

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2019 · 15 marks

Kautilya's views on the elements of the State.

● FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

Intro routes

R1 State as a living body — **Kautilya's Saptanga** = seven interdependent limbs; "a single wheel cannot move the chariot"

R2 sovereignty (**Garner**) — making a ~4th-century-BCE account strikingly comprehensive

Body flow

Swami (sovereign king, bound by *rajadharma*, owes *yogakshema*) → **Amatya** (ministers, *Mantriparishad* — institutional base) → **Janapada** (territory + productive population — revenue/social base) → **Durga** (fort — defence, strategic depth) → **Kosha** (treasury — bedrock; funds army, administration, welfare) → **Danda/Bala** (army + coercion — punishment firm, never excessive) → **Mitra** (ally — no state survives in isolation). Thread: organic interdependence; the king must strengthen every limb

Counter-view

theory is monarchy-centred — limbs read as resources for the king's power, not an impersonal/juristic sovereignty distinct from the ruler; including an external ally (*Mitra*) as a "limb" blurs state and statecraft. [Balance: **A.S. Altekar** reads *Mitra*'s inclusion as analogous to recognition in modern statehood]

Conclusion routes

R1 by binding administration, economy, defence and diplomacy into one organic whole, *Saptanga* is an integrated theory of the state that anticipates its modern elements

R2 reads as an early template of comprehensive national power — leadership, territory, treasury, military, diplomacy — still resonant in national-security and statecraft analysis

Kautilya, in the Arthashastra, conceives the state organically through his *saptanga theory* - seven limbs or prakritis whose interdependence he captures in the maxim that a single wheel cannot move the chariot.

They are, in Kautilya's sequence : Swami, the sovereign king, central yet bound by rajadharma and the duty of yogakshema; Amatya, the ministers and the Mantriparishad, who supply the institutional and advisory base; Janapada, territory and productive population, the material and revenue foundation; Durga, the fort, providing defence & strategic depth; Kosha, the treasury, which Kautilya treats as the bedrock of state power since it funds army, administration & welfare; Danda or Bala, the army and coercive power where punishment must be firm but never excessive; and Mitra, the ally, since no state survives in isolation.

Critics observe that the theory stays monarchy centred - the limbs read as resources for the ruler's power rather than an impersonal idea of sovereignty distinct from the King and treating an external ally as a limb blurs state & statecraft.

Yet by integrating administration, economy, defence & diplomacy into one organic whole, Kautilya anticipates the modern state's elements and the logic of comprehensive national power.