



## Chanakya's Ideologies

**For Prelims:** Chanakya, Chandragupta Maurya

**For Mains:** Kautilya's Saptang Theory of State, Ideologies of Chanakya, Relevance of Chanakya's Teaching in Contemporary Times

Chanakya's thinking ideology embodies a sense of realism and practicality. It encourages individuals to acknowledge and understand the truths of life and society in order to surpass them and reach new levels of success. His insightful approach challenges conventional thinking and encourages individuals to question the norms and assumptions of society.

By embracing these ideas, individuals can gain a positive and empowering mindset, enabling them to navigate life's challenges and achieve their goals with wisdom and resilience.

### Who was Chanakya?

- Chanakya (350-275 BCE, **also known as Kautilya and Vishnugupta**). He was **born into a Brahman family** and received his education at Taxila (now in Pakistan).
- He was **prime minister under the reign of Chandragupta Maurya, founder of the Mauryan Empire**.
- He is **best known as the author of the political treatise Arthashastra** and the **collection of aphorisms Chanakya Neeti** which he **wrote as an instruction manual for the young Chandragupta** on how to rule effectively.

### What Arthashastra and Chanakya Neeti are About?

- **Arthashastra:**
  - The Arthashastra is considered Chanakya's training manual by which he **transformed Chandragupta from a citizen to a monarch**.
  - The precepts of the Arthashastra not only enabled Chandragupta to seize power but to maintain it, **passing it down to his son, Bindusara and then to his grandson Ashoka the Great** whose initial success can also be attributed to the Arthashastra until he grew disillusioned by the war and converted to **Buddhism**.
  - The Arthashastra **is informed by the philosophical school of Charvaka** which **rejected the supernatural explanation of phenomena** in favor of a completely materialistic worldview.
    - The practical, hands-on nature of the Arthashastra **most likely could never have developed without the foundation of Charvaka to build on**.
  - Despite **being written over 2,000 years ago, Chanakya's teachings are still relevant in the modern era** and can be applied to various aspects of life, from leadership and management to **conflict resolution and diplomacy**.
- **Chanakya Neeti:**
  - It **encompasses a wide range of topics, including** leadership, governance,

administration, diplomacy, warfare, economics, personal development, and social conduct. It provides guidance on effective decision-making, maintaining integrity, understanding human nature, building and maintaining power, managing finances, and fostering good relationships.

- The teachings of Chanakya Neeti **emphasize the importance of** wisdom, knowledge, strategic thinking, ethical behavior, and the pursuit of excellence.
- Overall, it **serves as a valuable resource for individuals seeking guidance on various aspects of life, governance, and personal growth.**
  - It continues to be studied and appreciated for its **practical wisdom and relevance in both ancient and modern times.**
- Charvaka completely **rejected the Hindu religious texts known as the Vedas** which were believed by the Orthodox to be the words of Brahman, **creator of the universe and the Universe itself.**
- Religious and **philosophical schools that accepted the Vedas were known as astika** (“there exists”) while those **who rejected the Vedic vision were known as nastika** (“there does not exist”).
- **Jainism** and Buddhism are **both considered nastika schools of thought** but Charvaka, also nastika, **took the concept further to deny any supernatural existence or authority whatsoever.**

## What is Kautilya’s Saptang Theory of State?

- The word “Saptang” indicates seven limbs, constituents or elements. According to this theory, a state or a well-governed kingdom is composed of seven essential elements or limbs that contribute to its stability and prosperity. These include:
  - **Swami (The Ruler):** The king or ruler is considered the central figure in the state. They are responsible for making important decisions, maintaining law and order, protecting the kingdom, and ensuring the welfare of the people.
  - **Amatya (The Minister):** The ministers or advisers play a crucial role in assisting the king in governance. These ministers were not only to advise the king whenever their advice was sought; they were also to maintain the secrecy of their deliberations.
  - **Janapada (The People and the Territory):** It refers to the territory and people of the state. The territory of the state should be fertile and should have an abundance of forest, rivers, mountains, minerals, wildlife etc. People should be loyal to their king, hard-working, disciplined, religious, ready to fight for their motherland and should pay taxes on a regular basis.
  - **Durga (Fortification):** The fortifications and defensive structures represent the protection and security of the state. A well-fortified citadel is crucial for defending against external threats and maintaining internal stability.
  - **Kosha (The Treasury):** The treasury represents the economic strength of the state. It encompasses the financial resources, revenue collection, and management of finances to support the state's activities, including infrastructure development, defense, and welfare programs.
  - **Danda (The Army):** The military or armed forces are essential for defending the state from external aggression and maintaining internal order. They ensure the king's authority and protect the interests of the state.
  - **Mitra (Alliance):** Alliances are crucial for a state's security and prosperity. Maintaining diplomatic relations, forging strategic alliances, and engaging in trade contribute to the state's influence and stability.

## What are Some of the Ideologies of Chanakya?

- **"Even if a snake is not poisonous, it should pretend to be venomous."**
  - It underscores the **importance of projecting strength** and deterrence, even when one may not possess inherent power or advantage. This idea suggests that it **can be**

**advantageous to cultivate an image of potency and resilience, regardless of one's actual capabilities.**

- It serves as a **reminder to project confidence** and create an impression of strength to dissuade potential adversaries or threats.
- **"A man is great by deeds, not by birth."**
  - It **emphasizes that true greatness is earned through one's deeds**, achievements, and character, rather than simply inheriting status or privilege.
  - This notion **encourages individuals to strive for excellence and contribute positively to society**, regardless of their upbringing or social standing. It reinforces the idea that personal merit and actions are the ultimate factors in determining one's greatness.
- **"A person should not be too honest. Straight trees are cut first and honest people are victimized first."**
  - The saying suggests that being overly honest can make a person more vulnerable to harm. It compares **honest people to straight trees, which are often targeted or harmed first**.
  - While it acknowledges the unfortunate reality that honest individuals may face difficulties, it is important to understand that it doesn't mean being dishonest is the solution. Instead, **it serves as a reminder to be cautious and tactful in certain situations**, without compromising one's values and integrity.
- **"Before you start some work, always ask yourself three questions - Why am I doing it? What the results might be? Will I be successful? Only when you think deeply and find satisfactory answers to these questions, go ahead."**
  - Before undertaking any task, Chanakya advises you to ask yourself **three important questions**:
    - **Why am I Doing it?:** This question prompts you to reflect on the purpose and motivation behind your actions.
    - **What might be the Results?:** This question encourages you to consider the potential outcomes and consequences of your actions.
    - **Will I be Successful?:** This question challenges you to assess your capabilities and chances of success.
  - This **approach promotes thoughtful decision-making** and increases the likelihood of positive outcomes.
- **"Once you start working on something, don't be afraid of failure and don't abandon it. People who work sincerely are the happiest."**
  - It emphasizes the importance of persistence and dedication in one's work. According to Chanakya, **once you begin a task, it is crucial to not fear failure or give up easily**.
    - He believes that those who work diligently and sincerely are the ones who experience the greatest happiness.
  - This quote **encourages individuals to have a resilient mindset, embrace challenges, and stay committed to their endeavors**, even in the face of setbacks. It suggests that genuine satisfaction and fulfillment can be derived from putting in sincere effort and persevering toward one's goals.
- **"As soon as the fear approaches near, attack and destroy it."**
  - According to Chanakya, when fear approaches, one should promptly take action to confront and eliminate it. It suggests that **instead of succumbing to fear or allowing it to paralyze you, it is better to face it head-on and conquer it**.
  - This quote encourages individuals to be proactive in dealing with their fears, demonstrating courage and determination in the face of challenges. **By taking swift and decisive action, one can overcome fear** and achieve personal growth and success.
- **"Learn from the mistakes of others; you cannot live long enough to make them all yourselves."**
  - Chanakya suggests that it is impossible to live long enough to make every mistake ourselves, so we should take the opportunity to observe and understand the errors made by others.
  - By doing so, **we can gain wisdom and insights without having to personally experience the negative consequences**. This encourages individuals to be attentive and receptive to the lessons provided by the experiences of others, **enabling us to make better choices and avoid repeating the same mistakes**.

## What is the Relevance of Chanakya's Teaching in Contemporary Times?

- **Enduring Relevance of Education:** Chanakya placed great emphasis on the significance of education as one of his fundamental principles. He firmly believed that obtaining knowledge and developing skills were essential for triumph in life, and he was **intensely devoted to individuals possessing a well-rounded education** encompassing diverse fields, including economics, politics, and warfare.
  - Even in contemporary times, this notion remains applicable, as quality education **continues to be recognized as a vital catalyst for personal and professional development**, ultimately leading to success.
- **Human Nature in Leadership and Communication:** One important lesson from Chanakya that remains relevant today is his knowledge of human nature and his skill at assessing people's strengths and weaknesses. He stressed the **importance of being able to recognize the character and intentions of individuals**, as understanding human nature is crucial for effective communication and leadership.
  - This concept is still applicable in today's world, as successful leaders and communicators are often those **who can understand why people behave the way they do and what drives them**.
- **Strategic Thinking and Diplomacy:** Alongside his understanding of education and human nature, Chanakya's teachings on strategic thinking and diplomacy retain immense relevance in today's world. He **offered valuable guidance on constructing and preserving power**, as well as employing diplomacy to resolve conflicts and negotiate disputes.
  - These teachings have direct applications in contemporary scenarios, including **negotiation and conflict resolution, as well as power dynamics** within the realms of business and politics.
- **Ethics and Morality in Leadership and Governance:** Another crucial principle highlighted in Chanakya's teachings is the significance of ethics and morality in leadership and governance. According to him, a leader must uphold moral and ethical values to retain the support and trust of the people.
  - In the present era, **this principle finds application in leadership within government and corporate contexts**, where ethical and responsible leadership plays a pivotal role in establishing trust and credibility with stakeholders.
- **Role of Financial Stability and Wealth Management:** Additionally, he stressed the significance of financial stability and prudent wealth management. According to him, a ruler must possess a robust financial footing to ensure the stability of the state.
  - This principle **extends to personal finance and wealth management**, as establishing a strong financial foundation is vital for personal stability and security.
- **Effective Leadership and Social Welfare:** His concepts regarding good governance and striking a balance between economic progress and social justice continue to hold relevance in the present era. He recognized the significance of **ensuring the welfare of the people and his ideas about harmonizing economic growth with social equality** find applicability in today's world.
  - By incorporating these principles, governance and administration can be enhanced, guaranteeing that the needs and well-being of the people are duly considered.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year's Question (PYQ)

**Q.** "Corruption causes misuse of the government treasury, administrative inefficiency and obstruction in the path of national development." Discuss Kautilya's views. **(2016)**