

APPSC GROUP-I MAINS — STUDY NOTES

# MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

& Economy | Arthashastra • Bureaucracy • Revenue • Espionage • Trade

Paper II — History, Culture & Geography | Day 8 (07 Apr 2026)

## SECTION 1: SUMMARISED NOTES

### 1.1 Context — Why Administration Matters

Day 6 covered the Mauryan Empire's political history (Chandragupta, Ashoka, Dhamma). Day 8 goes deeper into HOW the empire was administered and its economic foundations. The Mauryan state was the most organised administrative system in the ancient world — rivalling Rome and Han China. The two primary sources are: Kautilya's Arthashastra (governance manual) and Megasthenes' Indica (Greek observer's account).

### 1.2 Central Administration

#### 1.2.1 The King (Raja)

The king was the supreme authority — head of state, commander-in-chief, chief judge, and policy-maker. Kautilya describes the ideal king as one who works ceaselessly for public welfare ('in the happiness of the subjects lies the king's happiness'). The king's daily schedule (described in Arthashastra) allocated time for: reviewing reports, holding court, military review, meeting spies, religious observances, and consultation with ministers. The Saptanga Theory defined the state through 7 elements: Swami (king), Amatya (ministers), Janapada (territory), Durga (fortified capital), Kosha (treasury), Danda (army), Mitra (allies).

#### 1.2.2 Council of Ministers (Mantri Parishad)

The king was assisted by a council of ministers (Mantri Parishad). Kautilya recommended a council of ministers to advise the king but stressed that the king must retain final decision-making authority. Key ministers: Purohita (chief priest/religious adviser), Senapati (commander-in-chief), Yuvaraja (crown prince), Mahamantri (prime minister/chief adviser — Chanakya held this role). Ministers were tested for loyalty through four upayas (methods): Dharma (religious test), Artha (monetary temptation), Kama (seduction test), Bhaya (threat/intimidation).

#### 1.2.3 Bureaucracy — Adhyakshas (Superintendents)

The Arthashastra describes approximately 27 Adhyakshas (superintendents) heading specialised departments, making it one of the most elaborate bureaucracies in the ancient world:

- **Sitadhyaksha:** Superintendent of Agriculture. Managed crown lands (Sita). Supervised cultivation, irrigation, crop selection.
- **Akaradhyaksha:** Superintendent of Mines. Managed mineral extraction (iron, gold, precious stones).
- **Sunadhyaksha:** Superintendent of Slaughter House. Regulated meat trade.

- **Pautavadyaksha:** Superintendent of Weights and Measures. Ensured standardisation in trade.
- **Sulkadyaksha:** Superintendent of Customs/Tolls. Collected trade taxes at borders and markets.
- **Navadyaksha:** Superintendent of Shipping. Managed river and sea transport.
- **Panyadyaksha:** Superintendent of Commerce. Regulated trade, prices, and market practices.
- **Lohadyaksha:** Superintendent of Metals/Iron. Controlled iron production (critical for weapons and agriculture).
- **Ganika Adhyaksha:** Superintendent of Courtesans. Regulated and taxed the profession.

This departmental structure demonstrates the Mauryan state's comprehensive regulation of economic activity — from agriculture to mining to trade to social services.

### 1.2.4 Espionage System

Kautilya's espionage network was the most sophisticated in the ancient world. Spies (Gudhapurushas) were categorised as: Sanstha (stationary spies — embedded in institutions), Sanchara (roving spies — travelling merchants, monks, ascetics), and special agents including: Kapatika (fraudulent monks), Udhashthita (apparent retirees), Grihapaitika (householders), Vaidehaka (merchants), Tapasa (false ascetics), Satri (student spies), and Vishakanya (poison girls for assassination). Spies reported on: public opinion, official corruption, enemy movements, and internal dissent. This system was essential for governing a vast, diverse empire.

## 1.3 Provincial & Local Administration

### 1.3.1 Five Provinces

The empire was divided into 5 provinces, each governed by a royal prince or trusted governor (Kumara/Aryaputra):

Province	Capital	Region	Notable
<b>Uttarapatha</b>	Taxila	NW (Afghanistan, Punjab)	Greek/Persian influence. Taxila university.
<b>Avantipatha</b>	Ujjain	Western India (Malwa)	Trade hub. Ashoka was governor before becoming emperor.
<b>Dakshinapatha</b>	Suvarnagiri	Deccan (AP/Karnataka)	Erragudi edicts (AP). Managed southern territories.
<b>Kalinga</b>	Tosali (Dhauri)	East coast (Odisha)	Conquered by Ashoka (261 BCE). Separate Rock Edicts at Dhauri.
<b>Central (Magadha)</b>	Pataliputra	Bihar + Gangetic plains	Directly ruled by emperor. Seat of central administration.

### 1.3.2 District & Village Administration

Provinces were divided into districts (Aharas/Vishayas), further divided into groups of villages:

- **Rajuka:** District-level officer. Judicial and revenue functions. Ashoka's edicts mention Rajukas having authority to punish and reward.
- **Pradeshika:** Provincial-level judicial officer (toured districts).
- **Yukta:** Lower-level revenue officer. Data collection and record-keeping.
- **Gopa:** Village-level accountant. Maintained records of houses, people, land, cattle, income, expenditure.
- **Sthanika:** Tax collector at the local level.
- **Gramani/Gramika:** Village head. Interface between state and village community.

### 1.3.3 City Administration (Megasthenes' Account)

Megasthenes described Pataliputra's city administration as comprising a board of 30 officers divided into 6 committees of 5 members each:

- **Committee 1:** Industries and artisans — regulated crafts, ensured quality standards.
- **Committee 2:** Foreigners — looked after visitors, arranged accommodation, monitored activities, and facilitated repatriation of bodies if foreigners died.
- **Committee 3:** Registration of births and deaths — for taxation and census purposes.
- **Committee 4:** Trade and commerce — regulated markets, weights and measures, and quality of goods.
- **Committee 5:** Manufactured goods — supervised production, prevented mixing of old and new goods.
- **Committee 6:** Collection of sales tax — 1/10th of the value of goods sold.

## 1.4 Judicial System

The king was the supreme judge. Two types of courts: Dharmasthiya (civil courts — handled disputes based on Dharma/sacred law, customs, royal edicts, and contracts — in that priority order) and Kantakasodhana (criminal courts — literally 'removing thorns'). Punishments ranged from fines to imprisonment to corporal punishment (mutilation was used for serious crimes). Ashoka introduced Danda Samata (uniformity of punishment) and Vhyavahara Samata (uniformity of legal procedure). Rajukas were authorised to pronounce judgments and punishments independently in their jurisdictions.

## 1.5 Military Administration

According to Pliny and Megasthenes, the Mauryan army was massive: 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, 9,000 war elephants, and 800 chariots. Megasthenes describes a War Office (military board) of 30 officers divided into 6 committees managing: infantry, cavalry, elephants, chariots, navy, and transport/commissariat. Soldiers were paid in cash from the treasury (not through land grants — this kept the army loyal to the king, not to local lords). The military also maintained a network of forts (Durgas) — the Arthashastra classifies 6 types: water fort, mountain fort, desert fort, forest fort, earth fort, and human fort (defended by warriors).

## 1.6 Economy

### 1.6.1 Agriculture

Agriculture was the backbone of the Mauryan economy. Two types of land: Sita (crown lands cultivated by state-employed labourers and Shudras — revenue went entirely to the king) and Raiyati (private land — farmers paid Bhaga/land tax). The Arthashastra's concept of Janapadanivesa (settling new villages) was a method of expanding agriculture by clearing forests and establishing farming communities. Irrigation was actively promoted — Sudarshana Lake (Girnar, Gujarat) is the most famous example. The state regulated water distribution and charged an irrigation cess (Udaka Bhaga).

### 1.6.2 Revenue System

The Mauryan revenue system was comprehensive and efficient:

- **Bhaga:** King's share of agricultural produce. Varied from 1/6th to 1/4th depending on land quality and irrigation.
- **Bali:** Tribute/cess — an additional tax beyond Bhaga.
- **Shulka:** Customs duty/toll on trade goods. Collected at borders, city gates, and market entry.
- **Kara:** Tax on artisans and craftsmen. Based on production.
- **Hiranya:** Payment in cash (rather than kind). Reflects monetisation of the economy.
- **Pranaya:** Emergency tax — levied in times of crisis (war, famine).
- **Senabhakta:** Army maintenance tax.

Sannidhata was the chief treasury officer responsible for storing revenue. The Arthashastra even suggests taxing courtesans, gambling, and liquor — showing the state's comprehensive revenue approach.

### 1.6.3 Trade & Commerce

Internal trade flourished along the Royal Highway (Uttarapatha — Taxila to Pataliputra) and other routes. External trade connected India with: Hellenistic kingdoms (Seleucid Syria, Ptolemaic Egypt), Central Asia, and Southeast Asia. Key exports: spices, textiles, precious stones, ivory, perfumes. Key imports: horses (Central Asia), gold, wine. Punch-marked silver and copper coins facilitated commerce. Trade guilds (Srenis) operated as self-governing bodies of merchants and artisans. Tamralipti (Bengal coast) was the major eastern port; Bharuch (Gujarat) for the western coast.

### 1.6.4 Infrastructure

- **Roads:** Rajamarga (Royal Highway) from Taxila to Pataliputra — one of the ancient world's great roads. Trees planted along roads (Ashoka), rest houses, and wells at regular intervals.
- **Irrigation:** State-sponsored irrigation (Sudarshana Lake). Canals. Water cess (Udaka Bhaga) for irrigation users.
- **Pataliputra:** Megasthenes described it as one of the world's greatest cities: 14 km long, 2.5 km wide, surrounded by a moat and timber palisade with 570 towers and 64 gates.

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## SECTION 2: KEY DIMENSIONS TO COVER

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*Examiner angles.*

1. **Arthashastra vs Indica:** Two different perspectives: Arthashastra = ideal state from Indian viewpoint; Indica = observed reality from Greek outsider. Compare and contrast what each reveals.
2. **Saptanga Theory:** 7 elements (Swami, Amatya, Janapada, Durga, Kosha, Danda, Mitra). Know all 7 and their significance for state theory.
3. **27 Adhyakshas:** Know at least 8-10 key ones (Sita, Akara, Pautava, Sulka, Nava, Panya, Loha). Shows depth of bureaucratic specialisation.
4. **Espionage:** Types of spies (Sanstha, Sanchara, Vishakanya). Functions. Why espionage was essential for empire. Compare with modern intelligence.
5. **Revenue System:** Bhaga (1/6-1/4), Bali, Shulka, Kara, Hiranya, Pranaya, Senabhakta. Sita vs Raiyati lands. Comprehensive taxation.
6. **City Administration:** Megasthenes' 6 committees of 5 (30 officers). Covers industry, foreigners, births/deaths, trade, goods, tax. Compare with modern municipal governance.
7. **Military:** 600K infantry + 30K cavalry + 9K elephants + 800 chariots. War Office (6 committees). Cash-paid army (no land grants). Fort classification.
8. **Trade:** Internal (Royal Highway) + external (Hellenistic kingdoms). Punch-marked coins. Guilds (Sreni). Tamralipti + Bharuch ports.
9. **AP Connection:** Dakshinapatha province (Suvarnagiri). Erragudi edicts. Southern trade routes through AP. Mauryan administrative influence on later Satavahana state-building.

## SECTION 3: PRELIMS MUST-REMEMBER FACTS

*Crisp factual points.*

1. Saptanga Theory (Kautilya): 7 elements of state = Swami (king), Amatya (ministers), Janapada (territory), Durga (fort), Kosha (treasury), Danda (army), Mitra (allies).
2. Arthashastra: ~27 Adhyakshas (superintendents) for specialised departments. Sitadhyaksha (agriculture), Akaradhyaksha (mines), Sulkadhyaksha (customs), Navadhyaksha (shipping).
3. 4 Upayas for testing ministers: Dharma (religious test), Artha (money temptation), Kama (seduction), Bhaya (threat/fear).
4. Espionage: Gudhapurushas (secret agents). Sanstha (stationary), Sanchara (roving). Kapatika (fake monks). Vishakanya (poison girls). Most elaborate ancient spy system.
5. 5 Provinces: Uttarapatha (Taxila), Avantipatha (Ujjain), Dakshinapatha (Suvarnagiri), Kalinga (Tosali), Central (Pataliputra).
6. Local officials: Rajuka (district judge/revenue), Pradeshika (touring judge), Yukta (revenue), Gopa (village accountant), Sthanika (tax collector), Gramani (village head).
7. Pataliputra city: 6 committees of 5 = 30 officers (Megasthenes). Industry, foreigners, births/deaths, trade, goods, sales tax.
8. Judicial: Dharmasthiya (civil courts); Kantakasodhana (criminal courts = 'removing thorns'). King = supreme judge. Ashoka: Danda Samata (uniform punishment).
9. Military: 600,000 infantry + 30,000 cavalry + 9,000 elephants + 800 chariots (Pliny/Megasthenes). War Office: 30 officers, 6 committees.
10. Soldiers paid in CASH (not land grants). This kept army loyal to king, not local lords. Critical difference from later feudal systems.
11. Revenue: Bhaga (1/6-1/4 of produce), Bali (cess), Shulka (customs), Kara (artisan tax), Hiranya (cash tax), Pranaya (emergency), Senabhakta (army maintenance).
12. Sita = crown lands (state-cultivated; full revenue to king). Raiyati = private lands (farmer pays Bhaga). Janapadanivesa = new village settlement.
13. Sannidhata = chief treasury officer. Samaharta = chief collector of revenue.
14. Sudarshana Lake: Girnar (Gujarat). Built by Chandragupta's governor Pushyagupta. Repaired by Ashoka's Yavanaraja Tushaspha. Later by Rudradaman I (150 CE).
15. Royal Highway (Rajamarga): Taxila to Pataliputra. Trees, rest houses, wells along the route. One of the great ancient roads.
16. Trade: Tamralipti (Bengal) = eastern port. Bharuch (Gujarat) = western port. Exports: spices, textiles, ivory. Imports: horses, gold, wine.
17. Punch-marked coins: Silver + copper. Symbols stamped. Used throughout Mauryan trade. India's earliest widespread currency.
18. Trade guilds (Sreni): Self-governing bodies of merchants/artisans. Fixed prices, quality standards. Forerunners of modern trade associations.
19. 6 types of Durga (forts): Audaka (water), Parvata (mountain), Dhanvana (desert), Vana (forest), Mahi (earth), Nri (human/warrior).
20. Megasthenes: Pataliputra = 14 km long, 2.5 km wide. Moat + timber palisade. 570 towers, 64 gates. Rivalled world's greatest cities.

## SECTION 4: MAINS MUST-WRITE POINTS

*Each can form a paragraph.*

- The Arthashastra State — Ancient India's Total Government:** The Arthashastra describes a state that regulated virtually every aspect of economic and social life through 27+ specialised departments (Adhyakshas). From agriculture (Sitadhyaksha) to mines (Akaradhyaksha) to shipping (Navadhyaksha) to weights and measures (Pautavadhyaksha), the Mauryan bureaucracy was the most comprehensive in the ancient world. Even courtesans and gambling were supervised and taxed. This 'total government' model — while impossible to implement uniformly across the vast empire — represented an ideal of state capacity that influenced Indian governance theory for centuries. Modern India's 90+ Union Ministries/Departments echo this departmental approach.
- Espionage as Statecraft:** Kautilya's espionage system was not merely intelligence-gathering; it was a comprehensive tool of governance. Spies monitored not just external threats but internal corruption, public opinion, and official performance. Stationary spies (Sanstha) were embedded in institutions; roving agents (Sanchara) gathered intelligence while posing as merchants, monks, and travellers. The Arthashastra even prescribed poison girls (Vishakanya) for assassination. This system recognized what modern states acknowledge: that information is power, and governance at scale requires systematic intelligence. India's RAW, IB, and NTRO are distant descendants of this ancient concept.
- Revenue System — Funding the World's Largest Ancient Army:** Maintaining 600,000 soldiers, 9,000 elephants, and a vast bureaucracy required an enormous revenue base. The Mauryan tax system (Bhaga from agriculture, Shulka from trade, Kara from crafts, plus multiple cesses) was designed to extract maximum surplus without destroying the productive base. Kautilya warned that over-taxation would cause resentment: 'taxes should be collected as a bee collects honey from a flower — just enough to sustain, without destroying the flower.' The distinction between Sita (state-cultivated) and Raiyati (private) lands shows a mixed economy approach that modern India would recognise.
- City Administration — 2,300 Years Before Municipal Corporations:** Megasthenes' description of Pataliputra's 6 committees managing industries, foreigners, vital statistics, trade, manufactured goods, and taxation reads like a blueprint for modern municipal governance. The committees ensured quality control in crafts, tracked population movements (births/deaths/foreigners), regulated trade practices, and collected taxes — functions that today's municipal corporations, district administrations, and regulatory bodies perform. The Mauryan city administration was arguably more systematic than European city governance until the 18th century.
- Cash-Paid Army — A Revolutionary Concept:** The Mauryan army was paid in cash from the central treasury, not through land grants. This was revolutionary because it meant soldiers were loyal to the king (who paid them), not to local landholders. This centralised military control was key to maintaining imperial authority across the vast empire. When later dynasties (post-Guptas) shifted to the land-grant (feudal) model, central authority weakened and regional fragmentation followed. The Mauryan cash-payment system anticipated modern professional armies by two millennia.
- AP under Mauryan Administration:** The Dakshinapatha province (capital Suvarnagiri) brought modern AP under direct Mauryan administration. Ashoka's rock edicts at Erragudi (Kurnool) prove administrative reach into Rayalaseema. Local officials (Rajukas,

Pradeshikas) governed under central directives. Southern trade routes connecting the Deccan to Pataliputra ran through AP. This Mauryan administrative infrastructure — road networks, revenue systems, bureaucratic positions — created the institutional foundation on which the Satavahanas later built their state. AP's political history begins not with the Satavahanas but with the Mauryan administrative integration of the Deccan.

## SECTION 5: VALUE ADDITION

4 topic-specific dimensions.

### Interlinkages

- **Mauryan Admin → Modern Governance:** 27 Adhyakshas → 90+ Union Ministries. Mantri Parishad → Council of Ministers. Espionage → RAW/IB. Revenue system → Income Tax/GST. City committees → Municipal corporations. The conceptual continuity is remarkable.
- **Saptanga → Modern State Theory:** Kautilya's 7 elements map to modern state elements: sovereignty (Swami), bureaucracy (Amatya), territory (Janapada), capital/infrastructure (Durga), economy (Kosha), defence (Danda), diplomacy (Mitra). A 2,300-year-old framework still valid.
- **Revenue System → Indian Taxation:** Bhaga (land tax) → land revenue (British zamindari/ryotwari). Shulka (customs) → modern customs duty. Kara (artisan tax) → income/professional tax. The categories persist even as rates and methods change.
- **Mauryan Trade Routes → AP's Economic Corridors:** The ancient trade routes through Dakshinapatha that connected AP to North India are echoed in today's VCIC (Vizag-Chennai Industrial Corridor) and NH infrastructure. Geographical advantages that drove ancient trade continue to shape modern economic corridors.

### AP Archaeological Evidence

- **Erragudi Rock Edicts:** All 14 Major Rock Edicts + 2 Separate Edicts found at Erragudi, Kurnool district. Proves direct Mauryan administration in AP. One of the most complete collections of Ashokan edicts.
- **Suvarnagiri:** Capital of Dakshinapatha province. Location debated (possibly Jonnagiri/Maski area in Karnataka-AP border). Ashoka's Minor Rock Edicts found in this region.
- **Amaravati Foundation:** The Amaravati stupa was originally an Ashokan foundation (3rd century BCE), later expanded by Satavahanas and Ikshvakus. Archaeological layers confirm Mauryan-era construction.
- **NBPW in AP Sites:** Northern Black Polished Ware fragments found at several AP archaeological sites confirm Mauryan-era trade connections with the Gangetic heartland.

### Comparative Perspective

- **Maurya vs Roman Administration:** Both had: provincial governors, road networks, standardised currency, professional armies, and comprehensive taxation. But Mauryan espionage was more elaborate; Roman law was more codified. Both empires controlled ~50 million people — the two largest states of their era.
- **Maurya vs Han China:** Contemporary empires (Maurya: 322-185 BCE; Han: 206 BCE-220 CE). Both had centralised bureaucracy, state granaries, road networks, and standardised weights. China used the Mandarin examination system; Maurya used the spy system for quality control. Both faced the same challenge: governing vast, diverse territories from a single centre.

- **Arthashastra vs Machiavelli's Prince:** Both are pragmatic governance texts that accept realpolitik. But the Arthashastra is far more comprehensive — covering economics, espionage, military, judicial, and social administration — while The Prince focuses primarily on acquiring and maintaining political power. The Arthashastra predates The Prince by 1,800 years.

### Way Forward — Lessons for Modern Governance

- **Welfare State:** Kautilya's 'happiness of the subjects = king's happiness' anticipates the modern welfare state concept. India's DPSPs (Art. 36-51) echo this ancient idea of state responsibility for public welfare.
- **Meritocratic Bureaucracy:** The Mauryan practice of testing ministers (4 Upayas) and selecting Adhyakshas based on competence (not birth) anticipates modern civil service examinations (UPSC/APPSC). Merit-based governance is an ancient Indian innovation.
- **Regulatory State:** 27 Adhyakshas regulating economic activity foreshadow modern regulatory agencies (SEBI, TRAI, CCI). The concept that the state must regulate markets for public welfare is Kautilyan.
- **Intelligence-Led Governance:** Kautilya's integration of intelligence into governance — monitoring corruption, public opinion, and official performance — anticipates modern concepts of evidence-based policymaking and anti-corruption surveillance.

## SECTION 6: QUICK REVISION BOX

*Last-minute glance.*

▶ Saptanga: Swami, Amatya, Janapada, Durga, Kosha, Danda, Mitra	▶ ~27 Adhyakshas: Sita, Akara, Sulka, Nava, Panya, Loha...
▶ 4 Upayas: Dharma, Artha, Kama, Bhaya	▶ Espionage: Sanstha, Sanchara, Vishakanya
▶ 5 Provinces: Taxila, Ujjain, Suvarnagiri, Tosali, Pataliputra	▶ Officials: Rajuka, Pradeshika, Yukta, Gopa, Sthanika
▶ City: 6 committees × 5 = 30 officers (Megasthenes)	▶ Judiciary: Dharmasthiya (civil) + Kantakasodhana (criminal)
▶ Army: 600K infantry + 30K cavalry + 9K elephants	▶ Soldiers paid in CASH (not land grants) = centralised loyalty
▶ Revenue: Bhaga (1/6-1/4), Bali, Shulka, Kara, Hiranya	▶ Sita = crown lands; Raiyati = private; Pranaya = emergency
▶ Sannidhata = treasury officer; Samaharta = chief collector	▶ Sudarshana Lake (Girnar): Pushyagupta → Ashoka → Rudradaman
▶ Royal Highway: Taxila to Pataliputra; trees + rest houses	▶ Ports: Tamralipti (east) + Bharuch (west); Sreni = guilds
▶ Pataliputra: 14×2.5 km; moat; 570 towers; 64 gates	▶ 6 fort types: water, mountain, desert, forest, earth, human
▶ AP: Suvarnagiri province; Erragudi edicts; Amaravati stupa	▶ Arthashastra > Machiavelli by 1,800 years

## SECTION 7: RECOMMENDED SOURCES

*Refer to these.*

Source	What to Read	Why
<b>NCERT Class XII — Themes in Indian History</b>	Ch. 2: Kings, Farmers and Towns (Administration section)	<i>Official textbook coverage of Mauryan governance</i>
<b>R.S. Sharma — India's Ancient Past</b>	Ch. 18-20: Mauryan Administration, Economy	<i>Exam-oriented; Adhyaksha list, revenue, trade details</i>
<b>Kautilya's Arthashastra (R.P. Kangle/Shamasastry)</b>	Books II-V (Administration, Revenue, Espionage)	<i>Reading key sections transforms Mains answers</i>
<b>Upinder Singh — Ancient &amp; Early Medieval India</b>	Ch. 10-11: Mauryan state and economy	<i>Academic depth with archaeological correlation</i>

Source	What to Read	Why
<b>Romila Thapar — Ashoka and the Decline of the Mauryas</b>	Administration and economy chapters	<i>Nuanced analysis; debates modern vs ancient perspectives</i>