

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The transition from being nomadic hunter-gatherers to staying in a society can be arguably said to be the most significant step in human evolution. However, staying in a society does not automatically mean that all the people (living in the society) are able to partake of the benefits unless an efficient and effective system of Public Administration (PA) is in place.

Early civilisations (Egyptian, *Vedic*, etc.) had advanced systems of government/ administration. Since the emergence of PA as a discipline of study, there have been paradigmatic shifts/ advances in PA. Weberian concepts were followed by New Public Management (NPM), New Public Governance (NPG) and New Public Service (NPS).

PA in India has also evolved from a “benevolent bureaucratic monarchy” (in *Kautilyan* times) to a “feudal bureaucratic monarchy” (in Mughal times) to a “colonial bureaucratic monarchy” (during the British rule in India). Since independence, India has been a “bureaucratic democracy” and has closely followed Weberian concepts. However, even 70 years after Independence, there exist major flaws/ shortcomings. Inadequate revenue generation, an ever-increasing population, communal unrest, increasing wealth inequality, a fractured polity, etc. have prevented the benefits of progress from reaching the poorest levels of society. It is here that the *Kautilya Arthashastra* can be referred to as a potential source of streamlining PA in India.

The *Arthashastra* can be defined as the “science of statecraft or of politics and administration”. Its final aim is योगक्षेम, i.e., the “Welfare of the People”. The natural state of society is that of मात्स्यन्याय (might is right). The *Arthashastra* is intended to

ensure that any society can make the transition from मात्स्यन्याय to योगक्षेम. The primary tool advocated is दण्डनीति (the art of governance). The *Arthashastra* comprehensively covers various fields of PA such as the king, the bureaucracy, the judicial system, suppression of criminals, discontentment in the people, etc. Thus, the *Arthashastra* is essentially a study of human nature.

A contemporary analysis of the *Arthashastra* provides a **framework for decision-making** which is timeless in nature and can be used to evaluate any society, in order to find out the strengths, address the shortcomings and achieve progress. This framework has three components: the frame of reference, the constituents (प्रकृती:) of the state and the means available (उपाया:). Any society can be analysed under these three components in order to find out the effectiveness of PA (in that society).

An analysis of PA in India (as per the above-mentioned framework) reveals the current state of PA in India. It is difficult to ensure “continued and capable leadership” in a democracy. The government is unable to ensure compliance to the law. There are structural shortcomings in the PA set-up. Failure to control the population has been the greatest failure of the Indian government. It is difficult to say whether the economy is really in a healthy state. Are we heading for a potential civil unrest in the next 10-15 years?

The study opines that the **framework for decision-making** (as provided by the *Arthashastra*) is relevant even today and can be used to analyse PA in India, in order to achieve the final aim of योगक्षेम.