

Ancient Indian Political Thought

Dharmashastra, Arthashastra & Buddhist Traditions — the ancient sources

One unit, four streams: the nature & sources of the tradition, the Dharmashastra strand (Manu), the Arthashastra strand (Kautilya), and the Buddhist & Jain strand. Revise the spine first, then the comparisons — that is where the marks sit.

Revise → write a little → don't break the chain.

Mains PYQs sitting on this unit (this file): 2015 · 2017 · 2019 · 2020 · 2021 · 2023 · 2024 — every dated question here is a 15-marker.

Years & marks above are only those printed in your chapter file; treat them as a pattern from past papers, not as official weightage.

PART A — NATURE & SOURCES OF THE TRADITION

Why this is a distinct tradition

Ancient Indian political thought is not an autonomous discipline in the modern sense. Political ideas sit embedded in discussions of dharma, danda, kingship, social order, justice, duty, punishment, welfare, taxation, diplomacy and war. The recurring concern is the preservation of order.

Problem of nomenclature — several words, each a different face of rule

Rajadharma — duties of the ruler

Kshatraditya — knowledge for rulers/warriors

Rajyasastra — science of statecraft

Dandaniti — policy of punishment

Nitisastra — ethics for ruler & subjects

Arthasastra — acquisition & protection of territory/resources

Dharma · Danda · Matsyanyaya — the conceptual core

- Dharma** — from root *dhṛ* (“to hold”); the moral order that holds society together. Duty, righteousness, law, social obligation, moral discipline, cosmic order. Not merely religion.
- Danda** — discipline, punishment, coercive authority; the enforcement arm of dharma. Without danda, dharma is ineffective.
- Matsyanyaya** — the “law of fish”: in the absence of authority the big fish devour the small, the strong exploit the weak. The standing justification of state and kingship.

Interdependence

Dharma gives moral purpose to power; danda gives institutional force to dharma. Dharma without danda is weak; danda without dharma turns arbitrary.

Dharma and Danda hold each other up



Remove either side and order collapses into the law of fish.

Salient features of Indian political thinking

- Continuity** — dharma–danda link runs from ancient to modern Indian thought; ethics and punishment stay tied to political order.
- Communitarian** — collective well-being over the isolated individual; the person sits inside family, caste, community, cosmic order.
- Pluralistic** — multiple social groups, customs, sects and local authorities recognised.
- Cosmopolitan** — community not defined only in narrow territorial terms.
- Cyclical view of history** — not linear Western progress; history as decline from an earlier moral order.
- Politics within dharma** — political life framed by moral and religious principle; divine influence treated as central.
- Influence of ethics** — king expected to embody virtue; internal administration stresses morality, external affairs may turn pragmatic (Kautilyan realism).
- Caste-based structure** — four varnas (Brahmana, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra); governance largely a Brahmana–Kshatriya partnership, Vaishyas sustaining the economy.
- No state–society separation** — state, government, law, custom and social order overlap.
- Monarchy as norm** — ganasanghas exist but remain exceptions.
- Government not sovereign (modern sense)** — ultimate authority rests in divine order, dharma, custom, sacred law; sovereignty is plural and dispersed.

“The entire world is a family.”

— Sant Tukaram (on cosmopolitanism)

Bhikhu Parekh's characterisation

- In-egalitarian** — moral equality may be granted, but social and political equality are absent.
- Pluralism** — autonomous groups recognised within society.
- Conservative & apologetic** — the existing order, especially caste, is often justified.
- Didactic & practical** — texts advise rulers rather than offer abstract critique.

Limitations in studying it

- Religious bias** — ideas must be extracted from ritual, moral and legal prescription.
- Idealised depictions** — texts describe an ideal order, not always actual conditions.
- Scattered character** — spread across Vedas, epics, smritis, Arthashastra literature, Buddhist/Jain texts, inscriptions, foreign accounts.
- Nationalist interpretations** — Kashinath Trimbak Telang, R. G. Bhandarkar, Radhakumud Mookerji, K. P. Jayaswal, R. C. Majumdar and Benoy Kumar Sarkar stressed India's contribution to counter colonial claims of backwardness. Ram Sharan Sharma warned such readings may turn selective, underplay social inequality, and ignore caste/gender exclusions.

Western doubts vs supportive assessments

Western doubts

“the only sphere where the Indian mind found itself at liberty to act, to create and to worship was the sphere of religion and philosophy.”

— Max Müller

“... religious institutions controlled the character and development of its people... There is no provision in such a scheme for the interest of the state...”

— Prof. Bloomfield

Supportive readings

“nowhere in the world, human mind has dealt with the various questions of life in such a depth as in case of India.”

— Max Müller

- **Ernest Barker** — birth of political science is in India, not Greece.
- **D. Mackenzie Brown**, *The White Umbrella* — political science begins from India.
- **Dr. B. R. Bhandarkar** — “absurd to affirm” India never developed politics as an independent branch.
- **N. D. Palmer** — ancient India treated the nature/origin of state, state–society relation, forms of government, kingship.
- **V. R. Mehta** — West works through dichotomies; India follows an integral mode, so political philosophy is embedded in spiritual texts.

2 Sources of Ancient Indian Political Thought

Mahendra Prasad Singh highlights religion, morality and the teachings of gods and sages as important sources. The material is scattered across many genres — speculative ideas on individual, society and state, alongside practical discussion of administration, war, diplomacy, taxation and justice.

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Sources of ancient Indian political thought



Vedic literature & Upanishads

- **Vedas** (Rigveda, Samaveda, Yajurveda, Atharvaveda) — king and kingship, duties of rulers, tribal polity under the **rajan**, assemblies **sabha** and **samiti**, political order linked to cosmic order. Rigveda Samhita evidences early tribal society.
- **Upanishads** — chiefly metaphysical; dharma as “inner law” gives a moral grounding to authority; legitimacy tied to moral order.

Epics & Puranas

- **Mahabharata** — major source of rajadharma and dandaniti; origin of state, kingship, judicial administration, ministers, treasury, defence, war ethics, diplomacy. **Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa** systematises much of polity.
- **Ramayana** — ideal of righteous kingship; **Rama-rajya** links legitimacy with justice, empathy and moral rule.
- **Puranas** — political narratives, genealogies, moral frameworks for kingship.

Dharmasutras, Dharmashastras & Smritis

- Guides to law, custom, duty, varna, ashrama, purusharthas, personal conduct, rajadharma.
- Key texts: **Manusmriti**, **Yajnavalkya Smriti**, **Narada Smriti**. Manusmriti is the most important; Manu is treated as the first law-giver.

Arthashastra & Nitisaara tradition

- **Kautilya's Arthashastra** — statecraft, taxation, administration, diplomacy, espionage, army, foreign policy, war, revolution, economic regulation, security. The realist strand; primacy to artha, security, revenue, strategic advantage.
- **A. S. Altekar** — ranks its importance in political literature with **Panini's Ashtadhyayi** in grammar.
- Later continuity: **Kamandakiya Nitisaara**, **Sukraneetisara** — political reflection survives past the classical period.

Buddhist & Jain literature

- **Buddhist**: Buddhacharita, Ashokavadana, Jatakas, Digha Nikaya, the canon, Ashokan inscriptions — origin of state from anarchy/moral decline, **Mahasammat** (consensus-based king), republican elements, Sangha's democratic features, non-violent foreign policy, Chakravartin winning through **Dhamma Chakra**. **Gail Omvedt** and **Kancha Ilaiah** read Buddha as a political philosopher; **Rhys Davids** calls the Sangha democratic.
- **Jain**: pluralism, non-absolutism, welfare kingship; **Somadeva** supports a welfare state and benevolent king; **anekantavada** serves civilisational pluralism.

“All men are my children.”

— Emperor Ashoka, Rock Edict XIII (kingship as paternal stewardship)

Inscriptions, coins, foreign accounts & compilations

- Inscriptions & coins — evidence of actual practice; reconstruct administration, authority, legitimacy.
- Foreign observers — **Megasthenes**, **Fahien**, **Huan Tsang** on administration, society, institutions, religious practice.
- Nibandhakaras (14th–18th c.) — **Chandesvara**, **Mitra Mishra**, **Nilakantha** reorganised scattered legal-political material.

3 Mahabharata & the Shantiparva

Political significance

- Not only an epic of heroism; a political text on human nature, social order, statecraft, military strategy, ethical leadership. Attributed to **Krishna Dwaipayana Vyasa**.

- **D. D. Kosambi** reads it as a historical text with insight into ancient Indian society and politics.
- Its political realism has parallels with the strategic concerns of **Sun Tzu** and **Niccolò Machiavelli**.

Structure of the Shantiparva

Bhishma instructs Yudhishtira after Kurukshetra. **365 chapters, 13,000+ verses**. Three sub-sections:

Parva	Concern
Rajadharmanushasana	Duties & responsibilities of the king; principles of governance.
Apaddharmaanushasana	Conduct during crisis and emergency.
Mokshadharma	Spiritual liberation; rules for moksha.

Origin of the state — divine & contractual together

Divine origin • State connected with divine creation; king rules as representative of divine order. • Rigveda: Brahma creates Kshatriyas to protect society. • Prithu Vainya's divine coronation symbolises sacred kingship.	Social contract • In chaos and lawlessness, people seek a ruler — for protection of property, family, varna order, security and justice. • People share resources in return for protection: an implicit contract. • Ram Sharan Sharma: tax obligation implies kosha; military obligation implies danda — both basic elements of state.
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Kingship & duties of the ruler

- King is both divine appointee and servant of the people. **Bhishma**: uphold dharma, protect moral/social order, preserve varna, enable artha–kama–moksha for subjects.
- Models: **Manu** accepts kingship to restore order; **Prithu** establishes governance against chaos.
- **A. S. Altekar**: the right to govern derives partly from divine sanction, partly from consent of the governed; the purpose is elimination of anarchy and establishment of harmony.

PART B — THE DHARMASHASTRA STRAND

4 Dharmashastra Tradition

Dharmashastra

The science of righteous living — law, morality, custom, duty, social order, familial obligation, rules of conduct, duties of rulers, civil and criminal matters, ritual discipline. Not only religious: a complete framework for ordering individual, family, community and state.

Key texts: **Manusmriti**, **Yajnavalkya Smriti**, **Narada Smriti**.

UPSC 2024 · ISm **Dharmashastra — duty-centric worldview**

Duty-centric worldview — duties before rights

- Every individual has a role; every role carries obligations; social harmony depends on performance of duties (**svadharma**).
- Dharma here = righteousness, duty, morality, law, self-discipline, social responsibility — a moral compass that curbs selfishness and binds society to a larger order.
- **Rajya-Dharma** extends the duty frame to rulers: governance is not entitlement; the ruler is custodian of order, must serve subjects, uphold justice and law.
- **Adharma** = action against moral and natural order.

Varna–Ashrama Dharma

Varna	Role-duty	Ashrama (life-stage)
Brahmins	Learning, priesthood, interpretation of sacred law	Brahmacharya
Kshatriyas	Protection, rule, warfare	Grihastha
Vaishyas	Trade, agriculture, economy	Vanaprastha
Shudras	Service and labour	Sannyasa

Purpose: regulate the life-cycle, maintain social order, connect individual conduct with cosmic and social harmony.

Law, morality & social order

Regulates marriage, inheritance, debt, trade, property, family and caste duties, the king’s duties, punishment, civil and criminal justice. In it, rights are secondary to duties; order over individual autonomy; legal/moral obligation tracks social status; justice is tied to varna and role.

A. L. Basham: Dharmashastra defines not only moral conduct but also the role of individuals in maintaining social order and justice.

Political dimensions — a theory of rule in moral idiom

UPSC · political dimensions of the Dharmashastras

- **Kingship** — king is guardian of dharma, enforces order through danda; authority legitimate only when used for protection and justice.
- **Constitutional limits** — royal power bound by dharma, shastra, custom and Brahmin counsel.
- **Social organisation** — varna & ashrama organise division of labour, hierarchy, revenue, coercion, legal status, group duties.
- **Public welfare** — **praja-palana** (protection of subjects) legitimises royal power: life/property, justice, agriculture/trade, social order, crime prevention.
- **War & restraint** — **dharma-yuddha**: no attack at night, no harm to non-combatants, violence restrained by ethical norm.

“the ruler, armed with the rod, becomes the very image of Dharma in the social world”

— Patrick Olivelle

By making the king “subject to the Law he is charged to enforce, the Dharmashastra tradition erected a constitutional check on arbitrary will”.

— Robert Lingat

Such texts are “regulatory, laying down the frame within which a polity defined by status could function”.

— Romila Thapar

5 Manusmriti — Place & Significance

Authorship, date, authority

- Also *The Laws of Manu* / *Institutions of Manu*; the most authoritative Brahminical Dharmashastra text.
- Composed **200 BCE – 200 CE** by multiple Brahmin scholars; ~**2,694 stanzas**; later than the Dharmasutras.
- Foundation for Hindu law; the British used it as a standard reference in disputes on inheritance, family, marriage, royal succession.
- Not a modern statute book. **Donald R. Davis Jr.** warns it is a historical error to treat Dharmashastra as a legal code and its authors as lawgivers — it is a **normative charter** of an ideal Hindu polity.

Manu in Indian tradition

- Progenitor of mankind; originator of law; first law-giver; **manasputra** of Brahma; one of seven great sages; first king in some traditions.
- Legend of **Manu of the Deluge** in the Shatapatha Brahmana; **Manu Vaiyasvata** as first king and founder of kingship.
- Believed to embody the essence of the Vedas; any smriti opposed to it was not approved in orthodox tradition.

“People suffering from anarchy... (maatsyanyayabhibhutah prajah) first elected Manu, the Vivasvata, to be the king.”

— Kautilya’s Arthashastra (on the election of Manu)

Frame, sources of law

- Frame story: dialogue of Manu’s disciple **Bhrigu** with students; Manu explains creation and the four-fold society; Bhrigu teaches the rest.
- Shruti** — revealed, immutable (Vedas). **Smriti** — remembered tradition, based on practice and learned interpretation.
- Four sources of sacred law: the Vedas; conduct of the virtuous learned in the Vedas; practices of holy men; personal conscience.
- Kashi Prasad Jayaswal**: appeal to divine origin strengthens rulers/elites (Pushyamitra Sunga used it) and weakened rival theories such as the Buddhist social-contract idea.

Key concepts

Purusharthas — dharma, artha, kama, moksha

Ashramas — four life-stages

Varnas — four social classes

Sanskaras — sixteen life rituals

On purusharthas: life is not reduced to renunciation; material and sensual goals are acknowledged; dharma regulates artha and kama; moksha gives ultimate direction.

Origin of the state — a quasi-contract

- Before the state: **arajakta** (anarchy), matsyanyaya, the strong exploiting the weak.
- People approach Brahma, who creates Manu as the first king; people accept obedience to law; ruler protects society and upholds dharma.

Divine personality, not divine right

The Indian idea differs from Western divine right. The king does not hold absolute divine right; he has a divine personality, embodies elements of divine authority, but stays bound by dharma — failure brings spiritual consequence.

Kingship & danda

- King = protector of all castes and orders; must preserve dharma, prevent matsyanyaya, protect varna-ashrama, punish violators, secure life and property.
- Danda** is the instrument of governance: it protects all creatures, keeps varnas/ashramas in discipline, deters crime “even when the public is asleep”; proper use brings happiness, reckless use brings destruction.
- Human nature: prone to evil; danda necessary but to be used sparingly, avoiding unnecessary coercion. The king must know both dharma and danda.

Standards for the virtuous individual & ruler

UPSC • “Manu Smriti sets standards a virtuous individual—ruler included—ought to observe”

Individual

- Non-violence, truthfulness, generosity, self-restraint.
- Abstention from injury, falsehood, theft.
- Self-cultivation across varna and life-stage — though not equally in social status.

Ruler (Books VII–VIII = rajadharma)

- King “created the protector of all castes and orders”.
- Use danda proportionately; income and punishment linked to public welfare.

“A king who duly protects his subjects receives a sixth share of their merit; one who fails inherits their sin.”

— Manusmriti, verse 8.304

The treatise negotiates “the balance between the political power and priestly interests.”

— Patrick Olivelle

Administration & governance

- Council of ministers** — from noble families, preference to upper castes, skilled in warfare, loyalty tested.
- Diplomacy & warfare** — four methods: **Saam** (conciliation), **Daam** (gifts/bribery), **Bhed** (division), **Danda** (force). War only on threat to the kingdom or for expansion; king compared to a **weeder** (removes weeds, protects plants); caution and preference for peace.
- Defence & spies** — well-stocked forts, spies, guard against internal and external threats.
- Moral conduct** — reject cruelty/deceit, follow rule of law, protect property and traders, regulate prices, prevent food adulteration, regulate weights and measures, encourage trade and agriculture.

Taxation & economy

- Tax = the king’s wage for protection; collected from land and cattle; should enhance national wealth; revenue used for welfare.

- Over-taxation breeds discontent and calamity; moderate taxation compared to **bees collecting nectar without harming flowers**.
- The king should not tax Brahmins and should be generous towards them.

Justice & the judicial system

Element	Manu's position
Principles	No rule without justice; justice quick and cheap; decide by equity, custom and practice; wrong judgment to be reversed.
Court	King presides with Brahmins and experienced counsellors; Brahmins interpret law; Shudras barred from legal interpretation.
Judges	Chosen on character and experience; must know Dharmashastras and established custom.
Punishments	Fines, corporal punishment, caste-based penalties.
Penal inequality	Brahmins receive leniency; lower castes harsher penalties (a Shudra insulting a Brahmin may lose his tongue; a Brahmin insulting a Shudra may be fined).
Jury	Juries existed; in the king's absence judicial power could pass to Brahmins; Brahmin-court juries were also Brahmin.

Marriage, women & mixed castes

- **Anuloma** — higher-caste man with lower-caste woman; permitted, not encouraged. **Pratiloma** — lower-caste man with higher-caste woman; strongly condemned. Eight forms of marriage; **Brahma** marriage most appropriate for Brahmins.
- Women placed under male guardianship: childhood → father, youth → husband, widowhood → sons; a paternalistic frame — subordinate status, controlled desire, sometimes treated like property, yet men urged to honour them.
- Mixed castes from inter-varna unions slotted into hierarchy: anuloma offspring base-born but linked to father's caste; pratiloma offspring treated as more degraded.

"In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband ... a woman must never be independent."

— Manusmriti

PART C — THE ARTHASHASTRA STRAND (KAUTILYA)

6 Kautilya & the Arthashastra

Kautilya theorises the state as a practical science of government — power, administration, diplomacy, law, economy, security — but does not reduce government to force. He is a realist, not a crude amoralist: strategic hardness combined with concern for order, prosperity and public welfare.

Life & times

- Names: **Kautilya** (kutil gotra, shrewdness), **Chanakya** (father Rishi Chanak), **Vishnugupta** (devotion to Vishnu).
- ~4th century BCE; Brahmin scholar-strategist; contemporary of **Aristotle** and **Alexander**; mentor and chief adviser to **Chandragupta Maurya**; helped overthrow the Nandas and consolidate the Mauryan Empire.

Arthashastra — meaning, scope, rediscovery

- **Artha** = material well-being, wealth, power, the material basis of political life; land central to artha (agriculture, revenue, population, military power).
- Three dimensions: **Arthaniti** (economic policy), **Dandaniti** (justice & coercion), **Videshniti** (diplomacy, foreign policy, security, war). Belongs to the **Dandashastra** tradition but integrates dharma and danda.
- Rediscovered by **Dr. Rudrapatnam Shamasastri**; first English translation **1915** — after which the Kautilya–Machiavelli comparison began in earnest.

"Material well-being alone is supreme. For, spiritual good and sensual pleasures depend upon material well being."

— Kautilya

Not crude materialism

Dharma and kama require a stable material foundation — artha is the base on which the other ends rest.

Statecraft

Jim Bulpitt reads statecraft as a way of understanding politics through governing challenges and the strategic choices of leadership. In Kautilya it is practical governance, not abstract theory: protect the state, secure prosperity, use power, counsel, law, punishment, diplomacy and economic management, and reach **yogakshema**.

Purpose of the state

- **Matsyanyaya** — without authority the big fish swallow the small; law, punishment and government become necessary. **Romila Thapar**, *History and Beyond*, connects the rise of the state with growing social stratification and the move from lineage to state systems; the Shantiparva carries the same fish image.
- **Yogakshema** — welfare, security, peaceful enjoyment of prosperity. The ruler must secure **raksha** (protection), **palana** (order), **yogakshema** (welfare).
- **Rajadharma** — the king is powerful but not above dharma; he protects dharma but is not its sole interpreter.

"In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness; in their welfare his welfare."

— Kautilya

"A king who flouts the teachings of the Dharmashastras and The Arthashastra, ruins the kingdom by his own injustice."

— Kautilya

Functions of the state

Protection — internal, external, life & property

Maintaining law — custom, disputes, reasoned judgment

Social order — dharma, varna-dharmashrama

Welfare — poor, women, children, orphans, aged, helpless

Saptanga theory — seven limbs of an organic state

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Kautilya's views on the elements of the State

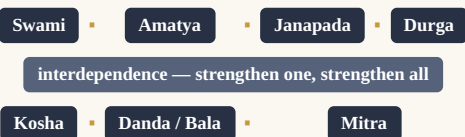
Limb	Stands for	Organic image
Swami	Sovereign king — head, highest authority, protector of dharma/welfare	Head
Amatya	Ministers/officials — advice, departments, continuity (Mantriparishad)	Eyes
Janapada	Territory & people — land, villages, agriculture, revenue base	Legs
Durga	Fort/fortified capital — defence, training, secret ops, state functions	Arms
Kosha	Treasury — basis of army, bureaucracy, welfare, emergencies	Mouth
Danda / Bala	Army & coercive power — order, borders, law, foreign policy	Mind/strength
Mitra	Allies — help in war/diplomacy, reduce isolation, balance enemies	Ears

King's three powers: **Prabhushakti** (army & treasury), **Mantrashakti** (counsel), **Utsahshakti** (energy, courage, charisma). The definition resembles the modern state — population, territory, government, sovereignty. **A. S. Altekar** compares Mitra with the role of recognition in modern statehood.

“no territory deserves name of state unless it is full of people & controlled by an agglomeration of power with absolute authority over the territory”
— attributed to Kautilya

“Single wheel cannot run the chariot”.
— Kautilya (the king depends on the other limbs)

The state as a body — no limb works alone



King, council & rajadharma

- Strong but responsible: disciplined, energetic, impartial, far-sighted, learned, guided by counsel — not idle philosopher, indulgent ruler, dictator or slave of pleasure. Close to the **rajarshi** (royal sage): power with restraint.
- Council essential — expert advice, prevents impulsive rule, must be selected carefully and also watched. (The Shantiparva's Bhishma likewise stresses competent, ethical ministers.)
- Rajadharma limits power: protect subjects, act by dharma, avoid excessive force, treat public happiness as his own.

Administration & governance

Detailed departmental organisation, hierarchy, record-keeping, inspection, taxation, audit, anti-corruption, surveillance, civil–military division. Kautilya trusts capable institutions, not personal virtue alone.

Unit	Approx. scale
Grama	Village
Samgrahana	~10 villages
Kharvatika	~200 villages
Dronamukha	~400 villages
Sthaniya	~800 villages

- Law & justice** — judges at key centres; civil/criminal distinction; protection for every individual; when sacred law and practice conflict, decide by reason. One of the earliest law-givers to give wide judicial protection.
- Welfare** — support to poor, pregnant women, children, orphans, aged, calamity victims; roads, trade, famine relief. Reforms: ban on sale/purchase of children as slaves, concern against child labour, protection of female slaves, some civil rights and witness rights for Shudras, recognition of mixed castes, inheritance for Pratiloma offspring.
- Education** — treated as a state duty; grants for teachers and schools; education as universal and free.
- Mixed economy** — state promotes agriculture, mining, manufacture, commerce, public works; regulates prices, weights, trade, hoarding; allows private property but intervenes on overproduction, price manipulation, public need.

Corruption & accountability — institutional, not sermon-based

“Among officials, the methods of embezzlement number forty.”
— Kautilya

“Just as fish moving under water cannot possibly be found out either as drinking or not drinking water, so government servants cannot be found out while taking money for themselves.”
— Kautilya (the fish comparison)

- Measures: strict accounting; separation of hands (collector, accountant, treasurer, paymaster at different levels); separate interrogation when accounts differ; regular transfers; spies, sting operations, whistleblowers; right-sizing of bureaucracy; punishment of both bribe-giver and -taker and the whole chain; heavy fines (up to twelve times the loss); capital punishment for precious-goods cases.

The honey-and-fish aphorisms “nicely capture both the temptation of officials who control rents and the difficulty of detecting their actions.”
— Avinash Dixit

The Arthashastra gives “the earliest systematic prescriptions to curb corruption in India’s administrative history.”
— Abhoy K. Ojha

Artha, Dharma & Yogakshema; Dandniti

- Artha at the foundation: dharma and kama depend on artha; without revenue, army, justice and administration fail; poverty weakens morality and order. Artha thus becomes rajadharma — wealth acquired justly through taxation, agriculture, trade, property protection, anti-corruption, public works, famine relief, defence.
- Dandniti** — science of punishment/force/order. Too little punishment → disorder; excessive → hatred and revolt; just punishment → order and respect. Controlled coercion under rajadharma, not blind force.

The Arthashastra is “a science of running a state, where kingship is identified with wealth”.

— Thomas R. Trautmann

‘men’s minds are not steady’ ... ‘people are controlled by punishment, the intrinsically pure man is rare’.

— Kautilya (on the need for danda)

Integrated statecraft

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Notion of statecraft & Kautilya’s theory of statecraft

A complete system: strong state + welfare orientation + Saptanga + Dandniti + Mandala + six-fold policy + four upayas + espionage + economic administration + anti-corruption. It covers virtually every aspect of governance in a monarchical state.

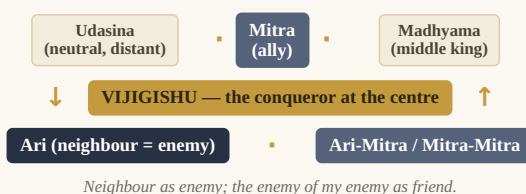
Mandala theory of foreign policy

- Mandala** = circle; interstate relations as concentric circles of power. The idea appears earlier in Manu and is hinted in the Rigveda; Kautilya systematises it.
- Central figure: the **Vijigishu** (would-be conqueror). Governing principle: “the enemy of my enemy is my friend.”
- Categories: **Vijigishu**, **Ari** (neighbour-enemy), **Mitra** (ally), **Ari-Mitra**, **Mitra-Mitra**, **Madhyama** (middle king who can tilt the balance), **Udasina** (neutral/distant but influential). Four circles × (king + friend + friend’s friend) → a network of **twelve kingdoms**.
- Logic (political realism): neighbours are natural enemies, distant states possible allies, no permanent friend or enemy, relations driven by interest, alliances shift, strategic flexibility necessary. Close to balance-of-power theory.

“International politics is like Jungle, where the strength of lions prevails”

— Kautilya

Mandala — circles of friend and enemy around the conqueror



Four Upayas & the Six-Fold Policy

Four Upayas (methods)

- Sama** — conciliation, persuasion, common interest.
- Dana / Dama** — gifts, concessions, inducements.
- Bheda** — division, dissension, divide-and-rule.
- Danda** — punishment, force, war as the decisive option.

Used singly or together; priority to calculation, not sentiment.

Six-Fold Policy (Shadgunya)

- Sandhi** — peace (when weaker; buy time).
- Vigraha** — war (when stronger).
- Asana** — neutrality (when equal; wait & watch).
- Yana** — march/offensive (when power rising).
- Samshraya** — seeking shelter/alliance.
- Dvaidhibhava** — dual policy (peace with one, war with another).

Six-fold policy reads off the balance of strength



Flexible realism: policy changes with strength, time and circumstance.

War, envoys, spies, national security

Type of war	Character
Mantra-Yuddha	Diplomatic war — negotiation, alliances, pressure without battle.
Prakash / Parakrama-Yuddha	Open war — direct, visible, rule-bound battle.
Kuta-Yuddha	Concealed/guerrilla war — ambush, deception, surprise.
Tusnim-Yuddha	Silent/covert war — espionage, sabotage, proxy, psy-ops.

- Envoys (Duta)** — from noble families, learned, with strong memory and courage; immunities (movement, protection); duties: carry messages, gather intelligence, ensure treaty compliance, acquire allies, create dissension.
- Spies** — disguised as monks, merchants, ascetics, students, servants, sadhus; collect intelligence, watch officials, detect rebellion, check corruption; counterintelligence stressed; sadhus used for psychological warfare.
- National security** — multi-dimensional: military defence, internal stability, economy, intelligence, diplomacy, fortification, famine/epidemic protection, revenue, moral discipline. **Yogakshema** becomes the wider idea of security.

Kautilya & political realism

- Politics as struggle for power, national interest, no central authority among states, constant possibility of war, suspicion, flexible alliances, balance of power,

army & treasury, deception/spies/coercion. Close to **offensive realism** (expansion treated as security).

- **Hans Morgenthau's** divide-and-rule, alliances and armaments echo Kautilya's upayas and techniques.
- Yet realism with ethical limits — dharma, welfare, rajadharma recur.

Kautilya is “the first great political realist”.

— Roger Boesche

“Kautilya is more Machiavellian than Machiavelli”.

— Max Weber (radical realism of the Arthashastra)

‘nowhere in the Arthasāstra is there any single sentence or verse to prove that Kauṭilya was conscious of having separated politics from ethics’

— Dr. Varma

Kautilya & Plato / Aristotle

vs Plato

- **Shared:** distrust of untrained masses; rule by a capable, self-controlled elite; knowledge in rulership. Plato's philosopher-king ≈ Kautilya's rajarshi.
- **Differs:** Plato is normative/idealist, the state an educational device for justice; Kautilya writes an operating manual for security, order and prosperity in a real state.

vs Aristotle

- **Shared:** organic state, interdependent parts, concern for law, administration, stability. (Aristotle tutored Alexander; Kautilya guided Chandragupta.)
- **Differs:** Aristotle examines origin/constitutions, is cautious about wealth; Kautilya assumes monarchy, treats wealth as essential, develops bureaucracy, spies, taxation, war.

“the state comes into existence for the sake of life and continues for the sake of the good life”

— Aristotle (overlaps Kautilya's welfare concern)

Rao (1958) judged Kautilya closer to Aristotle than to Machiavelli, since both define the state and examine its structure.

Kautilya & Niccolò Machiavelli

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Compare & contrast Kautilya and Machiavelli on statecraft

Jawaharlal Nehru, in *Discovery of India*, drew the parallel and used the idea of the “Indian Machiavelli”.

Similarities

- Political realism; power, strategy, survival; politics as calculation.
- Coercion accepted — Kautilya's danda; Machiavelli's fear over unstable affection.
- Harsh means for political ends; both far from Gandhian purity of means.
- Pessimistic on human nature; war wasteful unless victory likely; alliances useful but unstable; religion/morality may serve political ends.

Differences

- Kautilya's king bound by **rajadharma**; Machiavelli's prince placed above conventional morality.
- Kautilya people-centric at home; Machiavelli more ruler-centric.
- Scope: *The Prince* = acquisition/retention of power; Arthashastra = taxation, irrigation, trade, law, welfare, espionage, war, diplomacy.
- Kautilya's goal is **yogakshema**; Machiavelli gives no programme to enrich people.
- Kautilya supports **dharmavijaya** (righteous conquest), not endless greed.

‘men in general... are ungrateful, changeable, simulators and dissimulators, runaways in danger, eager for gain’

— Niccolò Machiavelli

‘for a prince ... it is not necessary actually to have all the ... qualities, but it is very necessary to appear to have them’

— Niccolò Machiavelli

‘In ethical concepts Kauṭilya is far removed from Machiavelli with whom he has been compared in a superficial manner.’

— Dr. Nag

‘Kauṭilya does not teach dharma for the sake of dharma, but he recommends humanity and justice as the best means for pacifying ... a conquered land’

— Winternitz

B. S. Sihag stresses Kautilya's programme for enriching people, which Machiavelli lacks. Machiavelli's **virtù** is not moral virtue but ‘strength, efficiency, power, or efficacy in particular circumstances for particular purposes’.

Kautilya, democracy & Gandhi

- Kautilya supports concentrated royal authority — accountability through rajadharma, counsel, surveillance and welfare rather than participation; useful for the authoritarian–democratic governance contrast, yet his welfare/anti-corruption concerns align with modern good-governance expectations.
- vs **Gandhi**: Kautilya → danda & artha, state security, accepts coercion; Gandhi → ahimsa & satya, purity of means, distrust of coercive state power.

Contemporary importance

- **Strategic culture** — **George Tanham** argued Indians lacked it; the Arthashastra challenges this with a developed tradition of geopolitics, balance of power, intelligence, alliances, war planning, economic statecraft.
- **Indian foreign policy** (careful analytic parallels) — balancing idealism/realism; non-alignment & disarmament under Nehru; 1971 Treaty with the USSR; nuclear capability; China–Pakistan alignment as “enemy of my enemy”; the Quad; engagement with Iran; the 2020 Ladakh standoff. No-first-use and non-alignment carry shades of Kautilyan restraint.
- **Economic statecraft & governance** — material capacity as foundation of power; fiscal prudence, market regulation, defence production; **Atmanirbhar Bharat/Make in India** as self-reliance. Anti-corruption insight maps onto the modern principal–agent problem (audit, surveillance, transfers, punishment > gain).

“We still have the same distrust of one nation by another, the same pursuit of its own interest by every nation tempered only by the considerations of expediency...”
— R. P. Kangle, *The Kautilya Arthashastra*

The Arthashastra is the ‘first comprehensive compilation of the timeless laws of politics, commerce, diplomacy, and war’.
— Heinrich Zimmer

PART D — THE BUDDHIST & JAIN STRAND

7 Buddhist Political Thought & the Śramanic Tradition

What kind of theory it is

Not statecraft in the administrative sense, but a **moral theory of power, society and governance**. It asks how authority arises, why rulers are needed, how power must be ethically restrained, and how **Dhamma** can guide public life. Politics is placed inside a wider moral order of compassion, non-violence, self-discipline, equality and welfare — never separated from ethics.

Background — why it appears when it does

- Emerges in the age of the **Mahajanapadas**: expanding kingdoms, clan republics & oligarchies, new urban centres, rising merchants & landholding farmers, weakening ritual hierarchy, and conflict between Brahmanical orthodoxy and the **Śramanic** traditions.
- A prosperous urban-mercantile class became patrons of Buddhism.

Buddhism as a Śramanic challenge (three moves)

- Rejected birth-based superiority · questioned ritualism & sacrificial authority · stressed ethical conduct over lineage.
- The Buddha’s preference for a more open society sat closer to the small **gana-sanghas** and clan republics than to large monarchies like Kosala and Magadha. The **Vajjian confederacy** modelled deliberation, respect for elders & women, public spirit and moral rectitude.

Is Buddhism “political” at all?

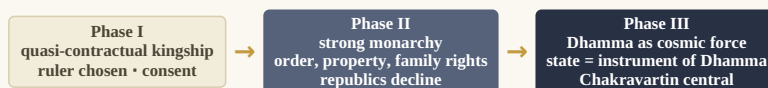
Position	Claim
Max Weber	Buddhism is apolitical, mainly “other-worldly”.
Tambiah, Ilaiah, Omvedt, Upinder Singh	Treat Buddhism as politically significant; it orders human affairs, not only personal salvation.
Kancha Ilaiah	Stresses the ‘this-worldly’, rationalistic nature of Buddhist philosophy — giving the Buddha a claim to be a ‘political philosopher’, not only a religious thinker.

Kancha Ilaiah: the Buddha sought to ‘reform and humanize the mercantile economy, the patriarchal family and the monarchical state, challenging Brahminical political theorists.’

Dīgha Nikāya & the evolution of Buddhist political ideas

- The **Dīgha Nikāya** — long discourses of the Buddha, part of the Pāli Canon of Theravāda Buddhism. **T. W. Rhys Davids** compared its importance to Plato’s dialogues.
- It carries the political core: origin of society & state, kingship, sovereignty, ethics of rule, Dhamma, Chakravartin, welfare & justice.

B. G. Gokhale — three phases of Buddhist political development



Origin of the state — Agganna Sutta & the Mahāsammata

The naturalistic, secular account

The **Agganna Sutta** explains the state through human psychology, not divine will. Disorder grows out of greed, desire, pride and selfishness; the state is the people’s remedy.

From perfection to the Great Elect — the Agganna arc



A. B. Keith links the primeval self-luminous beings to the Hindu idea of the subtle body, Sukshma Sharira.

- The ruler agrees to perform **censure and punishment** in return for a share of the people’s rice. **V. P. Varma** reads this as kingship as a quasi-contractual arrangement.
- Implications: kingship arises from **agreement, not divine command**; ruler chosen by people; authority functional, not sacred; legitimacy depends on maintaining order & justice; the contract expresses mutual obligation.
- This challenges Brahmanical divine creation of social order, and differs from **Matsyanyaya** (king needed because the strong devour the weak).
- Secular reading: **V. P. Varma** — the Buddha denounced a theological Godhead and explained order through human psychology & ethics. **Ernest Gellner** (via **Steven Collins**) reads it as a stage-wise account of society driven by psychological change.
- The first ruler may be monarch, republican chief or elected head. **U. N. Ghoshal** notes **Rājā** was used for both monarchs and republican chiefs — the Buddha’s own Shākya clan was a republic.

State, sovereignty & kingship

- The state becomes necessary when moral decline makes life insecure — to keep order, protect property & family rights, punish wrongdoers, protect the weak. **V. P. Varma** calls it a **punitive institution**.
- Four social classes are explained by **occupation, not divine ordination** (ruling, priestly, trading, hunters) — weakening birth-based hierarchy; status tracks function, virtue, knowledge.

- Republics existed (Shākya): assemblies, collective decision, councils. **Uma Chakravarti** notes their collapse soon after the Buddha’s death — internal discord, undisciplined individualism, external aggression, rising monarchies.

Sovereignty terms	Sense
Ānā	command
Ādhipacca	overlordship
Issariya	supremacy
Vasa	control
Siri	splendour

Saptaratna — seven treasures of the ideal monarch • Cakkaratana — wheel; dominion & territory. • Hathiratana — elephant; military strength. • Assaratana — horse; mobility & power. • Parināyakaratana — councillor; counsel & administration. • Itthiratana — woman; prosperity, continuity of lineage. • Maniratana — jewel; wealth & splendour. • Gahapatiratana — householder; people, taxation, prosperity. <i>Territory → Wheel; control of dominion → Elephant, Horse, Councillor; bases of control → Woman, Jewel, Householder.</i>	Dasa-rājadhamma — ten royal virtues • Dāna — generosity / public service. • Śīla — morality & self-discipline. • Pariccāga — self-sacrifice for welfare. • Ājjava — integrity, honesty. • Maddava — gentleness without arrogance. • Tapa — austerity, simplicity. • Akkodha — non-anger. • Avihimsā — non-violence. • Khanti — patience, tolerance. • Avirodhana — uprightness, no prejudice.
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presents the ruler as an ‘enlightened altruist on the grounds of self-interest and expediency.’
— **Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta**

Seven components of the state — not a systematic Saptanga, but close
Rājā/Mahāsammata/Khattiya (ruler) · Rattha (territory) · Amacca/Pārisajja (ministers) · Balam (army) · Kosakothagara (treasury) · Anuyuttā (allies) · Manussa (people & assemblies). The ideal kingdom is **Akantaka** (without thorns) and **Annuppāla** (untroubled); **Gail Omvedt** highlights stories where the king tackles poverty. Yet kings may turn greedy and oppressive — so **ethical restraint** is built in.

The conceptual heart — Dhamma, Ānā, Attha

Dhamma Righteousness, propriety, justice, moral law — natural truth discovered by the Buddha. Ethically tied to Sīla (morality), Prajna (wisdom), Karuna (compassion), Ahimsa (non-violence) and Samata (equality).
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Sphere	Role in politics
Ānā	Temporal command — gives the state capacity to govern.
Dhamma	Spiritual / moral law — gives political action moral direction; superior to the state; restrains it from tyranny.
Attha	Interest, welfare, prosperity, wealth — close to Kautilya’s Artha; protected by order & secure property.

Bimbisāra & Ajātasattu recognised the two spheres; the Saṅgha modified Vinaya rules to accommodate the state, but its autonomy stayed vital. Ānā needs Dhamma to avoid arbitrariness; Dhamma needs state support to operate.

- **Dhamma as a check** — king and subjects bound by the same ethical standard, in public and private acts; neglect invites decline; politics without Dhamma decays into **Rativijja**, the science of pleasure. Dhamma converts power into responsibility.

Dhamma & political emancipation

UPSC 2023 · ISm **Buddhist thought on Dhamma facilitates the emancipation of political action. Explain.**

- Dhamma frees political action from greed, domination, caste arrogance, arbitrary command, violence, ritual hierarchy and narrow self-interest. It prescribes **no fixed system** — only a moral compass for humane, just, compassionate governance.
- Action becomes emancipatory when it promotes equality & dignity, non-violence, compassion, welfare, accountability, justice, protection of the weak, dialogue & inclusion.
- **Thich Nhat Hanh** — mindfulness in political action; **Gandhi** shows the political force of Ahimsa; the Middle Path supports moderation and de-polarisation.
- Limitation to state honesty: risk of **politicisation of Buddhism**; difficulty of translating moral ideals into secular democratic institutions.

a “universal morality that protects the weak from the strong, and safeguards the growth of the individual”.
— **B. R. Ambedkar, on Dhamma**

Chakravartin & Dhammiko Dhammarājā

- The **Chakravartin** is the universal monarch who rules through Dhamma — also **Dhammiko Dhammarājā** (righteous ruler), temporal counterpart of the Bodhisattva, **Mahāpurisa**. Only one can exist at a time.
- He protects people, eliminates destitution, holds the seven treasures, **conquers by righteousness not force**, teaches moral precepts, supports material & spiritual welfare. His conquest is through **Dhammachakra**, not the sword.
- Honest caveat: an ideal type dependent on the ruler’s personal virtue.

Ethical scaffolding (the foundation behind the 2021 PYQ)

Set	Content & political reading
Four Noble Truths	Dukkha → Samudaya → Nirodha → Magga. Poverty, violence, greed, injustice are <i>social</i> forms of suffering; governance must reduce distress.
Eightfold Path	Right view, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness, concentration — right conduct must precede right rule.
Three Jewels	Buddha · Dhamma · Saṅgha.
Five Precepts	Voluntary commitments, not commands: non-violence, non-theft, non-indulgence, truth, non-addiction.

The Buddhist king is a **moral exemplar**: avoids falsehood & anger, appoints steady ministers, audits income & expenditure himself, punishes and rewards promptly.

Saṅgha, deliberation & the welfare state

- **T. W. Rhys Davids** — the Saṅgha ran on democratic principles: regular meetings, resolutions, majority votes, quorum, rules, expulsion for misconduct. Roots of deliberative democracy can be traced here.
- State–Saṅgha relations were **reciprocal**: the Saṅgha advised rulers and gave moral legitimacy; the state gave patronage. Separation of Ānā and Dhamma protected the moral community from despotism.

Aśoka — the Buddhist welfare state

- Not a theocracy but a **moral public order**: compassion, welfare, toleration, justice, non-violence, restraint, public discussion. Hospitals, bans on needless slaughter, **rajukas** (justice officers), moral instruction.
- Religious freedom: Aśoka never made Buddhism a state religion; he supported ascetics of other sects — secularism implicit in practice. **Amartya Sen** reads him through public reasoning and an early ‘deliberative democracy’.

“All men are my children. What I desire for my own children ... that I desire for all men.”

— Aśoka, 12th Rock Edict

Aśoka “plucked dhamma or dharma out of religious discourse and made it a central political issue.”

— Upinder Singh

“From not giving property to the needy, poverty became widespread; ... from the increase in theft, the use of weapons increased.”

— Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta

Buddhist vs Brahmanical tradition — Dhamma over Danda

‘For while the Arthashastra teachers were inspired by their avowed end of ensuring the security and prosperity of the state to condone, if not to justify, breaches of morality in its interest, Buddhist with its stern unbending code of ethics stood for the unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs.’

— U. N. Ghoshal

- Buddhism rejects caste restriction on kingship and denies birth-based sanctity; worth follows action, not lineage; the Saṅgha admitted all backgrounds. War is subordinated to **sarva-bhūta-hita**, the welfare of all beings.
- **Bhikhu Parekh** calls Buddhism the “**rebel child of Hinduism**” — continuities (Karma, rebirth, ruler’s duty to maintain Dhamma) but a more egalitarian ethic (Kshatriya–Vaishya alliance against Brahmin–Kshatriya hegemony). Honest limit: it did not radically reform the old order and retained Kshatriya prominence.

Ambedkarite Buddhism & Navayana

“Buddhism teaches Prajna (understanding) as against superstition, karuna (love and compassion) and Samata (equality). This is what a man wants for a good and happy life”.

— B. R. Ambedkar

For **Ambedkar**, Dhamma ends suffering and poverty and is a path of **emancipation**; **Dhananjay Keer** frames the conversion as part of his life mission for social justice. **Navayana** rests on **Anicca** (impermanence), **Dukkha** and **Anatta** (no fixed soul — persons can change), giving marginalised communities moral identity, dignity and a constitutional language of rights.

Contemporary significance

- **Governance** — Sri Lanka’s constitution recognises a duty to “protect and foster” Buddhism while protecting other communities; Bhutan’s **Gross National Happiness**; Thailand’s Dhammarāja image of monarchy; Myanmar, where Buddhism–governance ties are complicated by nationalism and ethnic conflict.
- **Foreign policy** — India’s **Panchsheel** echoes Buddhist peaceful coexistence; links to SAARC and UN peacekeeping.
- **Environment & rights** — interdependence, moderation and minimal harm feed sustainability debates; compassion, equality and rationality align with human-rights discourse.
- **Honest caution** — diverse interpretations, possible conflict with secular law, and ethno-nationalist capture can distort the universalist promise of Dhamma.

2021 PYQ — the ‘greater ethical foundation’ debate

UPSC 2021 · ISM

Do the Buddhist traditions have lent greater ethical foundation to ancient Indian political thought? Give arguments.

- **Yes** — Dhamma above force, ritual status & mere security; consent-based Mahāsammata kingship; ethics of Four Noble Truths / Eightfold Path / Precepts; Dasa-rājadhamma & Dhammarāja ideal; Aśoka’s welfare state; **U. N. Ghoshal** — Buddhism stood for the “unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs.”
- **But qualify** — Buddhism did not *invent* ethics in Indian politics, did not fully dismantle coercion, caste influence or dependence on kingly virtue. **Bhikhu Parekh**’s “rebel child” framing captures both the radical critique and the shared ground.

outlines a form of ‘compassionate socialism’ — the king putting the ‘common weal’ above himself, the principle of ‘people first’.

— on Nagarjuna

8 Jain Political Thought

Stance towards the state

Jain thought, also Śramanic, does not treat state or society as external saviours. The state is a **habitual condition** for moral life — indirectly good, yet **necessarily evil** because it rests on coercion. **Somadeva**, the Jain saint, was an early proponent of a **welfare state** — benevolent kingship, well-being of subjects, just order.

- **Political obligation** — rightful obedience to authority, payment of reasonable taxes, recognition that the king protects society and may levy taxes.
- **Sovereignty & ethics** — based on **wisdom, not mere power**: supremacy of wise leadership, society as collaborative, people as associates rather than only subjects. State laws should align with spiritual wisdom, non-violence, equality and **non-possessiveness**; political life must support spiritual life, or it promotes evil.
- **Freedom & right to life** — freedom is autonomy of the spiritual will (control over egoistic impulses, moral discipline, radical non-violence). The **right to life is supreme**; Jainism venerates all life and forbids force against living beings. Monks practise absolute Ahimsa; state and laypeople practise **limited Ahimsa** that still guides law and policy.

Ahimsa as a theory of relativity

A ruler who renounces **intentional** violence is righteous compared with one who does not — yet less righteous than a saint who renounces all violence. This yields a **realistic ethic**: violence must be reduced, intentional violence abandoned, and politics must find concrete ways to minimise harm.

Anekantavada & pluralism

Anekantavada

The doctrine of the multiplicity of perspectives: reality is many-faceted, truth is not exhausted by one viewpoint, absolutism must be avoided.

- Political significance: peaceful engagement with difference, refinement of speech, **intellectual non-violence**, a middle position in debate, tolerance, and openness without loss of identity.
- It has become part of India's **pluralistic ethos** — a model for non-violent encounter between strong convictions.

Individualism in Jain thought

- **Mahavira** stressed **self-conquest** — true happiness comes from conquering one's own soul, not external enemies. A 'rugged' individualism: souls are separate; birth, death and spiritual progress are individual journeys; worldly bonds cannot save one spiritually.
- The **Sutrakritanga** stresses individual responsibility in spiritual life. Jainism breaks from Brahmanism by rejecting ritualism & divine intervention, stressing karma & personal deeds, opposing animal sacrifice, and denouncing violent conquest.

Contrast with the Hindu tradition (after **Bhikhu Parekh**): against inequalities and uncritical acceptance of the social order, Jainism sets equality, reform, non-violence, non-possessiveness, pluralism and moral discipline.

PART E — READING THE STREAMS TOGETHER

9 The Social-Contract Tradition in Ancient India

UPSC · ISM Examine the social-contract tradition within ancient Indian political thought.

The thread

Several texts explain kingship as a **negotiated response to anarchy**, not only as divine command. Not democratic in the modern sense — but they limit power by tying authority to protection.

Source	The contract
Aitareya Brahmana	Gods elect Indra to curb strife — a “contract of convenience” between ruler and ruled.
Agganna Sutta (Buddhist)	People, alarmed by crime, choose a ruler: “We shall pay you with a share of rice; rule us well.” Kingship is elective, remunerated, functional — the Mahāsammata .
Arthashastra	To escape matsyanyaya , people choose Manu and “fixed one-sixth of grain as his due”. Taxation justified by protection.
Mahabharata (Shantiparva)	Kingship as a response to anarchy; ruler gets a share of resources and must uphold dharma through fair danda.
Manusmriti	The moral bargain — protection, not birth alone, grounds revenue.

“The king who protects may take a sixth part of the harvest; if he fails, that share drags him to hell.”

— Manusmriti

a “voluntary social contract that conceals the coercion behind taxation”.

— Upinder Singh

- **Patrick Olivelle** — the very need to invoke **consent** reflects discomfort with unchecked power; the king stays trustee of public welfare, answerable to dharma.
- **Bottom line**: a tradition of **reciprocal kingship** — subjects grant authority; the ruler owes protection, justice and welfare.

10 Dharmashastra vs Arthashastra · Manu vs Kautilya

UPSC · ISM Compare and contrast Dharmashastra and Arthashastra with reference to State power.

Two idioms of state power

Dharmashastra **sacralises** power; Arthashastra **secularises** it. Together they map the range of Indian statecraft — ethical idealism and hard realism.

Dharmashastra (Manu)

- Power is sacralised; kingship is **moral trusteeship**.
- Danda is necessary but must **preserve dharma**.
- Restraints: sacred law, Brahmin advisers, custom, ritual sanction, fear of cosmic consequence.
- Purpose: preserve **varna-ashrama** and the inherited social-cosmic order.

Arthashastra (Kautilya)

- Power is secularised; **Artha**, security, revenue, strategic advantage are central.
- Religion is often a political instrument.
- Accepts spies, shifting alliances, calibrated coercion, war strategy, expansion.
- Welfare-oriented **realism**, not endless greed.

The king “receives ... the sixth part of their spiritual merit; if he does not protect them, the sixth part of their demerit also falls on him”.

— Manu

“In the happiness of his subjects lies the king’s happiness; in their welfare, his welfare.”

— Kautilya, Arthashastra

the Arthashastra is “one of the great political books of the ancient world, its science of politics strikingly similar to Thucydides and Machiavelli.”

— Roger Boesche

Where they converge

- **Matsyanyaya** — both diagnose anarchy as the prime evil; Manu’s answer is a morally disciplined monarchy, Kautilya’s an energetic state apparatus.
- **Danda** — both accept punishment to keep order.
- **Welfare** — Manu in moral/sacrificial language; Kautilya through revenue, security and consent.
- **Limits on absolutism** — Manu via dharma, Brahmin counsel and cosmic retribution; Kautilya via the practical danger of revolt and lost legitimacy.

Manu vs Kautilya — the sharp line

Manu (Dharmashastra)	Kautilya (Arthashastra)
Government discussed <i>within</i> religion, morality & social order — not a separate discipline.	Politics treated directly as statecraft .
Danda preserves varna-ashrama order.	Danda secures the state and expands power.
Primacy of sacred law .	Greater stress on state law .

Shared ground: both accept state authority, rely on danda, hold the ruler to protection, link authority with welfare, and work within Vedic/traditional frameworks — with different emphasis.

II Contribution of Muslim Rule to Indian Political Traditions

- **Nature of the state** — theoretically Islamic; legitimacy linked to the Caliph; theocratic elements; distinct policy for non-Muslims (jizya).
- **Divinity of the king** — **Abu’l-Fazl**, in **Ain-i-Akbari**, described kings as possessing **divine illumination**: paternal love for subjects, generosity, trust in God, devotion.
- **Duties** — protect life & property, impartial justice, moral example, restraint, military preparedness, conquest to pre-empt aggression. **True king** protects righteousness & welfare; **selfish king** seeks personal power, breeding oppression.

PART F — CRITIQUE & CONTEMPORARY RELEVANCE

12 The Critique of Manusmriti & Dharmashastra

UPSC · ISm Drawing on Ambedkar’s public burning of the Manusmriti (1927), evaluate the text as both historical document and ideological instrument.

The double character

The same text that legitimised hierarchy now helps historians reconstruct — and critique — early Indian society. It is at once a **historical document** and an **ideological instrument**.

As historical document

- Records how powerful sections of early India **imagined the ideal society**.
- Evidence on varna order, ashrama duties, royal duties, taxation, diplomacy, village administration, punishment, contract, marriage, mixed castes, gender roles, inheritance.

It “offer us a glimpse into how the powerful sections of early India ... desired the society to be.”

As ideological instrument

- Strengthens Brahminical authority, caste hierarchy, patriarchy, divine origin of law, unequal punishment, obedience to inherited order.
- Ranks Brahmin first, Shudra last; presents hierarchy as natural & divinely sanctioned.

K. P. Jayaswal — such doctrines “bolster the privileged position” of elites.

Ambedkar’s critique — the 1927 burning

On **25 December 1927**, **B. R. Ambedkar** publicly burned the Manusmriti as a protest against caste oppression. His charge: the text institutionalises caste inequality, assigns status by birth, legitimises Shudra and Dalit oppression, denies equal dignity, blocks mobility, and conflicts with justice, equality and constitutional morality.

“a symbol of injustice under which we have been crushed across the centuries. ... The priest shadows [man] like an evil genius.”

— B. R. Ambedkar

“Because of Manu’s teachings, we have been ground down under despicable poverty... He is a clog on the wheel of civilization.”

— B. R. Ambedkar

Even the text's defence of danda carries the hierarchy: without punishment "the stronger would roast the weaker, like fish on a spit" — order bought at the price of graded inequality, with Shudras facing harsher penalties than Brahmins.

Feminist, subaltern & contextual readings

Lens	Charge / assessment
Feminist	Subordinate status of women, constant guardianship, control of sexuality, denial of independence.
Subaltern	Caste hierarchy, Brahmin privilege, Shudra exclusion, unequal punishment, domination through religious authority.
Rajni Kothari	Dharma promoted order & morality — but reinforced rigid social hierarchy, especially caste.
B. R. Ambedkar	Duty-based ethics turns oppressive once duties are assigned by caste and gender.
S. Radhakrishnan	Admired its philosophical & civilisational significance — modern critics still reject its social exclusions.
P. V. Kane	Contextual: read historically, it regulated a complex society and was <i>not</i> entirely rigid — yet its limits must be recognised.

Balanced verdict: a text of ethical order and of social hierarchy. It began with a logic of order but hardened into dogma — valuable for understanding ancient polity, but never to be accepted uncritically.

13 Contemporary Significance & Links to Other PSIR Themes

Governance, justice & constitutionalism

- Dharmashastra ties **power to responsibility**: the ruler is custodian, not owner; protection legitimises taxation; coercion must be bound to justice.
- It offers an early **role-based** model of justice — commensurate with varna and social role. Contrast it with **Rawls**'s justice as fairness; it sits closer to **communitarian** justice tied to community structures.
- Modern constitutionalism rejects caste-based status: **Articles 14–16** (equality before law, non-discrimination) and the demand for equal opportunity and dignity place Dharmashastra's duty-order under critical scrutiny.
- Uniform Civil Code** & gender equity — Dharmashastra still shapes debates on Hindu personal law, inheritance, marriage, temple entry and **stri dharma**, where constitutional equality meets inherited custom.

Threads back into the wider syllabus

Theme	The link
Theories of State	Matsyanyaya = an Indian state-of-nature; the social-contract thread runs across Buddhist, Brahmanical and Arthashastra texts.
Justice & Equality	Ancient justice is moral & hierarchical, equality role-based; modern justice is rights-based and rejects birth-based status.
Indian Political Thought	Gandhi (untouchability), Ambedkar (Manusmriti & caste), Aurobindo (spiritual nationalism), Sir Syed Ahmad Khan (community & reform), M. N. Roy (Radical Humanism).
Kautilya & statecraft	Saptanga, Mandala & realism set against Dharmashastra's moral order; the Kautilya–Machiavelli comparison.
Federalism	Dharmashastra's centralised kingship vs modern debates on uniformity and regional autonomy.

The honest balance — contribution and limitation

Contribution

- Duty-based ethics & **rajadharma**; dharma–danda link; kingship as protection; taxation as wage for protection.
- Moral limits on power; early ideas of public welfare; restrained use of force; political order tied to cosmic order.

Limitation

- Caste hierarchy, Brahmin privilege, Shudra exclusion, patriarchal control of women, unequal punishment.
- Justification of inherited status; subordination of individual autonomy to social order.

Manu is sometimes called 'father of Indian polity' — he treats government, kingship, danda, justice, taxation, courts and judicial procedure — but he never makes politics a separate discipline; it stays inside religion, morality and social order. The contribution lies in linking power with duty and protection; the limitation lies in converting duty into hierarchy. Ambedkar's critique therefore stays central to any modern assessment.

★ Power Quotes — verbatim, exam-ready

Drop these in sparingly — one well-placed line beats five. Use the attribution exactly as shown.

The framing line

"nowhere in the world, human mind has dealt with the various questions of life in such a depth as in case of India." — **Max Müller**

Arthashastra · Kautilya

"In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness; in their welfare, his welfare." — **Kautilya, Arthashastra**

the Arthashastra is "one of the great political books of the ancient world, its science of politics strikingly similar to Thucydides and Machiavelli." — **Roger Boesche**

Dharmashastra · Manu

"The king who protects may take a sixth part of the harvest; if he fails, that share drags him to hell." — **Manusmriti**

"the ruler, armed with the rod, becomes the very image of Dharma in the social world". — **Patrick Olivelle**

"In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband ... a woman must never be independent." — **Manusmriti**

The Ambedkar critique

"a symbol of injustice under which we have been crushed across the centuries. ... The priest shadows [man] like an evil genius." — **B. R. Ambedkar, on Manusmriti**

Buddhist · Dhamma over Danda

Buddhism stood "for the unqualified supremacy of the moral law over governmental affairs." — **U. N. Ghoshal**

"All men are my children. What I desire for my own children ... that I desire for all men." — **Aśoka, 12th Rock Edict**

"Buddhism teaches Prajna (understanding) as against superstition, karuna (love and compassion) and Samata (equality). This is what a man wants for a good and happy

life”. — **B. R. Ambedkar**

Buddhism is the “rebel child of Hinduism”. — **Bhikhu Parekh**

“From not giving property to the needy, poverty became widespread; ... from the increase in theft, the use of weapons increased.” — **Cakkavatti-Sihanāda Sutta**

§ Scholar Index

Every scholar & thinker cited in this capsule, for quick recall — attach a name to a claim before you write it.

A. B. Keith · A. L. Basham · A. S. Altekar · Abhoy K. Ojha · Abu'l-Fazl · Amartya Sen · Aristotle · Sri Aurobindo · Aśoka · Avinash Dixit · B. G. Gokhale · B. R. Ambedkar · B. S. Sihag · Benoy Kumar Sarkar · Bhikhu Parekh · Prof. Bloomfield · Chandesvara · D. D. Kosambi · D. Mackenzie Brown · Dhananjay Keer · Donald R. Davis Jr. · Dr. B. R. Bhandarkar · Dr. Nag · Ernest Barker · Ernest Gellner · Gail Omvedt · M. K. Gandhi · George Tanham · Hans Morgenthau · Heinrich Zimmer · Jawaharlal Nehru · Jim Bulpitt · John Rawls · K. P. Jayaswal · Kancha Ilaiah · Kashinath Trimbak Telang · Kautilya · M. N. Roy · Mahavira · Mahendra Prasad Singh · Manu · Max Müller · Max Weber · Megasthenes · Mitra Mishra · N. D. Palmer · Nagarjuna · Niccolò Machiavelli · Nilakantha · P. V. Kane · Patrick Olivelle · R. C. Majumdar · R. G. Bhandarkar · R. P. Kangle · Radhakumud Mookerji · Rajni Kothari · Ram Sharan Sharma · Rao (1958) · Robert Lingat · Roger Boesche · Romila Thapar · S. Radhakrishnan · Sant Tukaram · Sir Syed Ahmad Khan · Somadeva · Stanley Jeyaraja Tambiah · Steven Collins · Sun Tzu · T. W. Rhys Davids · Thich Nhat Hanh · Thomas R. Trautmann · U. N. Ghoshal · Uma Chakravarti · Upinder Singh · V. P. Varma · V. R. Mehta · Winternitz

¶ How UPSC Has Asked This Unit

Theme	How it has been asked
Sources & nature	2020 (15m) — Explain the sources of ancient Indian political thought. Also set, undated — key sources that led to the development of ancient Indian political thought.
Dharmashastra / Manu	2024 (15m) — Dharmashastra presents a duty-centric worldview. Undated — political dimensions embedded in the Dharmashastras; “Manu Smṛiti sets standards a virtuous individual—ruler included—ought to observe.”
Kautilya & statecraft	2015 (15m) — Kautilya vs Machiavelli on statecraft. 2017 (15m) — notion of statecraft & Kautilya’s theory. 2019 (15m) — Kautilya’s views on the elements of the State.
Buddhist thought	2021 (15m) — have Buddhist traditions lent greater ethical foundation? 2023 (15m) — Dhamma facilitates the emancipation of political action.
Cross-cutting	Undated — Dharmashastra vs Arthashastra with reference to State power; the social-contract tradition in ancient Indian thought.
Critique	Undated — Ambedkar’s burning of the Manusmṛiti (1927): historical document vs ideological instrument.

Jain political thought has no dated PYQ in this file — carry it as supporting material for pluralism, non-violence and the Śramanic contrast, not as a stand-alone answer.

◆ Today’s Practice

Pick one. Eight minutes, a flow-snapshot and a staked intro — that is the whole drill. Don’t aim for a perfect answer; aim for a written one.

UPSC 2017 · 15m What do you understand by the notion of statecraft? Discuss the theory of statecraft as given by Kautilya.

UPSC 2021 · 15m Do the Buddhist traditions have lent greater ethical foundation to ancient Indian political thought? Give arguments.

UPSC · 15m Examine the social-contract tradition within ancient Indian political thought.

From Amit Pratap Singh

Model answers to today’s three drop tonight on the channel — [@psirbyamitpratap](#). Write yours *first*; comparing a blank page to a model teaches you nothing.

If any point above felt unfamiliar — the Agganna arc, Saptanga vs the seven Buddhist constituents, the Manu–Kautilya line — it is covered in full in your Foundation / OGP class notes and handouts. Go back to that page, then return and write. This capsule is the revision, not the first lesson.

That is the ancient sources — four streams, one moral-political conversation.

Hold the spine: Matsyanyaya is the problem; danda, dharma and Dhamma are three different answers to it. Manu sacralises power, Kautilya secularises it, the Buddha moralises it, and the Jain qualifies it. The comparisons are where the 15-markers live.

See you tomorrow with Day II. Don’t break the chain.