



# King, Governance, and Law in Ancient India: Kautilya's Arthashastra

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## Editorial Review

### Review

"Although citizens of democratic India continue to mull over and quarrel about old texts like these, it could be argued that what keeps such works vital and relevant is not so much what's in them as the fact that they exist at all, that they function as reminders of the deep foundations on which the edifice of Indian modernity rests with a degree of confidence and stability. Whatever we may make of such texts, depending on our ideological needs, our political vantages, and our imaginative capacities, we must remain grateful to scholars like Olivelle, whose immense labor and lucid analysis give us the building blocks with which to make or break, arrange or rearrange our past, our present, and perhaps, with time enough, our future as well."--*Public Books*

"*Arthashastra* is a very important text in the understanding of ancient Hindu thinking, and Olivelle's translation will help researchers to make analyses with precision and without falling into anachronisms."  
--*Strategic Analysis*

"For years unreadable and inaccurate translations have discouraged general readers and Sanskrit-less scholars of India from reading the *Arthashastra*, though this work is central to anyone's understanding of Indian history, law, politics, economics, society, religion, and much more. At last we have a translation of extraordinary erudition and clarity that makes this fascinating and crucially important text truly accessible. The prose is transparent, clean, devoid of jargon or highly technical language; the meticulously detailed notes clarify the more abstruse points. All of Patrick Olivelle's translations are first-rate, but this is his great masterpiece."--Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religions, University of Chicago Divinity School

"Patrick Olivelle's fluent and illuminatingly annotated translation will be a revelation to all those interested in ancient India and in the organization of ancient states more generally. By offering a powerful counter to the popular notion of an ancient India focused only on transcendent religious speculation, it significantly complicates and deepens our picture of that place and time."--Stephanie W. Jamison, Professor of Asian Languages and Cultures and of Indo-European Studies, the University of California, Los Angeles

"Patrick Olivelle crowns a distinguished career by translating one of the most difficult, and by many measures the most valuable, of Sanskrit texts, Kautilya's *Arthashastra*. A lifetime of scholarly translations from Sanskrit has prepared him to scale these daunting heights, and the result is magnificent. The work is informed by a strongly-argued theory about the composition of the *Arthashastra*, and the translation is richly annotated. All scholars of ancient India will benefit from this splendid new translation."--Thomas R. Trautmann, Professor Emeritus of History and Anthropology, University of Michigan

"Patrick Olivelle, better qualified for the job than any other Indologist by decades of experience in translating ancient and medieval Indian texts, as well as by his long and highly productive engagement with Indian legal literature, has presented a new translation of the famous and in many regards unique *Arthashastra* of Kautilya, the only extant witness of the once much larger genre of texts dealing with the science of law and statecraft. By a rare combination of philological acumen, insightful recognition of textual and exegetical problems, an enviably vast erudition, and a developed feel for the language, Olivelle has succeeded in preparing a richly annotated translation that is both readable and utterly reliable. It not only outdoes all its predecessors but will also stand unchallenged the test of time."--Albrecht Wezler, Emeritus Professor of Sanskrit, University of Hamburg, Germany

*"The Arthashastra* is a work of exceptional importance for understanding the history of classical India. Olivelle's careful, painstaking, and transparent translation of Kautilya's great treatise is an exceptional work as well, and an outstanding contribution to the field of Indian studies." --*H-Net Reviews*

#### About the Author

**Patrick Olivelle** is Professor of Sanskrit and Indian Religions at the University of Texas at Austin.

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