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## Prevention of corruption in Kautilian way

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### Abstract

The paper focus upon Kautilya's ideas of administration of state, where corruption play's an important role in the State's economic system. In the Arthashastra, Kautilya has prescribed the measures to prevent the corruption and punish the offenders. He has presented an example that, just as fish moving inside the water cannot be known, when it is drinking the water, in the same way, officers appointed for the carrying out the works of state cannot be known when they are embezzling the money. The paper describes the relevance of Kautilya's ideas of preventing corruption in modern political environment.

**Keywords:** Corruption, Revenue, State officials, Kadrya, Secret agents

### Introduction

In the Indian intellectual tradition, Kautilya's name is known with the school of politics in ancient India. He was instrumental in the destruction of the unjust Nanda king of Magadha in 324 B.C. in ancient India. In his supervision, the Maurya king Chandragupta built the vast empire whose frontiers were larger than that of modern India. Chandragupta was the first king who was the king of greater India, whose historicity is certified in context to the time of administration. He was the first king, who after unification of northern India extended his kingdom from the Himalayas to south Indian continent.<sup>i</sup> Chandragupta Maurya did this all undertakings with the help of intelligent Kautilya, who was also his teacher. Kautilya's Arthashastra is a unique contribution in the area of political science, which covers the administration, polity, economics, foreign policy, and public administration also. We can see from historical sources that, the empire built by the Chandragupta Maurya, and was expanded by his son Bindusara and his grandson the Ashoka following the policies of Kautilya.

### Prevention of corruption in Kautilian way:

Corruption is an Improper and unlawful conduct intended to secure a benefit for oneself or another. Its forms include bribery, extortion, and the misuse of inside information. It exists where there is community indifference or a lack of enforcement policies. In societies with a culture of ritualized gift giving, the line between acceptable and unacceptable gifts is often hard to draw.<sup>ii</sup> By this description, we can see that corruption is unlawful activity, which emerges out from lack of enforcement policies. As said above that, the nature of man is similar of the horse, they change when they are employed in the work.

By the description of taking preventive measures against corrupt officials in the time of Kautilya, it seems that, corruption was also in practice in the administration. Daṇḍin also have mentioned the Kautilya's view in his *Daśkumāracaritam* that, the Cāṇakya has enumerated forty types, but the wicked officers employed in the state offices, embezzles the money by applying thousands types of deceitful techniques.<sup>iii</sup> Kautilya has described with the example of honey that, if the honey is placed on the surface of tongue of somebody, then it is impossible that, he has not tasted the honey. Similarly, officers who are employed in the work of dealing with the money it is impossible, that he has not tasted the state's money.<sup>iv</sup>

In present days we can see that, the roots of corruption are very strong; it has developed in micro level, such as traffic police, the clerk of a small office, to the macro level in the institution of government. We have seen the news of country's biggest scams, such as Bofors scam,<sup>v</sup> Fodder scam,<sup>vi</sup> 2 G spectrum scam,<sup>vii</sup> Coal auction scam from last the twenty years.

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These are said to be biggest scams of the country,<sup>viii</sup> which affected the economic progress of the nation badly. In present time, the corruption has developed the concept of black money. “A report published in 2013 by Global Financial Integrity states that the total black money outflow from India was nearly \$343 billion during the last decade. This puts India at the fifth position on global exporter of illicit money. Driven substantially by the higher education sector, real estate deals and mining income, India’s black economy could now be nearly three quarters the size of its reported gross domestic product (GDP)”.<sup>ix</sup> In the Kauṭīliyan terminology, such as persons who embezzles the money of the state in a large amount are called *Dūṣya*, and the punishment is recommended for them the secret punishment.<sup>x</sup>

The corruption has its adverse effect not just on the static efficiency, but also on the investment and growth.<sup>xi</sup> UNDP argues that the corruption is a great hurdle in the development of the nation, because of corruption the social and political stability of a nation undermined. “*Corruption in government increases poverty in many ways. Most directly, it diverts resources to the rich people, who can afford to pay bribes, and away from the poor people, who cannot. However, it also skews decisions in favour of capital-intensive enterprise (where the pickings are greater) and away from labour-intensive activities more likely to benefit the poor. Corruption also weakens governments and lessens their ability to fight poverty. It reduces tax revenues and thus the resource available for public services. Moreover, if administrations are assumed to be corrupt, honest people tend to avoid public service, so the quality of personnel suffers. More generally, corruption eats away at the fabric of public life-leading to increased lawlessness and undermining social and political stability*”.<sup>xii</sup>

We can see the example of developed countries such as Norway, Australia, Switzerland, Netherlands, and the USA; these are in the top position of ranking in the Human Development Index, and India has got 135<sup>th</sup> ranking in its Human Development Index. While, our neighbouring country Sri Lanka has a better position than the India in Human Development Index.<sup>xiii</sup> Circumstantial evidence suggests that over the last 100 years or so corruption has declined with economic growth in most rich countries. For, an example of Singapore, we can see that, as developing country that is corruption free country how much reconstruct in present time.<sup>xiv</sup> In the Transparency International report, India’s position is 85<sup>th</sup> among the list of 174 countries.<sup>xv</sup>

In modern India, it has been seen that, from last decade onward the corruption in the government has become intolerable for the economy of the country. It is disturbing the foreign policy, eating into the vitals of the state and enfeebling internal security. India has confronted several pressing national security threats. Only one of them, the political corruption poses an existential threat to the state, which in reality has degenerated into a republic of mega scandals. The pervasive misuse of public office for the private gain is an evil, eating into the vitals of the state, sapping India’s strength. When the important decisions, from arms procurement to policy changes, are often tainted by corrupt considerations, it is inevitable that national security will be compromised. If India today is widely seen as a soft state, much of the blame must be pinned on the corrupt and compromised that lead it. Such ‘softening’ of India has made the country a tempting target for those seeking to undermine the security.<sup>xvi</sup>

Kauṭīliya has prescribed the measures to prevent the corruption and punish the offenders. He has presented an example that, just as fish moving inside the water cannot be known, when it is drinking the water, in the same way, officers appointed for the carrying out the works of state cannot be known when they are embezzling the money.<sup>xvii</sup> Kauṭīliya’s earlier teachers opine about that, if any officer whose income is low, but he has a large expenditure, it is sure he is consuming the state revenue. Here, Kauṭīliya differs from them and say, that can be ascertained only through secret agents.<sup>xviii</sup> Therefore, the secret agents employed as their servants undercover as cooks, waiters, bath attendants, shampooers, barbers, washing and water service. After getting some reliable reports three different sources, unknown to each other, the king initiates the process of punishing the culprit officer with the help of the administrator.

Kauṭīliya has also described the type of those people who, after embezzling huge amount revenue money, tries to accumulate it by concealing in own house, deposit it with the citizens or country people, and sending it out of state or in foreign states (enemy state). These are called *Kadarya* or the niggardly officer in the Arthaśāstra, who accumulates wealth by putting his dependents and himself to suffering. To apprehend such type of officers, the secret agents were deployed to watch their every activity. Those secret agents collected information about him, such as his party of advisers, friends, dependents and relative as well as the coming in and going out of the goods. The secret agents after winning his confidence of his servants, who might be making movements in the foreign territory, tries to find out the plans. In addition, after ascertaining about the culprit officer, he was killed by secret agents under the pretext of finding a letter from the enemy.<sup>xix</sup>

To prevent corruption in the state offices, Kauṭīliya has prescribed an officer for watching the activities of officials. Who was employed as a supervisor is similar to the vigilance officer of present time. He was required to have the knowledge of riding an elephant, horse and chariots. Kauṭīliya prescribes for frequent transfer of officers from one to another and each department should be with many heads and without permanency to prevent corruption.<sup>xx</sup> The policy of transfer also bears some relevance in the present time. In present time, we see the news of black money, which is deposited in the banks of western countries to save the income tax and to hide the source of income from the government. These all are called *Kadarya* in Kauṭīliya terminology. The political parties make this as an issue, but they do nothing about it. Therefore, here we can see the relevance of Kauṭīliya’s in preventing corruption in the state department.

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<sup>i</sup> Radhakumuda, Mookarjii “Chandragupta Maurya and His Times”. Motilal Banarsidass, New Delhi, 1988. P-15

<sup>ii</sup> <<http://www.britanica.com/topic/corruption-law>>

<sup>iii</sup> ते अध्यक्षधूर्ताश्चत्वारिंशत्

चाणक्योपदिष्टानाहरणोपायान्सहस्रधात्मबुद्ध्यैव ते विकल्पयितारः।  
Daśakumāracaritam. 8<sup>th</sup> Ucchvāsa. Daśakumāracaritam. (By Kedarnath Sharma) Chaukhamba Amarabharti Prakashan, Varanasi, 2004.

<sup>iv</sup> यथा ह्यनास्वादयितुं न शक्यं जिह्वातलस्थं मधुं वा विषं वा।

अर्थस्तथा ह्यर्थचरेण राज्ञः स्वल्पोऽप्यनास्वादयितुं न शक्यः। The  
Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra. 2.9.32.P-48.

<sup>v</sup> “From Bofors to 2G, the same fate” The Hindu, 24 May 2013.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/fromboforsto2gthesamefate/article4743570.ece>

<sup>vi</sup> “Lalu Prasad, Mishra among 45 convicted in fodder scam case”, The Hindu, 30 September 2013.

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<sup>viii</sup> “2G scam biggest in my tenure, says CBI director”, The Hindu, 28 November 2012. New Delhi.

<sup>ix</sup> “The elusive hunt for black money”. The Hindu. New Delhi, 10 August 2014.

[www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/theelusivehuntforblackmoney/article6299336.ece](http://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/theelusivehuntforblackmoney/article6299336.ece)

<sup>x</sup> दूष्यकुलानां वा विवादे प्रत्युत्पन्ने रसदाः प्रणिहिता रसं दद्युः। The  
Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra.5.2.53.P-155.

<sup>xi</sup> “Fighting corruption in India, A bad boom;

Graft in India is damaging the economy. The country needs to get serious about dealing with it”

The Economist, 15 March 2014.

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<sup>xii</sup> “Human Development Report” 1997. UNDP, Oxford University Press, New York. 1997.P-101. [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

<sup>xiii</sup> “Human Development Report” 2014. P-222. [www.undp.org](http://www.undp.org)

<sup>xiv</sup> “Corruption and Development: A Review of issues”, Pranab Bardhan, Journal of Economic Literature, Vol. 35, No.3 (Sept-1997), pp-1320-1346.  
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2729979>

<sup>xv</sup> The highest-ranking countries are Denmark, Newziland, Finland, and Sweden. India got 36 in the 100. Corruption Perception Index, 2014.

[www.transparency.org/cpi](http://www.transparency.org/cpi)

<sup>xvi</sup> “Perils of Becoming a republic of scandals”. The Hindu, New Delhi, 6 December 2010.

<http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/article936001.ece?homepage=tru>

<sup>xvii</sup> मत्स्या यथान्तः सलिले चरन्तो ज्ञातुं न शक्याः सलिलं विवन्तः।

युक्तस्तथा कार्यविधौ नियुक्ता ज्ञातुं न शक्या धनमाददानाः। The  
Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra. 2.9.34.P-48.

<sup>xviii</sup> अपसर्पेणैवोपलभ्यतेति कौटिल्यः। The Kauṭīliya Arthaśāstra. 2.9.12. P-47.

<sup>xix</sup> यो महत्यर्थसमुदये स्थितः कदर्यः संनिधत्तेऽवनिधत्तेऽवस्त्रावयति वा  
संनिधत्ते स्ववेश्मनि, अवनिधत्ते पौरजनपदेषु, अवस्त्रावयति परविषये---

---सुबुदिते शत्रुशासनापदेशेनैनं घातयेत्। The Kauṭīliya

Arthaśāstra.2.9.25-26.

<sup>xx</sup> बहुमुख्यमनित्यं चाधिकरणं स्थापयेत्। Ibid. 2.9.31.P-47.