

3 Theories of Origin of State in Ancient India

The three theories of origin of state in ancient India are as follows: 1. Social Contract Theory 2. Divine Origin Theory 3. Organic Theory.

The core issues in the study of political science are the state and the government. The institution of state is studied in relation to its origin, nature, aims and functions of the state in ancient India. The dawn of civilization was stated to have marked the beginning of the origin of state.

The state in ancient India was considered necessary, for it ensures peace, order and happiness. It was a social organization with political power. However, ancient scholars were not unanimous in their opinion with regard to the origin of the state. According to some, state was the outcome of a contract mainly political in nature between the rulers and the ruled.

They opine that prior to the origin of state there was something called a golden age, wherein the people enjoyed a life of peace, order, self-discipline and happiness. Similarly, several theories like force theory, patriarchal theory, matriarchal theory, divine origin theory and finally the evolutionary theory advanced the origin of the state.

Secondly, the Saptanga theory propounded by ancient Indian thinkers discusses the forms and functions of the state. Promotion of Dharma was considered the primary concern of the state. Thirdly, monarchy was considered as the ideal form of government by a majority of the ancient Indian thinkers.

The origin of state has remained a controversial subject since olden days. It was one of the Vedic textbooks titled Aitreya Brahmana that provided an earliest record of the origin of state and kingship. The work is a description of a legend that explains the war between the Gods and the demons and the defeat of the former.

This defeat, as described by the book, made Gods unite and appoint Soma as their King who was expected to serve the human needs and save the country from military attacks. With the establishment of the kingship, the state gradually evolved. There are basically three theories that describe the origin of state, namely. Social Contract Theory, Divine Origin Theory and Organic Theory.

The following is a brief explanation of each theory:

1. Social Contract Theory:

The social contract theory, one of the common theories of the origin of state, believes that state is a result of a contract between the king and his subjects or representatives. The king, thus appointed, was expected to save the state and the subjects from external aggression and establish order and security within the state. However, the earliest Vedic works never stated that state was the result of a contract. But, they clarified that king was elected to wage a successful war against the demons.

2. Divine Origin Theory:

This theory of origin of kingship as well as the state was not widely acclaimed in the ancient Indian polity. The king, according to this theory, was a subordinate to law, which was made by the society and not him. The community as a whole was given greater importance than the king. The king was not allowed to act indiscriminately and was expected to act as a father to his subjects, and treat them with affection and kindness.

However, certain ancient scriptures like Manusamhita explain that the origin of state is from the divine. One such excerpt from Manusamhita is that ‘the Lord created the king for the protection of his whole creation ... even an infant king must not be despised (from an idea) that he is only a mortal, because he is a great deity in human form’.

It was also stated in Manusamhita that ‘when the world was not without a king and dispersed in fear in all directions, the lord created a king for the protection of all. And because, he’s formed of fragments of all those gods, the king surpasses all other beings in splendor’.

The great epic of India, the Ramayana, also clearly laid out that king was of divine origin. It is stated therein that men approached Brahma (the Creator) to provide them a king and accordingly after all the Gods spared a portion of their power, a being in the human form emerged and was made the king.

The Mahabharata, another great epic, explains that king is a person endowed with superior talent and calibre descended from heaven to the king on the earth. Similarly, Puranas also describe the divine origin of the king and the state. The Agni Purana states that the kings were embodiments or forms of Lord Vishnu (the god who sustains the earth). It is also interesting to note that some kings had titles like Chakravarti— universal emperor, while some of the Mauryan emperors conferred titles like Devanam Priya, beloved of Gods, upon them.

3. Organic Theory:

This theory holds the view that state is like an organism and that each organ has a specific function to perform. The theory believes that the healthy functioning of the whole organism depends upon the healthy conditions of each part of the body or organism and its efficient functioning.

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The seven parts of the body, that is, state are the king or the sovereign, the minister, the territory and population, the fortified city or the capital, the treasury, the army, the friends and the allies. Among all the seven elements or parts, it is the king who is most important.

The Matsya Purana states that the king was the root and the subjects were the trees. Similarly, Sukra Neetisaara, compares the state with that of human body. According to Sukracharya, the king is the head, the ministers the eyes, the treasurer the mouth, the army the heart, the fort the hands, and the territory the feet. Mahabharata also supports this theory and that every element or the limbs are important for the proper functioning of the state.

The evolutionary theory of origin of state can be explained by few factors. The theory that explains the convincing origin of the state, is the Historical or Evolutionary theory. It describes the state is the product of growth, a calm and composed evolution stretching over a long period of time and ultimately shaping itself into the complex structure of a modern state. The state is not a small artificial automated creation but an foundation of natural growth or historical evolution as said professor Garner.

he important factors which contributed to the growth of the state are

1. Family relationship

Family established the first section in the process of the evolution of the state with the development of the family arose new families and the multiplication of families led to the formation of clans and tribes.

2. Religion

Religion furnished the bond of unity in old society. It also influenced all paths of life. The worship of a typical ancestor and basic goods created a sense of social solidarity.

3. Property and defence

The beginning individuals live here and there seeing for fields and water. This led to causing adjustments in the social system and relationship between the segments of diverse groups. Theurge to protect property finally compelled the ancient people to establish the state.

4. Force

Force also performed a significant element in the evolution of the state. The use of physical force that was responsible for the growth of kingdoms and empires.

5. Political consciousness

When the people settle down on a particular region in pursuance of their, resources and a desire to secure it from intrusion by others. The need for fixing things and persons is felt imminently and this is the essence of political consciousness.