

## Heritage

### Various Concepts of Danda in Sanskrit

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**The etymology of Daṇḍa:** In Sanskrit grammar the word 'Danda' is used as masculine as well as neuter gender. The neuter 'Daṇḍa' is used to depict various things; such as stick, staff, mace, club, pole, post, beam (part of a balance), baton, handle (of any instrument), rudder, moment (measure of time being 24 minutes) etc. The masculine form of daṇḍa which is derived from the roots dam (to be tamed, to conquer) and daṇḍ (to punish) is widely used as the symbol of 'Dharma'. Though dharma is an expression of versatile and protean significance, yet in the Dharmaśāstras it signifies the duties and obligations of a person – religious, moral, social as well as legal. The general sense of dharma is provided by its root, 'dhr' which signifies the performance of maintaining, sustaining and supporting. It appears that 'Dharma' is described as firm and durable, which punishes the wrong-doers in order to sustain and maintain the law and order.

**Danda and ṛta :** Dharma signifies the eternal laws which maintain the world. This concept is related to the Vedic concept of ṛta, which is the divine principle of this organized universe. According to the Vedas the world is ruled by certain norms and sustained by an order necessary to its preservation<sup>(1)</sup>. It is believed that each constituent of this material world is perpetually struggling to expand its domain by prevailing its force upon that of another. But the inexorable law of nature keeps the balance among them. This nature of cosmic law is present in Manusmṛhitā- as the supreme, unfathomable, divine one (daṇḍa)<sup>(2)</sup>

**Danda and dharma :** Manu has described the incarnation of dharma as the danda. He has visualized the deity with brutal red eyes and black body, who inflicts punishment to the guilty and protects the feeble ones.<sup>(3)</sup>

During the initial phase of life; the student has to carry a stick (daṇḍa) as the symbol of physical and mental celibacy. At the terminal stage an ascetic has to carry a stick with him as the sign of emancipation. This proves the immense importance of danda in human life. Daṇḍa controls the four varṇas so as to lead them on to the performance of their duties and when it is employed by the ruler properly, it makes them desist from adharma. Danda is considered as the protector of social system. The duties and rituals recommended for the four stages (student – householder – hermit – ascetic) and the four varṇas are regulated by daṇḍa<sup>(4)</sup>.

An ordinary human being lacks the capacity to control this supreme transcendental law. So the king is described as the descent of a deity (Mahatī devatā) on earth. He surpasses the human mortal in every respect. He is also described as the incarnation of several vedic deities such as agni – indra – varuna and so on<sup>(5)</sup>. Still the fact remains, that the king can not over-ride the supremacy of law, neither he is allowed to question the authority of daṇḍa. Even he can not escape from the execution of the eternal judgments. Therefore the king is suggested to administer this rod of punishment with cautious sagacity and proper wisdom, otherwise it will disturb the peace and harmony in the society as well as that of the universe. Not only that the king himself will be punished if he fails to apply it properly<sup>(6)</sup>.

**Daṇḍanīti and its Importance:** This world is led by daṇḍa or the science which carries the rod of punishment hence it is called daṇḍanīti<sup>(7)</sup>. Daṇḍanīti controls the four varṇas, so as to lead them on to the performance of their duties and when it is employed by the ruler properly, it makes them desist from adharma. It ensures the stability and welfare of the three spheres of knowledge, they are Ānvīksikī i.e. logic, the whole of scholastic philosophy, Trayī (The study of three Vedas, Ṛgveda, Yajurveda, Sāmaveda), and Vārta (i.e. agriculture, monetary transaction.)<sup>(8)</sup>

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It is counted as the most effective way of acquiring what has not been acquired , increases what is guarded and distributes ( increased wealth ) among the deserving. The term Arthaśāstra is also applied to devote this science of government i.e.( daṇḍaniti ) P.V.Kane makes a difference between these two branches of learning. As he says :- "When wealth and prosperity of all kinds is the spring and motive of giving a name the science treating of these is called Arthaśāstra and when the government of the people and the punishment of offenders are the main ideas the same is called Daṇḍaniti."

The commentator of Amarkoṣa; Kṣīrswāmi uses two words in a synonymous way. As it reveals :- "Damyatenena damanam va dandah sa niyate damyam prati prāpyate yaja sa dandanitirartha śāstram."

Daṇḍaniti is also named as Rājaśāstra or Nṛpaśāstra ( i.e. the science of kingship ).

Both the words Rāja and Rājya have derived from the verb-root 'Rañj' which means 'to make happy.' Proper administration of daṇḍa leads the king and his subjects to prosperity and happiness. Therefore the daṇḍa is associated with the king ( Rāja ) for the benefit of Rājya or kingdom. Nitisāra says that dama ( control or chastisement ) is called daṇḍa and control is centred in the king. So the king is embodied as daṇḍa. It appears that dandaniti represents the science of politics and is concerned especially with the application of the coercive authority of ruler. Therefore the study of daṇḍaniti or royal ordinance is mandatory for an ideal king. Then only he can punish the wicked and protect the vulnerable. Through the study of daṇḍaniti one can acquire the quality of discipline ( i.e. vinay ) which is mentioned as the best quality of a human-being<sup>(9)</sup>. A Vinīta person can achieve his mission by dint of self-restraint. Otherwise he will be destroyed by six inner enemies such as passion-violent temper -avarice -infatuation -arrogance and malice. He will be inflicted by several vices originated from anger and cupidity. Incontinence should be abandoned in order to attain material as well as spiritual success. Attachment to sensual pleasure leads a man to abject misery. All religious ceremonies and rituals such as Vedic chanting, charity, sacrifice will be futile for a voluptuous man. A sensual man is often compared with a leather-pouch bearing a hole. A leather-pouch with a hole will easily drown in water. Likewise a person engaged in the gratification of pleasure will sink in distress.

**Daṇḍa as the integral part of Saptānga kingdom. :** The śāstrakaras count the daṇḍa as the integral part of the seven systems of a kingdom. The authorities have described a state as the composition of seven elements viz. Svāmin(ruler) Amātya ( minister ), Janapada or rāṣṭra ( the territory of the state and its people), Dūrga (fort or capital ), Koṣa ( bank or treasury ), daṇḍa ( army ), Mitra (friends or allies ). For danda the word 'bala' is also used in ancient texts. Danda is used to symbolize the army. The army is deputed to punish the alien adversaries of other territories as well as the rebellion of own kingdom

**Danda as one of the four fold measures:** A king is advised to use the four fold measures to conquer the opponents. They are Sāma or Conciliatory words; Dāna or donation of gifts; bheda or dissension among the enemies and danda or punishment by coercion. It is the last measure to dominate the enemies and to prove the supremacy over others.<sup>(10)</sup> Here danda is used as the assault to create nuisance of one's opponents through robbery, plundering the crops, etc. and to ruin them at the battle field.

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- (1) satyaṃ vr̥hat ṛtaṃ ugraṃ dikṣā tapo vraḥhma yajña pr̥thivīm dhārayanti/  
yā no bhutasya bhavyasya patnyurum̐ lokaṃ pr̥thivim no kṛnotu//
- (2).Yo asau atindriagrāhyaḥ sukṣmaḥ avyaktaḥ/  
Sārvabhūtamayaḥ acintyaḥ sa eva swamudbhavaḥ//
- (3 ) yatra śyāmo lohitākṣao daṇḍas carati pāpahā/  
prajas tatra na muhanti netā cet sādhu paśyati// manu samhitā.vii.25.
- (4)sa rajā puruṣo daṇḍaḥ sa netā śāsita ca sa/  
caturnām āśramāṇām ca dharmasya pratibhuḥ smṛtaḥ// ibid.vii.17.
- (5)so agniḥ bhavati vāyusca soarkya somaḥ sa dharmarāt/  
sa kuberaḥ sa varuṇaḥ sa mahendraḥ prā bhāvataḥ// ibid.vii.7.
- (6)samīkṣa sa dhṛtaḥ samyak sarvāḥ rañjayati prajāḥ/  
asmīkṣa praṇītastu vināśayati sarvataḥ// ibid.vi.19.
- (7) daṇḍena niyate cedam̐ daṇḍam̐ nayati vā punaḥ/  
daṇḍanītir iti khyātā trilokān abhivartate// Mahābhārata. 12.59.78.
- (8) ānvīksikī-trayī-vārtānām yogkṣemasādhano dandaḥ  
tasya nitir daṇḍanītiḥ. Arthaśāstra.1.4.
- (9).....  
Vinītātmāhinṛpatirnavinaśyatekarhicit// Manusamhitā.v
- (10)sāmnā dānena bhedenā samastairathavā pr̥thak/  
vijetum̐ prayatet ariṃ na yuddhena kadācana//  
trayanāmapi upāyānām pūrvoktānām asambhave/  
tathā yudhyet sampanno vijayet ripum̐ tathā// Manu Samhitā.vii.198-200.

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