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**The Origins of Indian Strategic Thought: Insights from a Strategic  
Culture Approach**

by

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**ABSTRACT**

**FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**

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**THE ORIGINS OF INDIAN STRATEGIC THOUGHT: INSIGHTS FROM A  
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This thesis is an examination of the origins of Indian strategic thought by utilising a strategic culture approach. Strategic culture is a much debated approach. For the purpose of this thesis, strategic culture refers to a set of dominant ideational symbols which exists as a cultural force within a state, influencing the consciousness of the dominant socio-political class in the making of strategy.

The study seeks to give a contextual analysis of Kautilyan and Gandhian thoughts as the two key ideational sources which facilitate an understanding of the foundation of Indian strategic rationale. Furthermore, the study involves an examination of the role of the two ideational sources in the study of strategic culture. The study begins by giving an analysis of the context of Indian strategic culture, followed by a detailed analysis of Kautilyan and Gandhian strategic thought in relation to the notions of state, power, anarchy and identity. The last key analysis in the concluding chapter focuses on the nexus between the two lines of thoughts.

The modern Indian strategic rationale is often considered as one that corresponds with neorealism which provides rationalist structural explanations for India's strategic behaviour. The argument this thesis presents is three fold. First, it highlights the relevance of the domestic strategic context of the dominant ideational source of Indian strategic thought. Secondly, it draws attention to the Brahmanical ideology as the main ideational source of the Indian case. Thirdly, it argues that Indian strategic rationale derives from the particular aspects of the ideology, Kautilyan and Gandhian strategic thought.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction

The account presented in this thesis focuses on one objective: to offer an interpretation of the origins of the Indian way of thinking on strategic issues, utilising an approach based on strategic culture. Indian political attitudes and behaviour in international affairs can be interpreted in two broad ways. The first school of thought derives from the assumption that materialist factors and structural influences are the primary determinants of state interests and behaviour. Consequently, this school considers the dynamics of state behaviour in South Asia to be based predominantly on concerns of power and security. Proponents of this school believe that the current nuclear weapons issue in South Asia as a region supports their postulation. Hence, for Kenneth Waltz, who is regarded as one of the strongest advocates of neorealism, nuclear weapons produce stability and security in regional situations like that of South Asia, because they make resorting to war extremely costly due to the resulting nuclear retaliation (Waltz and Sagan, 1995: pp.15-16). Bradley Thayer also reinforces this view by suggesting that India's desire for nuclear deployment is based on its security concerns, about China and Pakistan, the two other nuclear weapon states in the region (Thayer, 1995: pp.491-492). India's endeavour to be a major global economic power in the wake of China's industrial boom and subsequent economic growth can also be read as an extension of this line of argument.

The second school of thought posits a more subjective rationalism based on distinctive Indian cultural values. According to this school, the rationale for India's nuclear thinking is explicitly linked to prestige (Sidhu, 1998: pp.6-9; Cohen, 2000: pp.15-20). In the case of India, this manifests in two ways. On the one hand, as Stephen P. Cohen argues, India perceives nuclear weapons as a symbol of national greatness (Cohen, 2000: pp.17-20). On the other, the idea of prestige has also manifested in India's perception of itself as the pursuer of the moral welfare of humanity. This has been evidenced in India's abstention from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT hereafter), based on India's belief that the NPT has aspired to promote

the Western strategy of nuclear deterrence, rather than the idea of total elimination of nuclear weapons.

In either case, prestige could be argued to be a cultural value and a direct product of nationalism, which has been a crucial element in the formation of Indian identity. Jaswant Singh, the Indian Minister of External Affairs at the time of India's nuclear tests in May 1998, illustrates this perception in the following way:

'It is evident...that strategic thought has to be born principally in the crucible of nationhood.....The integrating roles of civilization, culture, and faith sustain a nation's strategic sense and enable it either to grow and meet the challenge of altering circumstances, or to fail. Strategic thought will be absent, or irrelevant, if it be not accompanied by a sense of high nationalism (Singh, May 1998).'

This suggests that even Singh, an advocate of nuclear procurement largely on the basis of the materialist/structural school of thought, is attuned to the idea that India's strategic rationalism is based on a collective effort to nurture the country's identity. Thus, under the prestige rationale, it could be argued that technological or any other material factors serve primarily as an instrument to attain that goal.

Given these two views, this thesis seeks to explore and expand the latter school in relation to the former with a view to explaining the role of ideas and values in charting Indian strategic culture. The idea of *Indian* strategic culture implies two key assumptions: a single monolithic identity called India; and the existence of its shared belief, ideas and historical experience which form a collective, cognisant or subliminal perceptual prism from which a set of dominant attitudes on international politics are derived. Before proceeding to examine these assumptions, it is necessary to review the strategic culture approach, as it entails some controversial tenets which need to be discussed in order to determine the key theoretical boundaries within which Indian strategic culture can be explored. There have been some in-depth scholarly debates within the discipline of International Relations (IR hereafter) over three key aspects: the meaning of strategic culture; the nexus

between ideas (culture and identity) and material or objective factors; and on the methodology of strategic culture. Before exploring the constituting assumptions of Indian strategic culture, these issues must be highlighted.

### **The Study of Strategic Culture: Some Caveats**

From the outset of this thesis, it should be noted that there are two interrelated aspects to strategic culture. Firstly, strategic culture can be understood as an empirical subject of study in its own right. Thus, an IR scholar could pursue research on the strategic culture of, for example, Australia. Secondly, strategic culture can also be understood as a theoretical study. This involves ontological, epistemological and methodological analyses and discussions, with a view to constructing a viable approach by which a set of hypotheses can be tested or corroborated through empirical evidence. This latter aspect is a contested area of the study and requires discussion. It must be stressed here that in its methodology, this thesis postulates strategic culture as a theoretical *approach* rather than a *theory* per se, for two reasons. Firstly, as will be implied below, strategic culture is a progressive notion, which requires more comprehensive empirical testing for it to be entitled a 'theory'. Secondly, as will be discussed in Chapter 2, epistemological and methodological differences exist within the study of strategic culture. For example, constructivism, which is broadly understood to provide a theoretical starting point for strategic culture, consists of two schools, with one approach preferring causal understanding of identity formation, and the other seeking to provide an account of processual aspects of identity and culture formation.<sup>1</sup> Thus, there is not yet *the* theory of strategic culture but rather there are diverse approaches to strategic culture pursued by various authors aiming to achieve different theoretical ends.

One of the most notable conceptual issues is the amorphous notion of 'strategic culture'. From an IR theorist's point of view, one of the problems here is the lack of consensus on the definition of the term. The lack of consensus is evident in the fact that scholars of strategic culture have come up with varying definitions of it. For example, Jack Snyder, who first coined



the term strategic culture, relates it specifically to the realm of nuclear strategy. His definition of the term was thus:

'the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses, and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and share with each other with regard to nuclear strategy' (Snyder, 1977: p.8).

What is evident in this definition is that Snyder's conception of culture incorporates both the realms of 'ideas' and 'patterns of habitual behaviours'. In other words, for Snyder, the identification of culture implies the isolation of persistent ideas and behaviours of the state. The term 'strategic' gives focus to these ideas and behaviours vis-à-vis nuclear strategy.

Since Snyder's thesis, others have felt the need to broaden the general definition of strategic culture to essentially mean military strategic culture. Yitzhak Klein, for example, defined it as 'the set of attitudes and beliefs held within a military establishment concerning the political objective of war and the most effective strategy and operational method of achieving it' (Klein, 1991: p.5). In a similar vein, Elizabeth Kier has focused on the organisational culture of military establishments with a specific focus on their doctrinal choices (Kier, 1995: p.67).

One of the most defining conceptual differences is highlighted in the debate between Colin Gray and Alistair Iain Johnston. Colin Gray's definition of strategic culture follows a similar pattern to that of Snyder's, except that his theoretical remit is broader in its basic tenets. In an attempt to theorise American strategic culture he defines strategic culture in the following way:

'[American strategic] culture, referring to modes of thought and action with respect to force, derives from perception of the national historical experience, aspiration for self-characterization (e.g., as an American, who am I?, how should I feel, think, and behave?), and from all of the many distinctively American experiences (of geography, political philosophy, of civic culture, and "way of life") that characterize an American citizen' (Gray, 1981: p.22).

Accordingly, Gray contends that defining strategic culture as a reification of ideas, behaviour and identity would help explain 'why' American strategists and policymakers have made the decisions they have (Ibid., p.22). Such a reified approach derives from Gray's treatment of strategic culture as 'context', by which he means 'that which surrounds' or 'that which weaves together' (Gray, 1999: p.50). For Gray, it is this context which gives meaning to strategic behaviour. Although he does not dismiss the prospect of the strategic culture approach developing into a theory with a capacity for predicting patterns of state behaviour (Gray, 1981: p.22), for him, its essential role is to provide a holistic *understanding* 'rather than explanatory causality for behaviour' (Gray, 1999: p.49).

On the other hand, in his attempt to formulate a predictable theory of strategic culture, Alastair Iain Johnston has put forward a different approach. Johnston disagreed with Gray's notion because it subsumed 'patterns of behaviour within a definition of strategic culture' which 'implied that strategic thought led consistently to one type of behaviour' (Johnston, 1995a: p.37). Johnston's disagreement was based on the assumption that one type of state behaviour does not necessarily reveal one set of distinct patterns of strategic assumptions. Johnston argued that Gray and many others' use of the notion of strategic culture led it to 'the sweepingly simplified conclusion that there was one American strategic culture, distinct from one Soviet strategic culture, which made the United States incapable of fighting and winning a nuclear war. Like many mechanically deterministic cultural arguments, this conclusion missed ample counter-evidence. For example, planners in the Strategic Air Command had all along considered counterforce war-fighting and war-winning nuclear options' (Ibid., 37). Johnston's point here is two-fold. First, there can be more than one strategic culture operating within a state's strategic thinking. Second, a strategic culture can exist independently from behavioural manifestation of a state. Accordingly, for Johnston, the task was to identify and explain the dominant strategic culture that influences a country's strategic preferences.

This led Johnston to formulate a different notion of strategic culture to that of Gray's. By utilising Clifford Geertz's definition of 'culture', he defined strategic culture as a:

'system of symbols (e.g., argumentation structures, languages, analogies, metaphors) which acts to establish pervasive and long-lasting strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs...' (Ibid., p.46).

This definition is specific in its understanding of strategic culture as being limited to historically enduring *ideas* which impact upon a country's strategic preferences. This postulation enables Johnston to treat strategic culture as an independent causal variable which can be identified and tested. To put it another way, Johnston's definition purports to utilise specific ideational constructs to identify dominant elements of a country's identity which determine its strategic behaviour.

The Gray/Johnston debate has revealed some useful caveats as well as some generic theoretical weaknesses in the study of strategic culture. These put the debate into perspective, with a view to furthering progress in the development of the strategic culture approach. Stuart Poore, for example, points out that Gray's 'context' approach implies two key problems (Poore, 2003: p.281). Firstly, he suggests that Gray's theory lacks explanation of the nexus between strategic culture as context, which is 'out there and everywhere', and non-cultural variables such as physical and political geography, which, as Gray suggests, have causal properties. Poore's main objection here is that his approach does not elucidate the nature of the material causal variables (do they have cultural context? How is the meaning of non-cultural variables constructed?). Accordingly, Poore argues that in subscribing to two conflicting methodological assumptions, contextual and causal approaches, Gray's theory may undermine the importance of strategic culture. Secondly, Poore implies that Gray's approach is vague about the remit of cultural context. As Poore points out, Gray's analysis entertains the idea that the intensity of 'cultural instinct' in individuals or organisations may vary in different situations. To this end, Gray's postulation may be

inadvertently edging strategic culture towards becoming an amorphous theoretical approach, implying as it does the existence of 'context' in multiple sub-layers within a culture.

Another issue that requires attention is Gray's amalgamation of strategic culture and identity in his definition of strategic culture. The rationale for such an amalgamation is debatable. Yosef Lapid, for example, disagrees with such an understanding of strategic culture. Citing Cohen and Fitzgerald, he has argued that culture and identity cannot be treated as one reified concept under the banner of 'culture', stating:

'Fused as they are, however, by history and current social practices, culture and identity are not isomorphic. Although cultures typically provide symbolic materials needed to delineate identity groups, identity groups do not always constitute separate cultures. And by the same token, cultures may change "while identities frequently persist, precisely because each fulfils different important functions for the individual or society"' (Lapid, 1996, p.8).

Following Lapid's logic, it would be difficult to associate a state with a single homogenous strategic culture, as there are likely to be a multiplicity of cultures within a particular national identity. In a similar vein, a national culture is likely to consist of a number of different identities. Thus, it could be argued that a central aim of a strategic culture approach should be to isolate the contact point between the dominant identity and the culture of a group which has persistently existed, in order to influence or determine the rationale of the group's behaviour.

Johnston's assumptions, however, also entail some theoretical problems. Johnston himself has pointed out two key caveats to his approach. Firstly, he points out the possibility of disjuncture between 'idealized' strategic culture, which relies on symbols, and 'operational strategy' (Johnston, 1995a: p.56). He postulates three possible scenarios in which this symbolism plays roles other than causal ones. The first role of strategic culture based on symbolism essentially is to be 'inwardly directed' rather than inter-organisational in its character. The strategies which stem from this culture 'reinforce the sense of competence and legitimacy held by decision-makers'

(Ibid., p.56). Thus, he argues that declaratory nuclear doctrine reflects the desired vision of the strategic decision-makers, without necessarily matching the operational nuclear doctrine (Ibid., p.57). The second purpose of such a culture is the use of a paradigmatic strategic rationale by strategic decision-makers in order to constrain agenda setting behaviour by other members of the group. In effect, this leads to an ideology which justifies the interests of 'military planners, military industries, and security intellectuals' (Ibid., pp.57-58). Thirdly, Johnston suggests that 'the use of symbols' is correlated with 'the creation and perpetuation of a sense of in-group solidarity directed at would-be adversaries' (Ibid., p.58). This notion implies exploration of the possibility of the role of 'symbolic strategic discourse' in defining a unique sense of community. The role of this discourse determines the self-image and values of the in-group, who in turn establish the values of the 'other'. The strategic discourse can be used by decision makers to 'rationalize' any contradictory ideals that may exist within the group and their preferred behavioural preference, through the use of acceptable linguistics and myths (Ibid., p.59). An implication here is that while Johnston's strategic culture approach has a predictable capacity vis-à-vis the external behaviour of states, it can also play an explanatory role in understanding the processes of a state's internal identity formation.

The second and greater caveat, encapsulates a general challenge to the proponents of the strategic culture approach. This is the possibility that the effect of 'strategic cultures' may not always be unique to individual states in the sense that states may go through a similar identity construction process in a way that forms an observable pattern of political behaviour (Ibid., p.60). That said, Johnston stipulates that the strategic preferences of states largely depend on the 'variation in the intensity or tightness of in-group identification'. The intensity of in-group identification is determined by the level of ideational and perceptual congruence within the group. The varying degree of identity formation heightens or lowers the perception of threats from the out-group (Ibid., p.60). Accordingly, as Johnston argues, the greater intensity of state identity, the more the behaviours of a state emulate realpolitik strategic cultures, while the lesser the intensity, the more likely

they are to conform to 'idealpolitik' strategic cultures. Thus, Johnston argues that this conceptual dynamic of strategic culture implies that 'structural conditions' play supplementary roles in determining the strategic preferences of states.

Conversely, Michael Desch is not convinced by Johnston's arguments. He points out that Johnston's analysis of the Chinese strategic culture still treats, as realists would, an anarchical international environment, together with military capability as key determining factors in the patterns of the state behaviour (Desch, 1998: p.161). Thus Desch implies that for Johnston to construct a viable theory of strategic culture which entails predictable capability, he has to compile and consolidate cross-national cases which would demonstrate that strategic culture is an independent causal variable conditioning the similarities and differences between patterns of strategic behaviours of states (Ibid., p.161).

There are also other limitations which are essentially to do with the absence of explanations and with some generic issues in relation to the strategic culture approach. Firstly, as Poore points out, Johnston's attempt to identify its dominant ideational elements does not incorporate the explanation of how the pervasiveness of strategic culture can be determined and 'when and why new strategic cultures emerge and become dominant' (Poore, 2003: p.283). Secondly, as Desch argues, cultural variables tend to be unsystematic and are difficult to quantify. Thus, he argues, 'Without systematic variables, there is no prediction. Prediction, however, is central to the social scientific enterprise not only for theoretical reasons (we need theories to make predictions in order to test the theories), but also for policy analysis (theories that do not make clear predictions are of little use to policymakers)' (Desch, 1998: p.153). Under this argument, Johnston's positivist approach to formulating a testable theory of strategic culture may be a complex task to perfect, as cultural variables are difficult to measure and test with a view to establishing behavioural predictions. Thirdly, in order to understand the root of a strategic culture, there has to be an understanding of the normative processes within which the societal values which have

energised the society or the nation-state to maintain a particular set of strategic preferences have arisen. From Johnston's standpoint, Desch's may not be a welcome approach, as it does not incorporate a theoretical framework in which values can be measured and tested. However, the identification and 'thick' understanding of the socio-political values which drive cultural and historical progression may help to answer when, why and how strategic culture is determined.

Fourthly, an underlying issue in the discussion of strategic culture is the materialism-idealism<sup>2</sup> nexus. One of the key unresolved debates in IR concerns the very nature of international relations: what is the primary source for the behaviour of international actors? Neorealism defines international politics primarily in terms of material power and structural means. It is based on the relative distribution of the material forces that drive interstate actors to behave in an egotistic manner towards each other. The proponents of a strategic culture approach tend to understand international politics primarily in *relational* terms. This is to say that, for them, the key attributes of international relations that should be seriously considered in conjunction with material aspects are the cultural sources from which the actor defines *itself* in relation to *others*. Thus, like idealists, the proponents of the strategic culture approach rely heavily on the role of ideas, value systems and psychological means which, they argue, determine how actors perceive each other. Alexander Wendt pursues these two lines of thought in an interesting way. He states,

'....people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meaning that the objects have for them. States act differently toward enemies than they do toward friends because enemies are threatening and friends are not. Anarchy and distribution of power are insufficient to tell us which is which. U.S. military power has a different significance for Canada than for Cuba, despite their similar "structural" position, just as British missiles have a different significance for the United States than do Soviet Missiles. The distribution of power may always affect states' calculations, but how it does so depends on the intersubjective understandings and expectations, on the "distribution of knowledge," that constitute their conceptions of self and other' (Wendt, 1992: p.397).

While this carries a strong resonance of idealism, Wendt's intention here is to stipulate a nexus between materialism and idealism in order to construct a synthesis: he does not falsify materialism but finds that it is simply 'insufficient' to explain world politics. Elsewhere he goes further by suggesting that while ideas give meaning to material forces, enabling social actors to form perceptions, some material forces, which he calls 'brute material forces', do have independent causal effects on actors' behaviours because at the foundational level, 'ideas are based on and are regulated by an independently existing physical reality' (Wendt, 1999: pp.110-111).<sup>3</sup> To this end, for Wendt, two realities exist: the material and the social world. His theoretical position, in a nutshell, is that on the one hand these two worlds cannot be divorced from each other as the latter gives meaning to the former. On the other hand, certain material forces in the former do independently cause behaviours of the social actors. That is to say that while such ideational factors as power, interest, culture and identity are outcomes of a constitutive process through relational politics, some material forces cause power and interest politics independently.

Gray's strategic culture approach is in line with Wendt's notion to the extent that it treats material forces not only as part of the cultural 'context' but also as independent variables which cause, in either enabling or constraining ways, the strategic behaviour of the social actors (Gray, 1999: p.52). However, Gray and Wendt's concepts entail a theoretical problem. Wendt's notion of rump materialism is problematic as it presumes a priori existence of meaning. In parallel with this, Gray's approach also invokes the question of the existence of acontextual material variables while claiming them to be part of the cultural context (Poore, 2003: p.281). The most plausible working assumption, for this thesis, on the nexus between the materialist and idealist camp, should be that the material forces could only be a constitutive element of the ideational factors, because social actors assign meaning and significance to forces. As Krause puts it,

'...behind so-called objective clashes of interests lie sets of *ideas*, which give practical content to states' (and regimes') definitions of their interests. There



is no separate relationship between two distinct things, 'cultural ideas' versus 'material' interests: the point is rather that the way in which decision-makers define their security interests is derived from their collective historical/social/cultural experiences and understandings' (Krause, 1999: p.3).

The Gray-Johnston debate represents a profound division in the scholarship of strategic culture. If the aim of this scholarship is to formulate an all-encompassing viable theory of strategic culture, there has to be a common definition. This may prove difficult to achieve because, as Howlett and Glenn point out, the definition would probably need to be so vague that all may be able to agree on it but none could use it effectively 'as it would remain boundless and with few properties delimiting its meaning' (Howlett and Glenn, p.5, forthcoming). At a methodological level also, gathering a consensus may be a difficult task. As the Gray-Johnston debate highlights, there is a profound divide between the interpretivist agendas and those of the positivist agendas. The heart of the unresolved matter in the context of social scientific research is whether to treat culture as a *scientific causal* variable which enables one to predict behaviour, or as *context* which helps one to understand the way of life. Thus, in referring to the Gray-Johnston debate, Theo Farrell concludes that 'each approach has its uses' (Farrell, 1998: p.408). In the context of the discussion on formulating a consensus on a definition of and approach to strategic culture, Farrell's remark implies the acceptance of difficulty in constructing a grand theory of strategic culture.

How then should strategic culture be understood and applied in the field of IR? Incorporating culture into scientific research is problematic, because doing so assumes it to be an objective constant that can be tested to predict a behavioural pattern. Rather, it should be treated as an organic concept which is susceptible to change in time and space. Daya Krishna thus states:

'A culture or civilisation is not a natural entity. It cannot maintain or reproduce or modify and grow as do most natural processes, including those found in living beings. They have to be continuously preserved, maintained and passed on to successive generations in order that they may survive and not die out through forgetfulness or loss of knowledge regarding what they meant and how they can be reproduced' (Krishna, 2005: p.2).

Treating culture as entirely an objective 'fact', may thus be a misunderstanding of its intrinsic dynamic, which is inherently intertwined with social consciousness and which evolves as long as humanity continues to exist. Under this view, culture in academic research could have many different meanings. Writing in 1952, Kroeber and Kluckhohn, for example, identify 164 definitions of culture (Kroeber and Kluckhohn, 1952: p.291). Julie Reeves also, in relating culture to *volksgeist*, demonstrates the organic nature of the concept of culture by looking at the etymological and conceptual evolution of 'culture' in both Western European society and in the realm of IR theory. She argues, '...at the time of the League of Nations we would have thought about 'culture' in conjunction with the concept of civilisation, while by the end of the Cold War we had unequivocally associated the idea of culture with identity' (Reeves, Ph.D Thesis, 2001: p.244). From this perspective, the role of strategic culture as an approach in IR should essentially be about exploring meaning and the understanding of man, society and history vis-à-vis strategic rationale, perception and attitude. That is to say that strategic culture should be studied and applied as a context which helps to identify cultural preferences. Krause's notion of culture reinforces this view. As he argues,

'One must see culture not as some fixed pattern of 'learned behaviour' that imprisons participants in security-building dialogues, but rather think of 'culture in context' in order to see how particular influences become important in certain regions, or in respect to certain issues, or in certain negotiating contexts' (Krause, 1999: p.4).

Having said this, a strategic culture programme should also accommodate the notion that culture entails some degree of persistence and continuity. In other words, while strategic culture should be conceived as an organic notion, the research on it should also acknowledge the possibility that some aspects, for example, a set of ideas, may continue to provide the core rationale of the socio-political culture, despite changes in circumstance or context. This would involve isolating and capturing sources and contexts from

the history of the region of concern, which gives rise to the persisting existence of a particular mode of thought.

An interesting experiment in understanding what may be seen as two contradictory epistemological sentiments, in the sense of anti-essentialist and essentialist respectively, is the game of Chinese whispers whereby a message is conveyed from one end of a chain of people to the other end, with the aim of the game being to find out how much the original message resembles the message passed on to the last person in the chain. Two possible results emerge. Firstly, the last message may turn out to be totally irrelevant to the original one. Alternatively, the result is often that while the wording of the messages may be different, the meaning they convey is in line with the original message. As each individual passes on the message to the next person in the chain, each interprets the message according to his own perception of its meaning, with the result of either the original message getting lost or of it being retained. The strength and ability of each person's cognitive perception plays the key role in determining whether the message will be conveyed accurately or not.

It may be argued that the evolution, change or persistence of strategic ideas involves a not dissimilar process. Social acceptance of cultural meaning through time and space is a process of interpretation and reinterpretation. The original meaning may either be lost or retained in this process. For anti-essentialists, the idea of change in strategic culture through an interpretative process represents the possibility that there is no absolute truth, but only 'interpretations'. For essentialists, the possibility of the continuous existence of the original meaning, despite change in contexts, and its effects on the social mindset supplement their view on the existence of 'essence' in socio-political life.

Given this complex dynamic of strategic culture, observing the socio-cultural world through the prism of neorealism provides limited scope. In the analysis of strategic culture vis-à-vis society and politics, neorealism, by dint of its design, is not capable of incorporating the role of normative values and

ideas, and the notion of identity formation into its rather axiomatic theoretical orientation. Waltz's clinical academic approach (Waltz, 1979: pp. 93-97), which purports to isolate 'objective' and material elements of the social world with a view to extrapolating the enduring metaphysical pattern of state behaviour, precisely rejects the subjective elements, such as culture, attitude and symbolism, because they are deemed unreliable for scientific IR research.

Despite its limitations, the strategic culture approach is potentially a valuable asset to IR in two ways. Firstly, it might offer a normative framework in which the 'social' aspects of international relations could be explored and evaluated. Within this framework, such ideas as power and identity are not necessarily taken for granted but are treated as culturally conditioned notions. Moreover, it offers the possibility of a theory of change in international relations.<sup>4</sup> In this respect, two possible theoretical directions for a strategic culture approach can be identified. Firstly, as Poore suggests, instead of understanding strategic culture as an approach for seeking causal explanation, it 'should seek to explore the cultural conditions of possibility for realist theories. The strategic cultural context thus constitutes and gives meaning to the material variables that realist theories typically rely on for explanation' (Poore, 2003: p.283). This approach, in effect, acknowledges the limitations of theorising about culture in order to analyse the political behaviours of the state.

Secondly, there is a possibility that a strategic culture approach can entail a limited causal property which also incorporates contextual utility for understanding and uncovering meaning of the material variables. The central element of this approach is the idea of *symbolism* which, according to Krishna, is a crucial part of observing a process of 'maintenance and transmission' of culture. A symbol is defined as 'the relation of what may be a natural object to the consciousness about what it represents' (Krishna, 2005: p.2). Accordingly, a study of strategic culture essentially concerns the dominant socio-political *consciousness* (its origins and how it is conveyed or

represented to other consciousnesses, what it is supposed to represent and how it is interpreted) concerning the making of strategy on war and peace.

Thus, borrowing from Krishna's methodology, strategic culture as an approach entails three intertwined properties: causal<sup>5</sup>, teleological and valuational. The underlying postulation of its causal property is that strategic culture can be envisaged as a 'fact' or an 'object', in the sense of 'a product of some consciousness and hence as conveying a message different from what it would have conveyed if it were treated as purely an object of nature' (Ibid., p.3). The viability of this postulation may lie in the notion that a cultural object from the past can also be understood as a *historical* source which entails some degree of unchanging essence. This may be interpreted to have caused or influenced events or behaviour in a given historical period of concern. How a cultural object can be identified as a determinant of behaviour is a matter of interpretation. Accordingly, interlocked with this causal role are the teleological and valuational properties which give meaning to the causal processes. Krishna states, 'The cultural object does not lie in a causal nexus alone but gets meaning either through the purpose through which it was created and/or the meaning which it was supposed to embody' (Ibid., p.3).

An implication of the latter approach is that understanding a cultural object simultaneously in these three ways, in conjunction with the historical processes and contexts, may allow a compromise, however limited it may be, between the two camps: one which treats strategic culture as an independent causal variable, and the other which understands it as 'context'. However, whichever approach one subscribes to, a strategic culture approach intrinsically entails interpretative methodology, for two reasons. Firstly, an understanding of causal, teleological and valuational properties of a cultural object changes over a period of time. This is primarily because given that strategic culture embodies relational<sup>6</sup> and processual characteristics, the information the same cultural object provides over a period of time may accumulate or change as the engrossing social consciousness also evolves. Secondly, the elusive character of purpose and meaning of the cultural object

implies that the observer's analysis and interpretation, which is influenced by an individual's own experience, perspective and purpose, is likely to be subjective and variable. This problem is at the heart of the debate on strategic culture in terms of its methodology, epistemology and ontology. This is to say that scholars disagree not only on what strategic culture is, but also on its value as an analytical and evaluative tool in understanding international relations. Nevertheless, the latter approach allows a broader and more accommodating analytical framework for interpreting a strategic culture.

### **Indian Strategic Thought and the Study of Strategic Culture**

Where does the above leave the study of strategic culture vis-à-vis Indian strategic thought? Johnston's approach defines strategic culture in terms of 'symbols', which are significant to a country's strategic preferences. He uses a positivist methodology in an attempt to formulate a predictable theory of strategic culture. In utilising his theory of strategic culture, he identifies two 'paradigms' from China's history in his analysis of Chinese strategic culture: the parabellum, which calls for an effective use of military power for the destruction of the enemy; and the Confucian-Mencian tradition, which assumes that conflict is avoidable and that in the case of a conflict force should only be used minimally in order to restore the moral political order (Johnston, 1995b).

The approach of this thesis is in part congruent with Johnston's understanding of strategic culture, in the sense that it utilises strategic culture as primarily an ideational vehicle, with a view to analysing two dominant *symbolic* bodies of Indian ideas which operate as a microcosm of the Indian strategic rationale. However, it does not use his positivist methodology because the thesis views culture as a subjective construct of socio-political life, which is difficult to quantify. The reason for this difficulty derives from the view that culture is inherently part and parcel of its context. Here, Gray's strategic culture as 'context' is useful. For a 'thick' understanding of a strategic culture to develop, the study of strategic culture needs to entail an analysis of its context. Accordingly, the approach this thesis uses is one of

interpretation with a view to *understanding*<sup>7</sup> the cultural foundation of Indian strategic thought.

The main argument of the thesis is that both Kautilyan and Gandhian strategic thought, as parts of the Brahmanical tradition, are central components of the cultural foundation of the Indian strategic rationale. The extent to which the two sets of thought converge with, or diverge from, each other is debatable. This is a significant issue as the two bodies of thought potentially imply two very different sets of strategic attitudes, policies and behaviours. This is an indication of the complexity of attempting to understand Indian strategic thought. The aim of this thesis is not to provide a debate from which a further development of the study of strategic culture can emerge. However, if one were to attempt to construct a predictable theory of Indian strategic culture to explain Indian strategic policies, the nature of the complex relations within and between the ideational and historical elements of India's national identity may dampen that attempt.

### **Theoretical Assumptions of the Thesis**

In view of the complexity related to taking a strategic culture approach, how should the case of India be approached and understood? This thesis is based on four basic theoretical assumptions. The first assumption is that Indian strategic culture concerns an identifiable set of dominant ideas and contexts, which form the source of shared belief and attitude vis-à-vis the issue of war and peace.<sup>8</sup> This postulation is based on the pretext that India's dominant and enduring social structure, known as *varna*, provides a viable access point for scholars to identify some of the key ideas which have promoted its survival for several millennia. Intrinsically related to the concept of *varna* are the four ancient Hindu values, *artha*, *dharma*, *karma*, and *moksha*. These values form the key aspect of the Brahmanical ideology seen as the ideational *symbolism* which is said to be a dominant cultural force of Indian culture (Embree, 1989). In terms of the observable strategic culture, *artha* has a particularly significant value as the ideology which derives from it, in the form of *Arthashastra* or science of politics, provides substantial and

important evidence of the origins of Indian strategic rationale and outlook. In terms of its opaque strategic rationale, dharma and moksha are significant value systems in understanding Indian strategic perception.

Secondly, the idea of 'context' in this thesis is assumed to play two key roles in understanding Indian strategic culture. Firstly, it provides valuable background to the efficacy of the core ideas of Indian strategic culture. Indeed, given the pretext that culture is an intersubjective process, the study of 'cultural conditions' should help uncover the meaning of the core strategic ideas. Thus secondly, it facilitates evaluating the teleological and valuational properties of the cultural ideas concerned. In so doing, it helps answer the questions *why* such ideational and valuational hierarchies exist and *how* they have come to be dominant. Accordingly, an analysis of historical, cultural and ideational contexts might shed light on the role and place of Brahmanical ideology in the study of Indian strategic culture. The study of these contexts also allows one to postulate that its rise was evidence of a valuational and ideational filtering process, in the sense that it facilitated the consolidation of the social preference of certain socio-political values and ideas in order to ascertain its centrality in society and politics. By the same token, an understanding of these contexts helps to explore why certain values have been rejected or re-evaluated in the course of its history.

Thirdly, in the case of India, it may be argued that the theoretical nexus between culture and identity, which can be defined as the socially constructed 'self-representation of the nation and its proper role in regional and global politics' (Latham, 1999: p.130), plays a significant role in understanding the Indian strategic rationale. As Lapid points out, the culture-identity nexus is a debatable issue (Lapid, 1996: pp.8-9). However, Johnston's approach stipulates the possibility that the emergence of dominant strategic culture may be correlated with the intensity of in-group identity, with the external strategic environment playing a supplementary role (Johnston, 1995a: p.60). This approach has some viable applications for understanding the nexus between the formation of Indian identity and Indian strategic culture in three ways. Firstly, in its origins, the role of Brahmanical



ideology essentially was to consolidate and re-legitimise the social position of the Brahmans against the challenges of other religious ideologies, namely Buddhism and Jainism. The latter challenged the existing caste system and advocated the idea of non-violence as a means to spiritual emancipation, which was perceived by the Brahmans as a threat to their socio-political dominance. Secondly, the ideology can also be said to have played the role of constraining the behaviour of members of other castes in the society by perpetuating the rigid tradition of the caste system, which assigned a particular set of social duties to each of the four orders. This, in effect, assured the political and social dominance of the Brahmans as the keepers of knowledge and as religious leaders.<sup>9</sup> In this way, the importance of the duty assigned to each caste effectively conspired to create a collective perception that performance of caste duties was the absolute necessity for attaining a better temporal as well as spiritual life for individuals. It has to be highlighted here that a factor, as significant as the ideology itself, which contributed to the Brahmanic dominance was the oral transmission (Sidhu, 1996: pp.174-175) of knowledge. The tradition allowed the existence of the culture of secrecy within the knowledge community and enabled the strengthening of the Brahmanic identity. Thirdly, the Brahmanical ideology played a key role in the formation of the Mauryan identity, the first ancient Hindu political entity to have consolidated vast power in the Indian subcontinent, by monopolising on the existing knowledge of politics and law, or *Arthashastra* and *Dharmashastra*, respectively, which embedded unique sets of moral, philosophical and political principles in the core of the Indian strategic and political rationale. The sense of cultural superiority was manifested through territorial expansion during Chandragupta of Maurya's reign in the late fourth century B.C., which adopted largely realpolitik strategic culture, but the similar sense of cultural pride became apparent through the moralpolitik strategic culture during Ashoka's reign. These ancient principles, arguably, played a foundational role in defining the Indian sense of cultural superiority in ancient India, as well as in post-independence India through the combined use of realpolitik strategic culture, which justified the use of military means, and moralpolitik strategic culture, which utilised the use of diplomatic means and moral principles in approaching political conflicts.

The fourth postulation regarding the study of Indian strategic culture is that the primary subject of concern is on how the meaning of 'material or objective' factors is constructed and how it influences the formation of the Indian strategic rationale, rather than how material variables cause behaviours of the state. The underlying assumption here is that the role of meaning in social relations and vis-à-vis material factors presumes the existence of the dominant socio-political consciousness within the hierarchy of the social rank, which is predicated upon and conditioned by a set of ideas, experience and attitudes. This is not to say that material or non-cultural factors are insignificant. In the formulation of an operational military strategy, technology and geography may influence an actor's behaviour. The main theoretical tenet of this thesis, however, is that though some non-cultural forces may have helped *shape* Indian identity, they have not *determined* its formation.

In short, the central idea this thesis seeks to explore is that there is a nexus between Indian strategic thought, identity and interest. That is to say that *interest*, in its philosophical sense, is a socially, historically and ideationally constituted or constructed embodiment of Indian strategic thought. The key argument in this thesis will be that India's enduring ideational culture, the Brahmanical ideology, and the historical evolution of its identity form the key basis for the emergence of the Indian sense of interest vis-à-vis international relations. International structural and material factors do influence this process but their significance is essentially interpreted through the lens of the dominant ideational forces within the country, which may influence its external behaviour.

### **Research Focus**

The main focus of this thesis is on *understanding*<sup>10</sup> the origins of the Indian strategic rationale, using a strategic culture approach with a view to portraying an intelligible picture of the origins of Indian strategic thought. The thesis uses Kautilyan and Gandhian thought to examine the Indian

conception of state, power, identity and anarchy. However, the reader should bear in mind the following three points. Firstly, the thesis does not aim to give an analysis of the strategic policies of post-independence India. However, it utilises works of authors who provide interpretations of modern India's strategic policies and rationale. This gives a starting point for researching the origins of Indian strategic thought. Secondly, this thesis does not seek to provide a positive identification of the definitive origin of Indian strategic thought. Instead, it analyses some of the key Indian literatures on strategy and political thought to offer an *interpretation* of the origins of Indian strategic thought. Thirdly, the aim of the thesis is not to develop a grand theory of strategic culture. Rather, it uses strategic culture as an approach through drawing on some of its theoretical assumptions, which are deemed useful for understanding the origins of Indian strategic thought.

The reason for choosing state, power, identity and anarchy as the theoretical subjects of focus springs from the fact that they are not only the foundational issues of the mainstream IR theories, but also they are integral themes embedded in the definitions of strategic culture given earlier. In terms of the theoretical approach, the argument this thesis conveys is that these foundational theoretical themes have context. In the case of India, the argument of this thesis is that they have particular set of origins and that the identification and understanding of their origins in both Kautilyan and Gandhian strategic thought helps to provide recognition of the complexity of the origins of Indian strategic thought. In addition, identifying and tracing these themes in Indian strategic thought gives a ground on which a balance may be able to be made between its context and its metaphysical attributes.

In order to pursue the origins of Indian strategic thought, this thesis examines three main aspects: the context, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Gandhian thought.

The contextual aspects of the Indian identity provide an intellectual setting relevant to understanding the formation of the Indian strategic outlook. In this respect, the context this thesis seeks to present is not a comprehensive outline of the Indian 'context' but a selection of historical,

geographical and ideational contexts pertinent to examining Indian strategic culture. Gray's assumption that some material variables have causal properties is controversial. In this thesis, material variables are regarded as playing a contributory role. The meaning of an object is generated through human perception, which is an outcome of mixing of the historical experience and ideational background. Thus, in the case of India, the material factor plays a useful part in exploring the origins of Indian strategic perception and attitude, but its significance can only be ascertained in conjunction with the historical and ideational contexts.

The reason for the focus on ancient *ideas* as the main focus of this thesis lies in the assumption that ideas shape the core of Indian strategic culture. This is, to a limited extent, in line with Johnston's research agenda. However, the thesis departs from his approach in two ways. Firstly, that these ideas are not necessarily causal factors. That is to say, the ideas existing in the *Arthashastra* or Gandhian thought do not necessarily have a direct bearing on the policymaking of the contemporary Indian government. Nevertheless, they provide a crucial clue in understanding the formation of India's strategic *rationale*. Secondly, the thesis does not utilise positivist methodology. Rather, it seeks an intelligible interpretation of Indian strategic thought by examining relevant texts and ideas.

There are three reasons for choosing the *Arthashastra* and Gandhian thought as the core referent objects of research. Firstly, both *Arthashastra* and Gandhian moral philosophy derive from Brahmanical ideology, which is said to be the dominant ideational element of Indian identity. The persistent dominance of this ideology is an indication of its importance to the cultural foundation of the Indian strategic rationale. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* was written within the remit of this ideology. Gandhi developed his thoughts by re-enacting the essence of the ideology, as he sought to define the national identity of prospectively independent India.

Secondly, the two sources provide unique insights into the nature of the origins of Indian strategic attitude. Kautilya's *Arthashastra* involves a

rationalism that is comparable to that of Machiavellian realism.<sup>11</sup> Yet it is unique, in the sense that embedded in its rationale is the ancient Indian philosophical belief from which the idea of social welfare derives. Gandhian strategic thought also encompasses a similar rationale, but it is much more in line with the moral and spiritual aspect of Brahmanical ideology and greatly influenced by Buddhist and Jain philosophy.

Thirdly, the efficacy of the *Arthashastra* as a primary research source lies in the fact that it is the earliest single compendium in existence which specifically deals with ancient Indian political and strategic thought. This thesis also utilises other existing sources which help explore the significance of the origins of the *Arthashastra*, such as the Kamadaka's *Nitisara*, Manu's *Dharmashastra* and the Epic document called the *Mahabharata*. Gandhi's ideas sparked the beginning of modern Indian identity in the sense that his political, social, religious and economic ideas emerged as an integral part in the formation of Indian strategic rationale in a much more direct way than those of Kautilya. Gandhian philosophy draws its strength primarily from a piece of popular ancient literature called the *Bhagavadgita*, which is part of the *Mahabharata*.

## **Sources**

This thesis uses a variety of sources, mainly in the forms of book and journal articles. Some of them are originally written in English, some are English translations of other modern languages and some are the original English translations of ancient Indian languages.

In this section, some comments should be offered on English translations of the key ancient Indian texts used in this thesis, which utilises translations of ancient Indian texts including *Rig Veda*, *Atharva Veda*, the *Upanishads*, the *Arthashastra*, the *Dharmashastra*, the *Ramayana*, *Shanti Parva* and the *Bhagavadgita* of the *Mahabharata*, and *Agni Purana*. It has to be acknowledged here that there are several different English translations of each of these texts. This thesis uses English translations of the texts chosen under two key criteria: first, translations deemed appropriate for academic use; second, the scholarly reputation of the translators of the relevant ancient

Indian languages. It would be an interesting academic thesis to explore the significance of different translations of the ancient Indian texts vis-à-vis Indian strategic thought, but this is a subject beyond the remit of this thesis.

Having said this, it is worth discussing the choice of two texts. Firstly, this thesis utilises two different translations of the *Arthashastra*. It uses the first English translation of the text by R. Shamasastri in 1915 and the second edition of the translation made by R. P. Kangle in 1972. The reason for using two translations of the text is to allow the thesis to give a more intelligible interpretation of the strategic thought depicted in the *Arthashastra*. However, the thesis relies more heavily on Kangle's translation for three reasons. Firstly, Kangle's translation is based on seven manuscripts which were discovered after Shamasastri's first edition. Before the publication of Kangle's work, some of these manuscripts were utilised by other translations<sup>12</sup> of the text but his version was the only one with the seven verifiable manuscripts discovered in the southern parts of India. Secondly, Kangle's translation not only improves on Shamasastri's first edition, but also makes use of the German and Russian translations of and studies into the original text. Thirdly, an indication of the credibility of the translation is that his second edition was reprinted six times from 1972 to 2003. This thesis uses the 2003 reprint.

The second group of texts for which the process of choice should be noted is the *Upanishads*. This thesis uses R. E. Hume's translated works which were collected by S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore in *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*<sup>13</sup>. Hume's 1931 translation is used mainly because the author feels that it provides a smoother linguistic flow of text, better suited for the thesis than M. Müller's 1879 translation. However, in the course of this research, Müller's translation was consulted for the benefit of the author's understanding of parts of the text.

## Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organised into nine chapters including the introduction. Chapter 2 will evaluate the value of Waltz's structural realism and Indian strategic culture by utilising India's nuclear strategy and behaviour from 1947 to May 1998 as a case study. Chapter 3 will examine the geographical, historical and ideational contexts of Indian strategic culture. It will further explore the nexus between these contexts and the formation of India's national identity and strategic rationale.

Chapters 4 and 5 will focus on Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Chapter 4 will trace the origins of Indian strategic culture by examining the ideational/historical origins of the literature itself, and of Indian political science vis-à-vis the *Arthashastra*. In doing so, it will also discuss the nature of the controversy over the authenticity of the literature by utilising the works of various authors.

Chapter 5 will move onto discussing more specifically the origins of the strategic thought present in the *Arthashastra* and strategic thought *per se*. Accordingly, it will examine the origin of the ancient Indian state and the theories on its origins. In view of this historical and theoretical context, the last section of the chapter will discuss Kautilya's theory of state, and internal and external strategic assumptions. Chapter 6 will shift focus to extracting the concept of state, power and anarchy inferred in Kautilyan strategic thought. In doing so, this chapter will provide a comparative analysis of Waltz's neorealism and Kautilya's notions of IR.

Chapter 7 and 8 will analyse Gandhian thought. Chapter 7 will contain two key points. Firstly, it will discuss the philosophical tenets from which Gandhian values and thoughts derive. Secondly, it will give a detailed analysis of four foundational pillars of Gandhian socio-political thought: Satya, Ahimsa, Swaraj and Swadeshi. Chapter 8 will then provide a comparative analysis between the Gandhian conception of state, power, order and identity and Waltz's notion of international politics.

In Chapter 9, the thesis will draw conclusions and include a summary, main findings, a discussion on the comparison of Kautilyan and Gandhian thought, some remarks on the limitations of the thesis, and an agenda for further research. The last section of the chapter will briefly discuss the possible contributions Gandhian thought could make to peace research in furthering the development of the study of strategic culture.



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<sup>1</sup> See 'Neorealism and Strategic Culture' section in Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> Alexander Wendt's definition of 'materialism' and 'idealism' is helpful for the purpose of this thesis. Materialists, according to Wendt, understand the fundamental dynamics of society in terms of 'nature and organisation of material forces'. Materialism entails at least four recurring material factors: 'human nature', 'natural resources', 'geography', 'forces of production' and 'forces of destruction'. Idealism is essentially concerned with 'the nature and structure of social consciousness' as the fundamental fact of society. See Wendt (1999), *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> Wendt describes the independent effects of brute material forces in three ways. Firstly, the balance of military capability in international politics makes it difficult for militarily weak states to conquer strong states. Secondly, the technological and qualitative advancement of material capabilities have 'constraining and enabling effects'. Thirdly, geography and natural resources have effects on societal, political and technological development. See Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, pp. 110-111, 1999. Wendt calls this a 'rump materialism', which he admits is an 'important concession to Political Realism', Wendt, p. 96.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Berger, for example, highlights the evolutionary aspect of culture. He states, 'Cognitive beliefs about the world are constantly tested by actual events. While failures and surprises can be reinterpreted so that they do not contradict existing norms and beliefs, they also create pressures that can lead to a reevaluation and modification of the culture' T. Berger, 'Norms, Identity and National Security in Germany and Japan' in Peter J. Katzenstein (ed.) (1996), *The Culture of National Security*, p.326. This dynamic is especially relevant in the ancient Indian context, where the rise of Buddhism and Jainism effectively forced the dominant Brahmanical ideology to evolve. This, in effect, ensured the survival of the latter.

<sup>5</sup> This causal property of culture does not necessarily imply that culture can be treated as an independent variable that has a predictable character, as Johnston's positivistic approach postulates. In this particular scenario, it simply implies that the transmission of symbolism yields results in ways that may change behaviour and/or context, and induce a carrying-on effect of the transmission to future generations.

<sup>6</sup> This inter-relational aspect of culture enables or encourages self-awareness. Indeed, the assumption here is that culture intrinsically entails purpose. This may be in conflict with Gray's understanding of culture as something 'out there', all around us, which entails an assumption that culture, by and large, exists subconsciously in people's psyches.

<sup>7</sup> See fn. 9.

<sup>8</sup> Under the postulation that culture is a socially constructed concept, integrating a 'shared belief' is necessary for the case of India. Ideas and context have to be transferred to or from shared beliefs at a collective level for culture to take effect as a nurturing or evolving force.

<sup>9</sup> In his analysis of strategic culture, Jeffrey Lantis raises the issue of the 'keepers of strategic culture'. See Jeffrey Lantis (2002), 'Strategic Culture and National Security Policy', *International Studies Association*, pp.106-109. This carries two important implications for the development of the study of strategic culture. Firstly, it implies the purposive element of strategic culture. Secondly, it implies the possibility that a change in strategic culture is to do with change in the evolution of the identity of the 'keepers' and vice versa.

<sup>10</sup> The thesis has used hermeneutics as its methodological approach. Hickson gives a useful guide to this approach. He states, 'hermeneutics is concerned with the recovery of the meaning and understanding of the historical actors' own beliefs and interpretations and the understanding of the context in which they operated. It is not possible to obtain a full understanding of an individual's actions without reference to the values of that individual because they shape both the behaviour of an individual and the individual's self-interpretation of his/her behaviour. Hence a correct interpretation of human behaviour requires an understanding of beliefs', Kevin Hickson (2002), *The 1976 IMF Crisis and British Politics*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Southampton, pp.5-6. For an excellent discussion of the notion of 'understanding', see Martin Hollis and Steve Smith (1991), *Explaining and Understanding International Relations*, pp.68-91.

<sup>11</sup> For an analysis on the comparison of the ideas of the two authors, see S. R. Goyal, 'Kautilya and Machiavelli: a comparison in S. R. Goyal (2001), *India as known to Kautilya and Megasthenes*, Kusumanjali Book World.

<sup>12</sup> L. Sternback comments that Shamasastri's first version is in many respects 'imperfect'. J. Jolly's and R. Schmidt's translations also only use available manuscripts. J. J. Meyer's

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translation improves on Jolly's and Schmidt's but 'it is full of speculations without foundations'. L. Sternbach (Apr.-Jun., 1967), 'The Kautiliya *Arthasastra*', *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Vol. 87, No. 2.

<sup>13</sup> This is a standard text book for students of ancient Indian philosophy and texts.

## Chapter 2: Neorealism and Indian Strategic Culture

### Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to assess the significance of neorealism and Indian strategic culture in explaining India's strategic attitude and behaviour. It uses the history of India's nuclear strategy as a case to identify an anomaly in India's behaviour which neorealism cannot or inadequately account for, but which Indian strategic culture can. If, indeed, there was an anomaly in India's strategic attitude and behaviour which neorealism could not fully account for, it would mean the efficacy of neorealism as a theoretical tool could be questioned. On the other hand, if the identified anomaly or anomalies can be explained by Indian strategic culture, this would provide a ground on which the value of Indian strategic culture as an approach could be promoted and further developed. In addition, this would pose a challenge to the claim of neorealism to be a falsifiable theory of IR which has universal applicability across time and space.

Indian strategic culture is a retrospective approach which derives its source from India's cultural and historical past. For this thesis, the ontological definition of Indian strategic culture centres on the rationale drawn from India's longstanding realpolitik and moral traditions, evident in Kautilyan and Gandhian thought respectively. This rationale consists of the *Indian* sense of pragmatism, realism, self-reliance and self-constraint which is particularly evident in India's attitude and behaviour regarding its nuclear strategy. The idea of pride and honour occupy the underlying and unifying arch of Kautilyan and Gandhian thoughts, which in turn play an active role in the evolution of Indian strategic culture as India interprets and reinterprets its past, present and emerging international political context.

Neorealism is a structural theory of international politics which aims to predict patterns of state behaviour through empirical testing of its hypotheses regarding power and international political structure. It is worth highlighting

here that neorealism and Indian strategic culture do share a key ontological agenda, the importance of the idea of power. However, a major theoretical difference between neorealism and Indian strategic culture concerns the nature and origin of power. Whereas neorealism supposes power which derives from an anarchic international structure to be material in nature, Indian strategic culture portrays power which interlinks India's historical and cultural past and present to be primarily ideational in nature. In order to pursue the aim set out above, this chapter is divided into four sections:

The first section places neorealism in a historiographical context of the theoretical development of IR as a discipline. The second section explores the assumptions of Waltz's theory of neorealism regarding power and anarchy. As a prelude to the fourth section on neorealism and Indian strategic culture, the third section discusses the debate between neorealism and strategic culture with a view to identifying some of the theoretical anomalies which neorealism cannot adequately account for. The last section focuses on assessing the explanatory power of neorealism and Indian strategic culture in the case of India's nuclear strategy and behaviour.

In the post-Cold War era, there has been an escalation of debate on the efficacy and relevance of neorealism in explaining state behaviour. The main triggering factor for such debate lies in the failure of neorealism to predict the end of the Cold War. That debate has become intensified with the revival of interest in strategic culture.<sup>1</sup> As indicated in the previous chapter, several writers have sought to analyse international relations by utilising cultural variables, such as ideas and values, and understanding them by highlighting the importance of the domestic cultural context, rather than abstract theorising and structural explanations. In so doing, some scholars, most notably Alistair Iain Johnston, have sought to develop a testable theory of strategic culture. Others, such as Colin Gray, have preferred to understand strategic culture as 'context', which conditions human attitude and behaviour.<sup>2</sup> While these writers do not dismiss the idea of 'theorising' strategic culture, they admit that it is difficult to label culture as an

independent variable because it is an intrinsic part of human society which pervades socio/political life.

As indicated in the introduction, the case for strategic culture has largely been made through compilation of case studies to indicate shortfalls of neorealism. In view of such a movement, in an article in 1998, Desch struck back by critically arguing that strategic culture did not 'supplant' but 'supplemented' realist theories (Desch, 1998). His claim was partly based on two key pretexts. Firstly, cultural theorising has 'selected cases that do not provide crucial tests that enable us to distinguish which theories are better' (Ibid., p.158). Secondly, he argued that cultural theories lacks explanatory power because 'cultural variables are tricky to define and operationalise' (Ibid., p.150). Thus, for Desch, strategic culture lacked independent causal explanatory power and it did not challenge the predictive capability of realist theories (Ibid., p.169). Accordingly, strategic culture is referred to as merely supplementing realist theories in three ways: '[f]irst, cultural variables may explain the lag between structural change and alterations in state behaviour. Second, they may account for why some states behave irrationally and suffer the consequences of failing to adapt to the constraints of the international system. Finally, in structurally indeterminate situations, domestic variables such as culture may have a more independent impact' (Ibid., p.166).

Although Desch claimed these were limited contributions, such anomalies are actually a disclosure of fundamental shortfalls of realism. As such, Desch's claim implies that structural explanations of neorealism are insufficient in explaining state behaviour.

The purpose of this chapter is not to supplant Desch's claim per se. Rather, it seeks to understand neorealism vis-à-vis strategic culture with a view to identifying anomalies in its explanation of India's strategic behaviour. In so doing, the chapter endeavours to supplement the main aim of this thesis, which is to explore the domestic cultural context of Indian strategic thought, by utilising a strategic culture approach, arguing for the efficacy of Indian strategic culture approach in explaining Indian strategic behaviour.

## Some Contextual Aspects of Neorealism

International Relations as a discipline covers a broad range of approaches and theories of the dynamics of intra- and international affairs. Initially, its paradigmatic boundary was confined to the subjects of history, law, politics and diplomacy (Banks, 1985: p.10).<sup>3</sup> Given the human and material devastation caused by the First and Second World Wars, the central issues around which the discipline developed in its initial stages were war and peace. In pursuit of the ways to understand and avert war, IR became a more theory-oriented discipline.

Michael Banks identifies three key stages of theoretical developments in IR since the end of the First World War: the traditional, behavioural and post-behavioural periods (ibid., p.10). The traditional period essentially comprised the debate between idealism, notably in the form of liberal internationalism, and realism, which was fuelled by the failures of the appeasement policies and the League of Nations which played catalytic roles in the build-up of the Second World War.<sup>4</sup> The central premise of liberal internationalism was the idea of collective security within a democratic institutional framework where no state would be able to act against the force of democratic regimes (Brown. 1997: p.27). The aim of such a movement was to pre-empt the challenge by anti-democratic and militarist regimes against democratic states through democratic institutional means. However, the legitimisation of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy through a democratic process in the early 1930s, coupled with the lack of credible willingness to use force by the members of the League against the dictatorial regimes led to the fatal failure of the original liberal internationalist approach to prevent wars.

In the context of the policy failure of liberal internationalists, the most influential realist critique of liberal internationalism was posed by E. H. Carr. His book *The Twenty Years' Crisis* portrays the fundamental dynamics of international politics in the light of states' hunger for power, which is glossed over by common interest and harmony, the central features of liberal

internationalism (Carr, 1946). Under this assumption, the motivating elements of Germany under Hitler's rule and Italy under Mussolini's in the 1930s, was the hunger for power. The major failures on the part of the liberal internationalist approach was not recognising such an international political reality and basing policies on their idealistic assumptions which, consequently, enabled Hitler and Mussolini to pursue the military power they craved for.

After the Second World War, realism gained further influence mainly through Hans J. Morgenthau's work, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, which was first published in 1948. Unlike Carr, who argued that the dynamics of international politics is determined by the human *condition*, i.e. the scarcity of material power, Morgenthau's basic postulations derived from the philosophy that the nature of states' desire to maximise power derives from human *nature* (Brown, 1997: p.32). As Brown points out, the success of *Politics Among Nations* was partly due to its systematised approach to political realism which provided clear guidance to students of IR (Ibid., pp.32-33). As will be discussed in the next section, Morgenthau's basic proposition was that international politics is about states pursuing their interests defined in terms of power. Morgenthau's approach to international politics entailed descriptive, explanatory and prescriptive methodology which later schools of realism retained – particularly significant is Kenneth Waltz' neorealism, which retains some aspects of this positivist methodology.

The next period saw the focus of the discipline moving away towards a debate over research methodology between the traditionalists or classical realists such as Carr, Bull and Morgenthau, and the behaviouralists behaviouralists such as Singer, Boulding and Deutsch (Nicholson and Bennett, 1994: p.197). The focus of the debate between the two camps was on whether scientific methodology for understanding and explaining the natural world could be applied to understanding international relations. This debate effectively broadened the academic horizon of IR by extending the debate to the philosophical discussion on how the social world should be understood. In the, so called, 'post-behaviouralist' period, the overall

emphasis of the debate shifted to the 'inter-paradigm debate' involving realism, structuralism and pluralism (Banks, 1985: p.11). These broad categories have contributed different methodologies and perspectives on the nature of international relations. While realism essentially focused on the dynamics of power in inter-state politics, structuralism approached international relations in terms of systems, especially focusing on socio-economic relations. Pluralism also focused on economic relations but with a strong emphasis on the role of non-state actors. Despite disagreements on theoretical framework and focus, encompassed in all three theories was the assumption of a state-centric world.

In the context of looming world economic problems, essentially because of the oil crisis in the 1970s as a result of the Arab-Israeli war of 1973, and the increasing influence of multinational corporations, non-governmental pressure groups and non-governmental organisations, the challenge to realism mainly came from pluralism. The most notable challenge came from Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye's work, *Power and Interdependence*, in which they proposed the concept of 'complex interdependence' (Keohane and Nye, 1977). This concept entails three key challenges to realist assumptions. Firstly, it challenges the realist assumption of the state as the unitary actor by arguing that there are multiple actors, including various governmental and non-governmental institutions and departments, interacting at various levels. Secondly, the concept of complex interdependence argues that in most institutional relationships, military power occupies less significance. Thirdly, the concept of complex interdependence assumes that the main concern of international relations is not necessarily always power or security but that the importance of an issue depends on context at a given time. The complex interdependent thesis does not argue that its assumptions are evident in all spheres of international relations, however, its key point was to challenge realism's claim to be a universally applicable theory of international politics (Brown, 1997: p.43).

One of the most influential realist responses came from Waltz, whose formulation of a new breed of realism came to be known as 'neo' realism. As



will be discussed later, his book '*Theory of International Politics*' (1979) purported to adopt positivist methodology through which the ontological agenda of classical realism could be reanalysed. The state-centric view of the world with particular focus on power and anarchy as the central causal variables in interstate relations remained the main pillar of neorealism. While his earlier work, *Man, the State and War* (1959) considers international politics by looking at all three levels, i.e. unit, structural and systemic levels, the significant feature in *Theory of International Politics* is the sole emphasis he places on how the anarchic structure of the international system conditions and determines the behaviours of states. Waltz regarded the first two levels of analysis to be inadequate for explaining the patterns of interstate behaviour and the recurrence of war. Rather, his attention shifted to formulating a scientific theory of international politics by utilising the third level analysis which he believed was needed to explain the persistent pattern of outcome of international politics.

Despite failing to predict the end of bipolar international politics after the end of the Cold War, Waltz has continued to claim the validity of his neorealism (Waltz, 1996; Waltz 1998; Waltz, 2000). However, the failure of neorealism to predict the end of the Cold War seems to have triggered a shift within IR, allowing it to be more pluralized. The new context has encouraged the revival of other approaches, previously regarded as peripheral, in the form of normative theories. Although, as Mark Hoffman points out, there is not one unified 'normative theory' per se (Hofmann, 1985: pp.27-37)<sup>5</sup>, normative theories, by and large, are concerned with the issues of the 'moral standing of states' and of 'duty', 'responsibility', rights and justice from the domestic to the global level (Hoffman, 1994: p.27; Hoffman, 1985: p.27). They incorporate such approaches as feminism, postmodernism, critical theory, theories of global governance and globalisation. Normative theories are also often issue-specific. International issues, such as human rights, environment, migration and global health have gained much more attention worldwide. In effect, normative approaches have driven IR in a direction more towards questioning the efficacy of the notion of the state, which by contrast

the mainstream IR theories have largely taken for granted, by exploring normative agenda that cross the state boundaries.

Under this changing context, other subject areas within IR have also gained a great deal of academic attention. This has been particularly the case in the areas of security, culture, identity and interest. This is evident in the study of strategic culture which provided the momentum to the debate about the role of culture in IR (Booth, 1994: pp.105-127). Similar effort has also been made through constructivist approaches which have significantly progressed towards integrating culture and identity into constructing a new breed of IR as a discipline. For example, *The Culture of National Security* (1996) edited by Peter J. Katzenstein, successfully applies a theoretical understanding of culture and identity to the analysis of national security issues. The contributions of the authors look at a number of case studies ranging from norms in conventional, nuclear and chemical weapons regimes to various national cases. Particular attention is given to the role of institutional expectations in understanding the ideas of patterns and change in the state behaviour. Another significant work was *Culture and Security* (1999) edited by Keith R. Krause. This study looks more specifically at the influence of culture and identity on diplomatic practices relating to regional and multilateral arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament. The theoretical framework Krause sets out is particularly useful in analysing IR, in that he draws attention to the common definitional aspects of four different conceptions of culture, political culture, strategic culture, diplomatic culture and security culture, with particular reference to the latter as encompassing key aspects of the other three. In so doing, he argues that these various cultural influences could play a role in determining 'state policies towards security building, and how they could shape the complex calculations of material capabilities or interests that lies behind policy-making' (Krause, 1999: p.14). Case studies demonstrate this argument.

The most notable work on culture vis-à-vis IR, however, was the collected volume, *The Return of Culture and Identity in IR Theory* (1996). The book, arguably, marked a turning point in IR because it brought together

some foundational aspects of political theory, such as the ideas of polity and sovereignty, to forge an understanding of IR in cultural terms. In so doing, it formed a basis for promoting and developing the value of incorporating culture and identity into IR as a discipline, not as supplementary 'variables' but as the core conceptual catalysts for transforming the dominant epistemological and methodological trend which was largely driven by neorealism. The general tenet of the book points to the absence of 'meaning' in neorealism, which reduces the dynamics of international relations to that dictated by the 'distribution of capabilities', which characterise the very purpose of the existence of the state, that is, the pursuit of security and power. Thus, in the conclusion of the book, Friedrich Kratochwil makes three important points. Firstly, he argues that culture and identity have been 'part and parcel' of the analysis of the social world. He points out that the classical works by, for example, Kautilya, Thucydides, Machiavelli and Hobbes, which are generally regarded by modern realists as forming the realist 'tradition', point to the fact that their ideas are not based on their attempt to construct abstract theories corresponding to first and second order analysis, but that the works were written and influenced by their respective historical, political and cultural contexts (Kratochwil, 1996: pp.203-204). This point poses an important challenge to realism and neorealism that, contrary to their characterisation of the state as that forming uniformity in attitude and actions, the contextual differences within the historical works of traditional realists amount to a fundamental disagreement on the nature of so called 'units', precisely because culture and identity are intrinsic parts of their theories.

Secondly, Kratochwil argues that the similar identity patterns that exist in traditional societies are little do to with evolutionary pressure, but rather with 'the conscious favouring of the past over the present and future' (Ibid., p.215). He explains this in the following way:

'The past, for example, reproduces itself through the action of the actors looking at a history understood and recorded in paradigmatic terms. The same approach also tells us that this process of reproduction will be altered by "modernity", in which new sources of change appear that make the past increasingly unlike the present and thus less apt as an example to be

imitated. But again, the resulting process is hardly one of unfolding stages, evolution, or simple diffusion, in which the “new” is victorious over the old way of life (even if both the political and economic development literature of yesteryear sometimes suggested such imagery)’ (Ibid., p.215).

That is to say, a theory of culture which considers international relations in this way could not only explain the persistent patterns of actors’ actions, but also change in those patterns when they occur. Indeed, unlike Waltz’s structuralist approach, this approach is epitomised by three key factors: first, incorporating history as an intrinsic part of a cultural approach; second, understanding history as a process or processes; third, appreciating culture as social *consciousness* which operates as a purposive organic force that interprets and reinterprets the past and present.

Thirdly, Kratochwil identifies what he regards as two conflicting definitional issues of culture: first, culture conceived as ‘a detailed symbolic system of meaning’; and second, the idea of culture as ‘an aggregate of individual beliefs and attitude’ (Ibid., pp.218). What is interesting is that the two conceptions of culture are in line with Johnston and Gray’s respective definitions of strategic culture. Whereas the conceptual difference between Johnston and Gray continues to be a source of debate in the study of strategic culture, Kratochwil argues that there is an important processual link between the two concepts. That is, while the condition that is constituted by collective belief and attitude induces the social acceptance of a set of practices and ideas, i.e. it is deemed ‘right’, ‘legitimacy’ is present when the ‘boundaries’ of identifiable set of symbolic systems or codes, such as language or discourse, are managed and ‘allow for the expenditures of resources in return for moral reward’ (Ibid., p.219). Thus, it may be inferred from this that while Gray and Johnston’s definition of strategic culture may appear conflictual, in fact, strategic culture can be understood as the constitutive process of the nexus between the cultural beliefs and attitude and symbolic boundaries, and the effects of that process in the formation of political and strategic preferences.

These contextual aspects of IR indicate that theories, whether they claim to be falsifiable or not, have processual and historical context and origins. Neorealism is not an exception. Waltz's neorealism was constructed on reflection of the previous realist tradition, and was influenced by particular historical and political contexts. It has, however, been the case that the dominant IR research programmes in the post Cold War era have retained ontological agendas similar to those of IR prior to the 1990s: they are still essentially concerned with the issue of the agent/structure/system nexus; power; and war and peace. Nevertheless, the major shift has been two fold. Firstly, such normative approaches have created a context within which epistemological concerns of the object of analysis can be debated.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, IR has become more interdisciplinary, in that normative concerns have drawn sociological and psychological epistemology into its analytical frameworks. In this way by utilising contextual and interpretive methodology for explaining power, state and international system, with particular concern for the social, political and cultural characters of the state, they have been able to challenge the ahistorical and acultural approach of neorealism.

### **Waltz's Parsimonious Neorealism**

The concept of anarchy is a key element of Kenneth Waltz's neorealism, a dominant theory of mainstream IR. In his intellectual quest to discover an objective law, Waltz strives to formulate a theory of international politics that provides an element of predictability to state behaviour. The key suppositions here are firstly, that states are by nature self-seeking; and secondly that they operate within the anarchic international structure (Glenn and Howlett, 2004: p.30). The starting point of Waltz's analysis is to assume that state behaviour is caused by the *system*. He justifies this by focusing on the idea of 'interaction' and its outcome on unit behaviour:

'Each state arrives at policies and decides on actions according to its own internal processes, but its decisions are shaped by the very presence of other states as well as by interactions with them. When and how internal forces find external expression, if they do, cannot be explained in terms of the interacting parties if the situation in which they act and interact constrains

them from some actions, disposes them toward others, and affects the outcomes of their interactions' (Waltz, 1979: p.65).

Waltz's 'objective' approach leaves out any abstract features of the state and its interactions. In his theory, he describes states in purely functional and structural senses enabling him, he believes, to treat them as equal ('autonomous political') 'units' in purely functional and structural senses (Ibid., pp.93-97). Thus his theory seeks a clinical environment (theoretically speaking), free of any subjective entities such as culture, political ideology, the personal character of political leaders or morality. Importantly, he seeks to ignore 'interactions' of units. Waltz takes 'interactions' to mean 'how units stand in relation to one another, the way they are arranged or positioned' rather than to mean various levels of diplomatic relations of units (Ibid., p.80). This assumption leads him to define structure as 'the arrangement of its parts'. Accordingly, a system consists of a structure and its interacting units.

Thus, Waltz's systemic theory of international politics centres around his concept of 'structure'. That structure is characterised as being anarchic, which is argued to be an inherent feature of international politics. Whereas what he calls, the 'organising' or 'ordering' principle of the domestic political structure is centralised and hierarchical, where an actor has to conform to higher authority, while the organising principle of international politics, anarchy, is described as the absence of central authority (Ibid., p.88). Within these systems, units are neither required to obey nor command. In explaining the origin of such systems, Waltz compares the dynamics of markets with those of international political systems. He stipulates that the market ('of a decentralised economy') is an unintended structural outcome of the interaction of its parts, where they freely compete with each other. In this free environment harmony or order can exist, because of the outcome of the interactions of units pursuing the same aim concurrently, that is their own good, surpasses the motives of individual units. Because of this while actors within the market system may have the aim of making profits for themselves, the market system may bring the price of their produce down because the self-help principle in the anarchic structure enables much fierce competition

among the actors (Ibid., p.90). Likewise, international political systems are an unintended conceptual outcomes of the 'coexistence' and 'coaction' of 'self-regarding units'. To Waltz, international political systems are innately individualistic where the core structural principle on which states co-act is self-help: the survival of the units depends on their own capabilities (Ibid., p.91).<sup>7</sup> Therefore, in the neorealist's international system, threat is an inherent and enduring condition of the system within which states seek to minimise risk.

Stability can emerge through the effect of the balancing of capabilities among states. This logic derives from two basic assumptions. Firstly, states pursue the minimum goal of 'survival' or security (Ibid., pp.105-106). Secondly, because states pursue survival, they calculate and pursue power or capability in relation to the position of other states in the international system. In what is effectively a readjustment process of the system, states seek any means, be it violent or peaceful, in the pursuit of relative gains (Ibid., p. 113). Given this condition of anarchy, Waltz's notion of balance of power postulates that in a situation where the weaker coalition is at the mercy of the stronger side, the secondary states tend to join the weaker side to balance against the stronger side because the latter, as it has a stronger capability, is a threat to them (Ibid., p.126). Once the balance is achieved stability emerges in the structure. However, because 'threat' is an inherent part of international politics, this balancing act may occur again, giving this stability an ephemeral status.

Waltz's theory of the balance of power can be further explained by applying it to nuclear behaviours of states. Waltz's theory predicts that a bipolar balance of power is much more likely to provide nuclear stability and discourage nuclear proliferation, because the two dominant competing states holding the international structure, i.e. an anarchic structure, together provide security guarantees to less powerful states to further their spheres of influence. On the other hand, this theory postulates that a multipolar international structure is likely to create more pressure for nuclear proliferation among states, because the security commitment of the

superpowers to their client states is likely to diminish, causing the client states to feel insecure and to try to obtain their own nuclear capability.

In this way the US-USSR tension in Cold War international politics is described as being conditioned by the bipolar power structure and the post-Cold War politics as being based on a multipolar power structure. During the Cold War, there was less pressure for nuclear proliferation because it was in the interest of the two superpowers to provide nuclear security guarantees to less powerful states. That interest decreased with the collapse of the USSR. This, in turn, increased the pressure of nuclear proliferation.<sup>8</sup>

### **Neorealism and Strategic Culture**

As a prelude to the next section on Indian strategic culture, this section has two aims: first, to address some of the key theoretical caveats of neorealism; and second, to highlight the place of strategic culture as a research programme vis-à-vis neorealism.

Waltz's neorealism consists of three key guiding principles: first, international relations is best explained by a materialist structuralist approach; second, there is a set of laws within which international politics operate; third, a theory of international politics can only be best judged by its ability to predict persistent patterns of state behaviour. Based on these principles, the theory gives three key postulations: first, international politics is inherently anarchic; second, the dynamics of international politics is based on the distribution of capabilities among states; third, the anarchic nature of international politics induces a recurrence of the balancing behaviour of states based on their capabilities. The theory claims that, explained in those terms, it is able to predict behavioural patterns of international politics.

In making such postulations, Waltz purposely avoids the unit level analysis by leaving out any domestic intervening variables such as the nature of political institutions, culture, social characteristics or ideology (Waltz, 1979: p.72). There are two key reasons for this: first, Waltz regards them as non-



objective variables which undermine his methodological aim of formulating a predictive theory of international politics; second, in his view, while the unit level variables could be useful in analysing differences in state behaviours, they do not serve the purpose of his theory which is to explain the long-term recurring patterns of state behaviour.

Thus, for Waltz, the Cold War is not characterised by ideological differences. Rather, it is characterised by the continuous system-induced state of tension and balance of material capabilities between the Soviet Union and the United States in striving to acquire relative security. Critics, however, argue that neorealism's inability to account for fundamental changes in the international system is an indication of its major theoretical weakness. For them, its failure to predict the end of the Cold War brings to the fore the limit of its prediction capability.<sup>9</sup> Waltz, however, has argued that the theory does not and cannot predict exactly when something will happen. He contends that his 'theory cannot say when 'tomorrow' will come because international political theory deals with the pressures of structure on states and not with how states will respond to the pressures' (Waltz, 2000: p.27).

However, this shortfall does not necessarily amount to the charge that the neorealist tautology per se is false (Wohlfort, 1998: p.656). Nevertheless, while Waltz's explanation is a qualification of the theoretical boundary of neorealism's capacity, it is not an adequate answer to the question as to why neorealism could not predict the end of bipolarity, which it had predicted would be likely to continue to be the main dynamic of the international system (Waltz, 1979: p.95 and p.183). Thus, this limit raises questions as to which is the better way of understanding international relations.

What accounts for a 'better' theory is a matter of debate. However, in order to understand the efficacy of strategic culture in analysing international relations, it is necessary here to briefly outline the epistemological premises of neorealism and strategic culture. The philosophical ground of Waltz's neorealism derives from the Popperian locus, which argues that a *scientific* theory is one that entails falsifiability and predictability. According to the

Popperian loci, a scientific theory consists of assumptions which manifest independent causal effects. That is to say, a scientific theory can be understood as a *tool* i.e. free from empirical and contextual realms. For example, Waltz considers his theory of balance of power to be a set of abstract hypotheses which are applicable in explaining behavioural dynamics of interstate politics across time and space. On the other hand a scientific theory becomes a *non-scientific* theory if its assumptions are *contaminated* with non-objective factors and there is empirical evidence disproving or contradicting that theory or part of it; i.e. it can no longer be considered as a tool because it is unable to function according to its design.

In contrast to this, the Lakatosian locus argues that no theory can be falsified because 'auxiliary evidence can be added to account for discrepant evidence' (Vasquez, 1997: p.900). Accordingly, this locus suggests that instead of attempting to prove or disprove theory through so-called scientific experimentation alone, research programmes or sets of theories should be tested for their '*theoretical progressiveness*', that is, 'their ability to predict novel facts and '*empirical progressiveness*', or 'for evidence that corroborates these new predictions' (Farrell, 1999: p.165).<sup>10</sup> Thus, following Lakatosian logic, Farrell argues that 'if culturalism predicts something that realism does not – such as a state will go to war to defend its self-perceived identity (as say, a great power) – and evidence can be produced to corroborate this hypothesis - such as a state going to war in which it has no interests at stake – this suggests that culturalism is a progressive research program' (Ibid., p.165).

Although the idea of prediction as a function of a theory of culture is debatable, several scholars have demonstrated that strategic culture represents a 'progressive' research programme. Alistair Ian Johnston, for example, identifies three generations of strategic culture research: the debate in the 1970s largely revolved around the discussion on the impact of the national style of the Soviet Union and the United States on their behaviour; in the 1980s, the focus shifted to 'instrumentality' of strategic culture, i.e. strategic culture as a form of hegemonic power; while in the 1990s, the

discussion centred more specifically on organisational and institutional cultures and their effects on state behaviour (Johnston, 1995a). Using various national and organisational cases as their case studies, the scholars of these generations of studies provide cultural accounts of state behaviour as alternative explanations to rationalist materialist propositions provided by neorealism.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike Johnston, John Glenn and Darryl Howlett take a thematic approach to highlighting the significance of strategic culture by identifying three schools of strategic culture: epiphenomenal strategic culture; the positively positive school; and the interpretivist school. 'Epiphenomenal strategic culture', is mainly concerned with analysing a persistent pattern of military strategy by utilising the concept of culture as a means to achieving that end. Thus, although the proponents of this concept do challenge ahistorical and acultural explanations of neorealism, they largely treat strategic culture as an intervening variable (Glenn and Howlett, *Conceptualising Strategic Culture*, Forthcoming: pp.5-8).

Unlike epiphenomenal strategic culture, the 'positively positivist' school utilises a constructivist approach to its causal theorising. The scholars of this school treat culture not merely as a concept that allows analysts to understand different types of state behaviour, but as one that has constitutive effects on a state's 'identity' and its action in international politics.<sup>12</sup> Thus, scholars of this school closely relate the formation of state interest to the formation of its identity (Wendt, 1994). Accordingly, unlike neorealists who treat the state and its interest as *a priori* givens, constructivists understand identity and interest as endogenous constructs through actors' interaction.

Departing from the former two schools, the interpretivist school argues that because of the *sui generis* nature of culture, it is inappropriate to use it as a 'variable' to construct a causal theory of state behaviour (Glenn and Howlett *Conceptualising Strategic Culture*, Forthcoming: p.14). The *sui generis* issue applies not only to the cultural differences in the international relations arena, but also to the mind of the observer, which is culturally

conditioned. In effect, the observer's analysis of the social world is an *interpretation* rather than an objective observation. Thus, for this school, the study of strategic culture should be about searching for a richer understanding of each case study, rather than constructing a predictable theory of international relations.

Although, as highlighted in Chapter 1, there are a number of unresolved issues and caveats deriving from the theoretical differences and disagreements within the study of strategic culture, the schools identified above provide grounds for a fruitful debate on the methodological, epistemological and ontological aspects of strategic culture vis-à-vis IR.<sup>13</sup> The interpretivist school can be viewed as an alternative approach to neorealism's positivistic account using selective empirical approach. It provides a 'thick' understanding of IR through the cultural and historical analysis of individual national cases. The positively positivist school also provides alternative explanations to those given by neorealism through constructivist epistemology and rich empirical case studies.

Here it is useful to highlight the role of constructivism in the study of strategic culture for three reasons: first, the complexity existing within the discourse helps students of strategic culture understand the efficacy of the epistemological and methodological differences between the positively positivist and the interpretivist schools of strategic culture; second, it helps to stipulate a particular strategic culture approach this thesis undertakes to understand the origins of Indian strategic thought; and third, it further helps to highlight strategic culture as an alternative discourse to neorealism.

The main thrust of the constructivist discourse is that first, identity and norm are central aspects of the social world; and second, that they are socially constructed. Thus, on the issue of the nexus between the agent and structure, it argues that the meaning the structure conveys is a product of a constitutive process of social interaction of agents. The discourse aims to search for social meaning through the contextualisation of knowledge and reality.

The complexity regarding constructivism is evident in the theoretical differences between what Ted Hopf calls 'conventional' and 'critical' constructivism (Hopf, 1998). Hopf identifies three key differences. The first difference concerns methodology. Conventional constructivism accepts the possibility of 'contingent universalism' regarding identity formation, i.e. there can be a theory of identity or/and culture using positivist methodology. David Dessler, for example, points out that constructivism is compatible with positivist methodology if it endorses 'the core beliefs of epistemological realism' and through 'a *generalizing* strategy, according to which researchers treat the event to be explained as an instance of a certain *type* of event, which is then shown to accompany or follow regularly from conditions of a specified kind' or through 'a particularising one, in which the researcher explains an event by detailing the sequence of happenings leading up to it' (Dessler, 1999: pp.125-129).<sup>14</sup> Critical constructivism, on the other hand, argues that this limits the theoretical progressiveness of the constructivist discourse. Hopf states,

'To reach an intellectually satisfying point of closure, [conventional] constructivism adopts positivist conventions about sample characteristics, methods of difference, process tracing, and spuriousness checks. In making this choice, critical theorists argue, [conventional] constructivism can offer an understanding of social reality but cannot criticize the boundaries of its own understanding...' (Ibid., p.183).

Secondly, conventional and critical constructivism carry different epistemology. Conventional constructivism seeks to uncover identities and patterns of associated social practices with a view to providing an account of how those identities entail certain modes of actions. Although critical constructivism also seeks to uncover identities, it prefers to discover and understand processual aspects of the social evolution of identities, i.e. it aims to magnify and understand the transitional boundaries of culture and identity, rather than to seek a causal understanding of identities and their actions (Ibid., pp.183-184).

Thirdly, the two camps also depart on the issue of 'the origins of identity'. Hopf argues that while conventional constructivism offers a cognitive explanation, or provides no account on the issue, critical constructivism, following on its understanding of the processual nature of identity formation, attempts to establish the origins of identity through a theoretical and historical analysis of power relations among different identities (Ibid., p.184). Here, power and emancipation are key ontological agenda for critical constructivists because, for them, they are evident in all social struggles in the formation of identity, whereas conventional constructivists are less interested in exploring those relations because their observation is that 'social practices reproduce underlying power relations' (Ibid., p.185).

It is possible to apply the conventional/critical dichotomy in constructivism to strategic culture research (Poore, 2000: p.44). As Poore suggests, Johnston's 'conventional strategic culture approach' offers a positivist strategic culturist challenge to neorealism, while Bradley Klein's 'critical strategic culture approach'<sup>15</sup> is geared towards constructing an interpretivist understanding of the social world by deconstructing 'the notion that there are universal truths and explanations as implied by realist theories' (Ibid., p.44).

Because of this the application of the conventional/critical dichotomy in constructivism to strategic culture research raises a distinct possibility and opportunity for such research to provide rich insights. This thesis embraces critical constructivist epistemology as it provides a theoretical remit for exploring the nexus between power relations and the origins of identity. However, it does not completely reject the causal understanding of identity in terms of the effects identity and norm can have on the projection of possible strategic preferences. That is to say that a strategic culture approach may have a limited predictive capability through the interpretation of key textual means. However, it is important to point out here that given the dichotomy within constructivism, it would be inadequate to assume that constructivism can provide the universally applicable explanation of the cause of identity formation.

In what ways then can strategic culture be proved as an alternative theoretical discourse to neorealism? Neorealism provides structuralist and materialist views on the state and its behaviour: states are taken for granted as the legitimate actors in international relations and their behaviours are determined by distribution of material capability. By analysing international relations as cultural constructs, a strategic culture approach is geared towards understanding construction of *meaning* in the strategic realm (Klein, 1988). Thus, the state identity is viewed largely as an ideational construct. According to this mode of thought, the dynamics of international relations centre on the way in which states perceive each other's identity, rather than the distribution of material capability per se.

As Hopf points out, this mode of thinking could provide alternative explanations for two 'puzzles' of neorealist theory: balance of power and the security dilemma (Hopf, 1998: pp.186-188). Firstly, whereas Waltz's neorealism argues that states balance against power, Stephen Walt suggests that states do not actually balance against power, but they balance against 'threats' (Walt, 1987). As balance of threat is intrinsically tied with the perceived intentions of actors, first, it challenges the neorealist tautology that state behaviour is determined by the relative distribution of material power, and second, constructivism can provide an explanation of the formation of threat perception and perceived intentions through its analysis of 'domestic socio-cultural milieus' of actors.

Secondly, constructivism challenges the concept of the security dilemma. Neorealism treats the security dilemma, which is assumed to derive from a constant fear of 'uncertainty' which states face, as explaining the persistent conflictual dynamics of international politics. Constructivism, however, argues that while the security dilemma is relevant and useful in understanding conflictual relations among states, many other interstate groupings exist in a non-threatening state. The analysis of identity politics can provide an understanding of why this is. Thus, as Hopf points out, constructivism can provide an understanding of the dynamics of conflict as well as cooperation and change in relations in world politics, through a

theoretical and empirical analysis of the 'meaning' different identities generate and how this influences or determines actors' actions.

Hence neorealism and strategic culture entail two different rationalities for approaching international relations. However, strategic culture does seem to pose much greater potential for theoretical progressiveness than neorealism does, essentially because it does not claim epistemological and methodological universalism, which is evident in the philosophical foundation of neorealism. Rather, it seems that the approaches within the study of strategic culture resonate with continuous dialectic processes, galvanising debates and providing further development of its theoretical tenets. On its applicability, by understanding IR in terms of identity and culture politics, strategic culture is able to provide an alternative analysis of *why* states act in the way they do.

### **Neorealism and Indian Strategic Culture: An Assessment**

In view of the theoretical contention between neorealism and strategic culture sketched in the previous section, how do the two apply to the case of India? The task of this section is to assess the usefulness of neorealism and strategic culture in the specific context of India's nuclear strategy. The main discussion is on whether purely structural explanations based on the concept of anarchy or domestic cultural context-centred understanding provides a better interpretation of India's nuclear behaviour, from the beginning of its nuclear strategy in the 1950s to the weaponisation of its nuclear capability in May 1998. The section begins by stipulating what Indian strategic culture is, then it gives a historical outline of India's nuclear strategy. Lastly, it gives a critical assessment of neorealism and Indian strategic culture through their interpretations of India's nuclear strategy.

#### *Indian Strategic Culture*

Before progressing further, it is necessary to stipulate *what* Indian strategic culture is. As pointed out in the introduction to the thesis, strategic culture is



an organic concept and there is no consensus on its definition among scholars. This is essentially because strategic culture is an amorphous notion which entails different schools of thought depending on their ontological, epistemological and methodological preferences, i.e. disagreements on what the referent subjects strategic culture is concerned with, the essence of knowledge construction, and how strategic culture is applied. The tentative working definition this thesis uses incorporates the idea of context and symbol for the purpose of understanding the origins of Indian strategic thought. To this end, Indian strategic culture, as an analytical approach, might be understood as a contextual approach to interpreting the Indian way of thinking on strategy, by utilising a set of identifiable ideational symbols. Defined in this way, a strategic culture approach allows room for interpreting Indian strategic rationale by analysing the significance of both ideas and the process through which they have gained their meaning.

Following this line of thinking, Indian strategic culture may be defined as the dominant Indian political and strategic attitude which derives from the rationales articulated in Gandhian and Kautilyan thought. Here, Gandhian and Kautilyan thoughts operate as a *symbolic* and *contextual* source which, through interpretation, gives insights into the meaning of India's attitude and behaviour regarding the issues of war and peace. The idea of Indian identity and the nationalistic human sentiment entailed in the formation of that identity is a central element of Indian strategic culture. This is because in their origin, both Gandhian and Kautilyan thought were motivated by a strong sense of nationalism, fuelled by the existing cultural symbolisms and India's historical past.<sup>16</sup>

This approach, however, does not deny the role of external influences, such as wars, political, economic and cultural interaction, and colonisation, on India's strategic behaviour. This is because Indian strategic culture, in its ontological sense, does not exist independently to the external environment. The outcome of the intersubjective coexistence of internal and external contexts is that it encourages or discourages the evolution of Indian strategic culture. This point can be further expounded by the fact that Indian strategic

culture described above has contextual origins which, as will be explored in the rest of the thesis, were formed as a result of the processual influences of ideational, historical and material factors: at one level or another, the conflation of external influences and domestic cultural elements took place in the processes of the formation of Kautilyan and Gandhian thought. To this extent, Indian strategic culture as a theoretical approach for understanding Indian strategic behaviour takes relevant external factors into account. In the final analysis, Indian strategic culture is a cultural filter through which the embedded recipients - i.e. Indian political decision-makers - interpret and reinterpret domestic and external influences. It is from these interpretational processes that Indian strategic behaviour takes its form.

The acknowledgement of this dynamic of Indian strategic culture is also an acknowledgement both of the complexity of the socio-politics involved in India's strategic behaviour and the point that Indian strategic culture cannot be taken for granted. That is to say, its evolutionary process should be continuously monitored and interpreted. To this end, Indian strategic culture, in its ontological and epistemological sense, is a progressive notion.

#### *The Origin of India's Nuclear Strategy: A Brief Overview*

Before its nuclear tests in May 1998, India maintained what is often referred to as 'recessed nuclear deterrence', which meant that it reserved the weaponisation of its nuclear capability as an option. The tests and the subsequent declaration of itself as a nuclear weapon state, however, confirmed a shift in its nuclear stance to overt nuclear deterrence. Before discussing what neorealism and the strategic culture approach have to offer to the debate on India's nuclear strategy, this section briefly surveys the origins of India's nuclear strategy.

The development of India's nuclear strategy up to 1998 can be best described in three periodic phases: 1947-64, 1964-70, and 1980-97. India's nuclear research dates back to the mid-1940s when a Cambridge educated nuclear physicist, Homi Bhabha, persuaded Jawaharlal Nehru that the

development of nuclear energy could help India overcome its economic problems. As a result, the Atomic Energy Research Committee (AERC) was set up in 1946 to fulfil that objective. Under Bhabha's guidance, progress was swift. By 1956, India's indigenously built experimental reactor, APSARA, went into service.

However, amidst this technical development, India's nuclear intention under Nehru's premiership reflected the ambivalent mix of pragmatism and moral principle which reflected his foreign and defence policy. In principle, Nehru opposed the idea of nuclear armament and advocated complete multilateral nuclear disarmament, but in private, he saw the potential value of nuclear deterrence, that being the prevention of 'atomic colonialism by particular powers'. This two-track strategic rationale continued to prevail under Nehru's premiership. On the international stage, he tried to stipulate India's image as the moral leader of the Non-aligned Movement (NAM). At the same time, Nehru became concerned about the political and military threat the People's Republic of China (PRC) could pose against India. In fact, on the political front, the PRC undermined India's effort to gain great power status and the leadership of the third world. Militarily, Nehru's concern was heightened by the Chinese military activities near its Himalayan border which subsequently led to its annexation of Tibet in 1959. The subsequent border war between the two countries and India's humiliating defeat in 1962 confirmed Nehru's concern about China as a major threat to India. It also led India to the realisation that it lacked reliable and powerful allies: despite Nehru's request for assistance, there was no real support from the US or the Soviet Union during the war.

In view of this context, the news of China's nuclear programme in the early 1960s galvanised India into seriously considering weaponisation of its nuclear capability. At the same time, Nehru approached the US to acquire a nuclear security guarantee for India. However, apart from financial assistance for enhancing India's conventional military capability, India was not able to gain a nuclear umbrella. By the mid-1960s, India had the capability to build

and deliver nuclear weapons. However, Nehru decided not to pursue that option despite China's nuclear capability (Sidhu, 1997: p.36).

The second phase of India's nuclear development was marked by Nehru's death in May 1964 and China's nuclear test in October of the same year. Despite the pressure from his Congress Party to authorise weaponisation (Subrahmanyam: 1998: p.27), especially influenced by Bhabha, Lal Bahadur Shastri, Nehru's successor, continued Nehru's strategy of nuclear ambiguity, stressing India's position as an advocate of universal nuclear disarmament, but at the same time leaving the weapons option open. Shastri pursued a two-fold strategy on the weapons option. On the one hand he sought nuclear security guarantees from the nuclear weapons states (NWSs), namely Britain, the US and the Soviet Union. On the other hand, in December 1965, he authorised the secret indigenous research programme, the Subterranean Nuclear Explosion Project (SNEP). However, India failed to gain a nuclear umbrella from the NWSs, and despite coming close to building unsafeguarded nuclear facilities and conducting the SNEP, the sudden deaths of Shastri and Bhabha in 1966 delayed the development of the programme (Sidhu, 1997: p.46).<sup>17</sup>

Under Indira Gandhi's leadership (1967-1977), India continued to pursue the policy of nuclear restraint by keeping the weapon option while seeking a nuclear umbrella from the US. In the period up to 1971, India was faced with a series of events which influenced its nuclear strategy. On the domestic front, Mrs Gandhi was faced with India's economic crisis caused by bad harvests: her preoccupation with this put halt to the plan for a nuclear test. In addition, in the initial period of her premiership, Mrs Gandhi was busy consolidating her political position. On the international front, several issues drove India towards seriously pursuing the weapon option. Firstly, the threat perception deriving from China's nuclear weapons programme continued to worry Delhi. Secondly, the US did not give in to the pressure to provide India with a nuclear umbrella. Instead, the US tried to persuade India to join the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in return for a nuclear security guarantee through the treaty provisions. Indira Gandhi refused to join the NPT on the

grounds of the treaty's inherent discriminatory treatment between the NWSs and non-nuclear weapon states (NNWSs) and the hypocritical attitude of NWSs on the non-proliferation issue. India's objection to joining the NPT was an evidential manifestation of its continuing opposition since the beginning of its nuclear programme to power politics dominated by the super powers and its lack of confidence in the NPT regime to provide reliable nuclear security protection for India.

The war with Pakistan in 1971 played a catalytic role in bolstering India's threat perception. Indira Gandhi's military intervention in East Pakistan to support the insurgents who wanted independence from Pakistan led to Pakistan's military retaliation against India. The situation escalated into India's declaration of war against Pakistan and the subsequent humiliating defeat of Pakistan's military by December 1971. During the war, India's perception of insecurity was particularly influenced by the emerging US-China-Pakistan axis: the US show of support for Pakistan by sending its aircraft carrier, *Enterprise*, into the Indian Ocean was a major shock to Delhi, while the US-China 'quasi-alliance' was motivated by US effort to counter the growth of Soviet military power. India's perception of its deteriorating international position led it to sign a Treaty of Peace and Friendship with the Soviet Union in August 1971.

Indira Gandhi made the decision to conduct the Peaceful Nuclear Explosion (PNE) shortly after the war. On 18<sup>th</sup> May 1974, India carried out the PNE. The timing of this test invoked a great deal of controversy, especially given India's improving regional position at the time (Ogilvie-White, 1998: p.61).<sup>18</sup> There are several possible reasons for the timing of the test. On the domestic front, it is possible that India's internal socio-economic problems caused the ruling Congress Party to try to shift public attention away from its internal issues. A nuclear test may have been regarded by Mrs Gandhi as a solution to galvanise a u-turn in public opinion to improve her political position and the image of the Congress Party.

There were also strategic reasons for the PNE. Firstly, India's perception of China as a threat was a major factor. India's defeat in the 1962

border war, and China's nuclear test in 1964, in effect, nurtured India's long-standing perception of China as a credible nuclear threat. Secondly, India's failure to get a nuclear security guarantee from the NWSs in the 1960s also played a crucial role in motivating India to demonstrate that it was capable of becoming a NWS. In addition, although the Peace and Friendship Treaty with the Soviet Union included some military provisions, it did not provide India with a clear guarantee of extended nuclear deterrence (Thomas and Gupta, 2000: p.2). These failures were further aggravated by India's objection to the discriminatory nature of the NPT. The test may have been perceived by Delhi as a necessary step for boosting India's status in international politics.

In the context of the international condemnation of India's nuclear test, India returned to the policy of nuclear restraint.<sup>19</sup> This self-restraint was further perpetuated under a brief premiership of Moraraji Desai (1977-1979), who reversed India's nuclear planning and opposed PNE on moral grounds. The return of Indira Gandhi in 1980 marked the continuation of the weapons option policy.

Throughout the 1980s until the 1998 nuclear tests (phase three), India maintained the option of weaponisation of its nuclear capability. The main difference in this period, however, was that Delhi's attention was much more focused on the nuclear issue vis-à-vis Pakistan. The change in focus was due to the reports in early 1980s of Pakistan's nuclear weapons programme. After this, several events heightened the Indo-Pakistan tension. The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan from December 1979 had a significant effect on India's threat perception of Pakistan. The Soviet expansion of power instigated the Reagan administration to provide Pakistan with a 3.2 billion dollar aid package and advanced arms which included 40 F-16s. In return, Pakistan was to provide the Central Intelligence Agency with access to Afghanistan through its territory in order to train and arm Afghan fighters to undermine the Soviet presence (Ganguly, 2000: p.49). It has been suggested that Pakistan's nuclear intention led India to prepare the ground for additional nuclear tests (Ogilvie-White, 1998: p.68). In addition to this, in view of the potential threat posed by Pakistan's F-16s as delivery vehicles for nuclear

warheads, Indira Gandhi instigated the Integrated Missile Development Programme (IMDP). The aim of the programme was to develop long-range nuclear-capable missiles to counter both the Chinese and Pakistani threat. It was with this integrated approach of keeping the nuclear option and also developing the delivery capability led to the formulation of India's nuclear doctrine which was termed 'recessed deterrence'.

After the confirmation of Pakistan's nuclear programme, there were also other internal events which raised the nuclear tension between India and Pakistan. In the early 1980s, the separatist activities in Sindh and Punjab region increased the antagonism between India and Pakistan, both accusing each other of supporting the separatist movement in the respective regions (Ogilvie-White, 1998: p.71). In 1983, these internal and border issues, and the US supply of sophisticated arms to Pakistan, led Mrs Gandhi to seriously consider the weaponisation of India's nuclear capability (Ibid., p.72).

The tension between India and Pakistan also reached a peak during Rajiv Gandhi's premiership (1984-1989) after India conducted the 'Brasstacks' military exercise with the aim of modernising India's armed forces. This had an adverse effect on Pakistan's threat perception and increased the nuclear tension between the two countries. The prospect of all-out war was prevented in February 1987 after Gandhi made an agreement with his counterpart in Pakistan, Benazir Bhutto, not to attack each other's nuclear facilities (Ibid., p.75).<sup>20</sup>

Against the backdrop of continuous animosity between India and Pakistan, India's nuclear strategy between 1990 and 1997 sustained two interrelated aspects: the effort to obtain an international agreement on universal nuclear disarmament; and the continuation of its nuclear and missile programmes. However, in the context of India's 1998 nuclear tests, it is significant to point out the two key events after which India came close to becoming an overt nuclear weapon state. One of the most notable events took place in 1990 over the secessionist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, which was understood by Indian policymakers to be supported by Pakistan.

In view of the intensifying violence in Kashmir, India, under the leadership of V. P. Singh, considered weaponisation of its nuclear capability (Ogilvie-White, 1998: pp.76-77). The tension eventually eased after the US intervened to persuade New Delhi and Pakistan to restrain from the use of force (Ganguly, 2000: p.52). Pakistan, however, continued to invest effort to further its nuclear programme, with technological assistance from China. India also continued to pursue the development of its Prithvi and Agni missiles.

Secondly, India was dissatisfied with the decision in the twenty-five-year review session in April-May 1995 to indefinitely extend the NPT, which it saw as furtherance of the nuclear weapon states' effort to retain their nuclear weapons. Instead, India had hoped for a consensus on a stipulation and implementation of the guarantee of credible nuclear security assurance from NWSs, with a view to initiating a gradual and universal elimination of nuclear weapons.<sup>21</sup> The indefinite extension of the treaty also meant that India would be under continuous pressure to join the treaty: if India had joined the treaty, it would have had to abandon the weapons option.

This international context was followed by rumours in the international media that India was planning a second nuclear test.<sup>22</sup> This was followed by speculations about Pakistan's nuclear test. Both countries denied that there was any substance in such speculations. However, the suspicions about India's nuclear test plans mounted when US spy satellites detected unusual activities in the test site in the South Western province of Baluchistan. The plan for a nuclear test was abandoned after the subsequent US pressure on India to abandon the test.

It is significant to point out here that prior to India's May 1996 General Election, the embarrassment caused by the cancellation of the test was closely monitored by the Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), whose election manifesto clearly expressed its pro-nuclear stance.<sup>23</sup> In May, the BJP further confirmed this by committing India to not only retain but also develop its nuclear option. Defence Minister Pramod Mahajan stated that part of this



commitment would be the deployment of Agni and Prithvi medium range missiles.<sup>24</sup>

Over the 3 days from 11<sup>th</sup> May 1998, India conducted five nuclear tests at Pokhran. Although the tests came as a shock to the international community at that time, the history of Indian nuclear strategy suggests that there had been a probability of India declaring itself as an overt nuclear weapon state since the 1960s. That probability had been sustained in the period running up to the 1998 tests by the combination of domestic and international events partly fuelled by India's threat perception of Pakistan and China. Given the continuity of India's nuclear strategy, there required 'triggers' for the nuclear tests. Firstly, India felt threat perception from the technological progress of Pakistan, which it believed was a result of the Chinese assistance: Pakistan's Ghauri inter-mediate range missile test on 6<sup>th</sup> April 1998 signified not only its capability to strike Indian cities and its technological progress but also, following the revelation of the Chinese assistance of Pakistan's missile programmes, stopped the progress of what had been an improving India-China relations.

Secondly, the demonstration of India's nuclear capability was seen by Delhi as a necessary measure to compensate for the strategic vulnerability created by the deterioration of India's conventional military capabilities. Thirdly, India felt let down and isolated by the international community for its commitment to comprehensive and universal nuclear disarmament through the reformation of the NPT and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) in a way that would commit the nuclear weapon states to dismantle their nuclear weapons (Walker, 1998: p.511).<sup>25</sup> Fourthly, there was growing public support for a pro-nuclear stance during the 1990s. This was mainly due to the general feeling of the need to stand up to international pressure, especially from the US, on the non-proliferation issue.

The BJP was able to make the nuclear question an election issue in both the April/May 1996 and the March 1998 elections. The party's victory in

the latter election, with its pro-nuclear manifesto, was a catalytic event which, in two months time, led to the change in India's nuclear status.

*Neorealism and India's Nuclear Behaviour: What Does It Explain, and What Can It Not?*

As indicated above, the story behind India's decision to weaponise its nuclear capability is complex. This section considers the value of neorealist explanations vis-à-vis India's nuclear strategy.

The key guiding question is: should the development of India's nuclear strategy be viewed as a response to the pressures formed by the anarchic international structure? To this question neorealists would use the balance of power logic and argue that threat and tension inherent in the anarchic international structure cause states to struggle for power in order to gain security. Security is gained once there is a balance of material capabilities where one side is deterred from attacking the other because of the fear that the subsequent retaliation could bring fatal destruction to itself. Based on this hypothesis, the key underlying causal factor of India's decision to weaponise its nuclear capability is the regional systemic tension in combination with a sense of isolation and insecurity.

The neorealist notion of anarchic power structure goes some way towards explaining the dynamics of India's nuclear behaviour. India's feeling of insecurity is partly due to the emergence of China as a powerful state in the 1950s. This sense of insecurity was further exacerbated when China demonstrated its superior conventional military capability in the border war with India in 1962 and in the wake of China's nuclear test in 1964. These two events partly led India to pursue a secret nuclear explosion project beginning in 1965, and to conduct a nuclear test in 1974. The threat from China was a persistent theme throughout the 1980s and 1990s, during which time India actively pursued missile and nuclear programmes in order to be in balance with China in its military capability.

The threat from Pakistan has also been a cause of India's insecurity. The confirmation of Pakistan's nuclear programme in 1979 was a key factor for causing India to initiate missile programmes and tests in the 1980s and 1990s. The escalation of India's sensitivity to the Pakistani nuclear threat was partly caused by the news in 1979 that Pakistan had been collaborating with China on its nuclear programme. India's reason to decide to conduct nuclear tests in May 1998 appears to have been Pakistan's continuous technological collaboration with China (and possibly North Korea) in combination with Pakistan's missile test in April 1998.<sup>26</sup>

The key causal factor for the Indian decision, as far as the neorealist model is concerned, boils down to the insecurity conditioned by the regional distribution of military capability. This, in turn, motivated India to demonstrate its nuclear capability in order to form a power balance against the Pakistani and Chinese military capability. That is to say, for neorealists, India's nuclear behaviour corresponds with the logic of the security dilemma, i.e. India's nuclear test in May was a part of a nuclear capability build-up driven by the fear of uncertainty about the nuclear threat from Pakistan and China.

There are, however, questions and anomalies arising from the history of India's nuclear behaviour, which Waltz's neorealism is only able to provide limited answer for, or is unable to answer. Firstly, according to Waltz's theory of balance of power, nuclear proliferation is less likely under a bipolar power structure because this structure induces the nuclear weapon states to provide less powerful states with security guarantee in their competition for spheres of influence. Thus, during the Cold War, it would have been logical for the US or the USSR to provide India with a nuclear umbrella as it was in their interest to do so in order to increase their sphere of influence. However, despite successive efforts by Nehru, Shastri and Indira Gandhi, India was unable to gain a nuclear guarantee from the US or the Soviet Union. Why was India unable to gain a nuclear umbrella? A theoretical answer to this question is that the US feared that providing India with a nuclear guarantee might provoke nuclear confrontation with the Soviet Union, which had close ties with India.<sup>27</sup> However, the Soviet Union was unwilling to provide India

with a nuclear umbrella because of the fear that it may face a nuclear threat from China. This answer, however, challenges Waltz's basic characterisation of the Cold War as bipolar power politics as the answer assumes China as the third superpower after the US and the Soviet Union also, making the Cold War structure a tripolar power structure.

Secondly, Waltz's neorealism postulates that when a state feels isolated, threatened and is unable to attain security assurance from a more powerful state, it is likely to develop or try to obtain nuclear weapons. In the early 1960s, India was faced with a conventional and nuclear threat from China. It felt isolated because it was unable to gain a nuclear umbrella from the superpowers. By then, India had the technological ability to demonstrate its nuclear capability. Given Waltz's prediction, the condition of anarchy should have driven India to demonstrate its nuclear capability then. Why did India not go nuclear? Why did Indira Gandhi reverse the decision to conduct nuclear tests when she came to power?

Thirdly, according to Waltz's theory, the transition from bipolarity to multipolarity creates greater structural pressure for nuclear proliferation because the collapse of security arrangements between nuclear superpowers and their client states drives the latter to feel insecure and to pursue weaponisation for their own security. Although non-proliferation pressure on India increased after the Cold War, the structural shift does not appear to be the cause of India's decision to become a nuclear weapon state. India's relationship with the two superpowers during the Cold War and in the 1990s was relatively consistent: India did not see eye to eye with the US, especially because of its pressure on India to join the NPT; India maintained close ties with Russia since they had signed a friendship treaty in 1971 which provided India with conventional military assistance but no nuclear umbrella. At a regional level, the threat from China and Pakistan also remained after the Cold War, as it had existed during the Cold War. Given a relative consistency in the structural influence, at least from India's point of view, why did India abandon its decades long nuclear recessed deterrence and decide to become an overt nuclear weapon state in May 1998? Why did

India choose to become a nuclear weapon state when it would have made more economic and military sense to have joined the NPT?

### *Indian Strategic Culture: Its Explanation*

The Indian strategic culture approach provides a different perspective on India's nuclear behaviour to that of the structuralist/materialist explanations. At a theoretical level, it is concerned with the way the construction of meaning, culture and identity influence threat perception and the related behaviour of the state. This strategic culture approach, thus postulates that India's strategic perception, preferences and behaviour are conditioned by two interlinked constituents in the order of emphasis: its domestic cultural contexts and its perception of the external environment. In its ontological sense, Indian strategic culture is a mixture of socially constructed, and often conflicting, Indian traditions of *realpolitik* and *moralpolitik*, as manifested in the Kautilyan and Gandhian traditions, respectively. These traditions are closely linked to India's nationalist struggle for independence from British colonial rule. Thus India's aspiration for nuclear weapons is closely linked to the formation of India's national identity. The following is an account of Indian nuclear strategy and behaviour according to an Indian strategic culture approach.

The first of these contexts is India's *realpolitik* tradition. This Indian tradition centres on the idea that the expansion of power and the protection of the physical and cultural identity of the country is the main duty of the state (Kautilya, 2003). This notion is predicated on the perceptual assumption of the ancient Indians that the key dynamic of interstate affairs was the pursuit of preponderant power. This cultural perception has existed in India for over two and a half millennia and became an intrinsic part of the Indian nationalist movement in the wake of British colonial rule. The second context derives from the Gandhian tradition which advocates, among many other religious and social beliefs, the value of non-violence, self-reliance and self-restraint. These values primarily originated from the ancient Jain and Buddhist

philosophy, which were partly emulated by Hindu social practice and belief to maintain its socio-political dominance in Hindu society.

These two cultural attitudes embody the heart of India's national identity, driving India to be an independent great state that surpasses its colonial past and has higher moral standing than the more materially superior states in international politics. In part, India's threat perception of Pakistan and China was the outcome of the intensity of the intersubjective construction of India's identity. In relation to Pakistan, India's threat perception grew out of religious and nationalist emotions. The conflicts between the Muslim nationalists and the Hindu nationalists, and the painful partition and the subsequent creation of Pakistan as a separate political entity, sowed the seeds of enmity between the two countries. As two separate states, this ideological and religious animosity fuelled arms competition between them. In relation to China, India's threat perception has been driven by its desire to prevent China from gaining preponderance in the region. Thus the development of its nuclear capability was intended to create a strategic parity with China.

The domestic and cultural contexts also help in the understanding of three key issues: the origin of India's nuclear strategy; why it took India over three decades to weaponise; and the timing and rationale of India's 1974 and 1998 nuclear tests.

On the first issue, Nehru was aware of the potential threat posed by China's nuclear capability and the religious enmity between India and Pakistan. However, rather than actively pursuing a nuclear weapons option, Nehru made the decision to maintain the nuclear option, while at the same time pursuing his anti-nuclear stance and advocating the ideal of universal nuclear disarmament. His personal background as a follower of Mahatma Gandhi was a factor which restrained him from taking the overt nuclear path. These two positions were conditioned by India's past struggle for independence from British colonialism which led Nehru to assert that India must be cautious of 'atomic colonialism by particular powers'.<sup>28</sup> Instead of

pursuing an overt nuclear weapons programme in the early 1960s he tried to obtain a nuclear security guarantee from the superpowers. Although the latter attempt appears contradictory to his personal view, it made political, economic and military sense as it would have allowed India to refrain from the weapons option, focus effort on economic development, and deter China's nuclear aggression. However, Nehru failed to gain a nuclear umbrella. Instead, he set nuclear ambiguity as the foundation of India's nuclear strategy for the next three decades or so.

Indian strategic culture can also explain why it took India over three decades to weaponise its nuclear capability when it could have become a nuclear weapon state in the early 1960s. The key constraining effect largely came from India's effort to maintain both a strategically rationalistic and morally viable position. At least on two occasions, the effect of the latter was clearly evident. Indira Gandhi's decision to reverse Shastri's previous nuclear test decision in 1966 was strongly influenced by Vikram Sarabai who succeeded Bhabha as the head of the influential Atomic Energy Committee. He was a staunch follower of Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy and played a key role in reversing the nuclear test decision previously made by Shastri (Perkovich, 1999: p.121). The election of the Janata Party led by Moraraji Desai in 1977 also brought India's nuclear policy to a halt on moral grounds. He was also a faithful follower of the Gandhian ideal and his policy against India possessing nuclear weapons was a direct reflection of this personal belief. At the same time, under his premiership, India continued to oppose the NPT on the basis of its discriminatory nature against NNWs (Ogilvie-White, 1998: p.64). These two occasions provide some insights into the way Indian strategic culture constrains India from pursuing the logic of realpolitik by conditioning the strategic preferences of India's political decision-makers.

Conversely, Indian strategic culture also helps one understand the rationale for India's May 1998 nuclear tests. Indeed, they could be seen as a response to Pakistan's Ghauri missile tests in April, the longstanding threat perception of China, and the China-Pakistan military collaboration. However, as implied in the History of India's Nuclear Strategy section, security as the

motivational factor for India's nuclear tests does not provide adequate insights into the rationale behind them, as the tests did not improve India's security environment.

India's rationale for the tests and the aspiration to become an overt nuclear weapon state derives from two roots. Firstly, ever since its inception, India had been deeply dissatisfied with two aspects of the NPT. At one level, India was unhappy with the discrimination the NPT made between the nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapons states. India saw the decision to indefinitely extend the treaty in 1995 as an indefinite extension of injustice and the attempt by the NWSs to maintain their power in the international system.<sup>29</sup> At another level, India felt isolated because there was no recognition of its moral position. The frustration created by this led to the decision in December 1995 to test, although the test did not go ahead due to the discovery of the test preparation by US spy satellites and subsequent US diplomatic efforts to dissuade India from testing. The 1998 tests were a delayed effect of the frustration created by India's failure to be recognised as morally superior state.

Secondly, India saw nuclear weapons as a symbol of power and prestige. This rationale is evident in the philosophy and manifesto of the BJP which was in government at the time of the tests. Its political philosophy centres on the idea of cultural nationalism or *Hindutva*. Simply put, *Hindutva* is 'a quest for rediscovering India's Hindu genius and restoring the nation to its superior ancient Hindu glory' (Chaulia, 2002: p.220).<sup>30</sup> The BJP's desire for India to attain global recognition as a great state in line with other great powers required replacing the Nehruvian 'pseudo secularism' with the ancient Hindu political ideology which entailed pride and glory.<sup>31</sup> Like Nehruvian nationalism, the BJP's ideology is also rooted in India's struggle for independence from the British. However, the major difference was that the BJP ideology focused strictly on India's realpolitik tradition, rather than on the Gandhian tradition, which was a amalgamated version of Hindu, Jain and Buddhist philosophy. Understood in this way, for the BJP, nuclear capability fitted well into achieving its ideological ends. This explains its overt position



on the weaponisation of India's nuclear capability, stated in its 1996 and 1998 election manifestos. This also thus explains India's May 1998 nuclear tests and the BJP-led government's subsequent declaration of India as a nuclear weapon state.

Given the domestic normative contexts, there are also other domestic factors which influenced India's strategic behaviour. Both the 1974 and 1998 tests were partly triggered by domestic political considerations. Indira Gandhi's decision to conduct nuclear tests in 1974 was in part directly driven by her need to divert public attention from the brewing socio-economic crisis, in order to improve her political position. This, in conjunction with the cultural norm, explains why the test was labelled 'Peaceful Nuclear Explosion' and why India reverted back to the nuclear option policy after the tests. The May 1998 tests also entailed a domestic political factor. The BJP sought to recover and strengthen its political position by capitalising on public opinion at that time, which favoured India becoming a nuclear state.

## **Summary**

The purpose of this chapter has been to evaluate Waltz's neorealism and the Indian strategic culture approach in order to identify and explain anomalies in India's nuclear strategy and behaviour. The key hypothesis of the chapter is that Indian strategic culture can provide an explanation for India's strategic behaviour as well as, if not better than, neorealism. In order to explore this hypothesis, this chapter has explored four topics: the historical context of neorealism; the nature of neorealism; the comparative analysis of neorealism and strategic culture approach; and the comparative evaluation of neorealism and Indian strategic culture, with India's nuclear strategy as a case study.

The first section has provided a historiographic and theoretical context to set the scene for the discussion contrasting neorealism and the strategic culture approach. This section made two key points. Firstly, neorealism is bound by the political and academic contexts of the time it was formulated. The contextual aspects of neorealism indicate that the basic tenets of the theory derive from the classical realist tradition. Therefore, it is not an abstract theory of international politics, but it should, however, be understood as part of a broader realist research programme. These tenets also indicate that the construction of neorealism in the 1970s was influenced by the political and economic concerns of the period. This suggests the strong possibility that neorealist assumptions are susceptible to challenge from other theoretical positions as the international political context changes. Secondly, with the end of the Cold War, neorealism has thus faced increasing challenges from the proponents of normative approaches to IR. These challenges are well demonstrated by the proponents of culture theories, especially in the works of Keith Krause and Friedrich Kratochwil.

The second section introduced the basic logic of Waltz's neorealism, with a particular emphasis on the notions of power and anarchy.

The purpose of the third section has been to explore neorealism and the strategic culture approach comparatively, with a view to highlighting some

of the key theoretical anomalies in neorealist assumptions. In the Popperian sense of scientific theory, strategic culture loses its 'scientific' utility because there is no consensus on its definition and the research programme entails three different, and sometimes conflicting, approaches. However, under the Lakatosian logic of theoretical and empirical progressiveness, the strategic culture approach represents a forward looking research programme which, through its resourcefulness, can identify anomalies in neorealist propositions and explain them with evidence. The integration of the constructivist theoretical framework into the strategic culture approach enables the latter to provide a thicker account of at least two key neorealist notions: balance of power and the security dilemma. This section has argued that by utilising the notion of identity and culture, the strategic culture approach can provide a better understanding of the formation of threat perception that neorealism can.

Given the theoretical discussion in the preceding three sections, the last section has attempted to explore the value of neorealism and Indian strategic culture by using India's nuclear strategy and behaviour as case study. This section has provided a definition of Indian strategic culture, thereby setting the agenda for the rest of the thesis, which is to explore the origins of Indian strategic thought. The Indian strategic culture approach centres around India-specific cultural symbols and contexts which directly or indirectly help the analyst to understand the Indian way of thinking, vis-à-vis the issues of war and peace. Indian strategic culture in its ontological sense comprises the rationales deriving from Kautilyan and Gandhian thought which have close bearing on the Indian way of thinking on international relations. In this way, Indian strategic culture operates as a symbolic as well as contextual force, conditioning Indian attitudes and/or behaviour.

This section has used India's nuclear behaviour from the inception of its nuclear programme to its May 1998 nuclear tests, as a case for understanding the values of neorealist and Indian strategic culture. As demonstrated above, Waltz's neorealism explains the regional politics in terms of the sense of threat and insecurity. Thus, it argues that India's

nuclear behaviour has been driven by its system-induced desire for security. However, it can provide only a limited explanation for why India could not gain a nuclear umbrella from the superpowers during the Cold War; it cannot explain why India did not weaponise its nuclear capability in the early 1960s when it felt the threat from China and had the capability to do so; it cannot explain why it took India over three decades to weaponise; and it can only provide a weak answer to why India conducted its May 1998 tests.

The major weakness of neorealism is that it treats states as simply units, and only considers the value of structural-material factors. As shown in the Indian strategic culture section, in order to gain a fuller understanding of India's nuclear behaviour, India's threat perception must be understood in terms of its strategic culture. The combination of its realpolitik and Gandhian traditions, deriving both from India's over two and a half millennia old *Arthashastra* school of thought and from Buddhist-Jain traditions, can explain the origins of India's policy of nuclear ambiguity; why it took such a long time for India to weaponise; and the timing and rationale of its May 1998 and 1974 nuclear tests.

The Indian strategic culture approach suggests that India's pursuit of nuclear weapons was driven by four key factors: its threat perception of China and Pakistan; prestige; preponderance; and its disappointment over the discriminatory power dynamics of the NPT. The nature of India's threat perception is based on the ideological/religious enmity between India and Pakistan and on India's perception of itself as a preponderant power to Pakistan. India's threat perception of China is largely based on three reasons: China's lack of recognition of India as a regional power and on the international stage; China's nuclear programme; and China's technological support to Pakistan's nuclear programme. However, the rationale for India's May 1998 tests largely derives from its longstanding desire for prestige and regional preponderance and also partly from the BJP's opportunistic move to gain political ground by capitalising on public support for weaponisation. India's 1974 test also derived from domestic political reasons: Indira Gandhi

needed to divert public attention from domestic socio-economic-political problems by conducting a nuclear test.

Indian strategic culture also induced India to pursue a moral high ground on its nuclear strategy. The influence of Gandhian tradition on Nehru's personal beliefs had a direct consequence on India taking the path of nuclear ambiguity, rather than having an overt nuclear weapons strategy. India's desire to be recognised as a leading advocate of multilateral nuclear disarmament before and after the signing of the NPT also explains the influence of the Gandhian tradition on its behaviour.

The analyses of India's nuclear strategy and behaviour utilising neorealism and Indian strategic culture suggest that Waltz's parsimonious structural approach can only provide limited explanations for India's nuclear behaviour. Reducing the cause of India's behaviour to the need for security has raised more questions than answers. On the other hand, by utilising India's domestic as well as cultural contexts, Indian strategic culture provides a thick understanding of India's nuclear behaviour. Having said this, Indian strategic culture cannot explain why the nuclear weapon states did not provide India with a nuclear umbrella during the Cold War. Waltz's neorealism would only be able to provide a limited explanation but at the expense of his own bi-polarity argument. This is because an approach based on Indian strategic culture would only be concerned with India's perceptual, domestic and cultural value systems. In order for Indian strategic culture to be able to explain a systemic influence on India's strategic behaviour, there has to be a theoretical development on the dynamics of interactions between different strategic cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> This is clearly evident in replies to Desch's article and his response. See John Duffield, Theo Farrell, Richard Price and Michael Desch (1999), 'Correspondence – Isms and Schisms: Culturalism versus Realism in Security Studies', *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1, pp.156-180.

<sup>2</sup> Colin Gray's 'context' based strategic culture theory is discussed in chapter 1.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Banks traces the origin of IR as an academic subject back to before the First World War. See Michael Banks, 'The Inter-Paradigm Debate' in Margot Light and A. J. R. Groom (eds.), *International Relations: A Hand Book of Current Theory*, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> The most notable examples are the League's failure to prevent: the invasion and occupation of Manchuria by Japan (1931); Mussolini's invasion of Abyssinia (1935); the Spanish Civil War (1936), nor the German, Italian and Russian interventions which fuelled it; Hitler's re-militarisation of the Rhineland (1936), which was forbidden by the Treaty of Versailles; and Germany's annexations of Austria and the Sudatenland (1938).

<sup>5</sup> Writing in 1985, Hoffman identifies four normative approaches, legal, realist, classical and cosmopolitan. Admittedly, normative approaches are saturated into the mainstream IR theories without being recognised as well as the more dominant theories. Thus, some normative theories are still state-centric. Normative theories have become more prominent with the shift in political and social agendas in the post-Cold War era.

<sup>6</sup> For example, there have been strong exchanges of views and reviews on Alexander Wendt's social constructivism, which attempts to construct an ideational bridge between positivist and interpretive ontology. See *Review of International Studies* (2000), No.26. In addition, there have been some constructive debates between proponents of American Realism and the English School. This is significant particularly for two reasons. Firstly, it highlights the Anglo-American divide, at least at theoretical level, within mainstream IR, which is traditionally regarded as more of a convergent intellectual ground. Secondly, it brings forward the divide between the normative approach and the positivist IR approach. See *Review of International Studies* (2003), No. 29.

<sup>7</sup> Alexander Wendt sees this 'individualist' approach to a structural theory of international politics as a problem in Waltz's systems theory, because while Waltz' theory is based on the assumption that the international structure has a determining effect on state behaviour, he is in danger of implying that the international structure per se is , unintentionally, generated by agents. See Alexander Wendt (1999), pp.15-16.

<sup>8</sup> North Korea can be used as evidence for Waltz's theory. It could be said that its nuclear test in 2006 was an outcome of Pyongyang's lack of powerful credible allies. Waltz has used North Korea as his case study. See Kenneth Waltz, 'More May be Better' in Sagan and Waltz (1995), *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate*, p.38.

<sup>9</sup> For a debate on the implications of the end of the Cold War on neorealism, see William Wohlforth (1998), 'Reality check: Revising Theories of Interantional Politics in Response to the End of the Cold War', *World Politics*, Vol.50, No.4, pp.650-680.

<sup>10</sup> Vasquez applies Lakatos' logic of 'sophisticated methodological falsification' to test the progressiveness of realist research programmes with particular focus on Waltz's theory of balance of power, vis-à-vis Walt's theory of balance of threat. He finds that because of both the epistemological inconsistency within realism as a research programme and the historical evidence which amounts to anomalies or puzzles to realism, realism becomes a degenerative research programme. See John A. Vasquez (1997), 'The Realist Paradigm and Degenerative versus Progressive Research Programs: An Appraisal of Neotraditional Research on Waltz's Balancing Proposition', *The American Political Science Review*, Vol.91, No.4, pp.899-912.

<sup>11</sup> For an excellent discussion on these generations of strategic culture, see Stuart Poore (2000), *Strategic Culture and Non-Nuclear Weapon Outcomes: The Cases of Australia, South Africa and Sweden*, Ph.D. Thesis, University of Southampton, unpublished, Chapter 2.

<sup>12</sup> Constructivism consists of different methodologies. Ted Hopf, for example, makes a distinction between conventional and critical constructivism, within which scholars use positivist, interpretivist or critical theory approaches to understand social constitution of identity and culture. See Ted Hopf (1998), 'The Promise of Constructivism in International Relations Theory', *International Security*, Vol.23, No.1, pp.171-200.

<sup>13</sup> Desch, for example, implies in his analysis that cultural assessments based at different levels (e.g. global and organisational culture) of analysis under the 'same culturalist umbrella' are 'potentially contradictory'. Desch (1998), p.152. Following on the Lakatosian

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logic of the progressive research programme, Farrell, however, argues that 'it is perfectly legitimate for a research program to contain theories that make contradictory predictions'. John S. Duffield, Theo Farrell, Richard Price, Michael C. Desch (1999), 'Isms and Schisms: Culturalism versus Realism in Security Studies', *International Security*, Vol.24, No.1, p.163.

<sup>14</sup> Dessler defines the core beliefs of epistemological realism as '(1) that we inhabit a world whose nature and existence is neither logically nor causally dependent on any mind; (2) that some of our beliefs about this world are accurate, even if incomplete, descriptions, and thereby qualify as true; and (3) that our methods of inquiry enable us to discover that (at least) some of our beliefs about the world are true'. David Dessler (1999), 'Constructivism within a positivist social science', *Review of International Studies*, No.25, p.124.

<sup>15</sup> See Bradley Klein (1988), 'Hegemony and Strategic Culture: American Power Projection and Alliance Defence Politics', *Review of International Studies*, Vol.14, No.2.

<sup>16</sup> For the origins of Kautilyan and Gandhian thought see Chapters 4 and 7.

<sup>17</sup> By 1965, India commissioned the indigenously built, but with the British and Canadian technological assistance, CIRUS reactor and a plutonium processing plant for peaceful use.

<sup>18</sup> India signed a peace agreement with Pakistan and Bangladesh in April 1974.

<sup>19</sup> Despite its 1974 PNE, India had no intention of weaponising its nuclear capability on the ground that: first, it would have had detrimental effects on its relations with the West; second, Indira Gandhi was preoccupied with domestic problems; third, India had no sufficient material or technological base for a long-term nuclear weapons programme. Sidhu (1997), p.54.

<sup>20</sup> Overall, Gandhi continued the Nehruvian strategy of keeping the weapon option while pursuing the policy of a gradual and universal elimination of nuclear weapons. The evidence for the former is that India continued its effort to develop long range missile delivery systems: on 25<sup>th</sup> February 1988, India tested its intermediate range missile, Prithvi, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 1989, it tested the Agni missile. See Sidhu (1997), pp.56-57. In the same year, Gandhi presented a plan for a universal nuclear disarmament at the Third Special Session on Disarmament at the United Nations General Assembly. See Rajiv Gandhi, 'A World Free of Nuclear Weapons' a speech at the UN General Assembly in New York on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1988. <http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Disarmament/disarm15.htm>, accessed in April 2006.

<sup>21</sup> India also expressed suffering institutional discrimination between nuclear weapon states and non-nuclear weapon states during the negotiations of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. See 'Statement by Salman Haider, Foreign Secretary of India, Plenary Meeting of the Conference on Disarmament, 21<sup>st</sup> March 1996'. *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 3, March 1996. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd03/index.htm#T-0058>, accessed in Dec. 2006.

<sup>22</sup> 'India-Pakistan Tensions, Rumours and Recriminations', *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 3, March 1996. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd03/index.htm#T-0107> accessed in Dec. 2006.

<sup>23</sup> The BJP manifesto which was released 7<sup>th</sup> April states, 'the BJP will re-evaluate the country's nuclear policy and exercise the option to induct nuclear weapons... Though the BJP stands committed to a nuclear-free world, we cannot accept a world of a nuclear apartheid', quoted in 'Indian BJP Pledges Re-evaluation of Nuclear Policy', *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 4, April 1996. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd04/index.htm#T-0116> accessed in Dec. 2006.

<sup>24</sup> 'Indian Election Results in Uncertainty and Tension on Nuclear Issue', *Disarmament Diplomacy*, No. 6, June 1996. <http://www.acronym.org.uk/dd/dd06/index.htm#T-0112> accessed in Dec. 2006.

<sup>25</sup> India's feeling of disadvantage was heightened after the indefinite extension of the NPT in 1995.

<sup>26</sup> 'Prime Minister's reply to the discussion in Rajya Sabha on nuclear tests on May 29, 1998', The Embassy of India, [http://www.indianembassy.org/pic/pm\(rs\).htm](http://www.indianembassy.org/pic/pm(rs).htm) accessed in Nov. 2002

<sup>27</sup> From India's point of view, however, the Soviet Union was not seen as a nuclear guarantor for India's security. The 1971 friendship treaty with the Soviet Union entailed no nuclear security guarantee.

<sup>28</sup> Nehru, quoted in Ogilvie-White, p.48.

<sup>29</sup> India described the non-proliferation regime as a form of 'nuclear apartheid'. See Walker (1998), p.511.

<sup>30</sup> Also see <http://www.bjp.org/philo.htm> accessed on 15th January 2006.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.bjp.org/philo.htm>

## Chapter 3: The Contextual Aspects of Indian Strategic Culture: Geography, History and Ideas

### Introduction

A central theoretical assumption of this thesis is that the core *rationale* of Indian strategic culture derives from a set of historically dominant ideas, particularly the Brahmanical ideology, values and attitudes. This, however, is not an abstract component that can be taken for granted but they are derived from construction and reconstruction of historical, political, social and cultural experiences. The purpose of this chapter is to explore the main *contexts* within which the essence of Indian strategic culture has been shaped and moulded.

There are two reasons for a particular focus on geographical, historical and ideational rather than other contexts such as technological innovation and external systems/structure which, it is argued, have influenced Indian strategic culture. Firstly, it is based on the observation that at least in the case of India, the former has had a foundational influence not only on the historical progression of its strategic thought but also on its 'identity' formation. It is this process of identity formation which has shaped its strategic rationale.<sup>1</sup> Geography as a context has been historically a much more stable material force, thus more likely to have influenced the identity formation than technological or modern international structural factor.<sup>2</sup> For example, in his analysis of the strategic cultures of the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, William T. Tow shows that geography has had a significant influence on the formation of their strategic doctrines and attitudes (Tow, 1999: pp.324-325).

Secondly, it is based on the theoretical assumption that intersubjective social relations, at the domestic and the international level, give meaning and significance to material factors and to any objective structural element one may identify in international relations, not vice versa. Those intersubjective social relations are essentially shaped through three contexts.



## **Geography and Indian Strategic Culture**

The debate over the nexus between geographical context and Indian strategic culture resonates around the impact geographic factors have on Indian strategic attitude and thought.<sup>3</sup> An investigation into this nexus would give an idea of the extent to which geography plays a part in the shaping of Indian national identity. This entails two avenues of analysis: an analysis of the effects geography has had on strategic attitudes in India's history; and an analysis of geographical references in the dominant strategic thought. The theoretical pretext for the latter is that within the nation's strategic thought are the attitudes that derive not only from the country's dominant ideational tradition but also from its perception of its physical self.

A number of analysts have suggested that the geographical aspect has been a nurturing factor in the shaping of India's identity. Spate and Learmonth, for example, go as far as to suggest that because of the diverse nature of the political and cultural settings of India, its geography plays the central role in defining and unifying the idea of India (Spate and Learmonth, 1967: pp.3-4). Indeed, when considering the national identity of India, its grand physical setting and its significance cannot be ignored. Geographically, India has an irregular diamond or kite shape that lies between the mountain ranges of Hindu Kush and Baluchistan in the northwest, and Myanmar (formerly Burma) in the northeast. From the southern most tip to the northern boundary, and from the eastern to the western tip, is about 2,000 miles in distance both ways. The western shores of the continent face the Arabian Sea, the eastern side faces the Bay of Bengal and in the south there is the Indian Ocean. The total length of the coastline is approximately 4,720 miles, and the entire subcontinent covers an area estimated to be around 1.5 million square miles. The population has also grown since ancient times, with the 2001 census showing a current figure of 1,027 million people (High Commission of India, London, 2002-03).

In this vast geographical context, some features, such as the mountains and rivers, have been especially significant in the development of

regionalism and culture. Geographers generally divide India into three regions: the northern plains around the Indus and Ganges; the Deccan Plateau, which is bordered by the mountain systems of the Eastern Ghats on the east overlooking the Arabian Sea, and the Western Ghats on the west overlooking the Bay of Bengal and the river Krishna to the south; and finally there is the triangular shaped peninsula. In the northeastern frontier, the Great Himalayas stretch for about 1,500 miles and almost isolates the subcontinent from the civilisations beyond the mountains. Although the Assam region is a relatively flatter part of the range, the dense forest and the long rainy season also acts as a natural barrier (Wolpert, 1993: p.4).<sup>4</sup>

Historically, the northwest region has provided the gateway to the fertile plains of the subcontinent. The mountains in this region are lower than those of the northeast and they branch southwards, providing passageways through which humans can traverse. The Hindu Kush has numerous passes, while the Indus River provides a wide passage through which people have migrated into the plains of Hindustan. Significantly, also, it was through these passages that invasions have occurred (the Moguls, for example, came down to conquer the fertile plains of the Indus river in the middle ages).

The Ganges (or Ganga), which originates from the Himalayas, provides a vast fertile plain in the North. This region has similarly been of prime strategic importance throughout the recorded history of India. At first, the nomadic Aryans, driven by short rainfall in the Punjab plains, migrated eastwards to the forest region of the Ganga-Yamuna river system (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: p.3). Many kingdoms have also based their capitals in this area and Delhi, India's modern capital, has traditionally been viewed as an important gateway to the fertile land of the Ganga-Yamuna river system (Ibid., p.10). The controller of this strategic access point was thus considered very powerful and historians have noted that the success of the British in conquering the subcontinent depended on the capture of the Indus and Gangetic waterways (Smith, 1923: p.iii). In contemporary South Asia (Pakistan, India and Bangladesh) there is a critical dependency upon three rivers, the Indus, the Ganga-Yamuna and the Brahmaputra, which indicates

the political and strategic relevance of geography on strategy even today (Wolpert, 1993: p.5, Saravanamuttu, 1993).

To the south, the Vindhya and Satpura mountain ranges in central India mark the natural barriers to the Deccan Plateau and the peninsula. These barriers not only played strategically and politically important roles in defending territorial areas, but also have encouraged the division of cultures between northern and southern India. The southern region is sheltered by the Ghats<sup>5</sup> in both east and the west and the seas. This geographic isolation has contributed to the growth of regionalism, which remains a serious issue in the modern Indian context. Historically and culturally, no foreign invaders have totally conquered the southern region.<sup>6</sup> It was only when the British came to conquer that the whole subcontinent was under one rule. Nevertheless, there was a cultural exceptionalism and a desire to retain independence and a distinct national identity.

Amid this cultural resilience through the effect of geographical isolation in some parts of the continent, historically, topography has also opened up opportunities for the development of India as a strategically significant place. In turn, it may be argued, that this is a crucial jigsaw which has contributed to the formation of India's self-consciousness and to its strategic perception. The physical location of India as a meeting point between the East and the West moulded its character as a place of commercial and cultural importance.

In his *Philosophy of History*, Hegel highlights the potency of India as a trading location, 'from the most ancient times downwards, all nations have directed their wishes and longings to gaining access to the treasures of this land of marvels, the most costly which the Earth presents; treasures of Nature – pearls, diamonds, perfumes, rose-essences, elephants, lions, etc. – as also treasures of wisdom. The way by which these treasures have passed to the West, has at all times been a matter of world historical importance, bound up with the fate of nations' (Hegel, 2004: p.142). The access to such treasures was largely due to the establishment of trade routes by land and

sea. The development of land trade routes between the Mediterranean ports across Iran and parts of Afghanistan was mainly due to the movement of the Greek army and the Greek settlements in the aftermath of Alexander the Great's failed attempt to conquer India (Thapar, 1983: pp.61-62). The establishment of those trade routes contributed to the growth of towns and cities. There were a few land routes by which the silk trade occurred: from Khotan across the Himalayas to Kashmir, Gandhara and Kabul from which Indo-Greek princes or Yavanas carried the silk goods by land to the head of the Persian Gulf; some of them came over via the Khyber pass to Taxila by the Greeks, which were then carried to the coast of Arabia where they were traded with the Arabs who took them to Leuke and Came at the head of the Red Sea; and the Chinese silk trade route extended across the Tibetan Plateau to the Ganges from which they were shipped along the eastern coast of India down to the southern trading ports of the Cholas, the Pandyas and the Cheras (Kumar, 1999: p.184). From there, the goods were shipped by sea routes to other civilisations in the west.

The sea routes, indeed, entailed a great deal of significance as they enriched the maritime tradition in the southern region. Throughout history, the region has been a fulcrum for the great trade routes, a place where the Greeks, Romans, Chinese and Arabs all bartered and came to exchange goods. Particularly notable is Rome's commerce in the Indian Ocean after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 B.C. (Ibid., pp.185-186). Their route started from the Egyptian ports in the Red Sea to the ports in the Arabian coast or to those in northern coast of Somalia, ultimately to the ports in the northwest India or to those of southwest India (Casson, 1991: p.8). Their vessels were big and sturdy, built specially to overcome the prevailing monsoon winds (Ibid., p.10). The size of the ships they used reflects the significance of India to the Romans as a strategic trading place: they were said to be up to 180 feet in length and over a thousand tons in burden, much bigger than those of Arabian competitors, which carried precious goods such as 'silks, fine cottons, pepper, costus, nard, spikenard', and other items (Ibid., p.10). In addition, the weather pattern in the Indian Ocean was studied and applied to maximise the efficiency of sailing to and from India.<sup>7</sup> There is

various evidence of the Roman trade in southern India but two seem to be most notable: the concentrated finds of Roman coins in the southern tip of India (Begley and Puma, 1991: p.2); and the Roman glass finds in the Indian subcontinent (Stern, 1991: p.113).

The development of trade routes encouraged the growth of towns and the movement of people. This, perhaps inevitably, induced cultural interactions. One of the earliest cultural interactions is said to be with the Persians in the northwest of the continent, today's southeast of Afghanistan and northeast of Pakistan. It is said that Cyrus, the Achaemenid emperor of Persia, crossed the Hindu Kush mountains around 530 B.C. and made contact with the regional tribes of Kamboja, Gandhara and other trans-Indian tribes (Thapar, 1983: p.58). According to Herodotus, an ancient Greek historian, the Indian tribes provided mercenaries to the Persian military to fight the Greeks between 486-465 B.C (ibid., p.58). The subsequent Persian influence manifested in various forms. According to Thapar, this was especially prevalent in Taxila, the capital of Gandhara, where Vedic and Iranian intelligentsia intermingled (ibid., p.59). The Persian cultural influence was evident: Persian coins were copied in India; the Kharoshthi<sup>8</sup> script, which was prevalently used in the region, was apparently widely used in Persia; and it is said that Zoroastrianism influenced the Mahayana school of Buddhism (ibid., p.59). In turn, Buddhism is said to have influenced the religious-philosophic system of Manichaeism (ibid., p. 59).

However, India was not just the recipient of the foreign influence but, historically, it also influenced other cultures. One of the most notable areas of its influence, though its significance is sketchy, was in Southeast Asia. The Sanskrit inscriptions discovered in Indonesia, which dates back to AD 400, indicate the Brahmanical influence in the early Indonesian political development (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: pp.145-146). Another important source of Indian influence on other cultures was Buddhism. In the ancient times, the University of Taxila, near the present city of Islamabad, the University of Nalanda, in Bihar, were the centres of the Buddhist scholarship where a large number of students from Southeast Asia and China came to

study. It is also said that the king Ashoka sent his Buddhist missionaries to Western and Central Asia, Egypt, Greece, Sri Lanka and Burma (Ibid., p.147). Later, around the fifth century, the Gupta style of Buddhist architecture and art influenced the art of Burma, Thailand and Indonesia (Ibid., pp.147-148). The south Indian influence on Southeast Asia came under the Chola dynasty. The significance of the Cholas lies in two aspects. Firstly, they expanded their cultural influence through maritime trade (Ibid., p.148). Secondly, from the early eleventh century, the Chola kingdom pursued for centuries a 'systematic policy of expansion': it not only conquered Sri Lanka but also ventured into Indonesia and Malaya (Ibid., p.109).

The geopolitical significance of India continued throughout the period from the Middle Ages onwards by the Islamic conquest and the European arrival. The Islamic conquest came from the north and its influence stretched along the maritime trade routes to Southeast Asia, cutting off the longstanding Buddhist connections in the region. The Portuguese dominance in the Indian Ocean in the late fifteenth and most of sixteenth century, consequently, opened the sea route by which the Dutch, English and French came later to conquer India. To this effect, the strategic significance of the land routes in the northwest has declined as the sea routes and Indian ports, such as Karachi and Bombay, has increased (Smith, 1967: p.5).

In relation to modern day India, some analysts have noted the differences between north and south in terms of perceptions of strategy. George Tanham, for example, suggests that while the strategic outlook in the north tends to be northward because of the frequent land invasions throughout history, the strategic outlook of the south tends to be geared towards the oceans. Part of this perception, according to Tanham, is a sense of security that derives from the 'protective barriers' of the mountains and seas 'against outside interference and invasion' (Tanham, 1996: p.32). However, it should not be assumed that natural barriers have, axiomatically, played a pivotal role in India's strategic perception. As Sidhu argues, the Indian perception of its natural barriers has evolved throughout history, to the

extent that, today, a 'more forward posture' can be observed (Sidhu, 1996: p.178).

This does appear to be a contingent feature of the post-colonial Indian strategic attitude. The size of the continent and its exposed character to the oceans has had some direct bearing on today's seaward looking strategy. Until 1971, most strategic attention was directed towards its territorial defence in the north against Pakistan and China. The event that changed this land-based perception was the arrival of the *USS Enterprise* as a show of support for Pakistan in the Bay of Bengal during the Indo-Pakistani war of 1971 (Tanham, 1996: p.87). This made Indian strategic planners feel even more exposed in an already geographically exposed continent. Since this incident, India has paid more attention to its naval strategy. For example, towards the end of the 1970s, plans were devised to build a nuclear submarine and in 1988, India acquired a Charlie class nuclear submarine from the Soviet Union on lease (Sakhuja, Apr. 2001). The debate over its naval strategy has extended to other areas of security issues, which include protection of trade routes, drug trafficking and human smuggling (Sakhuja, Aug. 2001). The first issue contains economic aspects, such as energy security and food security, which are crucial for India's economic development in an increasingly interdependent world (Gupta, 2002). To this extent, there is a great deal of awareness of the importance of the seaward strategy in the early twenty first century.

The exact extent to which geography is related to India's strategic culture is a contentious issue for it is difficult to pinpoint direct evidence. Nevertheless, as indicated above, its relevance is evident in the observation that geography has played a significant role in the formation of India's enduring sense of self-importance. This point can be further validated in two ways. Firstly, geography has been an intrinsic feature of Indian strategic thought since ancient times. This is evident in various ancient literatures on the science of politics, most notably in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, Kamandaka's *Nitisara* and Manu's *Dharmashastra* which utilise the mandala, or concentric circle, concept which depicts the country at the centre of the circle as the

principal hub of power vis-à-vis other countries around it. The underlying postulation, from which a set of foreign policy principles derive, is that the extent of hostility of the bordering countries is, in part, determined by geographical proximity. The strategic and cultural value of this concept, it may be argued, lies in two pretexts. Firstly, from the fact that the concept was adopted by the books whose authorship ranged from the fourth century B.C. to eleventh century A.D., one may infer that the concept entailed some degree of resilient utility and value. Secondly, although there is no definitive account on the origin of the mandala concept, it has been postulated, drawing on from some of the Vedic sources, that its origins may go as far back as the Vedic period (Rao, 1979: p.98). This reinforces the notion that geography was an important ingredient in the formation of Indian strategic thought qua *cultural* force. In effect, the mandala concept is a strategic insignia of pride, self-assertion and self-aggrandisement.

Secondly, it is possible to sketch the nexus between India's geography and culture by looking at the symbolic and cultural meaning of its geographical features. One of these features is its waterways, a crucial element in the development of Indian civilisation. Historically, so crucial were rivers for their livelihood that some were worshipped and deified. For example, the Ganges was called 'Mother Ganga' and was praised, and the name Brahmaputra meant the Son of Brahma – the Hindu creator god (Wolpert, 1993: p.5).

In addition to rivers, heat, fire and the sun were similarly deified. Heat was essential alongside water to cultivate land. Fire was also used in the process of the Aryan migration as it was used to burn down forests to make space for cultivation (Stein, 1998: p.9). This burning was attributed to the god of fire, Agni. The migration also involved conflicts for fertile lands and rivers with other clans. Here, Agni played the guardian and protector as it was recorded in the sacred book of *Rig Veda*, 'Be soft, Oh Agni, when we approach you as a friend, be a friend, be our relative, a just chief, because the tribe is full of deceits. Burn the adverse powers so that they run away' (*Rig Veda* III, 18, I, quoted in Nag, 1997: p.13). This belief system is, to a



limited extent, evident in the modern Indian military. India's only nuclear capable ballistic missile was named after Agni, the god of fire. This is clearly symbolic but the name resonates immensely powerful cultural perceptions both for India and for its enemies.

From ancient times geographical factors have taken an important place in India's strategic thinking. Often topographical features were used in ancient texts to show the physical perceptions of India, itself, and the world around it (Schwartzberg, 1992: p.13 and p.27). For example, ancient religious literature of the *Vishnu Purana* states, 'The country that lies north of the ocean, and south of the snowy mountains, is called Bharata: for there dwelt the descendents of Bharata. It is nine thousand leagues<sup>9</sup> in extent, and is the land of works, in consequence of which men go to heaven, or obtain emancipation' (The *Vishnu Purana*, quoted in Schwartzberg, 1992: p.27). What this suggests is that even in the ancient period, India was not only perceived as a geographical unit but as a spiritual identity as well. This attitude, which has now evolved into modern nationalism, is at the heart of the Indian identity. This is the context from which the Indian nation's collective identity grew whilst retaining its cultural diversity.

### **Historical Context**

If geographical context provides an understanding of the nexus between India's physical setting and its identity, its historical context<sup>10</sup> helps one understand its significance as an organic cultural entity. This section gives a brief overview of the key historical aspects which have influenced Indian strategic thinking. The central argument here is that Indian strategic thought presumes the existence of historical consciousness which derives from two avenues. Firstly, India's strategic thinking and attitude partly derive from its political experiences and traditions. They are primarily induced by historical circumstances which played a crucial role in the construction of its strategic perception. Secondly, it derives from the purposive selection and use of history by the ruling Indian political class to accelerate social and political development. Thapar suggests that such a deliberate use signifies 'a change

in historical situation' (Thapar, 1986: p.353). The latter is much more evident in the control of ideas by the educated political class. This point is delved into in the next section.

India was never fully politically independent until 1947, for centuries there were either struggles for power among the kingdoms in the Indian subcontinent or it was dominated by foreign powers. With the benefit of hindsight, it was this process of socio-political interaction, which has formed the basis of India's identity and its perception of itself and the world.

India's past is one of the main factors from which the founders of Indian nationalism have drawn strength in order to bring impetus to a unified India. From India's ancient history, emphasis has consequently been given to the Mauryan Empire established by Chandragupta in 326 BC. This is because this empire was the first within the region to be endowed with powerful and effective political institutions. It was also a period when a Hindu king dominated most of the Indian subcontinent.

Chandragupta made a peace treaty with Seleukos Nikator, the governor of the eastern part of Alexander the Great's empire, to which he gave 500 war elephants as a gift. In return, the Mauryan Empire projected its power as far east as Kabul, including Baluchistan (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: p.59). It was a period when sophisticated political ideas dramatically evolved from the old Vedic knowledge. As will be discussed in the next sections, these political ideas became more secularised (though by no means completely conforming to this trend), and they exerted a considerable influence on the material well-being of society and the perception of the hostile nature of international relations. Particularly significant with the erection of a powerful state institution was the development and application of strategic thought. These ideas were chiefly compiled by Kautilya in his book, *Arthashastra*. In commenting on the advancement of Kautilya's strategic thought, Nehru writes, 'long before Clausewitz, he [Kautilya] is reported to have said that war is only a continuance of State policy by other means. But, he adds, war must always serve the larger ends of policy and not become an

end in itself; the statesman's objective must always be the betterment of the State as a result of a war, not the mere defeat and destruction of the enemy. If the war involves both parties in a common ruin, that is the bankruptcy of statesmanship' (Nehru, 1946: p.133). Nehru understood that Kautilya's rationale was not merely about war and diplomacy, but seen in its entirety, it was founded on the idea of good or moral governance. This was Nehru's interpretation of Kautilya's strategic rationale and he pursued this line of thinking during his premiership of India.<sup>11</sup>

Ashoka's reign is also remembered as an important part of India's history. While maintaining the vast Mauryan Empire, Ashoka became a part of India's moral strength. It is recorded that after conquering the kingdom of Kalinga, Ashoka saw the horrors of the consequences<sup>12</sup> of conflict and, as a result, he turned to Buddhism for peace (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: p.62). Furthermore, he declared Buddhism as the national religion, which spread rapidly throughout the region during his reign. Buddhism taught him the value of love of life and the Dharma, or sacred Law and how to be a moral and righteous ruler. Buddhism does not prevail any more in contemporary India but this concept of dharma is culturally still related to modern Indian politics as it strongly influenced Mahatma Gandhi, who continues to be venerated as the Father of India.

The significance of the Ashokan period is evident in the design of the Indian national flag which contains the *charka* or Wheel which is an exact reproduction of the wheel on the capital of Ashoka's Sarnath Pillar. In his speech on 22<sup>nd</sup> July 1947 at the Constituent Assembly, Nehru stated the significance of the Wheel in the following way:

'That wheel is a symbol of India's ancient culture, it is a symbol of the many things that India has stood for through the ages. We, therefore, thought that this wheel, this *charka* emblem, should appear on our Flag. For my part, I am exceedingly happy that we have associated with our Flag not only this emblem but in a sense the name of As[h]oka, one of the most magnificent names in India's history and the world. It is well that at this moment of strife, conflict, and intolerance, our minds should go back towards what India stood

for in the ancient days and what, I hope and believe, it has essentially stood for throughout the ages....'(Quoted in Singh, 1991: p.68).

Although the Wheel itself is copied from the Buddhist notion, the flag itself, in its entirety, is an amalgamation of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain ethics. The origin of the concept symbolic in the flag, however, dates back to the Vedic period.<sup>13</sup> The meaning and values it manifests is consistent with those advocated by Mahatma Gandhi. An eminent Indian scholar S. Radhakrishnan summarises its meaning in the following way:

'*Bhagwa* or the saffron colour denotes renunciation or disinterestedness. Our leaders, must be indifferent to material gains and dedicate themselves to their work. The white in the centre is light, the path of truth to guide our conduct. The green shows our relation to the soil, our relation to the plant life here on which all other life depends. The As[h]ka wheel in the centre of the white is the wheel of the law of *Dharma*. Truth or *Satya*, *dharma* or virtue ought to be the controlling principles of all those who work under this Flag... the wheel denotes motion. There is death in stagnation. There is life in movement. India should no more resist change, it must move and go forward. The wheel represents the dynamism of a peaceful change...' (Ibid., p.70).

The reigns of Chandragupta of Maurya and Ashoka are therefore deemed important periods in the promotion of modern Indian identity. The cultural characteristics of dharma and political pragmatism, which derived from these two ancient political contexts, have been an intrinsic and, at times conflicting, part of the Indian strategic culture.

Other ancient periods have also been influential. The significance of the Gupta period, for example, stems from two main factors. First, Hinduism flourished during this period. At a societal level, this meant the return of the rigid caste system. Second, at a political level, it meant the return of Hindu kingship based on Hindu gods. Religion was an important part of governance in ancient times as this provided the ground for legitimisation of the kingship. It was a period of political stability, economic prosperity, developments in arts and academic studies. It marked the revival of the Vedic culture (Kulkarni, 1973: p.253). Hence, it was a huge change from the days of Ashoka. The rooting of the caste system also meant the wider spread of the Brahman caste, which still maintains social and cultural supremacy in India to this day.

Second, it is significant to note that at the height of the Gupta period diplomatic strategy displays a strong resemblance to the idea of concentric circle diplomacy articulated five centuries before by Kautilya (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: pp.84-85). Under this strategy, India is at the core of the circle, which symbolises its importance and greatness. This is reflected in contemporary India's perception of itself through various media, such as its deep cultural heritage and rich history. India also takes pride in being the largest democracy in the world and in its technological progress, which includes the development of a nuclear capability. Political and cultural nationalism, in effect, are the historical prisms that project these media.

Another factor of note is that from first century AD onward, there were frequent Muslim incursions into the subcontinent. The Islamic influence in the north of the Indian subcontinent significantly extended with the conquest of Sind by the Arabs between AD 711 and 712 and Muhammad Ghuri's seizure of Delhi in 1193 after defeating Prithviraj Chauhan.<sup>14</sup> The latter largely marked the conquest of the north of India.<sup>15</sup> The period designated as the Delhi Sultanate effectively began from this point.

The aspiration of the Muslim leaders during this period was to project power throughout the Indian continent and to spread their own culture and religion. The Sultans of Delhi established a centralised political system through which they fought off the Mongols whose strong presence in north India threatened them. One Turkish leader worth noting is Ala-ud-din Khalji who not only secured the northern border against the Mongols but his brutal military campaign went deep into the southern part of India where he won battles against the Hindu kings of the south and took the city of Madurai in 1310 (Stein, 1998: p.139). In addition, the significance of Ala-ud-din's rule lies in his administrative reforms. His ideas departed from the old system where his predecessors largely focused their influence in and around cities and depended on the Hindu chiefs of the villages for the collection of revenues. This limited their influence in the countryside where local rajas could escape the military influence of the central government. His centralised revenue collection system entailed fixed prices on foods, central food storage

near Delhi, constant monitoring of food prices, military enforced revenue collection, prevention of a black market and the heavy deployment of spies to oversee the markets of Delhi (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: pp.162-163). The success of this system enabled him to form and maintain a large standing army, which in turn allowed him to consolidate power in the country. Such a centralised state system resembles the sovereign state described in the *Arthashastra*. Kulke and Dietmar go as far as to speculate the possibility that Ala-ud-din knew about the *Arthashastra* and tried to implement the measures described in the book (Ibid., p.163). However, the new political structures were not effective enough to change the indigenous culture. In addition, the Muslim leaders faced institutional and administrative difficulties in penetrating the south (Ibid., pp.168-169).<sup>16</sup>

The Mughals, who ruled in the early sixteenth century, had much more efficient political structures, which enabled them to govern most of the Indian continent effectively. This was due to two factors. First, they were generally willing to blend into the existing Hindu culture and society, and give the people cultural and religious freedom. Second, there was hardly any cultural resistance to the foreign political rule from Hindu society. In this way, the two different cultures coexisted, and both contributed to the evolution of a distinct 'Indian' culture. The Muslims brought in new political thought, military technologies and strategies, as well as new religious ideas (Ibid., pp.184-185).<sup>17</sup> In turn, the Muslims, who were very active in their expansion in the early Middle Ages, spread Indian culture to Europe, Africa and other parts of Asia. Baber, the first Mughal leader who brought territorial unity, and Akbar, who ruled India with great cultural and political tolerance, are still regarded as great leaders of India.

The period of Muslim rule brought two significant implications for the development of India's strategic thinking in the contemporary context. First, it provided a foundation for a secular political structure for the modern India. Indeed, given its large Muslim population (12% of its 1,095.4 million population), Indian politicians must acknowledge this if they wish to pursue or retain political power.<sup>18</sup> Second, in contrast to the first point it also provided a

basis for potential conflict between Muslim and Hindu nationalists. This tension, which became more apparent in the wake of India's independence, led to the socio-political splitting of the subcontinent and the creation of East and West Pakistan as a separate Muslim state. However, the ethnic tensions within India did not stop there. The Hindu-Muslim tension in Kashmir became a significant source of the India-Pakistan tension exacerbating enmity between the two states. Thus, some authors have observed that internal security strategy, although not apparent in written form, has been a crucial part of Indian strategic thinking as this is perceived as a threat to India's physical integrity (Thomas, 1986: pp.51-52).<sup>19</sup>

With the disintegration of the Mughal power came the Europeans. It was eventually the British that successfully colonised India after the 1857 revolt or what is commonly called 'the Mutiny'. Like the Mughals, the British brought new political ideas, culture, and advanced technologies. The major difference was that whereas the Mughals tried to integrate themselves into the Hindu culture, the British directly and indirectly imposed their rules and culture on that of India. Most political decisions were made in London. Under British rule the country's infrastructure was improved; British-style legal and political systems were developed for the effective governance of the colony. Post-independent India then utilised this inheritance in the development of its own political and economic structures.

The extent to which the British raj influenced India's strategic thinking and identity remains a topic of debate. Tanham, for example, treats the British raj as the main influencing factor on the formation of India's identity and on its strategic thinking. He argues that the period of the British raj was an important part of Indian identity formation as it provided the basic material, political and legal infrastructure for postcolonial India. He further argues that India's defensive strategic attitude was largely inherited from Britain's strategic attitude which was oriented towards the maintenance of the 'status quo' at the end of nineteenth century and that, to an extent, the British continued the strategy of the Mughals (Tanham, 1996: pp.46-47). Sidhu, however, argues that the evolution of India as a nation-state was hindered by

the British colonisation. He states, 'the nationalist movement, which under normal circumstances could have focused exclusively on nation building (as it did in other nascent states in Europe), had to contend with throwing off the burdensome yoke of colonisation. In the bargain, the process of nation-building was put off to after independence and continues' (Sidhu, 1996: p. 178).

On Tanham's point on the British contribution to the formation of Indian strategic attitude, an important point to be made here that the Mughal period has been generally regarded as a period of history which contributed to the formation of Indian identity. Given this attitude and Tanham's assumption that the British inherited the Mughals's strategic attitude, the defensive strategic attitude is by default not inherited from the British but is part of an indigenous Indian strategic culture. Nevertheless, two aspects of the British legacy are undeniable. First, at an operational level, India's forward strategy in its naval strategic thinking is partly due to the legacy of Britain's naval strategy and the fact that they arrived in the continent from the sea. Second, British rule inadvertently played a catalytic role in the growth of India's nationalism and, to this extent, the British raj should not be completely ignored in the debate over India's strategic culture and identity.

The evolution of India's strategic thinking continued after independence. This is partly due to a new international setting, based on the political dominance of the US and the USSR in the Cold war period, and the interdependent nature of the international economic system. At a regional level, India fought five wars in the twentieth century: four wars with Pakistan and one with China. Two key strategic outcomes emerged from these experiences. First, as indicated in the previous section and despite much criticism from western India specialists concerning India's lack of strategic posture, India's operational strategy has become more forward-looking. The creation of mountain divisions, for example, was a strategic move to protect the mountainous north-eastern border of the Himalayas against any Chinese incursion. In addition, it has been suggested that there has been an element



of nuclear strategy since the late 1940s, though not necessarily in written form.

Although Nehru, the first Indian prime minister, largely took an anti-nuclear stance, he never dismissed the possibility of nuclear deterrence, particularly in the form best known as 'non-weaponised deterrence' (Sidhu, 1997). Similarly, the loss in the border war with China in 1962 and China's nuclear explosion in 1964, led India to a more active strategic attitude in nuclear weapons development. India has also become more technologically driven in its strategic thinking, with weapons procurements for its navy and air force all showing this orientation (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2002). This was largely due to the development of civilian technology sectors and a more knowledge-based armed forces, which gradually gained more voice in India's defence planning (Sidhu, 1997).

These various historical contexts indicate that India's strategic thinking is a product of many factors. What connects these contexts into an integrated Indian strategic culture lies, not in the western academic preference of historiography, but in its oral traditions. Sidhu argues that though there is a question of the reliability of history based on oral traditions '...in the Indian context, oral history has a respectable lineage and substantial credibility, and for several centuries the traditions, norms, military strategies and law books were passed on by word of mouth' (Sidhu, 1996: p.175). History was consequently traditionally passed on orally by the Brahman caste and, over many centuries, this oral transmission has become an invisible institution. This still exists in contemporary India's strategic outlook, although this may not necessarily be evident to an outside observer.

### **Ideational Context**

The modern Indian state was established in 1947 when it gained independence from Britain.<sup>20</sup> From this point onwards there was a concerted effort by successive Indian governments to build India's identity. It could be said that nationalism was an ideological movement within which this process

of nation-building began. In this sense, Indian nationalism was the foundation for India's current day political rationalism. This section delves into the cultural foundation of Indian political rationalism with a particular emphasis on some of the key ideational factors which are, as the author argues, the epitome of Indian identity. This is a crucial part of understanding Indian strategic culture because, as Gandhi understood well during his nationalist movement before and after India's independence, ideas and values play a significant part of the nature of Indian national identity. In turn, as this thesis argues, a strong national identity is a foundational condition for internal and external security building. Although the institutional setting of Indian politics was based on the relics of the British political structure, the ideology that dominated from the time of independence had its origins in India's ancient culture and history. This section focuses on the Brahmanical ideology as a defining feature of India. It is argued that this ideology has endured through the disintegration of the Maurya Empire, the invasion of the Turks, the British colonisation and through the independence of India and Pakistan.

### *The Context of the 'Brahmanical Ideology'*

Before discussing the Brahmanical ideology per se, it is first necessary to explore the historical/ideational context of the ideology. This context helps absorb the significance of the ideology as a driving force of the formation of India's strategic identity.

Indeed, like all knowledge, the 'Brahmanical Ideology' is said to have its context. The Hindu notion of caste<sup>21</sup> or class forms an intrinsic part of this context. Thus Max Weber states 'caste...is the fundamental institution of Hinduism. Before everything else, without caste there is no Hindu' (Weber, 1958: p.29). The importance of caste vis-à-vis the Brahmanical ideology lies in what it stands for. Shamasastri gives a helpful definition of caste. He states, 'caste means a social exclusiveness with reference to diet and marriage. So long as a Hindu, whether as Brahman, Ksatriya, Vaisya or Sudra, observes his social and communal rules about the articles of diet he eats and about the woman he marries, he is regarded to maintain his caste

and to lose it the moment he infringes the rules of dietary and marriage' (Shamasastri, 1967: p.37). In this social exclusiveness', the Brahman caste holds the highest social position. To put it in another way, 'the central position of the Brahmans in Hinduism rests primarily upon the fact that [the positive or negative nature of] social rank is determined with reference to Brahmans' (Weber, 1958: p.30). Thus it may be inferred that in its original sense, the Brahmanical ideology can be understood, as evident in the adjective 'Brahmanical', as an ideational manifestation of the centrality of the Brahman caste as the defining force of the socio-cultural institution of India.

The exact origin of the caste system is unclear (Luniya, 1980: p.81). One plausible theory evident from *Rig Veda* is that its origins go as far back as to the late Vedic age around the first millennium B.C. when Aryans, the semi-nomadic people, began to settle and form an agricultural society (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: p.38). The Aryans created the system of 'varna', which originally meant 'colour', to distinguish the indigenous people from the Aryans (Luniya, 1980: p.81). This eventually came to mean caste (Kulke and Dietmar, 1998: p.39). *Rig Veda*, a sacred Vedic text, indicates four varnas in the order of importance: Brahmans; Ksatriyas (warrior-rulers); Vaisyas (merchants and businessmen); and Sudras (workers and farmers). This differential social substructure has subsequently developed into a social and economic norm in the context of modern Indian society.

The significance of the Brahman and Ksatriya reflects the two key characteristics of the Aryan cultural and political setting. First, at the centre of the Vedic culture there was the worshipping of gods, such as Marut, Agni and Vasu, through rituals. These gods were central to their belief system. It was believed that these gods determined their destiny, especially survival in warfare. Brahmans were priests and hence were paramount in the Aryan society as they were the people who conducted the sacrificial ceremonies. Second, this was a period when there was frequent warfare among the tribes, mainly concerning access to fertile land. The battle for survival depended on the bravery and the leadership of the Ksatriyas (warrior-rulers). The stories of sacrificial ceremonies and the Vedic Aryans are recorded in

the texts of the *Vedas*: *Mantra* (holy words); *Brahmana* ('commentaries on sacrificial rituals'); *Upanishads* ('esoteric philosophical treatises'); and *Sutra* ('instructions for rituals'). Kulke and Dietmar believe that because the Vedic period, by nature, is didactic, the texts of the *Vedas* were orally passed on by Brahman priests through the generations (*Ibid.*, p.34). This indicates that the Brahmans not only held a sacred position in the Vedic age but were also an important factor in the preservation of Indian history.

As Vedic society became more settled and sophisticated, new ideational norms emerged. K. Nag calls this new era, 'the Epic' or '*Itihasa-purana*': 'there [in the sociological documents of the epics] we find, for the first time, a clear indication of real life with all its natural anomalies in an age of assimilation, the anomalies which challenge all the efforts of didactic or religious justifications: the war and the diplomacy, the crimes and passions of the Epic are the authentic facts of Hindu social history, as well as those of all other races.' (Nag, 1997: p.30).

Three key outcomes can be observed as a result of this evolution of social and cultural identity. First, the Ksatriyas gained a great deal of influence. As Nag points out, the norm of the society was not focused as extensively any more on the priests, rather it was the king who became the central point of attention. Second, social change was not just ontological in character but also ideational. The Ksatriyas were not just warrior rulers, they were key philosophical thinkers who wrote the *Upanishads* and founded Jainism and Buddhism as a counterweight to the conventions of Brahmanism (Tagore, 1923: p.12).<sup>22</sup> Although the spirit of Buddhism has not been prominent in modern India, Jainism has retained a strong influence in contemporary Indian society. Third, the influence of the culture of the Ksatriya gradually spread throughout the Indian subcontinent. In western society, it is generally perceived that the Indian caste system is socially rigid and something that one is born into. However, at this point the Ksatriya, was also considered to be significant and this could also be obtained through the merit of 'conquering and governing' (Nag, 1997: p.32). In other words, even in ancient India there was an advanced social understating of meritocratic

politics.<sup>23</sup> Yet this trend also gradually brought wars among small ethnic tribes and small countries. Nag suggests that this explains the 'tendency of the Hindu society...to get out of the logical development of the formation of big nations' (Ibid., p.33). In the contemporary Indian context, this may explain the desire of India's politicians to consolidate Indian identity through nationalism.

The evolution of cities, social structures and kingdoms from small tribal societies through differing social interaction, most notably wars, and the dialectic evolution of ideas, gave rise to the study of politics in the post-Epic period. The residues of ancient politics appear in the Vedic age, but it becomes more apparent in the *Mahabharata*, which, in effect, arches the Epic period and the post-Epic division of knowledge (Stein, 1998: pp.62-63).<sup>24</sup> The '*Mahabharata*' means 'the great story of the battle of the Bharatas'. It represents the cultures of the Vedic age, of Ksatriyas, and the evolving role of the Brahmanical knowledge.

There are many different aspects of *Mahabharata*, but in regards to the art of Indian politics, it constituted the backbone of the Indian perception of life through the moral commentaries (sutras) of duty (dharma), love and pleasure (karma), wealth (artha), and emancipation or salvation (moksa) (Winternitz, 1924: p.344).<sup>25</sup> These were the key factors that needed to be balanced for a king (ksatriya) to be righteous and successful when governing and conquering.

Interestingly, Nag suggests the *Mahabharata* was designed to decentralise both the social order and the knowledge base, which had been dominated by the Brahmans. Yet, this caste still plays a central role through the guise of Kanika, a Brahman minister, who advises Dhrtarastra in what became the science of diplomacy. Dhrtarasta was, in turn, uncle and tutor of Pandavas, a Ksatriya king who fought the epic battle of Kurukshetra against Kaurava (Nag, 1997: pp. 37-41). One crucial point here is that the religious dimension endured within this literature and there is a consensus among

Indologists that the *Mahabharata* should not be viewed through one aspect of ancient knowledge but should be understood as a whole.

In the post-Epic period, there was an apparent intellectual separation between the para (spiritual) and a-para (non-spiritual) disciplines. The former generally refers to the religious and philosophical thoughts that derived from the *Vedas*, Buddhism and Jainism. The latter is the tradition that advocated objective and practical thinking. Grammar, law, astronomy and rituals belong to this school. The inclusion of rituals in this school suggests that the objective rationality advocated by its supporters did not completely escape the tradition of the Vedic age. It was from this school that the science of politics was devised and, hence, the *Arthashastra*, which is said to have been written by Kautilya, became paramount in understanding the origins of Indian political rationalism. The former, or para, would gain considerable influence during Mahatma Gandhi's struggle for the independence of India in the first part of the twentieth century.

### *The Brahmanical Ideology*

What India cannot avoid is its internal cultural context that has existed relatively consistently for millennia and that exerts a strong influence Indian society, politics and the dynamics of social consciousness. It can be argued that Indian nationalism was founded within this context with the ultimate goal of becoming a great nation. This context entails a distinct set of ancient Indian social values. As T. N. Ramaswamy states, 'the Indian mind had conceived of four distinct epochs of cultural synthesis, representing the four sides of the ancient dice: the Krita or Satya [Truth] where the four instruments of existence: Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha representing the Law, Resources, Relations or Desire and Deliverance were in harmonic balance' (Ramaswamy, 1994: p.6). The order in which these values are followed and treasured has been a matter of debate. This is because the treatises written on each of the values have put emphasis more on the respective subject of concern rather than focussing on the equal harmonisation of the four values.<sup>26</sup> This is evident in the way the overall

emphasis on material security presented in the *Arthashastra*; the law and duty in the *Dharmashastra* by Manu; and the art of pleasure in the *Kamashastra*. Nevertheless, these values are supposed to have dynamic relations with the ultimate aim of obtaining Moksha. It could be argued that India's political, religious and social realities in their core evolve around them, influencing its vast cultural resources like music, art, literature and, above all, its cultural mindset. As far as its strategic attitude and thought are concerned, the most relevant values are Dharma and Artha with their focus on the divine duty and law, and the way of obtaining material well-being. It is, however, a subject of debate, as will be addressed later, which is the predominant value over the other.

The conceptual term within which this distinct value system could come under is what Nag calls the 'Brahmanic Knowledge'. The name 'Brahmanic' denotes didactic and religious character, at least in its original meaning, and that the knowledge was formulated by Brahman priests. It may be speculated that this knowledge has its origins from the name *Brahmana*, one of the Vedic texts. There appears to be no definitive definition of the word. One scholar speculates that it could mean 'holy practice', 'religious performance', 'holy utterance' or 'religious text' (Bloomfield, 1908: p.44). Another thinks it refers to 'holy knowledge', 'hymn' or 'incantation' (Edgerton, 1965: p.23). The content of the text essentially consists of prayers and instructions on sacrificial rituals and magic, which were perceived to have paramount importance in the Vedic society (Ibid., p.44). What seems to be significant from this religious text with regard to the nature of the 'Brahmanic knowledge' is a philosophical tenet born out from it. That is, the juxtaposition of knowledge and control (power) (Ibid., pp.23-24). This becomes the foundational block of the Brahmanical *culture*. This religious culture did not die out but was managed and evolved by Brahman priests. It came to empower the priests' position in Indian society. As Bloomfield states, '...the *Brahmanas* are an almost inexhaustible mine for the history of the sacrifice, religious practices, and the institutions of priesthood. These institutions in time became so systematic and formidable as to make the names Brahman and Brahmanism typical everywhere for priest and priesthood' (Ibid., p.45).

It seems, according to Nag, this knowledge developed during the secularisation of knowledge. Broadly speaking, it came to be bounded by the non-didactic school of thoughts, such as grammar and law (Nag, 1997: p.51). Ainslie Embree gives more extensive analysis on this term. In discussing the essence of Indian unity, he gives two useful descriptions. They are what he calls the 'Brahmanical Ideologies' and 'regional identities'. While the latter indicates the inevitable diversity of regional differences in this huge geographical ground the size of Europe, the former, according to Embree '...has been a unifier in Indian civilization and a powerful force in maintaining its integrity in the face of tremendous onslaughts of two other great civilizations, the Islamic and the European' (Embree, 1989: p.12). This unifying cultural element is 'not meant to imply an ideology that is confined to one group, but rather a set of values, ideas, concepts, practices and myths that are identifiable in the literary tradition and social institutions', hence, he states, '...Gandhi was not a Brahman, but his ideas were in conformity with the basic thrust of the Brahmanical tradition' (Ibid., p.10).

The Brahmanical tradition, according to this view, is the dominant culture within the existence of broad and diverse subcultures which, as a collective sum, is called Hinduism. This centre eschews the inconsistencies and fluidity that Hinduism often represents. Embree backs up his view by asserting that '...while it is true that the complex structures of Hinduism differentiate Indian civilisation from other great world cultures, it is not at all clear that in the past it ever acted as a unifying factor in the political realm. On the contrary, a very plausible argument can be made, as it often has, that Hinduism as a social system works against political and social integration.' (Ibid., p.12). The social system of Hinduism in this view has been instrumental in the unifying of a political entity under the remit of Brahmanical ideology. Perhaps a strong historical evidence for this view is the setting up of the Mauryan Empire in 324 BC. The creation of the empire by Chandragupta with his preceptor Kautilya was the first successful attempt to organise the society and territory in the way that the king could centralise his authority and political institutions. The *Arthashastra*, which is believed to have been written by Kautilya, recommends the maintaining and strengthening of



varna with an emphasis on the dharma for each respective caste, while implicitly promoting the importance of the Brahman caste (Kautilya, 2003: pp.7-9).<sup>27</sup> This evidence could lead to a postulation that by utilising the Hindu social structure to suit the collective interest, Kautilya, a Brahman minister, managed to retain the tradition of the Brahmanic centrality in the empire.

There are, however, two possible caveats if one subscribes to this view as a relevant concept to the modern Indian context. Firstly, it is the view that if one takes the assumption that culture by nature evolves through intersubjective social contacts, the subsequent outcome of these contacts may be a synthesis of the intermingling of various factors rather than that of the survival of the fittest. For example, present in Gandhi's proactive idealism was not simply the dominant 'Brahmanical' realism but also the moral and intellectual activisms that countered it, namely Buddhism and Jainism. This was perhaps why Gandhi's ideas appealed to the masses.<sup>28</sup> Gandhi's ideas were utilised by various interest groups with different levels of emphasis on the ideas depending on the nature of that group's purpose and interest. In other words, perhaps the contemporary Indian strategic culture, in its origins, is an outcome of the evolution of various political and religious ideas and social values moulded together with India's historical experience emphasising particular aspect(s) of that outcome in the formulation of a future strategy. Secondly, perhaps, there is a danger of it being interpreted as a reductionist approach to the study of Indian culture. Other aspects of Hindu culture, other than that of the Brahmanical tradition, have also survived. The fact that they survived, though lacking the cultural momentum of the Brahmanical tradition, to this day is indicative of its endurance as a more fundamental and generic trait of Indian culture that is not simply confined to the former.

Nevertheless, the ideational context, which the 'Brahmanical Ideology' provides, is an important source for three reasons. Firstly, it provides a foundation for understanding Indian strategic thought and attitude. This indigenous ideology was utilised by the Muslim and the British occupiers to rule India<sup>29</sup> (Karnad, 2002: pp.22-25). This peculiar process through which the ideology endured through India's arduous history, is indicative of the

strength of the ties it has had to the social and political culture of India. Secondly, to a greater extent, the consistent nature of the contents of the ideology could alleviate the difficulty of isolating the relevant cultural variables of Hinduism in understanding the essence of Indian strategic thought. Thirdly, the transcendental character of the Brahmanism enables one to study the nexus between the past and the present vis-à-vis the prevalent political and social culture of India. Accordingly, it may be plausible to postulate that any aspect of this culture could be susceptible to these key epistemological advantages. Then, it could be argued that these advantages are also in conformity with the ideas and attitude presented in the *Arthashastra*, as this thesis reflects both the essence of Indian culture as well as the Brahmanical rationalism.

## Summary

The aim of this chapter was to provide the strategic 'context' which played an important role in the formation India's national identity and its strategic culture. The chapter argued that the geographical (material), historical (experience) and ideational (knowledge) contexts have played a significant part throughout India's history in the formation of its strategic perception. In particular, it has highlighted the centrality of the Brahmanical context as a prelude to the analysis of Kautilyan and Gandhian strategic thought in the next chapters. The main argument of the chapter has been that India's national identity is a central part of the formation of Indian strategic culture.

The first section has argued that the geography of India provides a useful bearing on understanding Indian strategic culture in three ways. Firstly, that India as a geographical unit influences the development of cultural attitude and the perception of itself. Its geographical location provides a physical setting in which social activities and political developments occurred. This argument, thus, gives impetus to the notion that a non-cultural factor could be a factor in considering the efficacy of a country's strategic culture. Secondly, historically, India's location as a crossing point between the Near East and Europe, and Southeast Asia and China, enhances its strategic significance for trade and military expansion. The Persians, Greeks, Romans and Arabs all established trade routes to India and treated it as a strategically vital place for their economic activities. The Romans went as far as to specially design a ship that could withstand the treachery of the Indian Ocean. The idea of trade also expanded to the exchange of *culture* and *ideas*. It was said that the influence of Buddhism stretched to Persia and to the Far East. The expansion of Brahmanical influence was most evident in Southeast Asia through the combination of military and peaceful expansion of the Chola kingdom. Both Buddhist and Brahmanical influence was halted by the Islamic influence, which stretched from the subcontinent along the maritime route to Southeast Asia, and the arrival of the European powers which also used the maritime trade routes, mainly in the Indian Ocean, for their colonial expansion.

Thirdly, although it is difficult to pinpoint the nexus between geography and strategic culture, it is possible to infer that there is a correlation which can be identified through India's strategic and cultural symbolism in two ways. Firstly, the concentric circle theory existing in ancient Indian texts suggests the long existence of the Indian sense of *self-importance* as a geographical unit in Indian strategic thought. In the context of the theoretical debate within IR on the strategic culture approach, the mandala concept can be seen as a merging point of the Indian perception of the material world and their ideational/cultural realm of the social world. It can be argued that the modern Indian sense of *honour* and national pride is affiliated with such origin. Secondly, the Indian esoteric, religious symbolism provides a strategic rationale of another dimension. That is to say the notion of honour and pride is supplemented by a sense of moral superiority which is transpired through the worshipping of gods, often symbolised as geographical features, such as mountains and rivers. Agni, for example, the god of *fire*, symbolises justice and retribution, a symbol of spiritual security.

The key theoretical postulation conveyed in the 'Historical Context' section is that Indian strategic culture has a historical *context* which provides a base in which its significance could be identified and appreciated. The modern India's national consciousness is a continuation of its historical consciousness. This can be identified in two ways. Firstly, it can be identified in myths and epics (Thapar, 1986: p.354), which, in them, contain historical information relevant to culturally persistent strategic rationale. Secondly, the historical consciousness can be identified by exploring the historical periods and events which are deemed to have direct or indirect bearing on the strategic culture of India since its independence.

This section has focused on the latter by delving into the key aspects of Indian history, from the beginning of the first Hindu Empire to the post-independent India, where certain events have, as it is argued, influenced Indian strategic attitude and perception. It points out that in the discussion on the development of Indian strategic thought, a particular significance can be assigned to the periods of the two ancient emperors: Chandragupta and

Ashoka. The development of ancient Indian strategic thought during their reigns occurred in two ways. Firstly, it occurred through the establishment and implementation of the strategic blueprint in the form of the *Arthashastra* which is said to be written by Kautilya, the preceptor of Chandragupta. The text outlines the importance of Hindu dharmic values in building a strong social structure and blueprint for strategies regarding domestic and foreign policies, and war tactics. Secondly, Ashoka's personal conversion to Buddhism, which was followed by his declaration of the national conversion, paved the way for the development of India's moral strength. Ashoka's Wheel which is superimposed in the middle of the Indian national flag is a symbolic edifice, a cultural manifestation of the five key Buddhist dharmic values of 'Truth, Non-injury, non stealing, Purity and Non-possession' (Agrawala, 1964: p.58), subscribed and implemented by Ashoka.

The eras of Muslim occupation and the British raj also has significant influence on Indian strategic culture. The Muslim settlement in the subcontinent has left some problematic legacies in the region. On external relations, Indian strategic thinking has been significantly driven vis-à-vis Pakistan against which it has had several wars since its independence. It escalated to the point of nuclear stand off after their nuclear tests in 1998. The territorial/religious issue of Jammu-Kashmir has been a sensitive issue which often has intensified the tension between the two countries. On internal affairs, India's policy has had to take into account its Muslim culture and population, which is the second largest in the world (but still an ethnic minority given the total population). On the issue of law and culture, the secular nature of the Indian law has come into conflict with the *Shariat*, or Muslim Personal Law (Brass, 1990: pp.191-192).<sup>30</sup> On religion, there have been violent conflicts between the Hindu extremists and Muslims over religious sites which both side claimed to be their holy places of worship (ibid., pp.193-194).

As indicated in the section, the extent to which the British raj has influenced Indian strategic culture has been debatable. However, the influence of the British raj on Indian strategic culture can not be ignored for

two reasons. Firstly, India's seaward looking strategic perception has derived, in part, from the fact that British imperialism came from the sea. Secondly, before India's independence the imperial colonisation had a galvanising effect on the growth of Indian resistance and nationalism which became the backbone of the post-independent Indian national identity.

If the geographical and historical aspects represented a physical setting and experiential element, respectively, of Indian strategic culture, the ideational aspect could be understood as a force which nurtured the continuation and growth of socio-cultural consciousness. That is to say, Indian cultural identity is partly located in the contents of India's unique ideational tradition.

The significance of this was recognised by Nehru, who, in exploring the nature of Indian unity, made an observation that while the cultural diversity was rife in India, there is something 'distinctively Indian, with the same national heritage and the same set of moral and mental qualities. There was something living and dynamic about this heritage which shows itself in ways of living and a philosophical attitude to life and its problems' (Nehru, 1946: p.56). In effect, Nehru, as the first leader of India, was looking for a solid cultural foundation on which a great India could be built.

Indeed, as indicated in the 'Ideational Context' section, for the Indian nationalist movement in pre- and post-independence periods, forming a firm ideational basis was a fundamental part of consolidating India's national identity. This section has suggested that the Indian values of pride and honour, in part, derived from Brahmanical ideology which has its origins in ancient Indian history. This ideational force, however, evolved over time in ancient times due to the challenges posed by other religious movements, namely Buddhist and Jain, and the changes in historical context. Nevertheless, its core ideas and values, such as the four social values dharma, artha, karma and moksha and the caste system have survived and continue to exist in the national psyche of India.

The significance of the Brahmanical culture vis-à-vis Indian strategic culture is that it provides the analyst with an access point to an Indian ideational setting on which secular and non-secular values relating to Indian attitude and perception on governance developed. This is evident in the *Mahabharata* which holds didactic as well as non-didactic knowledge. This ancient document amalgamates the art of governance and moral/religious/philosophical knowledge to form instructions on the well-being of the society and individuals. The post-Epic period sees the separation between the spiritual and non-spiritual knowledge, though they never come to be completely separated. The most notable literature on Indian strategy is the *Arthashastra* which is a mark of the non-spiritual knowledge on Indian strategies on good governance, though there is evidence in the text to suggest that it follows the Vedic ideational tradition. A particular significance of this literature can be attributed to its historical context. Its authorship coincided with the beginning of the Mauryan Empire, the first Indian state with highly organised form of political institutions which conquered a large part of the Indian subcontinent. The *Arthashastra* was effectively written as a manual for a formation of a successful state.

The Brahmanical ideology also entails philosophical and religious values, most notably dharma, which is one of the four Brahmanical social values or *purusartha*. It is often used as a synonymous term with *satya* or Truth which is the central pillar of the Gandhian social and political philosophy. Thus, Brahmanical ideology embraces both the strategic ideas, which present a distinct Indian political rationalism, and didactic values, which centre on the spiritual welfare of individuals. These two constituents form a central part of the ideology which in turn is an important part of Indian identity. Accordingly, the Brahmanical ideology forms the backbone of Indian strategic culture.

The Indian strategic culture approach this chapter uses presents an alternative way of engaging the issue of Indian strategic behaviour to that of neorealism. While its contextual approach looks at the origins of India's socio-cultural identity and attitude to attempt to explain India's strategic

behaviour, neorealists seek their explanations by utilising a positivist methodology to identify a pattern of India's behaviour. Indeed, ultimately, both approaches seek to identify a pattern of India's strategic behaviour. However, there are two major differences between the two approaches. Firstly, whereas Indian strategic culture approach seeks to locate this pattern in India's socio-cultural-historical resources, neorealism finds its sources in independent variables, i.e. its abstract notions of security and anarchy. Secondly, while the contextual approach acknowledges the idea of change in patterns of behaviour, the advocates of neorealism's structural approach assume the pattern of the state behaviour to be constant.

Indian strategic culture can also be regarded as an alternative approach to neorealism in the way it utilises the idea of Indian identity. It is through an understanding of Indian identity that one can identify meaning of Indian strategic behaviour. However, the neorealist's notion of the unitary state ignores the idea of Indian identity. This appears to be a shortfall of neorealism's ability in explaining India's strategic behaviour.



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<sup>1</sup> In his analysis of the formation of the German interest in its post-unification period, Thomas Berger stresses the importance of a definition of national identity in the shaping of a national interest. See Thomas Berger, 'Norms, Identity and National Security in Germany and Japan', in Katzenstein, Peter J. (ed.) (1996), *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics*, p.323.

<sup>2</sup> Having said this, the impact of technological innovation on Indian strategic culture is a subject which requires further research. Technological availability and development is said to have influenced the development of India's nuclear doctrine. For an excellent analysis on this see Sidhu, W. P. S (1997), *The Development of an Indian Nuclear Doctrine Since 1980*, Ph.D Thesis, University of Cambridge.

<sup>3</sup> This section is a readapted version of the 'Geography and India's Strategic Culture' section in Marcus Kim, 'India' in Howlett, D. Glenn, J. and Poore, S. (eds.) (2004), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture: A Debate*, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp.75-104.

<sup>4</sup> Cherrapunji in Assam receives on average 426 inches of rain annually.

<sup>5</sup> The Western Ghats (Ghats means 'steps'). average about 3,000 feet in height and the Eastern Ghats vary but some peaks are 4,000 feet high.

<sup>6</sup> The Guptas, the Moguls, the Portuguese, the French and the Dutch all failed to conquer the land.

<sup>7</sup> This is evident in the ancient document called *Periplus Maris Erythraei*, or 'Sailing Guide of the Erythraean Sea' which was written in Greek for the merchants sailing to trade in the Red Sea, the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean.

<sup>8</sup> It is also known as the Gandhari script which is said to have derived from Aramaic.

<sup>9</sup> One league is approximately four miles.

<sup>10</sup> This section is a readapted version of the 'Historical Context' section in Marcus Kim, 'India' in Howlett, D. Glenn, J. and Poore, S. (eds.) (2004), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture: A Debate*, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp.75-104.

<sup>11</sup> This manifested in two ways: first, through his non-alignment policy; second, through his realist policy, especially on maintaining the nuclear option. For the latter, see Sidhu (1997) Ph.D. Thesis. On his foreign policy, see Walter Crocker (1966), *Nehru*.

<sup>12</sup> In his inscription, Ashoka tells that 150,000 people were abducted and 100,000 were killed in the battle.

<sup>13</sup> For a discussion on its origins see Agrawala, V. S. (1964), *The Wheel Flag of India*, Varanasi: Prithivi Prakashan, p.54.

<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, Pakistan named its intermediate range surface-to-surface ballistic missile 'Ghauri' as a symbol of Ghuri's victory over Prithviraj, a Hindu leader, in the twelfth century. This indicates the importance of history in the making of the contemporary South Asian history. The word 'prithvi' in ancient Sanskrit literally means 'earth'. In *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, however, the word is associated with the mythic origin of the state. It is stated, 'at that time [in the beginning of the world] there was neither decrepitude, nor famine, nor calamity, nor disease (on earth). In consequence of the protection afforded by that king [the royal son of Vena], nobody had any fear from reptiles and thieves or from any other source. When he proceeded to the sea, the waters used to be solidified. ... That high-souled king caused all creatures to regard righteousness as the foremost of all things; and because he gratified all the people, therefore, was he called *Rajan* (king). And because he also healed the wounds of Brahmanas [priests], therefore, he earned the name of *Kshatriya*. And because the Earth (during his reign) became celebrated for the practice of virtue, therefore, she came to be called by many as *Prithivi*' (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LIX, Roy, 1890: p.189). In view of this, the word 'prithvi' connotes not only the material sense of the Earth but also the symbolic meaning of moral righteousness.

<sup>15</sup> However, Ghuri failed to conquer the Kashmir region.

<sup>16</sup> Indeed, some of the Hindu kingdoms before had faced similar problems in projecting their power in the southern regions.

<sup>17</sup> Indeed, the success of Baber's conquest of India was mainly due to the introduction of firearms and his strategic skills.

<sup>18</sup> See <http://www.fco.gov.uk>

<sup>19</sup> The other crucial concern for internal security is secessionist movements, which are based on the historical problem of strong regional identities. The failure to conquer the Indian subcontinent by numerous Hindu kings and other foreign powers were mainly because of this reason. This has existed in India ever since the creation of social polities.

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<sup>20</sup> This section is a readapted version of the 'Ideational Context' section in Marcus Kim, 'India' in Howlett, D. Glenn, J. and Poore, S. (eds.) (2004), *Neorealism Versus Strategic Culture: A Debate*, Ashgate, Aldershot, pp.75-104.

<sup>21</sup> Caste is a complex notion. For a detailed analysis of the nature of caste system, see Max Weber (1958), *The Religion of India*.

<sup>22</sup> The conflict between the Ksatriyas and the Brahmans was ideational and physical in nature. Overall, the rise of Ksatriya brought a social equilibrium, as Tagore states, 'In fact, perfect balance in these opposing forces would lead to deadlock in creation; life moves in the cadence of constant adjustment of opposites, - it is a perpetual process of reconciliation of contradiction', R. Tagore (1923), p.3.

<sup>23</sup> The fact that the Ksatriyas influenced such a vast geographical area and so many ethnic groups suggests that understanding Indian political dynamics and perception is not just about exploring the 'isms' that have survived the longest and accepted the most but also about trying to appreciate the ideational process through which the modern attitude and perception is formed.

<sup>24</sup> Ramayana is another valuable source of ancient literature, which describes a model of a righteous king.

<sup>25</sup> Dharma, Karma and Artha, in particular were the essence of the Brahmanic knowledge. This knowledge, which was didactic in the Vedic age, evolved into the form of the quasi-rationalistic sutras and sastras or instructions. In a new political reality, power became a central element of its ideology.

<sup>26</sup> Gandhi's ideas also entail these values. Gandhi proactively tried to advocate and apply them in his life in the hope that the 'Truth' would be obtained. See chapter 7.

<sup>27</sup> This is evident in the fact that Kautilya puts the duties of each caste in an descending order of importance from Brahmans down to Sudra.

<sup>28</sup> Gandhi's success also has to be attributed to the British colonial context and the poor status of social welfare which had existed in India.

<sup>29</sup> Karnad suggests that the success of Akbar's rule in India was partly due to the ideational compatibility between the two traditions. In particular, the Laws of Manu, the principal treatise on Hindu laws, was in conformity with the Mughal rules. The British, on the other hand, utilised its principal social structure, the caste system which is deeply attached to its four values or ethics of life, by taking advantage of its vast labour resources to rule the country. See Karnad (2002), *Nuclear Weapons and Indian Security*, pp.22-25.

<sup>30</sup> In order to overcome this problem, on 6th May 1987, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi went as far as to integrate the provisions of the shariat into secular law.

## Chapter 4: Kautilya's Arthasastra: Cultural Embeddedness and Strategy

### Introduction

As indicated in the previous chapter, India has a very complex history and philosophy. This is further complicated by the diversity of regional identities constrained largely by the topographical barriers between the northern plain and the South, and the seas surrounding the subcontinent. What is remarkable, however, is that there are ideas and traditions that have been preserved for millennia without much contamination by foreign influence. In the foundation of the various philosophical traditions, which include Buddhism and Jainism, lies Vedic knowledge, the philosophical speculation regarding the essence of life and the universe. Ultimately, the pursuit of this knowledge is believed to bring salvation, *moksha*, one of the four Indian social and philosophical values or *purusartha*.

From the so called Late Epic Period<sup>1</sup> (from around early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium to late 1<sup>st</sup> millennium B.C.), the ideational change that leads towards the writing of the *Arthasastra* presents two intermingling ideational and social cultures. On the one hand there is the subjective belief and attitudes manifested in the forms of hymns and poems. This is most notable in the Vedic texts. In these texts, there are speculations about gods, nature, ritualism, and ethics. This predominant Vedic social and ideational culture was challenged by the growth of Buddhism and Jainism around 500 B.C., as a counter force to what was seen as corrupt social and institutional practices, hierarchy and inequality. It was largely a moral objection primarily concerning the caste system.<sup>2</sup> It was during this cultural conflict, which extends beyond the Late Epic Period, that texts such as the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* were written in order to preserve and further the Vedic culture. These texts thus contain inspirational mythic visions and stories that are based on Vedic beliefs.

However, on the other hand, what makes the Late Epic Period lead-up to the formation of a large territorial state different from the Vedic lies in its philosophic dimension; the pursuit of knowledge through the medium of reasoning. This is the period where the intermingled knowledge of the Vedic period (1400 – 500 B.C.) separates into relatively secular branches. The *Arthashastra*, which is believed to have been written by Kautilya, belongs to this period. It is an ancient Indian literature on the subject of *artha*, which generally refers to material wealth or economic profit. Based on references to various earlier scholars of science or politics in the *Arthashastra*, it appears that there had been an academic tradition of arthashastra in existence in ancient India before Kautilya's version was written.

The discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1904 by R. Shamasastri has brought new insights into the state of advancement of the ancient Indians in political and institutional theory. The work subsumes various aspects of political theory, which stretches from a theory of welfare state to security of the state, to war, peace and diplomacy. All these subjects are remarkable in that they are thoroughly reasoned and described. The latter aspects specially should interest students of International Relations (IR hereafter) as the key concepts are comparable and relevant to some of the assumptions devised in IR theories.<sup>3</sup> In addition to this significance, there has been an attempt to assimilate the *mandala* or concentric circle concept presented in the ancient text to the modern Indian political context (Tanham, 2001). While it is important to assess the potential applicability of such theory to the contemporary Indian context, such a direct application risks: 1) an inaccurate convergence between ancient and modern contexts; 2) misunderstanding of the dynamics of changing global and regional political settings; and 3) favouring of ideas for the convenience of transcendental application, where some ideas from the same text appear more attractive to apply than others.

Despite these risks, it would be premature to postulate that ideas and attitude are simply contextual or relative to time and space. This is because, in general, culture cannot be presupposed to exist in its abstract form but it changes and evolves, though slowly, through time and space through

horizontal or/and vertical social interactions of people and ideas (Lapid, 1996: p.7). This implies that culture is something that is continuously constructed and reconstructed. However, in this process, some ideas and values may carry on to be part of the identity of a society or a nation-state, whether they be part of the social/national consciousness or the sub-consciousness. In the case of India, the strength of its indigenous cultural values in the form of Brahmanical ideology has remained resilient, even through its turbulent historical experiences form such a dominant socio-cultural force that the attempts by various foreign powers to suppress and degenerate its social consciousness have failed.<sup>4</sup>

With this theoretical pretext in mind, the value of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* not only lies in the insights it provides on the advancement of the ancient Indian strategic rationale, but also through the strategic rationale evident in its text, it reveals its transcendental relevance to modern IR and to the understanding of modern India's strategic culture.<sup>5</sup> As T. N. Ramaswamy writes:

'Any careful study of the science [of artha], as presented by Kautilya, leaves no doubt of the trans-temporal perspective of the author, which alone is of lasting value to students of statecraft through time. It is this trans-temporal perspective that invests the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya with thought-strands which transcend temporal and environmental limitations and preserve a refreshingly modern pragmatic pigmentation' (Ramaswamy, 1994: p.5).

This is not to say that contemporary Indian political decision makers and strategists treat the *Arthashastra* as an essential manual and that India's attitude and behaviour in the international setting since its independence have necessarily conformed to the ideas presented in it. However, it may be postulated that the dynamics of strategic thinking evident in the text have indirect implications for modern India's strategic rationalism. In other words the arthashastra tradition, in conjunction with the long-existing social structure, has formed the essential endogenous cultural context within which India has operated in both regional and global theatres. It is to that extent, it could be argued, that this literature finds its significance in the modern context and marks the beginning of India's strategic rationalism.

In order to explore this assumption, this chapter attempts to refresh and regenerate the meaning of the *Arthashastra*. This is attempted in two stages. Firstly, the historiographical context of the *Arthashastra* is discussed. Secondly, the chapter traces the origins of the Indian science of politics. This essentially centres around two areas. The first concerns the ideational milieu that surrounds the literature. Following this the interpretative analysis is continued, examining the key strategic dynamics and philosophical/religious rationale implied in the *Arthashastra*.

### **Authenticity and Its Strategic Implications**

Since its publication in 1915, the *Arthashastra* has shed light on the status of Indian political science. Until then, some Western Indologists<sup>6</sup> held the view that Indians were deficient in the area of political thought. However, the introduction of the text overturned this view by confirming that Indian political science preceded modern political ideas by several centuries (Parmar, 1987: pp.1-2). Furthermore, it is evident that there existed in ancient India a set of strategic ideas for the building of a strong nation-state. Rao goes so far as to state that it 'brought up the lagging side in all the vitality around the individual, and asserted for man, the worth, the meaning and the possibility of human life' (Rao, 1958: p.13).

It is, however, also true that since Shamasastri's first discovery of the *Arthashastra* and the subsequent publishing of his translation from the Sanskrit to English in 1915, there have been various issues and controversies raised concerning a range of aspects of the book.

From the very outset, there have been issues that were not resolved, or at least not agreed upon. One of these issues is the very authenticity of the *Arthashastra*. At the centre of this lie two riddles. Firstly, there is the question of the authenticity of the writing date of the *Arthashastra*. Secondly, there is the uncertainty surrounding the historicity of Kautilya, who is

traditionally believed to be the author of the book. The fact that almost a century of research and debate has not found definitive evidence or agreement on this issue indicates the relatively evenly balanced strength of the opposing arguments, and the complexity of verifying the evidence uncovered. Nonetheless, broadly speaking, there are two schools of thought on the issue of authenticity: the traditional school and its antithesis. The former advocates the authenticity of the work and the latter claims it to be either a later work than claimed, written later in the early Christian era, or to not be authentic.<sup>7</sup>

The traditional school advocates the view that the *Arthashastra* is indeed genuine and that was written by Kautilya, also named Canakya or Vishnugupta, the preceptor of Chandragupta of Maurya, between the fourth and third century B.C. Indologists such as R. Shamasastri, N. N. Law, R. Mookerji, M. V. Krishna Rao and Ganapathi Shastri subscribe to this school. Shamasastri, for example, believes that Kautilya lived and wrote the *Arthashastra* between 321 and 300 B.C. (Shamasastri, 1915: pp.vi-vii). He bases this view on Chapter 10 of Book II, which identifies Kautilya as the author of the book (Kautilya, 1915: p.85). On the issue of date, Shamasastri points out that the society portrayed in the *Arthashastra* conforms to the social milieu of the Mauryan period, and it is beyond doubt that Chandragupta was made King in 321 B.C. (Shamasastri, 1915: pp.vi-vii). Bharati Mukherjee also subscribes to this school by pointing out the evidence in Chapter 1 of Book XV of the text itself which states, 'This Sastra has been made by him who from intolerance (of misrule) quickly rescued the scriptures and the science of weapons and the Earth which had passed to the Nanda' (Mukherjee, 1976: p.19; Kautilya, 1915: p.520). R. P. Kangle, who compiled the pieces of *Arthashastra* that were discovered from various regions of India in different languages subsequent to Shamasastri's discovery of the Northern version of it, is convinced of the historicity of Kautilya. He states, 'all sources, Brahmanical, Buddhist, and Jain, are....agreed on one point, that he [Kautilya or Canakya] was responsible for the destruction of the Nanda rule in Magadha and the establishment of Chandragupta Maurya on the throne'<sup>8</sup>

(Kangle, 2000: p.108). Archaeological research also seems to support this view (Mukherjee, Bharati, 1976: p.19).

In highlighting the controversy over the date of the composition of the book, Somnath Dhar turns to the corroborating evidence between the text and the historical context of the time of the reign of Chandragupta of Maurya. He suggests that the countries such as Mallaka, Mudraka and Kambhoja mentioned in Chapter 1 of Book XI were thriving in the early part of Chandragupta's reign (Dhar, 1981: p.14). N. N. Law also suggests that these nations had existed from or before the rise of Buddhism and through the time of Kautilya, as some of the countries on his list match the sixteen countries mentioned in Buddhist literature (Law, 1921: pp.2-3).<sup>9</sup> According to this view, the fact that the *Arthashastra* shows little respect for Buddhism confirms the political context of the time, when ideological conflict existed between conventional Hinduism and the relatively newly formed Buddhist sect (Dhar, 1981: p.14). Krishna Rao observes that there is no direct reference made to Buddhism or Jainism, but that the *Arthashastra* does mention words such as 'Pasanda' ('heretics with matted hair'), and that Buddhist and Jaina mendicants served the King as spies, monitoring suspicious characters in the society who could be a threat to the security of the state. This, in his view, confirms the written date of the *Arthashastra* as being between the fourth and third centuries B.C. (Rao, 1958: pp.21-22). In the introductory essay in *Studies in Ancient Hindu Polity*, R. Mookerji considers the synchronism of some of the technical words mentioned in the *Arthashastra* with that of the Edict of Asoka, and concludes that the book is authentic. (Mookerji, R., 1914: pp.xlii-xliii)

There is some other literary evidence put forward by this school. The most notable items are: Dandin's *Dasakumaracarita* (written in the seventh century A.D.) which praises Vishnugupta (another name for Kautilya) who wrote the science of polity for the Maurya king; Bana's *Kadambari* (written in the seventh century A.D.) which criticises Kautilya's work for its amoral and ruthless contents; and *Panchatantra*, which mentions the *Arthashastra* as the work of Chanakya (Aiyangar, 1935: p.133; Parmar, 1987: p.12fn). In *Nitisara*,



which is generally believed to have been written in the fourth century A.D. Kamandaka pays a long tribute to Kautilya, referring to him as 'the highly intelligent Vishnugupta' and the 'most cunning and artful one' (Kamandaka, 1896: pp.2-3). He also refers to him as having overthrown the Nanda king and 'brought the entire earth under the thorough control of Chandragupta, the foremost of sovereigns' (Ibid., pp.2-3).

The opposing school denies the authenticity of the *Arthashastra*, but encompasses a variety of views concerning the extent to which it is not authentic. Three different strands of thought can be identified. Firstly, there is a view which rejects the work's authenticity outright. Perhaps the most notable scholar holding this view is M. Winternitz. The bases for his view essentially lie in the cross-comparison of the *Arthashastra* with *Indica*, the book written by Megasthenes, the Greek ambassador to Chandragupta of Maurya (Winternitz, 1923: pp.262-263). Winternitz argues that while there are several points of agreement between the *Arthashastra* and *Indica*, there are also some notable differences and that these indicate that Megasthenes and Kautilya were not contemporaries and that the book should be assigned to a later date. Three of these differences can be highlighted. Firstly, according to Megasthenes, the ramparts for fortresses used during Chandragupta's reign were made of wood rather than stones, which Kautilya advises using in the *Arthashastra*. Winternitz points out that archaeological evidence supports the former method of construction. Secondly, Winternitz suggests that the entirely different description of financial and military organisation to that in the *Arthashastra* which is described in *Indica*, indicates that Megasthenes experienced different social and political conditions to those of Kautilya's. More recent study by Goyal supports this point (Goyal, 2000: p.177). Thirdly, in contrast with Kautilya's description of the advancement of knowledge of chemistry and science, Megasthenes' account of it seems to indicate a more primitive state of development. For example, according to Winternitz, the use of mercury in the process of making artificial gold, and in medicine, as mentioned by Kautilya, occurred much later (Winternitz 1923: p.263).

Goyal also belongs to the rejectionist school. Of the identities of the author mentioned in the book, Chanakya, Vishnugupta and Kautilya, he suggests that because Chandragupta became a Jaina, it is plausible that Chanakya, the Maurya minister, was also a Jaina. Hence, he could not have written a text such as the *Arthashastra* as it was anti-Jainism and Buddhist (Goyal, 2000: p.59).

The second perspective dismisses the traditional view of the homogeneity of the text and its author. In his book *Theories of Diplomacy in Kautilya's Arthashastra*, Kalidas Nag challenges the traditional estimation of the book's date to around the reign of Chandragupta of Maurya, by asserting that the disperse feudal diplomacy described in the text conflicts with the centralised diplomacy that existed at the time of Chandragupta. Accordingly, Kautilya's diplomacy occurred either before or after the Maurya period (Nag, 1997: p.121). He further argues that the *Arthashastra* is not the work of one but a collection of the interpolations of various authors (though he is not certain of the identities of the other authors). It was apparently a common practice to recopy old manuscripts as the climate often destroyed valuable works. In doing so, often some sections were modified or added and credited to the original great name, in order to create respect and credibility for the work (Ibid., pp.122-123). Nag qualifies this argument by cross-analysing historical information with the descriptions in the *Arthashastra*. He, like Winternitz, also points out that the description of the use of mercury in the book, and some of the contradictions between the *Indica* and the *Arthashastra* indicate that the *Arthashastra* was written later. In addition, Nag points to the fact that 'Cina', a country mentioned by Kautilya, could not have existed before the T'sin dynasty (250 BC). Based on this analysis, Nag concludes that the *Arthashastra* should not be treated as a history book but as a political theory that has transcendental implications (Ibid., p.124). One interesting difference between Winternitz and Nag, however, is that while Winternitz categorically rejects Kautilya's authorship, Nag believes that at least some parts are his work. This analysis puts the date of the *Arthashastra* to somewhere from the period around the Mauryan dynasty to the early Christian era.

The third view is more distinctive, in that it uses more technical methods to identify the authenticity of the work. There have been two interesting approaches. In the first place, there is the statistical approach of Thomas Trautmann. His investigation shows that there are changes in frequency of the occurrence of several words such as *eva*, *evam*, *ca*, *tatra* etc. in different books of the work. From this quantitative method, he suggests that three hands are apparent in Books II, III and VII. He also finds Books I, II and VIII to be the work of a single author. His conclusion is that 'the *Arthashastra* has not one author but several...and that it is to be referred to not one date but to as many dates as it has authors' (Trautmann, 1971: p.174). A piece of circumstantial evidence for this finding, which Trautmann cites, comes from Chapter 1 of Book I which says "This single *Arthashastra* has been made for the most part by drawing together (or condensing) as many *Arthashastras* as have been composed by previous teachers for the attainment and protection of the Earth" (ibid., p.173). Trautmann sees the *Arthashastra* as a 'compilation' of previous works, rather than as the creative work of a single author known as Kautilya. While his conclusions portray an even more complex picture of the problem of authenticating the *Arthashastra*, he leaves out the possibility that Kautilya himself was one of the authors of the work.

The second and more recent approach that is worthy of attention is an inscriptional approach. In his book, *Evolution of Kautilya's Arthashastra: An Inscriptional Approach*, S. C. Mishra cross-compares technical terms and various fragments from the text of the *Arthashastra* with terms recorded in various inscriptions from the third century BC to the twelfth century AD. The result of his study shows that the terms used in the book belong to various time-brackets, according to the corresponding style of words in the inscriptions of those times. From this careful research, Mishra shows that the *Arthashastra* has as many authors and ages as there are time-brackets (Mishra, 1997: p.205). For example, he shows that on the basis of inscriptional cross comparison of some of the textual terms, Chapters 6, 7, 8 and 9 of Book II, Chapter 11 of Book III, and Chapter 2 of Book V may belong

to the period A.D. 124-30, while Book VI and VII may belong between A.D. 450 and 475, or could have been composed at some time before the sixth century A.D. (Ibid., p.208). Mishra departs from the date that is usually assigned by the opposing school (early Christian era) by suggesting that the *Arthasastra* was added to as late as the ninth to twelfth century A.D. For example, Book II, which describes 'The Activity of the Heads of Departments', went through its final revision during this period. Various terms from this book are identified in the inscriptions of the Pala king Dharmapaladeva from Khalimpur in Maldah district, of Devapaladeva from Monghyr and of Lalitasuradeva from Pandukesvara (Ibid., p.210). It would appear that there was a revival of the study and application of the *Arthasastra*, especially in the area of administration, during this period.

Mishra's study provides at least two valuable observations. Firstly, a significant historical fact that Mishra establishes is that although there were frequent rewritings and interpolations into the text over a long time span, the *Arthasastra* existed in the Mauryan period, at least in a shorter form. For example, various chapters between Book I and Book IV contain original Mauryan elements. Chapter 13 of Book XIII, which deals with the pacification of conquered territories, is, according to Mishra, Mauryan in origin and has not been contaminated (Ibid., p.207). Secondly, at the very outset, the inscriptional approach assumes that the *Arthasastra* is not necessarily a single piece of work written by an author in a given period of time, but because different parts of the work are believed to belong to different time-brackets according to inscriptions written at different periods of history, it may also be assumed that it has historical value.

The arguments of the two schools of thought highlight the complexity surrounding this work. Both schools have the support of some prominent Indologists, with and present strong evidence. What is widely agreed, however, is the historicity of the Mauryan Empire in the fourth century B.C. and the fact that there was a text called the *Arthasastra* during this period, although this claim is rejected by scholars including Winternitz and Keith. It is clear, however, that neither school has definitive evidence to prove the

authenticity or otherwise of the *Arthashastra*: their evidence is mostly circumstantial. This debate will probably continue until concrete evidence for or against the work's authenticity is uncovered.

The significance of the debate discussed in this brief overview lies in two factors. Firstly, on a general note, it highlights the nuance of difference between undoubted historical fact (i.e. the general information in history text books) and the cutting edge of the academic world, where historical facts lose their clarity depending on which version of evidence one believes. The traditional school of thought on the *Arthashastra* should not be accepted as being the only view. This suggests that history cannot be seen as a set of 'given facts'. Secondly, following on from the literary evidence of the traditional school, Trautmann's statistical analysis and Mishra's inscriptional research, there seems to be evidence to suggest that there was a tradition of the science of politics from after the end of the Mauryan period up to at least the twelfth century A.D.

To a greater extent, both the main argument of the traditional school that there is literary evidence in the post Mauryan to early Christian era to support the authenticity of the *Arthashastra*, and the argument made by the latter school that it was a work made up of interpolations, implying the past existence of an arthashastra school, strengthens the thesis that there is a trace of 'Indian strategic thought' that can be called 'Indian strategic culture', at least at an ideational level.

### **The Origins of the Indian Science of Politics**

From the conviction that India has had a long tradition of a science of politics and that its foundation essentially derives from Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, it may be postulated that this forms the backbone of Indian strategic thought. This supposition could be supported by the fact that the *Arthashastra* is the most compact and comprehensive work on the science of politics. Its scope is wider ranging than any other subsequent works on the discipline.

At this point, however, it is necessary to note that the ideas and theoretical assumptions in the *Arthashastra* should not be regarded as a set of abstract *episteme* that were formed from nowhere, but that they have ideational origins. This is evident from the very beginning of the book, where in paying tribute to Sukra and Brihaspati, Kautilya states, 'this single (treatise on the) Science of Politics has been prepared mostly by bringing together (the teaching of) as many treatises on the Science of Politics as have been composed by ancient teachers for the acquisition and the protection of the Earth' (Kautilya, 2003: p.1). The identification of teachers by Kautilya suggests that there had been various schools of artha. Kautilya compiled differing views of these teachers (or 'acaryas') in order to codify existing views and convey his own understanding of the ways political affairs should be conducted. It is difficult to verify the historicity of the teachers mentioned by Kautilya for three reasons. Firstly, the works of his teachers or predecessors appear to be lost or undiscovered. Secondly, in ancient India it appeared to have been the case that often a single name of high repute was attributed to various great thinkers. For example, the name Manu was attributed to several persons. In the Vedic literature Manu is referred to as 'the first man' and 'the father of the race' without any historical reference.<sup>10</sup> This apparently is a different Manu to the one who is described in the *Dharmasastra* as 'the first sovereign ruler'. It seems appropriate to deduce that as Kautilya refers several times to Manu (who is described as 'a lawgiver) in the *Arthashastra*, he was aware of a political thinker called Manu who had lived before him. This Manu was apparently distinct from the Vedic, and post-Vedic Manus, and the later person of the same name who wrote the Code of Manu (Saletore, 1963: p.8).<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, as was the case with some other ancient literature, it is possible that the teachings of the 'ancient teachers' were orally transmitted, which would make verification of their theses impossible. Thus, one can only rely on a hypothetical account based on available evidence.

What is apparent in the text of the *Arthashastra* is that Kautilya uses the views of eighteen teachers (Saletore, 1963: p. 33).<sup>12</sup> P. V. Kane identifies Manu, Usanas (Sukra), Brihaspati, Parasara and Pisuna as schools of artha,

and the other seventeen (excluding the unnamed Teacher and Kautilya) as individual authors (Kane, Vol.I, 1930: p.99). B. A. Saletore presents a different view. By using a statistical method based on the number of times each teacher is mentioned in various contexts, he deduces that Kautilya may have had four distinct categories of teachers in mind (Saletore, 1963: p.33).<sup>13</sup> While accepting the limitation on verifying the outcome of his research, Saletore speculates that each teacher represents a school of thought and thus the *Arthashastra* implies nineteen schools of artha from the time of Manu to that of Kautilya (Ibid., p.33). Although it is difficult to verify the historicity of these teachers of artha, it is possible to locate some of their names in other literature.<sup>14</sup> For example, the *Mahabharata*<sup>15</sup>, which is generally accepted to be have been written between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200, mentions six teachers who are also mentioned by Kautilya. They are Brihaspati, Manu, Bharadvaja, Visalaksa, Sukra (or Usanas) and Indra (Kane, Vol.I, 1930: p.100). Saletore points out that for unknown reasons the *Mahabharata* mentions five teachers whom the *Arthashastra* does not mention. They are Gaurasiras, Kavya, Mahendra, Manu Pracetasa and Sambara (Saletore, 1963: p.38). If one assumes each of them to represent a distinct school of artha, it would bring the total number of artha schools to twenty four. This, though not definitive, indicates the existence of circumstantial evidence for the historicity of the teachers.

#### *The Etymological Origin of the Concept of Arthashastra*

As indicated earlier, the word 'artha' generally refers to material wealth or economic profit (Mukherjee, 1976: p.15). Hence, the word 'arthashastra' refers to ways of obtaining economic profit. Ashoke Chatterjee Sastri, however, suggests that it is misleading to associate the word with 'economics'. He states that the word 'artha' originally derived from 'the root 'arth', which means to want to pray, to request or to make...'. Hence, he concludes that it generally means '(a) aim, goal, necessity, desire; and (b) money, wealth, property, earthly attractions etc.' (Sastri, 1997: pp.2-3). For Sastri, the word arthashastra refers essentially to a treatise on 'wealth or property'. He believes that it is not accurate to associate it with royal administration or political

science (Ibid., pp.2-3). Kautilya, however, seems to prefer a broader interpretation of the word. As he states, 'the source of the livelihood of men is wealth, in other words, the Earth [throughout the World] inhabited by men. The science which is the means of attainment and protection of that Earth is the Science of Politics' (Kautilya, 2003: p.512). Thus, at the beginning of the *Arthashastra*, he gives an exhaustive list of contents, which includes such areas as social settlement, fortification of cities, business laws, employment of spies, metallurgy, organisation of the state, rules on external affairs, how to fight wars and astrology (Ibid., pp.1-5).

These two different conceptions of the meaning of artha are not necessarily in conflict with one another. If one understands 'artha' in the Hindu religious context, it is an essential value, one of the four religious and social aims of life or purushartha. This implies that artha is held as a virtue by all Hindu individuals. It is part of an individual's duty to pursue this virtue. The *Arthashastra*, however, was written for the King and princes, for the purpose of good governance. It was not regarded as of direct relevance at the religious and mass public level. In fact, it may even be postulated that there may have been a concerted effort to prevent it becoming integrated into the public domain. Its high political value may explain why it was first written in Sanskrit at an age when that language was rarely used. Sanskrit was the language of the elite and educated social classes, namely the Brahmins and Kshatriyas, with equivalent status to the Latin of Middle-Ages Europe. K. V. Rangaswami Aiyangar, an eminent Indologist, basically supports this view by stating that 'Rules of law and conduct...like those contained in a Dharmasutra are of interest to all classes of men equally, while, from their highly specialized nature, the contents of the Arthasutra, would have attraction only to princes and those destined for administrative careers' (Aiyangar, 1935: pp.18-19). Aiyangar gives another plausible interpretation that there were 'powerful interests' in maintaining the secrecy of such a sensitive, or even dangerous, set of information as the *Arthashastra* contains (Ibid., pp.19-20). The 'powerful interests' are the 'acquisition' of material wealth and the maintenance of order.



This argument can be sustained from the sense that Kautilya recognises the need for strict secrecy in pursuing what one might call, these prime directives. Chapters 10 to 17 of Book I of the *Arthashastra* describe instructions on appointing spies and guarding against enemies (Kautilya, 2003: pp.18-43). Book XVI gives details on how to defeat enemies using secret means (Ibid., pp.494-511). The meticulousness of detail and length give it an overwhelming impression of the author having almost an obsession with secrecy and security. Thus, it is not at all implausible to speculate that the *Arthashastra* was a document which was intended to be kept secret itself.

Light could also be shed on the origin of the *Arthashastra* by a cross-analysis of words that have synonymous meanings. Apart from the word 'artha', the most notable words that are usually used to describe the science of politics are dandaniti and *Nitisastra*.

Dandaniti would appear to be the oldest name for this science (Kangle, 2000: p.3). This supposition derives from the *Shanti Parva* (Book XII) of the *Mahabharata* where the name 'Danda', meaning 'the rod of chastisement', was given to the ruler at the beginning of the creation of the world in order to protect it and uphold righteousness (*Mahabharata, Mbh.* hereafter), Section XV, Roy, 1890: p.38). 'Danda' literally means the 'rod'. 'Dandaniti', thus, means 'the use or employment of the rod' (Kangle, 2000: p.3). In the context of politics, this could be interpreted as 'political power' or 'authority of the monarch' (Joshi, 1999: p.63). 'Dandaniti', thus, could mean the ways of, or science of, the use of force. It is conceivable that Kautilya's predecessors used the word 'dandaniti' rather than 'arthashastra' in describing this science. In discussing 'the End of Sciences' in Book I of the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya assigns 'Dandaniti' to describing the science of government according to the schools of Manu, Brihaspati and Usanas. The school of Manu holds the view that there are three sciences: 'the triple *Vedas*, Varta<sup>16</sup> [Economics] and the science of government [Dandaniti]'. Anvikshaki, or philosophy, according to this school, is a 'special branch' of the *Vedas* rather than a separate science. The school of Brihaspati believes there are two sciences: Varta and Dandaniti. The school of Usanas believes there is only

Dandaniti, for it is the origin and end of all the other sciences. Kautilya disagrees with all of these schools and asserts that there are four sciences: the Anvikshaki, the triple Vedas, Varta and Dandaniti, because, in combination, they teach the means to obtain spiritual and material well-being (Kautilya, 1915: p.6).

This etymological facet of the origin of the concept of arthashastra entails another aspect, the nexus between the concepts of arthashastra and dandaniti. U. N. Ghoshal believes that because the word arthashastra describes the widest sense of the science of politics in its meaning and scope, as compared with the relatively simplistic meaning of dandaniti, 'arthashastra is a comprehensive science of which dandaniti is only a branch' (Ghoshal, 1959: p.84). This postulation derives from a more literal interpretation of dandaniti, which is that it essentially concerns the 'application of the coercive authority of the ruler' rather than 'that which covers a broad spectrum of science of politics' (Ibid., p.83). According to this view, the scope of dandaniti is defined simplistically as 'policy and impolicy'. In one sense, the *Mahabharata* supports this view as it focuses on the role of 'danda' in protecting righteousness and punishing evil. Arjuna, who is said to be an expert in the science of politics, says, "The rod of chastisement (danda) has been so named by the wise because it restrains the ungovernable and punishes the wicked" (*Mbh., Shanti Parva*, Section XV, Roy, 1890: p.36). This suggests a strong sense of directive and simplistic purpose associated with 'dandaniti', as 'danda' or rod suggests the use of strong punitive measures in politics. Ghoshal's view can be qualified in this respect, as it is plausible that 'dandaniti' as an instrument of the King was applied in this simplistic manner in early stages of the formation of the ancient Indian polity. In the other sense, it contains a more sophisticated meaning which indicates its synonymy with arthashastra. In the same section, Arjuna also says, "The rod of chastisement protects Righteousness and Profit. It protects also, O King! For this, the rod of chastisement is identified with the triple objects [artha, dharma and karma] of life" (Ibid., p.36). Ghoshal also indicates that the function of danda is not only to protect the King and 'profit', but also people, the 'four orders' (the four castes) and the four stages of life, from

unrighteousness (Ibid., p.37). Thus, one may deduce from this that dandaniti contains both ethical and political dimensions to its meaning.<sup>17</sup>

In the *Arthashastra*, Kautilya seems to treat dandaniti in a similar sense to 'arthashastra' but he is more specific in his identification of its aims. He states, 'The means of ensuring the pursuit of philosophy, the three *Vedas* and economics is the Rod (wielded by the King); its administration constitutes the science of politics, having for its purpose the acquisition of (things) not possessed, the preservation of (things) possessed, the augmentation of (things) preserved and the bestowal of (things) augmented onto a worthy recipient' (Kautilya, 2003: p.9). Unlike the writer(s) of the *Mahabharata*, Kautilya includes in his aim the expansion and acquisition of material wealth. One may speculate that the context of statements in the *Mahabharata* is the rivalry between the two sets of cousins, the Pandavas and the Kauravas, which becomes a war. It is a war fought for the sake of honour and pride, and thus the expansion of wealth discussed by Kautilya's would not have applied. The historical context of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* is specifically related to the formation of a centralised and monarchical state, where acquisition of power through expansion of territory was thought to be vital for the security of the nation-state.

Apart from this specific extension of the meaning of dandaniti, its scope resembles that of *Arthashastra*. As in the *Mahabharata*, Kautilya identifies danda with the three aims of life, '...the Rod, used after full consideration, endows the subjects with spiritual good [dharma], material well-being [artha] and pleasures of the senses [karma]' (Ibid., p.10). In addition, danda is said to be the foundation for the protection of the people of the four castes and the four stages of life. Interestingly, both literatures use the example of the fish in the water to describe the chaos consequent on the absence of danda (Kautilya, 2003: p.10; *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section XV, Roy, 1890: pp.36-37).<sup>18</sup> In the *Mahabharata*, this analogy is used to portray the anarchic world where the strong prey on the weak (Ibid., p.38). It appears that Kautilya inherited this perception of the world which he calls 'the law of the fishes', an axiomatic vision of the world without the presence of danda.

Authors following Kautilya seem to prefer the word 'niti' to 'artha' or 'danda'. The works that involve this prefix include the *Nitisara* of Kamandaka, the *Nitivakyamrta* of Somadeva and the *Nitiprakasika* of Vaisampayna (Chande, 1998: p.2). 'Niti', is apparently derived from the word 'ni', which means 'the lead'. 'Niti' came to mean proper guidance or justice. It can then be suggested that 'nitisastra' is a science based on the 'ethical course of conduct' (Dhar, 1981: p.5). Hence Dhar states, 'Implying wisdom and prudence, Nitisastra, besides being the science of ethics, also was the science of wisdom and the right course. The utmost wisdom and propriety being the hallmark of the internal and foreign policy of the state, the science of government came to be called Nitisastra...' (Ibid., p.5). It may be postulated that this apparent integration of ethics and political thought is mainly to do with the influence of Buddhism and Jainism. Apparently Somadeva, for example, was a philosopher of the Jain faith (Appadorai, 2002: p.131). It is also indicated that the *Nitisara* of Kamandaka was written in Java, where Buddhism was the predominant religion (Dutt, 1896: p.ii).

Despite the resonance of ethics and morality in the title *Nitisastra*, the scope of the content of works under this title does not necessarily contradict that of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. The aims of constructing an ideal welfare state, and protection of the territory and the people are common foundational themes in the Indian science of politics (Appadorai, 2002). 'Danda' and 'niti' are described as being essential means for pursuing these key aims. Kamandaka states in *Nitisara*, '*Danda* is known to signify subjection. A king is also figuratively called *Danda*, for from him all punishments proceed...' but '...the system, that deals with the just infliction of punishments, is called Dandaniti. It is called a *Niti* as it guides kings in the right administration of justice' (Kamandaka, 1896: p.19). Sukra in the *Sukraniti* (also known as *Nitisastra*) also makes this point (Sukra, 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D. abridged in Appadorai, 2002: p.149). Likewise, as quoted above, the *Arthashastra* further emphasises the just use of danda (Kautilya, 2003: p.10). Thus, the underlying theme of the science seems to be the just use of power; and that the use of power for its own sake is perceived to be dangerous. Dhar takes a

broader perspective. He states, '...the scope of Nitisastra covered the all-round progress of society under the State. Hence to Sukra [an author of the *Nitisastra*], Nitisastra was the *sine qua non* for the security, stability and progress of the society and it was the means towards the accomplishment of the four-fold aims connected with Dharma, Artha, Karma and Moksha' (Dhar, 1981: p.5). Although the *Arthasastra* does not mention the word 'moksha', the word 'heaven' is used to describe the state of the afterlife.

In essence, the concepts of danda, artha and niti encompass two epicentres. On the one hand they are instruments of the use, management, and maintaining of power for/of the state. On the other, they have the moral centre of 'righteousness', welfare for the people, virtue and spiritual protection (Sirkar, 1962: p.514).<sup>19</sup> What is remarkable is that ancient Indian political thinkers realised the importance of the integration of the latter with the former. Not only Kautilya but also Manu and Kamandaka (Kamandaka, 1896)<sup>20</sup> emphasise this point. Manu, for example, states that the misuse of danda will bring down a king, his family, the whole country, the world and even gods (Manu, 1991: pp.130-131).

This etymological progression adds an important dimension to understanding Indian strategic rationalism. Firstly, at a theoretical level, it supports the epistemological hypothesis that the meaning of 'strategy', to a greater or lesser extent, evolves or varies in time. A plausible reason for this lies in context. The evolution of the concept of the science of politics from 'dandaniti' to 'arthasastra' and to 'nitisastra' may have been influenced by changes in cultural, historical and/or political context of the time. These changes occurred mainly because of movement in social structures from nomadic to semi-nomadic to settled status. This process, intertwined with the formation of a centralised state structure, became the context within which Kautilya wrote his *Arthasastra*. Secondly, despite the subtle evolution of the meaning, the essence of dandaniti, that is, the protection and righteous governance of the country, remained the central ethos of the Indian science of politics. In this respect, Indian strategic culture has, at its foundation, a unique epistemological dimension, that is to say that its intelligibility cannot

totally be relied on either as an essentialist or anti-essentialist paradigm. It can be viewed as a *process*, but it also carries a property of *essence*. Thirdly, and in support of the latter point, 'power' is a consistent theme in the ancient science of politics. But, at least in theory, it appears that power is not supposed to be pursued for the sake of power per se, but for the sake of attaining a secure nation-state with a moral<sup>21</sup> foundation. One cynical interpretation of this would be that Kautilya perceived this latter to be a mandate for the utility of the former: moral principles becoming the instrument of power politics. On the other hand, given the violent political context of the time, there may have been a genuine fear of internal and external insecurity, and it may have been realised that the maintenance of a strong social and moral structure would be foundational to the security of the state. This latter is probably a 'thicker' interpretation than the former. However, what really prevented Kautilya advocating the pursuit of power for the sake of power or security alone, was his subscription to the traditional belief of 'an integrated view of life' (Parmar, 1987: pp.6-7; Thakkar, 1999: p.14).<sup>22</sup> In this context the perfection of worldly life lies in the balanced implementation of various branches of knowledge and the four social values.

Thus, the Kautilyan strategic paradigm consists of complex and advanced insights into how politics should work and how it works in practice. This branch of knowledge, however, has another aspect that in effect broadens the horizon of Indian strategic culture. This is the way that it integrates the idea of *realpolitik* into the prevalent religious-philosophical-societal belief system. This can be explored through the nexus between artha and dharma.

### *The Philosophical Origin of the Concept of Arthasastra*

In the *Arthasastra*, Kautilya treats the science of politics as the foundational knowledge for the other sciences. In Book I of the *Arthasastra*, Kautilya takes a similar view towards the three Indian social values. He states, 'Material well-being [artha] alone is supreme... for spiritual good [Dharma] and sensual pleasures [Karma] depend on material well-being' (Kautilya,

2003: p.14). There is no doubt that Kautilya takes these values seriously but he seems to have two interpretations of their utility. On the one hand, they are described as 'the goals' of life (Ibid., p.14), implying that they are 'ends' rather than means.

While this is the underlying theme of the literature, Kautilya also incorporates a religious dimension to his strategic *episteme*. At a philosophical and religious level, the three Indian social values as a collective system have interrelated teleological properties. This is to say that although each developed into a science, they are not totally separable and that each value is not necessarily an 'end' in itself but entails the purposive element of 'emancipation' from the cycle of life and death. Kautilya, who is usually perceived to be a staunch materialist, states:

'(The observance of) one's own duty leads to heaven and to endless bliss. In case of its transgression, people would be exterminated through (the) mixture (of duties and castes). Therefore, the King should not allow the special duties of the (different) beings to be transgressed (by them); for, ensuring adherence to (each one's) special duty, he finds joy after death as well as in this life. For, people, among whom the bounds of the Aryan rule of life are fixed, among whom the *varnas* and the stages of life are securely established and who are guarded by the three *Vedas*, prosper, do not perish' (Kautilya, 2003: pp.8-9).

In Kautilya's view, dharma is the ultimate determinant of one's salvation. The duty assigned to the King is to protect and enforce the dharma that is assigned to each caste, thus preventing chaos or *matsyanyaya*. This is again emphasised in a different way in Book III. Kautilya states, 'when all laws are perishing, the King here is the promulgator of laws, by virtue of his guarding right conduct of the world consisting of the four *varnas* and four *asramas*....(carrying out) his own duty by the King, who protects the subjects according to law, leads to heaven; of one who does not protect or who inflicts an unjust punishment, (the condition) is the reverse of this' (Kautilya, 2003: pp.194 -195).

Three observations can be made about these statements. Firstly, while 'artha', as an end, indicates material well-being, Kautilya also interprets

it as the implementation of the King's duty, that is to enforce and protect dharma. 'Artha' here becomes the inseparable 'means' of pursuing dharma. In other words, they have an interactive and mutually inclusive relationship: while it is one's duty to pursue material wealth, moral and spiritual health cannot be obtained without the execution of the King's power and vice versa. Secondly, within the King's protection, the pursuit of artha and dharma also applies at a generic level, as a defining element of the boundaries between varnas and asramas. Thirdly, while it is clear that Kautilya treats 'artha' as the foundation in pursuing karma and dharma, he also indicates that implementing dharma is key to obtaining moksha or going to heaven. To this end, his two interpretations are not necessarily in conflict with one another but, in the words of Perrett, '...artha and dharma are legitimate intermediate worldly goals which, if properly pursued, lead to *moksha*' (Perrett, 1997: p.10).

How does this understanding of artha, or danda, and dharma vis-à-vis the *Arthashastra* help one to picture Indian strategic culture? The *Arthashastra* describes at least two theoretical conceptions of the strategic *milieu*.

On the one hand, Kautilya observes that the nature of the social world is inherently anarchic; the analogy of 'the law of fishes' in the *Arthashastra* and the *Mahabharata* indicates this perception. 'The law of fishes' is an analogy used in these ancient Indian books to describe the behavioural logic on which the actors in the natural world interact with one another. The analogy is that the order in the sea is defined by the physical size of the fish, the size representing the measure of power. Accordingly, the bigger fish prevail over the smaller fish. It is probable that Kautilya viewed the behaviour of the state in the social world as that based on a similar logic. This supposition comes from three pieces of evidence. Firstly, if indeed he was a genuine historical figure who served Chandragupta of Maurya around the late fourth century B.C., he would have observed how great powers operated around the Indian subcontinent. He would have witnessed the power of Alexander the Great in the Indian subcontinent. In a political context where there was no international law or inhibition, the brutality of the Greco-Persian occupation of



Northern India must have reaffirmed for Kautilya that the rule of the social world is a reflection of a natural order in which the strong prevail over the weak (Dhar, 1981: p.24).<sup>23</sup> Secondly, he had witnessed and taken a key part in bringing down the Nandas. There would appear to have been impoverishment under the rule of the Nanda kings, who unjustly governed their people. Thus, it is stated in the *Arthashastra*, 'This science [*Arthashastra*] has been composed by him, who in resentment, quickly regenerated the science and the weapon and the Earth [territory] that was under the control of the Nanda kings' (Kautilya, 2003: p.516). These experiences and the political context of his time may have spurred Kautilya to formulate a set of strategic instructions to prevent unjust rule. Thirdly, Kautilya, as a Brahman, knew the significance of the Vedic traditions (Kautilya, 2003: p.7) which accentuate that the dynamics of relations in the social world is analogous to that of the natural world.

On the other hand, a perception is manifested more subtly which is not a foundational theme throughout the text, the philosophical conception of 'heaven' or moksha as the ultimate purpose of human existence. The mentioning of such a religious concept as 'heaven' as the ultimate goal of life, seems rather strange for a person who has such a materialist and rationalist reputation amongst Indologists. One speculation which may be considered is the purpose for which the book was written. It is generally not disputed that the book's aim is to guide kings and princes in the righteous governance of their country. Hence, it is possible that the concept of eternal refuge as the ultimate reward for righteous living was included as an impetus for the King to follow its instructions. Perhaps a more plausible explanation derives from the influence of ancient philosophical systems on the *Arthashastra*. In the text, *Kautilya* mentions three philosophies: *Samkhya*, *Yoga* and *Lokayata* (Kautilya, 2003: p.6). These are complex philosophies but in combination they provide some valuable explanations of the rationale on which the *Arthashastra* was written.

The Samkhya system is essentially about the knowledge, evolution and progress of the social world. According to this belief system, the

dynamics of life is based on the parallelism of 'the knowing', through a process of logical inquiry, the *purusa* or subject, and 'the known' *prakrti* or object ('nature') (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: p.424). Prakrti is said to be in a state of tension between *sattva* ('potential consciousness'), *rajas* ('the source of activity') and *tamas* ('the source of resistance to activity'): it is believed that 'pleasure', 'pain' and 'indifference', in that respective order, all derive from these sources (Ibid., p.424). An evolutionary process occurs through the existence of purusa, which causes an imbalance of prakrti. In this evolutionary process, individuals develop the 'senses' and, from them, 'perceptions'. This system teaches that the 'true' individual, in a philosophical sense, is not a sensual being but is a 'free and pure spirit'. In other words, the senses, mind and thought are delusions triggered through purusa, the consciousness. Thus, the system advocates duality of life: the spiritual (the true life) and material. Moksha in the spiritual sense is almost irrelevant since the 'true self' is understood to be intrinsically free. But in the social world, moksha in the sense of 'freedom' can be achieved through 'the removal of the obstacles which hinder the full manifestation of the light of purusa'. The Yoga system is one method of attaining 'purity' or self-perfection. It purports to control one's senses through mental and physical discipline (Ibid., pp.453-454; Edgerton, 1965: p.38). These two systems, Samkhya and Yoga, thus have a mutually supportive relationship with the ultimate aim of purity and freedom through knowledge and action.

Interestingly, the Lokayata system advocates contrary views to the other systems. Its doctrine holds that knowledge derives from what one can 'perceive', not infer or deduce from reasoning (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: p.227). What is not observable does not have meaning, and hence, does not exist. Lokayata does not advocate religious, intellectual or philosophical *process* in obtaining 'truth' but teaches that truth of life is based on hard material fact. Thus, such notions as freedom and spirituality are misapprehensions of the truth.

Neither the contents nor the application of these systems is stipulated specifically as its foundational logic in the *Arthashastra*. It may also be pointed

out that the Kautilyan paradigm does not fully subscribe itself to the assumptions of these systems. Nevertheless, it is significant to point out that the overall ethos of the literature is relatively consistent with some of the key principles of the Samkhya-Yoga and Lokayata systems. The *Arthashastra* does not endorse the view that the physical senses are delusional, as the Samkhya system assumes. But, crucially, it appears to advocate the causal process of social and epistemological progress to be based on 'consciousness'. 'Reasoning' is the key method it uses in the text to refute or to agree with the established views of the teachers.<sup>24</sup> The 'aim' of this process, ultimately, is to achieve 'moksha'. The process itself, according to the *Arthashastra*, is about discipline and management of the senses. To this end, the rationale of the Yoga system applies both at the state and individual level. The *Arthashastra* states:

'Control over the senses, which is motivated by training in the sciences, should be secured by giving up lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance, and foolhardiness. Absence of improper indulgence in (the pleasures of) sound, touch, colour, taste and smell by the sense of hearing, touch and sight, the tongue and the sense of smell, means control over the senses; or, the practice of (this) science (gives such control). For, the whole of this science means control over the senses' (Kautilya, 2003: p.12).

For Kautilya, this applies to all individuals of all castes, including the King himself (Ibid., p.12). At the state level, it could be interpreted as the management of the machinery of government. This possibly explains why Kautilya prescribes in a meticulous manner employing right-minded individuals as ministers (Ibid., pp.13-21). The use of spies to monitor the government, its ministers and the public is also part and parcel of maintaining the quality of discipline, thus ensuring the integrity of the nation-state (Ibid., pp.21-29).

To this end, it would not be doing justice to the Kautilyan ideal to brand it as a convincing example of materialistic realpolitik in the modern sense. But there is certainly an element of materialism in the *Arthashastra*. Most of the instructions concern material things, protection and the gaining of wealth and territory. This is justified by the first strategic perception: the

nature of the world as portrayed by the law of fishes. However, the *Arthashastra* does not wholly subscribe to the philosophy of the Lokayata system, essentially because of three foundational principles of the *Arthashastra* that contradict it: ratiocination, progress and the duality of nature.

Thus, Kautilyan strategic perception seems to embrace a much deeper meaning than the modern conception of strategic paradigms, which predominantly rely on observable *modi operandi*. One may go as far as to argue that the observable conception of strategy was founded on, or at least inspired by, the unobservable understanding of strategy.

## Summary

This chapter chapter has highlighted the significance of the Brahmanical ideology; the four Indian values, artha, dharma, karma and moksha; the caveats involving the authenticity of the *Arthasastra*; and the origins of the *Arthasastra* and its implications for Indian strategic culture. It has argued that the Brahmanical ideology provides an analytical framework from which the two key ideational traditions, Kautilyan and Gandhian, can be identified. As Ainslie Embree suggested, this framework provides a more feasible access point than that of Hinduism in exploring the epitome of India's ideational culture, as the latter is too diverse a belief system to use as a contextual framework. What links this ideational culture to the enduring social culture of India are the four social value systems, artha, dharma, karma and moksha. Though it essentially focuses on elaborating the value of 'artha', the *Arthasastra* incorporates the other values, at both practical and spiritual level, as the ultimate aims of life.

The next sections focused more on the *Arthasastra* itself. The first section highlighted the controversy of its authenticity. The analysis concluded that despite the schism over this issue, the significance of the literature could not be easily dismissed. In fact, some investigations on the authenticity issue provided a base for the case that some of the ideas endorsed in the *Arthasastra* could be seen as forming a significant part of ancient Indian *strategic* culture. This is evident in S. C. Mishra's observation that there is an inscriptional evidence of the existence of the *Arthasastra* from the third century B.C. to twelfth century A.D. The second section explored various avenues through which origin of the *Arthasastra* could be traced. This included exploring the etymological origin of the word 'artha', the teachers that the *Arthasastra* quoted many times and the various other ancient texts which contained similar themes to the book. It is difficult to definitively identify the origin of the *Arthasastra* but in view of its ideational, cultural and historical contexts, the book and the ideas ascribed in it can not be taken for granted.

Lastly, as the prelude to the next chapter, this section explored the observable and philosophical characteristics of Kautilya's strategic paradigm. This especially involved the three relatively well-known Indian philosophic systems, *Samkhya*, *Yoga* and *Lokayata*, which were endorsed in the *Arthashastra*. These sets of ideas does not appear to have a direct bearing on Kautilya's strategic outlook but as indicated some of the key assumptions of the systems are compatible with his rationale. Perhaps to this end, it can be suggested that from the Samkhya system, he utilises the idea of social progress and evolution through a logical enquiry of knowledge. The Yoga system provides the idea of social discipline, self-perfection and purity. The Lokayata system provides the balance of the assumptions of the latter two systems through its emphasis on materialist logic.

From this contextual analysis it seems to be the case that in the epistemological foundation of the *Arthashastra*, there is, to a greater extent, convergence between the logic of the socio-cultural ideas, spirituality, belief systems and that of the material world. Kautilya perceives both aspects to be vital for the building of a powerful and prestigious nation-state. Because this aim has been an enduring aspect of India's ideational and modern political history, it may be feasible to view the literature as a part of an overall ideational *process* that has had a foundational influence on Indian strategic pragmatism.<sup>25</sup> In addition, the textual context should be borne in mind in discussing any specific subject area that the book raises. This includes Kautilya's concept of international relations, which is the next area of exploration.

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<sup>1</sup> The Late Epic Period coincides with the Late Vedic Period (900 – 500 B.C.). The Late Epic Period is characterised by the writing of the great Sanskrit epics such as the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*.

<sup>2</sup> As will be explored in Chapter 7, Mahatma Gandhi's ideas reflect much of this ancient struggle and attitude.

<sup>3</sup> These include mainly realist and neorealist theories. The most notable IR theories for a comparative analysis are Morgenthau's classical realism and Waltz's structural realism.

<sup>4</sup> The Mughals and the European powers all failed to bring the Brahmanical tradition under submission.

<sup>5</sup> As demonstrated in Chapter 2, India's realpolitik strategic culture has been evident in its nuclear behaviour since the beginning of its nuclear programme in the late 1940s.

<sup>6</sup> See M. Muller (1859), *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, London; W. A. Dunning (1902), *A History of Political Thought*, New York; and M. Bloomfield (1908), *The Religion of the Vedas*, New York.

<sup>7</sup> For the purpose of this study, the thesis subscribes to the view that there was a historical figure called Kautilya during the reign of Chandragupta of Maurya and that he initiated the writing of the *Arthashastra*.

<sup>8</sup> For an account of Kautilya's life, Kangle mentions at least four sources. They are 'Hemacandra's Parisistaparvan, the commentary on the Mahavamsa, and the Kathasaritsagara'. However, he takes Mudraraksasa as a historical account of Kautilya's life.

<sup>9</sup> N. N. Law (1921), *Aspects of Ancient Indian Polity*, Oxford University Press, London.

<sup>10</sup> The Vedic texts that use this description are *Rig Veda*, the *Atharva Veda* and the Taittiriya Samhita. Cited in Saletore (1963), p.9.

<sup>11</sup> Based on the account in the Satapatha Braamana, Saletore believes that Manu of the Deluge ('the first man') preceded Manu Vaivasvata, the first ruler of the race. See Saletore (1963), pp.41-42. There are other examples such as Brihaspati, Parasara and Yajnavalkya. Apparently, there is a Vedic and a post-Vedic Brihaspati. See Saletore (1963), pp.8-9.

<sup>12</sup> They are, 1. Manu, 2. Brihaspati, 3. Usanas (Sukra), 4. Bharadvaja, 5. Visalakasa, 6. Parasara, 7. Pisuna, 8. Kaunapadanta, 9. Vatavyadhi, 10. Baudantipura, 11. Katyana, 12. Kaninka Bharadvaja, 13. Carayana, 14. Ghotamukha, 15. Kinjalka, 16. Pisuna's son, 17. Ambhiyas, 18. The unnamed teacher, 19. Kautilya.

<sup>13</sup> Using the list in endnote 7, Category I includes teachers 1 to 3; Category II has 4 to 10; Category III has 11 to 17; and Category IV has 18 to 19.

<sup>14</sup> Saletore points out examples other than the *Mahabharata*. In *Rig Veda* the name Pisuna is mentioned to mean 'a traitor'. Other pre-*Arthashastra* texts that mention various names are *Brahmanas* and *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. See Saletore (1963), p.39.

<sup>15</sup> The composition date of the *Mahabharata* is also a controversial issue. Hildebeitel, for example, suggests that it was written over a much shorter space of time than is generally perceived. Thus, he suggests the period from the mid-second century B.C. to the year zero. This does not necessarily mean that the epic did not exist before that period. Hildebeitel accepts that there was an oral form of the book before its composition. See Alf Hildebeitel (2001), *Rethinking the Mahabharata*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.18, p.20, pp.21-26. This is plausible, as the battles described in the book are generally believed to have occurred long before the reign of Chandragupta of Maurya. This implies a strong possibility of the work being an outcome of aggregations. This also implies that the origins of the *Arthashastra* could be found in the *Mahabharata*, as its composition date precedes the former, at least in its oral form.

<sup>16</sup> R. Shamasastri translates Varta as the word that combines 'agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade'. Kangle, on the other hand, simply translates it as 'economics'.

<sup>17</sup> 'Niti' refers to ethical principles.

<sup>18</sup> There is no direct evidence to suggest that Kautilya had knowledge of the *Mahabharata* but as he had the knowledge of the Vedic literature it is plausible to assume that he was aware of the contents of the *Mahabharata*. The nearest evidence of Kautilya's awareness of the knowledge existing in the *Mahabharata* is found in Chapter 5 of Book I. In instructing on the details of the training of the Prince, Kautilya states that he should learn the '*Puranas*, *Itivrtta*, *Akhyayika*, *Udaharana*, *Dharmashastra* and *Arthashastra*, - these constitute *Itihasa*'. *Itivrtta* includes the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. Hence, it is plausible that Kautilya was well versed in the *Mahabharata*.

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<sup>19</sup> Benoy Kumar Sirkar (1962), 'Some Basic Ideas of Political Thinking in Ancient India', in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II, The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Second edition, Calcutta, pp.509-529.

<sup>20</sup> See II, 40, 2.

<sup>21</sup> This includes the welfare of citizens. After all, the *Arthashastra* is not entirely about the expansion of the state but also about the state's responsibility for providing peace and security for its people.

<sup>22</sup> There is no clear agreement on the integration of ethics or morality with Kautilyan ideals. Winternitz, for instance, is a staunch advocate of the view that the *Arthashastra* simply concerns how to obtain 'wealth and worldly power, without any regard to moral or religious considerations'. See M. Winternitz (Oct., 1923), 'Kautilya and the Art of Politics in Ancient India', *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol. 1, No. 3. The other end of the scale posits that because of the paramount importance given to the concept of dharma as the foundation of living, it cannot be 'condemned as immoral'. See Usha Thakkar, 'Morality in Kautilya's Theory of Diplomacy', p.11 in K. P. Jog (ed.) (1999), *Perceptions on Kautiliya Arthashastra*, Popular Prakashan PVT Ltd., pp.1-30, Mumbai, India. The middle position, however, identifies two standards in the *Arthashastra*. On the one hand, the book values the importance of dharma and righteousness, but on the other, it takes no moral position so far as politics and diplomacy are concerned. See Bharati Mukherjee (1976), *Kautilya's Concept of Diplomacy*, Minerva Associates (Publications) PVT. Ltd., pp.93-95.

<sup>23</sup> Apparently there was much discontent during the Persian occupation, which led to rebellions in the Punjab region. They were brutally suppressed.

<sup>24</sup> The word Samkhya literally means 'reasoning'.

<sup>25</sup> This dilemma has been manifested especially through Gandhian idealism See chapter 7.



## Chapter 5: The Evolution of Ancient Indian Polity and Kautilya's Arthashastra

### Introduction

The Kautilyan conception of international relations provides modern scholars with a unique and advanced understanding of Indian strategic pragmatism in the light of the two strategic remits of the *Arthashastra* discussed in the previous chapter, namely observable and unobservable conceptions of strategy. It is unique, in the sense that Kautilya's ideas are not merely a set of assumptions, but they may also contain a teleological property. It is possible that he wrote the *Arthashastra* to discover and manage the foundational quandary of the life-death cycle of a nation-state. T. N. Ramaswamy supports such a view. He states:

'Kautilya attempts to establish that socio-cultural erosion affecting the monocyclical epoch is symbolic of the general degeneration of resources. [This] should invest a special significance to the science of resources, as the foundation of balanced survival of law and amity' (Ramaswamy, 1994: p.7).

This view implies that, to Kautilya, the pursuit of 'national security' did not only involve the protection of the physical state of the nation, but also the protection of 'socio-cultural' values and structures that could be seen as the sinew of its integrity. This, in effect, justifies the intermingling of the observable and unobservable strategic remits in the analysis of the *Arthashastra*, as the latter are an integral part of ancient Indian social culture and politics.<sup>1</sup> In addition, it may also be the case that this cultural and ideational protectionism is closely linked with social structure. Since Kautilya saw the significance of socio-cultural integrity as part of the building of a nation-state, he knew the value of protecting and preserving the social structure, the Varna system. This social structure, which has remained firmly rooted in Indian society up to the modern era, is a vital part of his strategic thought.

The sophistication of Kautilya's conception essentially lies in its two characteristics. Firstly, the understanding that international politics is not confined to external and military affairs but that it incorporates domestic and social dimensions. Secondly, within the book are various theoretical concepts that have potential implications for modern Indian strategic rationalism. In view of this ancient advancement of strategic understanding, there is a need to revive interest in the *Arthashastra* as a source in the study of international relations.

The aim of this chapter, therefore, is to establish the origins of Kautilyan strategic thought. In order to accomplish this it will be divided into four parts. In the first part, the discussion centres on a contextual analysis of religion and politics. The second part traces the origins of the Kautilyan state. The third part discusses theories of the origins of the State. Lastly, the chapter examines the strategic thought which exists in the *Arthashastra*.

### **Religion, Politics and Culture: The Indian Case**

Some of the early Western scholars portrayed Indian social and political dynamics as being simply religious and philosophical in nature, with nothing to offer in the realm of politics or political theory. Max Müller, a German philologist and Indologist, for example, states that Indians tend to interpret the past, present and future in philosophical and religious terms, rather than separating speculations about these modes of thinking between rational and political thinking (Müller, 1859: p.31). Thus, he writes, 'India has no place in the political history of the World' (Ibid., p.31). In a similar vein, A. B. Keith states that India is essentially a nation of philosophy and religion 'which finds its fullest expression in the absolute idealism of the Vedanta of Sankara and the sceptical nihilism of Nagarjuna, is alien to the conception of man as a political organism, whose true end can be found only in and through membership of a social community' (Keith, 1921: p.V). Thus, though acknowledging that there was vigorous study of the practical aspect of government and international relations, Keith argues that 'India offers nothing that can be regarded as a serious theory of politics' (Ibid. p. V). If these views

are subscribed to, Indian culture becomes no more than a set of subjective and non-progressive attitudes and ideas that have no significant value in International Relations.

However, Indian culture is complex, and considering it without looking into its political facet would be doing injustice to its foundational logic, sophistication and richness. Two fundamental issues need to be addressed. Firstly, there is the issue of subjective<sup>2</sup> and objective rationalism. The issue of the nexus between religion and politics in the case of India is contested, according to Roy Perrett. By considering Artha and Dharma to be the Sanskrit equivalent of politics, and associating Dharma and Moksha with religion, he highlights two schools of thought. The first school believes that politics and religion have a seamless relationship, as Artha and Dharma are means to ultimately obtain Moksha. Perrett points out that despite some of their foundational differences, this view is common to the traditions of *Dharmasastra* and *Arthasastra*, and present in the *Bhagavadgita* (Perrett, 1997: p.11). The second school, according to Perrett, outlines the opposition between politics and religion. This position is essentially that of the philosophical traditions of Mimamsa and Vedanta (Ibid., pp.11-13).<sup>3</sup> In his conclusion, Perrett indicates that this division of knowledge was manifested in modern times through such influential thinkers and practitioners as Mahatma Gandhi and Sri Aurobindo.<sup>4</sup> This analysis clearly indicates that there was an advanced indigenous intellectual debate on politics and religion.

What seems to be noteworthy is that the Western conception of rationality, in the Weberian sense of rational legal authority<sup>5</sup>, and which is said to be a foundational *loci* on which most modern states operate, is to some extent 'inconsonant' on this issue with the ancient Indian mode of thinking, which is founded on and embodies value-oriented rationalism.<sup>6</sup> One significant reason for this lies in the ideational context within which its 'rationality' evolved in ancient India. There was an ideational evolution in progress in ancient India where the key dynamic was the separation of knowledge from the conventional Vedic ideology and into various specialised subject areas.<sup>7</sup> The separated knowledge, however, did not completely

depart from its origin but the original source was reapplied to the respective subject areas. In other words, religious and cultural ideals, in the forms of myths and symbols, are part and parcel, to a greater or lesser extent, of the Indian sense of political authority. In effect, what is understood to be 'subjective' in the views of Western political analysts is in Indian context 'rational'. This contextual incompatibility problem implies a need for a perspective that minimises the diffusion of the contextual forces of modern times, at least in the understanding of the ancient Indian polity.

Thus, on the issue of political rationality, one may agree with Perrett that there is a degree of continuity between religion and politics. This implies that the ancient Indian polity is characterised by both secular and religio-philosophical tenets. While this fundamental characteristic enabled the formation of rational thinking on politics, it did not allow a complete separation of politics from Vedic knowledge. Thus, the *Arthashastra*, which belongs to this process, inevitably treats Vedic knowledge as an important science, which commands that kings must learn to be righteous (dharmic) rulers (Kautilya, 2003: p.13).<sup>8</sup> The dharmic qualities that rulers must possess have a direct bearing on the governance of the country. In effect, Kautilya rationalised conventional knowledge in order to engage successfully with the political reality of his time.

Secondly, there is the issue of whether there is an ancient theory of politics. There is no ancient Indian 'theory' of politics, in the modern Western academic sense.<sup>9</sup> In order to portray the theoretical understanding of the ancient Indians, it is necessary to *infer* from various relevant texts. Thus, while the *Arthashastra* primarily purports to convey the administrative make-up and policy directions of government machinery it is, as will be discussed, possible to trace a degree of theoretical foundation springing from it. However, because the *Arthashastra* belongs to the ideational process mentioned above and the legacy of interconnectedness among ancient knowledge, the search for a theory of politics should not strictly be confined to the text itself. Hence, it would be premature to postulate that the theoretical dimension is simply redundant in the *Arthashastra*. Kautilya was

aware of the existence of other related ancient Indian texts which were based on the socio-cultural values of Dharma, Karma and Moksha<sup>10</sup>. Some of these elements should be read in conjunction with the text in order to trace the Kautilyan theory of politics.

A supplementary issue to this is whether the *Arthashastra* represents the historical reality of the time in which it was written. While acknowledging the controversies over the authenticity of the text, Vincent Smith, for example, uses it to understand the history of the Mauryan period (Smith, 1967: pp.95-96). U. N. Ghoshal, meanwhile, is convinced that the book is a historical document that portrays the political and social reality of Kautilya's time (Ghoshal, 1959).

With all these issues taken into consideration, ancient Indian strategic thought takes on an interesting shape. It neither becomes totally pragmatic nor does it become inapplicable to reality. It gives a birth to an inimitable form of government.

### **The Making of Ancient Indian Strategic Thought: The Origins**

One of the central aspects of the Kautilyan world of international relations is the State. Broadly speaking, there are two overarching, but conflicting perspectives on the nature of the Kautilyan state. One perspective takes a utilitarian line by defining the Kautilyan state as an amoral, centralised, practical instrument designed to attain security and power.<sup>11</sup> This view is qualified by Kautilya's dedication of the *Arthashastra* to the building and organisation of the mechanisms of the State and the recommendations of its use of any means, ruthless or not, of spies, religion or military force the State for the expansion of power and the survival of the country. On the other hand, the second perspective interprets the State as the guardian of moral or cultural welfare as well as of its own physical integrity.<sup>12</sup> According to this line of thought, Kautilyan governance is inherently associated with a moral directive. This view can be supported by the considerable emphasis and

attention given in the book to the importance of the sacred law, or Dharma, for the King and for each caste for the maintenance of order, security and social solidarity. Thus, the former perceives the State as a mechanical instrument while the latter views it as an organic regime that has greater meaning than simply mechanical functions.

Both schools have their respective merits depending on which aspects of the *Arthashastra* each bases its argument on. The key difference to emphasize for this thesis is that, whereas the latter attaches moral and cultural values to Kautilya's notion of state, the former detaches the State from value-based rationality. However, given the dharmic philosophical notion which the *Arthashastra* adheres to, this chapter argues that survival and the expansion of power, as behavioural incentives of the State, entail both moral and rationalist outlooks. An analysis of the origins of Kautilyan strategic thought may help to qualify this perspective.

One of these issues is the idea of 'the State' in ancient India. In the *Arthashastra*, the term *rajya* is used to describe the highest political authority and mechanism in the land (Kautilya, 2003: p.390). In his book *Political Theory of Ancient India*, John W. Spellman accepts 'rajya' as being equivalent to the English word 'state'. He states, '...the term *rajya* is a conceptual one and, like the word 'language', exists by itself while depending upon its component parts. It is a word which expresses the total effort of government'. Thus, in his view, the word *rajya* is closely associated in English with the word 'state' (Spellman, 1964: p.133). Nevertheless, Spellman acknowledges the difficulty of precise translation of many words into another language due to the different social, political and cultural backgrounds. He accepts that the word 'rajya' has several connotations, stating 'Rajya also has connotations which we associate with the words 'kingdom' and 'government', but it means more than these, and our concept of 'state' seems the nearest approximation' (Ibid., p.133). Therefore, he argues, 'in ancient India not only was there the political reality of the State, there was also a theoretical concept through which this reality was discussed in the abstract' (Ibid., p.133).

### *The Origin of the Kautilyan State*

The *Arthashastra* does not specifically discuss the origin of the State. Its focus is mainly on practical measures, such as law, and domestic and foreign policy, that are deemed necessary in constructing a successful state. However, through the exploration of the ancient historical and political contexts it is possible to extract some interpretations of the State's origins. There are two routes whereby an understanding of the origins of the Kautilyan state can be pursued: firstly, an historical overview of the progression of the idea of polity; and secondly through the examination of the ancient theories on the beginning of the State. The contents of these approaches, however, are not necessarily contradictory. Rather, a degree of inferred synchronism can be identified.

The origin of the Kautilyan state can be traced back to the Vedic age. It appears that there were at least three notions of 'state' during this period. One was the tribal state. The mentioning of the Sanskrit word 'gana' in *the Rig Veda* (R.V.) implies the existence of this type of polity (R.V. I, 64, 14; V, 52, 13-14). Somendra Lal Roy points out two interpretations of the word: 'non-monarchical form of government' and 'group' (Roy, 1978: pp.1-2). What is particularly significant is that in Vedic texts 'gana' is used to refer to entities having the characteristics of pre-state tribal democracies. The *Rig Veda* indicates that the Vedic Aryans had an understanding of equality and the common possession of wealth. For example, it states 'meeting together in the same enclosure, they strive not, of one mind, one with another. They never break the Gods' eternal statutes, and injure none, in rivalry with Vasus'<sup>13</sup> (R.V. VII, 76, 5). What bound the kingless society was the holy law or Dharma. *The Rig Veda* describes what may be termed as a *dharmocratic*<sup>14</sup> (or theocratic) society. It says, 'eternal law hath varied food that strengthens; thought of eternal law, removes transgressions. The praise-hymn of eternal law, arousing, glowing, hath opened the deaf ears of the living. Firm-seated are eternal law's foundations, in its fair form are many splendid beauties. By holy law long lasting food they bring us; by holy law have cows come to our

worship. Fixing eternal law he, too, upholds it, swift moves the might of law and wins the booty. To law belong the vast deep Earth and Heaven: Milch-kine supreme, to law their milk they render' (R.V. IV, 23, 8-10). Thus, it seems Dharma, even at this early stage of Indian history, not only had religious connotation but also entwined with the socio-economic well-being.

The second Vedic concept of state is the idea of kingship. The use of the two words, 'rajya' and 'rastra' in both the *Rig Veda* and *Atharva Veda* (A.V. III, 4, 2) indicates this postulation. Hymn 42 of Book IV of the *Rig Veda*, for example, mentions both words. 'Rajya' in this hymn seems to connote 'king' or 'sovereign power' (R.V. IV, 42, 1-2; III, 43, 5). The word 'rastra', however, refers to 'kingdom' or 'royal territory'<sup>15</sup> (R.V. IV, 42, 1). This distinction later (in the post-Vedic age) became blurred and came to mean territorial state (Roy, 1978: p.5).

There is evidence to suggest that kings were elected by the people. The *Atharva Veda*, for example, states, 'The tribesmen shall elect thee for the kingship, these five celestial regions shall elect thee. Rest on the height and top of kingly power; thence as a mighty man award us treasures' (A.V. III, 4, 2). One may infer from this that the people had the power to choose their king based on his good character and ability to lead his people. It also appears that an important duty of the King was to provide people with wealth, which may be interpreted as 'economic wellbeing'. This is evident in another place: 'All friends are joyful in the friend who cometh in triumph, having conquered in assembly. He is their blame-averted, food-provider, prepared is he and fit for deed of vigour' (R.V. X, 71, 10).

Once a king was elected, he was accountable for his leadership. People still retained the power to impeach him if he did not fulfil his duty. This was done through two political institutions called *Sabha*<sup>16</sup> and *Samiti*, which literally mean 'gathering' and 'assembly' respectively (A.V. VII, 12, 1). It appears that while the Sabha consisted of the privileged members of the society such as priests<sup>17</sup>, the Samiti consisted of the representatives of all the people (Chaube, 1997: p.46). The Samiti was like a



parliament/committee where a subject of the King had to appear regularly and present his past affairs, including the amount of wealth he had amassed (R.V. VIII, 45, 25).

The third Vedic concept of state is the monarchical polity. The traces of the centralised monarchical state are evident in the period of *Brahmanas* (late Vedic) when the idea of kingship became more solidified. According to Chaube, there are two reasons to support this supposition. Firstly, the mention of terms such as *Samraj*, *Ekaraja* and *Adhiraj* indicates the supremacy the King held over a large territory (Chaube, 1997: p.42; R.V. III, 55, 4)<sup>18</sup>. Secondly, the holding of sacrificial ceremonies such as the *Asvamedha* and *Rajasuya* indicate the centrality of the sovereign King. The international setting of the ceremonies, to which other kings were invited, indicates that they symbolised some sort of power politics. Quoting from *Satapatha Brahmana*, T. B. Mukherjee confirms this view by stating that 'the successful performance of this [Asvamedha] conferred on the sacrificer universal *suzerainty*. This was amply proved by the paraphernalia of the sacrifice' (Mukherjee, 1967: pp.31-32).<sup>19</sup> The symbolic importance given to the King's coronation ceremonies suggests that kingship was valued and perceived to be necessary for security and peace (Ghoshal, 1999: pp.214-215). The identification of kingship with the attributes of gods also indicates the extent to which the King's leadership and authority was recognised (R.V, III, 38, 4; Chaube, 1997: p.43).

Evidence of these three concepts (tribal polity, democratic and monarchical kingship) is scattered throughout the Vedic texts, which were written over centuries. It is, thus, possible that the development of kingship was not necessarily uniform throughout the region but at some point during this period, the three polities coexisted, that is, some tribes became more settled in one territory and evolved at different paces than others. At a theoretical level, there was a gradual transition from the original tribal and institutional democracy, headed by the King, to a more centralised, monarchical state. The important question that needs to be answered here, is

why was there such a conceptual transition? There are two possible explanations.

Firstly, the transition may have been influenced by the increasing need for security and wealth. It seems evident from the following passages that in the process of their settlement in Northern India, the Vedic Aryans were often harassed by non-Aryans (Dasa<sup>20</sup> or Dasyus):

'With these discomfit hosts that fight against us, and check the opponent's wrath, thyself uninjured. With these chase all our foes to every quarter: subdue the tribes of Dasas to the Arya' (R.V. VI, 25, 2).

'He [Indra] gained possession of the Sun and Horses, Indra obtained the Cow who feedeth many. Treasure of gold he won; he smote the Dasyus, and gave protection to the Aryan colour' (R.V. III, 34, 9).

'Win skilful strength and mental power, O Soma, drive away our foes; And make us better than we are' (R.V. IX, 4, 3).

'Guard us, O Agni, from the hated demon, guard us from malice of the churlish sinner: Allied with thee may I subdue assailants' (R.V. VII, 1, 13).

'Usas, as thou with light today hast opened the twin doors of heaven. So grant thou us a dwelling wide and free from foes' (R.V. I, 48, 15).

'Agni, be thou our Guardian and Protector, bestow upon us life and vital vigour. Accept, O Mighty One, the gifts we offer, and with unceasing care protect our bodies' (R.V. X, 7, 7).

Faced with such a determined and persistent enemy, it appears there was a degree of unity among the Aryan tribes. One passage in the *Rig Veda*, for example, states, 'O Indra, hear us. Raining down the Soma, we call on thee to win us mighty valour. Give us strong succour on the day of trial, when the tribes gather on the field of battle' (R.V. VI, 26, 1). This indicates that there was a degree of intertribal collectivity.

While the primary threat was from the non-Aryans, there is evidence to suggest that Aryans also fought amongst themselves:

'With these discomfit hosts that fight against us, and check the opponent's wrath, thyself uninjured. With these chase all our foes to every quarter: subdue the tribes of Dasas to the Arya' (R.V. VI, 25, 2).

'The Strong, the scatterers of the foe, Indra and Agni, we invoke; May they be kind to one like me. They slay our Arya foes, these Lords of heroes, slay our Dasyu foes. And drive our enemies away' (R.V. VI, 60, 5-6).

P. C. Vasu, while making references to these passages, suggests that it is premature to suppose Aryans fought other Aryans (Vasu, 1925: p.55). On the other hand, S. L. Roy, referring to the same passages, suggests that the Aryan tribes had come into the Indian subcontinent in successive waves, conflicting not only with the indigenous tribes but also the previously settled Aryans, and, thus, he takes this as evidence of a serious historical possibility (Roy, 1978: p.2). If one takes Roy's postulation to be correct, it is possible to deduce that intra-Aryan relations cannot be uniformly characterised as interdependent or united. In addition, the *Atharva Veda* indicates that there was at one point inter-class conflict between the Brahman (the priest class) and the Ksatriya (warrior or royal class) (A.V. IX, V, 19). Thus, the evidence points to a chaotic political situation during the period. Indeed, the general picture of the Vedic political environment that emerges from the *Rig Veda* and *Atharva Veda* is that of a great sense of insecurity felt by the Aryans growing out of both economic and security concerns. Thus, it is not unreasonable to infer that as the Aryans started to settle in Northern India, the need grew for a more systemic security system, through a centralised kingship.

Secondly, the Aryan settlement that was essentially the product of the resources available, also came to strengthen the foundation of the social structure, the Varna or caste system. As mentioned earlier, in the Vedic period the holy duty or Dharma of each caste was emphasised and adhered to, and it became the backbone of social stability. This later solidified the social functions of each caste and brought about a relatively rigid hierarchical social structure. Under the tribal polity, however, the Varna system had not yet developed and the Aryans relied on the principle of relative equality and interdependence. Thus, it seems that the growth of a hierarchical class

system occurred in the process of polity transition. This, in turn, occurred due to the transition from semi-nomadic to a sedentary lifestyle. As Roy puts it,

'...the pre-class tribal societies of the early Vedic period were detribalised owing to the changes in the mode of production caused by introduction of High Pastoralism. The *Rig Veda*, which during the long period of its composition witnessed the transition from the pre-class to class society, retains on the one hand on memories and relics of the pre-class society and on the other hand foreshadows the realities of the class society from which 'state' with all its elaborate machinery gradually evolved' (Roy, 1978: p.2).<sup>21</sup>

Thus, the two interrelated factors encouraged the transition from one polity to other: the gradual moulding of an endogenous social structure; and the external security environment. The hierarchical nature of the Varna system, in turn, encouraged centralised kingship, without democratic institutions monitoring the King's affairs. The system also strengthened the Dharma, in a spiritual and functional sense, of each caste. Thus, the King in the late and post Vedic period was not monitored by the democratic institutions, but by the social value system Dharma assigned to him. In turn, the central duty of the King was to be the guardian of the sacred law (Chaube, 1997: p.46). That is, to ensure the security environment necessary to allow his people to pursue their spiritual and secular duties.

The co-existence<sup>22</sup> of the three polities continued probably from the Late Vedic period up to the rise of Buddhism (900 – 500 B.C.). However, with the definitive settlement of the Vedic Aryans, the post-Vedic period sees a much more hierarchical and organised idea of kingship. It would be reasonable to postulate that the monarchical form of state was the norm at this time. It is in this period that the State becomes more structured and conceptually organised.

Two significant developments in this period were the institutionalisation of the State and the consequent centralisation of the power structure. A distinctive characteristic of these processes was the effects of the caste system on the empowerment of the King and the political

system as whole. This is especially apparent with the rise of Brahmanic influence in the realm of politics.

U. N. Ghoshal describes the development of the key constituents of the State in the early post-Vedic period as depicted in the sacred ancient texts of the *Yajus-Samhitas* and the *Brahmanas*. The constituents, according to the texts, are 'a king with his entourage of nobles and officials; his revenue and his troops; as well as a definite territory' (Ghoshal, 1959: p.85). Given this organisational evolution, there were three lines of gradual development in this period:

'There arose, firstly, an organised bureaucracy, a permanent revenue and a standing army, secondly, a twofold division of the State-territory caused by the exigencies of the State administration, and thirdly, a more or less definite foreign ally in the context of the prevailing State-system' (Ibid., p.85).

This conceptual picture of the State bears all the hallmarks of a settled and organised form of polity where security, wealth and the efficiency of the political system must have been demanded. The existence of a similar system within the State seems to have continued throughout the Buddhist-Jain period. The Buddhist canonical works of the *Dighanikaya* and the *Anguttaranikaya* indicate the existence of a state system consisting of a king, ministers, the army, and a permanent treasury (*Dighanikaya* and *Anguttaranikaya*, abridged in Appadorai, 2002: p.9). One of the most respected Indian epics, the *Mahabharata*, describes a state that is not dissimilar to the modern one. It mentions the operations of the king, the counsels, the treasury<sup>23</sup> and the administrative departments (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXVI, Roy, 1890: pp.278-279). It recommends a federal political system where one superintendent is assigned to rule ten villages and an officer to supervise over two superintendents (Ibid., p.279).

In the State system described in the *Mahabharata*, power was centralised in the person of the King. However, the King was not necessarily absolute, in the sense one may describe Louis XIV as an absolute monarch. The king was understood to be the most important constituent of the State,

but it was recognised that the proper function of the State depended on the quality of each constituent and their hierarchical interdependence. This is particularly evident in the relationship between the King and his ministers:

‘A king should never repose trust in a minister who is not devoted to him. Such a man, in concert with the other ministers of the king may ruin his master, even as fire consumes a tree by entering its crevices aided by the wind.....The prosperity of the kingdom depends on the counsels of policy that flow from ministers. Councils constitute the armour of a king and the limbs of his subjects and officers’ (*Mbh., Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXIII, Roy, 1890: p.270).

This functional hierarchy was reinforced by a social and cultural hierarchy. This was done through the consolidation of the caste system. This is evident in the *Mahabharata* in two ways. Firstly, it indicates that only people born of high caste and with appropriate merit can be appointed as the King’s counsellors. For example, the King’s priest should be ‘the well-born brahmana [caste], possessed of wisdom and humility guides the King in every matter by his own great intelligence. By means of sound councils he causes the King to earn prosperity’ (*Mbh., Shanti Parva*, Section LXXII, Roy, 1890: p.237). The ministers of war should be ‘regenerate caste’ [the twice-born class]; officers of the army should be ‘men of high birth’; and ‘one who is of high descent’ should be the King’s courtier (*Mbh., Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXIII, Roy, 1890: p.268). Although merit and personal qualities are emphasised as crucial prerequisites for his counsellors, the categorisation of different positions based on the social caste that one is born into appears to have been the fundamental condition for trust and success.

Secondly, the relatively loose system of Varna in the Vedic and the early part of the post-Vedic period became a crucial part of the socialisation of the masses. Social segregation became more rigid while the functional division became the base of social discrimination and economic exploitation (Roy, 1978: pp.9-10). It is not clear exactly why this came to be the case but it is possible that in combination with the emergence of bigger territorial states<sup>24</sup> and the centralisation of the King’s power, the idea of rights and ownership extended from material ‘things’ to social status, encouraging

disparity between the higher and the lower castes. On the other hand, the Varna system encouraged each caste to do its assigned functional and spiritual duty. The king's sacred duty was to make sure the system was complied with by members of the society. This, in turn, enabled the King to keep internal order and gain revenue. Thus, it is stated in the *Mahabharata*, 'kings should protect the four orders [the four castes] in the discharge of their duties. It is their eternal duty to prevent a confusion of duties in respect of the different orders' (Ibid., p.48).

Another significant aspect of the post-Vedic and the Epic period is the relationship between the King, a Ksatriya and the Royal Brahman priest (*purohita*). It is uncertain why the *purohita* was not a constituent of the State, given the importance given to the position, but it appears that he took an important part in its functioning. In the Vedic period, the King sought advice from him in political and religious matters. He was perceived as a holy one who was entitled by gods to perform sacrificial ceremonies which had political, religious and symbolic significance. He even accompanied the King to the battlefield to pray to his gods for the King's victory (Chaube, 1997: pp.46-47).

There is an argument that with the development of territorial states, the governance of secular state affairs was assigned to separate ministers or *mantrines or ammatyas* while the role of *purohitas*<sup>25</sup> was limited to religious affairs (Chande, 1998: p.5). However, while there were increases in ministerial posts the significance of *purohitas* may have been maintained in politics. Such possibility can be observed in the *Mahabharata*. It indicates that in political matters and decision making, the King should consult his ministers but 'after carefully ascertaining the views of three such men, the King should finally confer with his preceptor who should be a brahmana, well-versed in all matters of virtue, profit and pleasure. When a decision is reached after such deliberation the King should carry it out dispassionately' (*Mbh., Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXIII, Roy, 1890: p.272 rephrased in *Shanti Parva*, Swami Chandrananda, p.53). Perhaps more significantly, in the historical context, *purohitas* managed to maintain their prominence in the

scholarship of the *sastra* or science. They effectively became the originators of the science of kingship or politics, or *Arthasastra*, and law or *Dharmasastra*. The *Mahabharata* mentions seven such purohitas, some of which are quoted in the *Arthasastra*.<sup>26</sup> Kautilya himself was a purohita who not only was a close associate of Chandragupta of Maurya but also a scholar in the science of Artha.

The continuing importance of the purohita had two key effects. Firstly, through their evolving role, they consolidated their social significance as Brahmans. Secondly, contributing to the same effect, their scholarly, religious and secular position in the King's court gave strength to the Brahmanical ideology, which became a formidable cultural force throughout subsequent Indian history. This ideology attributed to the moulding of a historical parallelism of the State: the historical evolution of kingship on the one hand, and the ideational evolution of the concept on the other. They were not parallel in the sense of a mutual exclusion, but they influenced one another, encouraging progression through time. It would not be at all impossible to postulate that the Vedic purohitas such as Brihaspati and Usanas wrote their ideas of kingship based on their observations of the reality of the time. Likewise, Kautilya clearly reflected the political reality of his time in writing his *Arthasastra* (Kautilya, 2003: p.516). But their imagination and motivation stretched further in pursuit of constructing perfection, an ideal state. To this extent, the parallelism, in the sense of the two modes of operations never meeting, did exist in the same way that the pursuit of a perfect and lasting kingship which was the ultimate aim of the *sastras* or treatises did not reflect the political realities of ancient times: countries and empires did fall.

#### *The Theories of the Origin of the State*

Given these historical, political and social facets vis-à-vis the evolution of the ancient Indian polity, there also existed theories of the origin of the State. Two theories can be identified from the Epic period. They are the divine origin and the social contract theory.



The *Mahabharata* describes both theories. The following account illustrates the former:

'At first, there was no sovereignty, no king, no chastisement, and no chastiser. All men used to protect one another righteously. As they thus lived, O Bharata, righteously protecting on another, they found the task (after some time) to be painful. Error then began to assail their hearts. Having become subject to error, the perception of men, O Prince, came to be clouded, and hence their virtue began to decline' (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LIX, Roy, 1890: p.180).

Consequently, it is written that men became immoral and gave in to the passions of lust, anger and theft. Furthermore:

'All distinctions between food that is clean and unclean and between virtue and vice disappeared. When this confusion set in amongst men, the *Vedas* disappeared. Upon the disappearance of the *Vedas*, righteousness was lost. When both the *Vedas* and righteousness were lost, the gods were possessed by fear. Overcome with fear, O tiger, among men, they sought the protection of Brahma<sup>27</sup>' (*Ibid.*, p.180).

In order to prevent the destruction of the World,

'A person upon the exhaustion of his merit, comes down from heaven to Earth, and takes birth as a king, conversant with the science of chastisement.....It is for this reason that everybody acts in obedience to one, and it is for this that the World cannot command him. Good acts, O King, lead to good. It is for this that the multitude obey his words of command, though he belongs to the same World and is possessed of similar limbs' (*Ibid.*, p.190).

Manu's *Dharmasastra* also endorses the divine origin theory. '...when this World was without a king and people ran about in all directions out of fear, the Lord emitted a king in order to guard this entire (realm)' (Manu, 1991: p.128).

Although this divine origin theory gives rise to a mythical picture of the origin of the State, there may be a degree of synchronism between the theory and history. For example, it is possible that the harmonious World of the beginning represents the interdependent and communal Aryan lifestyle in the

pre or early Vedic period. The Fall of Man could be related to the chaotic and violent setting where the Aryans not only fought against the indigenous tribes but also among themselves. This synchronism is not verifiable. Nonetheless, the significant aspect of this theory is its portrayal of human nature as fallen and untrustworthy. This is so much the case that the ancient Indians believed even gods were 'fearful' of human nature destroying the World.

This perception of the nature of anarchy is consistent with the social contract theory. The *Mahabharata* portrays this well:

'It hath been heard by us that men, in days of old, in consequence of anarchy, met with destruction, devouring one another, like strong fishes devouring the weak ones in water. It hath been heard by us that a few amongst them then, assembling together, made certain compacts saying, 'He who becomes harsh in speech, or violent in temper, he who reduces or abducts other people's wives or robs wealth that belongs to others, should be cast off by us'. For inspiring confidence among all classes of the people, they made such a compact and lived for some time. Assembling after some time they proceeded in affliction to the Grandsire [Brahma] saying, 'Without a king, O divine lord, we are going to destruction. Appoint someone as our king. All of us shall worship him and he shall protect us' (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LXVII, Roy, 1890: p.216).

Thus, Manu<sup>28</sup> is asked by Brahma to be the King, but he declines the offer because he is fearful of the 'sinful acts' of the people. In desperation and out of the fear of anarchy, the negotiation begins as people offer Manu various promises (financial and social) to be loyal to him in return for his protection.

The idea of the people making a political contract with a king is also evident in some of the ancient Buddhist literature. For example, the *Dighanikaya* and *Anguttaranikaya* give an account of evil and immoral customs becoming rife among people. Having failed to correct this, the people gathered to elect a king for the protection of righteousness and people. In return, they are to give the king a 'proportion of rice' (*Dighanikaya* and *Anguttaranikaya* (400-300 B.C.), abridged in Appadorai, 2002: pp.3-4). In addition, the *Jataka Stories* gives an allegorical portrayal of the idea of

people electing a king to live away from the state of anarchy (*The Jataka Stories* (600 B.C.) abridged in Appadorai, 2002: pp.12-13).

The *Arthasastra* also provides a snap shot picture of social contract. As it states:

'People, overwhelmed by the law of the fishes, made Manu, the son of Vivasat, their king. And they assigned one-sixth of the grains, one-tenth of the commodities and money as his share. Maintained by that, kings bring about the well-being and the security of the subjects. Those who do not pay fines and taxes take on themselves the sins of those (kings) and (kings) who do not bring about well-being and security (take on the sins) of the subjects' (Kautilya, 2003: p.28).

This picture is not only of a contract of protection of the people provided by the State but, in return for financial gain, the King is to provide his people with comprehensive welfare. The consequence of either party breaking this contract would be the disintegration of social order and the State.

It is difficult to obtain a historical perspective vis-à-vis these theories, but the value of their existence lies in three areas. Firstly, although there is no direct historical reference made to these theories, one may infer a degree of historical synthesis. As described earlier, there is evidence to suggest that a democratic form of polity existed in the Vedic age, with people gathering in assembly (Sabha) to elect a leader. This indicates a kind of social contract that has a historical significance. Secondly, the Buddhist and the Epic accounts both endorse a centralised form of kingship, whether the King is divinely appointed or elected by the people. This perception derives from the fear of anarchy, together with the idea that a king with the right quality and merit could protect them from the immoral state. This perception is strongly emphasised in the great epic of *Ramayana*. Chapter LXVII gives a long list of the possible dire socio-economic and moral consequences of a kingless nation. For example it states:

'...In kingless lands not thunder's voice, No lightning wreaths the heart rejoice, Nor does Parjanya's heavenly rain Descend upon the burning plain. Where none is king, the sower's hand Casts not the seed upon the land; The son against his father strives, And husbands fail to rule their wives.....In kingless realms no merchant bands Who travel forth to distant lands, With precious wares their wagons load, And fear no danger on the road. No sage secure in self-control, Brooding on God with mind and soul, In lonely wanderings finds his home Where'er at eve his feet may roam. In kingless realms no man is sure He holds his life and wealth secure....' (*Ramayana*, LXVII, p.207).

Thirdly, the nature of kingship implicated in the theories gives rise to a philosophical issue of the relationship between the authority and the people. This is the issue of social *rights* and *obligations*. This is especially evident in the *Arthashastra* account of social contract theory. The Indian dynamic of social contract did not operate on the basis of *rights*. Rather, the contract was driven by the distinct cultural value of duty or Dharma. The acceptance of 'duty' as a 'sacred value', rather than simply a functional guidance, meant that the reciprocity of loyalty between the governing and the governed was perceived as a sacred relationship. Thus, Spellman states, 'the King had an obligation to protect, and the people to pay taxes. The distinction may seem merely a semantic one, but the implications were far reaching'. This implication was that the socio-cultural system was developed with the intention of preventing any kind of civil disobedience or revolt from materialising (Spellman, 1964: p.7). There was no concept of rights ingrained in the social value system for it to become a debatable issue. The issue, according to Spellman, was not 'rights' or 'obligations' but was one of 'responsibility' and 'obligations'. The structural force holding between the castes, and between the people and the State, was the Dharma assigned to them through traditions and history.

Another interpretation would be that 'trust' in the higher order was enshrined in the system, for the very reason that the State was divinely ordained in its origin, implying that the duty of the State was divine also. This, however, did not mean that the King's authority was limitless. As the *Arthashastra* indicates, the King failed in his duty if he did not 'take on

themselves the sins of the subjects', and vice versa. It is unclear whether this implies the justifying of active overriding of those who fail in their duty by the King or the subjects, or it indicates an unavoidable collapse of the integrity of the State. Nevertheless, it indicates a condition where this divine social contract could be broken. To this extent, it may be inferred that the King did not have absolute power. He is not only subjected to his Dharma but also to forcible removal from his position by his subjects in the case that he does not fulfil his duty.

### **Kautilyan Strategic Thought**

The Kautilyan conception of international relations was born out of the historico-ideational process that came about after the settlement of the Vedic Aryans in the Indian subcontinent. The period in which the concept was written down was a significant point in Indian history. At the ideational level, intermingled Vedic knowledge was being separated into secular and non-secular branches, the *Arthashastra* belonging to the former. It may be argued that this process enabled the science of politics to become more practical and logical in its nature. In the historical context, the ascent of Chandragupta of Maurya to power brought about the beginning of the Mauryan dynasty, which eventually conquered most of the Indian continent. Kautilya, as Chandragupta's preceptor, is said to have assisted him in overthrowing the corrupt Nanda kings and in building a new empire. These contexts, in a sense, allowed the *Arthashastra* to be more comprehensive in its prescription of how to build a great and secure state. Within its practical elements are various theories that enrich its strategic and intellectual value. The main theories vis-à-vis IR are the theories on power, anarchy, the international system, and foreign policy.

Given these contexts, the idea of the State in the *Arthashastra* is sophisticated, and is closely linked with international and domestic security. The state according to the *Arthashastra* embodies seven elements or *prakritis*. They are, in order of their relative importance, 'the King (*svami*), the minister (*amatya*), the country (*janapada*), the fortified city (*durga*), the treasury

(*kosa*), the army (*danda*) and the ally (*mitra*)' (Kautilya, 2003: p.314).<sup>29</sup> This structure indicates that the Kautilyan concept of the State intends it to be a watertight, well-integrated political institution which ensures both internal and external security for the country. The King was the ultimate political authority who oversaw the functions of the other elements; the ministers of various departments advised him on affairs of State; the fortified city provided protection for the King; the treasury provided financial resources from taxation gathered from the people; the army ensured the security of the State and the country; and the ally was vital in the protection of the territory. The smooth running of the State depended on all these constituents.

There are two noteworthy points with regard to these elements. Firstly, in Chapter 2 of Book VIII, where Kautilya explains the dangers of revolt from within the State to the King, he reduces the number of constituents. He states, 'the King and (his) rule [*raja; rajyam*], this is the sum-total of the constituents' (Kautilya, 2003: p.390).<sup>30</sup> There are differing interpretations of this passage. Kane takes it to mean 'the King is the State', thus reducing the elements to one. His justification comes from the previous chapter of the book (Kautilya Bk. VIII, 1, 12) where Kautilya stresses that the King is the most important power, who determines the other constituents (Kane, Vol. III, 1930: p.18). Thus, in the context of emergencies of State, the King had the ultimate significance, for the rest comes at his command. Kangle, basically, subscribes to this view (Kangle, Part II, 2003: p.390,fn.62). Saletore agrees with the argument to the extent that the seven constituents have their relative importance in the hierarchical order. However, he thinks that Kautilya reduces the elements to two, the King and the country or kingdom. As he states '...out of the seven recognised elements, it was only the King and the country that were of ultimate significance in the sense that the former appointed the ministers and the army, and selected his ally, while it was in the country that a fort could be constructed and through its resources, a treasury filled' (Saletore, 1963: p.297). Without the country, the King cannot rule. The different interpretations over the number of constituents in essence arise from the issue of translation. Kangle, for example, translates the word 'rajya' to mean 'rule' or 'rulership' (Kangle, 2003: p.390,fn.1).<sup>31</sup> To Saletore,

however, it means the country or kingdom, which naturally leads to the argument for only two constituents (Saletore, 1963: p.297).

Controversies over translation and interpretation in such an ancient text as the *Arthashastra* are inevitable. Nevertheless, this conception of the State conveys an invaluable message vis-à-vis Indian strategic thought. That is, that there was a realisation of the strategy of organisational 'flexibility'. In the case of crisis, the seven constituents could be reduced to one, the King himself. The King was the beginning and the end of the State. To put this in historical context, the beginning of the Mauryan Empire came about with Chandragupta, with the help of Kautilya, arousing rebellions in the North to overthrow the Nandas. The country could only become the King's country through his initiative and rule. Thus, it could be inferred that without the King there could not have been the country. If, indeed, Kautilya reflected his own experiences when writing the text, he might have had this particular one in mind. But Kautilya also thought of the case where the established state was in danger of disintegration. In this scenario, the protection of the King was vital, because it also meant the preservation of the possibility of a new kingdom.

The second point to note is that the King in the *Arthashastra* has at least three different names. The word 'svami' is used in listing the seven constituents. It means master or owner. The word 'raja' is used to describe a ruler. Lastly, the word 'vijigisu' is used to describe a conqueror or an emperor. These titles indicate the various roles of the King and the centrality of his status in State affairs. Nevertheless, the idea of *raja rajyam*, as will be discussed, cannot be said to mean the same thing as *l'etat c'est moi*, the idea of the absolute monarch that grew up during the reign of Louis XIV in seventeenth century France (Kangle, 2000: p.128). This is consistent with the concept of kingship after the end of the Vedic period (1400 - 500 B.C.)<sup>32</sup>.

The seven constituents of the State do not simply provide its structure, but each of them must meet the merit and qualities of their proper functions. There is a long list of qualities that the Svami must fulfil. In a nutshell, the

Svami should be born of noble family, be intelligent, truthful, trustworthy, humble, energetic, resolute, enthusiastic to learn and listen to his ministers, thorough, wise, intellectual, brave and strong. (Kautilya, 2003: pp.314-315). These are the qualities that an ideal ruler should have, and should be able to apply these personal qualities to his affairs, It is noteworthy that being a good ruler is not just about the Svami's abilities as a ruler, but he should also have moral integrity. This is evident in most of the epic literature and some of the literature of the early Christian era.<sup>33</sup>

Following his description of Svami, Kautilya discusses the quality of the ministers. Their importance is stated clearly: 'rulership can be successfully carried out (only) with the help of associates. One wheel alone does not turn. Therefore, he should appoint ministers and listen to their opinion' (Kautilya, 2003: p.14). There appear to have been two kinds of ministers, *amatya* and *mantris*. The former may be interpreted as the chief minister who was the King's right-hand man, and the latter as the 'councillor' who had expert knowledge on specific areas of the affairs of the State. However, their status seems to vary depending on the context (Parmar, 1987: p.29). On the merit of *amatya*, Kautilya utilises the views of the seven ancient teachers. (Kautilya, 2003: pp.15-16). According to these views, the ministers should be the King's fellow-students, because their abilities are known to him; those who have demonstrated their loyalty; those who bring more income; those whose fathers and grandfathers served as ministers; new men of high merit; and those similar in qualities to the King. The qualities of *mantri* are also listed in detail, which are not dissimilar from those of the King. However, after the ministers are appointed, the King is to conduct four secret tests on piety, material gain, lust, and fear (Ibid., pp.19-20). This indicates how important the interdependence of the King and the ministers was to the security and the running of the State.

Janapada, as the third constituent of the State, has two meanings. First, it signifies the territory. According to Kautilya, the typical characteristics of a territory should be that it is easy to defend from enemies; rich in material means, fertile for agriculture and cattle; and that there should be forests with



useful trees, and elephant forests (Kautilya, 2003: p.315). The second meaning denotes people or population. As people, the country should be 'malevolent towards enemies with weak neighbouring princes.....capable of bearing fines and taxes, with farmers devoted to work....inhabited mostly by the lower *Varnas*, with men loyal and honest' (Ibid., p.315). It is interesting to note that given these meanings, 'the State' does not simply imply administrative institutions but it, in essence, denotes *nation-state* or, perhaps more appropriately in the ancient Indian context, *state-nation*. This, however, does not mean that there was a well-established idea of nationhood in the European sense. Spellman argues that in ancient India, there was very little theoretical development of the idea of nationhood, in the sense of political unity and consciousness (Spellman, 1964: p.133). However, it may be fair to suggest that there was a degree of cultural and religious nationhood, at least at the theoretical level. The ideas of Varna, Dharma and the tradition of Veda are all well established in most of the ancient Hindu literature. The ancient scholars, including Kautilya, attempted to integrate this religio-cultural knowledge with the idea of political authority, with the intended consequence of a growth of politco-cultural loyalty and integrity. This was a vital foundation for the security of the State. While political power may change, cultural loyalty, which is strongly rooted in the social structure and religious tradition, remains intact.

The other important constituents are *durga*, *kosa*, *danda* and *mitra*. The required characteristics of *durga*, or a fort, are listed in length in Chapter 4 of Book II. The key considerations in its design seem to be: efficiency of movement through building roads and siting residential areas in strategic positions; defensibility; public and royal welfare; and trade by providing a separate living area for guilds and foreign merchants. *Kosa*, or the treasury, is also given great importance as the proper function of the State depends on its income. This is also emphasised in other ancient texts. The *Mahabharata*, for example, states that the King should levy taxes on all transactions, making the entire kingdom his treasury (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXVII, Roy, 1890: p.282). Kautilya states that the treasury should contain sufficient gold, silver, jewels and cash to last for a long period, especially in

the case of an emergency (Kautilya, 2003: p.316). The point that both the *Arthashastra* and the *Mahabharata* agree on is that taxes should be levied lawfully with consideration for the people. In other words, the money collected should be 'clean' and the King should give careful consideration to people's wealth: if they are poor he should not overburden them.

The inclusion of danda or the army as a constituent of the State is significant in three ways. Firstly, a strong and well-organised army is a symbol of a king's power. Secondly, it is a vital management tool for the internal security of the country. Thirdly, it is the tool for the protection and expansion of the territory. Given these factors, the army should consist of hereditary soldiers whose wives and sons are contented, and are strong, resilient, obedient, experienced, skilled in the art of war and weapons, and ready to follow the King's desire (Kautilya: 2003: p.316). Although Kautilya recommends that the army should consist mostly of ksatriyas, for they are thought to be the best warriors, in another place he also recommends drafting vaisyas and sudras in times of state emergency. Kautilya rates these castes as being as good fighters as the ksatriyas when trained properly as the ksatriyas are (Ibid., p.412). In addition, the use of mercenaries, foreigners, the ally's and tribal troops are all recommended at times of emergency where the hereditary troops are overstretched in their duty (Ibid., pp.409-413). Various war fighting tactics and strategies are listed thoroughly in Book X.

The last constituent of the Kautilyan state is mitra, or the ally. The ally should have been a long time ally through generations, reliable and able to mobilise quickly as the King requires (Ibid., p.316).

The qualities of the constituents are designed in such way that the State functions well in terms of both internal and external security. However, apart from this, one should not overlook the moral value of Dharma that is in effect an ideational and cultural foundation for the functioning of the State. This comes in the form of 'protection' and 'welfare'. The King's duty of protecting the people by ensuring the social order of Varna is stated to be

foundational in promulgating joy in life and afterlife (Ibid., p.9). It is also stated that the King should protect and look after children, elderly people who are in distress and helpless and childless woman (Ibid., p.57). Consideration of social welfare of the country and his court is also demonstrated in the King's building of fortified cities and through taxation as previously discussed.

With regard to the other constituents, the two values also apply. A good example of this is the nature of the relationship between the King and his subjects. There appears to be more than simply a functional relationship. As it is stated, 'in the happiness of the subjects lies the happiness of the King and in what is beneficial to the subjects his own benefit. What is dear to him is not beneficial to the King, but what is dear to the subjects is beneficial (to him)' (Ibid., p.47)<sup>34</sup>. In another place, it is stated 'in cases of all (kinds of) danger, they should make offerings day and night, saying 'We offer you the oblation.' And in all cases, 'he should favour the stricken (subjects) like a father' (Ibid., p.265).<sup>35</sup> This protection and concern for welfare also applies to the King's army (Ibid., p.404); and the choice of the ally also depends on its moral character. What these indications signify is a well-developed form of welfare state, which is not dissimilar to the European conception of public welfare. It seems clear that Kautilya realised the importance of internal security, in its broadest sense, vis-à-vis the external security of the State in the making of his overall strategy (Ibid. p.390). In addition, it should not be overlooked that such values as 'protection' and 'welfare', in the ancient context, were concerned with more than a physical security, containing also a spiritual value where doing one's assigned Dharma leads one to 'heaven' and not doing it leads to the opposite (Ibid., p.195).

External relations in the *Arthashastra* centre on the strategic concept of *mandala*<sup>36</sup>, the sphere of influence or concentric circles of kingdoms; and the six-fold foreign policy.<sup>37</sup> There are few theories on the origin of mandala. Saletore, for example, thinks that an elementary form of the mandala can be traced back to the Vedic period (Saletore, 1963: p.474). S. L. Roy dismisses this idea because intertribal relations in the Vedic period were different to those of the mandala system (Roy, 1978: p.68). Spellman, while accepting

the uncertainty of its origin, postulates that the theory is no earlier than about 500 B.C. and may have grown out of the power struggle between the kingdoms of Northern India, which were later incorporated into the Mauryan Empire (Spellman, 1964: p.158). S. L. Roy thinks that this history led Kautilya to codify the theory for the first time (Roy, 1978: p.69). One factor that supports this theory is that Kautilya does not mention any of the ancient teachers, which he frequently does on other issues. However, there appears to be no way of verifying this theory.

At the centre of the circle, there is the Conqueror; the King. Immediately outside the Conqueror is the enemy; situated on the outskirts of the enemy's territory is the ally; next to the ally is the enemy's ally; next to the enemy's ally is the ally's ally; and then comes the enemy's ally's ally (Kautilya, 2003: pp.318-319). Behind the Conqueror is the same arrangement, except that there are four kings. The king who is situated near to both ally and enemy, and capable of resisting or helping both sides, is termed a 'mediatory' or 'middle' king, while the king whose territory is not close to any of the other kings is termed a 'neutral' king. Thus, there are a total of twelve kings, the Conqueror at the centre, five kings to his front, four in the rear, one neutral and the mediatory king, with five material constituents for each state. The number of constituents is not necessarily fixed, while change in its number could mean a shift in balance of power that may lead to war. Moreover, each king has his own mandala which he has to be concerned with.

In view of this description, there seem to be two determinants of a state's diplomatic practices and alliances in Kautilya's mandala theory; first is geographical proximity and the second material resources. However, as Parmar suggests, these factors had further cultural meanings. He states, '...Kautilya advocates a balance of power built on geographical and economic factors, because the status and prestige of different states in ancient India depended on their geographical position and resources' (Parmar, 1987: p.204). Gandhi Jee Roy also supports this view (Roy, 1981: p.195).

Given these foundational elements, the strategic rationale of the mandala theory is three-fold. Firstly, it aims to maintain a 'judicial balance of power' among states of equal, superior and inferior power in the international society of states (Roy, 1978: p.67). Stability was a necessary condition for the maintenance of power. Secondly, getting a preliminary sketch of the identity of an enemy or ally allowed the State to be prepared for a situation of crisis. Thirdly, strategic assessment through the application of the theory into a real context gave the State an ability to predict international trends and determine its own level of power (Roy, 1981: p.195). This allowed a strong state to seize the best moment for territorial expansion.

The six-fold foreign policy is in effect determined within the dynamics of the mandala system. The *Arthashastra* devotes all of Book VII, one of the largest books, to the utility of the six measures. These are; peace-treaty (*Samdhi*); war (*Vigraha*); staying neutral (*Asana*); augmentation of power by marching<sup>38</sup> (*Yana*); seeking shelter (*Samsraya*); and making peace with one and war with another, or 'dual policy' (*Dvaidhibhava*) (Kautilya, 2003: p.321). These policies are the pillars of Kautilyan strategic thought that can be used in different combinations according to the requirements of different situations.

On the use of war, Kautilya suggests it to be used as both a defensive and offensive measure (Ibid., p.323). It is significant to note that in a situation where both peacemaking and war making would lead to similar outcomes, he recommends making peace, as war would only bring material losses (Ibid., p.325). Some scholars use this as an example of Kautilyan ethics but in this context, Kautilya is more of a pragmatist than a Vedic philosopher.

The policy of neutrality actually refers to armed neutrality (Ibid., p.324). Its meaning is different from the European conception of neutrality, in the sense that it is more about reserving military power to acquire an element of surprise or to be able to choose the right opportunity to attack the enemy, rather than abstention from taking sides (Ibid., p.324). To this end, this policy can be used in conjunction with war.

The use of marching is only to be used when one is more powerful than the enemy. Given the prospect of a prolonged war, Kautilya recommends that the Conqueror should make peace rather than march, thus gaining an element of surprise (Ibid., p.333). He also recommends marching together with other kings or an alliance when in need of more troops, in return for sharing of the spoils of a successful expedition (Ibid. p.333). An alliance can be made either with weaker, equal or stronger powers. The policy of Samsraya is linked to this. It could mean making alliance with a stronger king in the wake of an attack by a stronger enemy, or seeking shelter in another kingdom in a crisis situation (Parmar, 1987: p.206). Lastly, the policy of Dvaidhibhava, recommends the use of peace with one country and at the same time war against another. Kautilya recommends this policy over Samsraya, for 'he who resorts to the dual policy, giving prominence to his own undertakings, serves his own interests'. However, by applying Samsraya, the King would have to serve the host by sharing his gains of war (Kautilya, 2003: p.325).

Kautilya is very thorough in his instructions, describing every possible scenario and devising appropriate policy prescriptions accordingly. The policies are flexible and pragmatic and in the interests of the King. The purpose of foreign policy is to enhance the power and security of the State.

These policies must have been implemented in the ancient historical context. The Mauryan Empire successfully conquered most of the subcontinent, coexisting with the post Alexander the Great Greek state in the North West and with other smaller states (Schwartzberg, 1992: p.18).

## Summary

This chapter has explored more specifically the origins of the Kautilyan state, the mandala concept and the six-fold foreign policy of the *Arthashastra*. The purpose of the first section was to explore some of the foundational aspects of India's political rationalism: religion and politics. In so doing, it refuted the views of some of the imperial Indologists who reduced Indian rationalism to philosophic/religious speculations. By utilising Roy Perrett's view the section has argued that Indian political rationalism consists of subjective (religious and philosophic) and objective (secular and political) dimensions at its core in the forms of such values as dharma and artha. In effect, the embedment of these values in Indian socio-cultural structure became the source of the Indian mode of political legitimacy.

The next three sections discussed the origins of the ancient Indian state. This was pursued in two ways: historical and theoretical. Historically, three forms of state can be identified in ancient India going back to the Vedic times: the tribal, the democratic and the monarchic. It is suggested here that a polity did not necessarily go through a progressive evolution from one form to another, as was often the case when states of different forms coexisted. However, when a change occurred, the causes appeared to be largely due to resource deficiency, territorial expansion or external threat. The section has argued that Kautilya's monarchical state has origins in the Vedic polity. The strongest evidence for this seems to lie in the etymology of the word 'raja' which is used in the Vedic literatures as well as the *Arthashastra* to denote 'king' or 'state'. Significantly, with such evolution, social structure also evolved. The function of the four social classes became stricter and Brahmans came to take a powerful position as the gatekeeper of religion and knowledge. Secondly, the section has identified two theories of the origin of the state: the social contract and divine origin. The key assumptions of these theories are evident in various Epic literatures, including the *Mahabharata* and the *Arthashastra*. Both theories assign the origins of the centralised state to the rise of anarchy. The interlocking of the religious element to politics in the theories give a moral meaning to the institution and the role of the state. It

is difficult to trace the historical origins of these theories but in view of the violent Vedic history and religious characters of the ancient Aryans, it appears possible that such ideas came to form a belief system which motivated the building of a centralised state. The Kautilyan conception of monarchical state was born out of these historical and theoretical contexts.

In view of this, the last section focused on some of the key strategic issues described in the *Arthashastra*. It explored two aspects: Kautilya's idea of the state, its constituents and their roles; and his internal and external security policies. The Kautilyan notion of the state consists of the king, the minister, the country, the fortified city, the treasury, the army and the ally. The king is to ensure the welfare of his ministers and people as well as to oversee that the society functioned properly. It appears from the sheer meticulousness in the description and functions of the state as an institution in the *Arthashastra* that Kautilya probably understood the significance a proper functioning of the state is vital because he knew that the state's external security was dependent on the national integrity which was managed by the state. To him, this meant consolidating the caste structure, making sure that each caste did its duty, and the creation of a spy network within the society as well as the state institution. His perception of international politics is evident in his mandala concept and the six-fold foreign policy. In view of such thorough description of these theories in the *Arthashastra*, it would be fair to suggest that they were an ample manifestation of Kautilya's strategic pragmatism, in the sense that while the mandala concept manifests a clearly defined strategic remit, the foreign policy allows a degree of viable flexibility for the state to operate within the international structure.

On the base of the discussion above, it is possible to make two concluding comments. The first is that the idea of state evolved through complex historical and ideational processes. The notion of the state in the *Arthashastra* derived from these processes. The ancient Indian sense of political legitimacy also originated from them. However, unlike the Weberian notion of political legitimacy, the ancient Indian notion of legitimacy entailed strong religious as well as functional elements. Thus, as is evident in the



*Arthashastra*, there was a perception that the power of the state was divine in nature. It was this perception that gave legitimacy and *purpose* to the functions of the state. Secondly, thus, the idea of the state is central to Kautilya's strategic thought. His strategic policy is centred on protecting the interest of the state. That interest incorporates providing 'welfare' to its people, internal and external security.

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<sup>1</sup> It can also be argued that as modern scholars are influenced by the context of modern times and cultures in their writings, Kautilya as a Brahman must also have been subjected to the context and cultures of his time. In this respect, the ideas within the *Arthashastra* can be said to be, at least partially, an outcome of the contexts of his time.

<sup>2</sup> This is a crude but appropriate term chosen for the purpose of this analysis to describe the mode of religion and philosophy.

<sup>3</sup> While both philosophies claim the discontinuity of Dharma and Moksha, their justifications for the discontinuity are different. The school of Mimamsa views Dharma as both means and ends. According to this school, the virtue of life lies in practicing Dharma per se, not for the purpose of obtaining Moksha. The more prevalent Vedanta tradition, however, contends that Moksha is a state of 'self-realisation'. Obtaining this would not change the world, but the one who reaches this state would realise the truth that has been in existence for eternity. In this context, Moksha is a state of non-duality. This implies that knowledge and action are non-binding. Thus it excludes Dharma, which is the mark that determines right and wrong actions. Accordingly, ascetism is the only way to obtain 'Truth'. For an in-depth analysis of these schools, see Radhakrishnan and Moore (eds.) (1957), *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, pp.486-505 and pp.506-572.

<sup>4</sup> Gandhi advocated the first school and Sri Aurobindo represented the latter.

<sup>5</sup> Weber describes this notion in the following way: '[In] legal authority, submission does not rest upon the belief and devotion to charismatically gifted persons, like prophets and heroes, or upon sacred tradition, or upon piety toward a personal lord and master who is defined by an ordered tradition, or upon piety toward the possible incumbents of office fiefs and office prebends who are legitimised in their own right through privilege and conferment. Rather, submission under legal authority is based upon an *impersonal* bond to the generally defined and functional 'duty of office.' The official duty – like the corresponding right to exercise authority: the 'jurisdictional competency' – is fixed by *rationaly established* norms, by enactments, decrees, and regulations, in such a manner that the legitimacy of the authority becomes the legality of the general rule, which is purposely thought out, enacted, and announced with formal correctness'. Max Weber (1964), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, p.299.

<sup>6</sup> The Kautilyan notion of state described in the *Arthashastra* involves a highly organised form of bureaucratic political machinery. To this extent, the Weberian sense of legal rationality appears to exist in Kautilyan strategic thought. However, as this thesis argues, Kautilyan strategic thought essentially stems from the Brahmanical tradition, which includes both cultural and religious dimensions. Historical context also plays a key role.

<sup>7</sup> See the 'Ideational Context' section in chapter 3.

<sup>8</sup> Kautilya views Philosophy, the three *Vedas*, Economics and Politics to be the four sciences that kings should learn. See Book I.2.1, p.5.

<sup>9</sup> Neorealism in IR is a good example. It is scientifically formulated, with a set of basic assumptions about the way states interact. Neorealists use these assumptions to interpret and predict state behaviour.

<sup>10</sup> One of the most notable texts that incorporates all the four values is the *Mahabharata*.

<sup>11</sup> See Winternitz, M. (1923), 'Kautilya and the Art of Politics in Ancient India', *The Visva-Bharati Quarterly*, Vol.1, No.3, pp.261-267 and Stein, O., *Megasthenes und Kautilya*, Wien (1921). This view is in line with Morgenthau's and Waltz's theories of state which explain the purpose of the state as solely being the pursuit of power and survival (security) respectively. See Morgenthau (1973), *Politics Among Nations*, and Waltz (1979), *Theory of International Politics*.

<sup>12</sup> See Rao, M. V. K. (1979), Nag, K. (1997), Dishitar, V. R. R. (1953) and Mukherjee, B. (1976).

<sup>13</sup> The identity of 'Vasus' is unclear. However, referring to various passages in the *Rig Veda*, Edward Delavan Perry suggests that Vasus probably was one of the three divinities (the other two being Adityas and Rudras). In the *Rig Veda*, Vasus is also closely associated with the God Indra. See Edward Delavan Perry (1880), 'Indra in the Rig-Veda', p.178.

<sup>14</sup> The term is used by B. B. Chaube (1997), 'Vedic Foundation of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*', pp.39-51 in Radhavallabh Tripathi, *Kautilya's Arthashastra and Modern World*, Pratibha Prakasham, Delhi, First Edition.

<sup>15</sup> Griffith translates it as 'empire' but given there was no large territorial state in the Vedic period, 'royal territory' or 'kingdom' seems to be the better translation of the word.

- <sup>16</sup> The modern day Indian parliament is also called the Lok Sabha.
- <sup>17</sup> Various places in the *Rig Veda* mention priests as the members of Sabha: II, 24, 13; IX, 92, 6 etc.
- <sup>18</sup> Suffixes such as '-raja' or '-raj' indicate a royal status.
- <sup>19</sup> Also see S. L. Roy, pp.32-33.
- <sup>20</sup> According to Vasu, *dasa* also refers to slaves who were under the control of the Aryans. Vasu, Praphulla-Chandra (1925), *Indo-Aryan Polity*, p.47.
- <sup>21</sup> Roy uses R.V. X, 191 as an example.
- <sup>22</sup> This is especially evident in the *Arthasastra*. See Book XI, Ch. 1: 4. Ghoshal argues that around the time of the rise of Buddhism, two kinds of state existed: the monarchical and republican states. See U. N. Ghoshal (1962), 'Political Organization: Republics and Mixed Constitutions', pp.468-469 in *The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II, Second Edition, The Ramakrishnan Mission Institutes of Culture, Calcutta, pp.465-479.
- <sup>23</sup> The *Shanti Parva* also contains instruction on the management of taxation. See *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LXXXVII, Roy (1890), p.281.
- <sup>24</sup> The words, '*janapanda*' and *rastra* refer to entities bigger than the Vedic political unit. *Mahajanapanda*, thus, refers to a polity almost the size of a small empire.
- <sup>25</sup> The terms 'purohitas' and 'brahmans' in the context of the ancient polity are synonymous in what they signify, that is the influence of these classes on politics and society.
- <sup>26</sup> They are Brihaspati, Vidsalaksa, Kavya (Usanas), Mahendra (Indra), Praceta Manu, Bharadvaja and Gaurasiras. See M. B. Chande, *Kautilyan Arthasastra*, p.5. Kautilya describes 18 purohitas, some of whom are also mentioned in the *Mahabharata*. See fn. 13.
- <sup>27</sup> Brahma is the Hindu god of creation.
- <sup>28</sup> This is not the same Manu as the supposed author of the *Dharmasastra*.
- <sup>29</sup> Manu's *Dharmasastra* (p.229) also states these elements. The *Mahabharata*, although it does not list them in the same way, also mentions them. See *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, abridged in Swami Chandrananda, pp.54-57. Saletore insists that Kautilya increased the number of the elements from 7 to 8 to include 'enemy' as the last element. B. A. Saletore (1963) p.295.
- <sup>30</sup> There seems to be a conflict of translation on the word 'rajya'. Some Indologists such as Saletore interpret it in this context to mean 'kingdom'. B. A. Saletore (1963), p.297. However, others such as Kangle argues that it means 'rulership' or 'rule' and does not mean 'kingdom'. R. P. Kangle (2003), Part Two, p.390 fn.
- <sup>31</sup> Kangle categorically rejects the translation of rajya as 'country' or 'kingdom'.
- <sup>32</sup> See Kulke and Rothermund (1998), pp.354-361 for a complete chronology of Indian history.
- <sup>33</sup> See for example, *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, abridged in Appadorai, pp.78-79; Manu, pp.131-132; *Agni Purana*, CCXXXVIII, pp.851-852.
- <sup>34</sup> This is also written in the edict of Ashoka (Janapada and Pilar Edict VI), Parmar (1987), p.43.
- <sup>35</sup> This kind of relationship is also evident in the epic texts. See for example *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, abridged in Appadorai, pp. 79-80.
- <sup>36</sup> See also Manu, pp.143-144.
- <sup>37</sup> S. L. Roy suggests that mandala means a 'group' or 'cluster' rather than the circles of states. Roy (1978), p.69.
- <sup>38</sup> 'Marching' may be interpreted as that the modern day equivalent to military manoeuvres to gain strategic superiority.

## Chapter 6: The Arthashastra and Indian Strategic Culture: A Theoretical Perspective

### Introduction

Given the conceptual evolution of the ancient Indian state and its political evolution from the Vedic period to the sophisticated Kautilyan concept of the State and international relations, the question that must be addressed here is, what is the relevance of ancient Indian strategic thought to the theoretical understanding of modern Indian strategic culture? The *Arthashastra* deals with a wide range of issues, such as law (tax, inheritance, marriage, property etc.) and economics, which may have implications for the modern World. These, however, are beyond the remit of this inquiry, as each of these subjects deserves proper investigation according to its respective merit. With regard to the overall themes of the State, the operation of the State and the international system, there seem to be at least two areas of discussion vis-à-vis the study of Indian strategic culture. Firstly, there is the issue of the historical applicability of Kautilyan ideas. Secondly, the significance of the notions of power and anarchy raises the issue of the theoretical relevance of Kautilya's strategic thought to neorealism.

The transcendental applicability of ideas of the past to the present is an important issue, as it could have direct or indirect bearing on the making of policy or strategy. There seem to be two interpretations of the method of applying Kautilyan ideas to the modern Indian context. First is the literal application of the mandala concept to the contemporary Indian context. George Tanham most notably demonstrates this in *Securing India: Strategic Thought and Practice*. In his chapter 'Indian Strategic Thought: An Interpretive Essay', Tanham evaluates numerous factors, especially geography, history, culture and technological advancement, in order to identify and establish how modern Indian political attitude is shaped and why India behaves in the way it does in regional and international politics. In the essay Tanham pays special attention to Kautilya's theory of concentric circles and makes a direct extrapolation of the theory to the modern Indian context.

According to Tanham, India represents the centre of the circle. The second circle consists of smaller neighbouring countries: Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladeshi and the Maldives. The third circle incorporates Pakistan, an enemy ever since it gained independence from Britain; China, the most powerful rival in the region; and the Soviet Union, a long-time ally. The fourth ring is the general Indian Ocean region. The last circle symbolises the rest of the World and other distant great powers (Tanham, 1996: pp.47-48).

This direct application of the mandala theory implies that Indian strategic behaviour is not only conditioned by geographical proximity, but also by India's perception of itself as a great power in the region. This perception is evident in India's nuclear strategy.<sup>1</sup>

Tanham's approach to understanding Indian strategic thought, through analysing geographical, historical, cultural and technological factors, should, per se, be endorsed. It is a plausible framework for a 'thick' understanding of India's attitude and behaviour. He puts forward some interesting views. For example, in his analysis, he makes three observations: first, India has a near-absence of strategic thinking; second, India is deficient in strategic planning; and third, India lacks forward strategic posture. Tanham suggests that the key reasons for this absence are India's lack of political unity, the historical struggles of various powers in the continent, and, thus, the lack of 'expansionist military tradition' (Ibid., pp.73-79). This, indeed, is a Western interpretation, one that has a faint similarity with the views of the earlier imperial scholars. Having said this, some Indian scholars on security, such as Jaswant Singh and Brahma Chellaney, to some extent share this view (Singh, 1998, Chellaney, 1998-99). Chellaney, for example, states, 'India has no strategic doctrine or long-term national-security planning, lacks institutional mechanisms to develop a strategic vision or to mould its various policies into a coherent whole, and has yet to enunciate well-defined vital interests' (Chellaney, 1998-99: p.105).

Tanham's approach and analysis have not escaped criticism. W. P. S Sidhu, for example, repudiates Tanham's approach to the mandala concept

by stating that such analysis 'does not conform to the modern reality of India and its neighbours and shows the dangers of interpreting the *Arthashastra* narrowly' (Sidhu, 1996: p.176). According to Sidhu, the applicability of the *Arthashastra* lies in its 'broader and strategic philosophy' (Ibid., p.176). By the latter Sidhu means not only concepts that form relevant ideational context, but also at the same time that transcend time and space in their applicability, such as Kautilya's six-fold foreign policy.

Sidhu's objection is, to an extent, justifiable. Such direct application of ancient ideas that were developed well over two millennia ago, to the modern Indian strategic context is a controversial academic exercise. This is mainly because the politico-social context evolves, and with that, people's perceptions and attitudes. After the fall of the Mauryan Empire, the subcontinent went through many struggles between the indigenous kingdoms and tribes, occupation and rule by various foreign powers, and then the long struggle for independence from the British Empire. Once it gained its independence, India became the largest democratic country in the World.

Given this experience, it appears there are two key contextual factors that differentiate the ancient from the modern Indian setting. First is the issue of national consciousness, or nationhood. The ancient polity went through a different political process in its state formation, in a very different setting. In the process, however, there was no advanced development of a concept of nationhood (Spellman, 1964: pp.133-134).<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, the historical experience since ancient times has become an important part of the modern Indian identity. A great deal of the ideational foundation for nationhood was present in ancient times but this experience has brought about and nurtured a sense of national 'consciousness' which has become the foundation of the contemporary India. Secondly, a crucial context that ancient India was not subjected to, to the extent that modern India has been, is the forces of globalisation, mainly in the forms of economic liberalisation, technological advancement, regional and global level political interdependence and, thus, new social experience. In this context, some of the national and regional issues, such as terrorism, environmental degradation and poverty, have also become global concerns, while some global concerns have also become of

national and regional importance, involving vigorous interdependent organisational politics, and the involvement of such organisations as the United Nations, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

In this newly evolved national and international context, the applicability of the mandala concept should rightly be questioned. It could be argued that the mandala concept is socially constructed and conditioned by the socio-political context of ancient times. Thus, as far as the applicability of this concept is concerned, one could argue that there is a degree of intercontextual incompatibility, which makes it difficult to apply it, in such a literal way as Tanham does, to the modern Indian context.

In view of this possibility of contextual incompatibility, however, the significance of the mandala theory vis-à-vis the modern Indian strategic attitude is that it provides a ground for explaining India's strategic philosophy which centres around the notions of identity and power. The concentric circle theory also implies the idea of 'Indocentricism', which provides a strong conceptual impetus for the modern Indian sense of political and cultural prowess at both state and national level. In the modern context this is manifested through various avenues<sup>3</sup>, one of which is the pursuit of better military capabilities, mainly through indigenous technological development.

The Indian nuclear tests in May 1998 provide an ample example of the Indian perception of itself as a 'great nation'. One school of thought has argued that India's desire for nuclear capability is based on its security concerns in the region, especially centred on China (Waltz and Sagan, 1995: pp.15-16; Thayer, 1995: pp.491-492). This view was reinforced in the post-nuclear tests period (Ganguly, 2000: p.39). Others have argued that 'prestige' and 'greatness' are at the cultural foundation of India's decision to build a nuclear capability (Perkovich, 1999a, Cohen, 2000a). Both security and prestige are important elements but they are not mutually exclusive of each other. Rather, if we are to subscribe to the view that 'culture' conditions the social and political attitude and behaviour of a state, it could be argued that prestige, a cultural value, conditions the strategic perception. Indeed, just

as cultural context conditioned the rationality infused in the *Arthashastra*, the mandala theory, as an essential part of the book, was conditioned by the powerful perception of the 'prestige' or 'greatness' of India, that originated from an ideational context and the historical experience of ancient India. In turn, the mandala concept, as part of India's rich cultural resource, may have played an important conditioning force in modern India's strategic ideals and strategy making.

### **The Arthashastra and Neorealism: On Power and Anarchy**

At a theoretical level, the *Arthashastra* has particular significance to the study of international relations and Indian strategic culture. It is, however, the case that the book does not engage in a theory-specific discussion of conceptual issues in the way that IR texts do. It does not address, elaborate on, or highlight theoretical issues or problems. Rather, and it is important to reiterate this, its primary purpose was to provide an edifying knowledge base for the building of a successful and prosperous nation-state. Thus, the manner in which the book is written largely embraces practicality, applicability and pragmatism in the context of ancient politics. It is for this reason that in order to analyse the relevant IR concepts from the text we have to use educated inference, in line with the relevant aspects of the *Arthashastra* and the textual ambience ingrained in the *Arthashastra*. Approached in this way, the *Arthashastra* contains some core theoretical concepts and dynamics that are comparable to Waltz's neorealism. The most notable concepts are power, the international structure.

The aim of this section, therefore, is two-fold. The first task is to explore some of the core theoretical concepts within the *Arthashastra*, particularly vis-à-vis the mandala theory. Secondly, the section aims to provide a comparative analysis of Kautilya's strategic thought and Waltz's neorealism.



### *The Kautilyan conception of power*

One of the central pillars of Kautilya's science of politics is the idea of power. The equivalent term for 'power' in ancient Sanskrit is 'Danda' which literally means 'rod'.<sup>4</sup> Danda in the *Arthashastra* seems to have multiple meanings and roles. On one level, Kautilya understands power as the material capability of the State. He states, 'power is (possession) of strength' (Kautilya, 2003: p.319) for 'strength changes the mind' (Ibid., p.366). This 'strength' is divided into three sub-parts: 'the power of knowledge is the power of counsel; the power of the treasury and the power of the army<sup>5</sup> is the power of might; the power of valour is the power of energy' (Ibid., p.319). Following on from this definition, the role of power is through the means of wealth and force to prevent the State from drifting into a state of anarchy. In the context of internal security, the King's power is the source of maintaining domestic integrity and peace and the protection of the King himself. In external affairs it is the tool for defence, expansion and deterrence against the enemy.

Although this is an important part of Kautilya's understanding of power and the role of the State, there is another crucial dimension to this conception of power. If the latter understanding of power can be called an observable kind of power, this 'other dimension' may be called its unobservable<sup>6</sup> facet, based on political ethics and philosophy. This, however, does not necessarily contradict the former view of power but it exists as the 'cultural' foundation for the observable conception of power. This becomes clearer through an understanding of the origins of Danda.

In ancient India, Danda was seen in two interrelated ways. Firstly, it was regarded as an inherent necessity of life. In ancient Indian literature, Danda is understood as a divine instrument bequeathed to the King enabling him to rule the World in a righteous way. The importance of this divine characteristic is relatively consistent in ancient texts. The *Mahabharata*, for example, states, '[the Rod of] Chastisement [is] ordained by the creator himself for protecting religion and profit, for the happiness of all the four

orders, and making them righteous and modest' (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section XV, Roy, 1890: p.39). Thus, it stresses, without the 'Rod of Chastisement' the World would resort to chaos. The *Dharmasastra* of Manu includes a similar story. Manu states 'for (the King's) sake the Lord in ancient times emitted the Rod of Punishment, his own son, (the incarnation of) Justice, to be the protector of all living beings, made of the brilliant energy of ultimate reality' (Manu, 1991: p.129). Manu goes as far as to state that 'the rod is the King' and it is the 'guarantor for the duty of the four stages of life' (*Ibid.*, p.129). What is evident in these statements is that Danda or power is not simply understood as an instrument given to the King to fulfil his assigned moral duty or Dharma, i.e. protection of the people and the country, but it is perceived as the symbol and foundation of good and righteousness, essentially because it is valued as a God-given instrument.

Secondly, and perhaps in consequence of this socio-political ideal, another meaning of Danda emerges; Danda as an intellectual force of *episteme*. Danda as a science is called *Dandaniti*, which is believed to be the older name for Arthasastra (Kangle, 2000: p.3). It seems that earlier scholars of the science of politics preferred the name 'Dandaniti' to 'Arthasastra' (Kautilya, 1915: p.6). Because of the importance of Danda as the guarding force of order and righteousness, the science of Danda is treated as a foundational knowledge in both the *Mahabharata* and the *Dharmasastra* of Manu, and a ruler must be well versed in it to be successful in fulfilling his duty. The existence of eighteen schools of Dandaniti or Arthasastra mentioned by Kautilya in his *Arthasastra* confirms the view that there was a great deal of intellectual weight given to the debate over the science of politics. The power of knowledge was not just in the domain of the *intelligentsia*, but the fact that most of the ancient scholars on Arthasastra had the privileged title of *purohitas* or royal chaplains meant that the knowledge of the science of politics may have been transmitted directly to the King. Kautilya, himself, is said to have had the role of preceptor of Chandragupta of Maurya, the ruler who overthrew the Nanda kings to build a new unified nation-state (Kautilya, 2003: p.516). In this respect, it could be said that the school of Arthasastra or Dandaniti was a modern equivalent of

an 'epistemic community'. This had essentially two purposes. On the one hand, it formed a scientific knowledge base for the construction of a successful nation-state. On the other, it had an implicit purpose of maintaining Brahmanical power through the consolidation of the social structure or Varna. This was a necessary measure for the continuation of the high socio-political status of the Brahman caste.

In his strategic paradigm, Kautilya takes into account these unobservable conceptions of power. To Kautilya, power begins with the knowledge of the science of politics and without this awareness, other knowledge cannot be pursued. Kautilya states, 'the means of ensuring the pursuit of philosophy, the three *Vedas* and economics is the rod (wielded by the King); its administration constitutes the science of politics..... On it is dependent the orderly maintenance of Worldly life' (Ibid., p.9). In other words, without the science of politics (Dandaniti or Arthasastra), the King cannot properly exercise his god-given power to assure the welfare of the country. This, however, does not mean that Dandaniti is the intellectual foundation of or a superior knowledge to other disciplines.<sup>7</sup> He is postulating here that a successful implementation of Dandaniti would provide an environment conducive to any meaningful and productive actions, including the pursuit of welfare and knowledge. In this respect, Kautilya was a pragmatist and this, to a greater extent, is reflected throughout the *Arthasastra*. It is perhaps because Kautilya understood the importance of knowledge in building a successful nation that he instructs in great detail on the use of spies to gain information in both domestic and external affairs.

It is also possible to construe Kautilya's conception of power as having a moral foundation. This view is possible because Kautilya subscribes to the idea of the State as a moral institution, with its power God-given. He takes the traditional view (Manu, 1991: p.128; *Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LIX, Roy, 1890: pp.180-181; *Ramayana*, LXVII, p.207) of the origins of the State, that it originated to subdue the state of nature, which is anarchy, and reinstate righteousness (Kautilya, 2003: pp.28-29). It is because of this perception of the State as a moral institution that Kautilya instructs the key

constituents of the State, the King and the councillors, to not only be equipped with practical and academic skills, but also to have virtuous characters (Ibid., pp.314-315; Manu, 1991: p.132-134). This view is in line with Manu's view that the rod is the State and that it symbolises 'righteousness', giving a moral property to 'power'. Given this view, to Kautilya, morality is seen as pursuing in life the three of the four Hindu social values; Dharma, Artha and Karma.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the King's moral duty is to ensure, through a just use of power, that his subjects and people pursue these sacred values. Accordingly, he states, 'the (King), severe with the rod, becomes a source of terror to beings. The (King), mild with the rod, is despised. The (King), just with the rod, is honoured. For, the rod, used after full consideration, endows the subjects with spiritual good, material well-being and pleasures of the senses. Used unjustly, whether in passion in anger, or in contempt, [if] it enrages even forest-anchorites[or hermits of the forest] and wandering ascetics, how much more then the householders?' (Kautilya, 2003: p.10). Kautilya goes on to state that if the King did not use the rod at all, the World would resort to the original state, anarchy. It is from this moral foundation that values such as 'protection' and 'welfare' spring as the core ideational driving force of the *Arthashastra* as a scientific text.

The Kautilyan nature of 'power', however, has led to an ongoing schism. Some scholars have gone as far as to interpret 'power' as completely materially based and its use to be one based on political and material interest. Thus, they understand the Kautilyan dynamic of power to be based on the principle that ends justify means. As mentioned earlier, this view is based on various policy recommendations in the *Arthashastra* such as the use of treacherous means in wars and the use of cruel and secret punishment against traitors (Ibid., pp. 292-296). It is under this argument that the use of power is interpreted as either 'amoral' or 'immoral'. Others have not overlooked the moral aspect of power. However, this seemingly perpetual split, may perhaps not be necessary. There are two kinds of ethical stance in the *Arthashastra*. One is the idea of the State as a moral institution, following from the traditional view of the origin of the State. The State pursues righteousness, and the welfare and protection of the people. Second is the

political pragmatism necessary for nation building. Kautilya must have been a pragmatist who had a clear set of ideas on what the State should do to pursue success. These two motives, in the *Arthashastra* context, are not necessarily contradictory but are continuous. At the centre of this argument lies the idea of 'righteousness'. This is the moral purpose of the State, the philosophical foundation of its existence. It could be argued that the pursuit of righteousness at the operational level meant deploring and rooting out unrighteousness using any given means available. The state is meant to pursue this value through punishing unrighteousness in its internal and external functions, using the means which it is entitled to use, essentially war and diplomacy. M. V. Krishna Rao summarises this in the following way:

'Kautilya, to achieve a universal moral order, describes the State as a highly centralising and unifying power; and it seemed rational to him that during the process of co-ordinating the State, those within and [outside] its borders should transfer all power to it and accept the obligation to obey it; for the State represented the universal *Dharma*, which consisted [of] the liberation of the individual from both his baser, internal instincts and any external factors that might hinder the individual in the exercise of his duty and the urge to perfection.

The State was the realised moral life and the State was always to attempt a new synthesis which would naturally arise out of the rivalry of States, until at last, a universal synthesis was established abrogating ceaseless struggle, deterioration and immorality. Life had to be lifted up to the vision inherent in the Divine ideal, and authority had to ordain the ultimate criterion of the conduct of social life, because those who ruled, had a closer relationship with the Divine' (Rao, 1979: p.87).

This view implies two important dynamics of Kautilya's thinking in the *Arthashastra*. Firstly, Rao accepts the view that Kautilya perceives his conception of the State to be supreme in terms of both observable and unobservable power. It is through both conceptions that the State pursues its aim; the restoration of *righteousness*. Power, in the observable sense, is a necessary means to achieve this 'unobservable' end. This, however, does not necessarily mean that Kautilya recommends brutality as the standard method of war. Brutality is deemed necessary against unrighteous states. Generally, he prefers limited warfare, to avoid prolonged bloodshed and loss of resources and to 'promote peaceful and diplomatic relations with the inhabitants of other states and with foreigners' (Ibid., p.88). Secondly, the

moral and cultural ethic of the State operates as a foundation for its actions, be it in domestic or external relations. It is the idea of righteousness, in line with Dharma, that gives meaning to every aspect of its affairs, including its material power. It is significant to note that the idea of morality as the guiding force of political interests is *de facto* teleological. This is evident in the *Arthashastra* where it is stated that the pursuit of righteousness by following the holy law (Dharma) leads to 'Heaven' (Kautilya, 2003: p.195). In this respect, the Kautilyan concept of power has religious or spiritual 'ends'.

From this interpretation, it would seem that taking the Kautilyan conception of power to be simply materialistic does not provide a full picture of what he believes 'power' actually is. When understood in its ideational and philosophical context, it would also seem that seeing his conception of power as immoral or amoral does not conform entirely with the ancient cultural and ideational foundation on which the *Arthashastra* was written. Thus, the concept of power in the *Arthashastra* is a complex and dynamic one, one where moral and political use of power is not divorced but is integrated in a way that, at least in theory, is relatively consistent.

However, in reality, the ancient Indian kings must have gone through some degrees of moral dilemma, whereby the security of the State conflicted with peaceful, non-violent or humanitarian concerns. Ashoka, for example, saw the horror of war in the battle of Kalinga and eventually converted to Buddhism, resorting to the view that righteousness in the sense of non-violence and peace is much more to be desired than the use of force. In a sense, he viewed the non-violent measures to be superior forms of 'power' than the use of force. This is one of the central themes that Mahatma Gandhi advocated and will be discussed in the next chapter.

Following on from this, we find Kautilya's notion of the nature of the interstate relations to be inherently linked with his conception of power. The idea of a 'universal moral order' is, implicitly, the central theme of the mandala or concentric circle conception of international relations. It could, therefore, be argued that the key determinants of interstate relations, power

and location, gain their significance from this notion. In other words, while the idea of balance of power in the *Arthashastra* is explicitly to do with material capability, there is more to it than this. The Vijigitsu or conqueror is at the centre of the circle because he perceives himself to be morally superior to the rulers of other states around him. He is not necessarily motivated to conquer for the sake of material 'power' *per se*, but it is because he perceives it as his duty to demonstrate the moral superiority embedded in his culture. Neighbouring states having a similar cultural value system to that of the conqueror's state could alter their hostility status. Indeed, this may be looked upon as an astute strategy for the Vijigitsu to use his moral position to achieve selfish political objectives, such as material gains. Or it could be looked upon as a genuine evangelistic mission to expand the Vijigitsu's moral standard to other states. In either case, what is intrinsic in Kautilya's notion of power vis-à-vis his notion of interstate relations is that power carries meaning which is conditioned by the sense of who Vijigitsu is or what kind of status his state should have. That is to say, Kautilya's notion of power centres on the symbolic resonance of the socio-cultural consciousness deriving from the Brahmanical tradition. Thus, it may be the idea of pride in the ancient cultural value system that is at the heart of Kautilya's perception of international order.

### *Kautilya's anarchy*

This logic appears to be consistent in Kautilya's conception of anarchy. This view may be best put into perspective in two steps: a contextual insight into his conception of anarchy; and a comparative analysis of this and the notions of anarchy in mainstream IR theories.

The *Arthashastra* does not contain a 'theory' of anarchy as such, nor does it bequeath any in-depth analysis into the state of nature. Thus, the Kautilyan conception of the state of nature has to be mainly based on educated inference and a contextual approach. However, it does provide a starting point, namely two interrelated notions of anarchy: anarchy in the

literal sense of the word; and a structural form of anarchy postulated in the mandala theory.

The word 'Matsyanyaya', which refers to the 'Law of the Fishes' used in the *Arthashastra*, describes the first notion (Kautilya, 2003: p.10; *Ibid.*, p.28). The condition of Matsyanyaya induces struggles for power, bringing chaos and with it, fear. Kautilya indicates that chaos rises in the absence of the use of Danda, because without it, the strong devours the weak. In the context of the social World, it has two implications. Firstly, under anarchy power is the source of survival. However, secondly, anarchy is a state of amorality or Adharma, because under this condition individual interaction is perpetually motivated by power. In view of the origins of the State indicated earlier in this chapter, ancient Indians perceived it to be a moral institution, the central pillar in averting Adharma. In this respect, anarchy played, at least in a perceptual sense, the causal role in the institutionalisation of the State.

Matsyanyaya is a foundational notion of the ancient Indian polity, because it is the generic perception derived from this idea that led to the emergence of its ideational, social and political fabric (Roy, 1978: p.11). Not surprisingly, this postulation is difficult to prove definitively. Nonetheless, several key ancient texts indicate the importance of the concept, and from their exposition it may be inferred that the notion played an important motivational force in the structural evolution of the ancient Indian polity. The earliest evidence of Matsyanyaya is in the *Satapatha Brahmana*, a late Vedic text. It states, 'Whenever there is drought, then the stronger seizes the weaker, for the waters are the law' (S. B. XI, 1.6.24 quoted in Spellman, 1964: p.5). Manu's *Dharmashastra* also contains the same principle: 'If the King did not tirelessly inflict punishment on those who should be punished, the stronger would roast the weaker like fish on a spit' (Manu, 1991: p.130). Likewise, the *Ramayana*, one of the most popular epic texts in contemporary Indian society, emphatically indicates the importance of the State vis-à-vis anarchy. In one episode, it illustrates this by using the fish analogy:



'In kingless lands no law is known, and none may call his wealth his own, each preys on each from hour to hour, as stronger fish devour the weaker fish. Then, fearless, atheists overleap, the bounds of right the godly keep, and when no royal powers restrain, pre-eminence and lordship gain' (*Ramayana*, LXVII, p.208).

While the description of anarchy given by the texts so far assumes the State of nature to be inherently chaotic, the *Mahabharata*, arguably the most widely known ancient text in modern Indian society, portrays that in the beginning the state of the World is good and righteous without the need for king or Danda. There is no fear and people protect each other without a centralised authority. But then they start losing discipline and turn to unrighteousness. From this anarchy confusion starts to emerge between righteousness, based on *Veda*, and unrighteousness (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LIX, Roy, 1890: p.180). The origin of the ancient Indian state, at an ideational level, starts with this perception.

The repetition and the survival of this notion of anarchy in several texts for thousands of years through generations suggest the existence of a powerful social perception in ancient India that has had ripple effects throughout the country's long history. Moreover, existing within the concept of *Matsyanyaya* is the Indian understanding of human nature, as having two sides, good and bad. It may be argued that it is from this perception of human nature that the mainstream religious belief systems such as Jainism and Buddhism originated. The moral law, *Dharma*, became a central part, in both these religions and in Hinduism, in preserving and defining righteousness. With this, the idea of the State derived from the notion of maintaining *Dharma* and enforcing law and order. To this end, regardless of whether this notion of anarchy was true or a myth, the ideational process through which the story was conveyed created a powerful cultural perception, which led to the social aspiration for a strong state and a rigid form of social structure, the *Varna*.

It may be argued that this notion of *Matsyanyaya* effectively forms a theoretical foundation of the mandala concept in the sense that the purpose

of Kautilya's concentric circle theory is to promote, enforce and maintain 'order' in international politics, against the backdrop of the perceived negative dynamic of international relations, whereby *the stronger state devours the weaker one*. Deriving from this theoretical context, the mandala concept provides a systematic and refined version of anarchy in two ways. Firstly, Kautilya's anarchic structure consists of units or states with seven elements (Kautilya, 2003: p.314-317). The relations between the units are partly defined by geographic proximity and material resources (Parmar, 1987: p.204; Roy, 1981: p.195). While the former determines the level of threat, the latter determines the motivation to conquer. Kautilya also takes into account the level of power as a determinant of a state's behaviour: this may determine the motivation to invade, submit, make peace, stay neutral, pursue a dual policy or ally (Kautilya, 2003: p.321). In this respect, the three determinants can function, not only as causal elements, but also as constraining factors of state behaviour.

The significance of the assumption that these are the generic sources of state behaviour leads to a concept which George Modelski calls the 'minimum solidarity community' (Modelski, 1964: p.555). According to Modelski, the probable reason for this 'minimum' of solidarity is because the 'Hindu-tinged' regional political context, within which Kautilya operated, induced diverse belief-systems, which allowed only a limited level of solidarity or cooperation (e-mail correspondence with Modelski, 16/06/2004). This negative perception of the nature of international politics, coupled with Kautilya's 'locational determinism' on general threat perception, according to Modelski 'puts a limit upon the freedom of foreign policy' (Modelski, 1964: p.555). In other words, Kautilya's international system is based on the supposition that the nature of international politics is largely predicated on the idea of distrust of the intentions of other states.

That said, Modelski's view gives rise to two key significances. Firstly, it is significant to identify Kautilya's system as a 'community' of states, as this implies a possibility of cooperation. It implies that states can, though only to a limited extent, identify their needs with the needs of the collective. It implies a

theoretical possibility of a concept of collective security. Secondly, Modelski recognises that this system is only one of many systems (Ibid., p.555). He suggests that the rise of Buddhism might have offered an alternative solidarity system, evidently influencing Ashoka personally and his external affairs (e-mail correspondence with Modelski, 16/06/2004). It is also likely that Kautilya himself recognised the alternative systems of his time, namely Buddhism and Jainism, as these religions were gaining momentum from around 500 B.C.<sup>9</sup>

The second way in which the mandala concept is related to the notion of anarchy can be identified in its teleological moral implication. Existing in Kautilya's theory is not only the perception of the negative nature of the international system, but also that this has to be and can be remedied by the good, i.e. the State. To him, a state is not only an organisational and functional entity, but also, in its ideational sense, a collection of organic and cultural substructures that essentially derive from dharmic knowledge structures<sup>10</sup>, which give positive meaning to its action and identity. Thus, the King, the central constituent element of the State, is not a mere functional pillar, but is required to follow the dharmic way of life to be 'pious, truthful in speech, not breaking any promise, grateful, not dilatory with weak neighbouring princes...' and '...possessed of a sense of shame,....devoid of passion, anger, greed, stiffness, fickleness, troublesomeness and slanderousness....' (Kautilya, 2003: pp.314-315).<sup>11</sup> Thus, from this, two important philosophical assumptions of Kautilya's theory can be deduced. Firstly, a good governance of the State can only come to existence through the State conforming to dharmic values at the individual and organisational levels. Secondly, the State can only overcome anarchy, which is a manifestation of the negative face human nature, by actively conforming to dharmic cultural knowledge structures. This ideational ground in conjunction with the pragmatic political outlook evident in the *Arthashastra* forms the base of Kautilya's realpolitik rationale.

## *The Arthashastra and Waltz's Neorealism: A Comparative Analysis*

The pretext for a comparison between Kautilya's strategic thought and Waltz's neorealism arises from two sources. Firstly, the notions of power and anarchy are central pillars of both theories. Secondly, the fact that Waltz makes reference to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in his book *Theory of International Politics* to support his thesis on the dynamics of power in international politics (Waltz, 1979: p.186) suggests the relevance of Kautilya's notions to the study of international relations.

In view of the analysis of Kautilya's strategic thought above and the introduction to Waltz's neorealism in Chapter 2, both theories appear to be comparable in three ways. Firstly, Kautilya would agree with the neorealist assumption that the central dynamics of international politics is that the state's behaviour is motivated by external threat determined by the level of material capability of other states. This line of logic is evident in the *Arthashastra*. For Kautilya, the external policies and behaviour of a state depend on the level of material power of other states: the weaker state should make peace with the stronger and preponderant states should wage war on the weaker states (Kautilya, 2003: p.322).

While not in disagreement with this dynamic of international politics based on material power, Kautilya's notion of power diverges in that it entails a moral dimension. As suggested in the previous sections, power, according to Kautilya, is a divinely given privilege that the king must utilise to build, enforce and maintain internal and international order. On internal order, the exercise of power means providing welfare and protection to the country. On the external front, it means building and maintaining the moral and material preponderance of the *vijigisu* or emperor. The point here is that the nature of the Kautilyan notion of power entails not only the concepts of material power and survival, in the similar sense as conveyed by Waltz, but it is also conditioned by the moral and cultural value of *dharma* from which the Indian ideas of justice, law and duty derive. This departure suggests that, while the external pressure of the international structure is an important aspect of

Kautilya's strategic thought, his notion of power is also a continuation of pre-existing Vedic and Brahmanical ideas and values.

The second area of comparability aspect between the two theories is the notion of anarchy. There appears to be a general agreement on the notion that the nature of international structure is anarchic. For Waltz, it is the condition of anarchy which creates uncertainty among states about each other's intentions. This uncertainty induces the perpetual feeling of threat between states. It would appear too that Kautilya perceives the external world to be governed by the principle of anarchy or 'matsyanyaya'. It is a system in which the strong devour the weak. In such a system, the motivating factor of the state is to survive. In order to survive, the logic of the system dictates that the state increases its material capability.

However, it has to be noted that, like his notion of power, Kautilya's notion of anarchy also entails a cultural context. This is a concept that arose from the ancient Indian philosophical notion of good (dharma) and evil (adharma). Dharma implies an order based on the god-given duty of the state, while adharma refers to a chaos based on immoral or amoral actions. Indeed, Kautilya perceives the nature of the international politics as anarchic, but he also perceived the basic function of the state to be enforcing the dharmic ideal. Kautilya does not speculate on the complexity of the moral issues regarding the use of force in pursuit of the dharmic ideal as, at least at a theoretical level, he seems to treat the moral goal of the state independently from the means with which the state pursues that goal. Nevertheless, this endogenous origin of Kautilya's notion of anarchy marks a significant difference from Waltz's notion of anarchy which simply assumes that anarchy is a structural variable, without providing accounts of its origins.

Thirdly, Waltz's neorealism also seems to be in line with Kautilya's strategic thought on the issue of structural stability. Waltz's neorealism assumes that the anarchic international structure causes states to pursue parity in their material capability against each other. States pursue balance of power to obtain security. Kautilya's mandala theory appears to entail an

equivalent notion where the threat of the state is determined by geographical proximity and the level of military capability. The state determines whom to ally with based on these indicators.

However, there is a significant difference. Whereas Waltz argues that states balance against the prevailing threat rather than bandwagon, i.e. the alignment with the source of danger, Kautilya's mandala theory and his principles of six-fold foreign policy imply that the dynamics of international politics entail both bandwagoning and balancing behaviour (Kautilya, 2003: p.325). The use of the six-fold foreign policy by the state depends on the level of power of the neighbouring states: when there is no superior power to the king, balancing is preferred, whereas when there is a superior power, the policy of bandwagoning is recommended. In this respect, to Kautilya, power is perceived in both absolute and relative terms. Waltz's objection to bandwagoning as a dynamic of international politics lies in the suggestion that bandwagoning entails a strong possibility of the formation of hegemonic order in the system. He insists that the system induces states to balance rather than to bandwagon: 'because power is a means not an end, states prefer to join the weaker of two coalitions. They cannot let power, a possibly useful means, become the end they pursue. The goal that the system encourages them to seek is security. Increased power may or may not serve that end' (Waltz, 1979: p.126). In other words, in his view, bandwagoning does not guarantee the security of the state.<sup>12</sup> The possibility of hegemonic ascendancy arising from states' bandwagoning behaviour is not so much of a problem for Kautilya because his idealistic aim, while weighing the possibility that it may not happen in reality, is the political dominance of a region.<sup>13</sup> The idea of strategic flexibility is perceived to be a necessary aspect in the course of achieving such a goal.

While there are certain differences between Kautilya and Waltz on the notions of power and anarchy, their understandings of international politics appear to be in agreement, broadly speaking. However, the analysis of Kautilya's strategic thought is incomplete without an understanding of its

ideational context, as his understanding of international politics is largely shaped by the pre-existing Brahmanical value systems.

## Summary

This chapter has attempted to throw light on the meaning of Kautilya's understanding of IR vis-à-vis neorealism, with a view to highlighting the value of Indian strategic thought in the study of Indian strategic culture. It has considered the key theoretical tenets of Kautilyan strategic thought with a view to understanding their significance vis-à-vis neorealism. The first of the four sections has discussed the fundamental issue of the vertical application of ancient Indian 'knowledge', i.e. the trans-temporal application of Kautilya's ideas. The central question has been, if the contextual or/and ethnocentric approach to understanding a set of ideas or theories has a specific timeframe, how can the relevance or applicability of the past ideas to contemporary context be deduced? George Tanham's work on Indian strategic thought presents an interesting case. In Tanham's work, there seems to be a tendency to make a direct application of ancient Indian ideas to the modern Indian context. This is especially apparent in his use of Kautilya's mandala concept to explain the Indian perception of twentieth century South Asian and international politics. The section has also suggested the view that it would be more plausible to understand the mandala concept and six-fold foreign policy as part of India's cultural context and their dynamics as an integral part of modern Indian political and strategic *rationalism*. This interpretation incorporates three theoretical assumptions made by this thesis: that *context* is important in understanding culture; that both context and culture evolve but not necessarily progressively; and that in the process, some ideas may survive as integral parts of culture. Kautilya's ideas have survived as part of the Brahmanical ideology, a central part of Indian culture, which was utilised for their own political purposes by the Muslims and the British during their occupation.

In view of this theoretical debate, the next section focuses on two central concepts of Kautilya's strategic thought: power and anarchy. Kautilya's conception of power consists of two interwoven dimensions: observable and unobservable power. In the first categorisation, he defines power as material capability. This includes economic resources and military



strength. The unobservable dimension of power has two sources. Firstly, one source of power is 'knowledge'. This can be understood in two ways: as the 'power of counsel' (Kautilya, 2003: p.319) and secondly, as the intellectual knowledge of philosophy, economics and science of politics (Ibid., pp.6-7).

Significantly, the Kautilyan notion of power has a moral dimension. It has been argued in the section that this derives from Kautilya's subscription to the traditional view of the origin of the state. According to this view, the state is the guardian of righteousness or dharma against the opposite force, anarchy. The power of vijigishu is bequeathed by God, making the state a divine institution. To this end, power and the use of it is perceived to be righteous in the sense that it is dedicated to the 'protection' and 'welfare' of people (Ibid., p.10). Under this cultural context, expansion of power, a key aim of the Kautilyan state, includes the expansion of its culture, i.e. its superior social and moral belief system in the colony. These two facets are intertwined in the sense that the material power does not have meaning in the Indian context without its unobservable dimension of power. To put it another way, Kautilya's conception of power is a socially and culturally constructed concept.

This view of power has a close link with his conception of anarchy or matsyanyaya, which means 'law of the fishes'. It has been argued in the chapter that this is a concept foundational to the very fabrics of Indian society and the perception of life. That is to say that it is the key culturally inherent motivational force in building a successful nation. The origin of matsyanyaya can be traced as far back as Vedic times and was evident in the epic literatures as the *Mahabharata*, the *Ramayana* and Manu's *Dharmasastra*.

The *Arthasastra* also espouses this traditional concept. The logic of matsyanyaya, that the stronger devours the weaker, is an integral part of Kautilya's mandala theory. This identifies the state as a moral institution that is assigned the duty to defend its dharmic value systems from this negative political condition. It is to this end, to overcome the amoral condition, that Kautilya's strategic thought advocates so vehemently a decisive use of

military capability. That said, George Modelski's view of 'minimum solidarity community' enlightens another facet of the mandala theory, that the use of the phrase 'solidarity community' implies that the mandala theory entails potential prospects for cooperation among states based on common interest. This concept, however, becomes a much more prevalent strategic idea during Ashoka's reign.

The aim of the last section has been to indicate the significance of the theoretical tenets discussed in the previous section vis-à-vis Waltz's neorealism. The concepts of power and anarchy have been the common issues of contention between neorealism and the strategic culture approach. When compared with Waltz's theories, Kautilya's conception of power and anarchy are largely comparable: observable conception of power; the struggle for security and power as the inherent part of the nature of international politics; understanding of anarchy as the absence of central authority in international structure; and that states are self-regarding entities. As suggested in the section, however, there are some differences between the two theories. Kautilya's notion of power entails a moral dimension. This is to say that his notion of the state as a dharmic or moral institution leads to the understanding that power symbolises a moral force, enforcing and upholding the cultural values of the state against the condition of adharma (the state of immorality or amorality). Kautilya's notions of power and anarchy are effectively a continuation of the Brahmanical perception of international politics: the idea of danda (power) and matsyanyaya (anarchy) had existed since the Vedic age.

Kautilya's strategic thought occupies a key part of Indian strategic culture. It signifies the Indian sense of realpolitik. It provides a better ground than neorealism in understanding modern India's strategic behaviour because the ideas contained in the *Arthashastra* are a cultural continuum of the Indian political mindset which has existed, and has often been utilised by both foreign powers and indigenous ruling institutions, for over two millennia.

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<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 2.

<sup>2</sup> By 'nationhood', Spellman means a 'political consciousness of unity' in a wide geographical area.

<sup>3</sup> The sense of 'greatness' is also reflected in India's pride in its economic development, and in social enthusiasm for sports and film entertainment.

<sup>4</sup> See Chapter 5.

<sup>5</sup> 'Danda' also means 'army'.

<sup>6</sup> 'Unobservable' here refers to non-material or non-physical.

<sup>7</sup> In one place, Kautilya accepts the importance of four sciences; philosophy, the three *Vedas*, economics and the science of politics, for the development of the welfare system of the country (Kautilya, 2003: p.6). In another, he describes philosophy as 'the lamp of all sciences', as 'the means of all actions' and as 'the support of all laws' (Ibid., p.7).

<sup>8</sup> The fourth value is Moksha. It is a socio-religious value based on the idea of spiritual emancipation from the cycle of life, death and rebirth. It is not clear why the *Arthashastra* does not mention this value. It may be the case that at the time the *Arthashastra* was written, Moksha was not recognised as one of the four values.

<sup>9</sup> But he probably recognised them as more of a threat to the Hindu system.

<sup>10</sup> I call it 'knowledge structures' because Dharma has several layers of complex and systemic meanings. See B. K. Sirkar, *Some Basic Ideas of Political Thinking in Ancient India*, The Cultural Heritage of India, Vol. II, 1962, pp. 515-521.

<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that several ancient texts, most significantly the *Mahabharata* (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, abridged in Appadorai, 2002: p. 79) and Manu's *Dharmashastra* (Manu, p.132), describe similar qualities as requirements for a king. *Agni Purana*, which is generally accepted to have been written in the early Christian era, also lists these qualities (*Agni Purana*, 1904: CCXXXIX, p. 853).

<sup>12</sup> 'Buck-passing' and 'chain-ganging' behaviours have also been highlighted as caveats of offensive and defensive realism. See Glenn and Howlett (2004), p.34.

<sup>13</sup> As the translation of the word 'mandala', concentric circle, and the theory itself suggest, the vijigisus is supposed to be dominant over the states surrounding his state.

## Chapter 7: Gandhian Thought and Indian Strategic Culture

'My mission is not merely brotherhood of Indian humanity. My mission is not merely freedom of India, though today it undoubtedly engrosses practically the whole of my life and the whole of my time. But through the realisation of freedom of India I hope to realise and carry on the mission of the brotherhood of man....'<sup>1</sup>

M. K. Gandhi

### Introduction

Indian strategic thought essentially consists of two complex dynamics. One is the near-secular strategic rationalism which entails a degree of pragmatism and adaptability in the realm of international relations. The second consists of the intrinsically integrated cultural and moral strategic ideals which subsist as both foundation and intervening forces of its secular strategic rationalism. These form the central dynamics of the Brahmanical ideology. Thus, as discussed in the previous chapters, Kautilya's strategic thought also finds its ideational *loci* in them. However, while acknowledging the ethos of Brahmanical tradition as the foundation of his *Arthashastra*, Kautilya's strategic thought tends to focus much more on practical aspects, vis-à-vis the state and international relations. This may be attributed to two key reasons. The first lies in the historical and political context of Kautilya's time: in the context of the Greco-Persian influence and the political divisions within the Indian subcontinent, there building and sustaining a successful nation-state was a major political process. It is likely that Kautilya's position as the preceptor of Chandragupta of Maurya allowed him to play a key role as an architect in this process. Secondly, the ideational context of Brahmanism and specialisation of knowledge had cultural influence on Kautilya's academic mindset. This is evident in the *Arthashastra*, as it not only indicates the importance of Vedic philosophy as the essence of intellectuality, but also of politics as the foundational dynamic of life.

This chapter will explore another significant knowledge base of Indian strategic culture. This can be identified in Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi's

philosophical, political, religious and social thought. The significance of Gandhian thought on Indian strategic culture can be seen in terms of two key factors. Firstly, Gandhi's ideas cover a vast array of theoretical and practical issues that concern not only the political problems of the period, especially in relation to India's independence from Britain, but also the need to cultivate positive aspects of human nature. In Gandhi's view, such a process involves two key transformations. Firstly, a fundamental change in the philosophical understanding of means and ends dynamics. Secondly, there needs to be implementation of the transformed understanding in the politics of life, from the individual to the global level. The shift involved in these transformations evidently involves a radical idealism but they can still be given the title *realism* because Gandhi showed a glimpse of its practical applicability through his own life.

The second significant point, however, is that Gandhi's realism was not simply a set of ideas that he made up to remedy the political difficulties of his time, but was constructed on firm philosophical and social foundations. Accordingly, Ainslie Embree suggests that although Gandhi was not a Brahman, 'His ideas were in conformity with the basic thrust of the Brahmanical tradition' (Embree, 1989: p.10). This tradition, according to Embree, has had a unifying effect on Indian civilisation. Gandhi sought and developed his philosophical foundation from concepts, practices and values within this tradition, attempting to construct a unifying effect among Indians at a time of grave political and social oppression under British rule. In doing so, he played a defining part in the construction of *Indian* identity. In this respect, although Gandhi did not write a grand treatise or *sastra* on politics, the terms *strategic* thought and *culture* seem appropriate generic headings for his overall thought.

To this end, it can be argued that Gandhian thought is also consistent with the basic ethos of the two dynamics of the Brahmanical tradition. One of its key differences to the Kautilyan school of thought, however, is that moral and cultural ideals play a much more prevalent role in Gandhi's views on international relations. To him, morality based on the principle of *Satyagraha*

is both means and ends. The reason for this can be attributed to the fact that both Gandhi and Kautilya's strategic thought are based on two different Brahmanical values. While the *Arthashastra* is essentially a scientific treatise on *Artha*, the philosophical centre of Gandhi's ideas and action is *Moksha*, the last of the four Indian socio-cultural values, which means salvation or emancipation. This was the ultimate aim which Gandhi not only asserted to others, but also set out to achieve in his own life. This value describes the freedom from the cycle of life and death which Hindus generally believe to be the ultimate aim of human existence. The important point of convergence between the two schools of thought is over *Dharma* which provides the basis for individual and collective duty, or moral law, and responsibility.

From his holistic and moral understanding of life, Gandhi derived an unparalleled interpretation of international relations and the place of a unified India in the World. This chapter aims to understand and explain the dynamics of Gandhi's ideational strategy. It will seek to explore and analyse the inner dynamics of Gandhian thought with a view to suggesting how they should be understood with regard to neorealism and Kautilyan strategic thought. To accomplish this Chapter 7 will provide a contextual analysis of four conceptual pillars of Gandhian school, namely, *Satya*, *Ahimsa*, *Swadeshi*, and *Swaraj*, while Chapter 8 will focus on the key constituents of Gandhian strategic thought.

### **The Key Elements of Gandhian Strategic Thought**

#### *Politics and Religion*

In order to approach the complexity of Gandhian values, it is necessary, first, to understand the philosophical dynamic of his thought. This can be identified in Gandhi's understanding of politics and religion. His unique understanding of the nexus between the two areas had influence throughout all areas of his thought. It was radically different to that which was prevalent in the west. His particular interpretation of politics and religion gave him the ideational platform from which he could develop his own values in opposing all forms of exploitation both of India and of humanity in general.

Gandhi's view on modern politics is apparent in his indictment of European civilisation. Gandhi compares it with a narcotic dream which draws people into its vortex in the pursuit of materialism and pleasure (Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 2003: p.38). This results in tiers of standards and the incoherence of private and public life. Gandhi believes that this is the culture of modern politics which does not allow the 'human spirit to grow' (Ibid., pp.41-42). Politics, dictated by the ethos of this civilisation, 'encircles' people 'like the coil of a snake from which one cannot get out' (M.K. Gandhi quoted in Duncan, 1951: p.116). For Gandhi, it is the seductive force of *power* that enables people to be sucked into this vortex and that blinds people to the spirit of humanity. Modern European politics encourages the pursuit of power. Gandhi attributes this to a mutually inclusive cyclic dynamic of negative human nature and its ensuing outcome, both factors constantly interacting with each other. Gandhi is not making a criticism of politics as a medium per se, but of the degree to which it is corrupted by hollow materialistic and selfish attitudes.

Despite this condemnation, Gandhi accepts that politics is an unavoidable medium of social life. This is because for him the functional definition of politics covers not only the realm of parliamentary and governmental affairs, but also the interactions between people at the grass-roots level. For him, governmental politics is meaningless if it does not strive to work for the people. During his lifetime, this broad view of politics gave him a sense of urgency over cleaning up politics to the end that people's welfare would become the central concern. He understood and recognised the Hobbesian view of egotistic human nature which triggers men to hunger for power and deeply corrupts politics and society. While accepting this explanation, one of the central pillars of his thought with regard to politics is that just as negative human nature generates the norm of egotism in the form of power politics, human nature also has an opposite character based on 'moral values' which creates power and enhances the possibility of individual effectiveness and collective survival' (Iyer, 1973: p.40). This is a fundamentally different notion to that of Western international politics which is

largely built on the European *realpolitik* tradition, with the normative acceptance of the notion that the international structure of anarchy naturally forecasts pessimistic political outlooks. However, Gandhi's notion goes further. His message incorporates the real possibility of change in human affairs, and thus, fundamental transformation of the nature of politics.

Accordingly, Gandhi's thought is geared towards promoting and nurturing positive human nature in politics, through what he calls 'spiritualisation' or 'purification'. Gandhi felt this could only be achieved through amalgamating politics with religion. Politics operating without intrinsic foundation in religious values loses its meaning. He states,

'For me, politics bereft of religion is absolute dirt, ever to be shunned. Politics concerns nations and that which concerns the welfare of others must be one of the concerns of a man who is religiously inclined, in other words, a seeker after God and Truth....God and Truth are convertible terms and if anyone told me that God was a God of untruth or a God of torture I would decline to worship Him. Therefore in politics also we have to establish the Kingdom of Heaven' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 18<sup>th</sup> June 1925).

By religion, Gandhi does not embrace any particular creed. He means a vigorous pursuit of morality. His assumption here is that there are fundamental moral values which transcend the theological differences of world religions, including Hinduism. Without this common moral foundation, a religion is not a religion but merely a custom. Moreover, Gandhi's definition of religion transcends the diversity of cultures in the World. It is the manifestation of the 'good' aspect of human nature which pervades time and space. Religion has to be present and be the foundation of politics, in order to overcome immorality or 'irreligion'. Social life, thus, is a constant struggle between good and evil both within and outside the human mind. The nurturing of God-given goodness within human nature requires a persistent pursuit of 'truth'. This is not merely an intellectual exercise of *knowing* but also *acting* on that knowledge. Accordingly, politics should not be concerned with power per se but with the welfare of 'nations'. More specifically, religion involves adopting non-violence or active love in all aspects of life. In his book *An Autobiography: The Story of My Experiments With Truth*, Gandhi states,



'To see the universal and all-pervading Spirit of Truth face to face one must be able to love the meanest of creation as oneself. And a man who aspires after that cannot afford to keep out of any field of life. That is why my devotion to Truth has drawn me into the field of politics; and I can say without the slightest hesitation, and yet in all humility, that those who say that religion has nothing to do with politics do not know what religion means' (Gandhi, M. K, *An Autobiography*, p. 504).

Thus, for Gandhi, the pursuit of truth is the duty or *dharma* of humanity. With such a perception, in a sense, he is revitalising and expanding the traditional Indian conception of individual and social duty. Traditionally, Dharma is an intrinsic part of Indian social structure manifested in the form of *varna* or caste, which is partly based on the functional duties of individuals and is a concept that was vital in building the nation-state in ancient India. It entails both practical and moral connotations, the former being the economic division of labour and the latter essentially being the pursuit of national welfare. The essence of Gandhi's ideal was to reconstruct the moral dimension in the modern political context through non-violent means. His conception of Dharma goes beyond the functional and negative sense of duty and centres on the principle of *active* love of humanity. Thus, the idea of 'spiritualisation' of politics through religion is a fundamental and practical element of the Gandhian ideal of justice, love and welfare of humanity.

In view of this intrinsic nexus between politics and religion, Gandhi's concept of religion is open to two interpretations. Firstly, in a metaphysical sense, the essence of religion is almost synonymous with truth. It is a state of morality and pure goodness. In its application to politics, religion forms both means and ends. The task of humanity is to nurture it for the purification of the individual *self*, which will lead to the purification of politics. Thus, Gandhi states,

'Devotion to this Truth is the sole reason for our existence. All our activities should be centred in Truth. Truth should be the very breath of our life. When once this stage in the pilgrim's progress is reached, all other rules of correct living will come without effort, and obedience to them will be instinctive. But

without Truth it would be impossible to observe any principles or rules in life' (M. K. Gandhi, *Yeraveda Mandir* in Duncan, 1951: p.46).

Secondly, religion or truth as the ultimate purpose of life has a spiritual-philosophical dimension. In its final form, truth is a state of non-duality. Gandhi describes this state in the following way:

'In the march towards Truth, anger, selfishness, hatred, etc., naturally give way, for otherwise Truth would be impossible to attain. A man who is swayed by passions may have good intentions, may be truthful in word, but he will never find the Truth. A successful search for Truth means complete deliverance from dual throng [or paradoxical reality] such as of love and hate, happiness and misery' (Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography*, p.345).

Accordingly, the truth in its ultimate state is a state of deliverance, salvation or *Moksha*, one of the four Indian religious-social values. Under this description of the end-state, truth is not attainable in this world because of the intrinsic social dynamics of good and evil existing in politics. However, Gandhi is implying here that attaining this end-state is intrinsically linked to *how* one lives in this world. That is to say that truth is unattainable if religion is not sought for in political and social relations. In dissecting Gandhi's notion of religion further, Bhikhu Parekh comments that for Gandhi, religion or morality is 'a matter of *both* the quality of the soul and [of] conduct' (Parekh, 1989: p. 102). When these two elements are pure and in harmony with each other, the outcome of an individual's conduct will be positive, and it is only through this harmony that one can reach truth. Thus, for Gandhi, it is categorically the case that politics is a subset of religion, not vice versa.

Through his experiences in life, Gandhi learned and recognised that there were complexities and conflicts in political affairs between 'political expediency' and 'moral principles', often in the form of moral dilemmas (Gandhi, M. K., *An Autobiography*). In his analysis of this Gandhian notion, Raghavan Iyer suggests that 'in the ultimate analysis' Gandhi implies there is no conflict between these two, and moral dilemmas that occur in politics are resolvable (Iyer, 1973: p.47). This interpretation is justifiable within the philosophical sphere of the Gandhian assumption of a nexus between politics

and religion; the view that religion or morality are the foundation of social action and that political decisions and actions that follow work themselves out for the good. This highlights a fundamental difference between the Gandhian and the secular perception of the separation of utilitarian functionalism and religious or moral principles, which is prevalent in European ideational culture. Iyer's analysis suggests that Gandhi's view is in synchronism with the *Upanishads*, a collection of sacred ancient Indian literature, in dealing with moral dilemmas. Iyer states, 'the important thing ....is to distinguish between essentials and non-essentials, between what we know to be true and what we believe to be desirable, between *sreyas* and *preyas* as distinguished in the *Upanishads*' (Ibid., p.47).

These two notions are mentioned in the *Katha Upanishad*. It states,

'The better (*sreyas*) is one thing, and the pleasanter (*preyas*) quite another. Both these, of different aim, bind a person. Of these two, well it is for him who takes the better; He fails of his aim who chooses the pleasanter. Both the better and the pleasanter come to a man. Going all around the two, the wise man discriminates. The wise man chooses the better, indeed, rather than the pleasanter...' (*Katha Upanishad*, Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: p.45).

The passage goes on to juxtapose *sreyas* and *preyas* with 'knowledge' and 'ignorance' respectively. The pursuit of *sreyas* is the pursuit of 'knowledge' and the *preyas*, the pursuit of 'ignorance' (Ibid., p.45). The presupposition here is that 'knowledge' is 'good', hence, it must be pursued. This perception is in conformity with the Socratic dictum that knowledge is 'virtue'. Like Socrates, Gandhi believed in a morally disciplined pure politics.<sup>2</sup>

The fundamental implication of this Gandhian distinction is that right or wrong action depends on a close self-assessment of the means of that action and of its nearness to moral consciousness. The immediate physical outcome may or may not fulfil the intended expectation, but the definitional element in understanding the 'essentials' and 'non-essentials' of life lies in the extent to which one's intentions and actions are close to truth. Accordingly, while accepting that compromises between 'the better' and the desirable 'are often an inevitable dynamic of life, Gandhi advocates the view

that these compromises must be made in a way that would bring the individual closer to truth (Iyer, 1973: p.48).

Therefore, it can be argued that the essence of Gandhian thought is consistent with the Brahmanical ideology. His thought touches on all four Hindu social values, Artha, Dharma, Karma and Moksha. Here, two observations can be made vis-à-vis Gandhian thought and Brahmanical ideology. Firstly, Gandhian thought diverges from this mainstream Hindu tradition in the sense that its epistemological dynamic is not as rigidly compartmentalised as the latter. That is to say that existing in Gandhian thought is the conception that although there are fundamental and universal moral values that are common to all religions, there is no one correct way of reaching truth. This, in a sense, is a significant extension of the idea of the Brahmanical notion of 'Dharma', which assigns a set of duties to each caste. According to the Gandhian school, the idea of duty, like the idea of religion, is much broader than the Hindu social tradition allows. In other words, for Gandhi, implementing the assigned duty, whether cultural or otherwise, is not necessarily equated with obtaining truth. What matters the most is actions which are based on a selfless moral intention to do good for humanity.

Secondly, therefore, for Gandhi, politics or Artha cannot be detached from Dharma. Moreover, the pragmatism that derives from the *Arthashastra* tradition must be subordinated to personal and social ethics (Iyer, 1973, p.50). In other words, Gandhi perceived politics to be a necessary tool for enforcing Dharma, but that politics per se must be founded and nurtured by ethics.

It has to be borne in mind that in view of his broad definition of politics, Gandhi's idea of happiness is not achievable through top-down, coercive politics but only through conduct of ethical politics at all levels. He did not, thus, subscribe to the idea that true social and individual happiness or welfare can be obtained through *Rajadharma* or ethics of leadership which legitimises the use of *Danda* or force in enforcing order and social welfare

(Ibid., p.59). Rather, he believed in non-violent means, such as dialogue and persuasion, to be the ways of striving for true welfare.

Gandhi never called his ideas a grand theory or a strategy, nor did he write a grand treatise on his moral and political thought. Nevertheless, what seems to be evident from this Gandhian interpretation of religion and politics is a sense of purpose and an ideational construct, which may be called a grand 'strategic' ideal. It prescribes a clear religious, social and philosophical 'goal' and the means to reach that goal. The nature of that goal is not material, but is spiritual and moral. Intimately related to such a strategic format are his core values, which form the second layer in the foundation of his thought.

#### *The Core Gandhian Values*

In view of his rationale on politics and religion, Gandhi's strategic ideal consists of five key cultural ideas. They are *Satyagraha*, *Ahimsa*, *Swadeshi*, *Swaraj*, and *Dharma*. These ideas are essentially aimed at defining what Gandhi perceived to be true welfare or *sarvodaya* at two levels, and to encourage individuals to implement it. At one level, they are purported to improve material wellbeing of individuals, societies, nation-states and humanity through the means of non-violence. More importantly, at another level, they encourage individuals to pursue the experiment of self-purification or self-realisation, with the ultimate aim of obtaining truth. In the ultimate analysis, it is the latter which Gandhi believed should be the sole aim of life, the former being its subset. Although not all his ideas are reflected in the strategic attitude of India, the five ideas mentioned above are deeply embedded in India's strategic behaviour in the form of, on the one hand, constraining its behaviour and, on the other hand, driving it to pursue what it perceives as morally *right*. As demonstrated in Chapter 2, the effects of the Gandhian ideal are evident in India's nuclear behaviour where, for a long period of time, it constrained India from weaponising its nuclear capability, while conditioning it to be the leading advocate of universal nuclear disarmament. A reason behind the extent to which Gandhian thought has

influenced India's national identity may be the cultural affinity his ideals have with the longstanding basic tenets of Indian traditions and the active manner in which Gandhi managed to demonstrate them to the Indian people and to the world. Gandhi was not only in touch with the masses as a person, but also as an ideational guide or *guru*.

### *Truth*

The word Satyagraha literally means 'seizing or grasping truth'; *satya* means truth and *graha* signifies seizing or grasping.<sup>3</sup> Thus, it incorporates both idea and action. Gandhi first constructed the concept during his stay in South Africa, helping and campaigning for deprived Indian immigrants against the backdrop of Dutch and British rule. Satyagraha forms a central ethos of the Gandhian philosophy that truth must be followed by action. The prefix, *satya*, epitomises Gandhian thought, and is the foundational idea beneath the other four concepts. In the traditional Indian philosophy, Satyagraha is perceived as a transcendental notion or power that pervades human existence. It is the beginning and the end; the alpha and omega of life.

It is difficult to locate the definitive origin of Satya but there are essentially two interrelated levels by which its basis can be traced. At the etymological level, the word *satya* has several connotations other than 'truth' in the sense of honesty. It could be used to mean the following adjectives and nouns: real, genuine, serious, valid, effective, sincere, faithful...good; vow, promise, or oath.<sup>4</sup> Gandhi's notion of truth incorporates all these meanings. As Iyer points out, Gandhi's notion of Satya derives from the word *sat* which could mean 'real, actual, as any one or anything ought to be, true, good, right, beautiful, wise, venerable' and 'honest' (Iyer, 1973: p.150).<sup>5</sup> Thus, both *satya* and *sat* signify positive qualities, *asatya* and *asat* signifying the opposite qualities. The notion of 'Satya', in a discrete way, is associated with the Vedic age. The etymological meaning of the word '*Veda*', for example, is 'the sacred, the religious knowledge', in other words, the 'pure knowledge' (Winterritz, 1927: p.52).

The most notable meaning that the word 'sat' connotes, however, is 'existence' or 'being'. This notion of 'sat' in the context of ancient Indian thought is complex but a significant philosophical epicentre from which Gandhi's ideals derive. The earliest evidence of the use of 'sat' with this meaning can be traced to the *Rig Veda*, which is considered by Hindus to be the most ancient and sacred of the Vedic collections of hymns. In one hymn, the author of this ancient text uses 'sat' in relation to the origin of the World, speculating on the beginning of 'consciousness' (*Rig Veda*, X, 129). In this hymn, the words 'sat' and 'asat' seem to be used in two senses. Firstly, they are used in the neutral sense of 'objective' and 'non-objective'. Secondly, they represent the source of normative standpoints of rightness and falsehood respectively. In the beginning, however, there was nothingness, neither non-being nor being. There was no source of moral judgement: it was an entirely timeless metaphysical state. The only thing present was the 'One Thing'; this came to *be* through the power of heat. Although the author is unsure of the nature of *it* and whether it created the World or not, he acknowledges in verse seven its mystical power, which oversees the affairs of the World. The *Chandogya Upanishad* seems to miss the very beginning that the Rig Vedic text describes, but it is basically consistent with it, describing how in the beginning there was 'being' or *sat* (*Chandogya Upanishad*, VI, 2).<sup>6</sup> Here, 'sat' seems to be much more personified in the use of language but its nature is indescribable. The author of this text perceives 'sat' as the first being and the source of all existence. However, it also exists in non-physical way.

This idea of, or implication of, a supreme creator is mainly significant in two ways. Firstly, in the broader context of Hindu philosophical and theological evolution, this was a significant ideational stepping-stone from a polytheistic notion of *theos* into two other conceptions: monotheism and monism (Edgerton, 1965: p.19).<sup>7</sup> The former essentially describes a God that is personalised, relatable, and the creator of all things, including other gods. The latter considers 'sat' to be an impersonal god or abstraction, the ultimate and indescribable being that one strives to reach. These notions later develop into the more highly developed philosophic school of the Vedanta

(Moore and Radhakrishnan, 1957: p.16). Secondly, and in conjunction with the first concept, this monotheistic or monistic non-physical God becomes an ideological entity. In the *Rig Veda*, the supreme god is given the name *Jnanam* which means 'knowledge' or 'wisdom' (*Rig Veda*, X, 71). *Jnanam* is perceived as supreme, the most holy and faultless one. In the *Aitareya Upanishad*, it is described as *Atman* or the 'Highest Self' (*Aitareya Upanishad*, I, i, 1-3). The author of this *Upanishad* describes *Jnanam* as not only the creator of all, but also being the transcendental and universal knowledge that is the basis of all creation (*Ibid.*, III, v). The *Mundaka Upanishad* identifies this holy knowledge as *Brahman*, the Absolute, the Supreme Spirit which is immortal and imperishable (*Mundaka Upanishad*, II, ii). In another part of the text, it declares that *Brahman* is the highest knowledge and to realise it is the highest goal of life (*Taittiriya Upanishad*, II, 1).

This development clearly identifies *sat* as the deepest reflection of the supreme god, righteousness and the foundation of life. Another significant description or facet of the supreme creator is the law of the universe. One hymn in *Rig Veda* states, 'truth [Satya] is the base that bears the Earth; by Surya are the heavens sustained. By Law [Rta] the Adityas stand secure, and Soma holds his place in heaven' (*Rig Veda*, X, 85). One author describes 'truth' as the 'spiritual law' or the 'principle of integration' which originated in the 'Absolute', and 'Rta' as the 'cosmic law', the application and function of truth as rule and order operating in the universe (Krishnanda, 1994: p.13). This supreme originator of the World, here, is also the upholder of order and unity in the form of spiritual and natural law and righteousness.

The theme of Absolute or the Ultimate Reality continues in the text of the *Bhagavadgita*.<sup>8</sup> Following from the Vedic notion of personal and impersonal God, the *Gita* also describes the Supreme Spirit as being beyond both 'sat' and 'asat' (*Bhagavadgita*, 11, 37; 9, 19; and 13, 12). The Supreme God is both personal and impersonal, very near but also very far away (*Ibid.*, 13, 15). As in the Vedic literatures, he is identified as *Brahman*, who is the perfect good and righteousness, the transcendent knowledge beyond



temporal and spatial conditions of life (Ibid., 8). However, the *Gita* puts much more emphasis on the Supreme Spirit as the personal god who creates the observable world in reflection of his image. It states, 'O Arjuna, the Atma[n] that dwells in the body of all (beings) is eternally indestructible. Therefore, you should not mourn for anybody' (Ibid., 2, 30).

The *Gita* expresses the closeness of God's nature in two ways. First, the Supreme God or 'sat', here, is interchangeable with Atman (Ibid., 2, 16). Atman is also something that exists in all beings. It is a space of consciousness, a breath of life. It is the spiritual body that is indestructible and that cannot be perceived by physical senses. Because it is a spiritual manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, it is not subjected to any decay. Secondly, it is described as the goal of each human being.

'This unmanifest state is called the imperishable, or Brahman. This is said to be the ultimate goal. Those who reach My Supreme abode do not return (or take rebirth)' (Ibid., 8, 21).

Here, Brahman is the state of ultimate reality and is a term interchangeable with truth. It is the ultimate goal that is reachable only through devotion or *Bhakti*. The *Gita* states, 'this Supreme abode, O Arjuna, is attainable by unswerving devotion to Me within which all beings exist, and by which all this universe is pervaded' (Ibid., 8, 22; and 11, 55). The message the *Gita* conveys is that devotion is intrinsically part and parcel of life, for it requires action. However, it does not mean devotion to the physical self in a materialist sense, but refers to attentiveness to the well-being of the spiritual self which is a part of the Supreme Self.

Gandhi's philosophical base of Satyagraha is very much in line with the notion of sat existing in the Vedic texts and the *Gita*. For Gandhi, Atman, the Cosmic Law, the Absolute and truth are all interchangeable terms. However, he preferred to use the term 'truth'. Like the authors of the ancient texts, he also subscribed to the conception of impersonal and personal God which he identified with absolute and relative truth respectively. Truth or the Absolute denoted universal, transcendental, unchanging law that pervades time and change. He is beyond the comprehension of the human mind,

unknowable and indescribable. In this respect, he is impersonal. However, at the same time, in the human world, he has numerous identities. Gandhi expresses the two conceptions in the following way:

'truth is not only truthfulness in word, but truthfulness in thought also, and not only the relative truth of our conception, but the Absolute Truth, the Eternal Principle, that is God. There are innumerable definitions of God, because his manifestations are innumerable. They overwhelm me with wonder and awe and for a moment stun me. But I worship God as Truth only. I have not yet found Him, but I am seeking after Him. I am prepared to sacrifice the things dearest to me in pursuit of this quest. Even if the sacrifice be my very life, I hope I may be prepared to give it. But as long as I have not realised this Absolute Truth, so long must I hold by the relative truth as I have conceived it. That relative truth must, meanwhile, be my beacon, my shield and buckler' (Gandhi, M. K, *An Autobiography*, pp.xiv).

A crucial implication of this notion of the nexus between absolute and relative truth is that for Gandhi, the absolute truth is fundamental and conditional to relative truth. That is to say, each moral path in search for the state of perfection beyond the realm of the material nature cannot reach that state without faith in the existence of such a state, the absolute truth. Relative truth refers to the various conceptions of what is morally right but it is not the end itself. It is only a part of the way towards the absolute truth, like rivers which flow apart from each other, and yet reach the same destination in the end, the Ocean.

Gandhi recognised that truth in human affairs is inevitably relative, because individuals are bound by different qualities and experiences of the World, making truth appear in different ways and forms. Gandhi attributed the inevitability of relative truth to two key factors. Firstly, as Parekh reiterates, for Gandhi, 'the human mind was so used to the world of qualities that it did not find it easy to think in non-qualitative terms' (Parekh, 1989: p.71). Secondly, Gandhi perceived man as both a 'feeling' and a 'thinking' being, each, heart and mind, with different needs (Ibid., p.71). In other words, Gandhi recognised that there was an intrinsic need or instinct in man to personalise and relate, especially when it comes to an abstract notion, such as absolute truth. By this, what seems to be a psychological explanation of

relative truth, Gandhi did not mean that the relativism of truth was an illusion created by Man for his own mental satisfaction. The relativism of moral paths in the World was a part of the original design of the Absolute. It was the Absolute which designated the individuality of Man and endorsed individual differences by appearing to Man in different ways:

'He is the searcher of hearts. He transcends speech and reason. He knows us and our hearts better than we do ourselves. He does not take us at our word for He knows that we often do not mean it, some knowingly and some unknowingly. He is a personal God to those who need His personal presence. ....He is the purest essence...He is all things to all men. He is in us and yet above and beyond us...' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 5<sup>th</sup> March 1925).

The notional nexus and distinction between an impersonal God or the absolute truth, and the very personal God or relative truth carries, a great significance. The perception that derives from this is that socio-political life is imperfect and, thus, there is a great need to strive for perfection. It nurtures the idea that moral life is a process of trial and error. Progress can only be achieved by learning from past errors. As Iyer puts it, 'the significance of Gandhi's distinction between absolute and relative truth lies in the acceptance of the need for a corrective process of experimentation with our own experience, and this presupposes our readiness to admit openly our errors and to learn from them' (Iyer, 1973: p.160). That is to say, for Gandhi, the acts of admission and learning required humbleness, but at the same time faith in the Absolute. Unlike Hobbes, Gandhi did not believe in the inevitability of errors. He believed that errors could be corrected through the proactive and progressive evolution of attitudes. Although in the introduction of his autobiography Gandhi compares this to a science experiment designed to illustrate preciseness of the process and open-mindedness of the result (Gandhi M. K., *An Autobiography*: p.xiii), his idea of experiments with truth were much more potent in the sense that what was at stake in these experiments, for him, was moral and spiritual wellbeing at all levels, individual, social, national and global, the ultimate end being self-realisation or Moksha, salvation (Ibid., p.xii). Gandhi's presumption in this process was that an individual or a culture is capable of progressive change from bad to good.

The second significant aspect of the distinction between absolute and relative truth lies in Gandhi's rationale on reason, faith and culture (or civilisation). Gandhi assumed the notion of absolute and relative truth to be the conditioning and fundamental basis of life. Thus, these characteristics of humanity are subjected to the inherent influence of absolute truth. For this reason, Gandhi considered none of them to be ends in themselves. Rather, for him, these were inadvertently or advertently constructed media which were instrumental in the individual or social struggle to reach the ultimate aim, Moksha.

On reason, Gandhi regarded the 'scientific spirit' or the 'spirit of rational enquiry' as a necessary asset for examining one's consciousness. He considered it the pursuit of truth through intellectual faculties. In this respect, Gandhi admired intellectual progress in European nations in terms of vigorous examinations of religions and cultures of the World. However, as Parekh points out, Gandhi considered scientific advancement in Western states to be a falsehood, because the states become blinded to all but reason and progress. Reason overtook moral precedence. Gandhi saw the need to understand the fallibility of reason. Parekh states,

'Gandhi's admiration of the scientific *spirit*...did not extend to the scientific *culture*. In his view modern civilisation was right to give pride of place to reason, but wrong to make a 'fetish' of it and ignore its limitations. Such areas of human experience as religion raised matters transcending reason and requiring faith. In some other areas of life, such as morality and politics, reason was inherently inadequate and needed to be guided and supplemented by wisdom, conscience, intuition and moral insight' (Parekh, 1989: p. 31).

In his autobiography Gandhi both endorsed and embraced scientific methodology in the examination of his own consciousness (Gandhi, *An Autobiography*). For him, experiences had to be systemically examined in order to not only understand and discipline the nature of one's consciousness, but also to be convinced through the progress of life of the existence of the Absolute, which was higher and beyond the moral spectrum

of social life. However, he would have agreed with Kant, that reason alone could not provide happiness. For Gandhi, true happiness, that is spiritual welfare, requires an act of *faith* in the Absolute. He states:

'It is faith that steers us through stormy seas, faith that moves mountains and faith that jumps across the ocean. That faith is nothing but a living, wide awake consciousness of God within. He who has achieved that faith wants nothing. Bodily diseased he is spiritually healthy, physically pure, he rolls in spiritual riches' (Gandhi, Young India, 24<sup>th</sup> Sep. 1925).

The importance of 'faith' in Gandhian philosophy lies in its implications. Firstly, the Gandhian view highlights the distinction between the observable and unobservable nature of power. Faith, which is unseen, represents a power which supersedes material power because it enables the wellbeing of the inner self, which is imperishable. From this, a powerful social perception and attitude can be derived. This is that there is a greater sphere in life than the material realm, which must be recognised and understood even at the expense of bodily wellbeing. This idea had existed in Indian philosophy for millennia, but Gandhi tried to reinvigorate and promulgate it into the modern culture. Secondly, faith should not contradict reason and observation (Parekh, 1989: p.75). These conceptions of faith could bring the individual closer to the Absolute. Gandhi understood that self-realisation required a rational self-assessment of the individual's consciousness. Thirdly, the essence of the process of self-realisation required a 'leap of faith'. It was this leap that would prevent one from spiralling down into the vortex of modern civilisation.

In other words, while acknowledging human faith to be a socially constructed perceptual bond based on rationality, Gandhi believed there must also be a simple unquestioning conviction or dependence on the Absolute. This blind faith was the only link between Man as a social being and absolute truth. The justification for this idea of faith was made possible because of two philosophical sources for his ideals. Firstly, that one could not reach the ultimate goal with reason and observation alone, because the nature of the Absolute transcended manmade logic. Second, it was effectively in line with the concept of 'Satya' as described in the Vedic texts

and the *Gita*. It was the idea that Satya, the Absolute God was Rta, the holy cosmic law which governs the World. Gandhi's idea of faith was based on the conviction that the Absolute God was in control of the natural and social order of the World.<sup>9</sup> Thus, for him, the element of external *fear*, the antonym of faith, was an irrational attribute of humanity. The nurturing of faith through the utilisation of reason and observation, and the unconditional leap of faith was precisely to overcome fear, which he understood as based on the misperception of life (M. K. Gandhi, *Yeraveda Mandir* in Duncan, 1951: pp.49-50).

'Scientific culture', then, was mass conduct based solely on reason. For Gandhi, this described one main attribute of Western civilisation, which he severely criticised (Gandhi, 2003, *Hind Swarj*). His criticism of this characteristic of Western civilisation was not because of mass industrialisation and development per se, but because of its consequence of moral drought which he believed became rooted in the foundation of the Western culture. Gandhi attacked the very ontology of Western civilisation by giving an alternative notion of the term 'civilisation'. He states:

'Civilisation is that mode of conduct which points out to Man the path of duty. Performance of duty and observance of morality are convertible terms. To observe morality is to attain mastery over our mind and our passions. [By] so doing, we know ourselves. The Gujarati equivalent for civilisation means "good conduct"' (Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 2003: p.45).

This definition of civilisation presupposes the existence of moral force. That moral force, for Gandhi, is, or came from, absolute truth. Thus, culture, in its abstract sense, was a vital medium in cultivating the notion of morality. Moreover, in the context of the campaign for India's independence from British imperial rule, he believed that simple political independence was not good enough for India. His strategic vision for India was for it to be rooted in a morally influential national *identity*. Only then, could India become a moral force at a global level. In this respect, Gandhi's vision was not restricted by national boundaries. His grand vision was a world in which morality was at the core of social interactions between and within societies worldwide.

Gandhi hoped that this would put the World on the correct collective track towards 'freedom' or the realisation of 'Satya' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 8<sup>th</sup> Oct. 1925).

### *Ahimsa*

Truth, for Gandhi, was a divine goal which he thought should be the ultimate aim of humanity at all levels. Ahimsa, generally known as non-violence, is Gandhi's philosophical and practical answer to the question *how* to pursue that truth. He states, 'truth is my God, non-violence is the means of realising Him...' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1925). At one level, the introduction and the application of the concept of Ahimsa was Gandhi's attempt to transcend what was seemingly a perpetual cause of human conflict and social malice: the friction between, and the moral dilemmas of, good and evil. At another level, Ahimsa was the method Gandhi deemed righteous in his campaign for India's freedom from the British imperial rule. Gandhi himself, however, was not the originator of the concept. Rather, he resurrected the concept from ancient Indian tradition and recontextualised it to suit what he thought were the best interests of India.

The word ahimsa literally means non-injuring, non-killing or harmlessness.<sup>10</sup> In the traditional Indian didactic sense, it implies refraining from violence in thought, word and deed. This broad notion of non-violence proliferated between the seventh and sixth centuries BC (Sutherland, 1997: p.41), around the time when Buddhism and Jainism began to flourish against the backdrop of Brahmanical dominance. This comprehensive idea of non-violence was intrinsically associated by Buddhist, Jain and Hindu ascetics with food and food consumption and was based on the ascetic vow of religious mendicants to renounce the killing and eating of any living being (Ibid., p.41).

The origin of non-violence, however, can be traced as far back as the Vedic period. It seems there were two modes of thought during this period, at least based on the evidence of texts from the period. On the one hand, there

is some residual and scattered textual evidence of the Ahimsa in Vedic period. One hymn in the *Rig Veda* states:

'Gods, to our living creatures of both kinds vouchsafe protection, both to bipeds and to quadrupeds, that they may drink and eat invigorating food. So grant us health and strength and perfect innocence' (*Rig Veda* X, 37, 11).

In this and other texts<sup>11</sup>, the idea of peace is implied not only through sense of harmony within the community but also the non-killing of living beings. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly why this notion existed but it may be suggested that it is essentially to do with the didactic idea that by not partaking in killing and meat-eating one gains purity of body and soul. Purity was perceived as a quality of God and by being pure, it was perceived that one could become near to God with perfect security and welfare.

That said, another line of thought which seems to be the quintessential ethos of Vedic ideology is centred on the notion of 'food' and 'eaters', a theme which runs throughout the Vedic texts and a important ideational marker of the post-Vedic period (from 500 B.C.) (Smith, 1990). The Vedic perception of the world order was that the social world reflects the dynamics of the food chain: the hierarchical relations of the stronger dominating the weaker. At the top of this chain were the gods, who feed on symbolic sacrifices which provide them with food in substitute for their eating the human sacrificers. The next link in the chain, humans, eat animals; animals in turn eat plants and plants 'eat' natural nutrients (Doniger and Smith, 1991: pp.xxiv-xxv). The difference between the animal world and the social world, however, was that eating was more than an act based on biological need *per se*, but it was also a symbolism of power, a celebration of victory over the conquered.

This dynamic was reflected in the realm of interstate relations, where violence was justified mainly on the basis of the acquisition of land, resources and religious beliefs (Mukherjee, 1967: pp. 13-15). The adverse effect of this insecurity felt by the Vedic states in turn encouraged the pursuit of power. It



may have been from this repetitive pattern that hierarchical international relations based on wealth and might came to be accepted as the norm.

More significantly, this dynamic of the strong devouring the weak is evident in social relations. The interrelations between the four castes or varnas, warriors and rulers (Ksatryas), priests (Brahmans), lay people (Vaisyas) and servants (Sudras) reflect the hierarchical dynamic based on power. In the Vedic context, following on the dynamic of the natural world, the warrior class was supposedly the most powerful group dominating the other castes. However, while depicting the social dynamic as based on both anarchic and alimentary elements, the *Veda* describes the priest as the highest class, and highest in the food chain (Doniger and Smith, 1991: p.xxvi). Thus, as indicated in Chapter 5, there was some sort of clash of interest between these two classes.<sup>12</sup> It was a struggle for power within society. What seems to have been unprecedented is that in the political and social context where material might ruled, the kind of power which enabled the priest to hold on to his high status was his monopoly over sacrificial ceremonies or *yajna* and over knowledge (Doniger and Smith 1991: p.xxvii). The fire ceremony, indeed, was a central part of Vedic life. Doniger and Smith write:

'It was from a cosmic and primordial sacrifice that that the universe was created, and it was because of the repeated sacrifices offered by humans that the universe continues. The ritual, done correctly and at the proper time, was the workshop for manipulating the cosmic order (*ṛta*) itself. The sacrifice was also the site in which the priest laboured on behalf of their patrons, the sacrificers (*yajamanas*) who sponsored and benefited from the ritual. Personal ends, as well as cosmic ones, were the fruit of sacrificial practices. The priests held out to their patrons the promise of a place in heaven, but also of a long contented life, material success of all sorts, and worldly status' (Ibid., p.xxvii).

Such serious and fundamental integration of the role of sacrificial ceremonies with regards to everyday life enabled the priest to consolidate his position in Vedic society. In addition to such power, the priests were the *intelligentsia* who were in effect perceived as the guardians of knowledge. The *Veda* itself, which was a collection of sacred books on gods, sacrifices

and rituals, was written by the priests. It was they who had a fundamental hold over the very fabric of Vedic life, from sacred knowledge to the performing of religious rituals. This hierarchical dominance and struggle for power at the top levels of the social class structure was a manifestation of the Vedic ideology of food and eaters. It was a base for the justification of violence or *Himsa*.

This notion of violence continued to exist in the post-Vedic age in the more sophisticated notion of *realpolitik*. The use of force or Danda became a central role of the state. The use of violence was justified in terms of protection, welfare and the expansion of territory. This school became known as the school of Artha and its literature as arthashastra. However, with the rise of heterodox religions, essentially Buddhism and Jainism, the idea of non-violence gained much more prevalence and prominence.<sup>13</sup> Although the exact origin of the non-violence tradition remains uncertain, it seems probable that its origin is interrelated to the emergence of rejectionist discourse at the time of the rise of the heterodox religions (*ibid.*, p.xxxiv; Sutherland, 1997: pp.1-37). These religions were against Vedic ideals and the heart of the Brahmanical traditions. In particular, they denounced the Vedic ideology of violence, which was based on the principle of hierarchical relations between 'food' and 'eater'. For these religions, social life was characterised as endless suffering through violence towards other beings. More fundamentally, the essence of social life itself is perceived as involving suffering through birth and rebirth. It was believed that the only means of release from this cycle was the renunciation of violence.

At what seemed an unsettled period of Indian history, Ahimsa implied both political and moral aspects. One interpretation of the political nature of Ahimsa may be that its development directly challenged the Brahmanical tradition. The Jains and Buddhists who adopted this concept challenged the very fabric of Hindu society, the caste system and sacrificial ceremonies, and were against Brahmanical domination of society. In this respect, one may infer that Ahimsa entailed a broader political purpose, or an interest in changing the social structure.

Secondly, however, this political cause may have had limitations. Thus, Gail Hinich Sutherland argues that Ahimsa in the ancient Jain and Buddhist context was more associated with vegetarianism and complete abstinence from activity and productivity than concern for social and political injustices (Sutherland, 1997: p.43). It was this non-participatory norm that limited Jain and Buddhist involvement in political and social spheres. Moreover, this diet based Ahimsa seems to have had a significant adverse effect on their political cause. Sutherland writes:

'[N]ormative discussions of *Ahimsa* were frequently embedded within elaborate mendicant regulations and alms-gathering (*pinaisana*) restrictions. Thus, seen as, fundamentally, the preserve of non-producing renunciates, *Ahimsa* was part of the ensemble of differentia that fortified the economic base of mendicancy. As perennial economic dependents, these mendicant champions of total non-injury reinforced the system of hereditary division of labour. Drawing from all castes and classes, *sramanical* [renunciatory] groups were situated at the centre of efforts to reconceive the caste system. Their economic dependency, however, guaranteed that their protest against caste would not lead then to favour expunging it. They may have challenged the hegemony of *Brahman* sacrificers but they also legitimised the power and authority of kings and wealthy mercantilists' (Ibid., p.43).

In other words, this view suggests that Ahimsa as a revolutionary value system in opposition to the predominant Brahmanical cultural setting, became embroiled in and weakened by the asymmetric economic power relations between the two systems, inevitably reinforcing the predominant system.

While this is undoubtedly a powerful argument, the influence Ahimsa had on Brahmanical ideational development, perhaps, should not be underestimated. Because of the growing prevalence and antithetical nature of Ahimsa and vegetarianism, from the priest's point of view there had to be a radical reconsideration of the Vedic rationale that one needs to kill to eat. The task now for this intellectual driving force in ancient India was to somehow adapt to the logic that one does *not* have to kill to eat, without having to dismantle the Brahmanical social order. Thus, the quintessential socio-political-philosophical rationale of the post-Vedic and the Epic period centred

on the four value systems, Artha, Karma, Dharma and Moksha. These systems, on the one hand, enabled the legitimisation of the use of force and the maintenance of the social caste system but, on the other, also allowed the incorporation of the idea of 'purity' (which largely implies abstention from eating meat and non-injury, the symbolic essence of vegetarianism, in Brahmanical philosophy).

Taking the basic ideational ethos as a whole, this ideational balancing act was designed to retain, and to a significant extent to strengthen, Brahmanical traditions is evident in various Epic literatures. The *Shanti Parva* of the *Mahabharata*, for example, illustrates this point. In several places, it stipulates the necessity for self-restraint, forgiveness and non-injury, (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Sections LXXXVIII, CXVIII, CLX, Roy, 1890). On the other hand, the *Mahabharata* puts a strong emphasis on the idea of Royal 'protection' of the country through any means, including violence (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LVIII, Roy, 1890). Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, which is generally regarded as a treatise on political realism, has some traces of the Dharma, Moksha and non-violence nexus. It states, '[duties] common to all are: abstaining from injury [to living creatures], truthfulness, uprightness, freedom from malice, compassionateness, and forbearance. [The observance of] one's own special duty leads to heaven and to endless bliss. (Kautilya, 2003: p.8). On the other hand, another passage asserts that Danda, which means force, alone can provide security and welfare for the people (Ibid., p.10). Manu's *Dharmashastra* also has similar dynamics but it is much more focussed on Dharma, thus, there are more passages on non-violence than in the *Arthashastra*. One passage states, 'a resolute, gentle, controlled, non-violent man, who does not associate with people whose ways are cruel, wins heaven through his control and generosity when he behaves in the way' (Manu, 1991: p.97).<sup>14</sup> At the same time, Book VII is dedicated to the legitimate and illegitimate uses of force (Ibid., pp.128-151). The *Bhagavadgita*, which delves deep into discussion of the moral dilemmas of killing, continues this ideational trend. To Arjuna's sorrowful moral dilemma about whether to fight for the glory of his country in the battle against his own relatives, Krishna, his preceptor, responds:

'How has the dejection come to you at this juncture? This is not fit for an Aryan (or the people of noble mind and deeds). It is disgraceful, and it does not lead one to heaven, O Arjuna. Do not become a coward, O Arjuna, because it does not befit you. Shake off this weakness of your heart and get up (for the battle), O Arjuna' (*Bhagavadgita*, 2.02-03).

Krishna's logic is that as the body is perishable and non-permanent, the individual should focus on what is permanent, the soul or atman (*Ibid.*, 2.14-2.27). In other words, it is the notion that death with honour is much better than life with shame. On the other hand, Chapter 16 describes 'non-violence' and 'renunciation' as part of the 'divine quality' (*Ibid.*, 16.02-03).<sup>15</sup>

How can this apparent contradiction be explained? A political explanation, as suggested earlier by Sutherland, may be that this served the interest of Brahmins, who felt threatened by the ideology of Ahimsa which was becoming prevalent with the rise of Buddhism and Jainism. Another explanation, which may be linked to the former, is that there was a genuine philosophical interest in the idea of moral dilemma vis-à-vis the King's duty to uphold righteousness, with a view to building of a morally viable polity (*Mbh.*, *Shanti Parva*, Section LVI, Roy, 1890). This is to say that for the ancient scholars, the conflict between the implementation of the idea of righteousness and non-injury was a genuine intellectual problem. For them, at least in the philosophical sense, this was resolvable. They turned to Vedic theology for explanations. As a result, the concept of Ahimsa came to be a part of the wider Brahmanical theology, achieving compromise in what seemed to be the contradictory characters (Ahimsa and Himsa) of Brahma, the creator god. In the application of the idea of divine righteousness, thus, use of force is justified where the welfare of the State is at stake, while non-violence is a value that all men should pursue because it purifies, thus bringing one closer to God. Both means are believed to lead to heaven.

It seems that the ancient Buddhists and Jains took Ahimsa, at least initially, in a literal sense: vegetarianism and the renunciation of violence. However, there were, apparently, differing interpretations of the concept and its application. It seems that despite a strict moral code of non-violence

(Moore and Radhkrishnan, 1957: pp.312-313), the Buddhist interpretation allowed for Ahimsa had exceptions. Some degree of violence in battle was allowed to occur (Sutherland, 1997: p.52). This was essentially to do with the realisation of the politics of reality, where force was an inevitable necessity in socio-political affairs. This was a clear contradiction of the renunciatory code they originally adopted. Sutherland demonstrates this by citing the example of the policies of Ashoka after the battle of Kalinga, when he adopted Buddhism as his personal as well as the national religion. Thus, she argues that Ashoka's conversion was not in any way based on pacifism. She states, 'in the main, he confined his exercise of vaguely Buddhist virtues to the protection of animals and holy men of all sects and the conducting of polity in a general spirit of respect and civility' (Ibid., p.60).

The Jains practiced five virtues: Ahimsa; truth-speaking; non-stealing; chastity; and non-attachment (Moore and Radhakrishnan, 1957: p.251). They were more stringent about the application of Ahimsa in life. However, the Jain version did not denounce warfare (Sutherland, 1997: p.53). Jains did not reject the support of warriors (many were Jains themselves). The difference between the two religions over Ahimsa was that Jains were generally stricter in their implementation of vegetarianism and non-injury than the Buddhists. What they both seem to have realised was that total abstention from violence in social life was impossible.

Although the Ahimsa ideology did not change the rank order of the Brahmanical social classes<sup>16</sup>, it *revolutionised* the ancient Indian ideational and social rational, in the sense that it influenced and altered the Vedic way of thinking. Perhaps the ancient context of the development of the concept of Ahimsa can be juxtaposed with Gandhi's thought in the way that his devout embracing and advocacy of Ahimsa was a part of the attempt to bring about a re-rationalisation of what he regarded as the predominantly violence-based Western imperialism. Ahimsa, in other words, served as an antithetical ideology.

Gandhi's notion of Ahimsa is largely consistent with the original ancient ideology of Ahimsa as it embodies two common aspects. Firstly, his notion also literally means 'abstention from or renunciation of violence'. It embraces the virtues of forgiveness, faithfulness and harmlessness in both thought and action. Secondly, vegetarianism, though not as obviously part of the broader politics of his notion as of the original Ahimsa ideology, was also ingrained in his personal practice of the non-killing of living things and non-consumption of meat.<sup>17</sup> Such consistency is evident from the fact that he was a strong follower of the Ahimsa ideals of the *Bhagavadgita* (Fischer, 1984: pp. 44-52).

Thirdly, Gandhi seems to have subscribed to the radical and broadly defined Jain and Buddhist view of violence, that 'all sins are modifications of Himsa, that the basic sin, the only sin in the ultimate analysis, is the sin of separateness' (Iyer, 1973: p.181). This implies that the definition of violence is not exclusively confined to inflicting of physical or non-physical injury to a living creature, but, moreover, its essence is the ignorance of the absolute truth. The nature of violence, which is synonymous with the nature of sinfulness, is simply the absence of truth, with or without intent. Thus, one may deduce from this logic that one's Himsa, starts from the mindset even before one acts. It is not determined by the outcome of one's action but by whether the intention is guided and based on the truth. This is to say, actions based on narcissism, with an unselfish outcome, would be counted as Himsa. Conversely, then, non-violence, despite its potential unintended side effect of conflict, is invoked within and from the individual instigating the causes and action.

Fourthly, while Gandhi inherited a more strict and literal Buddhist and Jain interpretation of Ahimsa, his notion was also, to an extent, consistent with the Brahmanised version of non-violence. This is evident in two ways. Firstly, it is consistent in the sense that like the Brahmans who astutely adapted Ahimsa, which in effect strengthened Brahmanical tradition, Gandhi also reinforced this tradition by defending a foundational element of this tradition, the caste system. He writes in February 1920, 'I am one of those

who do not consider caste to be a harmful institution. In its origin, caste was a wholesome custom and promoted national well-being' (Gandhi, Young India, 25<sup>th</sup> Feb. 1920). In his reply to the criticism that the caste system caused slavery, he reinforced this view by going as far as to suggest that 'it is not caste that has made us what we are. It was our greed and disregard for essential virtues which enslaved us. I believe that caste has saved Hinduism from disintegration' (Ibid., 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1920). Gandhi viewed the four caste divisions as 'fundamental, natural and essential' for it was a corner stone of economic, social and religious (for Hinduism) stability. However, where he departed from the ancient tradition was that he recognised the existence of systemic oppression and power play within the system, and wanted it to be reformed in order for it to conform to the ideal of Ahimsa. He launched a staunch attack on the cultural embracing of untouchability, stating, 'I consider untouchability to be a heinous crime against humanity. It is not a sign of self-restraint but an arrogant assumption of superiority. It has served no useful purpose and it has suppressed, as nothing else in Hinduism has, vast numbers of the human race who are not only every bit as good as ourselves, but rendering in many walks of life an essential service to the country' (Ibid.). In this respect, Gandhi saw the caste system not as a tool of power, as the ancient Brahmins saw it, but as a functional structure, which if understood and maintained in conjunction with the principle of Ahimsa would provide proper welfare to the people.

The second aspect that represents the consistency of Gandhi's notion of Ahimsa with that of the ancient Brahmanical tradition concerns the use of force. The Brahmanical ideology, as explored above, though integrating Ahimsa as a central symbolism of purity, never rejected the idea of the use of force. This is most evident in the *Arthashastra* and *Dharmashastra* traditions. Although Gandhi did not explicitly subscribe to these traditions, he did not dismiss the use of force in certain circumstances. He states,

'I do believe that, where there is only a choice between cowardice and violence, I would advise violence. Thus when my eldest son asked me what he should have done had he been present when I was almost fatally assaulted in 1908, whether he should have run away and seen me killed or



whether he should have used his physical force which he could and wanted to use, and defended me, I told him that it was his duty to defend me even by using violence. Hence it was that I took part in the Boer War, the so-called Zulu rebellion and the late war. Hence also do I advocate training in arms for those who believe in the method of violence. I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour' (Ibid., 11<sup>th</sup> Aug., 1920).

For Gandhi, this 'honour' was a vital part of his public and personal life because it was, whether consciously or subconsciously, a part of his cultural identity. He was not prepared to lose it even at the expense of using violence. In a sense, he had no choice in this matter, for had he believed and acted otherwise, he would have been denying his duty or Dharma, which was a defining value of Hindu society, the society he was born into. Where Gandhi departed from the *Dharmasastra* and the *Arthasastra* traditions was that he did countenance the use of force for the sake of political expediency. His preference was always for non-violence and he deeply believed that it was 'infinitely superior' to violence (Ibid.).

However, Gandhi extended the original definition of Ahimsa in two ways. Firstly, unlike the ancient religious ascetics who understood Ahimsa to essentially mean a complete detachment from the World, i.e. inaction, Gandhi did not take the 'renunciation' to imply such rigidity. Thus, Ahimsa had two interrelated definitions, 'negative' and 'positive' for him. While, like the ancient religious monks, he took it to mean not injuring another living being in body or thought, he also referred to it as centring on *active* love for living beings. He writes,

'In its *negative* form it means not injuring any living being whether by body or mind. I may not, therefore, hurt the person of any wrong-doer or bear any ill-will to him and so cause him mental suffering. This statement does not cover suffering caused to the wrong-doer by natural acts of mine which do not proceed from ill-will. . . .*Ahimsa* requires deliberate self-suffering, not a deliberate injuring of the supposed wrong-doer. . . .In its *positive* form, *Ahimsa* means the largest love, the greatest charity. If I am a follower of *Ahimsa*, I must love my enemy or a stranger to me as I would my wrong-doing father or son. This active *Ahimsa* necessarily includes truth and fearlessness' (Gandhi, M. K, quoted in Iyer, 1973: pp.179-180).

This indicates that for Gandhi, Ahimsa, indeed, had a strict passive dimension through non-participation in Himsa in both body and thought. The negative aspect of Ahimsa is also consistent with the Jain understanding of non-violence, in the sense that it embraces injury deriving from non-intended and non-harmful action. While this is the case, Gandhi's notion of Ahimsa goes much further. The purpose that Gandhi intended for his notion of Ahimsa was not only individual emancipation from the cycle of life and death, i.e. Moksha, but also the conversion of the unrighteous to righteousness through non-coercive and non-violent means (Ibid., p.183). The implementation of this naturally required a notion of 'action', but a special one that conforms to detachment from violence. For Gandhi, that notion was 'self-suffering', which implied non-cooperation and non-capitulation to injustice, abiding to any physical distress arising from such non-compliance. For him, this was the essence of Ahimsa, which symbolised not only an active protest against evil, but also a manifestation of active love with a view to converting the heart of the oppressor. Gandhi asserts this view in *Young India* in 1920:

'Non-violence in its dynamic condition means conscious suffering. It does not mean meek submission to the will of the evil-doer, but it means the putting of one's whole soul against the will of the tyrant. Working under this law of our being, it is possible for a single individual to defy the whole might of an unjust empire to save his honour, his religion, his soul and lay the foundation for that empire's fall or its regeneration' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 11<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1920).

Accordingly, as a sword is the tool of a soldier, Gandhi viewed such virtues as forgiveness and humility as much more powerful tools, as he believed they had the power to influence and change the heart of a persecutor.

What is also significant about this view, which leads to the second point at which Gandhi's notion of Ahimsa departs from that of the ancient, vis-à-vis the epistemology of his world-view, is that he regarded Ahimsa to be the fundamental 'law' of the social world. This carries two significances. Firstly, Gandhi saw Ahimsa as a fundamental part of the Vedic notion of the cosmic law or *rta* (Krishnananda, 1994: p.13) which was designed for the well-being of all. Accordingly, he understood it to be an intrinsic manifestation

or means of the operation of the absolute God in the social world. In subscribing to this notion, he was effectively endorsing the idea that Himsa was not the natural or inevitable law of the social world, and that its existence was a breach of the true law that comes from the absolute truth. In order to restore this law, therefore, social relations must conform to the value of Ahimsa.

Secondly, while it takes strenuous and disciplined training to attain the mental state of Ahimsa (Gandhi, Young India 1<sup>st</sup> Oct. 1931), Gandhi also proclaimed that the practice and understanding of Ahimsa was not an exclusive privilege of the top social classes or *intelligentsia*, the culture which was prevalent in ancient India with regard to the implementation of Ahimsa. He states, 'the religion of non-violence is not meant merely for the Rishis and saints. It is meant for the common people as well ... [because] non-violence is the law of our species as violence is the law of the brute. The spirit lies dormant in the brute and he knows no law but that of physical might. The dignity of Man requires obedience to a higher law – to the strength of the spirit' (Gandhi, Young India, 11<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1920). This was almost the opposite notion to the one which existed in ancient religious culture. Ahimsa was essentially a practice confined to the Buddhist, Jain and Hindu monks and ascetics. Gandhi understood that in order to overcome the culture of violence, a *culture* of non-violence was required. He understood that limiting the scope of Ahimsa to a small group or class was not an effective way to cultivate non-violent 'culture', or one may say, restore the rightful law.

The notion of Ahimsa, however, is not without theoretical ambiguity, which invokes key moral and theoretical complexities. Firstly, the notion of winning over the enemy with non-violent means, i.e. self-suffering, at the expense of physical discomfort or even one's own death can be problematic. Indeed, the aim for Gandhi of this method was to spiritualise the oppressor through an act of humility and non-participation, but what the notion fails to take on board is the non-intended physical or/and non-physical harm that may have been done to others as an outcome of this act of non-violence. Although non-intentional, this would be an act of non-violence at the expense

of other people's suffering, not merely an act of 'self'-suffering. Would this be morally justified?

Secondly, perhaps there is a slight naivety in Gandhi's rather clear-cut conception of human nature with regard to the nature of oppression. As Parekh points out there are theoretical, but realistic, circumstances in which it is difficult to determine whether one's action is non-violent or not. One of the instances may be that the oppressed 'might merely acquiesce in their predicament rather than actively assist their masters, render the required services most grudgingly, cooperate at one level but quietly subvert the system at another, or bide their time until the ripe moment' (Parekh, 1989: p.202). He further states, 'to subsume all these and other acts under the capacious category of co-operation is to deprive the term of all meaning. We also need to ask *how* their 'co-operation' is secured' (Ibid., p.202). Parekh especially cites the Jews in the Nazi concentration camps who were worked to death for Hitler's evil purpose: many were mentally and physically demoralised and weakened to the extent that they had no strength or courage to resist the oppressor. They had no choice but to be forced to participate in the grand scheme of evil, often ending in their own death. Gandhi's notion of Ahimsa fails to take into account a situation such as genocide, where hatred could be a deeply embedded systemic force driving a massive project of oppression based around the simple reason of people belonging to a different race, culture or group. How could there be non-violent action where social will to non-violently retaliate has been crushed beyond the limit? Parekh, thus, argues that Gandhi's notion of 'cowardice' being the causal element for the behaviour of the oppressor is a much too simplistic understanding of social relations (Ibid., p.203). Ahimsa, which entails certain expectations, becomes an inapplicable notion in such social circumstances as mass killing or genocide, which can often be complex and beyond the scale of the rational and emotional expectations of humanity.

Thirdly, and perhaps most notably, Gandhi's justification of violence, even though it was for the sake of the honour which he valued, is contradictory to the essence of his ideal, Ahimsa, which he tried to preach

and demonstrate throughout his adult life. It is difficult to explain this apparent contradictory claim. Gail Hinich Sutherland gives one rather cynical explanation of this contradiction. She argues that, '*Ahimsa* is the hegemonic justification which masks the fact that violence is the expected political norm. In Indian history, *Ahimsa* has not functioned as a limitation *of* but rather, a condition *for* the unimpeded exercise of official power. The fact that we tend to think it is the other way around is a tribute to the success of hegemony' (Sutherland, 1997: pp.38-39). The basis of this argument is that Gandhi's ideals were, broadly speaking, a continuation of the ancient Brahmanical tradition which embraced the idea of non-violence on the one hand, but also the notion of righteousness and use of force, on the other. In this confluence of opposite ideals within the same ideological boundary, *Ahimsa* became the political instrument which enabled the survival of the Brahmanical traditions.

Nevertheless, the significance of *Ahimsa* remains intact. Gandhi never divorced religion from politics. He perceived *Ahimsa* as a means. Crucially, however, he also understood it as an end. Thus, he perceived and campaigned for the religious concept of *Ahimsa* to be the driving force of politics, not vice versa. He believed in it as a *moral* means for the purification of politics. He believed that if implemented with vigour and sincerity *Ahimsa* could achieve Hindu-Muslim unity, Indian independence, social justice and welfare, and international security. The apparent theoretical and moral problem of his justification of *Himsa* may be explained in two ways. Firstly, while Gandhi believed in *Ahimsa* as an absolute value, he also understood it as a relative value. In other words, he allowed room for an interpretative element in his notion of *Ahimsa*. This framework allowed him to justify the use of violence where it was based on a just, or moral, cause. He perceived the defence of 'honour', which was an important aspect of his cultural identity at both individual and national level, as his moral duty. Secondly, Gandhi not only believed *Ahimsa* to be inseparable from his notion of truth, but also he believed it to be superior to this notion. R. Iyer reiterates this view and states, '...if circumstances arose in which we had to choose between the two [Satya and *Ahimsa*], Gandhi felt that he would not hesitate to throw non-violence to the winds and to abide by the truth, which is supreme' (Iyer, 1973: p.229).

Lastly, a contextual explanation may be that Gandhi was born into the Brahmanical traditions in which Dharma was a central socio-cultural value system. It entails the idea of welfare, which is consistent with the notion of Ahimsa, and protection of righteousness, which allows for just use of force.

### *Swaraj and Swadeshi*

In the Gandhian ideological context, religion and politics are inseparably intermingled in principle and practice. Truth, non-violence, Dharma and Moksha are central themes of this amalgamated social dynamic. Closely related to, if not stemming from, these core philosophical values are Swaraj and Swadeshi. Gandhi treated them as not only moral virtues but also political values. They provided him with, perhaps, the most effective source for his campaign for Indian independence and freedom.

The term Swaraj means self-ruling. The prefix 'swa-', or 'sva-', literally means 'one's own' while 'raj' means to rule or ruling.<sup>18</sup> Thus, 'Swaraj' connotes self-determination, independence and freedom. Gandhi's concept incorporates all of these definitions and he derives his own conclusion from them. His notion of Swaraj, thus, is a complex one which has several layers of interrelated meanings: at one level it embodies moral and abstract interpretations; at another it is correlated with politics at individual, social and national levels.

As was the case with his notion of Ahimsa, Gandhi understood Swaraj in two different forms, positive and negative. He explained this in his justification of *purna Swaraj* or complete independence:

'The root meaning of *Swaraj* is self-rule. *Swaraj* may, therefore, be rendered as disciplined rule from within and *purna* means "complete." "Independence" has no such limitation. Independence may mean licence to do as you like. *Swaraj* is positive. Independence is negative. *Purna Swaraj* does not exclude association with any nation, much less with England. But it can only mean association for mutual benefit and at will. Thus there are countries which are said to be independent but have no *Purna Swaraj* e.g. Nepal. The word

*Swaraj* is a sacred word, a Vedic word, meaning self-rule and self-restraint, and not freedom from all restraint which “independent” often means’ (Quoted in Iyer 1973: pp.348-349).

This notion of *Swaraj* has two key political implications. Firstly, for Gandhi, *Swaraj* was defined neither as a legalistic sovereignty conditioned from outside, nor in the anarchist sense of unrestrained freedom. It had to come from ‘within’ ‘by educating the masses to a sense of their capacity to regulate and control authority’ (Gandhi, *Young India*, 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1925). For him, this meant internal regeneration of social will, responsibility and political identity. His vision was the attainment of Indian freedom through democratic means and the unity of people:

‘By *Swaraj* I mean the Government of India by the consent of the people ascertained by the vote of the largest number of the adult population, male or female, native born or domiciled who have contributed by manual labour to the service of the state and who have taken [the] trouble of having their names registered as voters. This government should be quite consistent with the British connection on absolutely honourable and equal terms’ (Gandhi, *Young India* 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1925).

Secondly, by *Swaraj*, he did not imply disengagement or isolation from the World, but a condition in which India could actively engage internationally by doing her duty. He understood that the foreign domination of India hindered her from doing her duty. Thus, in effect, the positive *Swaraj* of India was the antithesis of the idea of the country pursuing its own selfish interest. It meant an active cooperation with other nation-states for the common good of the World.

Thirdly, for Gandhi, the notion of freedom was a paramount aspect of *Swaraj*. For him, a freedom that was gained and maintained by either interfering with, or at the expense of, others was not the freedom in its purest form (Iyer, 1973: p.350). A true freedom had to be based on trust, discipline, tolerance and peace. Above all, true freedom had to be generated from ‘within’ for it to be ‘real’. In the context of India, thus, Gandhi believed that for the country to gain this freedom, its people had to believe that it could be

gained and act in concert to attain that goal. He said: 'The outward freedom...that we shall attain, will be only in exact proportion to the inward freedom to which we may have grown at a given moment' (Gandhi, Young India, 1<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1928). In the Indian context, the 'inward freedom' implied freedom from fear, distrust and violence. Accordingly, for Gandhi, the fundamental social condition for such freedom was the nurturing of this mentality through trust between people within the nation. He called for the abolition of untouchability and peace between Hindus and Muslims. In a speech at the Suppressed Classes Conference on the 13<sup>th</sup> April 1921 he said the following:

'...So long as the Hindus wilfully regard untouchability as part of their religion, so long as the mass of Hindus consider it a sin to touch a section of their brethren, Swaraj is impossible of attainment.....It is idle to talk of Swaraj so long as we do not protect the weak and the helpless, or so long as it is possible for a single Swarajist to injure the feelings of any individual. Swaraj means that not a single Hindu or Muslim shall for a moment arrogantly think that he can crush with impunity meek Hindus or Muslims. Unless this condition is fulfilled, we will gain Swaraj only to lose it the next moment. We are no better than the brutes until we have purged ourselves of the sins we have committed against our weaker brethren' (Gandhi, Young India, 27<sup>th</sup> April 1921).

A significant aspect of Gandhi's notion of freedom is that he applied the principle of his 'inward' and 'outward' freedom at all levels. Thus, as India's *national* freedom was conditional to freedom *within* India, such societal freedom in turn was conditional by the freedom existing at individual level. In a political sense, this meant the necessity for individual liberty and the respect for individual will. By this, he did not mean the imposition of liberty. Societal unity had to be realised by individuals, who would then have the desire to make peace within the society. For Gandhi, freedom was an inherent right of individuals, but gaining 'real' freedom required 'self-effort' (Iyer, 1973: p.351). Thus, in addressing the Kathiawad political conference, Gandhi stated: 'the true source of rights is duty.... If we all discharge our duties, rights will not be far to seek. If leaving duties unperformed we run after rights, they will escape us like a will o' the wisp. The more we pursue



them the farther will they fly' (Gandhi, Young India, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1925). Implied in this statement is that the kind of freedom that is based on trust and understanding could not be attained by assuming it as a right, though each individual may deserve that right, but it has to be gained through the individual's own action. Gandhi went as far as to suggest that it was an individual's obligation to act in this way in order for Swaraj at societal and national levels to be attained.

As important as Gandhi's notion of Swaraj was the concept of Swadeshi. As stated previously, the prefix 'swa-' denotes 'one's own'. The word 'deshi' refers to, in the words of Parekh, 'the total cultural and natural environment of which one was an inseparable part' (Parekh, 1989: p.57). The terms that are most associated with Swadeshi are self-reliance and self-sufficiency. In a narrow sense, Swadeshi means economic independence. In the context of British rule, this was a useful concept for the Indian nationalist movement as it blended appropriately with the idea of India's political independence.

Gandhi certainly implied in his notion of Swadeshi the idea of economic self-reliance. This meant for him the protection of domestic industries from foreign economic domination (Gandhi, Young India, 10<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1919). It meant giving priority to buying and consuming local products instead of the equivalent foreign ones, in order to vitalise local industry. By such implication, however, he did not suggest total economic and industrial isolation. He writes, 'the broad definition of Swadeshi is the use of all home-made things to the exclusion of foreign things, in so far as such use is necessary for the protection of home-industry, more especially those industries without which India will become pauperised' (Gandhi, Young India 17<sup>th</sup> June 1926). Gandhi viewed the protection of the Indian industries as a matter of urgency in attaining Swaraj, because he understood that foreign economic domination would ruin the welfare of ordinary Indians whose businesses would be unable to compete with foreign products. He believed

that India was perfectly capable of feeding and clothing herself (Gandhi, Young India, 19<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1921).

The core of Gandhi's notion of Swadeshi, however, was much more fundamental than issues of economic independence and material self-sufficiency. It was more of a foundational principle without which true Swaraj could not be achieved. Thus he defines it in the following way:

'Swadeshi is that spirit which restricts us to the use and service of our immediate surroundings to the exclusion of the more remote' (Gandhi, Young India, 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919).

It seems, from this definition, that Gandhi interpreted the meaning of Swaraj in its literal sense. The word 'swa' in one sense could also mean 'atman' which means soul or spirit (Ibid.). According to ancient Indian philosophy, atman exists within each individual. Even though the body perishes, the soul, which is believed to be the breath of God, does not perish. Thus, by Swadeshi, Gandhi was implying one's inseparable attachment to the soul of India, which is a manifestation of God himself. It was the love of belonging to what is the god-given essence of India. To put it in another way, Swadeshi was a cultural ethic of belonging to the essence of Indian unity or oneness.

Following from this line of thought, Swadeshi is not a tailor-made concept for Indian economic independence per se, but it is a broad, fundamental concept that is generally applicable to all areas of the culture of India (Gandhi, Young India 21<sup>st</sup> June 1919). The reason why Gandhi advocated economic Swadeshi was to galvanise and develop that spirit within individuals and, ultimately, within the society itself. The intention was not material gain but to 'develop an attitude of cultural self-respect and autonomy so that his countrymen did not blindly opt for European ideas and institutions' (Parekh, 1989: p.116). It is in this context that the spirit of

Swadeshi was fundamental to the pursuit of purna Swaraj, and because it was so fundamental, it could not be imposed from above or outside as this would not be the true Swadeshi, but as in the case of Gandhi's notion of freedom, Swadeshi had to be realised from within by each individual, by the society and by the nation.

Both Swaraj and Swadeshi were present in Gandhi's personal interpretation of nationalism. However, they fundamentally departed from nationalism in the conventional sense of the word in two ways. Firstly, the concepts of Swaraj and Swadeshi did not entail an element of political narcissism which was often manifested in the nationalist movement. Gandhi's Swaraj and Swadeshi were intended for the political independence of India in the spirit of the unified love of the country's people. Gandhi's ultimate intention was for India to offer itself for the well-being of the World. Secondly, Gandhi's concepts were not just about political and economic independence from foreign powers. His programme was much more comprehensive, in the sense that his Swaraj and Swadeshi entailed complete self-examination and reform at individual, societal and national level. The philosophical pretext for this, one may argue, is that Gandhi understood the prefix 'self-' not in an objective and static sense, but in an organic and evolutionary sense. That is to say that in his view, there was always potential for change and reform for an individual, a society or a nation-state. Gandhi never tried to hide the fact that Indian culture and religion had faults. For him, true independence in the spirit of Swadeshi meant love of oneself from within, and it was for this love that any structural and cultural injustices within India had to be rooted out. He believed that it was only in this way that India could truly offer her service internationally.

Underlying the concepts of Swaraj and Swadeshi is the moral and philosophical dimension. Indeed, for Gandhi, these were not merely political concepts but they were inherently related to the core of his ideational world, based around the concepts of Satya and Ahimsa (Iyer, 1973: p.347). Gandhi

perceived freedom, which essentially required freedom from all internal iniquities, as a moral prerequisite for the realization of truth. Accordingly, the notion of 'self-purification' and self-sacrifice' which are key aspects of his notion of truth, are central aspects of Swaraj (Gandhi, Young India, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep. 1920). What may be unique in Gandhi's ideology is the conviction that as it is possible for the individual to reach the state of truth, this is also possible at the collective level by means of a process of self-purification. Political freedom was merely a physical necessity for this ultimate end. Ahimsa, then, was a basis of Swadeshi. Ahimsa in both the negative sense, i.e. non-cooperation with injustice, and in the positive sense, i.e. the love of life, were moral sources of Swadeshi in the examples of the boycott of foreign goods and the love of one's culture and identity. In view of this dynamic, as Ahimsa was the means for the realisation of truth, Swadeshi was the necessary means for Swaraj (Iyer 1973: p.347; and Gandhi, Young India, 22<sup>nd</sup> Sep. 1920). Gandhi expressed his personal dedication to this belief in the following way:

'I live for India's freedom and would die for it, because it is part of Truth. Only a free India can worship the true God. I work for India's freedom because my Swadeshi teaches me that being born in it and having inherited her culture, I am fittest to serve *her* and *she* has a prior claim to my service' (Gandhi, Young India, 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1924).

## **Summary**

The notions of satya, ahimsa, swaraj and swadeshi were foundational pillars on which Gandhi founded his views on politics. One may deduce from the discussion above that Gandhi's theory of socio-political life is inseparable from his moral principles. According to Gandhian philosophy, satya and ahimsa are the fundamental laws of this world, within which swaraj and swadeshi are the necessary precepts for practical and spiritual life of India.

This chapter has discussed the origins of the foundational elements of Gandhian strategic thought. The chapter has shown that Gandhian socio-philosophy comes from the notion that politics and religion are inseparable in understanding the purpose of social life. This argument can be supported by the fact that Gandhi strongly adhered to his concepts of truth, non-violence, freedom and self-reliance. The Gandhian notion of truth describes God, who exists in all individuals in the form of the soul. The ultimate duty of each person is to realise the nature of the soul through the practice of non-violence in all spheres of life. The Gandhian tradition assumes that freedom and self-reliance are basic social conditions in pursuing that goal. Gandhi applied this principle to his campaign against British colonialism. He deemed India's independence from Britain to be a necessary condition for it to show the world the way of non-violence with a view to obtaining truth.

Gandhian thought has its origins in ancient Indian traditions. The origins of the notions of truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa), in particular, stretch back to the Vedic texts. They are also the central principles of ancient Buddhism and Jainism. They are also evident in the Brahmanical tradition. The concept of ahimsa has a close correlation with ancient Indian vegetarianism. However, in the ancient Indian sense of the word, ahimsa denotes more than just the passive meaning of non-violence. Rather, it refers to the love of life. Indeed, this meaning incorporates both the idea of protection of life, and self-restraint from the use of violence. The protection of life allows a limited use of violence. Thus, in their struggle against the prevalent Hindu culture, notably against the unjust caste system, the ancient

Buddhists and Jains used violence in self-defence. Gandhian thought follows this tradition. Although Gandhian tradition thus entails the pacifist ambience of anti-violence, it does not dismiss the use of violence for morally justifiable causes. In conjunction with this, the Gandhian tradition prefers the practice of self-restraint from the use of violence in the way that enables the advocates of the tradition to gain a moral and political highground. The significance of Gandhian thought on Indian strategic culture derives from these two characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> *Young India*, 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1929.

<sup>2</sup> A crucial difference between the two thinkers was on the issue of civil disobedience. Whereas Socrates believed civil disobedience to the law of the state was disobedience to the entire system of law, Gandhi believed civil disobedience could be justifiable if the cause and means were morally justifiable.

<sup>3</sup> *Cappeller's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Strassburg, 1891.

<sup>4</sup> *Cappeller's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Strassburg, 1891.

<sup>5</sup> Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

<sup>6</sup> The *Chandogya Upanishad* describes the beginning of the World in terms of *asat* and *sat*. However, according to this text, in the beginning, there was *sat*, not nothingness. It argues that existence does not come about from the state of non-existence. The description of the creation according to the *Upanishads* is thus different to that given in the *Rig Veda* text. It is difficult to understand why there is such a difference between the two texts. One interpretation may be that the author of the *Upanishad* text may have perceived the ultimate creator which the author of *Rig Veda* text describes as 'One Thing' as the first existence - *sat* or the Supreme Being - which created all beings.

<sup>7</sup> This is also evident in other hymns of *Rig Veda*. Particularly see R. V. VIII, 41; X, 82; X, 90; X, 72; I, 164; I, 89; and X, 121.

<sup>8</sup> The *Bhagavadgita* is described by P. E. Dumont as 'India's favourite Bible'. Dumont, P. E. (Jan.-Mar. 1946), 'Review of Franklin Edgerton's *The Bhagavad Gita*, translated and interpreted', p.89.

<sup>9</sup> This notion of faith is comparable to the Christian concept of predestination: the idea that God had pre-planned the future of the World and for each individual before the creation.

<sup>10</sup> *Cappeller's Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Strassburg, 1891.

<sup>11</sup> See also for example *Rig Veda* X 191; *Atharva Veda* 10. 191. 4, 98. 48. 5, 6. 120. 1; and *Yajur Veda* 12. 32

<sup>12</sup> See p.150.

<sup>13</sup> Apparently the orthodox religious practitioners who composed the *Upanishads* also challenged the Vedic ideology of violence. Doniger and Smith, 1991: p.xxxiv.

<sup>14</sup> See also 1.29, 12.83, 11.223, 10.63, 6.75 and 2.159.

<sup>15</sup> See also 10.05, 13.07, and 17.14.

<sup>16</sup> If not, it enhanced the Brahmanical social class system. Doniger and Smith, p.xxxvii.

<sup>17</sup> Gandhi inherited the Indian tradition of non-meat eating in his daily life. However, in his youth he struggled with this tradition, not because of his dislike of it but because of his innocent belief that eating meat would make him strong enough to drive out the British from his country. See Gandhi, *An Autobiography* p.20-23. The idea of vegetarianism became more familiar to him during his first visit to England. One of the first books he purchased was Salt's *Plea for Vegetarianism* which appealed to him very much, and gave him a sense of cultural affinity with the foreign culture, See *Ibid.*, p.48. Later, he set up the Vegetarian Society in Bayswater of which Sir Edwin Arnold became the vice-president, See *Ibid.*, pp.55-62.

<sup>18</sup> Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

## **Chapter 8: Gandhian Strategic Thought: A Theoretical Perspective**

### **Introduction**

Although Gandhi never wrote a treatise or an academic theory on strategy, there are within his ideas principles and an understanding of socio-political life which can be said to be of relevance in understanding aspects of Indian strategic thought. These were effectively products of his religious belief. For Gandhi, religion and politics were inseparable spheres of life: any aspect of human civilisation where they were separated would have to be moulded back together by conscious human effort. For him, this principle was true and applicable at all levels of life, from the individual to international affairs. His aim was to encourage morally influenced social life, with religion being the foundation of politics. His religion consisted of the four values discussed in Chapter 7, and he devoted his life to trying to apply them in the politics of his own life as well as of India's. This is a fundamentally different ethos to the one that exists in IR, in particular to neorealism. The nature of the latter essentially is academic and secular: its underlying tasks being to observe or/and predict the patterns of the socio-political world. This, which may be generalised as a religion-based approach versus a secular academic approach, at first glance seems to be epistemologically incompatible (Chan, 1994: p.244). Indeed, both approaches have very different philosophical and contextual origins, from which derive different focuses and interpretations of the world. However, a theoretical understanding of Gandhian values will help clarify a vital aspect of Indian strategic culture which will in turn help identify some of the theoretical deficiencies of neorealism in understanding Indian strategic attitudes. This chapter discusses the theoretical elements of Gandhian thought which are in common with those central to the study of strategic culture.



## The Key Theoretical Aspects of Gandhian Strategic Thought

Within Gandhi's philosophy of the social world are various referent objects that scholars of a strategic culture approach have been concerned with. These are the notion of the state; power; order; and identity.

### *The State*

For Gandhi, the State was a fundamentally necessary institution for the welfare of the nation. The issues that he was mainly concerned with were the nature of the State, i.e. what it is or what it *should* be, and 'good' governance vis-à-vis India. Gandhi's notion of state was largely idealistic. In many ways it derived from his perception of the modern state, by which he meant the Western liberal democracies and the fascist states. His vision was to reform the hypocritical and brutal nature of the modern state in a way such that moral authority played the central role in its affairs. At another level, it may be argued that his vision of the state was idealistic, not in the sense of unrealistic or unviable, but rather that it was too advanced a moral concept for the modern state to subscribe to.

Gandhi's critique of the modern state essentially rests on five key grounds. Firstly, his dislike of the modern state is based on its highly centralised and mechanical nature. He argued that inevitably deriving from such a centralisation is the coercion and alienation of its own people as well as the people of other nations. Gandhi's logic for such a view was that the political elites had become so protective of their power that *it* had become the fundamental source of the functioning of the state, a default foundation of the state. The adverse outcome of such characteristics was that the very people who elected politicians became 'dehumanised' and devoid of power. Gandhi believed that this was so because it was necessary to develop a state-centric political culture through the vigorous pursuit of institutional interests and the monopolisation of the political agenda (Parekh, 1989: p.28). Secondly, such monopolisation was also active at the international level in the form of

imperialism. Gandhi detested such violent dominance based on racial, cultural and religious superiority.

Thirdly, the political monopoly extended to moral superiority (Ibid., pp.28-29). For Gandhi, the modern state misused moral values to fulfil its selfish desire for power. It imbued its citizens with the illusion that it was the guardian of the moral order. Through such cultural indoctrination, its citizens were intoxicated with the notion that serving and dying for such a master was regarded as a manifestation of one's honour. This claim to moral superiority instigated a norm of discouraging and depressing criticism. Fourthly, the factor that insulated the state from disintegration was its pursuit of material wealth, bringing to its citizens relatively high standards of living. This provision of material comfort masked its true nature, silencing internal criticisms.

Gandhi also observed the centralised economic system which gave rise to problems such as unemployment, poverty and, above all, economic inequality. The wealth generated by the system was distributed unfairly, making the rich richer and the poor poorer. At an international level this wealth was extracted from colonies using violence in order to protect the market system. At this level, the scale of the inequality became much greater as the extraction of wealth from a country like India discouraged the well-being of its national economy and, above all, its people (Heredia, 1999).

Lastly, Gandhi's objection to the modern state extended to its hypocritical nature, masked under the ideological cover of 'democracy'. For him, Western democracy was no more than a system that encouraged competition among political groups in order to attain power. This was done in the name of the people's interest but once in power, corruption prevailed. His fierce criticism of the system is evident in his comment on the British parliament. In *Hind Swaraj*, he refers to it as the 'talking shop of the world' without the capability to represent the genuine interest of the people (Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 2003: p. 27). The Prime Minister's interest lies not in safeguarding the welfare of Parliament and the nation, but in accumulating

and protecting his power and the electoral success of his party (Ibid., p. 28). Gandhi also criticised the electorate:

'To the English voters their newspaper is their Bible. They take their cue from their newspapers which are often dishonest. The same fact is differently interpreted by different newspapers, according to the party in whose interests they are edited' (Ibid., p.27).

The point he was conveying was that the modern state, such as that of Britain, operated not in accordance with genuine democratic principles and *values*, but according to the rules of the nature, *interest* and *power* of a small political and capitalist elite.

In effect, for Gandhi, the driving force of the culture and system of the modern state was fear and violence. While the former was implicit, the latter was pursued in an organised manner with the state's political and legal faculties systemically justifying its use. Accordingly, Gandhi viewed the system of the modern state to be intrinsically geared towards cultivating a culture of deception and violence in its own self interest. In a broader sense, he argued the modern state was a manifestation of modern civilisation, for which he used the terms 'Satanic Civilisation' and 'Black Age' (Ibid., p.30).

In essence, then, Gandhi's fundamental concern in his theory of the state was the idea of constructing a state which acted in accordance with the values of democracy, in its literal sense, accompanied by 'moral duty' and responsibility as a motivating force. His theory of the state fundamentally challenged the Western notion of it, in the sense that it departed from the centralised Westphalian state system, to a decentralised and localised political structure where power and freedom of the state's citizens were maximised. The Gandhian state was effectively a form of 'ordered anarchy' which was guided by the virtues of Dharma and Ahimsa (Parekh 1989: p.113). His presumption was that individuals were fundamentally moral agents with the potential to cultivate a morally viable society and, ultimately, national culture.

Gandhi's concept of the state derived from his notion of Swaraj. For him, the term democracy was synonymous with the term Swaraj. His understanding of the former, however, was different to that of the liberal democracy in the West, in the sense that he took it to mean a direct social contract between the State and the people based on a literal application of the principle of rule by the people and for the people in the State affairs. His notion of the state was, thus, constructed upon such an understanding. Gandhi's state consisted of federally based concentric circle systems (Ibid., pp.114-115). At the core, Gandhi envisaged the villages, which were run by five annually elected people with legislative, judicial and executive powers. The social unit heavily relied on social responsibility, cooperation and trust. At the next level, the villages were grouped into a bigger unit, and again each bigger unit was grouped into the district, and the district grouped into the province. The government of each level had a considerable amount of autonomy over the formulation of its legal foundation. Over all, it was structurally a hierarchical system but in practice, because the people of each tier elected its representatives to government, the power was much more diffused to the public. The key role of the central government, then, was to manage the unity of these elements. Their power to interfere in local affairs was limited by the fact that the entire system drew its strength directly from the people, not only in terms of its bottom-up electoral system but also in terms of the general political affairs of the locality.

Gandhi's vision of Swaraj, however, went beyond this structural level of 'self-government. He states,

'I hold that self-government is not an end, but only a means to good government. And true democracy is what promotes the welfare of the people. The test of a good government lies in the largest good of the people with the minimum of controls. The test of autocracy, socialism, capitalism, etc., is also people's welfare or good government. In themselves they are of no value. Any system of government can fail if people do not have honesty and a feeling of brotherhood. There may be work, there may be women to do work and tools with which to do it, yet in my view, a system that admits of poverty and unemployment is not fit to survive even for a day' (Gandhi, CWMG, vol. 90, 30<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1947: p.325).

At the core of Gandhi's notion of the state lay several crucial features without which his state could not function properly. Firstly, a vital condition for his state system is the idea of self-purification in the form of socio-political reforms. These included independence from foreign dominance; the abolition of untouchability; Hindu-Muslim unity; the regeneration of national education; and racial and social equality (Gandhi, *Young India*, 26<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1924). Secondly, there had to be economic self-reliance. This was crucial, as Gandhi saw India's lack of political unity as being a factor in enabling Britain's dominance over India. Thus, referring to Indian cooperation given to the British economic exploitation in the early years of its exploration in India, he went as far as to assert that 'The English have not taken India; we have given it to them' (Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 2003: p.31). Gandhi was effectively making a criticism that there was a grave lack of unity of interest and spirit among Indians. For him, a swaraj state must be founded on a common interest, that is the swadeshi spirit, or the love of one's country and one's culture. For him, just as a human body was meaningless without the soul, the state was meaningless without the cultural spirit of the nation. Gandhi derived the social responsibility and duty which were foundational elements of his state from this spirit. Thirdly, Gandhi's Swaraj is not complete without truth and Ahimsa which he regarded as its two central ideational pillars. He states,

'The swaraj of my conception will come only when all of us are firmly persuaded that our swaraj has got to be won, worked and maintained through truth and Ahimsa alone. True democracy or the swaraj of the masses can never come through untruthful and violent means, for the simple reason that the natural corollary to their use would be to remove all opposition through the suppression or extermination of the antagonists. That does not make for individual freedom. Individual freedom can have the fullest play only under a regime of unadulterated Ahimsa' (Gandhi, *CWMG*, vol. 69, 20<sup>th</sup> May 1939: p.50).

The integration of Ahimsa into Gandhi's notion of the state was fundamental in respect to generating trust and order within the state. Thus, in its application, he saw no need for the creation of a police force or army, as the culture of non-violence would discourage crimes and violence (Parekh, 1989: p.115). He believed that this culture would create national pressure against social ills.

These were central principles of Gandhi's idea of the state which remained unchanged. However, as Parekh points out, Gandhi's notion of the structure of the state shifted around 1930. Despite his indictment of the centralised modern state, he began to see the necessity of a form of centralised state because he realised that social reforms and economic regeneration could not be implemented well without some sort of centralised planning and authority (Ibid., p.118). This meant that his decentralised state structure had to become not dissimilar to the shape of modern state machinery. Although this was a radical change of attitude, the core values of his state remained unchanged, in the sense that this centralised form of the state still had to represent and serve the needs of its people and be an impetus in cultivating the swadeshi spirit.

Gandhi's theory of the state is a product of historical context and abstract religious-cultural values. On the former, as Dalton points out, Gandhi's notion of the state was an antithetic product of British colonialism (Dalton, 1996: p.97). This implies that his theory was purpose-specific for India, but was not necessarily applicable for other nation-states. However, in view of its abstract 'core', the traditional values of Satya, Ahimsa, Swaraj and Swadeshi, there may have been grounds for further applicability beyond the context of India. The significant aspect here is that it was these abstract values that enabled him to understand the nature of the state as an organic institution susceptible to evolution and change, as opposed to a static and objective entity.

### *Power, Order and Identity*

The central idea which Gandhi aimed to cultivate in his discussion of religion and politics was the notion of the purification of politics. For him, this notion was the key to conjoining morality and politics which he perceived to often have conflicting relations, manifested in the form of corruption and manipulation of interests and values. Gandhi's notion of the 'purification' of politics, however, carried much more profound and fundamental meaning

than the eradication of corruption from politics. In its ultimate sense, it meant a fundamental change in the dynamic of power within both politics in its narrower sense - politics at the state institutional level - and in its broader sense, that is the general social interactions of life. Gandhi viewed this radical cultural change to be necessary because he believed that this transformation of the understanding of the nature of power was conditional to the formation of a non-coercive form of organic 'order' within the socio-political structure. For him, it was within this new form of order that each individual or nation-state could cultivate and sustain its true socio-political and cultural identity.

Although he was well read in Western philosophy and politics, Gandhi was not a scholar of IR, and never claimed to be one. Accordingly, he never treated power as an academic subject, i.e. a subject to be systematically evaluated and theorised about. Rather, he treated power more as a practical issue that had direct bearing on his life mission to obtain India's Swaraj. Nevertheless, within his philosophy was the postulation that power was an unavoidable force of social life, and thus was also an inherent part of India's Swaraj. It was a means for India to grow to positively influence the world and it was a means for India to move towards self-rule.

Gandhi's understanding of the nature of power was intrinsically intertwined with his notion of human nature. For him, human nature conditioned and shaped the nature of power. To an extent, Hobbes shared this idea. But Hobbes came from the opposite end of the spectrum to that of Gandhi. For him, human nature was inherently negative and it triggered Man to pursue and use power for his own selfish interest, which Hobbes regarded as an enduring aspect of human behaviour. Gandhi did not subscribe to Hobbes' pessimistic and deterministic understanding of human nature or his notion of power. Gandhi's view of human nature derived from his belief in monism, the absolute oneness of God and humanity. For him, a person was not God, but neither was s/he different from the 'light of God' (Iyer, 1973: p.91). This 'light of God', as Gandhi meant it, referred to *atman* or soul which was an attribute of God inherent in individuals, a manifestation of God's

identity. The body was perishable but atman was imperishable. In effect, he highlighted two sides of human nature: the side that did not reflect God's character and the side that reflected the divinity of God.

From this emerged three conceptions of power in Gandhi's thinking. Firstly, people had the inherent capacity to use brute force. Secondly, however, they were also born with the capacity to recognise God. Thirdly, and most importantly, they were born with the power of choice. Unlike Hobbes, Gandhi believed that humans were also conditioned by their environments. Through the power of choice, individuals could either cultivate their violent nature, or they could strive for the realisation of God. That act of realising God meant two things: to strive for recognition of one's atman; and to use ahimsa in one's daily walks of life. The evolutionary capacity of human nature meant that through conscious choice and effort, every individual had the potential to convert and be converted from the brute to the God-loving.<sup>1</sup>

In the ultimate analysis, for Gandhi, the defining point of human nature was twofold: the human capacity to choose between good and evil; and to nurture his/her divine nature, which belonged to God. Thus in his autobiography, he stated, 'the brute by nature knows no self-restraint. Man is Man because he is capable of, and only insofar as he exercises, self-restraint' (Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p.317). Accordingly, Gandhi defined a socio-political relation in terms of a continuous process of self-awareness, self-assessment and self-restraint. This, in effect, was what he meant by the term 'purification'. It was the idea that power must be defined by its purifying, not its coercing effect. Thus, he defined power in the following way,

'Power is of two kinds. One is obtained by the fear of punishment and the other by arts of love. Power based on love is a thousand times more effective and permanent than the one derived from fear of punishment' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 8<sup>th</sup> Jan., 1925).

Two concentric *systems* of power, entailing different notions of order, emerge from this analysis. The first system is built upon a culture of fear. Under this system, ends justify means. This culture derives from and



embraces the notion that social relations, like natural relations, are based on competition for power and the perception that power is the source of survival.<sup>2</sup> In this system, self-survival is the reason for existence. The organising principle in this system is thus inherently mechanical and inflexible. The powerful are protective of their wealth and might. Accordingly, the political structure in this system is centralised, hierarchical and coercive. In a society under this system, power is monopolised by and centralised by the state through coercion. Social and political order is hierarchical, defined by the level of power.

The second system originates from Satya or Truth, which is at its core. Instead of coercion, the organising principle of this system is Ahimsa or non-violence which in the positive sense means love of life. A key component of Ahimsa is 'fearlessness', a state of complete non-attachment from the worldly anxieties. As Gandhi asserted, 'fearlessness connotes freedom from all external fear - fear of disease, bodily injury and death, of dispossession, of losing one's nearest and dearest, of losing reputation or giving offence and so on' (M. K. Gandhi, *Yeraveda Mandir* in Duncan, 1951: p.49). This fearlessness, as Gandhi believed, is a source which enables Ahimsa to be a definitive and effective power. The sole aim of such power is Sarvodaya or social well-being. Sarvodaya, in the Gandhian sense, essentially means moral well-being of the individual and the collective. Gandhi believed that the cultivation of non-violence by individuals would lead to the spread of peace within wider social relations, with the consequent emergence of collective desire and conduct for moral and physical well-being. Thus, under this system, political power is centralised in the people. Gandhi stated,

'The truth is that power resides in the people and it is entrusted for the time being to those whom they may choose as their representatives..... Civil disobedience is the storehouse of power. Imagine a whole people unwilling to conform to the laws of the legislature, and prepared to suffer the consequences of non-compliance. They will bring the whole legislative and executive machinery to a standstill. The police and the military are of use to coerce minorities however powerful they may be. But no police or military coercion can bend the resolute will of a people who are out for suffering to the uttermost' (Gandhi, CWMG, vol. 75, 13<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1941: p.148).

This is an organic system whereby the people become intrinsic participants in politics in order to nurture their spiritual welfare, which leads to a construction of good governance while its by-product is material well-being for the nation. The motivating force in this system is the faith of each individual in the knowledge that belief in and practice of Ahimsa will ultimately lead to Moksha or salvation. In view of these two conceptions of power, Gandhi's message was that all people were born with the power of choice, between the path that led to unending fear of existence, and that which ultimately led to freedom from the duality of good and evil, the state of being truly one with Truth, or with God. But as Gandhi realised, it was not entirely a matter of the power of choice alone, but also through education of the masses that they could come to realise 'their capacity to regulate and control [coercive] authority' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 29<sup>th</sup> Jan. 1925). For Gandhi, this sense of fearless confidence could be nurtured further through truth, self-awareness, self-suffering, self-sacrifice, humility, forgiveness and non-violence, in order to achieve the spiritual goal of salvation.

Gandhi's conception of power operated within a particular conception of 'order'. He subscribed to the Vedic notion of the transcendental existence of moral order (law) or *Rta*<sup>3</sup> in the cosmos which governed the whole world. In the post Vedic period, *Rta* came to form a central philosophical element of Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical traditions. If Satya was the Absolute, the origin of righteousness and good, *Rta* was its unseen force or law, sustaining and managing cosmic equilibrium. All the attributes of *Rta* were the same as those of Satya. Thus, Gandhi treated God (truth) and *Rta* as one and the same (Parekh, 1989: p.72). In post-Vedic Hindu philosophy, *Rta* became the origin of Dharma<sup>4</sup>, which in turn came to be one of the cornerstones of Hindu society (Radhakrishnan and Moore, 1957: p.27; Iyer, 1973: p.225). Accordingly, in the metaphysical sense, Satya, *Rta* and Dharma were interchangeable terms which could be interpreted as 'moral law'.

Gandhi accepted the diversity of moral laws but believed that their *essence* was the same. For him, this essence was the ultimate moral standard which was 'immutable', and 'independent' of the temporal

subjectivism of Man (Gandhi, Ethical Religion, 1968: pp.14-15). But its independence did not imply irrelevance to humans. What Gandhi meant was that the essence of moral law was beyond the control of humanity: it was beyond the power of people to define it but rather, it defined the true nature of individuals. People had no choice but to recognise and obey it. It was so much more important than the temporal laws that Gandhi declared: it was more vital to obey the former than the latter because moral law was divine in its nature, greater than temporal laws (Ibid., p.16).

Following on from the ancient ideology, for Gandhi, the central dynamic of Rta was *Yajna*, 'a system of uncoerced and interrelated offerings' (Parakh, 1989: p.88). It was a system sustained by temporal and spatial cause and effect of human actions conditioned by a sense of social and moral interconnectedness. The social world operated on the logic of *Yajna*. Parekh describes Gandhi's view in the following way:

'Nature continually went through a protracted and painful process to provide Man with his means of sustenance; his parents made countless sacrifices in order to bring him into the world and raise him as a sensitive and sane human being; hundreds of sages, seers, saints, scholars and scientists struggled over the centuries to create a civilisation without which his life would have remained poor and brutish; and millions of unknown men and women worked hard, thought little of their comforts, fought wars, even gave up their lives and created an orderly and stable society so vital for his existence and growth. In short every Man inherited a world to the creation of which he had contributed nothing' (Ibid., p. 88).

It was this concept of order that induced Gandhi to place more emphasis on the value of religious and social duty of individuals and states than on their rights. For Gandhi, it was not simply a matter of people choosing their duty but, to a greater extent, humans were *subjected* to duty through vertical (temporal and generational) and horizontal (social inducement and interpersonal relations) social interactions which were managed overall by the supreme moral force. Accordingly, if there was an anomaly, i.e. an individual not performing his or her duty, it would affect the whole system negatively, in one way or another,.

The concepts of Rta and Dharma are particularly interesting in the analysis of Gandhi's notion of order, in the respect that though the terms were interchangeable, there was a nuance of meaning which enhanced both in terms of socio-political application; while Rta connoted the unchanging and continuous moral standard, Dharma, which encompassed the attributes of Rta, also denoted 'conduct'.<sup>5</sup> The inference from this was that Man's purpose of existence was to be part of Rta in the way that consciously enforced this moral order by good conduct. It may be further inferred that the conceptual transition<sup>6</sup> from Rta to Dharma represented a shift in broader socio-political perception: from the one that was more superstition oriented, to the one that profoundly leaned towards the consolidation of religion, society and politics. In other words, the need for socio-political cohesion and harmony derived not just from the practical need for survival but also from the perception that the cosmic order needed to be upheld. The effect was the formation of practical social and political codes which centred upon Dharma. Raja-Dharma, for example, was the code of conduct for rulers for good governance and the welfare of the people. The social structure was determined by Varna (caste) and Asrama (order of stages of life).

Conversely, it may be postulated from Gandhi's notion of human nature that he subscribed to the ancient philosophical view of anarchy. Given that Rta was the origin of good which managed the moral equilibrium of the universe, the origin of evil was Man himself. The general consensus of the major Indian philosophies, Buddhism, Jainism and Hinduism, was that anarchy was a state of power play where the strong devoured the weak.<sup>7</sup> For Gandhi, this was a state of inhumanity, which was unnatural and unjust (Radhakrishnan, 1949: p.26). Having been born in the time of British imperialism and through his experiences of injustice and racial discrimination in South Africa, Gandhi accepted that this condition was prevalent in the world, but it was so because men chose such a course.

However, the fundamental basis of Gandhi's optimistic outlook of the ultimate destiny of Man derives from the theory that in managing moral equilibrium in the social world, Rta had a compensatory effect when there

was moral imbalance caused by inaction or the undutiful actions of men. The compensatory effect was the law of *Karma*. In the generic sense, Karma was the notion that every action carried a consequence based on its nature.

'Any action which originates in a sense of personal individuality set in opposition to or incongruous with the universal order of Rta and Satya should obviously mean the work of a nemesis, as a natural reaction to such action, endeavouring to set the set right the balance of cosmic equilibrium which has been disturbed by it. This redounding of the effect of action upon the doer of it is the metaphysical, ethical and psychological force called Karma, which requires the doer of such action to pass through a series of experiential processes called metempsychosis or rebirth in other conditions and environments than that in which the action has been done' (Krishnananda, 1994: p. 14).

Gandhi believed that Man's actions based on selfishness did not require coercive retribution by political means because Rta has its own way of rebalancing itself through the force of Karma. Thus, for Gandhi, this removed the fear of oppression, physical harm and death. Rather, following on the philosophy of the *Bhagavadgita*, his ideas focused on selfless actions.<sup>8</sup> The motivation for such action, however, was not a passive one, i.e. in order to avoid rebirth as a lower being, but an active one: Moksha, which was the ultimate spiritual end of salvation or freedom from the cycle and pain of life and death, and becoming truly one with the absolute.

The course set by Rta, which he believed was the most natural path individuals should follow, was the course of non-violence and truth. In effect, Gandhi's philosophy merged power and order into one: Rta was not just a moral standard but it had real effect and influence, not only on the overall course the world was evolving towards but also on individual lives. In this, there was clearly an experiential element which influenced him deeply. The first distinctive experience Gandhi had, which eventually enabled him to gain faith in and insight to the way of Rta, was when he confessed to his father of all the wrongful things he had done, including meat-eating which was strictly forbidden to his caste and Jain traditions. He was profoundly touched by the tearful forgiveness of his father. He wrote, 'this was, for me, an object-lesson in *Ahimsa*. Then I could read in it nothing more than a father's love, but today

I know that it was pure *Ahimsa*. When such *Ahimsa* becomes all-embracing, it transforms everything it touches. There is no limit to its power' (Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p.28). Gandhi's treatment of *Ahimsa* was unique in the sense that he viewed it as the only workable common nexus of the divine and the true temporal order. As far as he was concerned, it was the only logic that was viable for the continuation of the divine order in the temporal world.

Intertwined with the Gandhian notion of power and order is the concept of *identity*, which may be extrapolated from Gandhi's concept of *Swaraj*. Gandhi dedicated most of his adult life to the struggle for an independent India, with its own individuality intact. Gandhi's *swaraj* movement, however, was not just about striving for political independence from a foreign power, but it was essentially about constructing India's political, cultural and moral identity. Gandhi believed that to attain this required the use of non-violent means and in so doing, India would be conforming to and enforcing *Rta*.

Drawing on Gandhi's notion of the 'self', it seems that it primarily contains two interrelated philosophical assumptions on identity. Firstly, on the one hand, identity, in its abstract sense, is an essentialist notion with its nature unchanging and permanent. It is based on the idea that Man is given a fixed identity, *Atman*, which is an attribute of God or truth. Secondly, identity is evolutionary and organic. It is able to evolve through learning and through inhabiting different environments. By utilising the unique gift of power of choice, individuals are able to influence others and themselves for better or worse. In so doing, the individual derives a realisation of himself and others.

The main focus of Gandhi's philosophy of life, as discussed in previous sections, was on the former notion. The latter was necessary, and supported his assertion that the primary purpose of man's existence in the temporal world was to realise one's true self and to see others in the same light. Thus, the term 'self-realisation', which was central to Gandhi's philosophy, denoted a continuous devotion and training in mind and body for

an enlightened understanding of one's Atman. The second supposition was also supported by Gandhi's definition of national identity, or 'civilisation' as he implied, in terms of 'good conduct' (Gandhi, *Hind Swaraj*, 2003: p.45). In other words, for Gandhi, identity evolved with the aim of self-realisation through actions based on moral values or Dharma.

In view of these assumptions, for Gandhi, the process of identity formation or self-realisation starts within an individual through constant evaluation of oneself and one's experience, and through non-violence. Gandhi tried to demonstrate this in his own life (Gandhi, *An Autobiography*). The idealistic goal Gandhi aimed for was that if each individual pursued such a course of action, it could develop into a social/national culture with an aspiration of collective self-realisation. Going further, Gandhi saw no reason why this could not become an international culture. For him, the notion of unity with diversity applied at all levels of analysis meant that while there were differences in physical looks, ability, experience and personality among people, there was ground for a common identity. The expected outcome at the temporal level was a world with trust placed at the centre of social and international interactions.

In the political context of India's struggle for independence, the Gandhian philosophy of identity as part of his swaraj campaign presupposed the need for national identity. Gandhi believed that national identity was a condition of any possibility for the formation of common international identity.

'In my opinion, it is impossible for one to be internationalist without being a nationalist. Internationalism is possible only when nationalism becomes a fact, *i.e.* when people belonging to different countries have organised themselves and are able to act as one man. It is not nationalism that is evil, it is the narrowness, selfishness, exclusiveness which is the bane of modern nations which is evil. Each wants to profit at the expense of, and rise on, the ruin of the other (Gandhi, *Young India*, 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1925).

Gandhi's notion of national identity, like his notion of individual identity, was organic in nature, with a strong moral basis. For him, it had to be constructed with the consideration of not only the welfare of the people of the

nation but also of the service to the humanity at large. Following on the theoretical assumptions, the identity Gandhi thought best for India was one that was willing to be self-aware, to learn and to evolve towards a more morally influenced nation. This moral influence was conditioned by the unchanging principles of Ahimsa and Satya. Only then could India be in the best position to serve the world.

### **Gandhian Thought and Neorealism: The Foundational Sources of Difference**

In view of the evolving Gandhian understanding of the basic theoretical notions in its strategic thought, where does its conception stand in relation to neorealism? As pointed out earlier, Gandhi never wrote a grand theory of international relations. Thus there are number of caveats in determining the place of Gandhi's notions. Firstly, there is methodological incompatibility. Rooted within the Western scientific norm, neorealism consists of a particular Western methodological process. That is, generally speaking, the derivation of a block of assumptions, a process of vigorous scientific testing through various submissions of historical, empirical or/and abstract evidence to prove or disprove one's assertions and the conclusion. The discussions on the validity of a theory go through constructive debates, i.e. the process of hypothesis, formulation and testing, within the academic community. Depending on the outcome of this process, a theory of strategic culture either gains or loses its significance. Gandhi's ideas are largely unsystematic and philosophical. He was a well-read individual on Western and Indian philosophy (Fischer, 1984: p.105) but was never an academic scholar and never claimed to be one. The problem of comparability is simply that because he was widely perceived as a politician and a religious figure, his intellectual energy was focused on and integrated into Indian nationalist and religious movements. In effect, there is no scholarly methodology *per se* in Gandhi's ideas because his sole intention was to extrapolate his philosophical and religious beliefs directly to social and individual life rather than to construct an appropriate theoretical model to assess feasibility and applicability.



Secondly, neorealism and Gandhi's ideas derive from different epistemological grounds. While the former is largely concerned with and founded on the Western rational of the European 'realpolitik'<sup>9</sup> tradition, the basic tenets of Gandhi's ideas are founded on philosophical/moral and religious ideals. In the knowledge construction based on the former, the ideas of politics and religion are strictly separated as the latter is perceived as a subjective and unreliable source. The prevailing understanding in this tradition is that religion can be or is an instrument for the pursuit of power. The ground which Gandhi's ideas are built upon is the opposite, the notion that religion and politics, in a broader sense, are inseparable fact of life. At the core of this difference lies the different cultural perception of knowledge construction. That core is the difference between a discipline which evolves and constructs its knowledge on 'reason'- based evidence, and the one that builds its understanding of the world and life on experience, history, moral law and 'faith'. The main theoretical concerns of neorealism, which are built on the Western philosophical foundation, is not susceptible to such indefinable, but core, concepts of Gandhi's as absolute truth (satya), soul (atman) and 'faith'.

Thirdly, it may be inferred that the problem of incompatibility may also be found in the deep-seated difference in conception of time and space. It is difficult to pin point the 'fixed' conception of time and space as there can be fluctuating and plurality of views on the nature of time and space. Laure Paquette acknowledges this difficulty in her analysis of cultural difference in the conception of time and space, and thus strategy, between Clausewitz's work *On War* and Sun Tzu's *The Art of War* (Paquette, 1991: p.39). Nevertheless, in her analysis, she manages to isolate a number of characteristics of time and space that are identifiable in Western culture. She uses the following illustration.

'If an observer attempted to picture "time" in his mind, he would see something like a river flowing toward and on past him. What is behind him is the past. What is immediately around him is the present. The question is upstream. But one cannot see very far upstream because of a waterfall, the waterfall symbolising the barrier to knowing the future. This line of time is

conceptualized as quantity, especially as lengths made of units. A length of time is envisioned as a row of similar units' (Leroy Little Bear quoted in Paquette, p.42).

The implications she draws from this are that the Western conception of time is 'linear' with greater priority given to the present; 'fragmented' with each fragment consisting of very short moments which works as an incentive to act and is 'directed', in the sense of creating as much certainty as possible taking into account of the known and the unknown (Ibid., p.42). She also speculates that 'directedness' and 'linearity' reinforce the optimistic view of change, thus evolution. An inferential reason for such view of the Western attitude of time may be that evolution or change is mostly based on rationality and action within which subsist intention - for problem-solving, rather than the attitude of passivity and introversion. Space, according to Paquette, carries similar implications.

The notion of time implicit in Gandhian philosophy, generally speaking, differs from that described above. Firstly, Gandhian philosophy entails a different scale and dimension of time to that of the West. Whereas the Western concept of time is relatively short and focuses on the present, the Gandhian notion stretches from the temporal to a spiritual, unseen, dimension with a particular focus to the latter. The rational is philosophical and religious. Secondly, thus, though there is an element of linearity of time in Gandhian philosophy, for example in Gandhi's belief in the evolution of human nature from good to bad, an implication from his overall philosophy of life and death is that time and space is 'cyclical'.<sup>10</sup> The importance Gandhian philosophy gives to the idea of reincarnation of life and repetition of death according to the nature of one's deed is an indication of this. Under this mode of thinking, *both* the future and the present have prevalence because the values and actions of the latter determine the nature of the former. Gandhian philosophy, however, does allow a religious sense of linearity. That is the belief that there is a way out of the notion of 'time'. This could only happen by reaching moksha or salvation, a state beyond the influence of time. Thus, while the Western conception of time described by Paquette revolves round the idea of observable improvement and problem-solving, the Gandhian

conception of time, though very implicit, centres on moral values and unobservable spiritual growth.

To a limited extent, the foundational ethos of neorealism coincides with Paquette's analysis of the cultural influences of linearity, directedness and evolution. Neorealism is founded on a rationality which is geared towards not only explaining international politics, but also problem-solving and short-term prediction of state behaviour based on its supposedly unchanging behavioural hypothesis of international dynamics. This is in line with the idea of linearity and directedness. These two notions can be observed in the idea of evolution in two ways. Firstly, although neorealism does not predict change in the *nature* of international politics, the idea of change exists implicitly in its postulation that the state is a rational actor. That is to say, under the condition of anarchy, the outcome of the rational choice the state makes can instigate a chain of *predictable* causal effects which lead to change in political relations. This entails, though implicit it may be, an embedment of the conception of time as a controllable mean through a particular logic and action. Secondly, in the historiographical context of IR theories, neorealism itself has evolved by filtering through the issues of the changing world politics.<sup>11</sup> Intellectually, the process of the evolution has been with a degree of control through debates as significant political events have unfolded. In other words, the change has been 'directed' with a view to enabling the theory to be more acceptable and susceptible to the changing context.

Given these fundamental differences between the Western realist conception of time and space, by which neorealism is conditioned, and the Gandhian way of thinking, Gandhi's cosmopolitan outlook on world politics and Waltz's structure-centric notion of international politics entail both comparable and divergent aspects. The most significant similarity of the two theories lies in their agreement on the observation that the core organising principle of international politics is one of 'fear'. Waltz's neorealism assumes that this fear creates uncertainty, which drives states to behave in a self-seeking manner. The Gandhian tradition also observes that it is this fear that

causes the negative condition for states to compete for material capability. In effect, for the Gandhian school of thought, it is this fear that causes injustice, inequality and poverty in the world. Under such a condition, war is part and parcel of these negative effects of human activities.

However, whereas Waltz's theory stops short of the observation of the international political dynamics, the Gandhian school of thought goes further by providing an ideal state of international relations. Gandhi's notion of international relations places the Brahmanical value of dharma or holy duty, and the more extreme ancient Buddhist and Jain principle of ahimsa, at the centre of the theory of the state. This means that the duty of the state is to provide welfare and protection to its people in accordance with the principle of non-violence. However, Gandhi's devolved and part-centralised form of the state implies that the protection and welfare of the people is not an automatic provision of the central government to the people. Rather, that the citizens of the state work together to better and protect their lives. This, in effect, is the Gandhian model of democratic governance. On the issue of protection of the state, the principle of ahimsa allows a limited use of force for self-defence, but only as a last resort (Gandhi, *Young India*, 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1920).<sup>12</sup> Contrary to Waltz's assumption, Gandhian tradition postulates that the occurrence of violence does not have to be perceived as an inevitable outcome of the anarchic international structure. Instead, it would argue that through the universal application of ahimsa as the enduring dynamic of international relations by all members of international community, it is possible to create a condition of peace, in place of fear, which constrains the use of violence by states.

Gandhi's notion of national identity is closely linked to the state and ahimsa. Ahimsa, according to Gandhian tradition, means the love of life. It argues that this principle should be the central ethos of individual citizens and of the nation as a whole. Gandhian tradition argues that the embedding of such a principle in the consciousness of the state would enable the state to pursue its moral functions in a way that would convey the message to other states that its system provides desirable way of living. In this way, the state is

not reduced to a decision-making machine but remains an organic entity with a collective consciousness. Waltz's notion of the state, on the other hand, assumes the state as a 'unit' whose perpetual function is to pursue material gains in order to improve the probability of its survival.

## Summary

Given the discussion of the philosophical bedrocks of Gandhian thought in the sixth chapter, the aim of the seventh chapter has been to extrapolate and discuss the theoretical elements of Gandhian strategic thought that were also foundational to IR. They are the state, power, order and identity. The state, for Gandhi, was a necessary institution to guarantee the welfare of the country. Gandhi's critique of the modern Western state, however, revealed that his notion of state did not distinguish between the nation and the state. For him, the nation was the state. Power, thus, is directly correlated towards the citizens. The moral nature of the state can only be obtained through the pursuit of truth through non-violence by its citizens. The *choice* to pursue such a goal is an important dimension of his concept of power. The power of choice is an important aspect of maintaining the spiritual order (*rta*) of the world. This determines the moral equilibrium of the world, because the consequences of that choice determine whether *rta* is to be rebalanced or not. The process of rebalancing manifests itself in various forms, including wars. The two notions of identity in his thought are consistent with the other notions. While the identity of an individual or a collective evolves due to the balancing and rebalancing of *rta*, the spiritual identity, that is the soul (*atman*), stays constant.

The Gandhian notions of state, power, order and identity are founded on his concepts of *satya*, *ahimsa*, *swaraj* and *swadeshi*. There is thus a strong philosophical and moral dimension to his conception of international relations. A unique element of his thought on international relations is that his level of analysis ranges from the individual to the state, and to the international level, in that order, in the belief that the greater good of humanity can only be achieved through the pursuit of spiritual well-being at the individual level. Thus, his notion of identity consists of the complex relations between the spiritual and the physical 'self'. At the state level, the equivalent notion to the spiritual self exists in the form of a collective consciousness, and the physical self manifests as the state institution. Gandhi's vision was to see harmony at these two levels.

When compared to neorealism, the Gandhian rationale appears to be based on an epistemological background. Whereas neorealism is solely concerned with observable reality and problem-solving, the Gandhian rationale is focused on the nexus between the reality of the world and the spiritual realm. The implication of this fundamental difference is that unlike neorealism, the Gandhian school of thought entails a socio-political and religious idealism. The former is evident in his notion of the state as a moral institution with the aim of pursuing non-violent domestic and international society, with a view to creating a universal condition of peace. On the latter, the proper performance of individual and collective deeds is correlated with spiritual emancipation, that is the freedom from the cycle of life and death.

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<sup>1</sup> One could argue that this philosophy of Gandhi's is simplistic or naïve, as the use of violence in the social world is morally controversial. Protection of the social or international good has often been labelled as just cause for the use of violence. The Second World War is an example. However, it must be born in mind that Gandhi was at heart a radical visionary. His vision was to change the nature of the social politics of his days into a course of non-violence. Nevertheless, as suggested in the concluding chapter, Gandhi was a realist, in the sense that he understood the preservation of a nation's cultural, social and political integrity as a justifiable cause for the use of violence.

<sup>2</sup> Gandhi believed that this dynamic was subtly manifesting itself in the politics of the Western democracies. In his critique of modern civilisation, he declared that the British parliamentary system was opaquely driven by the fear of uncertainty, which in turn created a culture of selfishness and greed. See M. K. Gandhi (2003), *Hind Swaraj*, p.27.

<sup>3</sup> Rta, which can also be spelled *rita*, has several connotations such as fixed or settled order, law, rule, sacred or pious action or custom, faith or divine truth. See *Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary*. According to Radhakrishnan and Moore, its literal translation is 'the course of things', S. Radhakrishnan and C. A. Moore (eds.) (1957), *A Source Book in Indian Philosophy*, p.27.

<sup>4</sup> The word Dharma derives from the word *dhr* which essentially means to hold (or uphold) or to preserve soul or body, to hold in a balance etc. See *Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

<sup>5</sup> *Monier-Williams, Sanskrit-English Dictionary*.

<sup>6</sup> This etymological transition ultimately represented a mutation in meaning.

<sup>7</sup> See for instance, the *Mahabharata*, Appadorai (2002) p.77; the *Ramayana*, LXVII, p.208; and Manu, p.130.

<sup>8</sup> See for example the *Bhagavadgita* 2.48.

<sup>9</sup> The founding works of this tradition can be identified across history. These include such works as Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* as well as more recent works by Machiavelli, Hobbes and Clausewitz.

<sup>10</sup> Paquette uses the term 'cyclical' to describe the nature of time understood by Sun Tzu in his book *The Art of War*.

<sup>11</sup> Initially, there was a transition from classical realism to neorealism. This was not only a shift in methodology, from a normative to a positivist, but also there was some shift in theoretical postulations. For example, Kenneth Waltz's neorealism refutes Morgenthau's notion that the ultimate motive of states is to seek power. Kenneth Waltz (1965), *Man, the State and War*, pp.34-36. Instead, he argues that the system of international politics induces them to compete for survival. Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 1979, p.91. In addition, Waltz's theory utilises a systems approach rather than focusing on agent/structure (in that order) as Morgenthau does.

<sup>12</sup> See 'Ahimsa' section in Chapter 7. Gandhi stipulated that the use of force is permissible for the defence of one's 'honour'. However, the defence of 'honour' as Gandhi meant is an elusive idea. It could be interpreted to include such notions as self-defence, and the protection of one's own or other's moral standing or cause. In either case, a religious and moral element is intrinsically entwined in this idea.



## Chapter 9: Conclusions

In the course of the previous chapters, this thesis has examined the origins of Indian strategic thought by utilising a strategic culture approach. The research has been divided into three parts: first, a comparative examination of the value of neorealism and Indian strategic culture in explaining India's strategic behaviour; second, an analysis of the geographical, historical and ideational contexts of Indian strategic culture; and third, an analysis of the key components of Indian strategic culture, the Kautilyan and Gandhian traditions. The main objective of the thesis has been to provide an interpretation of the domestic cultural origins of Indian strategic thought with a view to stipulating the theoretical link between Indian strategic culture and neorealism. As a way of conclusion, the final part of the thesis consists of four parts: final summary, main findings of the research, an evaluation of the Kautilyan-Gandhian strategic thought and some thoughts on Indian strategic thought vis-à-vis the field of strategic culture.

### Final Summary

The introduction to the thesis highlighted some of the key caveats of the strategic culture approach and gave the theoretical assumptions of this thesis. Those caveats essentially concerned the issues regarding three aspects: the difficulties in forging a viable definition of strategic culture; the differences among scholars on the basic referent subjects of concern; and methodology. The Gray-Johnston debate highlighted this well. Gray's notion treated strategic culture as 'context' or 'that which surrounds'. For him, it was this context which gave meaning to strategic behaviour. Accordingly, his methodology essentially entailed a pursuit of *understanding*, rather than predictability. Johnston's approach treated strategic culture as a set of key dominant 'symbols' within a national setting which had a lasting effect on strategy. Unlike Gray's notion, his approach aimed to construct a predictable and falsifiable *theory* of strategic culture.

Both approaches had limitations. Gray's notion had three key problems: first, its broad definition of cultural 'context' made it difficult to pinpoint the referent subject of concern for the benefit of strategic culture analysis, e.g., how should the cultural 'context' be defined ('context' all the way or part way down?); second, his approach did not clarify the nexus between the context and non-cultural variables (he took certain material factors as given); and third, the amalgamation of the strategic culture and the national identity and behaviour, thus implying the change in strategic culture automatically transpires to the change in identity and behaviour and vice versa. Johnston's approach also entailed limitations; first, Johnston's attempt to formulate a predictable theory of strategic culture is too complex as strategic culture is difficult to quantify, i.e. can a cultural value be scientifically measured?; second, it lacked explanation on the processes in which a dominant strategic culture emerged; third, it was susceptible to criticism from the neorealists that at the core of it, Johnston's approach and neorealism were in synchronism with one another as the former still treated anarchical international environment and military power as important constituents of its assumptions.

This chapter has argued that *both* the context and prediction-based strategic culture approaches entailed significance for further development of strategic culture as an approach. Accordingly, it suggested that such development should centre on the study of the dominant socio-political consciousness based on limited causal, teleological and valuational understanding. It should also accommodate the possibility that those understandings could change.

Given this argument, the chapter presented four working assumptions for research. Firstly, that Indian strategic culture essentially consists of an identifiable set of dominant ideas and contexts which are, directly or indirectly, transfused with the shared belief regarding the issues of war and peace. An important caveat which is worth noting here is that identifying what those dominant ideas and contexts are a matter of qualifiable interpretation and preference of an analyst. This thesis has identified the

ideas deriving from the Brahmanical tradition and India's geographical, historical and ideational contexts to be the dominant source of Indian strategic culture on the base that they have shaped the foundation of India's enduring strategic attitude and perception. Secondly, Indian strategic culture is not an independent variable but it is an ideational continuum of geographical, historical, and ideational contexts. These contexts help one to explicate the significance of the identified ideas and to understand why and how dominant ideas have become dominant. Thirdly, that the theoretical nexus between culture and identity plays a significant role in understanding Indian strategic rationale.

Chapter 2 highlighted the significance of the Indian strategic culture approach, which uses India-specific cultural symbols and contexts related to the issues of war and peace, in relation to Waltz's neorealism in explaining India's nuclear strategy and behaviour. Indian strategic culture, in its ontological sense, consists of the rationales of Kautilyan and Gandhian thought. By utilising the case of India's nuclear behaviour from 1947 to 1998, the chapter demonstrated that Indian strategic culture provides a better theoretical ground for explaining the anomalies of Indian nuclear behaviour, most notable the origins of threat, the delay in the weaponisation of its nuclear capability and the timing of the May 1998 nuclear tests, which Waltz's neorealism is unable to or cannot adequately explain.

Chapter 3 has argued that geographical, historical and ideational contexts form the backbone of the formation of the Indian national identity. In particular, it has identified Brahmanical ideology as the ideational source to which both Kautilyan and Gandhian tradition belong to. This ideology provides an access point for tracing the origins of the Kautilyan and Gandhian traditions. Given the profile given to the role of Indian identity in the analysis of Indian strategic culture, this chapter has argued that Waltz's neorealism, which assumes the state as a hypothetical unit, provides limited theoretical scope for understanding Indian strategic behaviour.

Chapter 4 highlighted the historiographical aspects, in relation to the origins of Indian political science, of Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. Although the date of authorship is not clear, the origins of the *Arthashastra* stretches back to at least the pre-Buddhism and Jainism period (before 500 B.C.). The chapter has shown that the *Arthashastra* embraced the ancient Indian philosophic systems, notably Samkya, Yoga and Lokayata. This suggests that the materialist/non-materialist aspects of Kautilya's strategic thought is constructed from a broad ancient Indian philosophic outset.

Chapter 5 focused on the origins of the Kautilyan notion of international relations. The chapter showed that the Kautilyan concept of the state evolved through a complex historical and ideational processes. Its origins date as far back as the Vedic age (1500-500 B.C.). Intertwined with this evolution is the development of the political legitimacy of the Brahmanical tradition which pervades the cultural mindset of the Indian national identity. The chapter also introduced the contents of Kautilya's strategic thought, notably his concentric circle theory and the six-fold foreign policy.

Chapter 6 explored the theoretical relevance of Kautilya's strategic thought vis-à-vis Indian strategic culture and neorealism. The chapter argued that Kautilya's notions of the state, power and anarchy are comparable to those of Waltz. However, the two theoretical positions diverge in one significant way. Unlike Waltz's neorealism, Kautilya's notions entail moral dimensions such as dharma or the holy duty, which are an intrinsic element of his strategic thought in general. The chapter also argued that a 'thick' understanding of Kautilya's strategic thought requires an analysis of its 'contexts'.

Chapter 7 turned to the Gandhian tradition, the second facet of Indian strategic culture. The chapter explored the origins of the four key notions of Gandhian tradition: truth, non-violence, Swaraj and Swadeshi. The Gandhian tradition also belongs to the Brahmanical tradition as it incorporates the Hindu social system of caste and its value of Dharma. However, its notion of non-violence or ahimsa also has its origins in the ancient Buddhist and Jain

practice of vegetarianism. The chapter argued that while non-violence has a strong pacifist connotation, the notion allows a limited use of force for morally justifiable causes. Accordingly, ancient Buddhists and Jains allowed themselves to use violence in their struggle against the dominant Hindu culture. Gandhi also allowed a limited use of violence in response to certain causes, such as self-defence and in defence of one's 'honour'. However, the way Gandhi utilised the concept in the form of passive resistance against the British was to use it to gain political advantage and moral high ground.

Chapter 8 extrapolated the Gandhian concepts of the state, identity, order and identity with a view to juxtaposing them with Waltz's neorealism. By and large, Gandhi's socio-political idealism is incomparable with that of Waltz's. The chapter identified two key reasons. First, unlike Waltz's neorealism, Gandhi's understanding of IR is founded on his moral and spiritual outlook on social life. Thus, the ancient socio-religious value of Dharma and Moksha or heaven take a significant place in his thought. Second, whereas neorealism entails what Paquette calls, the 'linear' sense of time and space, the Gandhian sense of time and space is characterised as 'cyclical'.

### **Main Findings**

From the analysis given in this thesis, nine conclusions can be drawn:

1. It has been shown that Indian strategic culture consists of two facets: realpolitik and moral traditions. The realpolitik tradition is reflected in the notion of power and anarchy evident in the *Arthashastra* which is said to have been written in the late fourth century B.C. by a figure called Kautilya who apparently was a political advisor to Chandragupta of the Mauryan Empire. India's moral attitude is a continuation of the Gandhian rationale which advocates the ideas of self-restraint from violence, self-rule, self-reliance and the pursuit of the universal good. The Gandhian rationale is founded on the notions of truth (satya) and non-violence (ahimsa) which have their origins in the ancient Buddhist, Jain and Brahmanical traditions. These traditions in

combination with the geographical and historical evolution of India's national identity are the foundation of India's strategic mindset.

2. Kautilya's strategic thought is comparable to Waltz's neorealism on the notions of the state, power and anarchy. Notably, Kautilya's mandala theory is, by and large, in line with Waltz's balance of power theory. However, the mandala theory differs from balance of power as it entails both balancing and bandwagoning state behaviours. Accordingly, the mandala theory predicts that behaviour of the state is determined by security or/and power maximisation. The analysis of the Arthashastra and the research into the origins of Kautilya's concept of international relations suggest that Kautilya's notions are closely linked to and conditioned by the ancient Hindu value of dharma or holy duty. In other words, Kautilya's strategic thought cannot be divorced from ancient Indian religious philosophy. In this respect, the Indian realpolitik tradition cannot be seen in a similar light to Waltz's scientific theory of international politics.

3. The religious nature of Gandhian tradition indicates that Gandhian political thought is largely incompatible with Waltz's neorealism. This is evident in the difference between Gandhi's cosmopolitan notion of the state in conjunction with his religious idealism of ahimsa and Waltz's assumption of the state as a unit. Nevertheless, the relevance of Gandhian rationale in Indian strategic culture in the form of self-reliance, self-constraint and the pursuit of political power by taking morally advantageous position suggests that neorealism is not adequate in explaining India's strategic behaviour deriving from those attitudes.

4. The cross-comparison of Gandhian and Kautilyan thought suggests that there are some broad similarities and differences. They converge on the importance of the State as the moral guide of the nation and the anarchic nature of international structure. However, they depart from each other in two significant ways. Firstly, on the organisation and operation of the State, whereas Kautilyan thought advocates a centralised form of organisation that has the right of coercive use of its authority, the Gandhian notion of State is

based on a diffused form of a federal state with a maximum participation of its citizens to the political process. Secondly, whereas the basic principle of Kautilyan strategic thought is designed on building and managing the State with a view to surviving and pursuing a preponderant international status in the anarchic international structure, the main pillars of Gandhian thought is focused on changing the anarchic world order which is assumed to be unjust and immoral.

5. In view of the Kautilyan and Gandhian origins of Indian strategic thought, Indian strategic culture entails two definitions. Indian strategic culture as a theoretical approach can be understood as a contextual approach to interpreting the Indian way of thinking on strategy, by utilising a set of identifiable ideational symbols. In its ontological sense, the thesis defines Indian strategic culture as the dominant Indian political and strategic perception which derives from the transmission of India's historical and cultural past in combination with rationales articulated in Gandhian and Kautilyan thought. Overall, this strategic culture operates as symbolic and contextual source giving insights into the meaning of India's World-view and behaviour regarding the issues of war and peace.

6. The complexity of India's nuclear strategy and behaviour from the beginning of India's nuclear programme to its May 1998 nuclear tests suggests that neorealist explanations, which reduce India's nuclear behaviour to one that is solely motivated by security concerns of China and Pakistan, is inadequate. Indian strategic culture approach, on the other hand, is able to explain the origins of India's threat perception as well as the anomalies, the delay in India's weaponisation of its nuclear technology and the domestic and cultural politics intertwined in its motivation for the May 1998 tests. Indeed, the Indian strategic culture which is defined in terms of the cultural expectations of the endogenous moral and realpolitik traditions provide better insights into the internal dynamics of Indian strategic behaviour.

7. Indian strategic culture, however, is not able to explain why the superpowers did not provide nuclear security guarantee to India in the 1960s and 70s because Indian strategic culture is essentially concerned with the India-specific domestic and cultural ideas rather than structural explanations. This raises a conceptual caveat for the strategic culture approach. That is, in order to provide a strategic cultural explanation of the nexus between the international political structure and the domestic cultural context, there requires, through a continuous building of case studies, the Lakatosian sense of a grand theory of strategic culture.

8. The analysis of India's strategic behaviour vis-à-vis its strategic culture suggests that there are three key interrelated facets which condition India's attitude regarding the nuclear issue in the region and in the wider global context: identity, historical experience and material symbolism. The sense of national identity is a significant element of India's cultural context which forms a part of the driving force of the formation of the Indian perception of international relations and the societal solidarity. However, under this sense of collective belief and loyalty under the ideational edifice called 'India', there appear to be different political groups within India which disagree on how that collective belief and loyalty should transpire in reality. Such variations are evident between those who advocate hard-line Hindu nationalism, such as the BJP, and those who support the notion of a more secular India, such as the Congress Party. In the context of India's nuclear behaviour between 1947 and 1998, when India was governed under the leadership of the Congress Party, India took two-edged stance on its nuclear strategy: taking a moral stance for a universal nuclear disarmament while leaving the weaponisation of its nuclear capability as an option. Under the BJP government, however, India, while advocating its moral stance, became a nuclear weapon state. The BJP's desire for the weaponisation had been evident in its election manifesto 2 years prior to their election in 1998. The BJP perceived nuclear weapon as a symbol of greatness which India should be identified with in order to stand as a great power alongside other nuclear weapon states in the global stage.



9. The formation of India's identity is intrinsically related to its historical experience. In a similar vein, India's threat perception is entwined with India's identity and the way it was formed through its historical experience. India's perception of threat from Pakistan has derived from the past religious and cultural tension, the painful experience of the partition after the Second World War and the subsequent conflicts after their separation, rather than the outcome of structural factors as neorealists would argue. India's threat perception of China derived essentially from the possibility of China's regional dominance in the 1950s by gaining nuclear capability and India's defeat in the Indo-China war of 1962, rather than on the distribution of relative material capability as neorealists would argue. Thus, it can be argued that the sense of instability deriving from these historical experiences, or historical processes, have fuelled India with a general feeling of insecurity which culminated in India's negative perception of its position in the region. The reason for India's 1998 nuclear tests can be attributed to this. Thus, there is a viable connection between the historical processes of India's identity formation and India's perception of itself and of others. That connection is that India's perception is conditioned by the nature of its identity. Indian strategic culture assumes the existence of this identity as a culturally progressive entity. As part of India's cultural context, it conditions its strategic preferences and behaviours.

### **Gandhian Thought and Kautilyan Rationale: Complementary or Antithetical?**

As discussed in this thesis, while Kautilya's theory of international politics presented in the *Arthashastra* is, to a limited extent, incongruent with that of Waltz's neorealism, Gandhian strategic thought is largely incompatible with Waltz's assumptions about international politics. This necessarily brings us to the subject of the place of Gandhian thought vis-à-vis Kautilyan thought. This necessity arises for two reasons. Firstly, at least on the surface, there seems to be an anomalous nexus between the two schools. On the one hand, the Kautilyan rationale seems to be in conflict with Gandhian thought in its adoption of a realpolitik dynamic, such as is evident in Waltz theory. On the

other hand, to adopt Ainslie Embree's argument, both Gandhian and Kautilyan thought belong to a single cultural edifice called Brahmanical ideology.<sup>1</sup> This implies to some extent a common ideational foundation between the two approaches. Secondly, there has been a lack of academic discussion on this subject. However, for the purpose of this thesis, this is a significant issue for an interpretation of the overall internal dynamic of Indian strategic thought. The task of this section is to explore and analyse to what extent the two schools converge and depart, and, thus, to understand how two seemingly different visions can exist under the same cultural/ideational heading.

Cross-comparison of the two schools of thought can be based on two categories: contextual and ideational. The contextual comparison of the two systems of thought does present a problematic aspect. The reason is simply that Kautilya and Gandhi belonged to two very different historical and political situations. Internally, Kautilya lived in a political context which was dominated by a monarchical and tribal political system. The Indian sub-continent was occupied by many large and small political units with no centralised sense of unity. Externally, the Mauryan Empire mainly had to face the Persians and Hellenistic Greeks. Kautilya, a preceptor to Chandragupta of Maurya, helped conduct diplomacy with them and pave the way for the building of a strong empire. The ancient Greeks never conquered the Indian sub-continent: Alexander the Great only managed to conquer the North-western part of India (Kulk and Rothermund, 1998: p.56). Gandhi, on the other hand, faced different circumstances from Kautilya. He opposed the British who had annexed the subcontinent into their empire. Internally, there was a broad nationalist movement for independence. Gandhi, in effect, faced two interrelated fronts: on the one hand, a campaign against the presence of the British imperialists; and on the other, internal religious and social divisions which he regarded as an obstacle towards the attainment of true Swaraj.

This contextual difference is mainly due to the two millennia gap between the two historical periods. However, although a certain amount of contextual relativism is unavoidable, there are some points of comparison

between the two contexts. Both Kautilya and Gandhi lived at a turning point of Indian history. The Mauryan Empire rose out of the pre-existing internal disunity and corruptions in the Nanda state, and the external threat from Alexander's Empire. It was the first major political unit in the Indian sub-continent. Gandhi's political context was also a product of centuries of disunity and foreign domination. It was a turbulent but significant period, given that there was a nationalistic movement and a campaign for independence from Britain and to construct a unified India. Both figures struggled against more powerful states to build national unity and sovereignty. It was the combination of the internal and external contexts which drove Kautilya and Gandhi's political thoughts and activities.

The ideational comparison also indicates a degree of dichotomy and convergence. The key postulation, which supports an understanding of the two supposedly divergent sets of ideas, is that Brahmanical ideology consists of two intertwined dynamics: the normative core and pragmatic psychology. These essentially derive from historical progression in conjunction with, on the one hand, a particular philosophical perception of nature, life and the universe, and on the other, human needs driven by changing or progressing socio-political and environmental contexts. Both the Kautilyan and Gandhian systems of thought entail these dynamics. For example, emanating from a Brahmanical value of Dharma, which is one of the most essential ideational elements in either schools of thought, is the idea of holy law, purity, rights and responsibilities, and the idea of socio-political pragmatism in the forms of laws of governance, duties and qualities of leadership and the system of Varna. Dharma, to Kautilya, is fundamental for a proper functioning of a society and, if followed, leads one to heaven or Moksha (Kautilya, 2003: p.8). For Gandhi, also, the Varna system, which assigns duty to each caste, was 'fundamental' to the socio-economic cohesion which played a crucial part in the survival of Hinduism (Young India, 8<sup>th</sup> Dec. 1920).

These two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. To some extent, they have a mutually inclusive causal relationship. This is to say that the pragmatic school of thought may have been driven forward by

philosophical speculation on life or a particular circumstance. By the same token, it may be speculated that a sense of pragmatism, induced by an event, could have influenced philosophical and/or religious thought. It is difficult to prove the historical validity of either inference. However, in relation to Kautilyan thought, it seems to be the case that while the political context of his time had a direct bearing on the motivation for him writing pragmatic and practical instructions in the *Arthashastra*, it may be argued that the philosophical rationale of his thought was in synchronism with the normative core of the pre-existing Brahmanical tradition.<sup>2</sup> A similar logic also applies to Gandhian thought. While the unjust British domination of India stimulated Gandhi's motivation to campaign for Indian Swaraj both through action and writing, his ideas originated in ancient sources.<sup>3</sup>

The key normative concept that both schools embrace is Dharma. Dharma played a pivotal role in the thoughts and actions of both Kautilya and Gandhi, in their attempts to construct a viable social and political pragmatism to meet the concerns of the political context of their times. The resultant socio-political system, which both thinkers aspired to construct, was intended not only to devise a political system to provide welfare to the nation, but also to consolidate national and cultural identity. Moreover, the concept of Dharma helped to stipulate an ideational ground for constructing a societal, political and economic order, as well as a nexus between the philosophical mindset, which developed with religious speculations, and the political rationale. In other words, Dharma was intended as a cultural core to enhance the general sustainability of a nation-state.

In a philosophical sense, there also seems to be a synchronistic dynamic in the way both Kautilya and Gandhi applied the notion of Dharma in their understandings and actions. That is to say that both thinkers interpret Dharma as a practical notion that necessarily entails good *action* or *conduct* which, at the temporal level, leads to a strong nation, and at the spiritual level, to eternal bliss or Moksha. For Kautilya, the observance of caste duties provides a significant route towards both ends (Kautilya, 2003: p.8). For Gandhi, also, Dharma is a foundational condition for India's independence or

Swaraj, and ultimately leads to Moksha (Gandhi, *Collective Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (CWMG), vol. 69, 13<sup>th</sup> Mar. 1939: p.52; and Gandhi, *An Autobiography*, p.xii). This common aspect is a manifestation of the Brahmanical *locus* in two ways. Firstly, it implies a bridging of the core internal values of Dharma and Moksha. Secondly, it represents an instinctive ideological realisation that has existed since ancient times; that the survival of the Brahmanical tradition has to be accompanied by ideational consolidation, as well as by a morally and practically viable socio-political framework.<sup>4</sup>

However, it should also be highlighted that the interpretation of Dharma within the Brahmanical tradition is not entirely homogenous. In fact, Gandhi's interpretation of the utility of Dharma departs from Kautilya's more practical interpretation, in the sense that in Gandhian thought, Dharma has a much more religious and philosophical connotation.<sup>5</sup> While the *Arthashastra* is primarily concerned with observable and collective Dharma, Gandhi's interpretation focuses on the nexus between the observable and spiritual, between collective and individual Dharma.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the concept of Dharma in the *Arthashastra* is mainly concerned with regulations regarding the politics of social life, with a view to constructing a blueprint for a nation-state. The Gandhian school, however, postulates that the true independence of India depends on the freedom of the inner self of the individuals who make up the nation-state. Thus, Gandhi writes in 1928, 'the Dharma of those workers who wish to attain true freedom is to try and attempt an improvement in the self' (Gandhi, CWMG, vol. 38, 4<sup>th</sup> Nov. 1928: p.18). As a measure of pursuing Dharma, the Gandhian school views the self-cleansing of individual and social impurities through the search for and cultivation of moral strength as a prerequisite for national unity. In other words, only when morality, in the form of Dharma, is established as social fabric does a nation-state qualify as a 'civilisation'. Indeed, unlike the coercive nature of the Kautilya's dharmic ideal, the Gandhian school gives great emphasis to the role of individuals, as both a functional and spiritual part of a nation-state. Secondly, Gandhi's identification of Dharma with Satya or truth also marks an interpretational departure with regard to the *Arthashastra*. In the *Arthashastra*, Dharma is

generally treated as a necessary means to an end, i.e. the formation of a nation-state and Moksha. For Gandhi, however, it signifies both means and end: it is the source of legitimacy as a body of law; and in its abstract state, it is the ultimate end, the state of absolute pureness or Satya that should be pursued by humanity.

These differences have implications for other aspects of the two schools. Firstly, the interpretive departure of Dharma implies a conceptual difference over the idea of politics. Kautilya's notion of politics stipulates a coercive contractual nexus between the state and its citizens within the pre-existing hierarchical framework, i.e. the caste system. This relationship is based on the ruler's provision of protection and welfare in return for loyalty, performance of caste duties and payment of taxes from his people. The Gandhian notion of Swaraj, however, arises from the idea of a non-coercive political and social structure whereby the people of the country help and rule themselves with a sense of political equality. Thus, secondly, the form of governance also differs according to the two schools. While the *Arthashastra* describes a centralised form of political governance with the King as the supreme leader, the Gandhian school pursues the idea of a democratic and decentralised form of governance with most of its powers trusted to the people. Thirdly, the divergent interpretations of Dharma have an implication over the use of force. For Kautilya, the use of force is a necessary means for preserving both the country and the way of life. It is an essential element of Rajadharma or the King's duty. The Gandhian view is that violence is the essence of Adharma (the state of lawlessness or anarchy). Thus the use of it, in effect, is going against the very grain of Dharma.

In a sense, these implications highlight the two disparate notions of security within Indian strategic thought. For the Kautilyan school, Dharma provides the necessary ideational and cultural prerequisite for the notion of national security. For the Gandhian school, Dharma, in its application in politics, is a prerequisite for the building of *volksgeist*, which, if successfully applied, becomes a more effective means towards building the welfare and security of the nation. Perhaps, the reason for this departing point lies in the

intentions of the two authors. Having seen the success of Alexander the Great's empire, Kautilya's concern was focused on emulating that success through the consolidation of state power, because he understood that with greatness came prestige and security. Gandhi also wanted a great nation, but in a different way. He was deeply influenced by his experiences in South Africa and India, where he saw injustices carried out by a centralised, coercive and militaristic political authority which prided itself on representing civilisation. Thus, his aim was to construct a great nation by mobilising the ordinary *demos* through active campaigns of persuasion. From this process, he hoped to cultivate a resilient, just and, above all, non-violent society. Thus for Gandhi there was no distinction between a nation and a state. His aspiration went beyond challenging the British occupiers to challenging what he perceived as the materialistic and mechanistic culture of the Western nations, which he saw as the cause of their repressive behaviour beyond their own territories. Ultimately, Gandhi's intention was to eliminate the element of fear which he saw as the source of insecurity in both international and social relations.

Having said this, there is an unresolved conundrum over the seemingly contradictory views of the Gandhian school: the rejection of violence on the one hand, the legitimisation of the use of force on the other. This, taken at face value, could make the Gandhian moral position untenable. In order to extract some plausible explanations with a view to establishing a nexus between the Gandhian and Kautilyan schools of thought, it is helpful to understand why the former school does not completely reject violence.

Writing in 1920, Gandhi justified the use of force in the name of 'honour'. He wrote, 'I would rather have India resort to arms in order to defend her honour than that she should in a cowardly manner become or remain a helpless witness to her own dishonour' (Gandhi, *Young India*, 11<sup>th</sup> Aug. 1920). The idea of 'honour' was important enough to Gandhi to subscribe to the very notion he strongly rejected throughout his adult life. However, it is not clear what exactly 'honour' actually meant to Gandhi. Here, three possible explanations may be offered. Firstly, it may be inferred from

his relating 'dishonour' with cowardliness and helplessness that the term 'honour' implies the self-confidence that derives from the basic rights with which humans are born. Accordingly, 'honour' entails the right to basic human needs such as the right to life and to welfare. Secondly, it incorporates the right to protect one's cultural, political and social identity. Thirdly, it implies self-sacrifice for the good of the collective. Accordingly, the Gandhian notion of honour encapsulates the notions of responsibility and rights, in that order, of individuals in terms of both their nation and their humanity.

The significance of these implications is two-fold. Firstly, so far as honour translates into the idea of self-protection and self-preservation, they are in synchronism with the Kautilyan rationale on the use of force. Secondly, protecting honour, implied in both schools, refers to the defence of one's physical survival as well as the *purpose* of one's existence. For Gandhi, that purpose was pursuing Ahimsa and truth; and for Kautilya, ultimately, obtaining Moksha. The dharmic ethos, as a common ideational ground of both schools, reinforces these implications.

Given the importance of the use of force with a view to protecting 'honour', there are two possible explanations of the apparent contradictions within the Gandhian school of thought. One option is to see Gandhi as a realist.<sup>7</sup> This position is advocated by a few authors. One of the most notable arguments is made by Waheguru Pal Singh Sidhu. He identifies three aspects which correspond to the realist logic. Firstly, he argues that underlying Gandhi's idealistic notion of non-violence is the pragmatic attitude that India was not materially and politically powerful enough to fight and win against the well-equipped and well-organised British Empire (Sidhu, 1996: p.177). Secondly, Gandhi understood that obtaining political freedom by using force would automatically legitimise any retaliatory violence on the part of the British. However, by using violence against unarmed people using non-violent means to campaign for their political freedom, the British 'had no way to legitimise the use of force' (Ibid., p.177). Thirdly, Sidhu points out that the Gandhian school advocates two principal methods of managing international



relations: diplomacy; and the use of force (Ibid., pp.176-177). The latter is the last resort when one's honour is at stake. In citing Raju G. C. Thomas, Sidhu also points out that the idea of diplomacy in Gandhi's realism implies the notion that security is better achieved through 'peaceful coexistence' among nations rather than through arms build up. Furthermore, citing Ashok Kapur, Sidhu extracts the view that the Gandhian method of international politics is 'transitional' in the way that it is conditioned by any strategic options which may be available at a given time (Ibid., p.176). In other words, if non-violence means is the only viable option against much more powerful force, one has to utilise it to one's advantage, whereas if one has the relative military capability as a secondary option, one should utilise either or both to protect one's own interest.

Bharat Karnad also follows the line of argument that Gandhi pursued a 'two-faced' policy which was subsequently manifested in Nehru's security policy: on the one hand utilising morality as an instrument of politics to end British rule, and on the other treating the use of force as the right of a free India to self-defence and self-interest (Karnad, 2002: p.33). He further argues that Gandhi was clear on the idea of violence from the earliest days of his career: that 'what constituted ethical behaviour was not the absence of violence but the absence of cowardice'; and that the implementation of non-violence by individuals cannot be afforded by a sovereign state (Ibid., p.48). By way of qualifying the 'realist orientation' of Gandhi, Karnad turns to Gandhi's experience in the Army and his interactions with Indian officers. Gandhi is quoted as saying, 'how can we ever hope to rid ourselves of the British by force of arms? We are a poor, uneducated, unarmed people - we can never fight the British. But when we are a free country, we shall have to have an army' (Ibid., p.50).

A logical deduction from this portrayal of Gandhian ideals as compatible with the key realist assumptions is that the Gandhian rationale of international politics is in synchronism with that within the *Arthashastra*. Thus, Sidhu suggests that the 'strategic philosophy' in Kautilya's six forms of foreign policy, i.e. state behaviour based on the notion of self-interest and

power, is congruous with Gandhian realism (Sidhu, 1996: p.176). Latham also broadly agrees with this argument. He asserts that Gandhian ideology assumes the centrality of power politics in its application. He states, 'it is important to note that, contrary to Western notions of passive resistance, *Satyagraha* is a philosophy that assumes that those engaged in resistance do so from a position of moral and political power' (Latham, 1999: p.138). He argues that Gandhi is a 'hero' in the Indian mytho-historical context not only because of his successful use of his moral ideals but also 'his ability to mobilise overwhelming social and political (and even implicit 'military') resources' to compel the British to leave India. Using this interpretation, Latham deduces that the Gandhian tradition 'reinforces' the Kautilyan school of thought 'for in both traditions, the successful pursuit of one's interests is seen not as a function of compromise and concession but of *preponderant power*' (Ibid., p.138).

The second explanation may be that the Gandhian school emulated the ancient Brahmanical rationalism which through historical progression incorporated the idea of non-violence into its Vedic ideology<sup>8</sup> in order to counter the growth of Buddhism and Jainism. Behind this adoption of the idea of non-violence was the intention of diluting Jain and Buddhist influence with a view to strengthening the Brahmanical influence. Gandhi adopted the same rationalism in order to revitalise Indian society in the way that intended not only to dilute British influence but also to locate, distil and consolidate the cultural foundation of 'Indianness'. His ideology was, however, a concoction of all three traditions, Brahmanism, Buddhism and Jainism, but with the greatest influence from Brahmanism given that he identified himself as a Hindu. Although Gandhi never openly subscribed to the ancient realpolitik tradition, his legitimisation of state violence in the national interest seemed to have coincided with the basic rationale of this tradition, which was subsumed in the sub-traditions of Arthasastra and Dharmasastra. Thus, given the Brahmanical paradox of non-violence/violence ideologies, coupled with Jain and Buddhist acceptance of certain types of violence<sup>9</sup>, it could be argued that the Gandhian paradox is a manifestation or continuation of the ancient Indian traditions.

Neorealists may argue that in principle either explanation points to their abstract assumptions about self-help and the power driven and anarchic nature of international relations, within which Indian politics has always operated, be it Kautilyan or Gandhian. However, there are three key points which should be considered. Firstly, on the use of violence, although certain common principles can be identified between the two schools, it may be suggested that the extent to which violence is legitimised differs: for the Gandhian school, violence as a means of problem-solving should be the least relied on option in international relations, whilst for Kautilyan thinkers the use of force is a *raison-d'état*. To put it another way, an assumption that derives from the latter point of view is that for the Kautilyan school, threat is an inherent attribute of international politics while for the Gandhian school, threat is a social concept which can be constructed and deconstructed. Secondly, the neorealist's metaphysical interpretation of the common aspects of the two schools may be refuted. Despite the fact that both concepts of international relations coincide with some realist assumptions, it is evident from both the *Arthashastra* and from Gandhi's writings that their ideas are normative<sup>10</sup> or value-based, with historical and ideational context: one significant difference is that Gandhian thought is religious and more normative.

Thirdly, neorealists seem to have failed to observe the philosophical nature of the intentions vis-à-vis the conception of time in the writings of Kautilya and Gandhi.<sup>11</sup> The essential point of distinction that should be considered in understanding both schools of thought are the two dimensions: temporal and spiritual. Within these lie three conceptions of time: how social and international relations *are*, *should be* and *will be*. The *Arthashastra* is much more temporal in its focus. Accordingly, the *Arthashastra* is written as a set of instructions on how the state *should* function, based on the broader perception of the contemporary nature of international and social relations, i.e. how it *is*.<sup>12</sup> As its spiritual dimension, Moksha is the ultimate end, i.e. how it *will be*, if the instructions are followed properly. Gandhi's thought is much more spiritual, in the sense that his perception of the temporal world starts

from the point of view of his religion and philosophy. A foundational aspect of his belief lies in the Hindu idea of the source and dynamics of power in the World. This is to say that the imbalances of good and evil, which are closely linked with the freewill of individuals, are rebalanced by the mysterious force called Rta or cosmic law. In Gandhi's view, this is, or should be understood as, the true nature of the social world. It is this force which preserves the integrity of the wheel of life and drives it forward. Thus, within Gandhian thought is the implication that to prevent this process of rebalancing, which often manifests itself in human pain and sorrow, humanity has to live by the way Rta has always stipulated: the way of Ahimsa and Truth. For the Gandhian school, this *should* be the natural dynamic of all social and political relations. In international politics, then, Gandhian thought also gives rise to the perception that there is a prevalence of desire for power for self-centred interests, i.e. how it *is*. As long as this is the case, its stipulation is for the state to behave in two ways: to build a capacity to use military means for self-defence on the one hand and through persuasion and demonstration convert other nations to conform to the ways of Rta on the other.

One has to be cautious in stating that Gandhi was a 'realist' because, although some aspects of his ideas imply that international relations operate on the basis of egoism and power, his conception of the state and its implications fundamentally differ from those postulated in realism. Gandhi's conception of the state largely reflects his notion of human nature and power. The main ideas here are: that the state is an organic and social entity, which, like human nature, has the potential for change and evolution; the state is a social construct essentially evolving through the amalgamation of its own historical experiences and culture; and that it has the power of *choice* over the way it behaves. These ideas imply that the basic dynamics of international relations are not necessarily axiomatic in the context of self-help and power-seeking, as realists postulate.

Understood in this way, it may be argued that neither Gandhi nor Kautilya were 'realists' in the sense used in IR, but they could be called *cultural realists* because they utilised their cultural, philosophical and

ideational heritage in ways they deemed appropriate in order to help resolve the political and social issues they faced in their times. There are also some notable continuities between the Gandhian and Kautilyan thought over their understanding of the use of power and the use of force, but taken on the whole the two modes of thought are disconnected by interpretative disparities. While Kautilyan thought is much more focused on the idea of building a prestigious and strong nation, Gandhian thought is notably broad in its philosophical and socio-political scope, with much more attention paid to its spiritual aspect. However, a crucial common ground which exists in both schools is Dharma, which is a main pillar of not only the Brahmanical ideology but also of Hinduism.

Some of Gandhi and Kautilya's ideas appear to be in line with the theoretical postulations of Waltz's neorealist assumptions, but their basic philosophical tenets derive from India's unique ideational and historical contexts, which are different to those that gave rise to neorealism. In addition, although Waltz's methodological tenets have the benefit of constructing predictable and scientific postulations, they seem to be too narrow in focus to accommodate the cultural and philosophical dimensions of Gandhian and Kautilyan thought.

### **Limitations and Agenda for Further Research**

There were essentially two limitations in the course of this research. Firstly, the author's inability to read ancient Sanskrit led to his complete reliance on English translations of the ancient Indian texts. This ability would have allowed the author to give a firsthand interpretation of the texts. However, it would have been difficult to master the language in the given length of time to the extent of being able to fully understand a Sanskrit text like the *Arthashastra*. Secondly, the research for this thesis did not involve visiting India for field work, which, perhaps, would have allowed the author to experience first-hand the Indian social and cultural milieu.

Further research on Indian strategic thought could consider the above limitations. This thesis has also raised other issues which may be of value for further research. Firstly, on the issue of the 'context' of Indian strategic thought, there are other factors one could consider. For example, technological innovation could also be included as a material context as it could become a factor that influences the collective perception, operating as a force of change in strategic culture. Secondly, given the analysis of the origins of Indian strategic thought in the thesis, further research could be pursued on the link between the origin of and the modern Indian strategic culture. Bharat Karnad's work on Indian nuclear security gives a ground for this pursuit, as he uses both Kautilyan and Gandhian thought to provide cultural context, with a view to analysing India's nuclear strategy (Karnad, 2002). Rajesh Basrur also identifies a set of ideational factors with regard to India's nuclear policy (Basrur, 2001). Kanti Bajpai gives an analysis of the ideational schools of thought in modern Indian strategic culture (Bajpai, 2001 n.p.). All these studies provide a stepping stone for further research. Thirdly, more research could be pursued on the nexus between a global strategic norm and Indian strategic culture, aiming at the development of an analysis of how the former influences the latter and how this could further the understanding of the evolution of Indian strategic rationale. Specifically, this could be correlated with the issue of nuclear arms control. Indian strategic thinking on global arms control has been one of resistance to what it has regarded as the Western-centred global norm. This was evident in Rajiv Gandhi's speech at the United Nations General Assembly on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1988 where, in referring to Mahatma Gandhi's notion of non-violence, Rajiv Gandhi presented his own arguments against the Western notion of nuclear arms control and proposed a progressive and a comprehensive total nuclear disarmament by all nuclear weapon states.<sup>13</sup>

Fourthly, further research on developing the strategic culture approach with a view to making it more relevant to policymaking could enhance the value of the study of strategic culture. This entails developing the strategic culture approach in the way that would direct strategy makers to formulate their strategies with a degree of prediction capability. The key area to focus

on, the author believes, is to understand the aspects related to culture, in its metaphysical sense, which could be used to construct theoretical frameworks that could be used to predict and understand change in patterns of belief or behaviour in international relations. Fifthly, most notably, the Gandhian notion of peace may have a significant role to play in the study of strategic culture.

### **Gandhian Thought and Peace Research**

The Gandhian notion of non-violence offers a theoretical potential for the amalgamation of ideas of peace-making, peace-building and peace-enforcing into the idea of strategic culture. This would mean that the study of strategic culture could incorporate such areas as confidence-building measures and conflict resolution.

To some extent a ground for this research is already in existence. Gandhi's notion of non-violence has been explored by Western academics, especially from the discipline of Peace Research<sup>14</sup>. Within this discipline, it is possible to identify some sort of moral ethos which is compatible with that existing in Gandhian theory on understanding and promoting the idea of peace. This is evident in Galtung's definition of Peace Research. He states, 'the basic concern of Peace Research is the pursuit of peace with peaceful means, if possible in a [h]olistic manner' (Galtung, 1988: p.1). By a 'holistic manner' Galtung means the incorporation of various academic disciplines in understanding 'peace'. Gandhian theory is not an academic theory with a particular research methodology, but this sentiment is in synchronism with the general ethos within it which promotes the idea of non-violence as an integral and inseparable strategy of social life.

Given this general sentiment, Galtung's notion of peace appears to be particularly in line with Gandhi's notion of it in two ways. Firstly, Galtung's definition extends the traditional conception of peace beyond its *negative* connotation, i.e. the absence of violence. Peace, for him, should also be understood in its *positive* meaning, which is the absence of 'structural

violence' (Mack, 1991: p. 83). The latter is produced by institutionally or culturally constructed injustice inherent in a social system.

Secondly, as is implied in Gandhian thought, Galtung introduces the idea of culture as a component social structure that encourages either violence or peace. Writing in 1990, he defined 'cultural violence' as 'those aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology, language and art, empirical science (logic, mathematics) – that can be used to justify or legitimise direct or structural violence' (Galtung, 1990: p.291). Conversely, 'cultural peace' refers to 'aspects of a culture that serve to justify and legitimise direct peace and structural peace' (Ibid., p.291). These broader conceptions of peace and violence have had particular significance to the study of underdevelopment within the peace research community (Mack, 1991: p.85). Indeed, the notions of cultural and structural violence have implications for political life from the individual to the structural and from the domestic to the international level. They broaden the conceptual framework of peace and violence beyond their traditional senses to incorporate issues such as poverty, institutional violence, social discrimination and inequality.

In view of this significance, where does Gandhi's philosophy stand in peace research? Galtung's research is refined, systematic, scholarly, positivistic and theoretical. In these respects, he follows the Western methodological tradition of analysis. To this extent, Gandhi's philosophy is as incompatible for direct comparison as it is with the mainstream IR theories.

However, Gandhian philosophy plays a much more significant and direct role in Peace Research than vis-à-vis the mainstream IR theories. This is evident in two ways. Firstly, both the Gandhian school and peace scholars are dedicated to the study of non-violence. Galtung, for example, relies on Gandhian principles of violence and non-violence to enhance his theories of cultural violence (Galtung, 1990: p.302), and the associative and dissociative approaches<sup>15</sup> (Galtung, 1988:p.3). In his article in 1965, Giuliano Pontara also discusses the Gandhian notion of non-violence (Pontara, 1965: pp.197-



215). He starts from the hypothesis that Gandhi's rejection of violence is based either on 'deontological' ethics, i.e. an outright rejection of violence 'independent' of its consequences, or 'teleological', ethics i.e. a violent action is much more likely to cause evil consequences in the course of time than a non-violent one (Ibid., p.197). Pontara's systematic analysis of Gandhi's notion of duty, Ahimsa and life leads him to the conclusion that although there is a strong element teleological ethics in Gandhi's philosophy, his notion of Ahimsa is fundamentally founded on its deontological ethics.

There are also other authors who utilise the Gandhian postulations on non-violence. Anima Bose's analysis gives an in-depth interpretation of Gandhian non-violence per se by discussing Gandhi's concepts of 'Satya', 'Satyagraha' and 'Sarvodaya' with regard to his notion of human nature and conflict (Bose, 1981: pp.159-164). Contrary to the general Western conception of peace, Bose points out that the Gandhian notion of peace is not an 'end state' but both ends and means, a continuous process by which a society and individuals should progress (Ibid., p.159). In his article, 'The meanings of non-violence: a typology', Gene Sharp introduces varying notions of non-violence with particular focus on Gandhi's notion of non-violence (Sharp, 1959: pp.41-66). He argues that Gandhi's notion is unique in the sense that it entails not only a religious notion of faith as a form of power but also a set of social programmes for cultural change (Ibid., pp.58-59). Sharp's article on non-violence is utilised by Brian Martin and Wendy Varney in their article in 2003 which attempts to conceptualise non-violence with a view to exploring its applicative prospects by applying communication perspectives (Martin and Varney, 2003: pp.213-232). They argue that using communication perspectives could offer practical and conceptual frameworks for the principles of non-violence to be more viable in its application especially in five areas: 'conversion', 'power equalisation', 'mobilisation of third parties', 'collective empowerment' and 'individual empowerment' (Ibid., p.232).

Secondly, the discussion and application of Gandhi's notion of non-violence is also evident in the study of Conflict Resolution, a subset of Peace

Research. The scholars of this sub-discipline essentially focus on the modelling of problem-solving and conflict resolution. Thus, the analytical methodology they employ is often positivistic. Betts Fetherston, for example, extracts three key thoughts from the Gandhian tradition which can be applied in problem-solving in a group conflict: 'non-coercive behaviour', 'respect for the adversary' and 'mutually satisfactory outcomes' (Fetherston, 1991: pp.248-249). Other scholars such as Robert E. Klitgaard and Bishwa B. Chatterjee focus much more on specifying and constructing a model for conflict resolution based on Gandhi's notions of non-violence and Satyagraha.<sup>16</sup> There seem to be two common postulations, however implicit they may be, in the works of these scholars. Firstly, a generic assumption behind the theorisation of Gandhi's notions on conflict resolution is that though there are subjective ideals and discrepancies in Gandhi's philosophy, it is possible to interpret and construct workable and effective theories of conflict resolution from it. Secondly, Gandhi's methods and programmes for reconciliation are applicable beyond the Indian context.

One broad criticism of these approaches in the application of Gandhian ideals to Conflict Resolution is that their analyses can be too much focused on specific theory-modelling, without giving much attention to the philosophical *epitome* which is the foundation of Gandhi's over-all beliefs and ideas, and to portraying the all-round picture of Gandhi's beliefs and ideas. Such methodology potentially could cause the compartmentalisation of his ideals and their practical application into separate research programmes (Weber, 2001: p.493). Such compartmentalisation risks a shallow understanding of Gandhian thought. Explication and application of Gandhian thought necessarily entails understanding Gandhi's philosophical and religious remits.

Having said this, in order to construct a system that could be applied in contemporary conflict situations and to do it in a way that could be translated into *action* as smoothly as possible, it may be helpful to extrapolate the relevant techniques from an appropriate source to construct a setting in which a conflict situation can be remedied. Gandhian strategic

thought could provide the ideational potential for the formulation of a conflict remedying technique, especially through the principle of Ahimsa. This could be a valuable area of research within the study of strategic culture, for two reasons. First, at the practical level, an increasing level of conflict in contemporary international politics means that there is a greater need to incorporate the ideas of peace and confidence building into the making of overall conflict strategy in conjunction with that strategy's military aspect. Second, at a theoretical level, the idea of peace arising through the scholarly filter of Peace Research could increase Peace Research's value as a practical mode of thinking in the formulation of constructive and practical peace-making, peace-building and peace-enforcing programmes.

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<sup>1</sup> While treating Gandhian thought as part of the Brahmanical ideology, Embree does not refer directly to Kautilya's *Arthashastra* as being a microcosm of Brahmanical ideology. However, from his argument that the Mauryan Empire contributed to the consolidation of the ideology, it may be deduced that Kautilya, who is said to have served Chandragupta of Maurya as a preceptor, was part of this Brahmanical context. See Ainslie Embree, 'Brahmanical Ideology and Regional Identities' in Mark Juergensmeyer (ed.), *Imagining India: Essays on Indian History*, 1989, p. 20 and p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> The *Arthashastra* hints at this. It states that it consists of a compilation of the thoughts of the ancient teachers on the science of politics' See Kautilya, *Arthashastra*, 2003, p. 1. In addition, Kautilya stipulates the necessity of the Vedic texts and lore. He states, 'The law laid down in this Vedic lore is beneficial, as it prescribes the respective duties of the four *Varnas* and the four stages of life'. Kautilya, p. 7. From this, it may be inferred that the basis for Kautilya's idea of 'welfare' is based on pre-existing tradition.

<sup>3</sup> See Chapter 7.

<sup>4</sup> The basis for this interpretation is that advertently or inadvertently their ideas empowered the Brahmanical foundation.

<sup>5</sup> Gandhi described Dharma as 'religion in the highest sense of the term' and superior to any other religion. See Gandhi, CWMG vol. 64, Dec. 27<sup>th</sup> 1936: pp. 191-192.

<sup>6</sup> The term 'Dharma' in both cases refers to duty and law.

<sup>7</sup> The term 'realist' referred to here corresponds with the realism in IR.

<sup>8</sup> Arguably this may be designated as the origin of the Indian parable tradition.

<sup>9</sup> See 'Ahimsa' section in Chapter 7.

<sup>10</sup> The idea of righteousness, for example, is a Brahmanical value to which both schools aspire and which serves against the rise of Adharma in the World.

<sup>11</sup> A possible reason for this failure is that the methodological focus of realism is one dimensional, i.e. an explanation of its metaphysical assumptions with the central focus on the present point of time. This limits its analytical scope.

<sup>12</sup> An example of this is its assumption of the state of nature as being anarchic or *Matsyanyaya*.

<sup>13</sup> Rajiv Gandhi, 'A World Free of Nuclear Weapons' a speech at the UN General Assembly in New York on 9<sup>th</sup> June 1988.

<http://www.indianembassy.org/policy/Disarmament/disarm15.htm>

<sup>14</sup> For an excellent introduction to the history of Peace Research, see Tom Woodhouse (ed.) (1991), *Peacemaking in a Troubled World*, 'Introduction', pp.1-13.

<sup>15</sup> In Gandhian terms, they are equivalent to non-cooperation and action (Ahimsa).

<sup>16</sup> See Robert E. Klitgaard (1971), 'Gandhi's Non-Violence as a Tactic', *Journal of Peace Research*, 8:2, pp.143-153; and Bishwa B. Chatterjee (1974), 1974, 11:1, pp.21-29.

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