

UPSC CSE MAINS · OPTIONAL SUBJECT

Public Administration

Optional · Paper II

Part A · Indian Administration, Units 1 to 7

Complete notes on the seven units of Part A, from the evolution of Indian administration to district administration, with diagrams, Indian examples and topic-wise previous year questions.

Compiled by Arvind KrS

7

SYLLABUS UNITS

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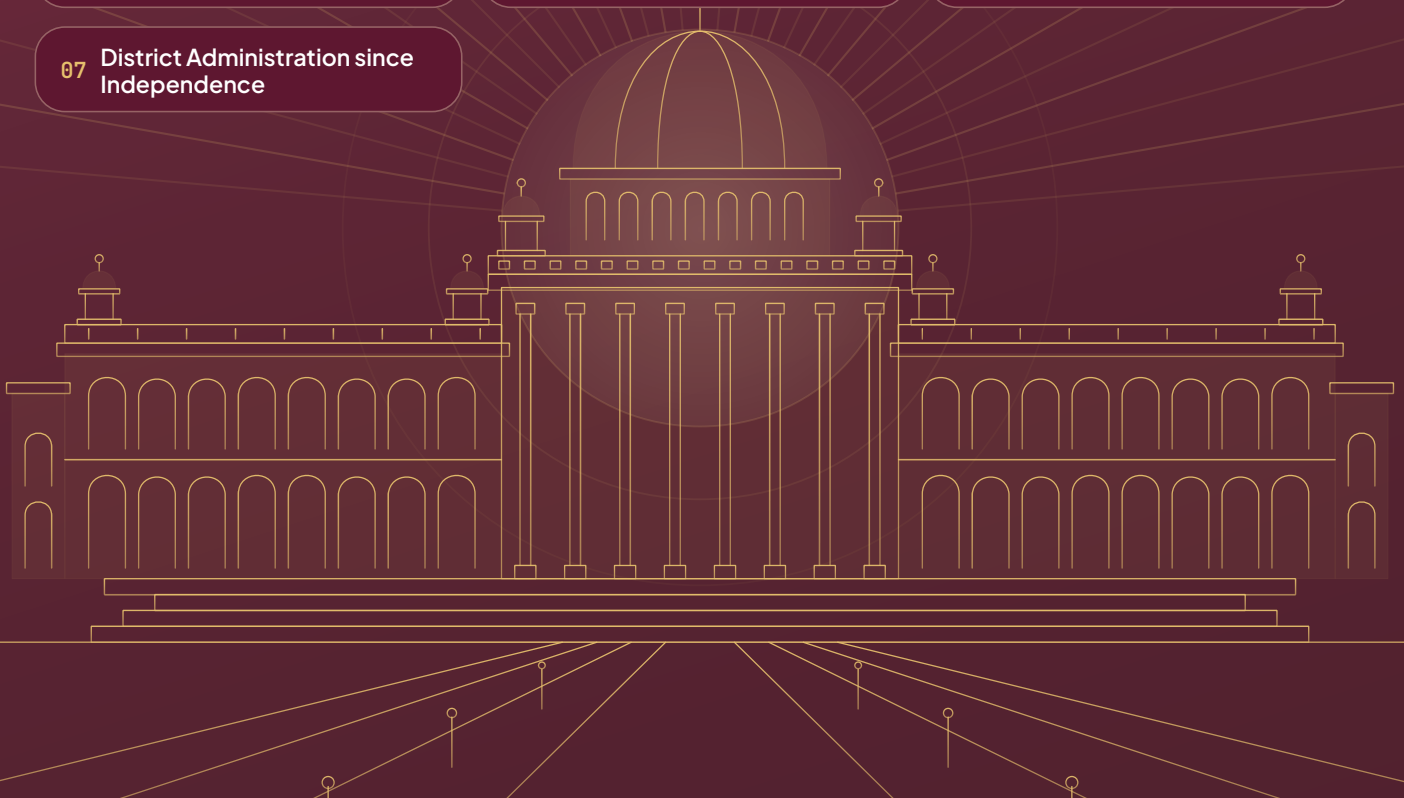
CHAPTERS

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DIAGRAMS

01 Evolution of Indian Administration**02** Philosophical and Constitutional Framework**03** Public Sector Undertakings**04** Union Government and Administration**05** Plans and Priorities**06** State Government and Administration**07** District Administration since Independence



Public Administration Optional — Paper II

Part A: Indian Administration, Units 1 to 7

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01

UNIT 01

3 CHAPTERS

71 PYQS

Evolution of Indian Administration

Kautilya's Arthashastra; Mughal administration; Legacy of British rule in politics and administration – Indianization of public services, revenue administration, district administration, local self-government.

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER II · PART A

Kautilya's Arthashastra: Saptanga, Administration, Mandala and Relevance

The **Arthashastra** is the oldest surviving Indian treatise that treats **government as a subject of systematic study**. It discusses how a ruler should be trained, how ministers should be chosen and tested, how departments should be organised, how revenue should be raised and accounted for, how courts should decide cases, how spies should watch officials, and how a state should deal with its neighbours. For Indian administration it matters for three reasons: it shows that ideas such as **hierarchy, merit, audit and anti-corruption control** have deep Indian roots; it supplies a vocabulary (*yogakshema, rajadharma, danda, mandala*) still used in Indian public life; and it raises a question every state still faces, namely how far **power and morality** can be combined.

SYLLABUS Kautilya's Arthashastra; Mughal administration; Legacy of British rule in politics and administration – Indianization of public services, revenue administration, district administration, local self-government.

THIS CHAPTER Kautilya's Arthashastra — the text, its meaning and its authorship and dating debate; the origin of the state and the saptanga theory; the king and rajadharma; mantrins, mantriparishad and amatyas; the superintendents (adhyakshas) and the departmental machinery; principles of administration; personnel administration (recruitment, upadha tests, pay, transfer, discipline); corruption and its control, including the forty ways of embezzlement; revenue, treasury, budgeting, accounts and audit; justice and the four sources of law (dharma, vyavahara, charitra, rajasasana) and codification; espionage; local and village administration; mandala theory, the six-fold policy (sadgunya) and diplomacy; ethics, welfare and political realism; comparison with Weber and Machiavelli; Ashoka as a brief bridge; relevance to contemporary governance and international relations.

CONTENTS

01 The Text: Meaning, Structure, Authorship and Date	02 The State: Origin, Saptanga and the Aims of Government
03 The King and Rajadharma	04 Ministers, Council and the Machinery of Government
05 Personnel Administration	06 Corruption and Its Control
07 Revenue, Treasury, Budgeting and Audit	08 Justice, Law and Codification

09	Espionage and Internal Security	10	Local and Village Administration
11	Mandala Theory, the Six-fold Policy and Diplomacy	12	Ethics, Welfare and Political Realism
13	Kautilya, Weber and Machiavelli	14	Ashoka: The Arthashastra Tradition in Practice?
15	Relevance to Contemporary Governance	16	Key Terms
17	Commissions, Committees and Judgments	18	Contemporary Developments
19	Revision Grid	20	Previous Year Questions

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · EVOLUTION OF INDIAN ADMINISTRATION

Topic map

Kautilya's Arthashastra

A manual of state, statecraft and administration

Aim: yogakshema — security and welfare through a strong state

1 · The text

- Artha = livelihood and territory
- 15 books, 150 chapters
- **Authorship and date** debated

2 · State and king

- Matsyanyaya; **saptanga**
- Rajadharma; restraints
- Welfare, not a police state

3 · Machinery

- Mantrins, council
- 18 tirthas
- ~30 **adhyakshas**
- Hierarchy, records

4 · Personnel

- Merit, **upadha** tests
- Pay, pension
- Transfer, discipline

5 · Money

- Seven revenue heads
- Budget, accounts
- **40 ways** of embezzlement

6 · Law

- Four sources of law
- **Codification**, writs
- Civil and criminal courts

7 · Security

- Spies watch officials
- Village records
- Frontier control

8 · Foreign policy

- **Mandala** of states
- Six-fold policy
- Four upayas

9 · Comparison and relevance

Weber and **Machiavelli**; realism and ethics; Ashoka; lessons for governance and international relations

Realist in politics, moralist in administration

In simple words: a handbook telling a king how to run a kingdom well and keep it safe.

Public Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Imagine a very detailed handbook written for the head of a large company. It tells him how to choose managers, how to check that they are honest, how to keep the accounts, how to settle disputes between staff, how to deal with rival companies, and why his own success depends on keeping customers happy. The Arthashastra is such a handbook, written for a king and his kingdom.

01

The Text: Meaning, Structure, Authorship and Date

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Before studying what the Arthashastra says, it helps to know what kind of book it is: a practical manual on running a state, put together in fifteen books, whose author and date are still debated by scholars.

1.1 What “Arthashastra” means

- **Artha as livelihood and wealth.** The last book of the text defines its own subject: the subsistence of human beings is *artha*; the earth inhabited by human beings is also *artha*; and the science that teaches **how to acquire and maintain the earth** is the Arthashastra. The word therefore means more than “economics”. It is the **science of livelihood, wealth and the territory that sustains them**, which is why it is often translated as the **science of polity** or **political economy**.
- **Two aims: palana and labha.** The text has a twofold purpose. **Palana** (also *rakshana*) is the **protection and administration** of the existing state; **labha** is the **acquisition** of new territory and resources. The first is internal administration; the second is foreign policy and war.
- **Primacy of wealth.** In Book I Kautilya states that among the three goals of life (*dharma, artha, kama*) **artha is the chief**, because righteousness and pleasure both depend on material means. This does not reject dharma; it says that **a poor and insecure state cannot sustain a moral social order**.
- **Wealth of the people, not only of the king.** The treasury, the army and royal power all rest on **varta** (agriculture, cattle-rearing and trade). A ruler who wants a full treasury must first make **the subjects productive and secure**. This is why the text spends so much space on irrigation, mines, trade routes, weights and measures and the settlement of new villages.

1.2 The four sciences and the place of dandaniti

Kautilya lists four branches of knowledge a ruler must master.

SCIENCE	MEANING	ROLE IN GOVERNANCE
Anvikshiki	Philosophy and logic (reasoning, enquiry)	Trains the mind to judge right and wrong, strength and weakness

SCIENCE	MEANING	ROLE IN GOVERNANCE
Trayi	The three Vedas	Lays down social and religious duties
Varta	Economics: agriculture, cattle-breeding, trade	Produces grain, cattle, gold, forest produce and labour, and so the treasury and army
Dandaniti	The science of government (literally "the policy of the rod")	Enforces order so that the other three can flourish

- **Dandaniti defined.** The sceptre (*danda*) on which the progress of the other three sciences depends is called **danda**, and the science that treats of it is **dandaniti**. It is a means to **acquire, secure, improve and distribute** wealth. Dandaniti is the oldest name for the science that Kautilya calls Arthashastra.
- **Knowledge as a qualification to govern.** The king, the crown prince, the high priest and the ministers must all be **trained in the science of government**. Kautilya says that a minister who is not learned in the sciences is **unfit even to hear council deliberations**, and that a king who acts against the science **ruins himself and his kingdom by maladministration**. Administration, in short, is both a **science** to be learned and an **art** to be practised; practice without science blunders, and science without practice is useless.

1.3 Structure of the text

The Arthashastra is a prose text in short aphoristic sentences (*sutras*) with some verses.

- **Size.** It has **15 books** (*adhikaranas*), **150 chapters** (*adhyayas*) and **180 topics** (*prakaranas*). The text itself claims **6,000 shlokas**; the modern critical edition counts about **5,300–5,400 numbered sentences**, of which about **380 are verses**.
- **Balance of themes.** Books **I to V** carry most of the material on internal administration; Books **VI to XIV**, on foreign policy, war and secret means, form roughly **half the text**.
- **Method.** Book XV explains the **32 devices of exposition** (*tantrayuktis*) the author uses, which shows that the work was composed as a **systematic scientific treatise**, not a loose collection of maxims.

BOOK	THEME	ADMINISTRATIVE CONTENT
I	Concerning discipline	Training of the king, ministers, upadha tests, spies, council, envoys, daily routine
II	Duties of government superintendents	Settlement, forts, samahartri, accounts office, embezzlement, writs, about thirty departments, towns
III	Concerning law	Four sources of law, civil courts, contracts, marriage, inheritance, labour
IV	Removal of thorns	Criminal justice, protection of artisans and consumers, misconduct of officials

BOOK	THEME	ADMINISTRATIVE CONTENT
V	Conduct of courtiers	Salaries, emergency taxation, conduct of officers
VI-VII	Sources of sovereignty; six-fold policy	Saptanga, mandala, sadgunya
VIII-XIV	Calamities, war, alliances, secret means	Military and covert operations
XV	Plan of the treatise	Method of exposition

1.4 Rediscovery and editions

- **Lost and found.** The work was widely cited until about the eighth century CE (the poet **Dandin** knew it), then fell out of use. In **1905** a manuscript reached **R. Shamasastri**, librarian of the Mysore Government Oriental Library. He published the Sanskrit text in **1909** and a full English translation in **1915**.
- **Later scholarship.** **T. Ganapati Sastri** published a commentary (1924). **R.P. Kangle** produced the critical edition in three parts (text 1960, translation 1963, study 1965), which remains the standard reference. **L.N. Rangarajan** published a rearranged English translation (1992), and **Patrick Olivelle** a new annotated translation, *King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India* (2013).
- **Effect on Indian thought.** The rediscovery corrected the colonial claim that ancient Indians cared only for the other world and had no political science. Within decades a body of Indian scholarship on ancient polity grew up, and the nationalist movement read the text as proof of a **strong indigenous tradition of statecraft**.

1.5 Authorship and dating debate

COMMON CONFUSION

Does the Arthashastra describe how the Mauryan empire was actually governed? Not with certainty. The text is **prescriptive**: it describes what a well-run kingdom ought to look like, not a record of a particular administration. Its date and single authorship are disputed, and several details (for example the city administration) differ from what the Greek envoy Megasthenes reported of Chandragupta's capital. It is best read as a **manual of ideal practice drawn from long experience**, which may reflect Mauryan practice in part, rather than as an administrative report of the Mauryan state.

- **The traditional view.** Indian tradition identifies **Kautilya** with **Chanakya** (also called **Vishnugupta**), the Brahmin teacher who helped **Chandragupta Maurya** overthrow the Nandas and found the Mauryan empire around **321 BCE**, and who served as his chief minister. On this view the text dates to the **late fourth century BCE**. The concluding verse names **Vishnugupta** as the author. Shamasastri, Kangle and many Indian scholars accepted this dating.

- **The case for a later, composite text.**

- **Thomas Trautmann**, in *Kautilya and the Arthashastra: A Statistical Investigation of the Authorship and Evolution of the Text* (1971), compared the frequency of common Sanskrit particles across the books and concluded that **Books II, III and VII were written by different authors**, so the text is a **compilation**.
- **Patrick Olivelle** (2013) proposes three layers: an early treatise on statecraft (around the mid-first century BCE), a **"Kautilya recension"** (about 50–125 CE) that combined earlier expert texts into a single vision, and a later **"Shastric recension"** (about 175–300 CE), which is the text we have.
- Others point to references (such as certain terms, coins and institutions) that seem anachronistic for the fourth century BCE, and some argue that Chanakya and Kautilya were different people.
- **What remains agreed.** Whatever its date, the text **draws on earlier schools** of statecraft (it cites the views of **Bharadvaja, Vishalaksha, Parashara, Pishuna, Kaunapadanta, Vatavyadhi** and others and then gives "Kautilya's" own view), and it shows a **mastery of administrative detail** that could only come from practical experience of government.
- **Megasthenes and the Arthashastra.** **Megasthenes**, ambassador of the Greek ruler **Seleucus Nikator** at Chandragupta's court, wrote an account (*Indica*, surviving only in quotations by later Greek writers). Some details match the Arthashastra (a large, centralised bureaucracy, state control of mines and forests, an elaborate system of informers); others do not (Megasthenes describes **boards of five members** running the capital, which the Arthashastra does not). The match is close enough to suggest a shared tradition, not close enough to prove that the text is a description of Mauryan reality.

1.6 A practical, not merely theoretical, work

- **Debate with predecessors.** Almost every important question is settled by stating what "my teacher" or a named school says and then giving Kautilya's reasoned answer. On how to choose ministers, for example, seven earlier opinions are rejected before Kautilya concludes that **a man's ability is to be judged by his capacity shown in work**. This is the method of an **empirical policy analyst**, not of a utopian philosopher.
- **Theory present but not abstract.** There is a theory of the state (origin, elements, aims), a theory of law (four sources), a theory of inter-state relations (mandala) and a theory of administration (principles of hierarchy, division of work, control). But the theory is always tied to **what to do and how**. It is therefore fair to call the text a **treatise of applied political science**: theoretical in its framework, practical in its prescriptions.
- **Not an ideal state.** Unlike **Plato's Republic**, the Arthashastra does not imagine a perfect society with common property or the abolition of the family. It takes **human selfishness, rival states and scarce resources as given** and asks how to govern well in spite of them.

The State: Origin, Saptanga and the Aims of Government

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya explains why people need a state (without it the strong would eat the weak), what a state is made of (seven parts that depend on each other), and what the state is for (keeping people safe and helping them prosper).

2.1 Origin of the state: from matsyanyaya to monarchy

- **The law of the fish.** In the absence of a ruler, society falls into **matsyanyaya**, the “law of the fishes”, in which **the bigger fish swallows the smaller**. Kautilya says that where punishment is not enforced the strong devour the weak, but under the protection of the ruler **the weak can resist the strong**.
- **A quasi-contract.** Oppressed by this anarchy, people chose **Manu** as their king and agreed to give him **one-sixth of their grain and one-tenth of their merchandise and gold**. In return the king guaranteed their **security and prosperity**. Taxation is thus the **price of protection**.
- **Not a full social contract.** Unlike **Hobbes** in *Leviathan* (1651), Kautilya does not develop the contract into a theory that makes the ruler all-powerful, nor like **Locke** into a theory of limited government and a right of rebellion. The story is a **justification of taxation and kingship**, mentioned briefly; the text’s real interest is in how the king governs.
- **Divine aura, practical basis.** The text attaches a **divine element** to kingship (the king grants favours like **Indra** and punishes like **Yama**; disrespect to kings invites divine punishment). But the actual basis of royal authority is practical: **protection, welfare and the contentment of the subjects**.
- **Forms of rule.** Monarchy is assumed to be the normal form. Kautilya mentions **dvairajya** (joint rule by members of one family) and **vairajya** (rule by a foreign conqueror) and rejects the latter, because a foreign ruler has **no real interest in the welfare** of the land and will drain it of men and wealth.

2.2 The saptanga theory: seven limbs of the state

The best known part of Kautilya’s political theory is the **saptanga** (“seven-limbed”) theory. The state has seven **prakritis** (constituent elements or “limbs”). Each must be healthy for the state to survive.

LIMB	MEANING	IDEAL QUALITIES IN THE TEXT	MODERN ANALOGUE
Swami	The ruler	Noble birth, learning, energy, self-control, truthfulness, foresight, a good council	Head of government
Amatya	Ministers and high officials	Native, well-born, trained, honest, tested, loyal	Council of ministers and civil service
Janapada	Territory with its people	Fertile, rich in mines, forests and water, defensible, with loyal and hard-working people able to pay taxes	Territory and population

LIMB	MEANING	IDEAL QUALITIES IN THE TEXT	MODERN ANALOGUE
Durga	Fortified capital and forts	Strong forts of four types: water, hill, desert and forest	Defence infrastructure
Kosha	Treasury	Justly acquired, rich in gold and silver, able to last through long calamities	Public finance
Danda	Army (coercive power)	Hereditary, loyal, well-trained, contented	Armed forces and police
Mitra	Ally	Hereditary, constant, able to mobilise quickly, unlikely to break away	Strategic partners

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · THEORY OF THE STATE

Saptanga

The Seven Limbs of the State

Seven interdependent prakritis, listed in order of importance



In simple words: a state is like a body; every part must be healthy for it to live.

Public Administration

- **An organic view.** The seven are compared to the **limbs of a body**. They are **interdependent**: a defect in one weakens all. Book VIII discusses the **calamities** (*vyasanās*) of each limb and asks which calamity is graver, for instance whether a calamity of the ministers is worse than one of the king.
- **Order of importance.** The list is in **descending order of importance**, with the king first. Kautilya holds that **a wise king can make even weak elements prosperous**, while a wicked king destroys even the most

prosperous and loyal ones. Yet he also says that **sovereignty is possible only with assistance**: “a single wheel can never move”, so the king must employ ministers.

- **The people are inside the janapada.** The text does not list the citizens separately; they are part of the **janapada**. Its ideal population is **loyal, productive and able to bear taxation**, which shows that the subjects are seen mainly as the base of the state’s strength.
- **The ally is a limb, the enemy is not.** The *mitra* belongs to another state, but it is counted because no state can survive alone. The **enemy** is discussed alongside the prakritis in Book VI, but the text expressly excludes it from the seven limbs.
- **Comparison with modern theory.** Modern political science names **four elements** of the state (population, territory, government, sovereignty). Kautilya’s list is **more concrete and administrative**: it adds the treasury, the army, forts and allies, recognising that **finance, force and foreign support** are what turn a legal state into a functioning one.

COMMON CONFUSION

Is the enemy the eighth element of the state in the Arthashastra? No. Some notes list eight elements including the enemy. The text names seven prakritis (swami, amatya, janapada, durga, kosha, danda, mitra) and, after describing the worst kind of enemy, says that the seven, **excepting the enemy**, are the limb-like elements of sovereignty. The enemy matters for foreign policy (the mandala), not as a constituent of the state.

2.3 The aims of the state: yogakshema, protection and welfare

- **Rakshana and yogakshema.** The king’s first duty is **rakshana** or **palana**, the protection of the subjects and their property against both **natural calamities** and **anti-social elements**. Beyond protection lies **yogakshema**: *yoga* is the successful acquisition of what one does not have, and *kshema* the secure enjoyment of what one has. Together they mean **welfare, prosperity and security**.
- **The welfare duties in Book II.** The king must:
 - **maintain** orphans, the aged, the infirm, the afflicted and the helpless, and provide for **helpless pregnant women** and their newborn children;
 - **protect agriculture** from oppressive fines, forced labour and taxes, and help cultivators with seed, cattle and money;
 - **build** reservoirs, roads, trade routes and market towns, and **help people** who build reservoirs of their own accord;
 - **relieve famine** by distributing seed and provisions, starting public works and, if needed, drawing on the stores of the rich or of allies;
 - make relatives who neglect dependants **pay fines**, and make village elders **guard the property of minors**.
- **An economic state.** The state runs **mines, forests, manufactories, shipping, salt and liquor** as state enterprises, regulates **prices, weights and measures**, and protects **consumers** against cheating merchants and **artisans and labourers** against breach of contract. This is a **regulatory and entrepreneurial state**, not a minimal one.

- **“Neither a police state nor merely a tax-gathering state.”** The phrase sums up this mix. The Kautilyan state certainly uses **danda** (coercion) and certainly collects revenue intensively, but both are **means**. The ends are **security, prosperity and the maintenance of social order**. A ruler who neglects welfare, Kautilya warns, will fall victim to **the fury of his own subjects** (*prakritikopa*) or to his enemies.
- **The limits of this welfare state.** The welfare is **paternal and hierarchical**. The king protects the **varna and ashrama order** (the social order of castes and stages of life), and the text accepts slavery (while regulating it) and inequality between castes. The subjects are **beneficiaries, not citizens with rights**. It is a welfare state of a **benevolent monarchy**, not of a democracy.

INDIAN CONNECT — WELFARE GOALS IN THE CONSTITUTION

Several **Directive Principles of State Policy** read like a modern restatement of yogakshema: **Article 38** (a social order securing justice and welfare), **Article 39** (adequate livelihood, distribution of resources for the common good), **Article 41** (public assistance in old age, sickness and disablement), **Article 42** (maternity relief) and **Article 47** (nutrition and public health). The difference is that the Constitution places these duties in a **democratic, rights-based** framework where the state answers to elected representatives and courts, not to the conscience of a king.

03 The King and Rajadharma

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The king in the Arthashastra holds great power, but he is expected to work very hard, control his own desires, listen to advisers, be easy to reach, and treat the happiness of his people as his own happiness.

3.1 Training and qualities of the ruler

- **Discipline of the senses.** The king must conquer the **six enemies** of the self: **lust, anger, greed, vanity, haughtiness and overjoy** (*kama, krodha, lobha, mana, mada, harsha*). Kings who gave way to them, the text says, perished with their kingdoms.
- **The sage-king.** A king who controls his senses, keeps company with the learned, sees through his spies, is ever active and does good to the people is a **rajarshi** (royal sage). Unlike Plato’s philosopher-king, he is **not an ascetic**: he may enjoy the three goals of life in balance, provided he does not violate righteousness and economy.
- **Training.** The prince studies **philosophy and the Vedas** under teachers, **economics** under the superintendents of departments, and **dandaniti** under theoretical and practical politicians. Learning, for Kautilya, produces **discipline** (*vinaya*), and discipline is the foundation of good rule.
- **Qualities listed in Book VI.** Noble birth, valour, truthfulness, gratitude, high aims, enthusiasm, freedom from procrastination, a council of good ministers, love of discipline, sharp intellect, memory, foresight, ability to reward and punish fairly, and freedom from passion, anger, greed, fickleness and back-biting.

3.2 Rajadharma: the duties of the king

Rajadharma means the **duty of the ruler**. Book I gives its most quoted statement:

“In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare; whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good.” — Kautilya, Arthashastra I.19 (Shamasastri translation)

- **The king as the first servant.** Of a king, the text says, the **religious vow is readiness to act**, the **sacrifice is the satisfactory discharge of duties**, and the **sacrificial fee is equal attention to all**. Royal duty is redefined as **public service**.
- **Energy as a virtue.** “If a king is energetic, his subjects will be equally energetic”; if he is reckless, they will be reckless too and **eat into his works**. The root of wealth is **activity**, the root of evil its reverse.
- **The first manual of time management.** The king’s day and night are each divided into **eight parts**. The day’s parts are assigned to accounts of receipts and expenditure, the affairs of citizens and country people, study, revenue and appointment of superintendents, correspondence with the council and reports of spies, rest, inspection of the army, and military planning; the night’s parts to secret agents, sleep, reflection on the sciences and the next day’s work, and consultations. The schedule may be adapted to the king’s capacity.
- **Accessibility.** The king must **never keep petitioners waiting at the door**. A ruler who makes himself inaccessible and leaves work to his immediate officers causes **confusion in business and public disaffection**. He must personally hear matters concerning temples, learned men, cattle, sacred places, **minors, the aged, the afflicted, the helpless and women**, and must attend to urgent matters at once, because postponed problems become impossible to solve.
- **Justice and protection.** The king is the **fountain of justice** (*dharmaprayatana*). A king who does not protect his people **wields the sceptre in vain**. If stolen property of citizens cannot be recovered, the king must **make it good from his own treasury**; if he punishes an innocent man, he must **offer thirty times the fine** as an expiation.

3.3 Was the Kautilyan king absolute?

The text gives the king the **last word** in appointments, policy, justice and war. But it also hedges royal power with many **indirect restraints**.

- **Moral and educational restraints:** the king’s training, the requirement to follow the science, and the duty of the **purohita** (high priest) and teachers to warn him of careless conduct.
- **Institutional restraints:** the expectation that every major measure is preceded by **deliberation in a council**; in an emergency the king must do **what the majority of the council advises**.
- **Fixed emoluments:** the highest salary (48,000 panas) is fixed by the text for the senior-most figures around the throne, which implies that the **royal establishment is a charge on revenue under rules**, not the king’s private property.
- **Political restraint:** the constant fear of **prakritikopa** (anger of the subjects). An oppressive, greedy or lazy king, Kautilya warns repeatedly, will be overthrown by his own people or conquered by enemies.

- **Some interpreters** therefore describe the Kautilyan king as almost a “**constitutional slave**” of his duties. Others note that none of these restraints is **enforceable**: there is no assembly that can remove him, **no ministerial responsibility** to a legislature, no independent judiciary and no fundamental rights.

POINT	KAUTILYAN RULER	MODERN DEMOCRATIC RULER IN INDIA
Source of authority	Heredity, divine aura and protection of subjects	Elected majority; the Constitution
Tenure	For life; removal only by revolt or conquest	Fixed term; can lose a no-confidence motion or an election
Accountability	Moral, to dharma and the subjects' contentment	Legal and political: to Parliament, courts, CAG, media, voters
Ministers	Chosen and dismissed by the king; responsible to him	Collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha (Article 75(3))
Rights of the people	Benefits granted by a benevolent king	Enforceable fundamental rights
Welfare	Paternal duty	Constitutional directive and statutory entitlement
Information	Spies and personal hearings	RTI, grievance portals, audit, free press

The table shows that the **ethic** of the Kautilyan ruler (the people's welfare as the ruler's own) is close to modern ideals of public service, but the **institutions** that enforce it are absent. Modern democratic rulers face far more formal checks; yet many of them fall short of the personal discipline, accessibility and constant activity that Kautilya demanded of a king.

04

Ministers, Council and the Machinery of Government

IN SIMPLE WORDS

No king can do everything alone. Kautilya describes a small group of close advisers, a larger council, about eighteen top officials, and around thirty heads of departments, all arranged in a clear chain of command.

4.1 Amatya, mantrin and the mantriparishad

- **Terms.** The text uses **amatya**, **sachiva** and **mantrin** in overlapping ways. Broadly, **amatya** denotes **all high officers** of the state, whether counsellors or executive heads of departments; **mantrin** denotes the **inner counsellors** whose main function is to give advice (*mantra*). The mantrins need higher qualifications than ordinary amatyas.

- **The inner body: three or four mantrins.** Kautilya rejects the view (of Bharadvaja) that the king should deliberate alone, and the view that he should consult endlessly. He advises **three or four counsellors**: one alone acts wilfully and cannot reach a balanced conclusion on complex issues; **two** may combine against the king or quarrel; with **more than four**, decisions become slow and **secrecy** is hard to keep. Depending on the matter, the king may still consult one or two, or decide alone.
- **The five elements of deliberation.** Every proposal is examined under five heads: **the means of starting the work; the men and material required; the place and time; remedies against failure; and final success.**
- **Secrecy of counsel.** Deliberations must be so secret that “even birds cannot see them”. Carelessness, intoxication, talking in sleep and love are listed as causes of leaks, and anyone who discloses counsel is severely punished.
- **The mantriparishad (council of ministers).** Below the mantrins is a larger **council**. Earlier schools fixed its size at **12** (Manu), **16** (Brihaspati) or **20** (Ushanas); Kautilya says it should have **as many members as the needs of the dominion require**. Its functions are:
 - **to start** work not yet begun;
 - **to complete** what has been begun;
 - **to improve** what has been accomplished;
 - **to enforce** strict obedience to orders.
- **Majority rule in emergencies.** The god **Indra**, the text says, has a council of a thousand sages who are his “eyes”, which is why he is called thousand-eyed. In an emergency the king must call **both the mantrins and the mantriparishad** and act on **what the majority advises** or on whatever course promises success. Distant members are consulted **by writs**.
- **Not a cabinet.** Some writers compare the mantrins to a modern cabinet and the mantriparishad to the wider council of ministers, but the analogy is weak. The ministers were **appointed and removed by the king**, held office at **his pleasure**, could be consulted **individually or not at all**, and had **no collective responsibility** to any elected body. Their role was **advisory and executive**, not constitutional.

4.2 The eighteen tirthas: high officers of state

Kautilya places the senior officials in **eighteen tirthas** (high offices). The list below gives the main ones and their modern equivalents.

OFFICE	ROLE	ROUGH MODERN PARALLEL
Mantrin	Chief counsellor	Prime Minister or senior cabinet minister
Purohita	High priest and moral adviser	Moral and ceremonial guide; no modern parallel
Senapati	Head of the army	Defence Minister or service chief
Yuvaraja	Crown prince	Heir; may lead armies
Dauvarika	Chief of palace attendants	Head of the royal household

OFFICE	ROLE	ROUGH MODERN PARALLEL
Antarvamshika	Chief of the king's guards	Head of personal security
Prashastri	Head of the secretariat and records; magistrate	Cabinet or Chief Secretary
Samahartri	Collector-general of revenue	Finance and Revenue Minister; also home administration of the countryside
Sannidhatri	Treasurer-general and keeper of stores	Treasury and stores
Pradeshtri	Commissioner; criminal justice and inspection	Divisional Commissioner or magistrate
Nayaka	City constable or military chief	Police commissioner
Paura (nagaraka)	Governor of the capital	Municipal commissioner
Vyavaharika	Chief judge or superintendent of transactions	Chief Justice of civil courts
Karmantika	Superintendent of factories and mines	Industries
Mantriparishadadhyaksha	President of the council	Cabinet coordinator
Dandapala	Officer of the army department	Military logistics
Durgapala	Guardian of forts	Internal defence
Antapala	Warden of the frontiers	Border management
Atavika	Officer in charge of forest tribes	Forest and tribal administration

The list shows a government organised around **functions** (finance, justice, security, economy), with the king at the top of every line.

4.3 Samahartri and sannidhatri: the twin pillars of finance and field administration

- **The samahartri (collector-general).** He **prepares the annual budget**, fixes the revenue expected under each of the **seven heads of income**, keeps the accounts and tries to correct any excess of expenditure over income. He is also the **administrative head of the countryside** (everything except the fortified capital), with the *sthanikas* and *gopas* under him and the *pradeshtris* to suppress crime. He is therefore part **finance minister** and part **home minister**.

- **The sannidhatri (treasurer-general).** He is in charge of **stores**: the treasury, warehouses of grain, forest produce, the armoury and even the prison. He maintains the **secret reserve** built up for emergencies.
- **Dual control.** The superintendents of revenue-earning departments are under the **samahartri** for revenue and personnel, and under the **sannidhatri** for the supply of goods, with the **king's** control over both. This is an early form of the **separation of collection, custody and accounting** of public money, a basic principle of financial control today.

4.4 The adhyakshas: superintendents and departments

Book II describes the duties of about **thirty superintendents** (*adhyakshas*), each the head of a department.

- **Kinds of departments.** The superintendents fall into four broad groups:
 - **in charge of state goods and stores** (treasury, storehouse, armoury, forest produce);
 - **in charge of state establishments** (accounts office, mint, weaving, slaughterhouses, prisons);
 - **in charge of mining and industry** (mines, metals, gold, salt);
 - **regulating trade and economic life** (commerce, tolls and customs, weights and measures, liquor, shipping, passports, pastures).
- **Examples.** The **sitadhyaksha** (agriculture on crown lands), **panyadhyaksha** (trade and prices), **shulkadhyaksha** (tolls and customs), **akaradhyaksha** (mines), **lakshanadhyaksha** (mint), **lavanadhyaksha** (salt), **pautavadhyaksha** (weights and measures), **suradhyaksha** (liquor), **navadhyaksha** (shipping and ports), **mudradhyaksha** (passports), **godhyaksha** (cattle), **kupyadhyaksha** (forest produce) and **akshapataladhyaksha** (accounts and records).
- **Expert help and joint working.** Superintendents work with **accountants, writers, coin-testers, treasurers and supervisory officers**, and are assisted by **technical experts**. A department is to be run by **several temporary heads**, which prevents any one officer from building a private empire.
- **Departments by function.** Departments are arranged according to the **services needed by the people and provided by the government**, mostly horizontally by subject; the revenue department under the samahartri, with its commissioners, district officers and village officers, is a **vertical, territorial** arrangement.

4.5 Principles of administration in the Arthashastra

The machinery rests on principles that modern administrative theory would recognise. They can be grouped into two sets.

- **Principles of authority and obligation**
 - **Authority, obedience and discipline:** the king's danda keeps people to their duties; without it matsyanyaya returns.
 - **Duty and interest:** obedience is secured not only by fear but by **duty** (the injunctions of the Vedas) and **interest** (pay, promotion, permanence, land, help in illness and at funerals).
 - **Responsibility:** each officer answers for his work and is liable to make good losses caused by negligence.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · MACHINERY OF GOVERNMENT

Structure

The Kautilyan Machinery

From the king to the village, under one chain of command

King — supreme executive, judge and coordinator

Mantrins (3–4)

Secret counsel on means, resources, place and time, risks, success

Mantriparishad

Size as needed; starts, completes, improves, enforces; majority view in emergencies

EIGHTEEN TIRTHAS — HIGH OFFICES

Samahartri

Collector-general: budget, revenue, countryside

Sannidhatri

Treasurer-general: treasury and stores

Others

Senapati, prashastris, pradeshtri, nayaka, antapala...

ABOUT THIRTY ADHYAKSHAS — DEPARTMENTS

Agriculture · trade · customs · mines · mint · salt · weights · liquor · shipping · passports · cattle · forests · accounts

Staff in each: **yukta** (head) → **upayukta** (officer) → **tatpurusha** (lowest)

FIELD ADMINISTRATION

Sthanika

Quarter of the kingdom



Gopa

Five or ten villages; census



Gramika

Village headman

In simple words: all power flows from the king, and all reports flow back to him.

Public Administration

• Principles of organisation

- **Division of labour:** “sovereignty is possible only with assistance”; work is divided among ministers and departments, and the workload of departments such as agriculture is described in detail.
- **Coordination:** the natural corollary of division of work; the king, with his council, is the chief coordinator.
- **Hierarchy:** three grades of amatyas (highest, middle, lowest); in each department the **yukta** (head), **upayukta** (subordinate officer) and **tatpurusha** (lowest servants); a scale of more than seven rungs by salary.
- **Unity of command:** all officers derive authority from the king and answer to him; orders flow through royal writs.
- **Specialisation and job classification:** special qualifications for special posts; the more responsible the office, the more numerous and higher the qualities required.
- **Uniformity:** the same practices and standards (of weights, accounts, writs) across the kingdom.

- **The written word and records.** Writs, registers, sealed account books and statistics on land, households and livestock show a **records-based administration**. Kautilya even specifies the design of the accounts office (door facing north or east, separate seats for clerks, shelves for account books), an early attention to **office layout**.
- **Gaps.** As modern commentators note, the links between parts of the machinery are not always clear: the relationship of superintendents to ministers, the exact chain from district to village, and the place of justice in the hierarchy are left vague. The text gives **principles and detail**, but not a single organisation chart.

INDIAN CONNECT — KAUTILYAN PRINCIPLES IN TODAY'S MACHINERY

The **Government of India (Allocation of Business) Rules, 1961** and **(Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961**, framed under **Article 77(3)**, divide work among ministries and fix who may decide what: a modern form of Kautilya's division of labour and coordination. The **Cabinet Secretariat** and **Cabinet committees** coordinate as the mantriparishad was meant to; the **Central Secretariat Manual of Office Procedure** prescribes the written trail of files and orders that Kautilya's writs and registers anticipated.

05 Personnel Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya cared a great deal about who works for the state. He wanted officials chosen for ability, tested for honesty, paid well enough to resist temptation, rewarded for good work, moved around to stop corruption, and punished when they failed.

5.1 Qualifications and recruitment

- **Merit proved in work.** In Book I Kautilya reviews seven views on whom to appoint as ministers: classmates, those who share the king's secrets, those who proved loyal in danger, those who raised revenue, sons of former ministers, new men learned in theory, or men of good family with practical wisdom. He concludes that appointments must **depend on qualifications**, and that **ability is inferred from capacity shown in work**. Theory without experience, he says through one of the schools, leads to **serious blunders** in practice.
- **The qualities sought.** A minister should be a **native** of the country, of good family, **trained in the arts and sciences**, intelligent, of good memory, eloquent, bold, upright, friendly, firm in loyalty, healthy, energetic and free from vices. The key general qualities are **sattva** (energy and courage), **prajna** (intelligence) and **vakyashakti** (power of expression).
- **How qualities are checked.** Origin and family are checked through trusted persons; learning through experts; intelligence, perseverance and dexterity through **performance in work**; eloquence and presence of mind through **conversation**; endurance through behaviour in **troubles**; integrity and loyalty through **associates and the upadha tests**.

- **Who appoints.** Officers drawing **1,000 panas and above** are appointed by the king with the advice of the high priest and the chief minister. Superintendents of groups of a hundred or a thousand may regulate the **pay, appointment and transfer** of the staff under them, an early form of **delegation of personnel powers**.
- **Persons to avoid.** The king should not entrust money to the **mulahara** (one who has squandered his inheritance), the **tadatvika** (one who spends all he earns) or the **kadarya** (the miser who hoards at the cost of his own family).

5.2 The upadha tests of integrity

Ministers appointed to ordinary departments are tested secretly, through trusted spies, by four kinds of **allurement** (*upadha*). The result decides where each officer is posted.

TEST	HOW IT WAS APPLIED	OFFICER WHO PASSES IT IS POSTED TO
Dharmopadha (religious allurement)	A dismissed priest invites him to join a plot to replace an "unrighteous" king	Civil and criminal courts
Arthopadha (monetary allurement)	A dismissed commander offers great wealth for joining a plot	Revenue collection and the treasury
Kamopadha (allurement of desire)	A woman agent claims the queen desires him and promises wealth	Pleasure grounds and the palace precincts
Bhayopadha (allurement under fear)	Officers are arrested on a pretext and then incited to rebel	Immediate personal service of the king
Passes all four		Mantrin (chief counsellor)
Fails		Mines, forests and factories, away from sensitive work

- **The idea.** Integrity is not one quality but several; a man who resists money may yield to fear. Matching **the kind of integrity to the kind of post** is a remarkably modern idea, close to today's **sensitive-post** and **vigilance-clearance** practices.
- **Kautilya's own caution.** He rejects the view that the king or queen should be used as bait, because a pure mind once tempted may not recover its original state, "like water vitiated with poison". The tests should therefore use an **external object** as the bait. This shows awareness that **testing itself can corrupt**.
- **Critique.** The method rests on **entrapment and deception** by the state. Modern law treats entrapment of honest officers with suspicion, and the tests reveal more about the king's fear of conspiracy than about competence. Their underlying idea, **verifying integrity before entrusting power**, survives in police verification, character certificates and integrity checks.

5.3 Training

- The prince's training is elaborate, but there is **little on training of officials** after appointment, apart from the **daily drill of the army** at sunrise, which the king himself should watch. Kautilya seems to assume that officials enter service **already learned** and **already tested**, and learn on the job under supervision.

5.4 Pay, allowances and pension

- A cap on the wage bill.** The king should keep the cost of maintaining his servants **within one-fourth of the total revenue**. This is an early **fiscal rule** on establishment expenditure.
- Liberal pay to prevent temptation.** Salaries are fixed on a generous scale so that officers will "scarcely yield to temptation and hardly be discontented". The scale is given in Book V:

RANK (EXAMPLES)	ANNUAL PAY IN PANAS
Sacrificial priest, teacher, chief minister, purohita, commander of the army, crown prince, king's mother, queen	48,000
Doorkeeper, chief of the harem guards, prashastri, samahatri, sannidhatri	24,000
Princes, city constable, governor of the town, judge, superintendent of factories, members of the council, wardens of country and frontiers	12,000
Chiefs of military corporations and of army wings, commissioners	8,000
Superintendents of infantry, cavalry, chariots, elephants; guards of forests	4,000
All superintendents of departments; astrologers, story-tellers	1,000
Trained soldiers, accountants and writers	500
Artisans and carpenters	120
Attendants, labourers, bodyguards	60

- Payment in kind.** When money is short, pay may be given partly in **forest produce, cattle or fields**, but the king should **not grant whole villages**, which would create a hereditary landed class outside his control.
- Social security.** The **wives and sons** of servants who **die on duty** receive their subsistence and wages; infants, the aged and sick relatives of deceased servants are also helped; the king gives **presents on funerals, sickness and childbirth**. This is an early form of **family pension and welfare measures**, though no pension after retirement is mentioned.

- **Pay rises for learning and work.** The king should **increase subsistence and wages** in consideration of learning and work: pay linked to **qualification and performance**.
- **The spread of pay.** The highest annual pay is **48,000 panas** and the lowest **60 panas**, a ratio of 800 to 1; the purohita is in the top grade. (Figures of 4,800 panas for the top salary, found in some accounts, are a slip.)

5.5 Promotion, permanence and transfer

- **Performance-based reward.** Superintendents who bring in **as much as or more than** the fixed revenue are to be **honoured with promotion and rewards**; those who increase revenue and are loyal are to be **made permanent**. There are no fixed rules of promotion by seniority.
- **Transfer as an anti-corruption tool.** Officials are to be **transferred from one work to another** so that they can neither misappropriate money nor “vomit what they have eaten”. The exception: officers guarding royal buildings, forts and country parts are **not to be transferred**; they should be many and **permanent**, because security posts need continuity.
- **No leave and personal liability.** No leave is provided. If an employee absents himself, his **sureties or dependants** must make good the loss. Every official is liable to punishment if found **corrupt, slack or oppressive** to the people.

5.6 Supervision and conduct of officials

- **Daily examination.** Superintendents are to be **examined daily** “for men are naturally fickle-minded and like horses at work exhibit constant change in their temper”. The agency, tools, place, time, form of work, outlay and results are always to be checked.
- **Neither collusion nor discord.** Officers must work “without dissension and without any concert among themselves”: “when in concert they eat up the revenue; when in disunion they mar the work”. This captures a permanent dilemma of control: **coordination can turn into collusion**.
- **No unauthorised action.** Officers must undertake nothing without the king’s knowledge, except **remedial measures against imminent danger**. A fine of **twice the daily pay** is fixed for negligence.
- **Conduct of courtiers.** Book V advises officers to behave with dignity, avoid arrogance and flattery, and read signs of the king’s displeasure. It shows that **service was at the king’s pleasure**, with no tenure protection of the kind **Article 311** now gives civil servants.

INDIAN CONNECT — KAUTILYAN IDEAS IN INDIAN PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION

Merit-based entry through the **UPSC (Article 315)**, **probation** before confirmation, **vigilance clearance** before empanelment and promotion, identification of **sensitive posts** with **rotational transfer**, the **Conduct Rules** (All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968; Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964), **family pension** to dependants, and pay revision by **Central Pay Commissions** all echo Kautilyan concerns. The capacity-building agenda of **Mission Karmayogi** (launched September 2020) adds what Kautilya largely left out: structured **training after recruitment**.

Corruption and Its Control

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya assumed that anyone handling public money would be tempted to take some of it, and that such theft is very hard to see. So he listed the ways officials cheat, and built many checks: spies, audits, rewards for informers, compensation for victims, transfers and heavy fines.

6.1 Realism about corruption

Kautilya's starting point is a frank view of human nature in office. Three similes in Book II make the point:

- **Honey on the tongue.** Just as it is impossible not to taste honey or poison placed on the tip of the tongue, it is impossible for a government servant **not to eat up at least a bit of the king's revenue**.
- **Fish in water.** Just as fish moving under water cannot be seen drinking or not drinking, officials employed in government work **cannot be found out while taking money**.
- **Birds in the sky.** It is possible to mark the flight of birds high in the sky, but not the movements of officials **of hidden purpose**.

The lesson is that corruption is **structural, not exceptional**: it arises from **opportunity and information advantage**, and so must be met by **systems** rather than trust alone.

6.2 What depletes the treasury

The chapter on embezzlement opens with "**All undertakings depend upon finance**; hence foremost attention shall be paid to the treasury". It lists eight causes that deplete the treasury, each with its fine.

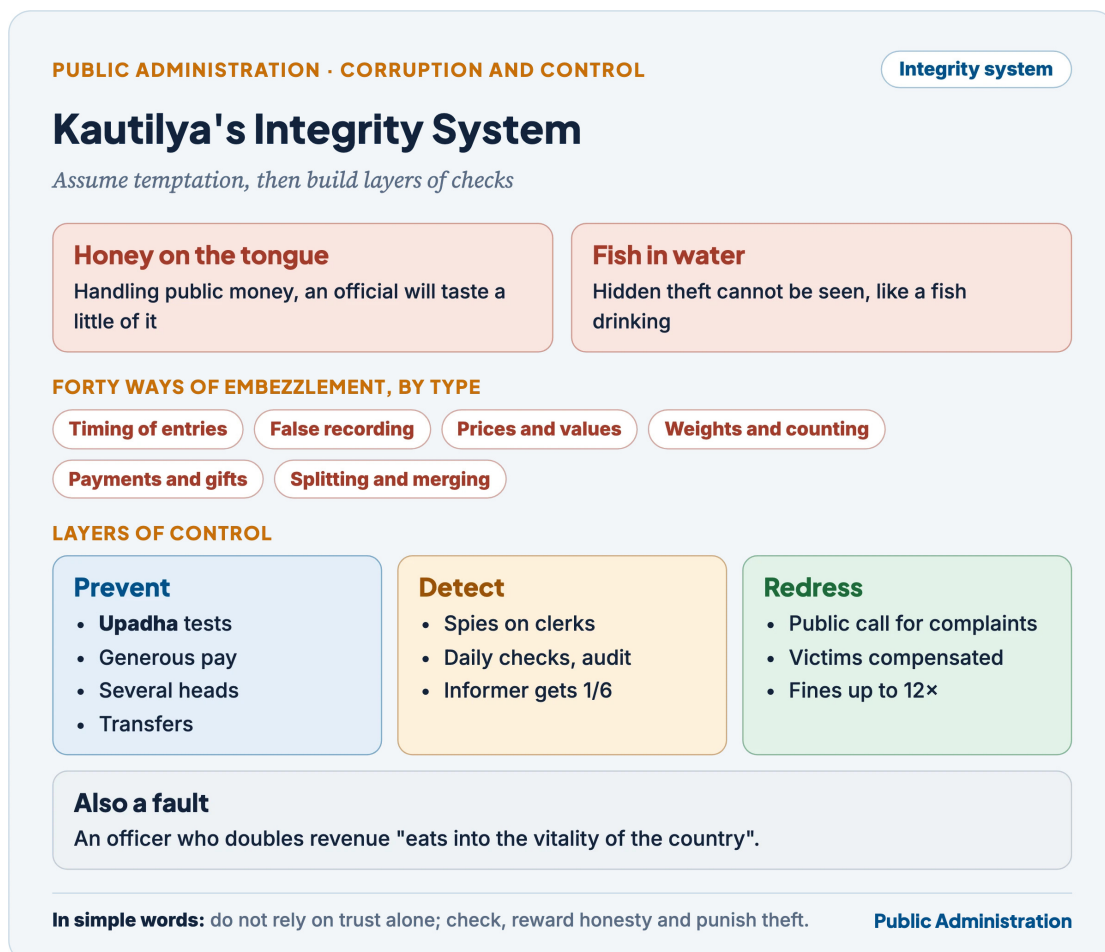
FAULT	MEANING	PENALTY IN THE TEXT
Pratibandha (obstruction)	Failing to start work, realise its results or credit profits	Ten times the amount
Prayoga (loan)	Lending treasury money on interest	Twice the profit
Vyavahara (trading)	Trading with government money	Twice the profit
Avastara (fabrication)	Falsifying the time of revenue collection	Ten times the amount
Parihapana (causing loss)	Reducing fixed income or inflating expenditure	Four times the loss
Upabhoga (self-enjoyment)	Using the king's property for oneself or others	Death for gems; lesser fines for other goods
Parivartana (barter)	Exchanging government articles for one's own	As for self-enjoyment

FAULT	MEANING	PENALTY IN THE TEXT
Apahara (defalcation)	Not crediting collections, not spending as ordered, misreporting net revenue	Twelve times the amount

6.3 The forty ways of embezzlement

Kautilya then lists **about forty ways of embezzlement**. They can be grouped into a few types, each still recognisable in audit reports today.

- **Timing frauds:** entering early receipts late and late receipts early; paying too early or too late; not collecting what is due; showing hard-to-collect revenue as collected.
- **Recording frauds:** showing collected sums as uncollected and uncollected sums as collected; entering part payments as full and full payments as part; entering one source or one item in place of another; entering a false donee.
- **Valuation and quantity frauds:** exchanging costly goods for cheap ones and the reverse; raising or lowering prices; false weights and measures; false counting; misstating the fineness of gold and silver.
- **Payment frauds:** paying what is not payable and not paying what is; inflating small gifts into large ones and reducing large ones; entering unpaid raw materials and omitting paid ones.
- **Aggregation and calendar frauds:** splitting a lump sum into scattered items or merging scattered items; adding or removing days in wage records; months not matching the year or days the month.



6.4 The toolkit of control

Kautilya does not stop at listing frauds. He builds a **layered system of prevention, detection and punishment**.

• Prevention

- **Integrity tests** before appointment and **matching of posts** to tested qualities.
- **Liberal pay** to reduce need and resentment.
- **Several temporary heads** for each department and joint working with accountants and treasurers, so that no single officer controls a transaction.
- **Rotation by transfer**, except in security posts.

• Detection

- **Spies** placed among accountants and clerks; Kautilya holds, against his teacher, that “**cases of embezzlement can be ascertained through spies alone**”, not merely by comparing income and expenditure.
- **Daily examination** of work and **annual audit** in the accounts office.
- **Separate examination** of everyone in the chain of a transaction (treasurer, prescriber, receiver, payer, the person who caused payment, the officer’s assistants); anyone who lies is punished like the chief offender.
- **Rewards to informers**: an informant who proves an embezzlement gets **one-sixth** of the amount (**one-twelfth** if he is himself a government servant); a part proof earns a proportionate share. A false accuser is punished, which guards against malicious complaints.

• Redress and punishment

- **Public proclamation** inviting anyone harmed by the offending officer to come forward, and **compensation** equal to their loss: an early **grievance-redressal and restitution** mechanism.
- **Confiscation** of ill-gotten hoards and fines of up to **twelve times** the amount.
- An officer proved guilty of part of a large embezzlement is **answerable for the whole**.
- Special punishments for **judges and officials who abuse their power** (Book IV).

6.5 Over-zealous officers are also a danger

Kautilya warns against the opposite fault too.

- **Whoever doubles the revenue “eats into the vitality of the country”**: an officer who squeezes the people to impress the king is to be warned and, if the offence is grave, punished.
- **Whoever spends without results “eats up the labour of workmen”**.
- The test of a good officer is therefore **honest and sustainable revenue**, not the largest possible collection. This anticipates the modern distinction between **efficiency and effectiveness**, and the idea that **over-extraction destroys the tax base**.

INDIAN CONNECT — THE KAUTILYAN TOOLKIT AND INDIA’S ANTI-CORRUPTION FRAMEWORK

India’s framework reproduces many Kautilyan devices in legal form. The **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** (amended in 2018 to make **bribe-giving** an offence and to add **Section 17A**, requiring prior

approval to investigate decisions taken in official duties) mirrors the twin aims of punishing the corrupt and **protecting the honest from harassment**. The **Central Vigilance Commission** (statutory since 2003), the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, the **Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers Resolution, 2004** (whistle-blowing), rotational transfers from sensitive posts, and the **CAG's** audit perform the functions of Kautilya's spies, informers and accounts office. On **13 January 2026** the Supreme Court delivered a **split verdict** on the validity of Section 17A, and the question was placed before a larger bench.

07 Revenue, Treasury, Budgeting and Audit

IN SIMPLE WORDS

For Kautilya the treasury was the backbone of the state, because the army, the officials and welfare all need money. He described where revenue should come from, how it should be collected without hurting the people, how it should be spent, and how every account should be written and checked.

7.1 The primacy of the treasury

- **Kosha before danda.** The army depends on the treasury: without money, soldiers cannot be raised or kept loyal. Kautilya therefore treats **finance as the base of all state activity**: "all undertakings depend upon finance".
- **A public, not private, treasury.** The kosha must be **justly acquired**, rich enough to withstand long calamities, and is **not the king's personal property**; even **gifts to the king** were to be entered in a record book.

7.2 Sources of revenue: the ayasharira

The **samahartri** collects revenue under **seven heads**, together called the **ayasharira** ("body of income").

HEAD	WHAT IT COVERS
Durga (forts and towns)	Tolls, fines, weights and measures, mint, passports, liquor, slaughterhouses, goldsmiths, gambling, artisans' guilds
Rashtra (countryside)	Produce of crown lands (<i>sita</i>), the king's share of produce (<i>bhaga</i>), religious taxes (<i>bali</i>), money taxes (<i>kara</i>), ferries, road cess
Khani (mines)	Gold, silver, gems, pearls, metals, salt
Setu (irrigated works and gardens)	Flower, fruit and vegetable gardens, wet fields, sugarcane

HEAD	WHAT IT COVERS
Vana (forests)	Game, timber and elephant forests
Vraja (herds)	Cows, buffaloes, goats, sheep, horses, camels
Vanikpatha (trade routes)	Land and water routes

- **Forms of revenue (ayamukha).** Revenue comes as capital, share of produce, premia, fixed taxes, premia on coins and fixed fines.
- **Land revenue.** The customary share of the produce is **one-sixth** (*shadbhaga*). Crown lands are cultivated directly through the superintendent of agriculture.
- **State enterprise as revenue.** Mines, salt, forests, manufactories, liquor and state trade are run for profit. The state is the **largest producer and trader**.
- **Canons of taxation.** Kautilya's maxims anticipate later canons:
 - **The ripe-fruit rule.** Just as fruit is gathered from a garden when it is ripe, **revenue should be collected when it is ripe**; collecting unripe revenue injures the source and causes great trouble.
 - **Remissions that swell the treasury.** The king should grant only such favours and remissions as will increase revenue in the long run; new settlements receive **tax holidays** in their early years.
 - **Emergency revenue.** In a financial crisis the king may make special demands (*pranaya*), but **only once and never twice**, and may invite voluntary contributions.
 - **Do not oppress cultivators** with fines, forced labour and taxes; a king with a depleted treasury, Kautilya warns, will eat into the vitality of citizens and country people.

7.3 Expenditure: the vyayasharira

- The **vyayasharira** ("body of expenditure") lists the heads of spending: worship and gifts, the palace and kitchen, messengers, storehouses, the armoury, warehouses, factories, labour, the four wings of the army, cattle herds, and stores of firewood and fodder.
- **Wage bill limit:** within **one-fourth of revenue**.
- **Profitable works are protected:** the king "will have to suffer in the end if he curtails the fixed amount of expenditure on profitable works", an early recognition of the value of **capital and productive expenditure**.

7.4 Budget, accounts and audit

- **The budget.** The samahartri fixes the revenue expected under each head and plans expenditure, and tries to correct any **excess of expenditure over revenue**. This is an early **annual budget** with a concern for **balance**.
- **The accounting year.** A working year is **354 days**; accounts close at the end of the month of **Ashadha** (around mid-July), when officers present themselves with their **sealed account books**, commodities and net revenue. The intercalary month is calculated separately.
- **The akshapatala (records and accounts office).** It maintains registers of each department: the work and results of factories, profit and loss, delayed earnings, wages, labour used, prices and weights of goods, the customs and transactions of regions and corporations, grants and remissions, and even **treaties and**

tributes. From these registers the superintendent of accounts prepares statements of **works in hand, works accomplished, partly finished works, receipts, expenditure, net balance and works to be undertaken.**

- **Audit procedure.** Accounts are examined by department and in aggregate; discrepancies attract fines; accountants who fail to present themselves on time, or to produce their books with the net revenue, are fined **ten times** the amount due. The king is to **hear the accounts** in a council meeting and personally attend to receipts and expenditure each morning.
- **A limitation.** Accounts and audit are kept in **the same office** under the superintendent of accounts, so there is **no strict separation of audit from accounts**, although a separate audit procedure is laid down. The independence that **Article 148** later gave the CAG has no Kautilyan counterpart.

7.5 Planning and the role of the state in the economy

- **Control rather than development planning.** The Arthashastra's "planning" is **budgetary and regulatory**: fixing expected revenue from each activity and controlling its collection. Modern planning sets **multi-year development priorities** and allocates resources to them; the Kautilyan emphasis is on **control**, the modern one on **development**.
- **Regulation of markets.** The superintendent of commerce fixes **fair prices** and allows a profit of **five per cent on local goods and ten per cent on foreign goods**, prevents hoarding and adulteration, and protects buyers; weights and measures are standardised and stamped; artisans who breach contracts and weavers who short-change customers are fined. This is early **consumer protection and market regulation**.
- **Public goods.** Roads, irrigation, forts, market towns and the settlement of new villages are state responsibilities: the state creates the **infrastructure for private prosperity**.

INDIAN CONNECT — FROM THE AKSHAPATALA TO THE CAG

The Kautilyan scheme of budget, registers and audit has its constitutional counterparts in the **Annual Financial Statement (Article 112)**, **Appropriation Acts (Article 114)**, the **Comptroller and Auditor General (Articles 148–151)**, whose current incumbent is **K. Sanjay Murthy** (since November 2024), and Parliament's **Public Accounts Committee**. Kautilya's cap on the wage bill and his warning against over-extraction have modern echoes in the **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003** and in Finance Commission norms. The big difference is **independence**: Kautilya's accountant served the king, while the CAG audits the executive on behalf of Parliament.

08 Justice, Law and Codification

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya believed that punishment, applied fairly, keeps society in order. He set out four sources of law, said that the king's written orders could override older custom when needed, and described courts for civil disputes and for crimes.

8.1 Danda: punishment as the instrument of order

- **Proportionate punishment.** Kautilya rejects his teacher's advice that the king should always keep the rod raised. A ruler who **punishes severely** becomes hateful; one who **punishes mildly** is despised; one who punishes **as deserved** is respected. Punishment awarded with **due consideration** makes people devoted to righteousness and to productive work; punishment awarded from **greed, anger or ignorance** angers even forest hermits.
- **Impartiality.** Power, exercised **impartially and in proportion to guilt**, whether against the king's son or his enemy, sustains this world and the next.

8.2 The four sources (legs) of law

Book III names four "legs" of law, each with a different basis.

SOURCE	MEANING	BASIS
Dharma	Sacred law; eternal truth	Scriptures (dharmashastras)
Vyavahara	Evidence and transactions	Witnesses and documents in a dispute
Charitra	Custom and usage	The tradition of the people, castes, guilds, regions
Rajasasana	Royal edict	The king's written order

- **The later prevails over the earlier.** Of the four, **each later one is superior to the one before**. The **king's edict therefore overrides custom**, custom overrides evidence, and so on. In practice this gives **positive law made by the state** priority over religious tradition.
- **Reason over scripture.** Where sacred law conflicts with **rational law** (the king's law based on justice), **reason prevails**, because the original text on which the sacred law rests may be lost.
- **Secular tendency.** This ordering places **politics above religion** in matters of governance. Religion remains a source of values, but the state decides.

8.3 Why Kautilya favoured codification and written orders

The text opens its chapter on royal writs by noting that kings depend on edicts, and that **treaties and war have their roots in writs**. Several reasons for Kautilya's preference for written, codified law can be drawn from the text.

- **Uniformity and predictability:** a written rule applies the same way across a large kingdom, to every officer and subject; Kautilya insists on **uniform administrative practice**.
- **Control of discretion:** written orders and registers bind officials and leave a **trail** that can be checked; without them, officials could act on whim and conceal misconduct.
- **Accountability within the hierarchy:** authority flows from the king, and the writ proves **who ordered what**.
- **Administration at a distance:** a large empire cannot be run by oral command; distant ministers are consulted and instructed **by writs**.
- **Diplomacy:** treaties, ultimatums and alliances depend on precise written terms.

- **Overriding outdated custom:** the rajasasana allows the state to **reform** custom where needed.
- **The craft of drafting.** The **lekha** (writer) must have ministerial qualifications, know customs, compose well and write legibly. A writ needs **orderly arrangement, relevance, completeness, sweetness, dignity and lucidity**; its faults are **clumsiness, contradiction, repetition, bad grammar and misarrangement**. The text lists **thirteen purposes** of writs (such as command, prohibition, inquiry, persuasion and threat) and kinds of writs (of information, command, gift, remission, licence, guidance, reply and general proclamation).

COMMON CONFUSION

Does Kautilya's support for written law amount to the modern rule of law? Only partly. Codified rules and written orders give **predictability and limit officials' discretion**, which is one element of the rule of law. But in the Arthashastra the **king's edict is the highest law**, the king is not bound by the courts, and there are no rights enforceable against the state. The modern rule of law, in **Dicey's** sense and under the Indian Constitution, places the **government itself under the law**; Kautilya places the law under the king, though he expects the king to obey dharma and reason.

8.4 Courts and procedure

- **Two kinds of courts.**
 - **Dharmasthiya courts** (civil): presided over by **three judges learned in sacred law** (*dharmasthas*) and **three ministers** (*amatyas*), they decide disputes on contracts, debts, deposits, marriage, inheritance, property, labour and partnership.
 - **Kantakashodhana courts** ("removal of thorns"): presided over by **three commissioners** (*pradeshtris*) or three ministers, they deal with **crime and threats to public order**, including fraud by artisans and merchants, misconduct of officials, and the investigation of suspects.
- **Location.** Courts sit in the **sangrahana** (centre of ten villages), **dronamukha** (centre of four hundred), **sthaniya** (centre of eight hundred) and at **places where districts meet**, with the king's court at the top.
- **Procedure.** The year, month, date, place, amount and the names, residence, caste and occupation of the parties are **registered first**; statements are recorded in order and scrutinised. Shifting one's case, contradicting oneself or conferring secretly with witnesses is the offence of **parokta**, punished with fines. **Witness costs** are paid by the losing party; the defendant gets **three to seven nights** to prepare a defence.
- **Validity of agreements.** Agreements made in secret, at night, in forests or by fraud are void, except where the circumstances make them natural (for instance traders who work at night, or forest dwellers). Agreements by minors, the very old, the intoxicated, the insane or dependants without authority are invalid. Many of these rules resemble modern contract law.
- **Judges under the executive.** Judges are **appointed by the king** and can be removed by the samahartri for injustice, slackness or corruption; ministers sit with jurists on the bench. There is **no separation of the judiciary from the executive**, a sharp contrast with **Article 50** of the Constitution.
- **Limits on coercion.** The text allows torture of suspects whose guilt appears probable, which no modern system accepts, but it **exempts pregnant women and women within a month of childbirth**, halves the standard for women, bars the arrest of a suspect three days after a crime without strong evidence, and insists on **conclusive evidence**, warning that innocent people have confessed under fear of torture.

8.5 The range of law

The Arthashastra's law covers **contracts, debts, deposits and pledges, sale and purchase, partnership, labour and wages, marriage, divorce in some circumstances, women's property (*stridhana*), inheritance and partition, boundaries and property, defamation, assault, theft, robbery and sexual offences**, as well as **consumer protection** and the regulation of professions. This breadth makes it one of the earliest comprehensive **civil and criminal codes** in the world.

INDIAN CONNECT — CODIFICATION IN MODERN INDIA

India's own history of codification runs from colonial codes to their replacement. The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam** (enacted 2023, in force from **1 July 2024**) replaced the Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act. The **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026** (assent 7 April 2026), which amended 784 provisions of 79 central Acts and decriminalised 717 of them, applies a Kautilyan idea in modern form: **punishment proportionate to the wrong**, neither too harsh nor too mild.

09

Espionage and Internal Security

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya treated spies as the king's eyes and ears. They watched not only enemies but also the king's own ministers and officials, and reported what ordinary people were saying.

9.1 Why espionage was central

- **Information as power.** A king who rules a large territory cannot see everything himself. Spies give him **information about officials, public opinion and enemies**. The text holds that embezzlement can be detected **only through spies**.
- **Nobody is exempt.** The ministers, the purohita, the commander, the crown prince, the treasurer, the collector-general, the judges, the council and the heads of departments are all to be **watched**. Integrity tests themselves are administered by spies.

9.2 Types of spies

Kautilya divides spies into two groups.

GROUP	TYPE	COVER AND TASK
Samstha (stationary, working from "institutes of espionage")	Kapatika	Fraudulent disciple; reads others' minds

GROUP	TYPE	COVER AND TASK
	Udasthita	Recluse who runs farms and maintains a network of ascetics
	Grihapatika	Former cultivator living as a householder
	Vaidehaka	Former trader running a business
	Tapasa	Ascetic with shaven head or matted hair, consulted by the public
Sanchara (wandering)	Satri	Orphans trained in palmistry, omens and lore; carry information
	Tikshna	Fearless “fire-brand” agents; can act as bodyguards or assassins
	Rasada	Poisoners placed as cooks, barbers and attendants
	Parivrajika / bhikshuki	Women ascetics with access to ministers’ homes

- **Cross-checking.** Information is believed only when **three independent spies** agree; a spy repeatedly found wrong is removed. This is an early method of **verifying intelligence**.
- **Spies among the public.** Spies in the guise of ascetics or traders gather what people say about the king and his officers, and identify the **contented and the discontented**, so that grievances can be addressed or disaffection controlled.
- **Spies among officials.** Honest attendants of military officers watch accountants and clerks; householder spies verify the gopa’s village accounts.
- **Spies abroad.** Envoys, merchants and ascetics gather intelligence in enemy states; covert agents sow dissension and, in extreme cases, carry out “silent war”.

9.3 Evaluation

- **Strength:** the system gives the ruler **feedback on administration and opinion**, catches corruption and protects against conspiracy. In a monarchy without elections, press or courts independent of the king, it was the **main channel of accountability information**.
- **Weakness:** it builds a **surveillance state** in which officials and subjects are watched constantly, encourages deception, and can be abused to settle scores. Modern constitutional democracies must reconcile intelligence with **privacy and due process**; the Supreme Court in **K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India (2017)** held privacy to be a fundamental right, so state surveillance must satisfy legality, necessity and proportionality.

- **Modern parallels:** intelligence agencies for internal and external security, **vigilance wings** in departments, **audit and inspection**, and, in democratic form, **RTI, social audit and grievance portals**, which give citizens themselves the information that Kautilya's king gathered through spies.

10 Local and Village Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya divided the kingdom into a ladder of units: four large divisions, groups of villages, and single villages. A village accountant kept detailed records of land, people and animals, and passed them up the ladder.

10.1 The territorial hierarchy

- **Settlement of villages.** Villages are to contain **100 to 500 families** of cultivators, with clear boundaries (rivers, hills, forests, trees, embankments), and should be able to **protect one another**. New villages may be settled with immigrants or with surplus population from crowded areas, and receive **tax concessions** in their early years.
- **Administrative centres.** A **sthaniya** (fortified town) is set up in the centre of **800 villages**, a **dronamukha** for **400**, a **kharvatika** for **200**, and a **sangrahana** for **10**. These centres house courts, stores and officials.
- **Officers.** The **janapada** is divided into **four divisions**, each under a **sthanika**; under him, each **gopa** handles the accounts of **five or ten villages**. **Pradeshtris** (commissioners), sent by the samahartri, inspect the work of gopas and sthanikas and suppress crime. At the bottom is the **gramika** (village headman), a state servant.
- **Frontier and forest administration.** **Antapalas** man forts at the frontiers and control entry of men and goods through passes; **trappers, hunters and forest tribes** watch the interior wilds.

10.2 The gopa and the record of rights

- The gopa **numbers and registers every plot** (cultivated or not, wet or dry, gardens, forests, temples, irrigation works, cremation grounds, pastures, roads), and records **gifts, sales and remissions**.
- He **numbers every house** as tax-paying or not, and records the number of people of each caste and occupation (cultivators, herders, traders, artisans, labourers, slaves), the number of **animals**, and the **income and expenditure** of each household.
- **Householder spies** then verify his figures. This is the earliest Indian description of a **land-records and household-census system**, the ancestor of the patwari's records and of modern statistical administration. Kautilya is often credited as among the first thinkers to see the value of **statistics** in administration.

10.3 The village and the town

- **Village elders** (*gramavridhdhas*) look after the property of minors and of temples and help settle boundary disputes. Whether they formed a **panchayat** with real powers cannot be said from the text.

- **Restrictions on village life.** Outside ascetics, foreign guilds and entertainers are kept out of villages so that villagers stay at their work: the village is seen as a **unit of production**, not of self-government.
- **Towns.** The **nagaraka** (governor of the city) administers the capital through gopas (in charge of groups of households) and sthanikas (in charge of quarters), and is responsible for **fire precautions, sanitation, night patrols, the register of travellers and the control of crime**.

10.4 Evaluation: deconcentration, not devolution

- **Highly centralised.** Power in the countryside is centred in the **samahartri and his officials**; the village has **little initiative**. In modern terms this is **deconcentration** (spreading the centre's agents into the field), not **devolution** (transferring power to elected local bodies).
- **Yet administratively sophisticated.** The tiered structure, the record of rights, the use of statistics and the combination of revenue, police and judicial functions in field officers anticipate the later **district administration**, in which the Collector and the patwari carry out similar tasks.
- **Contrast with Gandhian and constitutional ideals.** The **73rd Amendment (1992)** made the panchayat a **constitutional unit of self-government**; Kautilya's village was a unit of **revenue and control**.

11 Mandala Theory, the Six-fold Policy and Diplomacy

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya saw neighbouring kingdoms as a circle. Your next-door neighbour is likely to be your rival, and your rival's neighbour is likely to be your friend. A wise king chooses among six policies, from peace to war, depending on whether he is stronger or weaker than the others.

11.1 The mandala: the circle of states

- **The vijigishu at the centre.** The theory is built around the **vijigishu** ("one who desires to conquer"), the king who is ambitious and well endowed with the elements of sovereignty.
- **Geography shapes alignments.** The state immediately bordering the vijigishu is his natural **enemy** (*ari*); the state beyond the enemy is his natural **friend** (*mitra*); beyond that comes the **enemy's friend** (*arimitra*), then the **friend's friend** (*mitramitra*), then the **enemy's friend's friend** (*arimitramitra*). Behind the vijigishu are the **rear enemy** (*parshnigraha*), the **rear friend** (*akranda*), and their allies (*parshnigrahasara*, *akrandasara*).
- **Two outside powers.** The **madhyama** (middle king) borders both the vijigishu and his enemy and can help or resist either; the **udasina** (neutral king), more powerful and further away, can help or resist all of them.
- **Twelve kings, four circles.** These make up the **twelve primary kings**. The text also counts **four primary circles** (centred on the vijigishu, the enemy, the madhyama and the udasina), and **seventy-two elements** in all once each king's elements of sovereignty are added.
- **Natural and acquired relations.** A **natural enemy** is a neighbour of equal birth; a **factitious enemy** is one who becomes hostile for reasons of his own. A **natural friend** is a hereditary ally; an **acquired friend** is one courted for self-interest.

- **The goal.** The vijigishu should make himself the **nave of the wheel** and the other kings its spokes. Each king seeks to **increase his power** (deliberation, treasury and army, and martial energy) and his happiness; superiority, equality and inferiority in power decide policy.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · FOREIGN POLICY

Mandala

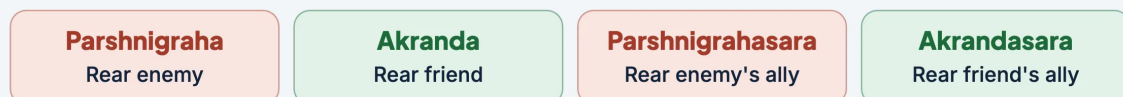
The Circle of States and the Six-fold Policy

Neighbours tend to be rivals; the neighbour's neighbour tends to be a friend

IN FRONT OF THE CONQUEROR (MOVING OUTWARD)



BEHIND THE CONQUEROR



SADGUNYA — CHOOSE BY RELATIVE POWER

Policy	When
Sandhi (peace)	When weaker
Vigraha (war)	When stronger
Asana (staying quiet)	When neither can hurt the other
Yana (marching)	When ready and own works are safe
Samshraya (shelter)	When too weak to defend oneself
Dvaidhibhava (double policy)	Peace with one to fight another

In simple words: pick friends and fights by geography and strength, not by sentiment.

Public Administration

11.2 Sadgunya: the six-fold policy

Kautilya rejects the view (of Vatavyadhi) that there are only two policies, peace and war, and lists six, each suited to a particular balance of power.

POLICY	MEANING	WHEN TO ADOPT IT
Sandhi	Peace by treaty	When one is weaker than the other king
Vigraha	War or hostility	When one is stronger

POLICY	MEANING	WHEN TO ADOPT IT
Asana	Staying quiet; neutrality	When neither side can hurt the other
Yana	Marching; preparing to attack	When one has the means and has secured one's own works
Samshraya	Seeking protection of a stronger king	When one is too weak to defend oneself
Dvaidhibhava	Double policy: peace with one, war with another	When help is needed from one to act against another

- **The test of a policy.** The right policy is the one that lets the king **build forts, roads, plantations, mines and villages** while **harming the similar works of his enemy**. The aim is to move from **deterioration to stagnation to progress**. Foreign policy is thus judged by its effect on the **economic strength** of the state: war and peace are means of development, not ends.
- **Prudence over glory.** A weak king attacked by a strong one should neither surrender abjectly nor fight to the death, but **seek protection or hold out in a fort**. Peace is preferred when gains from peace and war are equal, because war brings losses, expense and absence from home.

11.3 The four upayas and diplomacy

- **Four means.** In dealing with other kings the ruler uses **sama** (conciliation), **dana** (gifts or concessions), **bheda** (sowing dissension) and **danda** (force), generally in that order, with force as the last resort.
- **Envoys.** Kautilya distinguishes the **nisrishtartha** (envoy with full powers), the **parimitartha** (envoy with a limited mission) and the **shasanahara** (bearer of royal messages). An envoy must convey his message **exactly as entrusted, even at the risk of his life**, study the enemy's forts, army and officials, and watch the reception he receives for signs of the enemy's intentions. Envoys are **not to be killed**, since they merely speak for their masters.
- **Kinds of war.** The text names **open war** (*prakasha-yuddha*), **treacherous or concealed war** (*kuta-yuddha*) and **silent war** (*tushnim-yuddha*, eliminating an enemy through secret agents without open hostility).
- **Kinds of conquerors.** A **just conqueror** (*dharmavijayi*) is satisfied with submission; a **greedy conqueror** (*lobhavijayi*) with land or money; a **demon-like conqueror** (*asuravijayi*) wants everything, including lives. A weak king should seek the protection of the just one.
- **Governing the conquered.** After conquest the king should **cover the enemy's vices with his own virtues**, keep his promises, remit taxes, honour local leaders, and **adopt the dress, language and customs** of the people and respect their festivals and faith, because "whoever acts against the will of the people becomes unreliable". Realism in war is joined to **conciliation in rule**.

11.4 Relevance to international relations

Kautilya is widely called the first great **political realist**, and many of his ideas reappear in modern realism.

- **Self-interest of states:** states act to increase their power and security; alliances follow interest, not sentiment. This is the core of **realism** from Thucydides to Morgenthau.

- **Geopolitics:** neighbours tend to be rivals and the neighbour's neighbour a natural partner; the mandala anticipates **balance-of-power** reasoning.
- **Hedging:** dvaidhibhava (peace with one, hostility with another) and samshraya resemble modern **hedging and multi-alignment**.
- **Economic foundations of power:** foreign policy is judged by its effect on productive capacity, close to modern ideas of **comprehensive national power** and **economic statecraft**.
- **Intelligence and grey-zone conflict:** silent war and covert action anticipate **hybrid and grey-zone** warfare.
- **Indian practice.** Indian strategic discourse often reads policies such as **Neighbourhood First, Act East**, partnerships with distant powers and the pursuit of **strategic autonomy** through multiple alignments in Kautilyan terms. The Indian Army's **Project Udbhav** (launched October 2023 with the United Service Institution of India) set out to build an **indigenous strategic vocabulary** from texts including the Arthashastra.
- **Limits.** The mandala assumes **small, contiguous monarchies** in constant rivalry. It does not account for **international law, multilateral institutions, nuclear deterrence, economic interdependence or non-state actors**, and its acceptance of assassination and deceit conflicts with modern norms.

INDIAN CONNECT — RELEVANCE IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS VERSUS ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

The claim that the Arthashastra is more relevant to **international relations** than to **economic affairs** has some basis: its strategic logic of interest, alliances and power translates easily to today's world of states, while its economic model of **state monopolies, price control and royal enterprise** belongs to a pre-industrial monarchy. But its economic **principles** endure: a sound treasury, taxation that does not destroy the source, investment in infrastructure, regulation of markets, consumer protection and a check on official extraction. The Ministry of Finance and the Institute of Economic Growth have convened the **Kautilya Economic Conclave** since 2022 (its fourth edition was held on 3–5 October 2025) precisely to link economic policy with strategic thinking. The fairer view is that Kautilya's **strategic concepts** are more directly usable, while his **economic institutions** need translation into a market economy.

12 Ethics, Welfare and Political Realism

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya wanted honest officials and a king devoted to the people, which is ethical. But he also allowed lies, spying and even killing when the safety of the state required it, which is realist. Understanding him means seeing how both ideas fit together.

12.1 Ethics in public service in the Arthashastra

Ethics in the Arthashastra is not preached in the abstract. It is **built into administration**. Its main elements are:

- **Ethics of the ruler:** control of the six inner enemies; the happiness of the subjects as the king's happiness; accessibility; constant activity; impartial justice; personal liability for theft he cannot prevent.
- **Ethics of selection:** appointment by **merit and tested character**, and placement according to **which temptations an officer can resist**.
- **Ethics of reward:** fair and adequate pay, family support, and reward for honest performance, which reduces the **pressure to be corrupt**.
- **Ethics of control:** a detailed list of frauds, layered checks, **informer rewards, compensation to victims** and graded punishment.
- **Ethics towards the people:** protection of cultivators, artisans, consumers, women, minors, the aged and the helpless; prohibition of **over-extraction** of revenue.
- **Ethics of the conquered:** respect for the customs and faith of a conquered people.

These elements justify the view that **ethics in public services is a central concern** of the text. Yet that view must be qualified.

- **Ethics as instrumental.** Honesty is valued largely because **corruption weakens the treasury and the state**. The welfare of the subjects matters because **contented subjects make a strong state**. Kautilyan ethics is the ethics of **raison d'état** (reason of state), in which the good of the state is the final test.
- **A double standard.** The same text that demands honesty from officials prescribes **deception, entrapment, secret killing and the use of religion to manipulate** when the state's interest requires it, especially against enemies and traitors.
- **Hierarchical morality.** Duties differ by **varna**, and the moral order the king protects is unequal.

12.2 Political realism

Political realism is the view that politics is governed by **power and interest**, that the statesman must deal with the world **as it is** rather than as it ought to be, and that **public morality differs from private morality**.

- **Evidence of realism in the Arthashastra**
 - Human nature is taken as **self-interested**: officials will steal; neighbours will be rivals.
 - **Power** (of counsel, of treasury and army, of energy) is the measure of states; policy depends on relative power.
 - **Means** include deceit, espionage, bribery, dissension and assassination; treaties may be broken when interest requires.
 - **Religion** may be used to boost one's troops and frighten the enemy's.
 - The test of policy is its **result** for the state.
- **But a bounded realism**
 - The ends that justify extreme means are **specific**: the security of the state, the punishment of the wicked and the protection of the good, and the welfare of the people. The text is not a manual for a tyrant's personal enjoyment of power.

- Harsh measures are mainly reserved for **enemies, traitors and emergencies**; ordinary administration is governed by rules, proportionate punishment and welfare.
- The ruler himself is **bound by discipline**, and an unrighteous ruler is warned that he will fall.
- **Historical reception.** Within India the text was not universally admired: the seventh-century poet **Banabhatta**, in *Kadambari*, condemned the science of Kautilya as **merciless in its precepts**. The playwright **Vishakhadatta's** *Mudrarakshasa* portrays Chanakya as a master of intrigue in the service of a just cause. The tension between admiration and unease is as old as the text.

12.3 Was Kautilya a preacher of moral values?

- **Yes, in the sense that** he demands of the king and officials **self-control, truthfulness, learning, diligence, justice and care for the weak**, and treats these as the foundation of good government.
- **No, in the sense that** he subordinates morality to the **preservation and growth of the state**, and openly accepts immoral means in statecraft.
- **The synthesis.** Kautilya separates **individual morality** from **public morality**. He is a **moralist in administration** and a **realist in politics**: within the state he seeks an honest, welfare-oriented government; in dealing with threats to the state he accepts whatever works. This is why some scholars praise his **timeless wisdom** and others condemn his **ruthlessness**, and why his ideas are, as one modern summary puts it, often publicly criticised and privately practised.

CRITICISM — THE CASE AGAINST KAUTILYAN STATECRAFT AS A MODEL

- **Ends justify means:** espionage, entrapment, assassination and broken treaties are acceptable whenever the state benefits, which no constitutional democracy can accept.
- **Surveillance state:** officials and subjects are watched by a vast secret network; privacy and trust are casualties.
- **Absolute authority:** the king's edict is the highest law; there is no legislature, independent judiciary or enforceable right.
- **Unequal order:** the state upholds the varna hierarchy and accepts slavery.
- **Instrumental ethics:** honesty and welfare are valued because they strengthen the state, not because people have rights.
- **Uncertain history:** the text may not describe any real administration, so its "practice" is partly ideal.

DEFENCE — THE CASE FOR KAUTILYAN STATECRAFT AS A MODEL

- **Welfare as the end:** yogakshema, protection of the weak and the ruler's happiness in the subjects' happiness make the state an instrument of welfare, not of personal power.
- **Bounded realism:** harsh means are reserved mainly for enemies, traitors and emergencies; ordinary rule is by law and proportionate punishment.
- **Institutional integrity:** merit, tests, adequate pay, audit, informer rewards, transfer and compensation form a coherent anti-corruption system still relevant today.

- **Honest about power:** it states openly what states actually do, which helps in designing controls against abuse.
- **Discipline of the ruler:** the king is bound by training, counsel and fear of the people's anger.
- **Administrative science:** division of work, hierarchy, records, statistics and budgeting make it a pioneering text of public administration.

13 Kautilya, Weber and Machiavelli

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Kautilya is often compared with two European thinkers: Max Weber, who described modern bureaucracy, and Niccolo Machiavelli, who wrote frankly about power. Kautilya shares Weber's interest in an orderly, rule-bound officialdom and Machiavelli's frankness about power, but differs from both in important ways.

13.1 Kautilya and Weber

Max Weber, the German sociologist, described the **ideal type of bureaucracy** in *Economy and Society* (published 1922), as the administrative staff of **legal-rational authority** (see the chapter on Weber and Bureaucracy). Kautilya's administrative maxims show striking similarities with it, despite a gap of two thousand years and very different settings.

FEATURE	KAUTILYA	WEBER
Hierarchy	Three grades of amatyas; yukta, upayukta, tatpurusha; pay scale of several rungs	Clear hierarchy of offices
Defined competence	Each superintendent has a defined department and duties	Fixed jurisdictional areas
Selection by merit	Qualifications, performance, upadha tests	Technical qualifications, examinations
Salaried officials	Fixed cash salaries, within a quarter of revenue	Fixed salaries, usually with pension
Written records	Writs, registers, sealed account books	Administration based on files
Career and promotion	Permanence and promotion for good work; no fixed rules	Career with promotion by seniority or achievement

FEATURE	KAUTILYA	WEBER
Discipline and control	Daily examination, spies, fines, transfer	Strict and systematic discipline
Separation of office and person	Treasury not the king's property; gifts recorded	Official does not own the means of administration
Basis of obedience	Control: fear, interest and duty, backed by danda	Legitimate authority: belief in the legality of rules
Nature of authority	Traditional / patrimonial: officials serve the king personally, at his pleasure	Legal-rational: officials serve impersonal rules
Method	Prescriptive and normative manual	Ideal-type construct for analysis

- **The key difference: authority versus control.** Weber's bureaucracy rests on **authority**, the willingness to obey because rules are seen as legitimate; Kautilya's rests on **control**, obedience secured by **sanctions, surveillance and incentives**. In Weberian terms, Kautilya's system is closer to **power** than to legitimate authority.
- **Patrimonial, not legal-rational.** Kautilya's officials are the **king's servants**, appointed and removed at his pleasure; Weber's are servants of **impersonal law** with security of tenure. Kautilya's administration thus combines **rational techniques** with a **patrimonial structure**, which Weber himself would classify as a form of traditional rule.
- **Ethics.** Weber expects officials to internalise professional ethics; Kautilya assumes they will steal and relies on **external checks**. Both, however, want a **clean administration** and see control of corruption as central.
- **Weber on Kautilya.** In his lecture "**Politics as a Vocation**" (1919) Weber remarked that truly radical "Machiavellianism" is classically expressed in Kautilya's Arthashastra, compared with which Machiavelli's *The Prince* is harmless. Weber knew the text and saw it chiefly as a work of **ruthless realism**.

13.2 Kautilya and Machiavelli

Niccolo Machiavelli, the Florentine diplomat, wrote *The Prince* in **1513** (published 1532), advising a ruler how to gain and keep power in the turbulent Italy of his time.

POINT	KAUTILYA	MACHIARELLI
Context	Founding and running a large empire	Divided Italian city-states; call for a unifying prince
Aim of the work	Yogakshema and rakshana: security and welfare of the subjects through a strong state	How a prince may acquire and maintain his rule
Scope	Comprehensive: administration, economy, law, personnel, foreign policy, war	Mainly political conduct of the prince (with <i>Discourses</i> on republics)

POINT	KAUTILYA	MACHIAVELLI
Means	Openly includes espionage, assassination, deceit, poison	Deceit and cruelty "well used"; less on espionage and assassination
Morality	Public morality distinct from private; ruler bound by discipline	Politics autonomous from Christian morality
Administration	Detailed machinery of departments, revenue and audit	Little on administration
Welfare	Elaborate welfare duties	Little on welfare; the prince should avoid being hated
Reception	Admired in ancient India, criticised by some	Denounced for centuries in Europe

- **Similarities:** both are **realists** who separate politics from conventional morality, accept that **ends can justify means** in statecraft, value **strength and prudence**, and write from experience of politics.

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · COMPARATIVE THOUGHT

Comparison

Kautilya, Weber and Machiavelli

Shared ideas, decisive differences

Point	Kautilya	Weber	Machiavelli
Main concern	Security and welfare of the state	Rational administration	Gaining and keeping rule
Officials	Merit, tests, salaries, records	Merit, salaries, files, career	Little on administration
Obedience rests on	Control: fear, interest, duty	Legitimate legal authority	Fear and reputation
Type of rule	Patrimonial monarchy	Legal-rational	Princely rule
Method	Prescriptive manual	Ideal type	Advice from history
Means allowed	Spies, deceit, secret killing	Lawful procedure	Deceit and cruelty "well used"
Welfare	Elaborate duties	Not the focus	Avoid being hated

With Weber

Hierarchy, defined duties, merit, pay, records, discipline.

With Machiavelli

Realism; public morality distinct from private.

In simple words: Weber's orderly office, Machiavelli's frank realism.

Public Administration

- **Differences:** Machiavelli's prince seeks to **perpetuate his rule**; Kautilya's king seeks the **security and welfare of the state and its people**, and the Arthashastra is a **treatise on administration and economy** that Machiavelli never attempted. As Weber noted, Kautilya is also **more radical** in the means he accepts.

- **Plato and Aristotle.** Compared with the Greeks, Kautilya shifted attention from **political philosophy** (the ideal state, justice) to **political science and administration** (how a real state is run). Plato's idealism contrasts with Kautilya's practical realism, though both favour rule by the **trained few**.

14 Ashoka: The Arthashastra Tradition in Practice?

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Ashoka, Chandragupta's grandson, ran the same empire but turned away from war after the conquest of Kalinga. His edicts show a ruler who kept many Kautilyan administrative habits while trying to rule by moral persuasion.

- **Ashoka** ruled the Mauryan empire from about **268 to 232 BCE**. After the bloody conquest of **Kalinga**, he turned to **dhamma** (a moral code of tolerance, compassion and right conduct) and to **conquest by dhamma** instead of by arms.
- **Kautilyan continuities.**
 - **Constant availability:** in his sixth major rock edict Ashoka orders that reporters should inform him of the people's business **at all times and in all places**, whether he is eating, in the inner apartments or in the garden: a direct echo of the Arthashastra's demand that the king never keep petitioners waiting.
 - **Special officers:** he created **dhamma-mahamattas** (officers of righteousness) to look after the welfare of different communities, and gave **rajukas** (rural officers) authority in justice and welfare.
 - **Public works and welfare:** wells, rest houses, shade trees along roads, and medical care for people and animals.
 - **A large, centralised bureaucracy** with regular inspection tours.
- **Departures.** Ashoka rejected the **expansionist mandala** in favour of **dhammavijaya** and stressed **moral persuasion** over coercion. Whether he was directly guided by the Arthashastra cannot be proved; the similarities suggest a **shared Mauryan tradition of governance** in which Ashoka gave Kautilya's welfare ideal a moral and Buddhist turn.

15 Relevance to Contemporary Governance

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Many of Kautilya's ideas, such as choosing honest officials, keeping careful accounts, rewarding people who report fraud and being easy for citizens to reach, are still good advice. Others, such as an all-powerful king and constant spying, cannot fit a democracy.

15.1 Learnings for governance today

KAUTILYAN IDEA	WHAT IT MEANS TODAY	INDIAN EXAMPLE
Yogakshema; the ruler's happiness in the people's	Citizen-centric, welfare-oriented governance	DPSPs; welfare schemes; citizen's charters
Accessibility of the ruler	Open, responsive government	CPGRAMS grievance portal; Jan Sunwai; PRAGATI reviews
Merit and tested integrity	Merit recruitment, vigilance clearance	UPSC; probation; vigilance clearance
Adequate pay, reward for performance	Pay commissions, performance-linked incentives	Central Pay Commissions; APAR
Forty ways of embezzlement; layered checks	Systems-based anti-corruption	PC Act 1988; CVC; Lokpal; e-procurement
Informer rewards; compensation to victims	Whistle-blower protection; restitution	PIDPI Resolution 2004; consumer forums
Transfer from sensitive posts	Rotation to prevent entrenchment	Rotational transfer policies
Budget, registers, audit	Fiscal discipline and audit	Article 112; CAG; FRBM Act 2003
Ripe-fruit taxation; no over-extraction	Taxation that protects the base	GST rate rationalisation; taxpayers' charter
Proportionate danda	Proportionate regulation	Jan Vishwas Acts 2023 and 2026
Written, uniform law	Codification and legal certainty	BNS, BNSS, BSA (2024)
Statistics and records	Data-driven administration	Census; digital land records
Mandala and six-fold policy	Strategic, interest-based foreign policy	Neighbourhood First; strategic autonomy

15.2 Governing, accountability and justice

- **Governing.** Kautilya's insistence that **all undertakings depend upon finance**, that policy should be decided after structured deliberation (the five elements of counsel), and that the ruler be **active and accessible** is a template for **effective executive leadership**.
- **Accountability.** His system is **upward accountability** (officials to the king) enforced by **surveillance, audit and sanction**. Modern democracy adds **downward and horizontal accountability**: to citizens, legislatures, courts and independent bodies. Kautilya's **public proclamation inviting complaints** against an erring officer is a rare early instance of **accountability to the people affected**.

- **Justice.** Proportionate punishment, registration of cases, rules on evidence and witnesses, and **protection of the weak** remain sound. The missing elements are **judicial independence** and **rights against the state**, which the Constitution supplies.

15.3 Limits of relevance

- **Monarchy versus democracy:** the Kautilyan state has subjects, not citizens; legitimacy comes from protection, not consent.
- **Surveillance versus privacy:** the espionage system conflicts with constitutional rights.
- **Hierarchy versus equality:** varna-based duties cannot be reconciled with **Articles 14–17**.
- **State monopoly versus market economy:** the entrepreneurial monarchy differs from a liberalised economy with independent regulators.
- **Means versus ends:** constitutional morality does not permit the deceit and violence that Kautilya allowed.

The useful legacy is therefore the **administrative and ethical technique**, not the political form.

Theory lens: Kautilya through Paper I ideas

- **Weber's ideal-type bureaucracy.** Kautilya anticipates Weber's hierarchy, defined competence, merit, salaries, records and discipline, but within a **patrimonial** order where obedience rests on control rather than legitimate authority (see the chapter on Weber and Bureaucracy). India's civil service today is formally Weberian; its informal workings often recall the patrimonial side.
- **Riggs's fused and prismatic societies.** Fred Riggs, in *Administration in Developing Countries* (1964), described **fused** societies in which one structure performs many functions. The Kautilyan state, where the king's household, treasury, courts and army overlap and the samahartri is at once revenue, police and magistrate, is close to the **fused** type with some **diffracted** techniques. The often-quoted description of Indian administration as "**Weberian structures, Kautilyan practice and Gandhian rhetoric**" is a **prismatic** picture: Weberian forms on paper, Kautilyan power-centred and surveillance-based practice beneath, and Gandhian ideals in public speech, which is Riggs's **formalism** (see the chapter on Riggsian Models).
- **Principal-agent theory.** Kautilya's honey and fish similes describe exactly the problem of **information asymmetry** between a principal (the king) and agents (officials) who have hidden actions and hidden purposes. His remedies (monitoring by spies, audits, bonding through sureties, incentive pay, rewards for informers, rotation) are the standard agency solutions of **monitoring, bonding and incentive alignment**.
- **Public choice.** The assumption that officials will "eat" the revenue unless checked, and that over-zealous officers maximise collection to impress their master, parallels **public choice** theory's self-interested bureaucrat (see the chapter on New Public Administration and Public Choice).
- **Accountability theory.** Kautilya relies on **hierarchical and legal accountability** in Romzek and Dubnick's terms: close supervision and sanctions. Professional and political accountability are thin. His public proclamation for complaints is a primitive form of **diagonal accountability** (see the chapter on Accountability and Control).
- **Good governance.** The **World Bank's** *Governance and Development* (1992) stressed public sector management, accountability, a legal framework and transparency. Kautilya's sound finance, accountable officials, codified law and information systems match the first three; transparency to citizens is the missing element (see the chapter on LPG and Good Governance).

- **Administrative ethics.** The upadha tests and placement by tested integrity anticipate modern **integrity management**, and the separation of public and private morality is the old form of the debate on **ethics of public office** (see the chapter on Administrative Ethics).
- **Development administration.** The Kautilyan state that settles villages, builds irrigation and runs enterprises is an early **positive, developmental state**, a reminder that the administration of development did not begin with post-war theory (see the chapter on Development Administration).

16 Key Terms

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Arthashastra	The science of acquiring and maintaining the earth (livelihood and territory); science of polity
Artha	Wealth, livelihood, and the territory that supports them
Anvikshiki	Philosophy and logic
Varta	Economics: agriculture, cattle-breeding and trade
Dandaniti	Science of government; the policy of the rod
Danda	Coercive power, punishment; also the army
Matsyanyaya	Law of the fish: the strong swallow the weak in anarchy
Saptanga / prakritis	Seven limbs of the state
Yogakshema	Acquisition and secure enjoyment of welfare
Rakshana / palana	Protection and administration of the state
Rajadharma	The duties of the ruler
Rajarshi	A royal sage: a self-disciplined, learned king
Mantrin	Inner counsellor
Mantriparishad	Council of ministers
Amatya	High official; minister or head of department
Tirthas	The eighteen high offices of state

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Adhyaksha	Superintendent; head of a department
Samahartri	Collector-general of revenue and head of rural administration
Sannidhatri	Treasurer-general and keeper of stores
Akshapatala	Records and accounts office
Ayasharira / vyayasharira	Body of income / body of expenditure
Upadha	Secret test of integrity by allurements
Yukta, upayukta, tatpurusha	Head, subordinate officer and lowest staff of a department
Lekhaka	Writer who drafts royal writs
Rajasasana	Royal edict; the highest of the four sources of law
Charitra	Custom and usage of the people
Dharmasthiya / kantakashodhana	Civil courts / courts for crime and public order
Gopa / sthanika	Officer of five to ten villages / officer of a quarter of the kingdom
Samstha / sanchara	Stationary spies / wandering spies
Vijigishu	The would-be conqueror at the centre of the mandala
Mandala	Circle of states
Sadgunya	Six-fold foreign policy
Madhyama / udasina	Middle king / neutral king
Prakritikopa	Anger or revolt of the subjects

17

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

The Arthashastra predates modern commissions and courts, but the bodies and judgments below carry its central administrative concerns (integrity, audit, codification, surveillance) into the Indian state today.

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Committee on Prevention of Corruption (chair K. Santhanam)	1964	Led to the Central Vigilance Commission (1964) and a systematic anti-corruption framework
Prevention of Corruption Act	1988 (amended 2018)	Criminal liability of public servants; 2018 amendment made bribe-giving an offence and added Section 17A (prior approval)
Vineet Narain v. Union of India	1997	Supreme Court struck down the "Single Directive", gave the CVC supervisory role over the CBI, and laid down safeguards for independent investigation
Public Interest Disclosure and Protection of Informers Resolution	2004	Designated the CVC to receive and protect whistle-blower complaints
2nd ARC, 4th Report, "Ethics in Governance" (chair M. Veerappa Moily)	2007	Recommended a code of ethics for ministers and civil servants, a strengthened anti-corruption framework and protection of whistle-blowers
Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act	2013	Statutory ombudsman for corruption complaints against public servants
Subramanian Swamy v. Director, CBI	2014	Struck down Section 6A of the DSPE Act (prior approval to investigate senior officers) as violating Article 14
K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India	2017	Privacy is a fundamental right; state surveillance must meet legality, necessity and proportionality
Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, Sakshya Adhinyam	2023 (in force 1 July 2024)	Replaced the IPC, CrPC and Evidence Act; a fresh codification of criminal law
Centre for Public Interest Litigation v. Union of India	2026 (13 January)	Split verdict on Section 17A of the PC Act; one judge held it unconstitutional, the other valid if screening is done by the Lokpal or Lokayukta; referred to a larger bench
Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act	2026 (assent 7 April)	Amended 784 provisions of 79 central Acts and decriminalised 717, for proportionate, trust-based regulation

The pattern in the table is a move from Kautilya's **king-centred, surveillance-based control** to **rule-based, independent and rights-respecting control**: statutory vigilance bodies, independent investigation, an ombudsman, protection of privacy and proportionate penalties.

Contemporary Developments

- **Kautilya Economic Conclave (October 2025).** The fourth edition, held on **3–5 October 2025** in New Delhi on the theme “Seeking Prosperity in Turbulent Times”, was convened by the **Institute of Economic Growth** with the **Ministry of Finance**, which have organised the conclave annually since **2022**.
- **Chanakya Defence Dialogue (November 2025).** The Indian Army and the Centre for Land Warfare Studies held the dialogue on **27–28 November 2025** on the theme “Reform to Transform”, showing the continued use of Kautilyan identity in India’s strategic discourse.
- **Project Udbhav (2023–2024).** Launched by the Defence Minister on **21 October 2023** with the United Service Institution of India to study ancient Indian strategic texts, including the Arthashastra, and develop an indigenous strategic vocabulary; its first phase closed with a panel on ancient military ethics on **21 May 2024**.
- **Split verdict on prior approval for corruption probes (January 2026).** On **13 January 2026** the Supreme Court split on Section 17A of the Prevention of Corruption Act, reviving the Kautilyan dilemma of how to catch the corrupt **without harassing the honest**.
- **Jan Vishwas (Amendment of Provisions) Act, 2026 (April 2026).** Passed by Parliament on **2 April 2026** after a Select Committee review, it decriminalised **717 provisions** across central Acts, a modern application of **proportionate danda**.
- **New criminal codes in force (July 2024).** The BNS, BNSS and BSA came into force on **1 July 2024**, replacing colonial codes with a new codification of criminal law.
- **Karmayogi Saptah (October 2024).** The Prime Minister launched the first **National Learning Week** for civil servants on **19 October 2024** under Mission Karmayogi, adding structured capacity building to merit-based recruitment.
- **New CAG (November 2024).** **K. Sanjay Murthy** took office as Comptroller and Auditor General in **November 2024**, heading the independent audit institution that has replaced the king’s accounts office of the Arthashastra.

Revision Grid

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Kautilya (Chanakya, Vishnugupta)	<i>Arthashastra</i> (traditionally c. 4th century BCE)	Science of polity; saptanga; yogakshema; machinery of administration; mandala
R. Shamasastri	Text (1909), translation (1915)	Rediscovered and first published the text
R.P. Kangle	Critical edition (1960–65)	Standard text, translation and study
Thomas Trautmann	<i>Kautilya and the Arthashastra</i> (1971)	Statistical analysis: multiple authors

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Patrick Olivelle	<i>King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India</i> (2013)	Three-layer composition, c. 50 BCE to 300 CE
Megasthenes	<i>Indica</i> (c. 300 BCE, fragments)	Greek account of Chandragupta's administration
Max Weber	"Politics as a Vocation" (1919); <i>Economy and Society</i> (1922)	Called Kautilya more radical than Machiavelli; ideal-type bureaucracy
Niccolo Machiavelli	<i>The Prince</i> (1513)	Realist advice on gaining and keeping power
Roger Boesche	<i>The First Great Political Realist</i> (2002)	Kautilya as the founder of political realism
Fred Riggs	<i>Administration in Developing Countries</i> (1964)	Fused–prismatic–diffracted; formalism
Banabhatta	<i>Kadambari</i> (7th century CE)	Criticised Kautilya's science as merciless
Ashoka	Rock and pillar edicts (c. 268–232 BCE)	Dhamma, constant availability, dhamma-mahamattas
Santhanam Committee	Report (1964)	Anti-corruption framework; CVC
2nd ARC	4th Report, <i>Ethics in Governance</i> (2007)	Codes of ethics; anti-corruption reforms



Previous Year Questions 19 QUESTIONS



2026

Learnings from Arthashastra could make **governance effective** even today. **Explore** the potential. 10 MARKS

2025

Arthashastra of Kautilya means the **science of economics of livelihood** of the people. **Comment.** 10 MARKS

2024

"Ethics in Public services has been the main concern of **Kautilya's Arthashastra.**" **Examine** the statement. 10 MARKS

2023 "Kautilya's Arthashastra is a **theoretical work on the state and Statecraft.**" **Comment.**

10 MARKS

2021 Kautilya envisages **protection, welfare and prosperity** of the State and its people as the utmost concern of a ruler. In this context, **discuss** the significance of Kautilya's emphasis on **governing, accountability and justice** in contemporary India. 20 MARKS

2019 In the text of Arthashastra, 'the state is **neither a police State nor merely a tax gathering State**'. **Comment.** 10 MARKS

2016 "In contemporary times, Kautilya's Arthashastra is relevant more in the field of **international relations** than in **economic affairs.**" **Analyse** the statement. 20 MARKS

2014 "**Ethics in public services** has been the central concern of Kautilya's Arthashastra." **Critically examine** the statement.

2014 "Indian administration is said to be characterised by its three features viz. **Weberian structures. Kautilyan practice and Gandhian rhetoric.**" **Examine** the statement.

2012 'The Arthashastra is a book of **political realism.**' **Elaborate.**

2010 "The rule of kings depends primarily on **written orders**" Why did Kautilya favour **Codification of Laws?**

2009 **Comment** on the view that despite different contexts, **administrative maxims of Kautilya's Arthashastra** bear considerable similarity with features of **Weber's ideal bureaucratic model.**

2007 "Kautilya was not only the foremost **politico-administrative thinker** of ancient India but he was an advocate and preacher of **moral values** too." **Comment.**

2006 "In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness; in their welfare his welfare." **Comment** on **Kautilyan state administration.** In what respects is **modern democratic rulers' behaviour** different from Kautilyan rulers?

2003 "The Arthashastra is **India's oldest complete text on public administration.**" **Comment.**

2001 "The **machinery of government** designed in Kautilya's Arthashastra does not exactly resemble our modern-day polity, but it does contain some **principles** which could be said to be the part of today's **science of public administration.**" **Comment.**

1998

"Kautilya's Arthashastra has significant **relevance to the contemporary Indian administration.**" **Comment.**

1990

'The **principles** in Arthashastra do not command as much of our attention as the delineation of the **machinery of administration** in it.... It reveals the authors **mastery of detail**, which could have developed only as a result of his actual experience of administration.' **Comment.**

1987

'It is not possible to maintain that the **administrative system, described in Arthashastra** was in **actual existence during the Mouryan period**'. **Comment.**

LOTUSARISE IAS

07

UNIT 07

2 CHAPTERS

68 PYQS

District Administration since Independence

Changing role of the Collector; Union-State-local relations; Imperatives of development management and law and order administration; District administration and democratic decentralization.

CHAPTERS

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION OPTIONAL

PAPER II · PART A

The District Collector: Changing Role, Development Management and Law and Order

India has **more than 770 districts**, and in almost every one of them a single officer, called the **Collector, District Magistrate (DM) or Deputy Commissioner (DC)**, stands at the head of the State government's field administration. The office was created by the East India Company in **1772** to collect land revenue; it survived the end of empire, absorbed the tasks of planning and welfare, and today also carries **disaster management, elections, the census, flagship schemes** and a growing list of **crisis duties**.

How this one office balances **order** and **development, regulation** and **facilitation**, and **State control** and **local democracy** is the central question of district administration in India. The answer decides how well national policies actually reach the citizen.

SYLLABUS Changing role of the Collector; Union-State-local relations; Imperatives of development management and law and order administration; District administration and democratic decentralization.

THIS CHAPTER The district as the basic unit of administration and the structure below it; reorganisation of districts; origin and evolution of the Collector (Mughal antecedents, Hastings 1772, Cornwallis and Munro, the 1859 union of Collector and Magistrate, the colonial "Mai-Baap"); the Collector's roles after Independence (Collector, District Magistrate under the BNSS, development administrator, disaster manager, election and census officer, coordinator, grievance and protocol officer); the police commissionerate and its effect on the DM; the four phases of the changing role; development management versus law-and-order administration; issues (overload, tenure and transfers, politicisation, generalist versus specialist, district training); committees and reports (Krishnamachari, First ARC study team, Hota, 2nd ARC 5th, 6th and 15th Reports, T.S.R. Subramanian); modernisation, best practices and awards; climate change and the Collector; a brief note on democratic decentralisation.

CONTENTS

01	The District as the Basic Unit of Administration	02	Origin and Evolution of the Collector
03	The Collector's Roles Today	04	The Changing Role of the Collector
05	Development Management and Law-and-Order Administration	06	Issues and Challenges in the Collector's Office
07	Committees, Reforms and Modernisation		

09	Key Terms	08	Emerging Frontiers: Climate Change and the Collector
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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Topic map

The District Collector

Changing role, development management and law and order

One office, many roles: from revenue collector to district coordinator

Origin and evolution

- District as the basic unit
- **1772** Hastings; Cornwallis, Munro
- 1859: Collector + Magistrate
- Colonial "Mai-Baap"

Roles today

- **Collector:** land and revenue
- **District Magistrate:** BNSS
- Development coordinator
- DDMA chair, DEO, census

Changing role

- Order and revenue
- Development
- Regulation and facilitation
- **Digital** and data-driven

Two imperatives

- Law and order
- Development management
- Tension and linkage
- Commissionerates

Issues

- **Overload**, committees
- Short tenures, transfers
- Politicisation
- Generalist vs specialist

Reforms

- First ARC; **2nd ARC** 15th Report
- Hota; 2014 tenure rules
- e-District, MIS, best practice
- ADP, PM's Awards

Theory lens

Prefectorial field administration · Weber's generalist · development administration · Riggs' sala · NPM manager · network coordinator

In simple words: the Collector is the State government's face in the district, and the job keeps growing. **Public Administration**

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Think of the captain of a cricket team who is also the groundsman, the umpire on some days and the team manager on others. He keeps order on the field, plans how to win, looks after the pitch and

deals with every visitor. The Collector is that captain for the district: the government's single most visible face, expected to keep peace, deliver schemes and solve whatever problem walks through the door.

01

The District as the Basic Unit of Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

A State is too big to be run from its capital alone, so it is divided into districts. The district is the level where the government's departments meet the people, and where one officer can see the whole picture at once.

1.1 Meaning of district and district administration

- **District.** The *Oxford Dictionary* defines it as "a territory marked off for special administrative purposes". In India it is the **basic territorial unit** of general administration, revenue, criminal justice and development.
- **District administration.** **S.S. Khera**, a former Cabinet Secretary, in *District Administration in India* (1964), called it **the total management of public affairs within the territorial unit of the district**: that portion of public administration which functions within a district's limits.
- **The convenient unit.** The First Administrative Reforms Commission's **Study Team on District Administration (1967)** described the district as the most convenient geographical unit where the **total apparatus of public administration can be concentrated** and where it comes into **direct contact with the people**.
- **Size and scale.** A district is often as populous as a small country: the median district held about **1.5 million** people in 2001, and many now exceed four or five million. Hence the remark, made by Prime Minister **Manmohan Singh** to District Magistrates in **May 2005**, that if India lives in its States, it also **lives in its districts**.

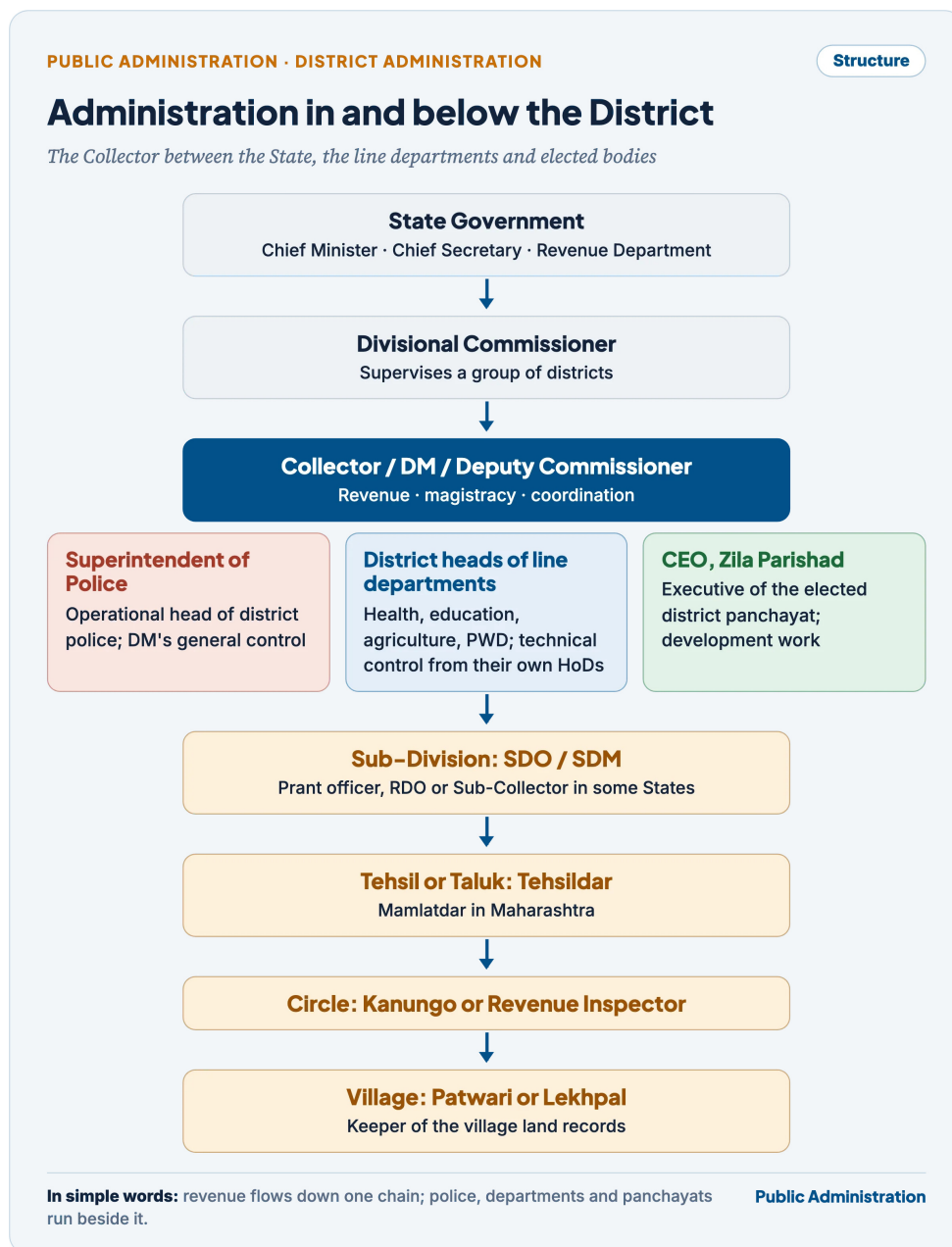
1.2 The district in the Constitution and law

- **Original Constitution.** The word appeared only in **Article 233**, which deals with the appointment of **district judges**.
- **After 1992.** The **73rd and 74th Amendments** placed the district at the centre of local government: the **district panchayat** (Part IX), **municipalities** (Part IXA) and the **District Planning Committee (Article 243ZD)**, which consolidates the plans of panchayats and municipalities.
- **Creation of districts.** Districts are created, merged and abolished by **State governments** by executive notification under their **Land Revenue Codes**; no parliamentary law is needed. This flexibility explains frequent and sometimes politically driven reorganisation (section 1.4).
- **Designations.** The same office is called **Collector** (revenue role; Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh), **District Magistrate** (magisterial role; Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, West Bengal) and **Deputy**

Commissioner (Karnataka, Assam, Punjab, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir). The office of the Collector is the **Collectorate**.

1.3 Administration in and below the district

The Collector sits in the middle of a vertical chain that runs from the State capital to the village, while several other chains run beside it.



- **Above the district.** The Collector belongs to the **General Administration / Revenue Department**, works under the **Chief Secretary** and the **Revenue Department**, and in most States is supervised by a **Divisional Commissioner** (created in Bengal from 1829), who oversees a group of districts.
- **Beside the Collector.** The **Superintendent of Police** (police), the **District and Sessions Judge** (judiciary, under the High Court), the district heads of **line departments** (health, education, agriculture, public works, forests), and the **CEO of the Zila Parishad**, the executive of the elected district panchayat.
- **Below the district.** The chain of revenue and magisterial administration, summarised in the table.

The units below the district carry different names in different States, but their logic is the same everywhere.

LEVEL	USUAL NAME	OFFICER IN CHARGE	VARIANTS
Sub-division	Sub-division	Sub-Divisional Officer / Magistrate (SDO/SDM)	Revenue division and Sub-Collector or RDO (Tamil Nadu); <i>prant</i> and Prant Officer (Maharashtra)
Tehsil	Tehsil or taluk	Tehsildar (with Naib-Tehsildar)	<i>Taluka</i> and Mamlatdar (Maharashtra, Gujarat)
Circle	Circle, <i>pargana</i> or <i>firka</i>	Kanungo / Revenue Inspector	Circle Inspector (Maharashtra)
Village	Revenue village	Patwari	Lekhpal (Uttar Pradesh), <i>karnam</i> (Tamil Nadu), <i>talathi</i> (Maharashtra)

- **The SDO** is a young IAS officer or a State Civil Service officer: a link between the Collector and the Tehsildar in revenue matters, and between the DM and the station house officer in law and order. Sub-divisions are of an **office type** (the SDO has an office within the sub-division, the common pattern) or a **touring type**.
- **The tehsil** is often called a “miniature district”, because the field offices of many departments sit at its headquarters; the Tehsildar is a gazetted State officer with revenue, magisterial and executive powers.
- **The patwari** keeps the village land records and revenue accounts, and is often called the **kingpin of revenue administration**.
- **A recurring weakness.** SDOs and other sub-divisional officers often **live at district headquarters** rather than in their sub-divisions, which defeats the purpose of the tier and makes citizens travel for small tasks.

1.4 Size and reorganisation of districts

The number of districts has risen from about **300** around Independence to more than **770** today. Whether smaller districts bring better administration is a live question.

- **The case for smaller districts.** A smaller area reduces the **Collector's span of control**, brings the office **closer to citizens**, allows **closer supervision** of schemes and police stations, and gives remote or tribal areas their own headquarters. Smaller districts have helped some new States (Telangana, Chhattisgarh) bring administration nearer to people.
- **The case against.** Each new district needs a **Collectorate, police headquarters, courts and staff**; new districts often start with **vacant posts and no buildings**; boundaries can split communities, PRIs and planning units; and an overloaded Collector's problem lies in the **number of functions**, not only in area.
- **Politico-populist reorganisation: the Rajasthan case.** The State notified **17 new districts and 3 divisions** on **5 August 2023**, shortly before the Assembly election. A review committee of the next government, chaired by retired IAS officer **Lalit K. Panwar**, found several of them unviable, some with fewer than six tehsils; on **28 December 2024** the Cabinet **abolished nine districts and the three divisions**, leaving **41 districts and 7 divisions**. The episode shows how district creation can follow **electoral convenience** rather than administrative criteria such as population, area, revenue base and connectivity.

INDIAN CONNECT — CRITERIA FOR CREATING DISTRICTS

No national law fixes criteria for new districts. Sound practice, as reflected in State review committees, looks at **population and area, distance from headquarters, number of tehsils and police stations, financial capacity** to build offices, **social and geographical coherence**, and the effect on **panchayat and municipal boundaries**. A district created without these becomes a signboard rather than an administration.

02

Origin and Evolution of the Collector

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The British needed one trusted officer in each district to collect taxes and keep order. Over time this officer became the government itself in the eyes of villagers. Independent India kept him but asked him to serve a democracy and to develop the district, not just to rule it.

2.1 Before the British

- **Ancient and medieval antecedents.** Territorial units existed from the Mauryan period. Under the **Mughals** the **sarkar** (district) had a **faujdar** for law and order and an **amalguzar** (or *karori*) for revenue, with the *pargana*, *qanungo* and *patwari* below. The British inherited this revenue structure and placed their own officer over it.

2.2 The colonial Collector, 1772 to 1947

This is a brief summary; the full story is in the chapter on Legacy of British Rule.

- **1772, Warren Hastings.** When the Company decided to “stand forth as Diwan” in Bengal, **Warren Hastings** made Company servants **Collectors** of revenue in the districts. The title still records the office's first purpose.
- **1787.** The Collector was given **civil justice and magistracy** in addition to revenue.
- **1793, the Cornwallis Code.** Lord Cornwallis, believing in the **rule of law** and separation of powers, confined the Collector to **revenue** and gave civil justice, magistracy and police to a separate **Judge-Magistrate**. This was the **Cornwallis school**, tied to the **Permanent Settlement** with zamindars in Bengal.
- **The Munro school.** Thomas Munro in Madras, with Elphinstone, Malcolm and Metcalfe, argued for **one strong, paternal officer** combining revenue, magistracy and police and dealing **directly with cultivators** under the **ryotwari** system. Its logic of **concentrated authority** prevailed in the non-regulation provinces and gradually everywhere.

How the Collector's Office Evolved

From revenue agent of the Company to coordinator of a democratic district

Colonial foundation

- 1772** ● **Warren Hastings** makes Company servants Collectors of revenue
- 1793** ● **Cornwallis Code** separates revenue from justice and magistracy
- 1820s** ● **Munro school**: one strong officer close to the people
- 1859** ● Collector and **District Magistrate** united in one officer
- 1861** ● **Police Act**: SP under the DM's general control

Development and democracy

- 1952** ● **Community Development**: Collector leads the extension drive
- 1959** ● Panchayati Raj; Collector linked to the **Zila Parishad**
- 1980** ● Collector chairs the **DRDA** in most States
- 1992** ● **73rd and 74th Amendments**: elected district tier

Regulation, crisis and data

- 2005** ● **DM Act**: Collector chairs the DDMA
- 2018** ● **Aspirational Districts**: ranking by data
- 2022** ● DRDAs merged into **Zila Parishads**
- 2024** ● **BNSS** replaces the CrPC; s.163 for s.144

In simple words: each era added a new duty; few were ever taken away.

Public Administration

- **1829 to 1859. Divisional Commissioners** were placed over Collectors (1829); magisterial powers returned to the Collector; and in **1859** the **Collector and District Magistrate were finally united** in one officer.
- **1861, the Police Act.** Under **section 4 of the Police Act, 1861**, the district police, headed by the **Superintendent of Police**, worked under the **general control and direction of the District Magistrate**. This created the **dual control** of district policing that still exists.
- **The "little Napoleon".** By the late nineteenth century the Collector-cum-DM was revenue collector, treasurer, magistrate, controller of police and jails, head of local boards and the government's eyes and ears. The **Simon Commission (1930)** observed that to most inhabitants the district officer **was the government**. **Ramsay MacDonald** compared him to the **tortoise on whose back stood the elephant of the Government of India**.
- **"Mai-Baap".** People came to see the Collector as **mother and father (mai-baap)**, a **paternal guardian** who could solve land disputes, scarcity, family quarrels and caste conflicts. This image gave the office legitimacy, but it also bred **dependence, distance and arbitrariness**, which democracy later had to unlearn.

INDIAN CONNECT — THE BENGAL AND RYOTWARI PATTERNS OF DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

The **Bengal pattern** grew from the **Permanent Settlement (1793)**: revenue was fixed and collected through **zamindars**, so the Collector had **little direct contact with cultivators**, village records decayed and the district was large and thinly administered. The **Madras and Bombay (ryotwari) pattern** settled revenue **directly with the ryot**, so the Collector's revenue staff (tehsildar, patwari) reached **every village and plot**, building a dense, record-based administration. Much of today's variation in land records and sub-district structure across States still reflects this divide.

2.3 Why the colonial office was “prefectorial”

- **Prefectorial system.** In a **prefectorial** system, named after the **French prefect**, a **general representative of the government** in each territory supervises and coordinates the field officers of all departments. In a **functional** system each department runs its own field line from headquarters.
- **The British choice.** The British **superimposed a prefect-like officer** on the inherited Mughal district at a time when there were **no elected rural local governments** at the district level. With nothing to share or check power, **all authority converged on the Collector**. The French prefect is still regarded as the nearest analogue of the Indian Collector.
- **After 1947.** India kept this **integrated prefectorial** core for revenue, law and order and crises, while development sectors developed **functional** lines and, after 1992, elected district bodies. The result is a **mixed system**, discussed in the theory lens.

2.4 What changed after Independence

The Collector “**admirably survived** the historic role of change from an alien regime to a national one”, in a phrase long used to describe the office, but its setting changed in at least ten ways.

- **Ends of government.** A **welfare state** replaced a revenue-and-order “**police state**”; development became the main business of the district.
- **Form of government.** **Parliamentary democracy** at the Centre and States made the Collector answerable to **elected ministers**, and MLAs and MPs became powerful local actors.
- **Separation of the judiciary.** **Article 50** (a Directive Principle) and the **Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973** moved criminal trials to **judicial magistrates** under the High Court, ending the Collector's role as a trial magistrate.
- **Panchayati Raj.** From **1959**, and constitutionally from **1992**, elected **Zila Parishads** and municipalities became separate centres of power.
- **Departmental growth.** A large number of **technical departments** (agriculture, health, cooperation, industries) set up district offices headed by **specialists** answerable to their own heads of department.
- **ICS to IAS.** The **Indian Administrative Service** replaced the ICS, with a broader social base after the spread of education and reservation, and a stated ethos of **service rather than rule**.
- **Political consciousness.** Rising awareness, **political parties**, **pressure groups**, the **media** and later **RTI** and social media made the district officer far more visible and contestable.
- **Commissionerates.** In large cities, **police commissionerates** took law and order away from the DM.

COMMON CONFUSION

Is the District Collector a Union (central) government officer? No. The Collector is usually a member of the **Indian Administrative Service**, an **All India Service** recruited by the Union through the UPSC and governed by Union rules (the All India Services Act, 1951). But the Collector is **appointed by the State government**, holds powers under **State laws** such as the **Land Revenue Code**, and works under the **State's** control and discipline while posted in the district. The office is a **State post**; the Union's influence comes through the cadre rules, centrally sponsored schemes and bodies such as the Election Commission, not through direct command.

03

The Collector's Roles Today

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The Collector wears many hats. Some come from laws (revenue codes, the BNSS, the Disaster Management Act, election laws), some from government orders (chairing committees, running schemes) and some from tradition (being the person everyone turns to in trouble).

PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION · DISTRICT ADMINISTRATION

Roles

The Many Hats of the District Collector

Statutory, executive and coordinating roles held by one officer

Collector

Land revenue, **land records**, acquisition, stamps, treasury, relief

District Magistrate

Executive magistracy, **BNSS s.163**, ss.126–129, licences, jails

Development coordinator

Schemes, **convergence**, DPC under the rural jobs law, DISHA

Disaster manager

Chairs the **DDMA**; district plan, relief, crisis command

District Collector

Agent of the State government in the district

Election and census

District Election Officer; Principal Census Officer

Grievance and RTI

Public hearings, grievance cell, **citizen interface**

Protocol and liaison

VIP visits, armed forces, media, civil society

Regulator

Excise, mining, civil supplies, **arms** and cinema licences

In simple words: one officer wears nine hats; the trouble is wearing them all at once.

Public Administration

The 2nd ARC's **15th Report, State and District Administration (2009)**, listed the portfolio broadly as: head of **land and revenue administration** and district finance; **executive magistracy** and overall supervision of **law and order**; **licensing and regulatory authority** under special laws; **elections**; **disaster management**; **guardian of public lands**; **public service delivery**; facilitating **civil society–government** interaction; local **cadre management**; and **chief information and grievance redressal officer**.

3.1 As Collector: land, revenue and relief

Revenue is the oldest function, and although land revenue now yields little money, **land administration** remains central to every dispute, project and welfare scheme.

- **Revenue collection.** Land revenue and **other government dues** recovered as arrears of land revenue (irrigation dues, loans, cesses); **stamp duty** and registration (in many States); **excise** (through the District Excise Officer); **transport** revenue. **S.S. Khera** stressed two principles: revenue assessed must be **collected in full**, and **in time**, or collection soon becomes impossible.
- **Land records.** Maintenance and revision of **records of rights**, village maps, mutation registers and crop registers through the patwari–kanungo–tehsildar chain; **survey and settlement**. Digitisation under the **Digital India Land Records Modernisation Programme** and the **SVAMITVA** scheme (2020) for drone mapping of village habitations now runs under the Collector's supervision.
- **Land management.** **Land acquisition** under the **Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013**; custody of **government land** and removal of encroachments; implementation of **land reforms** and ceiling laws; **nazul** and government estates.
- **Relief.** Assessing crop losses, granting **gratuitous relief**, suspending or remitting revenue, distributing agricultural loans (*taccavi*) and running relief works in **drought, flood and fire**.
- **Treasury.** General supervision of the **district treasury and sub-treasuries**, periodic verification of balances and reporting to the Accountant General.
- **Revenue courts.** Hearing **revenue appeals** against orders of subordinate revenue officers.

INDIAN CONNECT — LAND RECORDS AND TRANSPARENCY

Digitised records reduce visits to the patwari and the scope for rent-seeking, but they do not by themselves make the system transparent. Old errors get digitised, **mutation** may still lag behind sale, the **spatial map** and the **textual record** often do not match, and the Collector's revenue courts remain slow. Real transparency needs **survey and resurvey**, linked **registration and mutation**, time-bound services under State **Right to Service** laws, and ultimately **conclusive titles**, which the 2nd ARC (11th Report on e-Governance) and the 15th Report both urged.

3.2 As District Magistrate: executive magistracy and law and order

Since the separation of the judiciary, the Collector is an **executive magistrate**, not a trial magistrate. His law-and-order powers now come from the **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS)**, which replaced the CrPC from **1 July 2024**.

- **Appointment.** Under **BNSS section 14** (formerly CrPC section 20), the State government appoints **Executive Magistrates** in every district and designates one of them as the **District Magistrate**; it may also

appoint **Additional District Magistrates** and place executive magistrates (SDMs) in charge of sub-divisions.

- **Preventive and order-maintenance powers.** The main sections that the DM and the executive magistracy use are set out below, with their old CrPC numbers.

The BNSS kept almost all the executive magistrate's preventive powers, but renumbered them; older literature cites the CrPC sections.

POWER	BNSS 2023	OLD CRPC 1973
Executive Magistrates and the District Magistrate	s. 14	s. 20
Security for keeping the peace	s. 126	s. 107
Good behaviour from persons disseminating certain matters	s. 127	s. 108
Good behaviour from suspected persons	s. 128	s. 109
Good behaviour from habitual offenders	s. 129	s. 110
Dispersal of an unlawful assembly by civil force	s. 148	s. 129
Conditional order for removal of a public nuisance	s. 152	s. 133
Urgent orders in cases of nuisance or apprehended danger (prohibitory orders)	s. 163	s. 144
Dispute concerning land or water likely to cause breach of peace	s. 164	s. 145

- **Section 163 orders.** The DM, an SDM or a specially empowered executive magistrate may issue **written prohibitory orders** to prevent obstruction, danger to life or a riot; such an order lasts at most **two months**, extendable by the State to **six months**. This is the most visible of the DM's powers in tense situations.
- **Control of the police.** Under **section 4 of the Police Act, 1861** (and corresponding State Police Acts), the district police is under the SP, subject to the DM's **general control and direction**. The SP manages internal organisation, postings, discipline and investigation under the **DGP**; the DM decides **when and where force is needed**, receives intelligence, can inspect police stations, and the SP's annual report passes through him. **Some new State Police Acts** have dropped the explicit "general control" clause, though people still see the DM as overall in charge.
- **Other magisterial functions.** **Licensing** under the **Arms Act, 1959**, explosives, petroleum and cinematograph laws; **preventive detention** orders under the **National Security Act, 1980** and State laws when empowered; requisitioning the **armed forces** in aid of civil power; supervision of **jails** and juvenile homes (parole, classification of prisoners, inspection); enforcement of **Essential Commodities** orders against hoarding; the **annual criminal administration report**.
- **What was lost.** Trial of criminal cases, inspection of trial registers and control of judicial magistrates passed to the **High Court and Sessions Judge**. A DM's orders under preventive sections are open to **revision by the courts**.

3.3 The DM and the SP: dual control

The relationship between the DM and the SP has been debated for over a century, and the debate still turns on one question: how to reconcile the DM's **general supervision** with the SP's **operational freedom**.

- **Colonial roots.** Police manuals once treated the SP as the DM's assistant. The **Indian Police Commission (1902–03)** under **Andrew Fraser** kept the DM's supremacy but asked him **not to interfere in departmental management and discipline**; the **Royal Commission on Decentralisation (1909)** favoured stronger district officers. **Philip Woodruff**, in *The Men Who Ruled India*, noted that local factions always tried to **play the Superintendent off against the Magistrate**.
- **After Independence.** A State police commission in Bihar (1961) concluded that friction, where it existed, came more from **clashes of personality than from the system**. With rising communal, caste and extremist violence, the DM's **civilian, neutral check** on police force was valued, while police reformers argued that dual command causes **delay and blame-shifting**.
- **Current balance.** The **Prakash Singh v Union of India (2006)** directions on police autonomy (State Security Commissions, Police Establishment Boards, minimum two-year tenure for SPs and SHOs) and the separation of **investigation from law and order** strengthen police professionalism. The DM remains the **coordinator of the district's response** to unrest, elections, VIP security and disasters.

3.4 The police commissionerate and its effect on the DM

In a **commissionerate**, a **Commissioner of Police** (an IPS officer of DIG rank or above) heads a **unified police command** for a city and is himself vested with **executive magistrate powers** (prohibitory orders, licensing, preventive sections), which in districts belong to the DM and SDMs.

The table contrasts the two systems that coexist in India today.

DIMENSION	DUAL CONTROL (DISTRICTS)	COMMISSIONERATE (LARGE CITIES)
Command	SP heads police; DM has general control	Commissioner heads a unified command
Magisterial powers	With DM and SDMs	With Commissioner and his deputies
Speed	Consultation can delay preventive action	Quick decisions in fast-moving urban crises
Check on police	Civilian IAS officer as an external check	Concentrated police power; needs strong complaints bodies
Accountability	Through DM and SP to State government	Directly to State Home Department

- **Recommendations.** The **National Police Commission (1977–81)** favoured commissionerates for large and rapidly urbanising cities; the **Model Police Act, 2006** (drafted by the **Soli Sorabjee** committee) and the **2nd ARC's 5th Report, Public Order (2007)** recommended them for cities with a population of **ten lakh or more**.

- **Spread.** Kolkata, Mumbai and Chennai have had commissioners since colonial times; **Delhi** adopted the system in **1978**; **Uttar Pradesh** introduced it in **Lucknow and Gautam Buddha Nagar (Noida)** in **January 2020**, and later in more cities. More than **60 cities** across some 15 States had commissionerates by 2020.
- **Effect on the DM.** In commissionerate areas the DM **loses magisterial and law-and-order powers** (in UP, powers under about 15 Acts passed to the police), keeping revenue, elections, disasters, development and protocol. Supporters see **clear accountability and faster response**; critics fear “**police raj**”, the loss of a **non-uniformed authority** citizens can approach, and weaker **civilian oversight** of force.

3.5 As development administrator

After Independence, the single largest addition to the Collector's work came from **planning and rural development**. As Prime Minister **Lal Bahadur Shastri** put it in 1965, the district officer was to be a **commander organising the development drive** with clear targets.

- **Community Development (1952).** The Collector became the district leader of the **extension** movement; **Block Development Officers** worked under him. **Khera** argued that **administrative leadership** was even more necessary in economic development than in the routine tasks of order and revenue.
- **Panchayati Raj after the Balwantray Mehta Committee (1957).** The committee proposed that the **Collector chair the Zila Parishad**. States diverged into three broad patterns (a fuller account is in the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union–State–Local Relations).
 - **Maharashtra–Gujarat pattern** (from the early 1960s): development transferred to the **Zila Parishad** with a separate senior officer (**CEO / District Development Officer**, usually IAS) under it; the Collector is confined largely to **regulatory administration**.
 - **Tamil Nadu–Rajasthan pattern:** the Collector, often designated **District Development Officer** or **Inspector of Panchayats**, combines **regulatory and development** roles; in Rajasthan the Collector sat in the Zila Parishad without a vote and chaired committees.
 - **West Bengal pattern:** the DM has served as **Executive Officer of the Zila Parishad**, though in practice law and order and protocol left him little time for it.
- **The Bihar swing.** Bihar shows how the role ebbed and flowed: a **1955** circular made the Collector responsible for all development; a **1973** scheme gave planning and development to a **Deputy Development Commissioner** of equal rank as CEO of the Zila Parishad; the **Emergency (1975–77)** brought the Collector back to the centre, including the **20-Point Programme**; the Janata years revived PRIs; and after **1980** the Collector again led most programme points. Whatever the design, governments **returned to the Collector** when they wanted results.
- **District Rural Development Agency (DRDA, 1980).** A registered **society** for **IRDP**, **TRYSEM**, **DWCRA**, the Drought Prone Areas and Desert Development Programmes, chaired by the **Collector** in most States. It combined **government authority with a society's flexibility**, but it also became a **parallel channel** to PRIs. The Union **discontinued the DRDA Administration scheme from 1 April 2022** and asked States to **merge DRDAs into Zila Parishads**, a step that formally moved the district development machinery towards elected bodies.
- **Flagship schemes and convergence.** The Collector chairs or reviews district bodies for health (the **District Health Society** under the National Health Mission; the **Rogi Kalyan Samiti** of the district hospital in many States), education, nutrition, water, housing and sanitation, the **District Level Bankers' Committee** reviews and **District Industries Centre** in some States, and the governing council of the **District Mineral Foundation** in mining districts. Under the **Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission**

(Gramin) Act, 2025, which replaced MGNREGA from 1 July 2026, **section 17** makes the **District Collector** (or an officer of equal rank) the **District Programme Coordinator**, responsible for consolidating the district plan, convergence, monitoring and grievance redressal, as the Collector or CEO was under MGNREGA.

- **DISHA (2016)**. The **District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee**, set up in **June 2016**, is chaired by the **senior-most Lok Sabha MP** of the district, with MLAs, ZP chairperson and others as members, and the **Collector as Member Secretary**. It monitors about **28** Union programmes and places the Collector in a structured relationship with **elected representatives**.
- **Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP, January 2018)**. NITI Aayog's programme for **112** of the least developed districts rests on **Convergence** (of Union and State schemes), **Collaboration** (of central and State nodal officers and **District Collectors**) and **Competition** (monthly **delta ranking** on **49 indicators** under five themes: health and nutrition, education, agriculture and water resources, financial inclusion and skill development, and basic infrastructure). The **Champions of Change** dashboard makes the Collector a **data-driven manager**. The **Aspirational Blocks Programme (7 January 2023, 500 blocks)** extends the model to block officers under district guidance.

INDIAN CONNECT — FIELD ORGANISATIONS AND NATIONAL MISSIONS

Programmes such as **MGNREGA** (now its 2025 successor) and the **Swachh Bharat Mission** are designed in Delhi but succeed or fail in the district. The district administration **mobilises Gram Sabhas**, sanctions works, **geo-tags** assets, trains frontline workers, settles **land and convergence** issues and ensures **social audit**. Where Collectors used **campaign methods**, community ownership and peer pressure (as in many open-defecation-free drives), outcomes improved quickly; where the field relied on **target-chasing** and paperwork, assets were poor and toilets went unused. The field organisation turns a scheme into a **local programme**.

3.6 As disaster manager and crisis administrator

It is in a crisis that the district system is most severely tested, and that the Collector's authority is least questioned.

- **Statutory basis**. Under **section 25 of the Disaster Management Act, 2005**, every district has a **District Disaster Management Authority (DDMA)** with the **Collector / DM / Deputy Commissioner as Chairperson**, the elected head of the local authority (usually the **Zila Parishad chairperson**) as **co-chairperson**, and an ADM as CEO. The DDMA prepares the **District Disaster Management Plan (s. 31)**, coordinates response, and may requisition resources and premises (**s. 34**).
- **The 2025 amendment**. The **Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025** (assent **29 March 2025**, in force **9 April 2025**) requires district plans to be reviewed **at least once every two years**, provides for a **disaster database**, and allows **Urban Disaster Management Authorities** for State capitals and municipal-corporation cities, chaired by the **Municipal Commissioner** with the **Collector as vice-chairperson**. It also clarifies that "man-made causes" of disaster **exclude law-and-order situations**.
- **Functions in a disaster**. Early warning and evacuation, **rescue and relief camps**, food and drinking water, health response, **requisitioning the armed forces**, damage assessment, **gratuitous relief** under SDRF norms, and rehabilitation. Earlier, the **Famine Codes** and the **Defence of India Rules** gave similar crisis powers.

- **Leadership.** Older administrators described crisis administration as a **vibrant response to the unforeseen**, not a rigid application of rules; **L.S.S. O'Malley** observed that crises cannot be met by **rule-of-thumb routine** and bring out the higher qualities of leadership.
- **COVID-19.** The pandemic showed the Collector as **incident commander**. Using the DM Act, the **Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897** and prohibitory orders, Collectors declared **containment zones**, ran **district war rooms**, organised testing, oxygen and hospital beds, managed migrant movement and later **vaccination**. Rajasthan's **Bhilwara** district became an early model (March–April 2020) of strict curfew, door-to-door screening and contact tracing. The experience also exposed **centralised micromanagement**, dependence on the Collector's personal ability, and weak **public health** capacity below the district.

3.7 As District Election Officer and census officer

- **Elections.** Under **section 13AA of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**, the Collector is usually the **District Election Officer (DEO)**, coordinating **electoral rolls** and the conduct of elections; he is also commonly the **Returning Officer** for the Lok Sabha seat (s. 21, RP Act, 1951). During elections he works under the **Election Commission's** superintendence. In the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)** of rolls ordered on **24 June 2025** (Bihar first, then **12 States and UTs** from October 2025 with **321 DEOs**), the **DM hears the first appeal** against an Electoral Registration Officer's decision. Collectors usually also conduct **panchayat and municipal elections** for the **State Election Commission**.
- **Census.** Under **section 4 of the Census Act, 1948**, States appoint the Collector as **Principal Census Officer** for the district (the Divisional Commissioner, SDO and Tehsildar get census designations below and above). For **Census 2027**, India's first **digital census**, the house-listing phase began on **1 April 2026** with **self-enumeration**, and population enumeration is due in **February 2027**.

3.8 As coordinator, grievance officer and protocol officer

- **Coordinator of departments.** District heads of specialist departments are **technically and administratively answerable to their own directorates**, so the Collector coordinates through **review meetings, committees and persuasion** rather than command. Most State governments value his view, and departments look to him when **inter-departmental** bottlenecks arise.
- **Committees.** The Collector chairs a very large number of district committees: a study for DARPG cited by the 2nd ARC found a Deputy Commissioner in **Assam chairing 43** committees, and the Commission noted that some Collectors **did not know how many committees** they chaired or all the laws under which they held powers. He may also head the **Red Cross**, trusts, colleges and sports bodies.
- **Grievance and public interface.** Public hearing days (*Jan Sunwai, Praja Vani*, "Collector's Grievance Day"), grievance portals and the citizen's charter of the Collectorate make the office the **last local resort** for citizens. The 2nd ARC proposed an **RTI cell** and a computerised **grievance cell** in every Collectorate.
- **Protocol and liaison.** **Protocol** for VIP and VVIP visits, the government's representative at **ceremonial functions**, **liaison with the armed forces** and ex-servicemen, **civil defence**, and the district's **public relations** with the media.
- **Other regulatory work.** **Civil supplies and the PDS** (through the District Supply Officer), **mining** leases for minor minerals, **excise**, **transport**, labour laws such as the **Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976**, and supervision of **municipalities** in some States.

3.9 Articles and Acts governing the Collector's work

The Collector's powers are scattered across dozens of laws; the most important are listed here.

ARTICLE / ACT	PROVISION	WHAT IT GIVES THE COLLECTOR
Article 50	Separation of judiciary from executive	Ended trial functions; DM is an executive magistrate
Article 233	District judges	The judicial head of the district is separate from the Collector
Articles 243G, 243W, 243ZD	Powers of panchayats and municipalities; District Planning Committee	Define the elected district tier the Collector must work with
Police Act, 1861, s. 4	District police under DM's general control	Basis of dual control
BNSS, 2023, ss. 14, 126–129, 148, 152, 163, 164	Executive magistracy and preventive powers	Prohibitory orders, bonds, dispersal of assemblies, land disputes
State Land Revenue Codes	Revenue administration	Appointment as Collector; revenue courts; land records
RFCTLARR Act, 2013	Land acquisition	Collector as acquiring and award-making authority
Arms Act, 1959; Explosives laws	Licensing	Licensing authority
Disaster Management Act, 2005, ss. 25, 30, 31, 34 (amended 2025)	DDMA	Chairperson; district plan; emergency powers
RP Act, 1950, s. 13AA; RP Act, 1951, s. 21	Elections	District Election Officer; Returning Officer
Census Act, 1948, s. 4	Census officers	Principal Census Officer
VB–G RAM G Act, 2025, s. 17	Rural employment guarantee	District Programme Coordinator
Essential Commodities Act, 1955	Supply and price control	Action against hoarding; PDS oversight
National Security Act, 1980	Preventive detention	Detention orders when empowered by the State

The Changing Role of the Collector

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The Collector's job has changed four times: from ruler and tax-collector, to development leader, to regulator and facilitator in a market economy with elected local bodies, and now to a data-driven crisis manager. Each phase added work without removing much of the old.

4.1 Four phases

The role has moved through four overlapping phases, each with a dominant image of the office.

PHASE	PERIOD	DOMINANT ROLE	KEY DRIVERS
Law and order and revenue	1772–1947	Ruler-magistrate, "Mai-Baap"	Colonial extraction and control
Development administrator	1950s–1980s	Leader of planned development, chair of DRDA, often of ZP	Five-Year Plans, Community Development, poverty programmes
Regulator and facilitator	1990s–2000s	Coordinator alongside elected PRIs and markets	73rd/74th Amendments, liberalisation, PPPs
Digital, data and crisis manager	2005 onwards	Outcome manager, DDMA chief, platform-based service deliverer	DM Act, e-governance, ADP dashboards, COVID-19

- **Phase one.** Revenue and order were the purpose; the welfare of subjects was incidental. The Collector was distant, powerful and paternal.
- **Phase two.** The **Five-Year Plans** made the district the operational unit of development. Area programmes (DPAP, DDP, Command Area Development) and beneficiary programmes (IRDP, TRYSEM) put the Collector at the centre. Revenue became the **least important** of his tasks, as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh later told DMs.
- **Phase three.** After **1991**, the State moved from **provider to regulator and facilitator**, and after **1992** PRIs became a constitutional third tier. The Collector's expected role became **enabler**: attracting investment, ensuring **ease of doing business** (land, permissions, utilities), building **public-private partnerships**, protecting the **weaker sections** from the uneven effects of globalisation, and forging **consensus** among competing groups. In this view the district administration must be **partisan in favour of the poor** to be truly neutral in an unequal society.
- **Phase four.** Since the **DM Act (2005)**, the Collector has become **crisis manager-in-chief**; since the **National e-Governance Plan (2006)** and the **ADP (2018)**, a **manager of indicators, dashboards and platforms**; since COVID-19, an **incident commander**. New skills are expected: **human resource management, strategic planning, financial management, data analysis and communication**.

4.2 Changed but not diminished?

- **Diminished in some respects.** Judicial functions went to the judiciary; development in several States went to ZPs and line departments; law and order in big cities went to commissionerates; the SP and specialists gained autonomy; elected representatives and the media constrain discretion. Some observers predicted that the CEO of the Zila Parishad would become the **most influential official** and the Collector would “**sink into oblivion**”.
- **Not diminished in others.** Every new national priority (elections, disasters, flagship schemes, the census, COVID-19, voter roll revision) has been **routed through the Collector**. As the only official with **horizontal authority across departments**, legal powers, and public recognition, the office remains the **linchpin** of district administration outside the metropolises.
- **Additional function: guiding democratic bodies.** The Collector must now **carry conviction** with elected Zila Parishads, MLAs and MPs, rather than command. In **Richard Park’s** observation, people in many districts saw a strong Collectorate as **protection** against capture of local funds by local politicians, which is why the office kept its legitimacy even as democracy deepened.
- **Why the office survived the transition.** It was **adaptable** (it absorbed each new task), **neutral** (an All India Service officer from outside local factions), **legally anchored** (dozens of statutes), **trusted** by citizens and **useful** to politicians who wanted visible delivery. The “steel frame” bent rather than broke.

COMMON CONFUSION

Has the Collector become merely a “post office” for government schemes and an “officer in attendance” on VIPs? Partly. Studies and the 2nd ARC itself found Collectors overwhelmed by **review meetings, data reporting, protocol and committee work**, leaving little time for **independent judgement or field inspection**, and the “bureau for funnelling schemes” description captures this. But the description is incomplete: the Collector still exercises **real statutory power** (land, prohibitory orders, licences, disaster powers, elections), resolves **inter-departmental deadlocks**, and in programmes like the ADP and crisis response shows **initiative that changes outcomes**. The 2nd ARC’s answer was not to abolish the office but to **realign** it around **core functions** and **coordination**, and to **shed** what PRIs and departments can do.

4.3 From hierarchy to teamwork

- **Old style.** The Collector as **commander** at the top of a hierarchy of revenue and magisterial officials, issuing orders.
- **New demands.** Development and service delivery depend on **specialists** (doctors, engineers, agronomists), **elected representatives**, **SHGs**, **NGOs**, **CSR foundations** and **community volunteers** who are not the Collector’s subordinates. Results come from **teams that cut across hierarchies**: ADP’s district “champions of change” teams, mission-mode cells for sanitation or nutrition, disaster task forces, district war rooms.
- **Meaning for the Collector.** Leading by **persuasion, shared data and trust**, giving each agency **breathing space**, removing bottlenecks and building a **unity of purpose**. **Mary Parker Follett’s** “power with” rather than “power over” and **Chester Barnard’s** acceptance theory of authority describe this shift; see the articles on Mary Parker Follett and Chester Barnard.

- **Limits.** Teamwork does not remove the need for **hierarchical authority** in emergencies, law and order and statutory decisions; the art is to switch between the two modes.

05 Development Management and Law-and-Order Administration

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The district administration has two big jobs: keeping the peace and making life better. The first needs firmness and quick orders; the second needs patience, money and people's cooperation. The same officer has to do both, and the two jobs sometimes get in each other's way.

5.1 Key concepts

- **Law-and-order administration.** Maintenance of **public order and security**: prevention of breaches of peace, riot control, regulation of assemblies, licensing, and coordination with police and courts. It is **regulatory** and **coercive**, works on short time horizons and is judged by **incidents prevented**.
- **Development administration.** The term is credited to **U.L. Goswami (1955)** and popularised by **Edward Weidner** (*Development Administration: A New Focus for Research*, 1962) and **Fred Riggs**: administration oriented to **goals of socio-economic change** and **nation-building**, as against the maintenance-oriented administration of the colonial state. See the chapter on Development Administration.
- **Development management.** A later, more **managerial** idea associated with writers such as **Derick Brinkerhoff** and **Jennifer Coston** (1999): achieving development objectives with **optimum use of limited resources**, through **results-based management, stakeholder participation and capacity building**, and building **self-sustaining, client- or customer-friendly local institutions** (SHGs, water user associations, school management committees, panchayats) that continue after a scheme ends. At the district level it means **outcome dashboards, convergence, participatory planning and accountability to users**.

INDIAN CONNECT — SELF-SUSTAINING INSTITUTIONS IN THE DISTRICT

Development management in an Indian district looks less like a Collector running schemes and more like the **Kudumbashree** network of women's groups in Kerala, **village water and sanitation committees** that own and maintain piped supply under the Jal Jeevan Mission, or **Rogi Kalyan Samitis** that let district hospitals raise and spend user fees. The Collector's role is to **create, train and protect** such institutions, then step back; institutions that depend on one officer's enthusiasm fade when he is transferred.

5.2 The two imperatives compared

- **Aim and mode.** Order is about **restraint and command**; development about **persuasion, participation and convergence**.

Law and Order versus Development Management

Two imperatives that pull apart yet depend on each other

Dimension	Law and order	Development management
Aim	Peace, security, rule of law	Better lives, services, growth
Mode	Command, regulation, restraint	Persuasion, participation, convergence
Time	Immediate, crisis-driven	Long, cumulative
Tools	BNSS powers, police, licences	Schemes, budgets, data, local bodies
Measure	Incidents prevented	Outcomes on indicators
Skills	Firmness, neutrality	Management, teamwork, empathy

Where they clash

- Crises crowd out development time
- Coercive image deters participation
- Different partners and pace

Where they meet

- No development without peace
- Exclusion breeds unrest
- Land, mining, relief need both

In simple words: peace makes development possible, and fair development keeps the peace.

Public Administration

- **Time and attention.** Law and order is **urgent**; development is **important but deferrable**. In practice, the urgent crowds out the important.
- **Partners.** Order is pursued with the **police and magistracy**; development with **departments, PRIs, banks, NGOs and communities**.
- **Image.** A coercive image may deter the trust that participatory development needs; a welfare image may weaken the authority needed in a riot.

5.3 The dichotomy and the interdependence

District administration in India has long been **organised as if the two functions were separate**, while in reality they **depend on each other**.

- **Sources of the dichotomy.**
 - **Colonial legacy:** the district was built for revenue and order; development was added on top through separate agencies (CD blocks, DRDAs, missions).
 - **Structural separation:** in Maharashtra–Gujarat-type States, regulatory functions stay with the Collector and development goes to the ZP; police commissionerates separate order from the rest of urban administration.

- **Separate career and reporting lines:** the SP reports to the DGP, line officers to their directorates, the CEO to the ZP and Panchayati Raj department, the Collector to the Revenue department.
- **Different performance metrics:** incidents and crime figures versus scheme indicators.
- **Time pressure:** recurring law-and-order and protocol demands leave the Collector little time for development, a point the 2nd ARC made explicitly.
- **Why the two are interdependent.**
 - **No development without peace:** investment, schools, health camps and road works stop in districts affected by riots, insurgency or **Left-Wing Extremism**.
 - **No lasting peace without fair development:** land alienation, displacement, unemployment and exclusion of tribals and Dalits generate unrest; the approach to LWE-affected districts treats roads, mobile towers, banking and schools as security measures as much as development ones.
 - **Shared instruments:** **land acquisition, mining, encroachment removal, relief and rehabilitation** all need both regulatory force and developmental sensitivity in the same decision.
 - **Crisis as both:** a flood, epidemic or communal flare-up is simultaneously an order problem and a welfare problem.
- **Reconciling them.** Keep **one coordinating authority** for both in the district; give the Collector **adequate deputies** (ADMs for law and order, CEO/ADM for development); use **integrated district plans** linking security and development in sensitive areas; and adopt **community policing** and **participatory development** so that each supports the other.

5.4 Separating regulatory and development functions: the debate

Several States removed development from the Collector to protect PRIs and lighten his load; others kept them together. The question is whether the separation **helped or harmed**.

- **Case for separation.**
 - It frees the Collector for **regulation, order and crisis**, where his statutory role is unique.
 - It gives **elected PRIs** real control over development (the **Maharashtra-Gujarat** and **Kerala** experiences) and avoids a powerful official **dominating** elected leaders.
 - Development needs **continuity and specialisation**, which a separate CEO or DDO can supply.
 - The **Ashok Mehta** (1978) and **G.V.K. Rao** (1985) committees favoured giving district development to the ZP and a separate officer (the G.V.K. Rao Committee proposed a **District Development Commissioner**).
- **Case against (or for a relook).**
 - Development depends on **regulatory inputs** (land, encroachment, law and order, licences), so separation causes **delay and buck-passing**.
 - The **CEO lacks the Collector's horizontal clout**, so line departments do not cooperate; PRIs lack **funds, functionaries and capacity**, so devolved development **stagnates**.
 - In practice the separation is **incomplete**: Collectors still chair DISHA, run flagship schemes, head ADP efforts and receive MPLADS/MLALADS funds, producing **ambiguity** rather than clarity.
 - Experience (Bihar's swings, the Emergency, ADP) shows governments **return to the Collector** when they want results, suggesting that separation **weakened both** the Collector and development administration.

- **The middle path.** The **2nd ARC (6th and 15th Reports)** sought a “golden mean”: empower the elected **District Council** while **fully using the institutional strength of the Collector**, by making the Collector its **Chief Officer** in the interim, accountable to the Council on local matters and to the State on regulatory matters.

06

Issues and Challenges in the Collector's Office

IN SIMPLE WORDS

The Collector's office is overloaded, moved around too often, pulled by politics, staffed by officers who may be too young for hard districts, and asked to be an expert at everything. These problems, more than any law, decide how well a district is run.

6.1 Overload and role diffusion

- **Too many functions without clear definition.** The 2nd ARC found that the Collector's **widespread functions without well-defined roles** cause lack of clarity and **diffusion of responsibility**; Collectors were sometimes unaware of all the statutes under which they held powers.
- **The tortoise and the elephant.** The old image of a small tortoise carrying the elephant of government still fits: one office carrying revenue, magistracy, elections, census, disasters, dozens of committees, scores of schemes and endless reviews by State and Union departments.
- **Officers in attendance.** Protocol, **VIP visits**, video conferences and **data reporting** consume time; tours and inspections, once the core of district administration (the “**tent is mightier than the pen**” tradition and the detailed **inspection notes** that fed the old District Gazetteers), have declined.
- **Consequences.** **Firefighting** instead of planning, superficial reviews, dependence on subordinates, and **inter-role conflict** between order, development and protocol.

6.2 Short tenures and frequent transfers

- **Evidence.** **Lakshmi Iyer and Anandi Mani** (“Traveling Agents”, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, 2012), studying IAS career data from 1980 to 2004, found an **average tenure of about 16 months** in a post, a **53 per cent** annual probability of transfer, and that only **56 per cent of District Officers** stayed more than a year. Transfers rose with **changes of Chief Minister or ruling party**. **David Potter** found that even in **1936** two-thirds of district officers had held their posts for under a year.
- **Effects.** Officers cannot learn the district, **projects and innovations lapse** when they leave (a point the 2nd ARC made about best practices), subordinates wait out unpopular officers, and transfers become a **tool of political control**.
- **Responses.** The **Hota Committee (2004)** recommended **assured tenure** and **statutory Civil Services Boards**; the Supreme Court in **T.S.R. Subramanian v Union of India (31 October 2013)** directed **minimum fixed tenure** and **Civil Services Boards**; the **IAS (Cadre) Amendment Rules, 2014** (notified **28 January 2014**) require a cadre officer to hold a post for **at least two years**, with premature transfers only on the **Civil Services Board's** recommendation, which the competent authority may override with recorded reasons. Compliance remains uneven because the override clause is often used.

6.3 Politicisation

- **Pressures.** MLAs and ministers seek favourable postings, transfers of subordinates, **land and licence decisions**, and control over scheme beneficiaries. **Caste affinity** with the ruling party, Iyer and Mani found, can influence who gets important posts.
- **Risks.** Erosion of **neutrality**, selective enforcement of law (encroachments, prohibitory orders), and a “**committed bureaucracy**” in the negative sense.
- **Counterweights.** Fixed tenure, Civil Services Boards, **RTI**, judicial review, the **Election Commission’s** control during polls, and a professional ethic of the All India Services.

6.4 Generalist versus specialist

- **The generalist rationale.** The IAS is a **multipurpose** service: the same officer moves from district to secretariat to corporation. The Collector’s value lies in **breadth, judgement and coordination**, in line with **Max Weber’s** picture of the trained, impersonal official and the British tradition of the “**intelligent amateur**”.
- **The critique.** District problems now involve **public health, climate risk, data systems, finance and engineering**. A young generalist may be **insulated from contemporary professionalism**, dependent on specialists, and slow to adopt modern management. The **Fulton Committee (UK, 1968)** made the same criticism of the British administrative class.
- **Towards a balance.** **Domain competencies** through **Mission Karmayogi (2020)** and role-based training, **lateral expertise** in district teams (data analysts, fellows such as ADP fellows), and the Collector as **integrator** of specialist inputs rather than a specialist himself. See the chapter on Bureaucracy and Democracy, Bureaucracy and Development.

6.5 Young Collectors and district training

- **Early postings.** In many States IAS officers become Collectors after about **four years** of service, having held only an SDM post. The 2nd ARC felt that **complex, populous or problem-prone districts** need officers with **10–12 years** of service.
- **Induction training.** The two-year induction of IAS officers includes Phase I at the LBSNAA, **district training** of about a year in the allotted State, an **Assistant Secretary** attachment in Union ministries (started in **2015** with the 2013 batch; now an eight-week integral component) and Phase II. The **Thorat study team (1967)** of the First ARC and the **V.T. Krishnamachari Committee (1962)** had already stressed **training under carefully selected Collectors**, a spell as **additional BDO**, and casework in law and order.
- **Why it needs revisiting.** District training quality depends on the **Collector’s time and interest**; trainees are sometimes used as extra hands; exposure to **modern tools** (data, digital platforms, disaster management, financial management) is uneven; and **feedback loops** between field training and the academy are weak. Suggestions include **structured mentoring, assignment-based learning** with outcomes, sub-district charge with real responsibility, and alignment with **Karmayogi** competencies.

6.6 Relations with elected bodies and representatives

- **With PRIs.** After the 73rd Amendment, ambiguity persists: PRIs say Collectors **control panchayat staff, funds and approvals** (as Inspectors of Panchayats or through the District Panchayat Officer) and treat them as subordinate; Collectors say PRIs lack **capacity** and are prone to **elite capture**. The Constitution

did not define the Collector's role in the new set-up, so each State drew its own line. This is treated in full in the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union–State–Local Relations.

- **With MLAs and MPs.** Legislators increasingly drive **local development** through MPLADS/MLALADS, DISHA and their influence on postings, creating a **parallel political channel** that can bypass PRIs.
- **Union–State–local layering.** The Collector is a **State officer** implementing **Union-designed schemes** through **local bodies**, making him the meeting point of three levels of government; overlapping funds and reporting lines complicate accountability. Again, detail belongs to the companion article.

6.7 Challenges facing district administration as a whole

Because almost every Union and State programme lands in the district, the district administration faces challenges beyond the Collector's own office.

- **Scheme proliferation** with separate guidelines, portals and reporting formats; **fragmented funding** (centrally sponsored schemes, State schemes, MPLADS, DMF, CSR).
- **Capacity gaps:** vacancies at block and village level, weak technical staff, poor **data quality**.
- **Coordination failures** among line departments, PRIs, ULBs and parastatals (the 2nd ARC warned that **parastatals should not undermine PRIs**).
- **Accountability deficits:** weak social audit, grievance backlogs, corruption at the cutting edge (the 2nd ARC found **vigilance a neglected component** in districts employing more than ten thousand State employees on average).
- **New risks:** climate extremes, cybercrime, misinformation, urbanisation of rural districts, and migration.

07

Committees, Reforms and Modernisation

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Since Independence, many commissions have asked what the Collector should do. Their common answer: keep the office, define its core clearly, give it modern tools and stable tenure, and let elected local bodies grow alongside it.

7.1 Major committees and their views on the Collector

- **Balwantray Mehta Committee (1957).** Recommended **democratic decentralisation** and proposed that the **Collector chair the Zila Parishad** to lead development.
- **V.T. Krishnamachari Committee (1962)**, on *Indian and State Administrative Services and Problems of District Administration*. Urged **expansion of the IAS cadre** for development needs, **coordination of elective and administrative elements** and of administrative and technical services in the district, and better **district training** of IAS probationers (training under carefully selected Collectors, 18 months in the State, a spell as additional BDO).
- **First ARC (1966–70)**, chaired by **Morarji Desai** and then **K. Hanumanthaiya**. Its **Study Team on District Administration (1967)** examined the district machinery; its **Report on State Administration (1969)** carried

its conclusions, and the **Thorat** study team (1967) on recruitment and training recommended a **one-year district attachment** under an experienced Collector.

- **Ashok Mehta Committee (1978)** and **G.V.K. Rao Committee (1985)**. Moved district development towards the **Zila Parishad** and proposed a **District Development Commissioner** as its chief executive; the Collector's development role would shrink.
- **Hota Committee on Civil Services Reforms (2004)**, chaired by **P.C. Hota**. Recommended **assured tenure**, **statutory Civil Services Boards**, an **ombudsman** for premature transfers, and career planning in which officers spend early years in **rural areas** and are posted to small districts on first promotion.
- **2nd ARC, 6th Report, Local Governance (2007)**. Proposed a single elected **District Council** for rural and urban areas as the **District Government**, with the Collector as its **Chief Officer** in the interim.
- **2nd ARC, 15th Report, State and District Administration (2009)**. The fullest recent review of the Collector's office (below).

7.2 The 2nd ARC's 15th Report on the Collector

- **Realign functions** so that the Collector concentrates on **core functions**: land and revenue administration, law and order, disaster management, public distribution and civil supplies, excise, elections, transport, census, protocol, general administration, treasury management and coordination with agencies and departments.
- **Job profile** in three parts: (a) a **well-defined set of exclusive statutory and non-statutory functions** for the State; (b) the general work of **coordination** with State and Union agencies at the district level; (c) in the interim, the **Chief Officer** of the proposed **District Council**, fully accountable to it on local matters and to the State on regulatory matters not delegated.
- **Experience before posting**: officers may be posted as DMs early, but in **complex and problem-prone districts** only after **10–12 years** of service.
- **Modernise the Collectorate** through an **MIS** for monitoring programmes under the Collector's direct charge; a computerised **District Grievance and Public Feedback Cell** linked to field offices and kiosks; a **Vigilance Cell** liaising with the State Vigilance Commission; revival of **tour inspection notes and institutional memory**; a **civil society and media cell**; and a special **RTI cell**.
- **Process re-engineering and IT**: an **e-District** framework, codified rules and procedures, standard forms, **delegation** to avoid file movement, a central district database, **computerised land records**, front-end service centres, online grievance tracking and **networking** of the Collectorate with sub-district offices.
- **Land titles**: move to a **land title management system**, as recommended in the 11th Report on e-Governance.
- **Document and institutionalise best practices**, so that innovations do not die with the officer's transfer.

INDIAN CONNECT — BEST PRACTICES FROM THE DISTRICTS

- **SCORE, Muzaffarpur (Bihar)**. The busiest registration office in Bihar, handling 150–200 documents a day, introduced **digitised registration** in **December 2005**, so that deeds could be registered and returned **the same day**, with transparent procedures.

- **Total Sanitation Campaign, Surguja (Chhattisgarh).** In a large, poor, tribal district with high infant mortality, the district administration used a **model of convergence** in which health, education, panchayats and rural development worked together with communities: more than **85,000 household toilets** and **2,703 school sanitation complexes** in **256 panchayats**, with communities monitoring construction and fining defaulters; teacher attendance and hygiene improved.
- **Service centres.** Early **one-stop** citizen centres such as *Jan Seva Kendras* (Ahmedabad), *Mahiti Shakti Kendras* (Panchmahal), *Saukaryam* (Visakhapatnam) and *Lok Mitra* (Hamirpur) showed what the **e-District** model later generalised. The 2nd ARC observed that such initiatives were mostly **individual-driven** and poorly replicated, and asked States to provide a **holistic framework**.

7.3 Modernisation since the 2nd ARC

- **e-District.** A **Mission Mode Project** under the **National e-Governance Plan (2006)** for high-volume district services (certificates, pensions, revenue court cases, ration cards, grievances), now largely delivered through **Common Service Centres** and State portals, often under **Right to Service** laws with fixed timelines.
- **e-Office and dashboards.** Paperless files, **CM dashboards**, **PRAGATI**-style reviews, and the ADP's **Champions of Change** dashboard turn the Collectorate into a **data-driven** office.
- **Land records and courts.** **DILRMP**, **SVAMITVA** property cards, online **revenue court** case management, and integration of **registration and mutation**.
- **Recognition.** The **Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration** (instituted **2006**) now reward **districts** for **holistic development** under priority programmes, **Aspirational Blocks** and **innovation**; for the 2024 cycle, **710 districts (92 per cent)** registered, and **16 awards** were conferred on **Civil Services Day, 21 April 2025** with an incentive of **Rs 20 lakh** each.
- **Capacity building.** **Mission Karmayogi** (2020) and the **iGOT** platform for role-based competencies of district officials.

08

Emerging Frontiers: Climate Change and the Collector

IN SIMPLE WORDS

Floods, heatwaves, droughts and cyclones are becoming more frequent. The district is where these hit people first, so the Collector must prepare before disaster, not only respond after it.

8.1 Why climate change is a district problem

- **Local impact.** Heatwaves, erratic monsoons, floods, cyclones, landslides and droughts strike **specific districts** and **specific groups** (farmers, outdoor workers, coastal fishers, urban poor), and their effects (crop loss, water scarcity, disease, migration) land on district institutions.

- **From relief to risk reduction.** The DM Act (amended 2025) defines disaster management to **include disaster risk reduction**, and requires district plans to be **reviewed at least every two years**, pushing DDMAAs from relief towards **preparedness and mitigation**.

8.2 What a proactive district administration does

- **District Heat Action Plans.** Many DDMAAs now issue annual **heatwave action plans** (shifting working hours, cooling centres, drinking water points, hospital preparedness, alerts); the **NDMA**, which had about **250 city heat action plans** by 2025, has sought to extend them to **districts** with financing mechanisms.
- **Health adaptation.** Under the **National Programme on Climate Change and Human Health** (2019), districts have a **District Nodal Officer for climate change**, a **District Multisectoral Task Force** and a **District Action Plan on Climate Change and Human Health**, with heat-illness and respiratory-illness surveillance.
- **Water and land.** Convergence of rural employment works, watershed and **Amrit Sarovar**-type water bodies, crop diversification, contingency crop plans and **climate-resilient infrastructure** in district plans.
- **Early warning and communication.** Using IMD alerts, common alerting protocols and community networks to reach the last village; **hazard-specific nodal departments**, which the 2025 amendment asks States to notify.
- **Mainstreaming.** Climate screening of district projects, protection of wetlands, forests and floodplains from encroachment (a regulatory function), and **air-quality** action in polluted districts.

8.3 Constraints

- **Short tenures** and crisis-driven attention favour **response over prevention**.
- **Scattered funds and departments:** climate action falls between agriculture, water, health, forests, disaster management and urban bodies.
- **Data and skills gaps** in risk assessment; weak **ULB and PRI** capacity.
- The Collector's **coordinating role** is therefore central: climate adaptation is a classic **whole-of-government, place-based** task.

CRITICISM — CRITICISM: THE COLLECTOR AS AN IMPERIAL ANACHRONISM

- **Colonial origin and ethos.** An office built for revenue extraction and control, with a **"Mai-Baap"** paternalism ill-suited to citizens who are rights-holders.
- **Contradicts democratic decentralisation.** A powerful, unelected officer **overshadows** elected Zila Parishads and municipalities (Articles 243G and 243W), retains control over their staff and approvals, and channels scheme funds around them.
- **Overloaded and diffuse.** Too many functions, too many committees and too little time make supervision **superficial** and reduce the office to an **officer in attendance**.
- **Generalist and transient.** Young generalists with **16-month** average tenures cannot master complex districts or sustain reform.
- **Politicised.** Transfers and postings used as rewards and punishments undermine **neutrality**.

- **Centralising.** The office makes the district **dependent on one person's** ability, blocking the growth of other local institutions; the Commission itself noted the view that the institution should **gradually recede** into a land revenue functionary responsible to local bodies.

DEFENCE — DEFENCE: THE COLLECTOR AS AN INDISPENSABLE LINCHPIN

- **Neutral arbiter.** In districts divided by caste, community and party, an **All India Service officer** from outside local factions offers **impartiality** and protects weaker sections against **elite capture**.
- **Horizontal coordination.** Line departments work in **vertical silos**; only the Collector has the legal standing and recognition to make them work together, as convergence programmes and the ADP show.
- **Crisis authority.** Disasters, epidemics, riots and elections need **single-point command**; the DM Act, the BNSS and election law all rely on it, and COVID-19 proved its value.
- **Statutory anchor.** Dozens of Union and State laws vest powers in the Collector; replacing them would be costly and disruptive.
- **Adaptability.** The office has absorbed every new national priority and moved from ruler to **facilitator, manager and coordinator**.
- **Reform, not abolition.** The 2nd ARC chose a **golden mean**: realign core functions, modernise the Collectorate and **use the Collector to empower** the District Council rather than oppose it.

Theory lens: the Collector through Paper I ideas

- **Prefectorial versus functional field administration.** **James Fesler** (*Area and Administration*, 1949) contrasted **area-based** (prefectorial) and **function-based** field systems; **Robert Fried** (*The Italian Prefects*, 1963) distinguished **integrated** prefectorial systems (France, British India), where the prefect commands departmental field officers, from **unintegrated** ones (Italy), where he only coordinates. The Indian Collector began as an **integrated prefect** and has become a **partly unintegrated** one: commanding revenue and magistracy but only coordinating specialist departments and PRIs. See the chapter on Structure and Forms of Public Organisations.
- **Weber's generalist bureaucrat.** **Max Weber** (*Economy and Society*, 1922) described **legal-rational authority** exercised by trained, impersonal officials appointed on merit with career tenure. The Collector's statutory powers, hierarchy and neutrality fit this ideal; the "**Mai-Baap**" image and personal charisma of district officers show **traditional and charismatic** elements alongside it. The generalist–specialist debate questions whether Weber's trained official must also be a domain expert. See the chapter on Weber and Bureaucracy.
- **Development administration.** **U.L. Goswami** (1955) and **Edward Weidner** (1962) defined administration as an **instrument of planned change**; the Collector as **change agent** in Community Development, IRDP and ADP is the Indian embodiment, while **Riggs** warned that a bureaucracy pursuing development without political checks may become self-serving. See the chapter on Development Administration.
- **Riggs' sala, formalism and overlapping.** **Fred Riggs** (*Administration in Developing Countries*, 1964) described the **prismatic sala**: modern structures coexisting with family, caste and patronage. The Collectorate shows **formalism** (laws and charters on paper, uneven practice), **overlapping** (land and

posting decisions shaped by caste, kin and party), and **poly-normativism** (citizens and officials switching between legal and personal norms). See the chapter on Riggsian Models.

- **NPM and the managerial Collector.** Christopher Hood's (1991) **New Public Management**, with its stress on results, competition and performance measurement, explains the ADP's **delta ranking**, outcome dashboards, service-level guarantees and award competitions; critics warn of **indicator-chasing** and neglect of what is not measured. See the chapter on New Public Management and After.
- **Network governance and the Collector as coordinator.** R.A.W. Rhodes (*Understanding Governance*, 1997) and Stephen Osborne's *New Public Governance* describe governing through **networks** of public, private and voluntary actors. The modern Collector **steers networks** (SHGs, NGOs, CSR foundations, banks, PRIs) more than he commands a hierarchy, which is why **teamwork** and **trust** matter; **Barnard's** acceptance theory explains why such authority rests on consent.
- **Principal-agent and public choice.** Iyer and Mani's finding that politicians use **transfers** to control bureaucrats is a **principal-agent** problem: elected principals with short horizons, bureaucratic agents with career concerns. Fixed tenure and Civil Services Boards are devices to **realign incentives**. See the chapter on New Public Administration and Public Choice.
- **Democratic decentralisation theory.** The **subsidiarity** principle (functions at the lowest competent level) underlies the 2nd ARC's District Council and the transfer of development to PRIs; the Collector's future is as an **enabler of local self-government**, not its rival. See the chapter on District Administration, Democratic Decentralisation and Union-State-Local Relations.

09 Key Terms

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Collector	Head of district administration; named after the original task of collecting land revenue
District Magistrate (DM)	The Collector as chief executive magistrate, responsible for law and order
Deputy Commissioner (DC)	Name for the same office in Karnataka, Assam, Punjab, Haryana and some other States
Collectorate	The Collector's office, divided into sections (revenue, land records, elections, relief, etc.)
Divisional Commissioner	Officer supervising a group of districts on behalf of the State
SDO / SDM	Sub-Divisional Officer or Magistrate, in charge of a sub-division
Tehsildar	Revenue and executive officer of a tehsil or taluk
Patwari	Village accountant who keeps land records

TERM	MEANING IN SIMPLE WORDS
Executive magistrate	Non-judicial magistrate with preventive and order-maintenance powers under the BNSS
Section 163 order	BNSS prohibitory order in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger (old s.144)
Dual control	District police headed by the SP but under the DM's general control
Police commissionerate	City policing in which the Commissioner of Police also holds magisterial powers
Prefectorial system	Field administration led by one general representative of government in each area
Functional system	Field administration in which each department runs its own field offices
Mai-Baap	Paternal "mother-and-father" image of the colonial district officer
DRDA	District Rural Development Agency, a society that ran poverty programmes (merged into ZPs from 2022)
DDMA	District Disaster Management Authority, chaired by the Collector
District Election Officer	The Collector's role in coordinating electoral rolls and elections in the district
DISHA	District Development Coordination and Monitoring Committee chaired by an MP
Aspirational Districts Programme	NITI Aayog's 2018 programme for 112 districts based on convergence, collaboration and competition
Delta ranking	Ranking districts by improvement rather than absolute level
Development administration	Administration as an instrument of planned socio-economic change
Development management	Results-oriented, participatory management of development with lasting local institutions
Convergence	Pooling schemes, funds and departments on one place or outcome
e-District	Mission Mode Project for electronic delivery of district services
Civil Services Board	Board of senior officers that recommends postings and screens premature transfers

Commissions, Committees and Judgments

The bodies, laws and cases below shaped the Collector's office, listed by year.

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Warren Hastings' revenue arrangements	1772	Company servants made Collectors in Bengal districts
Cornwallis Code	1793	Collector confined to revenue; justice and magistracy separated
Union of Collector and Magistrate	1859	One officer for revenue and magistracy
Police Act, s. 4	1861	District police under the DM's general control and direction
Indian Police Commission (Andrew Fraser)	1902–03	DM supremacy kept; no interference in police management and discipline
Royal Commission on Decentralisation (C.E.H. Hobhouse)	1907–09	Strengthened the district officer's position
Indian Statutory (Simon) Commission (John Simon)	1930	District officer seen by most inhabitants as "the government"
Balwantray Mehta Committee	1957	Democratic decentralisation; Collector to chair the Zila Parishad
V.T. Krishnamachari Committee	1962	IAS expansion; coordination of elective and administrative elements; district training
First ARC (Morarji Desai, then K. Hanumanthaiya): Study Team on District Administration; Report on State Administration	1967–69	Reviewed the district machinery and its coordination
First ARC Study Team on Recruitment and Training (S.P.P. Thorat)	1967	One-year district training under an experienced Collector
Ashok Mehta Committee	1978	Zila Parishad as the executive body for district development
National Police Commission (Dharma Vira)	1977–81	Commissionerates for large, fast-growing cities
G.V.K. Rao Committee	1985	District Development Commissioner as CEO of the Zila Parishad

BODY / CASE	YEAR	KEY POINT
Hota Committee on Civil Services Reforms (P.C. Hota)	2004	Assured tenure; statutory Civil Services Boards
<i>Prakash Singh v Union of India</i>	2006	Police reform directions, including minimum tenure for SPs
Model Police Act (Soli Sorabjee committee)	2006	Commissionerates for cities of ten lakh and above
2nd ARC, 5th Report, <i>Public Order</i>	2007	Commissionerates for cities above ten lakh; separate investigation
2nd ARC, 6th Report, <i>Local Governance</i>	2007	District Council as District Government; Collector as interim Chief Officer
2nd ARC, 15th Report, <i>State and District Administration</i>	2009	Realign core functions; modernise Collectorate; 10–12 years for complex districts
<i>T.S.R. Subramanian v Union of India</i>	2013	Minimum fixed tenure; Civil Services Boards; written instructions
IAS (Cadre) Amendment Rules	2014	Minimum two-year tenure; transfers through Civil Services Board
Disaster Management (Amendment) Act	2025	District plan review every two years; Urban DMAs with Collector as vice-chair
Viksit Bharat–G RAM G Act, s. 17	2025	Collector as District Programme Coordinator of rural employment guarantee

11 Contemporary Developments

- **BNSS in force (1 July 2024).** The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita replaced the CrPC; the DM's prohibitory power moved from **s.144 to s.163**, and preventive bonds from **ss.107–110 to ss.126–129**, with the substance largely unchanged.
- **Sampoornata Abhiyan (4 July–30 September 2024).** NITI Aayog's three-month campaign sought **saturation** of key indicators in all **112 Aspirational Districts and 500 Aspirational Blocks**, run by district and block administrations with elected representatives.
- **Rajasthan reverses new districts (28 December 2024).** The State Cabinet abolished **nine of the 17 districts** and **three divisions** created in August 2023, after a review committee chaired by **Lalit K. Panwar**, leaving **41 districts and 7 divisions**.

- **Disaster Management (Amendment) Act, 2025 (in force 9 April 2025).** Added disaster databases, two-yearly review of district plans, Urban Disaster Management Authorities with the **Collector as vice-chairperson**, and statutory status for national crisis committees.
- **PM's Awards for districts (21 April 2025).** On Civil Services Day, **16 awards** were conferred under **Holistic Development of Districts, Aspirational Blocks** and **Innovation**; **710 districts** (92 per cent) had registered.
- **Special Intensive Revision of rolls (2025–26).** Ordered on **24 June 2025** and extended to **12 States and UTs** on **27 October 2025**, the SIR placed Collectors as **District Election Officers** and first appellate authorities at the centre of a nationwide verification of about **51 crore** electors.
- **Census 2027 field work (from 1 April 2026).** The first digital census began with self-enumeration and house-listing; Collectors were notified as **Principal Census Officers** (for example, in Rajasthan on **2 December 2025**).
- **Rural employment guarantee recast (1 July 2026).** The **VB–G RAM G Act, 2025**, replacing MGNREGA, makes the **District Collector** the **District Programme Coordinator** (s.17), with Zila Parishads overseeing implementation and Gram Panchayats preparing *Viksit Gram Panchayat Plans*.

12 Revision Grid

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Warren Hastings	Revenue arrangements (1772)	Creation of the Collector
Lord Cornwallis	Cornwallis Code (1793)	Separation of revenue and justice; rule of law
Thomas Munro	Ryotwari system (1820s)	One strong paternal officer close to the cultivator
Simon Commission	Report (1930)	District officer is “the government” to the people
Ramsay MacDonald	On the Collector	Tortoise carrying the elephant of government
Philip Woodruff	<i>The Men Who Ruled India</i> (1953–54)	Rivalry of Magistrate and Superintendent
S.S. Khera	<i>District Administration in India</i> (1964)	Total management of public affairs in the district
David Potter	<i>India's Political Administrators</i> (1986)	Continuity and short tenures of district officers
U.L. Goswami; Edward Weidner	1955; 1962	Development administration as goal-oriented change

THINKER / BODY	WORK OR REPORT (YEAR)	KEY IDEA
Fred Riggs	<i>Administration in Developing Countries</i> (1964)	Prismatic sala, formalism, overlapping
James Fesler	<i>Area and Administration</i> (1949)	Area versus function in field administration
Robert Fried	<i>The Italian Prefects</i> (1963)	Integrated and unintegrated prefectorial systems
Max Weber	<i>Economy and Society</i> (1922)	Legal-rational, trained generalist official
Derick Brinkerhoff and Jennifer Coston	Development management (1999)	Results, participation, sustainable local institutions
Christopher Hood	NPM (1991)	Performance measurement and managerialism
R.A.W. Rhodes	<i>Understanding Governance</i> (1997)	Governing through networks
Lakshmi Iyer and Anandi Mani	"Traveling Agents" (2012)	16-month average tenure; transfers as political control
Hota Committee	Report (2004)	Assured tenure; Civil Services Boards
2nd ARC	15th Report (2009)	Realigned core functions; modernised Collectorate; District Council



Previous Year Questions 40 QUESTIONS



2026

District administration in India is characterised by the **dichotomy between law and order maintenance and development management**, even though both functions are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. **Explain.** 20 MARKS

2025

In contemporary times, the **District Collector** should prioritize **teamwork over hierarchical structures**. **Comment.** 10 MARKS

2025

Experience of various States suggests that **reorganization of districts** was prompted more by **politico-populist convenience** rather than ease of administration. **Discuss.** 20 MARKS

- 2025 **Examine** the significance of **field organizations** in enhancing **policy implementation** of projects like **MGNREGA and Swachh Bharat Mission**. 10 MARKS
- 2023 "There is a need to **redefine and realign the functions** of the **Deputy Commissioner/ District Collector**. **Elaborate**. 20 MARKS
- 2023 The **district training component** of **Induction Training of IAS officers** requires to be revisited. **Examine**. 10 MARKS
- 2022 "The office of the **District Collector** **admirably survived** the changing times from **colonialism to the present times**". **Comment**. 10 MARKS
- 2021 **District Collector** is the most important functionary in district administration in India. In light of the above statement, **discuss** the **multidimensional responsibilities** of District Collector in effecting **coordinated developmental administration** in India. 20 MARKS
- 2020 District administration is the most important unit in governance. Most of the Central and State Government schemes and programmes are directed towards the district administration. In this context, **discuss** the **challenges and problems posed to the district administration**. 20 MARKS
- 2020 At the district level, **police** functions under the **overall supervision and control of the District Magistrate**. **Comment**. 10 MARKS
- 2019 The office of the **District Collector** has merely become a **bureau for funneling government schemes**, collecting statistics and an **officer on attendance** for unending VIP duties. **Critically examine** its role in the light of the recommendations of the **Second Administrative Reforms Commission**. 20 MARKS
- 2018 **Climate change** issues pose new challenges for **district administration** to be proactive." **Elaborate** 20 MARKS
- 2018 "**Development management** advocates **self-sustaining customer-friendly institutions** at the district level." **Comment**. 10 MARKS
- 2017 "**Digitalization of land records** is a necessary but not sufficient precondition for ensuring **transparent district administration**." **Explain**. 10 MARKS
- 2017 "**Disaster preparedness and management** has become an important component of **district administration** in India." **Discuss** with suitable illustrations. 20 MARKS

2016

"The **separation between regulatory and development functions** in many States has not only weakened the **District Collector** but also **development administration**." **Critically examine** the need to relook at this policy. **20 MARKS**

2015

"**District Collector's role in the development process** has been **overemphasised**." **Comment** on the statement.

2014

"**District collector** is a **legacy of the British Raj** and has largely remained insulated from the demands of **contemporary professionalism**." **Discuss**.

2013

"**Reducing the size (geographical area) of the district** will provide relief to the **overburdened and overworked collector**." **Comment**.

2013

Explain the important recommendations of **V.T. Krishnamachary Committee** on Indian and State Administrative Services and **problems of District Administration**.

2012

Explain the **emerging ambiguity** in respect of the **developmental role of the District Collector** in the wake of the **73 rd Constitutional Amendment Act**.

2011

"**Administrative reforms** get diluted because of **constant tinkering on the margin** rather than a holistic transformation." **Discuss** the statement in the context of **reforming district administration** in India.

2008

"**District Administration** is like a **small tortoise carrying the load of an elephant**." **Discuss**.

2006

"The **District Collector**, the Additional Deputy Commissioner and Sub-Divisional Officer, have virtually become '**officers- in-attendance**' and have **lost initiative** and independent of judgement." **Comment**.

2005

"One of the most distinctive characteristics of **Indian Administrative Service** is its **multipurpose character**." **Comment**.

2005

"The primary emphasis in **District Administration** has to be on **implementation of development programmes** in cooperation with **active support of people**." **Elucidate**.

2005

"The **District Collector** is an **overburdened officer** due to the expansion and increasing **developmental activities**." **Comment**.

2004

"The **district officer** as a chief agent and **representative of state** serves as a **channel of communication** between the Government and the residents of the district." **Explain**.

2003

"**District Collector** Has increasingly become **multi-dimensional**." **Comment**.

2002

"**Collector** is the **representative of the State government** in the district and also represents public interest." **Comment.**

2001

"The **District Collector** admirably survived the historical change of role from an **alien regime to a national one.**" **Comment.**

1995

Critically review the evolving **relationship between the district magistrate and the superintendent of police** in the field of **law-and-order management** in a district."

1994

"The **Bengal pattern of district administration** was based on the **Zamindari system of land tenure.**" **Explain.**

1993

"The British colonial administration superimposed the **prefectorial system** on the historically inherited **district administration** in India, in the absence of rural local governments at the district level." **Comment.**

1992

'The **office of collector** created by the British forms the basis of district administration in India, but today it needs a new look to metamorphise itself into a **Key office of District Government.**' **Comment.**

1990

'The designation "**District Collector**" is a **misnomer** at the present juncture, the correct designation would be "**Chief District Administrator**". He is the pivot, in district administration, of the stability and progress of the district, but his performance in both these respects depends on the **co-operation of and co-ordination with the officials** in various departments in the district.' **Elucidate** the statement in the light of the experience, particularly during the eighties and nineties.

1989

'As the Panchayati Democracy descends down to the hustings, the **Office of the 'Collector'**, like that of the 'Governor' tends to become **anachronistic** in the Federal Political System of India.' **Examine** the Statement.

1988

"The formative stage of administration, preceding the Indian mutiny of 1857 witnessed a struggle between the '**Cornwallis**' and '**Munro**' schools of district administration." **Comment.**

1987

'The **role of District Collector has changed but not diminished** for now he has an additional function of **guiding democratic bodies** and has to carry conviction with members of these democratic institutions.' **Comment.**

1998

"**Headquarter and Field relationships** determine the tender of **implementation of programmes.**" **Comment.** PAPER I

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