

Kautilya's
Arthashastra

Translated into English by
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commodities to the store-house (*dápaka*); those who supply commodities (*dáyaka*); those who are employed to receive compensation for any real or supposed error in measuring grains, etc. (*sálákáipratigráhaka*); slaves; and labourers;—all these are called *vishti*.

Grains are heaped up on the floor; jaggory (*kshára*) is bound round in grass-rope (*múta*); oils are kept in earthenware or wooden vessels; and salt is heaped up on the surface of the ground.

[Thus ends Chapter XV, “The Superintendent of Storehouse,” in Book II, “The Duties of Government Superintendents” of the *Arthasástra* of Kautilya. End of the thirty-sixth chapter from the beginning.]

CHAPTER XVI. THE SUPERINTENDENT OF COMMERCE.

THE Superintendent of Commerce shall ascertain demand or absence of demand for, and rise or fall in the price of, various kinds of merchandise which may be the products either of land or of water and which may have been brought in either by land or by water path. He shall also ascertain the time suitable for their distribution, centralisation, purchase, and sale.

That merchandise which is widely distributed shall be centralised and its price enhanced. When the enhanced rate becomes popular, another rate shall be declared.

That merchandise of the king which is of local manufacture shall be centralised; imported merchandise shall be distributed in

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several markets for sale. Both kinds of merchandise shall be favourably sold to the people.

He shall avoid such large profits as will harm the people.

There shall be no restriction to the time of sale of those commodities for which there is frequent demand; nor shall they be subject to the evils of centralisation (*sankuladosha*).

Or pedlars may sell the merchandise of the king at a fixed price in many markets and pay necessary compensation (*vaidharana*) proportional to the loss entailed upon it (*chhedánurúpam*).

The amount of *vyáji* due on commodities sold by cubical measure is one-sixteenth of the quantity (*shodasabhágo mánavyáji*); that on commodities sold by weighing balance is one-twentieth of the quantity; and that on commodities sold in numbers is one-eleventh of the whole.

The superintendent shall show favour to those who import foreign merchandise: mariners (*návika*) and merchants who import foreign merchandise shall be favoured with remission of the trade-taxes, so that they may derive some profit (*áyatikshamam pariháram dadyát*).

Foreigners importing merchandise shall be exempted from being sued for debts unless they are (local) associations and partners (*anabhiyogaschárthesshvágantúnámanyatassabhyopakári bhyah*).

Those who sell the merchandise of the king shall invariably put their sale proceeds in a wooden box kept in a fixed place and provided with a single aperture on the top.

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During the eighth part of the day, they shall submit to the superintendent the sale report, saying "this much has been sold and this much remains;" they shall also hand over the weights and measures. Such are the rules applicable to local traffic.

As regards the sale of the king's merchandise in foreign countries:---

Having ascertained the value of local produce as compared with that of foreign produce that can be obtained in barter, the superintendent will find out (by calculation) whether there is any margin left for profit after meeting the payments (to the foreign king) such as the toll (*sulka*), road-cess (*vartanî*), conveyance-cess (*âtivâhika*), tax payable at military stations (*gulmadeya*), ferry-charges (*taradeya*), subsistence to the merchant and his followers (*bhakta*), and the portion of merchandise payable to the foreign king (*bhâga*).

If no profit can be realised by selling the local produce in foreign countries, he has to consider whether any local produce can be profitably bartered for any foreign produce. Then he may send one quarter of his valuable merchandise through safe roads to different markets on land. In view of large profits, he (the deputed merchant) may make friendship with the forest-guards, boundary-guards, and officers in charge of cities and of country-parts (of the foreign king). He shall take care to secure his treasure (*sâra*) and life from danger. If he cannot reach the intended market, he may sell the merchandise (at any market) free from all dues (*sarvadeyavisuddham*).

Or he may take his merchandise to other countries through rivers (*nadîpatha*).

He shall also gather information as to conveyance-charges (*yânabhâgaka*), subsistence on the way (*pathyadana*), value of