

“Kautilya Strategic Insight on Local Governance”

Prof. (Dr.) Shyam T. Shirsath

Department of Public Administration

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University,

Aurangabad, Maharashtra (IN)

Abstract:

Kautilya, the renowned strategist and philosopher of ancient India, often referred to as the "Indian Statecraft," offered a comprehensive and insightful perspective on the role of local administration in the governance of the state. Kautilya's treatise, the Arthashastra, He Emphasis deeply into the intricate mechanisms of statecraft, and his views on local administration are a testament to his keen understanding of the importance of effective decentralization. Kautilya recognized the need for a robust and well-integrated local administration system to ensure the effective implementation of the ruler's policies and the maintenance of order within the kingdom. This research paper examines Kautilya's comprehensive framework for local administration as articulated in his seminal work, the 'Arthashastra'. Recognizing the complexities of governing a vast and diverse territory, Kautilya advocated for a robust system of decentralized administration. This paper delves into the key elements of his model, including the specific roles and responsibilities of local administrators, their hierarchical structure, and their crucial function in maintaining order, implementing policies, and ensuring efficient revenue collection.

Furthermore, the paper explores Comparative study of 73rd and 74th Constitutional amendment act. Also analysing Kautilya's strategic insights on local governance, this paper sheds light on the significance he placed on local administration as a cornerstone of a stable and prosperous state.

Keywords: *Kautilya Administration, 73rd & 74th Constitutional amendments, Local administration, Decentralisation.*

Introduction:

Kautilya recognized the need for a robust and well-integrated local administration system to ensure the effective implementation of the ruler's policies and the maintenance of order within the kingdom. He emphasized the importance of decentralizing power and authority to local administrators, who would be responsible for overseeing the day-to-day affairs of their respective jurisdictions (Kohli, 1995:2-4). By empowering local authorities, Kautilya believed that the ruler could better respond to the unique needs and challenges of different regions, improve the efficiency of governance, and maintain a closer connection with the people (Roy, 2017:2-3).

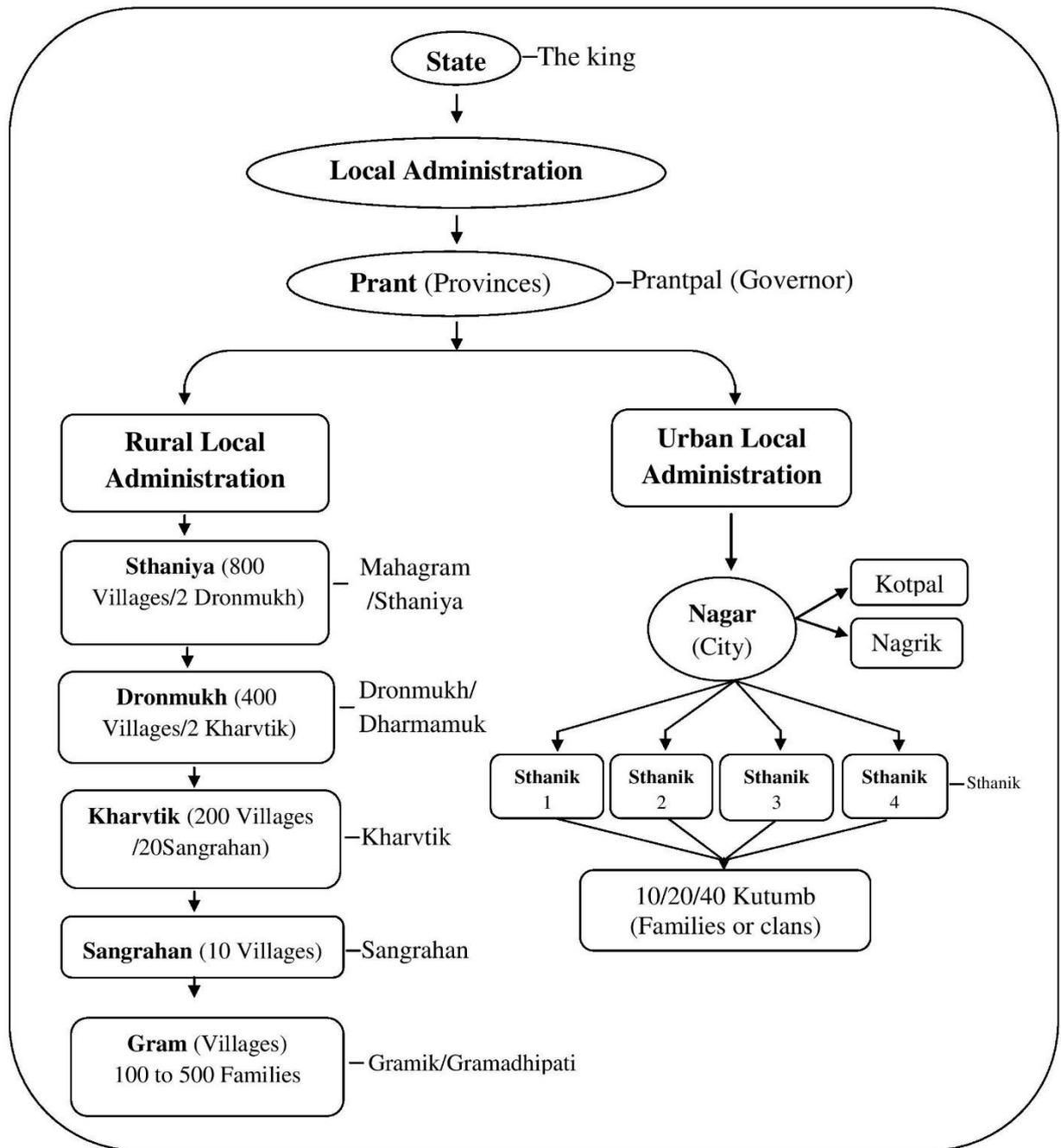
Kautilya's approach to local administration was founded on the concept of "Mandala," which viewed neighbouring states as potential rivals and distant states as potential allies. This strategic framework informed his recommendations for the deployment of local administrators, who were to be carefully selected and trained to navigate the complex web of regional alliances and rivalries. (Col. Harjeet Singh, 2013:3-14)

Kautilya's Arthashastra also delves into the specific responsibilities and duties of local administrators, underscoring the importance of maintaining a strong and well-organized bureaucracy. (Subhash, 1994: 165-182) (Sihag, 2009:1-3)

Local government bodies are the pillars of a true democratic system. The country like India, after independence, the formation of local self-government was promoted through democratic decentralization. Local self-government was given constitutional status by the 73rd and 74th constitutional amendments. Through constitutional amendment, the social basis of democracy was expanded and a truly inclusive and participatory democratic system was created. However, since ancient times in India, the existence of local

government was seen during that time. This local administration used to carry out their functions under different names and through different systems during that period. Kautilya has mentioned in detail about local administration in both rural and urban in Arthashastra. In order to decentralize more power to the local level, Kautilya has suggested proper structure and proper control system to prevent the local administration from becoming autocratic.(Roy, 2017:3-5)

Kautilya's Structure of Decentralized Administration



In Kautilya Philosophy, state is the apex system of public administration. Kautilya also says that states should be divided into provinces for administrative convenience and local administration should be formed under the control of provinces. The structure of local administration is clearer from the accompanying diagram. (Shirsath,2003:32-36)

The state should be divided into several provinces and a provincial governor should be appointed as the administrative head. Kautilya also mentioned the governor as the head of the nation and the president. He has said that Yuvraj, Mahamatra, or his blood relative should be appointed as governor. Taking the example of the Mauryan period, Chandragupta divided his kingdom into four provinces. (Deshkar, 2010:87-95) (Shirsath,2003:32-36)

1. The first northern province whose capital was Taxila.
2. Another central province, whose capital was Ujjain.
3. The third ,southern province whose capital is Suvarnagiri
4. The fourth, Toshali was the capital of Kalinga (Eastern) province.

It was only because of the creation of such a province that the Maurya's were able to maintain such a huge empire. Kautilya designed separate local administrations for rural and urban systems under provincial control. Both these structures were developed separately by Kautilya keeping in mind the differences in rural and urban living conditions and culture.

Rural Local Administration

The concept of five-tiered village administration is explained by Kautilya in Arthashastra. The five levels of village administration were local, Dronmukh, Sarvatic, Sangrahan and Gram (Village) (Deshkar, 2010:87-95) (Shirsath,2003:32-36)

1) Gram

The most important and fundamental element in rural administration is the Gram (village). A village or a Gram would be of 100 to 500 families and there would be an official called Gramik or Gramdhipati, the houses in the village should be at such a distance that they could help each other in times of crisis, In village Shudras & farmers would have more economic burden. The area of the newly built village should be 1 to 2 Sq.meter, there should be a defined boundary for the village, there should be a river, hill, forest, valley, bridge, etc. on the village boundary. The villager will be responsible for collecting and keeping accounts, counting the land, keeping records of the population and number of animals etc. (Shamasastri,1951:108-112)

2) Sangrhan

The uppermost unit of the village is the sangrhan, the sangrhan will be organized together of 10 villages or villages. Kautilya says that a Sangrhan officer will be working on the sangrhan, a court will also be set up at the Sangrhan Site.

3) Kharvtik

The level above Sangrhan is kharvtik, kharvtik is to be formed out of 20 Sangrhan i.e. 200 villages, kharvtik officer will be working at this level,

4) Dronamukh

There should be two Kharyatiks i.e. Dronmukh of 400 villages. A Dronmukh Officer should be appointed to look after the affairs of Dronmukh. Dronamukh should have control over village and kharvtika.

5) Sthaniya

It is the highest level of (Gram)village administration. Sthaniya two Dronmukhs i.e 800 villages will be organized together. A Mahagram or a local officer should be appointed over the locality. It is believed that this element was created to control the entire village administration from the position of the Sthaniya. The Sthaniya will function directly under the control of the provinces.

Urban Local Administration

Kautilya has proposed a three-tier urban local administrative system in the economy. He has mentioned three levels in the form of urban, local and family groups.(Sharma, 1998:265-270) (Deshkar, 2010:87-95) (Tyagi,2010:148-178)

1) Nagar (City)

Kautilya has provided for a separate administrative system for each Nagar. Every nagar will have an officer named Kotpal and a citizen, the citizen should focus more on peace and order in the Nagar. However, more population is expected to establish the Nagar. Kautilya believed that the creation or arrangement of the nagar should be planned.

2) Sthanik

The Nagar should be divided into four parts. In the interior architecture of the Durga, it is divided into six parts by dividing those sections into 'Sthanik'. A local named officer will be working on each division. There is no definite mention in the Arthashastra for what reason the place should have been created. However, it is believed that this creation should be for administrative convenience.

3) Kutumb Samuha (Family Group)

This is the element of urban local administration. Under the 'Sthanik' division there were 10/20/40 groups of family. An officer called 'Gopa' had been provided financial facilities to families or clans. Gopa should keep the detailed information of that area. The information about the caste, occupation, income, expenses etc. of the families in our work area should also be kept confidential. It will be the duty of the local citizen to give information about the visitors who come and how long they will stay.

During Kautilya's time the administration of Nagar was very excellent. In the administrative system of Pataliputra (present day Patna) there were 30 member boards and 6 committees working. Each committee was entrusted with various subjects, and the committee had 5 members to monitor it.

Functions of Local Administration

Kautilya's Arthashastra writings following functions are generally assigned to the local administration.(Sihag, 2009)

1. Recovery of various revenues levied by the king.
2. Arrangement of lamp in village or city.
3. Construction and repair of roads.
4. Management of markets and travel.
5. Solving the problems of local citizens or informing the superiors if it is not possible to solve them.
6. Making arrangement for irrigation or water supply,
7. Keeping information about foreigner coming to the village or city.
8. Arranging a pitcher filled with water in front of the house in the square to extinguish the fire.
9. To strive for the safety and protection of the public.
10. To arrange for the conveyance of information to the King regarding the security, problems or rebellion of the local people.

Scenario in Modern Context

Various such functions were entrusted to the local administration. The most significant aspect of Kautilya's thought on local administration is that he made the right balance between autonomy and control and created an excellent model of local administration. Apart from the Kautilya Administration, Indian Constitution came with amendments for strengthening local Administration again. Here, Comparison between 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment act in the following table.(Constitution of India, 2017)

73rd Constitutional Amendment Act	74th Constitutional Amendment Act
It brought the Panchayati Raj System to rural/village/Gram India.	It brought the Municipality system to urban/Nagar India.
It laid down a three-tier system that shall comprise to be the Panchayati Raj. In Kautilya Arthshashtra he comprises with five-tier system.	It gives provisions for establishing three types of municipalities in every state- Nagar panchayat, municipal council, and municipal corporation.
This made the Gram Sabha the fundamental basis of the Panchayat Raj system to perform the duties and responsibilities assigned by the State Governments.	The President of India assented to this act on 20 April 1993.
The amendment provides for a three-tier Panchayat Raj system at the village, intermediate, and district levels.	It came into force on 1 June 1993.
It added Part IX to the Indian Constitution.	It added Part IX-A to the Indian Constitution.
The Provisions contains in Articles between 243 to 243-O.	The Provisions contains in Articles between 243 P – 243 ZG.

In brief, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of India which was related with democratic decentralization in India, enacted in 1992, revolutionized local governance by institutionalizing rural administration popularly known as Panchayati Raj institutions (PRIs) and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs), respectively, ensuring decentralization, democratic participation, and empowerment at the grassroots level. These amendments mandated regular elections, reservation of seats for marginalized communities, and the devolution of functions, funds, and functionaries to local bodies. In contrast, Kautilya's Arthashastra, an ancient Indian treatise on statecraft, outlined a centralized form of governance where local administration was managed by officials appointed by the king or Swami. These officials were responsible for tax collection, law enforcement, and maintaining law & order, but they lacked the autonomy or democratic structure emphasized in the 73rd and 74th Amendments. While Kautilya's system was hierarchical and centralized, focusing on efficient administration under the king's control, the constitutional amendments seek to empower local communities, fostering participation, accountability, and self-governance at the local level. In fact, Kautilya's Model of local governance was very effective in Mauryan Period and this model is still relevant in today's era.

Conclusion:

Kautilya's Arthashastra provides a timeless and strategic blueprint for local administration. In modern times, the principles of Kautilya's local governance resonate with the objectives of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in India, which aim to strengthen local self-government and promote a participatory democratic system. Kautilya's ancient insights into decentralization and local administration continue to hold relevance, offering valuable lessons for contemporary governance.

After all Kautilya's Arthashastra offers a comprehensive and strategic framework for local administration. By balancing autonomy and control, Kautilya created an effective model for decentralized governance, underscoring the crucial role of local administration in achieving a stable and prosperous state. His work remains a testament to the importance of local governance in the broader context of statecraft and administration.

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