CHAPTER IV

LABOUR SYSTEMS IN Arthaśāstra
Arthaśāstrā is the oldest extant treatise in Sanskrit that presents elaborate accounts on the science of wealth. No other work of that age would be useful for a study of ancient Indian economics, in the sense of vārttā, as is Arthaśāstrā. The text deals with the wealth-generating activities of the state, such as the acquisition of territory and the taxation of the people inhabiting it. It is also a work that gives a rather clear picture of professions in which the people were engaged in that age. The professions described in Arthaśāstrā, as is clear from the previous chapters in this study, range from the higher officials like ministers and heads of departments to manual labourers such as servants and workers in agriculture. In many places the nature of works to be carried out by different categories of employees are also dealt with in the work. Besides, Arthaśāstrā gives many details about the prevalence of different systems of employment. Abundant reference to slave workers, bonded labourers and workers on the basis of wage etc. appear in Arthaśāstrā. The whole labour force described in Arthaśāstrā can be classified on the basis of their freedom in their profession. The categories thus distinguishable in the text are slaves, bonded labour, unpaid labour, forced labour, child labour, casual labour for wages, piece-rate workers, self employed guilds and women labour, and civil service. This chapter aims at analyzing the labour systems reflected in the text, which presumably had been prevalent in the period of Arthaśāstrā.
Slave Labour

Slave labour is the un-free labour. Slavery is the ownership and control of one person and his services by another person. *Arthaśāstra* contains reference to slaves who were regarded as a form of property and gifted on ritual and other occasions. Kauṭīlya has given a detailed description regarding slaves existed in ancient India. According to R.S. Sharma, during the Mauryan period Šūdras were employed by the state largely as slaves in the middle Gangetic plains. ¹ It is evident in *Arthaśāstra* of Kauṭīlya, that a striking social development in its period was the employment of slaves in agricultural operations on a large scale. The state maintained farms on which numerous slaves and hired labourers were employed. They played a prominent role in production. ² During that period the Šūdras were compelled to serve the higher communities as slaves, artisans, agricultural labourers, and domestic servants. ³ In *Arthaśāstra* a Dāsa is allowed to hold and inherit property. ⁴ The Dāsakarmakara portion of the third Adhikaraṇa in *Arthaśāstra* deals with the dispositions concerning to slave. It shows that the basic mode of labour in the age of Kauṭīlya was dāsyā and it was quite widespread. ⁵

*Arthaśāstra* shows that the relationship between the master and the Dāsa was often contractual in nature, which contrasted with lifelong and hereditary servitude that had prevailed in the past. ⁶ The descriptions made by Kauṭīlya reveal that in that period there existed numerous big farms, worked with slaves and hired labourers in the direct employment of
Sitādhyaṅka (बृहस्पतिप्रकृतियां स्वभूमिं दासकर्मकर्तरण्याल्पतिक्षरत्तिमिश्रिते। 2.24. 2).
The state supplied them with agricultural implements and other accessories and requisitioned the services of carpenters, blacksmiths and other artisans for the purpose. Slavery was domestic in nature. R.S. Sharma observes that, Kauṭilya is the first and the only Brahmanical writer who furnishes evidence of Dāsas being employed in agricultural production on a substantial scale. ⁷

In the age of Mauryas each Grhaṇa had Dāsas and Dāśis attached to his household for hard labour including tilling, the hardest part of the labour processes in agriculture. Dāsa could be owned by private individuals as well as the state. As in the case of production of goods and services in all other fields, in the case of arts and crafts too, the basic institutional device for appropriating labour was Dāsyā. Under the state scheme of Kauṭilya, the major monumental constructions, which had involved extremely tough labour such as quarrying and mining, chipping, sculpting and polishing of hard stones, erecting huge blocks etc. presuppose large-scale deployment of Dāsakarmakāras. ⁸ According to Nāradasmaṇṭī there is a distinction in the kind of work that could be allotted to Dāsakarmakaras. Dāsas are expected to perform impure work. All others were to be given pure work (5.5.7). ‘Impure work comprises sweeping the doors of houses, pits in which leavings of food are thrown, roads, rubbish heaps; scratching or shampooing the private parts of the masters; collecting and throwing away leavings of food, ordure and urine and making use of one’s limbs at the masters desire for wiping off the master’s private parts, all other actions are pure.’ ⁹ In this context Uma Chakravarti observes ‘The distinction between pure and
impure work, and the corresponding distinction between the work of Dāsa and that of the Karmakara, is a noticeable departure from pre-Mauryan and Mauryan periods when the Dāsas and Karmakaras were almost invariably clubbed together, especially in the context of agricultural labour. Some may have worked as agricultural labourers and others as artisans. It is also possible that a man owning many slaves may have on occasion, hired them out for general purposes. R.P. Kangle is of opinion that the state slaves (Daṇḍaprātikartṛ) were engaged in the state mining industry. In addition, those disgruntled with the regime too are posted in the mines (गुम्पुत्रदारानाकर्मवानवा वा वासवेतुः परेर्वामात्त्वमभवत् | 1.13.21). There is a reference in Arthaśāstra to the women slaves engaged in state weaving industry. Women who had committed offences and had therefore to pay fines could earn the money for the fine working as weavers (2.23.2). Kangle states, ‘she is a state-slave and the whole of her wage goes towards her ransom amount.’ Mothers of prostitutes, old female slaves of the king, and retired female slaves of temples (old Devadāsīs) were also engaged in this profession (2.23.2).

Female slave of a courtesan (Gaṇīkādāsī), whose professional carrier is over, had to work in the kitchen or state storehouse (गणिकादासी भम्बोगा कोशागारे महानसे वा कर्म कुर्यात् | 2.27.8). They had to cook the food, husk rice, and bring water for household use, bathing the master and his family members, washing the floor and should attend each household work that needed servile labour. They are described as working in both the kingly
harems and ordinary household. In the royal establishment, female slaves were engaged as bath attendants, shampooers, bed spreaders, laundresses and garland makers (1.21.13). A section of women slaves were employed as wandering spies (1.12.5). It is said that, in normal circumstances an Ārya should not be subjugated to slavery. But, it is possible that due to some misfortune, family troubles, or necessary for earning more money than usual, an Ārya may temporarily work as a slave (3.13.1). While dealing with slavery Kauṭilya states that the purchase or sale of children as slaves was not forbidden amongst the Mlecchas for they were backward and savage but an Ārya child could in no case be allowed to remain a slave. Only Mleccha (barbarians, which include the Greeks) were not guilty of a crime if they sold their subjects into slavery or bound them over (मल्लिध्राजमर्देश: प्रजां विन्द्रतमाझाते वा | 3.13.3). Such Mlecchas were in demand as entertainers and had access even to the inner royal apartments. As it is said earlier, according to Arthashastra slaves can be owned by private individuals as well as the state. They had entitled to the same wage as the free worker, namely, one a paṇa and a quarter per month (2.24.28). The slaves were not only required to do low work but were mercilessly beaten on their failure to obey the master. They were also deprived of all proprietary rights, which Kauṭilya had so generously granted to them.17

Bonded Labour

Bonded labour is labour or personal services rendered without remuneration in consideration of debt or part of debt or interest till the debt
is redeemed or repaid. The term ‘bonded labour’ also refers to debt-bondage or mortgaged labour. 18 For the first time in Indian history, one gets a clear idea of debt bondage in Arthaśāstra. It provides more information on various groups of Dāsas who have been used as bonded labourers. This was a condition of “un-free” labour i.e. a worker, male or female, who enjoyed fewer rights than other categories of employees. It often involves longer hours of work, irregular payment, the performance of household as well as agricultural tasks, or claim by the employer upon the time of the labourer’s wife and children.19 Of the slaves and bonded labourers employed, the latter were in a more elevated position than the slaves. ‘The slave and serf may be easily distinguishable categories in European context. But the Indian slave and the bonded labourer cannot be easily distinguished. This is partly due to the range of variations within the categories themselves and partly due to the semantic confusion. The only practical distinction seems to be that the slave could be brought or sold and the bonded labourer could not be traded that way.’20 Both were paid wages in accordance with the amount of work they completed and were not owned by the employer.21 They were also used as agricultural and domestic labourers and are known to have worked on ships as well.22

Reference to debt-servitude appears frequently in the text, under several forms, as a voluntary servitude or temporary slavery during which working for a creditor pays of a debt. As stated above, the control of the master over the Dāsa in debt bondage was less effective than that in other categories of Dāsas, because Arthaśāstra envisages a situation in which a
bondsman who attempts to escape is reduced to the status of an ordinary Dāsa, who may never be redeemed. This would result in debt bondage being transmuted to slavery for life (3.13.6). The relationship between debt, bondage and enslavement is fairly clear from the text, since a person could often slide from one status to the other. In short, as per the indication of the text a person could be bonded for non-payment of a debt and enslaved if he attempted to escape.23

Kauṭilya classifies bonded labourers into five kinds; Udaradāsa- ‘stomach slave’ (3.13.1), Āhitaka- mortgaged (3.13.11), Ātmavikrayī- self selling (3.13.13), Daṇḍapraṇīta- brought by justice (3.13.18), and Dhvajāṅgṛta- brought with flag (3.13.19). Various categories in Arthaśāstra are for the most part, Dāsas who are pledged, either pledging themselves or being pledged by others.24 Concerning Udaradāsa Kangle has specified in the note on his translation of the text 3.13.1, that, ‘He is one who, in distress, lives with another person in better circumstances and works as a slave return for food. A minor may be so handed over for his maintenances. There is no actual sale in this case, only stay for time being.’25 The text included Udaradāsa into the category of temporary servitude. ‘Proceeding from the etymology of the term Udaradāsa, some scholars came to the conclusion that Udaradāsa is to be identified with Bhaktadāsa mentioned in Manusmṛti 8.415 and in Nāradasmṛti 4.28, 36 implying a person who is kept by his master, having a roof over head and clothes, but no wages.’26 The Āhitakas were engaged in the profession of wet nurses. From the references to Dāhātri, Paricārikā, Ardhasītikā and Upacārikā in 3.13.9, it can be
understood that all of them possibly belong to the group of pledged slaves.\textsuperscript{27} Kauṭilya says, a bonded labourer who mortgages himself- Ātvamāvikrāyī- or has been mortgaged by someone else (against a debt) should be redeemed by paying the amount for which he is owned (3.13.15, 17). Daṇḍapraṇīta is a state-slave worked under the Sīṭādkhakṣa (2.24) on state farms and under the Sūṭrādkhakṣa (2.23) in state weaving industry. The whole of his wage goes towards his ransom amount.\textsuperscript{28} Dhvajārtha is an Ārya individual captured during war time. He should be freed after suitable work for a specified period or for half the price (आयप्राणो ध्वजार्ताः कर्मकालानुसरेण मूल्यार्धम् वा विमुक्तिः। 3.13.19). In other words, after doing work assigned for a specific period he becomes free.\textsuperscript{29}

The emergence of debt bondage created a new category of slaves whose labour was available for the master but retained some measure of control over him. He was allowed to earn money by working elsewhere in his spare time, as long as it did not obstruct the work he did for the master (3.13.14).\textsuperscript{30} However, from the legal point of view, the Dāsas are considered the property of the master. The Dāsīs are kept as concubines, and they, also their progeny, enjoy no special privilege whatsoever. In the oligarch’s house, they do not have even the privilege of commensality and certain places are supposed become impure by the presence of a Dāsa.\textsuperscript{31} Kauṭilya then prescribes how the Dāsīs are set free from slavery. One who sells himself or is pledged or is born a slave becomes freeman by paying off respectively the amount for which he was purchased or pledged or what would be a proper price. One who is made a slave for a fine may pay off the
fine by doing work. Kauṭilya prescribes that if a master makes a pledged slave carry a corpse or sweep ordure, urine or leavings of food, or keeps him naked, beats him or abuses him or violates the chastity of a female slave, he forfeits the price paid by him.\textsuperscript{32}

**Unpaid Labour**

The references about the non-payment of wages to those whose services are used for menial work is mentioned in several places in *Arthaśāstra*. The unpaid labourers were those who worked in lieu of a tax or a fine. Kauṭilya says ‘the work of pounding, splitting (pulses), frying, fermenting and grinding from those who live by these, the pressing of oil from oilmen using the hand press and the round press, and the work of extracting and treating juice of sugar-canves, these constitute labour in place of taxes (कुट्टकरोचकस्तुकिस्तिक्तपिष्टकम् तजीवनेयू तैलपीड़नमौद्राजिकेकविज्ञूणा च 
क्षारकम् संह्विनिका | 2.15.8). The verse 2.24.2 states the Sīṭāḥyakṣa selects people required for his task from the groups of slaves, labourers and persons paying off their fines by personal labour. Kangle clearly says that they are all state-slaves and the whole of their wage goes towards their ransom amount.\textsuperscript{33}

Women, who had committed offences and had therefore to pay fines, could earn the money for the fine by working as weavers (2.23.2). The thief and the prisoners should be bound and forced to work in the mines. The person who offers personal labour in place of a fine also has to be sent for
the same (2.12.21). Kangle holds the view that the workers in the state-run mines may be supposed to belong to the same categories as the workers on crown land, namely, Dāsa, Karmakara and Daṇḍapratikārtī. These persons were remitting their fine or paying taxes through labour for the king on his farms or in mines or in workshops. Trautmann in this regard observes that, ‘such temporary enslavement, as it can be termed, is cheap labour, but it is the least desirable form of labour for an employer, the worker being unskilled and temporary’.  

**Forced Labour**

Forced labour is also a kind of unpaid labour exacted by the state or its agents or officials in recognition of the state’s prerogative to exact it from the servile populace. The prerogative is clearly accepted in ancient India as witnessed in the descriptions of Kauṭilya (see Chapters 2.15, 2.35, 3.10, and 8.1). *Manusmṛti* (7.138, 10.120) also refers to it. It was described as viṣṭi. In *Arthaśāstra* forced labour or viṣṭi is mentioned in connection with the expenses for the royal sector of economy and the army. Romila Thapar suggests that the system of hired labour is to be distinguished from viṣṭi, which was in practice in Mauryan times. *Ṛgveda* uses the term viṣṭi to denote skilled labour but by the Mauryan time it stood for labourers engaged by the state. *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* (5.9.11) and *Kāmasūtra* (5.5.5) also use this term in the sense of forced labour in the context of agriculture. In *Kāmasūtra* a village headman demanded viṣṭi from the wives of peasants in the form of working in his granary, in his house and in his fields and of spinning and weaving for him and his family. ‘Viṣṭi in *Arthaśāstra* consists of menial and
drudge labour, which was needed on a large scale in army camps and for state work.\textsuperscript{39} The works to be done by them include clearing of the encampments, the roads and the irrigation works, transport of arms and food supply for the troops as well as carrying away the wounded from battlefields.\textsuperscript{40} Such labour was also used to weigh measure and transport the grain collected as land revenue.\textsuperscript{41} Uma Chakravarti thinks that this was a paid labour, however, there was an element of ‘press-gang’ compulsion in it.\textsuperscript{42} In \textit{Arthaśāstra} uses the word viṣṭi in the sense of labour employed by the state or labour in lieu of taxes. Ganapati Shastry states that these types of work were done by the Karmakaras, for along with some others the Dāsas and Karmakaras were regarded as always liable to forced labour, which meant that they were not adequately paid for their work. Commenting on a passage of \textit{Arthaśāstra}, Bhaṭṭasvāmin suggests that one type of villages was meant only for supply of free labour in lieu of taxes and its inhabitants were employed in building fortresses etc.\textsuperscript{43} Megasthenes also mentions that artisans worked for the state for a certain number of days in lieu of paying tax.\textsuperscript{44} Every family in the village was responsible for paying various types of contributions. But none of the ancient Indian literary or legal sources gives the amount of labour involved in viṣṭi. However, A.L. Basham observes ‘According to the system of viṣṭi, all craftsmen were expected to devote one or two days’ work per month to the state, but this tax was probably often commuted to a sort of income tax on average daily earnings. There was also liability to viṣṭi, though this does not seem always to have fallen very heavily upon the masses’.\textsuperscript{45}
Child Labour

In *Arthaśāstra*, there is little evidence to the employment of children for wages. Collection and preparation of the ingredients for alcoholic liquor was one of the works of children and women in *Arthaśāstra* (सूराक्षिणविचयं स्त्रियो बालाश्र क्रूरः 2.25.38). The state was regulating the production and sale of the spirituous liquor. This was a major industry in those days and generated a large part of labour to the weaker section of the rural community. However, Kauṭilya does not give any evidence in this direction. The slaves of tender age, often less than eight years of age, were owned for doing low and ignoble work. Children of slaves were born as slaves, lived as slaves and died also as slaves unless the master was pleased to manumit them.46

Casual Labour for Wages

Causal labour is the least un-free labour and may be described as daily labour also. The same labourer may be employed on subsequent days but suppose he is not worked on a contract for the entire period. The labourers as well as the employers are free to discontinue the arrangement.47 *Arthaśāstra* mentions rules regarding the wages due to the employees, for the work done by them. The existence of labour at a wage or on terms of share-cropping in the state farms shows the presence of landless people in the countryside who must work for hire or for the use of farmland belonging to someone else.48 Casual labour was utilised for agriculture, animal rearing, industry and trade as well as for domestic service. The terms and conditions
of service were varying on account of the situation. Kautilya mentions special rules, which regulated the wages of employees or labourers. He mentions that the amount shall fix in proportion to the work done and the time spent for that (3.13.27). The labourers were employed for a day, a fortnight, three months, six months, and one year. Payment may be made on daily basis or piece-work basis. It may be paid in cash or a share of the produce or a combination of them.\textsuperscript{49} However, Kautilya does not mention whether the payment is to be made at one time or at different times. Regarding this \textit{Naradasmrti} (4.6.2) specifies that the wages agreed upon may be paid at three different times, i.e. firstly at the beginning of work and secondly at the completion of half of the work or finally once at the end of the work undertaken.\textsuperscript{50} But when no wages are settled beforehand \textit{Artha\=s\=stra} (3.13.28) agrees that the agent of a trader, the cowherd, and husbandman shall receive a tenth part respectively of the profit, of the milk and of the crops\textsuperscript{51} (कर्षणं सस्यानां गौपालकः सर्पिशं वैदेहकः: पण्यानामात्मना व्यवहताना दशशारणं असम्भावितेवेतनो लभेत। 3.13.28).

\textbf{Cattle Tending for Wages}

\textit{Artha\=s\=stra} considers animals as wealth and it is highly concerned about the upkeep and the welfare of the same. Tending of cattle was the second most important occupation in the period of Ku\=tilya.\textsuperscript{52} Unsuitable land for agriculture is allotted to pastures for domestic animals (2.2.1). Cows, buffaloes, horses, donkeys, camels, goats, sheep and pigs were reared as domestic animals. All these animals are utilized for the welfare of the
state. Herds were not maintained only by the state but also wealthy individuals.\textsuperscript{53} Elephants are a special case as these are captured in the wild as adults. \textit{Arthaśāstra} gives a detailed discussion of cows belonging to the state, and directs that the same pattern is to be followed in the case of herds of other domestic animals (2.29.40). During the time of the text cattle rearing was a main occupation of Vaiśya community. Kauṭilya instructs the Superintendent of Cattle (Go‘dhyaṃka) to employ different categories of labourers to perform various jobs related to cattle, for fixed wages. The text gives more information about the working conditions of the herdsmen, who seem to have been employed in a large numbers by the state. The works of superintendent include collecting taxes, inquiring into the conditions of the animal and the work of the herdsmen. Each animal of the state stable was categorised into classes by signs approved by the state. No private person was allowed to use any royal badge.

Four ways in which herds may get tended are mentioned in the text. They are \textit{vetanopagrāhika}, \textit{karapratikara}, \textit{bhagnotṛṣṭaka}, and \textit{bhāgānupraviśṭaka} (गृहभूतो वेतनोपग्राहिकं करप्रतिकरं भगनोत्रिष्टकं भागानुप्रविष्टकं ब्रजपर्यं नर्वं विनायं क्रीरशृंखलां चोपलभेत । 2.29.1). According to the \textit{vetanopagrāhika} system, a herd of one hundred milch-cows is given for tending to a team consisting of a cowherd, milkman, churner and hunter (to provide protection against robbers and wild animals) each of whom is paid a wage in cash. The entire yield of the milk and ghee goes to the state (2.29.2). Kauṭilya is of opinion that if the wage is given in milk and ghee, they might harm the calves. Hence, cattle are looked after for a wage (2.29.3).
Appointment was made on payment of a certain fee, for a herd of one hundred cows of all ages, containing in equal numbers the following five classes of cattle, viz. aged cows, pregnant cows, milch-cows, young cows, and cows with calf. The fee was eight vārakas of ghee and one paṇa for one animal and the skins of dead animals. This system was called karapratikāra (2.29.4-5). It seems that kara refers to the eight vārakas of ghee and 100 paṇas that the herdsman pays to the state and pratikāra to what he gets for himself out of the herd.54 ‘Herdsmen look after one hundred animals divided into equal number of cows that are diseased, that are crippled, and that do not allow another person to milk them, that are difficult to milk and that kill their calves’ (2.29.6). Each herd was comprised of the above four classes in equal numbers. As the tending of these herds was difficult, it was rewarded by a share in the outturn from the herds.55 The tending of the cows which become useless and cast off is called bhagnotṛṣṭaka (2.29.6). Engagement of the services of the Go’dhyaḵṣa by private parties for tending their herds in the event of their own liability to do so, either from danger of thieves, or from apprehended danger from forests. In these cases, the share received by the state is one tenth of their produce. This system was termed as bhāgānupraviṣṭaka- cattle entered by payment of a share (2.29.7). Kauṭilya was also of the opinion that the loss of cattle could happen due to several reasons. If it was due to the ignorance of the herdsman, he could be forced to make amends for the owner. Kauṭilya advises that a herdsman should keep the animal away from all possible dangers. They must be vigilant when the animal goes to drink water or take bath in river (2.29.20-24). They should
also ensure protection of calves, aged animals, and diseased ones in an appropriate manner. Herdsmen should immediately make a report to the Go’dhyakṣa whenever an animal is stolen, or carried away by a wild animal or bitten by a shake, or dies due to disease or infirmity. If a herdsman fails in job, he has to make good the loss.⁶⁶

To protect cattle wealth Kauṭilya enunciates some measures which include awarding of rewards and punishments. He informs that one should receive an appropriate reward if he recovers the cattle from thieves of his own country, and one who rescues the cattle from foreign states should be rewarded with half the value of the animal (2.29.18, 19). The author also states that wages of herdsman were withheld, if any one failed to be punctual in reporting for work (2.29.33). If a herdsman fails in his duty and thus becomes the cause of the loss of any animal he has to pay the price of the animal (2.29.24). While discussing the duties and responsibilities of a herdsman, Kauṭilya declares even capital punishment to be inflicted on him (2.29.15). Handlers of elephant and horse were also strictly controlled by the state. Respective superintendents were strictly keeping up the health care of these animals. The text states that ‘un-cleanliness of the stall, non-receipt of fodder, making elephants sleep on a bare ground, striking them at an improper place, mounting by another person, riding at an improper time, on unsuitable land, leading down to water where there is no crossing, and a thickest of trees are offences to be penalized’. Rations and wages will be deducted from that of the offenders (2.32.19-20). If a horse kept inside for the purpose of treatment, is caused to work, then the offender had to pay fine
of twelve pañas as the illness of a horse aggravates due to careless treatment or non administration of suitable medicine. In such cases a fine equal to the price of the animal has to be obtained from the wrongdoer, probably from the employee concerned. Same rules are also applicable to the workers related with cattle, donkeys, camels, and buffaloes and goats and sheep (2.30.46-49).

**Piece-rate Work**

Piece-rate work is referred to by Kauṭilya in connection with the Chief of Ordnance awarding work to expert artisans. *Arthaśāstra* refers to experts; whose services are required in various technical departments of the state. The expression usually used in such a case is tajjāta “one born to that” (kind of work) as in 2.18.1, 2.22.5, and other places. The Suvarṇādhyakṣa is advised to construct a workshop for working of gold and silver into finished goods, and also appoint a Sauvarṇika in the market highway to supervise artisans who receive gold and silver from people from the Janapada and the Durga, to be worked into jewellery for them on piece-rate contracts.\(^{57}\) It can also be learnt that experienced workmen have been working under the direction of the Chief of Ordnance and they made wheels, weapons and other accessory instruments for the use in battles, in the construction or defense of forts, or in destroying the cities or stronghold of enemies. These artisans and artists produce articles after an agreement was made as to so much work is to be done in so much time for so much wage (2.18.1).\(^{58}\) As regards conch shells, diamonds, precious stones, pearls, corals and necklaces, experts acquainted with the time, cost and finish of the
production of such articles shall fix the amount of toll. Unskilled or semi-skilled workers may work on a piece-rate basis, receiving gold from a customer to turn it into gold jewellery. Weavers collect thread from the Sūtrādhyakṣa to turn into cloth, for an agreed rate and an agreed period of time, the artisan being responsible for the materials supplied to him and liable for an excessive diminution of the material during the process of manufacture.

Women Labour

Arthaśāstra makes a significant contribution towards the role of women in early Indian economy. Among the better classes in ancient Indian society, a major part of women were supported by children, husband, or father. They did not do much, if any, work beyond their household tasks as mother, wife, or daughter. But among the poorer people the case was different, and there are various records which refer to self-supporting women who were engaged in a trade or a profession. Arthaśāstra refers to self-supporting women and speaks of women folks that are associated with different economic activities. They are referred to as holding risky jobs like bodyguards, secret agents, brothel keepers etc. Indigent women of all the four classes could live by manual labour. They were engaged in various occupations in Arthaśāstra society. The following categories of women workers are mentioned to have actively participated in different types of economic activities;

1). Women engaged in state weaving industry.
2). Women engaged in productive activities such as agriculture and crafts.

3). Women engaged in the profession of prostitution and espionage.

4). Women worked as bodyguards.

In Kauṭilyan scheme, it is clearly noted that works in textile industry were reserved for women on a large scale. One of the chapters in the second Adhikaraṇa of the text deals with the duties of the Superintendent of Weaving. Weaving was done by the helpless women folk who had been marginalized due to circumstances such as widows, crippled women, unmarried girls, women living independently, old female slave of the king, female slaves of the temple, whose services to gods were no longer required, and the mothers of prostitutes. Women who had committed some crimes and were fined shall pay it off in the form of physical labour by weaving (2.23.2). A.L. Basham rightly observes these were all of low class women, and worked under male overseers. But there were also one class of women, those who did not stir of their homes (aniṣkāsini) and supported themselves by weaving in their evil days. They earn a livelihood in this way. The manufacture is divided basing on gender, women making thread and men making the finished product. As the products include armour and rope, so an element of military supply is involved. The above said women on service shall be employed to cut wool, fiber, cotton, penicle, hemp and flax (2.23.2). Two types of weavers are mentioned by Kauṭilya. The first were those who worked privately either at home or by renting looms at the weaving house. Secondly there were guilds of weavers. The textile work could be carried
out in one’s own house under the supervision of the Sūtrādhyakṣa, in the case of the modest women like widows, handicapped women, unmarried girls and the women whose husbands were away on a journey (यात्रानिष्कासिन्यः प्रोणिता विध्रवा न्यङ्गः कृत्यका बाल्मानं विभूषरस्या ततः स्वदागीन्द्रितञ्चायं सोपयं कर्म कारपितिवः। 2.23.11). This obviously indicates that weaving was not left only in the hands of professional weavers. Women weavers were compulsorily required to perform the job for which they were employed. The state provided raw materials to the weavers. Instructions on dealing with women workers are very precise. In the case of women who could not leave their homes, each one has to send her maid-servant to collect the raw material and return the completed work, letting the superintendent thus being unacquainted with the actual person who worked for him. The women who are in a position to leave their homes had to call at the weaving house early in the morning, when the yarn could be exchanged for wages.65

The extent to which women were employed in the agricultural sector is not clear from the text. However, it may not be wide of the mark to state that a large section of rural women possibly worked in the fields and pastures with men. And also women contributed to agricultural production organized through households in a variety of ways- supervising and participating in labour processes such as transplantation, weeding, harvesting, threshing, and winnowing, apart from processing grain.66 They appeared in the text as slaves, wage earners, labourers etc. They had worked under state control and under private land owners as well. Kautilya states that the Superintendent of Agriculture was also to get the fields sown by
prisoners undergoing punishment (2.24.2). He also suggests that wives of sharecroppers are responsible for the re-payment of debts incurred by their husbands (स्वी चाप्रतिभाविभी पतिकृतमणं, अन्यत्र मोपात्मकार्धसीतिकर्मवः। 3.11.23).

This clearly implies that wives of share-croppers were engaged in the profession of their husbands, for unless these women had had their own earning they will not be capable of repaying the debt. Kautilya informs that the women of such low status communities as actors, players, singers, fishermen, hunters, herdsmen, wine-distillers and vendors and similar persons usually are uncontrolled. They constitute a significant labour force. They enjoy a greater freedom of movement than among the other communities (3.4.22). The women of fisher folk, cowherds and hunters must have carried their products to market or door-to door for sale.67 Except the wife of herdsmen, who is a Vaishya, the others were Sudra women. The outside life of the women of the Sudravarṇa was possible due to the necessity of working in the fields and pastures for the subsistence of their family.68 Kautilya also gives references to women of lower communities are more frequent into the field of menial jobs. Sudras are the principal agricultural community as shown by the text (2.1.2). Hence, Kautilya had to provide rules concerning them. Perhaps, Arthaśāstra is the only text and Kautilya is the only Brahmanical writer who speaks of the Ardhāśītikas, women tenants tilling for half the produce (3.13.9). A section of rural women belonged to landless rural households, are directly involved in agricultural field, animal husbandry, forestry etc. These women are primarily responsible for their families’ subsistence and survival.69 This was
not the case with women of the higher Varṇas whose activities were limited
to the sphere of home. They represent the counterpart of the aniṣkāsinī
women and the author exhibits a typically gendered upper caste view of the
communities.

Arthaśāstra looks upon prostitution as a profession and mentions
several grades of prostitutes. These classes of women were not bound by the
rules and restrictions which limited the freedom of the high caste wife. There were certainly many poor and cheap prostitutes, who would end their
days in begging, or as menials and work-women. The typical prostitute in
Arthaśāstra was beautiful, accomplished and wealthy, enjoying a position of
fame and honour. All prostitutes in Arthaśāstra are controlled and regulated
by the state. Teachers and trainers of prostitutes were to be given
encouragement by the government. Apparently, the prostitutes were an
important treasure of the state, and the safety of the mothers of prostitute
(Māṭrka), daughter (Duhitṛkā) and female attendant of prostitute (Rūpadāsi)
was of great importance, as killing of any of these, was to be punished with
the highest fine violence (मातृकादुहित्रिकारूपदासी सत्ताते उत्तमः साहसदण्डः: 12.27.17). The text informs that a part of the income of the prostitutes was
collected in the form of tax per month and constituted a source of revenue
under the heading ‘fort’ (2.6.2; 2.27.27).

State control over Gaṇikā

Arthaśāstra describes that, if the Gaṇikā left the country or died,
her daughter or sister took her trade or her mother should substitute some
other Gaṇikā in her place. When none of these existed, the king took her wealth and her son did not inherit her property. On the other hand, a Gaṇikā could buy her freedom by paying the state 24,000 paṇas as ransom amount. Kauṭilya makes special provisions for the expense of Gaṇikās by the state. The state dominion has to maintain the teachers for these women. The curriculum includes singing, playing on musical instruments, recitation, dancing, acting, writing, painting, playing on the lute, the flute and the drum, reading the thoughts of others, preparing perfumes and garlands entertaining in conversation, shampooing and the arts of love making (2.27.28). This obligation of the state to provide for special education to Gaṇikā might be considered as their additional income, particularly in view of the possibility of regaining their freedom and they gain their livelihood by harlotry on their own account.\(^73\)

In prescribing punishments for prostitutes Kauṭilya follows Dharmaśāstra rules. For disobeying king’s order to attend on someone, she was given 1,000 strokes with a whip or a fine of five thousand paṇas (राजाज्ञा पुरुषमनमिगच्छन्ति गणिका शिफःश्रस्तं लभेत, पञ्चसंहस्त्र वा दण्डः। 2.27.19), which is a very huge fine recommended by Kauṭilya. For killing a client, she was burnt alive or drowned to death (2.27.22). However, the state not only imposed obligations on prostitutes but also save from harm. A client, who forcibly attacked a courtesan’s daughter, had to pay a fine of fifty paṇas plus a fine (śulka) of sixteen times of her mother’s rate for a visit, presumably to mother herself (4.12.26).
Women, who lost their beauty and popularity and thus not fit for jobs like prostitution, were even rehabilitated into more suitable jobs like cooking, store keeping and cotton wool and flax spinning and in a variety of other manual jobs. This was a means of income generation to the most of the women and can be cited as an example of the marginalized women. These activities were performed separately from their gender roles imposed on them by society as a girl, wife, mother, widow and so on.

The prostitutes were also worked as female spies and they used to bring certain secrets from the society (2.27.30). A section of prostitutes had worked as barmaids in the wine shops. The liquor-seller employed beautiful female servants, who were used to find out information about customers who might have been imposters (2.25.15). They used to serve wine in state wine-shops or private shops and even in brothel. Collection and preparation of the ingredients for making alcoholic liquor was another field of work for women (2.25.38).

Another profession open to women was espionage. In Arthaśāstra spies were engaged by the state to secure information about the kingdom and the people. Kautilya used all types people for espionage drawn from both sexes and from all grades of society. The important role in it was played by female mendicants who act as spies. Women from different categories in that society were engaged in the profession of espionage. Bhikṣukī or Parivrājikā (a begging nun) is advised to be appointed as a spy in the house of high officials (1.12.4). Apparently, women of Brāhmaṇavarna alone could become Parivrājikās.74 They seem to have access to the harems of the king
and his ministers. They are supposed to carry love messages, letters and presents from the queen to the minister. Kauṭilyan scheme of espionage also included Vṛṣalas and Muṇḍas (the shaven nuns of heretical sects). They have easy access to persons belonging to different strata of society. These categories were employed on a permanent basis. Their salary was fixed as two hundred and fifty paṇas which could be increased according to the work done (चारस्यार्थानेत्रतीयशताः, प्रयासबुद्धिवेशते वा। 5.3.24).

A section of women were working as bodyguards to the King’s person to earn their livelihood. Arthaśāstra refers to armed amazonian guards of the royal palace. ‘The King is on rising from bed would be received by the troops of women armed with vows and some others would bathe, dressed up and garland him’ (1.21.1). In Kangle’s opinion women were imparted military training. It is also clear that from the text the women soldiers had to accompany the king to the battlefield and take good care of him as bodyguards (10.1.10). All personal services to the monarch were performed by women servants. The risks of food poisoning and guarding his route on the occasions when the king ventured forth from the palace were performed by armed women soldiers.

All these evidences should be interpreted not in terms of greater subordination of these women but with reference to their economic role.

Self-employed Guilds

It is evident from Arthaśāstra that self employed craftsmen had formed their own guilds. Artisans like blacksmiths, carpenters, washermen,
tailors, dyers etc. were generally entered into work through guilds and collected from people materials for working them. Śrēṇī is the term used in Arthaśāstra to denote guilds. The first chapter of the Fourth Adhikaraṇa mainly deals with these matters. In fact, guilds were not essentially economic but also political bodies, for besides guilds of artisans, craftsmen, merchants, traders etc; there were guilds of villagers, forest police and even of robbers and free booters. In some cases, guilds of villagers worked as auxiliaries to the king and helped him in his administration. These guilds were small autonomous units, organized by the men of different vocations, for their own creative benefits.⁷⁹ However they were controlled by the state. Kauṭilya considers a śrēṇī to mean a group of employers. He states that guilds of artisans or workers etc. are to be controlled and directed by boards consisting of three Pradeśṭṛs and refers to the entrance or membership fee, which was to be deposited with the head or the senior member of the guild who is supposed to be trustworthy. These deposits were most probably kept as reserve and could be given to the depositor whenever he is in need (4.1.2). Every guild had to be registered with the total administration and no guild was permitted to move from its location without prior consent.⁸⁰ The groups of these artisans could take up a job, under such boards, after settling the place, time and work. The workers, who failed to settle the terms or to present themselves in time to work, and causes unreasonable delay in handing back finished articles, were to receive one fourth less than the proper wages and were fined twice the amount of the wages (4.1.4). Because of the guild union, individual members possessed certain rights. For
instance, they were protected against injury and theft. If a craftsman was
hurt, the person responsible was put to death. 'Most probably this law
applied during the time he was actually working. An individual accused of
theft of articles belonging to an artisan had to pay a heavy fine.'
Similar provisions are made for loss of wages and fines for weavers who do not
increase the weight of cloth (cotton, linen, silk or woolen) woven up to the
usual standard (4.1.10). A worker had to make good any loss or damage
causd by his fault. Whatever was earned by the guild belonged to its
members and was distributed equally among them all (3.14.18-19).

Self-employed washermen used to wash garments on wooden boards
or smooth slabs of stone. Nevertheless, if they washed them elsewhere, they
had to pay compensation for loss caused and a fine of six paṇas (4.1.14-15).
They were to be fined twelve paṇas for the sale, pledge or hiring out of
others cloths. They were also to be fined for keeping cloths with them
beyond the time ordinarily required (4.1.17). Moreover, during the washing
operations the washermen should wear his own cloth marked with the sign
of the club. Otherwise, he shall pay a fine of three paṇas (4.1.16). At first
washing, there is a loss of one-fourth (of the value of the garment), and at
the second one-fifth (4.1.23). Kauṭilya says, they shall return a garment,
which is white like a bud, which is cleansed on a slab of stone, which has the
colour of washed yarn, and which is bleached white, after one day increased
successively by one day (4.1.18). Sūtrādhyakṣa looks into the affairs of all
types of yarns, armour, ropes, cloth and weaving work through the guilds
and women’s. He also distributed the raw materials to skilled employees and
other experts in this field. The spinning work was mainly carried out in
government weaving houses. In Kauṭilyan labour scheme it is evidently
noted that this profession was reserved for weaker section of the women folk
on a big scale. They can get a source of revenue through this vocation. The
textile work was carried out in their own houses under the direction of the
superintendent.

Kauṭilya also speaks of workshops for weaving cloth from fibers
called kṣauma, and dukūla, from silk, hair of the raṅku deer and cotton, for
the production of varieties of cloth, bed sheets and coverings, and also
starting workshops for armour (2.23.7-8). Both guilds and private parties
were given work on the basis of fixed wages. The wage is to be fixed
according to the quality of yarn and the amount of time taken over its
(प्रशणस्थूलमध्ययां च मूत्रस्य तितिवा वेतनं कवल्पत, विद्वन्द्वयां च । 2.23.3). In case
of guild worker the payment was made through the guild. Special rewards of
perfumes and garlands of flowers are also given workers, those who worked
on holidays (2.23.4).

When the completed work was brought back, it was measured
and compared with the calculation. If it was found to be short, then the value
of the missing amount was cut from the wages of weaver. The usual
penalty was a fine and this was cut from the wages. Weavers who defaulted
by failing to produce work in the agreed time had to forfeit a quarter of their
wages and in addition were fined twice the amount of the commission
agreed upon. If the weavers damaged goods, then they had to pay
compensation. If the finished articles were short in weight, then the fine would be as much as four times the value of the loss. The offence of substituting yarn of inferior quality was to be punished by a fine of twice the value of the original.⁸⁴

The women workers were very much protected. This is obvious from the fact that the officials were directed not to stare at their face or to hold in any discussion unconnected to job (2.23.14). As Kauṭilya was concerned for the safety of humility of the women folk, there were extreme punishments meted out to the officials as well as to the women workers if any fraudulence or cheating were founded out. If a woman refused to work after getting wages the Adhyakṣa could cut off her thumb and the middle finger (गृहीत्वा वेतनं कर्माचुतष्टया अहिःपृष्टादित्यं दाययेत्, भक्तिप्रतिपत्तिरस्तः पञ्चदीर्घात 2.23.15).

Doctors also worked through their own श्रेणि. They were also strictly controlled and regulated by the state. It is a legal duty of a doctor to report the matter to an authority if he treats a stranger. Kauṭilya says, a physician, who undertook the medical treatment of a patient without informing the authorities, of the dangerous nature of the disease, was to be punished with the first ammmercement. If the patient died the punishment was middling fine. If the patient died due to the carelessness of the doctor and if the patient suffered some vital injury, the matter was dealt with as assault (daṇḍapāruśya) and trials were done accordingly (4.1.56-57).
Goldsmiths who without informing (government officers) purchased from the hands of a disreputable person, without changing the form of the article or after changing the form, or purchased from a thief were to be fined respectively twelve, twenty-four, or forty-eight paṇas (4.1.26). For stealing one māṣaka (one-sixteenth of a suvarṇa) from a suvarṇa, the goldsmith was to be fined two hundred paṇas. For stealing one māṣaka out of a silver dhāraṇa there was a fine of twelve paṇas (4.1.28). Fines are provided for loss of weight beyond the recognized standard in the case of working up copper, lead, brass, bell metal and tin into vessels and other articles (4.1.35). The smiths should do the work agreed upon within stipulated time. No time limit need be stipulated, if the work to be done is of a special nature (2.14.2, 3). The smiths shall return to the customer the same quantity of precious metal, of identical quality, as was entrusted to him, even if the customer claims it after a lapse of time. Allowance is to be made for loss in manufacture and normal wear and tear (2.14.5, 6). Even if the artisan has gone a long journey or is dead, his sons must return it in the same condition.85

Civil Service

It can be learnt from Arthaśāstra that a large part of people working for a regular wage or salary were employed by the state, particularly in the secret service and the civil service.

Secret Service

Arthaśāstra depicts a well-developed organization of spies. The creation of a secret service, with spies, secret agents and specialists such as
assassins, was a task of high priority for the state. The Kauṭilyan state was riddled from top to bottom with secret agents, pervading every department of the administration and every class of people. A complete network of spies used to be spread throughout the length and breadth of the country. They have played an active function in the governance of the country. They are a group within the administrative scheme and are recruited from all strata of society, from orphaned children to Brahmin widows and Śūdra women. Espionage requires maximum confidentiality. Working under disguise and creation of a variety of covers by spies is the crucial part of spy system. The secret agents are to spy on the eighteen Tīrthās in public. For spying on their private character, persons pretending to be hump-backed, dwarfs, Kirātas (pigmies), the deaf and dumb, idiots, the blind and others such as actors, dancers, singers, or a performer of musical instruments are to be employed. They have to keep watch over the seducible and non-seducible parties in his country and in the enemy’s country and to make propaganda in favor of the ruler’s policy.\textsuperscript{86} Secret services were normally structured by the state on a determined remuneration. Both groups were permanent state employees on fixed salaries. Rewards were also given to them as a salary and as to encourage them to work with great zeal (5.3.22-24).

The Saṃsthās made the centre of a network of intelligence agents. Equipped with plenty of money and assistants, and the associates Saṃsthās shall carry out agricultural activities, cattle breeding and trade on the land allotted to them. And from the profits of work, they should provide all wandering monks with food clothing and residence. They have to make the
report when they come to receive their subsistence and wages (1.11.4-7). The institution of spies as described in the Arthaśāstra for gathering information is not only a known practice, but it is suggested as a normal part of statecraft. Not only are the spies unknown to the public, but they are unknown to each other as well. It is stated that the officers in the institute of espionage should not know the working spies, but should give written directions. The espionage system was used not only in the detection of crime and eliciting of public opinion in the home country, but spies were also sent to foreign countries, just as spies from foreign countries were known to be active in the home country.87

Even when occasional embassies were not on visit in a neighboring state, Guptacaras were always at work to fish out the information. They watched and controlled the evils prevailing in society such as corruption, robbery, harassment of weak people, moral degradation, extortion, sedition etc. According to Kauṭilya, when the three categories of spies give the same information it may be taken as reliable. If they frequently show differences of version, they should be dismissed or secretly punished (1.12.15-16).

Government Servants

In the scheme of governance proposed by Kauṭilya, the king is put at the apex. As he cannot run the state single handed he needs to have helpmates in this task. Thus appointment of a vast network of state staffs is imminent. The text discusses about a good variety of officials and
employees appointed for the smooth administration of the state. The king was mainly assisted by the councilors and other high officers. The state proposed by Kautilya was a compact unit ruled by the king and an oligarchy of chiefs. All high officials and their assistants were under the supreme control of the king.

*Arthaśāstra* gives rules regarding the code of conduct of government servants. According to Kautilya, officials were constantly under suspicion of wanting to skim off public revenue into their own pockets. ‘Just as it is not possible not to taste honey or poison placed on the surface of the tongue, even so it is not possible for one dealing with the money of the king not to taste the money in however small a quantity.’ (स्वातः स्वतन्त्र च विपदं नाम्न: स्वातः चित्तवर्धितं न विपदं। अर्थातः वह अर्थचरण मानः स्वातः चित्तवर्धितं न विपदं। 2.9.32-34). The author says that the king should have the work of each department inspected daily, for men being inconstant in their minds and by nature fickle and, like horses, change after being put to work. Kautilya taking precaution in this regard advocates that heads of departments should not remain permanently in one job and should be rotated frequently (बहुमुखमनित्वं विधिकरण स्वाप्येत्। 2.9.31). So each department has many temporary heads as they are transferred from one department to another department. While selecting the higher dignitaries to the state administration according to their ability, the persons who have the necessary qualifications were appointed as ministers; and if the qualifications are not fulfilled in all respect and yet eligible they are appointed as heads of departments.
(अमात्यसम्पदोपेता: सर्वाध्यक्ष: शल्लित: कर्मस्य नियोज्यो:। 2.9.1). Therefore, says Kauṭilya, the king should be acquainted himself with all the details of each department or undertaking, such as the officer responsible, the nature of work, the place of work, the time taken to do it, the exact work to be done, the out by and the profit (2.9.2-4). Kauṭilya also says the officials should not start any work without authorisation, except in cases of emergencies (2.9.7) and they should carry out the work according to the orders of the state (2.9.5). In the case of remissness their duty they shall be punished with fine and they have to pay double in their wage and the expense incurred (2.9.8).

In all the cases of corruption, in transaction with the public, the subordinate officers, the store keeper, the recorder, the receiver, the payer, the official who is authorized the payment, the adviser, and the helpmate should be interrogated individually. If any one of these tells a lie, he shall receive the same punishment as the officer concerned (2.8.22, 23). A proclamation will be then issued calling on all those who had suffered at the hands of the corrupt official to inform the investigating officer. All persons who respond to the proclamation will be compensated according to their loss (2.8.24, 25). If an official, who is accused of corruption in several cases of fraud, denies all the charges, he is held liable for all of them if he is found guilty even in a single case. If he admits some of them, each charge shall be taken individually for trial and punishment. In the same manner, if an officer is accused of defrauding a large amount and the accusation is proved even for a small part of it, he shall be held liable for the whole (2.8.26, 28). Kauṭilya states, cases of corruption are proved through the help of spies and
public informants. An informant is rewarded with one-sixth part of the amount involved if the case is proved. If the informant is a state employ, the reward should be one-twelfth of the amount involved. If the case is proved the state should protect him from the warmth of the accused. But if the case is not proved, the informant shall receive corporal or monetary punishment and no favour shall be shown to him (2.9.29-31). D.D. Kosambi in this connection states, ‘After detailing all precautions against corrupt state servants, Kauṭilya admits ruefully that it is as difficult to detect an official’s dipping into state revenues as it is discover how much water is drunk by the swimming fish. The Arthaśāstra state was not characteristic of a society in which some new class had already come into possession of real power before taking over the state mechanism’. 89

Wages

Arthaśāstra makes detailed rules related to the wages of different categories of workers. The terms and conditions of the service are varying in each case. The labourers are generally entered into contract to settle their wages with employers before undertaking any work. In the absence of contract, the payment of wages to labourers was decided either on the basis of work done and the time spent in doing or at the rate prevailing at the time (3.13.27). For labourers on land the wages fixed is one pana and a quarter per month over and above the food for themselves and their families. The same rate applies to workers in vegetable gardens, fruit orchards, flower gardens and to herdsmen (षण्डवाट्सायोपालकदासकर्मकरेम्यो यथापुरुषपरिवारपर्यो भर्तें
And also the state has given the broken grains to slaves, labourers etc. (2.15.61). In connection with the disposal of bad liquor it is said that this should be given as wages to the Dāsas and Karmakaras, because of the low grade of their work (2.25.9). References show that the state authorities are sympathetic towards their manual workers who are even provided with food as per their requirement. If the wages previously unsettled, a cultivator shall obtain one-tenth of the butter clarified and a trader one-tenth of the sale proceeds. Wages previously settled shall be paid and received as agreed upon (3.13.28-29). In this case no food rations are allowed.

The conditions of employment of agricultural labourers were different from that of the other workers whether they were Karmakaras or Dāsas. Dāsas usually got their maintenance only in return while the Karmakaras got their stipulated wages. Another striking difference between the two was that unlike the Dāsas, Karmakaras were not twenty four hour servants of their employers and were not bereft of their freedom. The wages were payable in cash to the agricultural labourers by the state Superintendent of Agriculture. They were to be paid one and a quarter pāṇa per month, besides food by way of wages (2.24.28). According to Kauṭilya there seems to have been some commonly accepted standards for the payment of wages which went into force if wages were not agreed upon earlier, though due importance was attached to the opinion of experts. Regarding payment for wages to artisans, physicians, cooks and other workmen who served of their own accord, Kauṭilya ordains that they should
be paid as much as similar persons employed elsewhere usually get or as is fixed by experts (कार्यमिककृतििविीचिकित्सकवागजीवनपरिचारकदिरााराजकरिक-
र्गस्तु यथान्यस्तदिश्चः कुयांद्र यथा वा कुशला: कल्पयेयुः तथा वेतनं लभेत | 3.13.30).
Kauṭilya takes the position that disputes regarding the view that wages are to be decided on the strength of evidence furnished by witnesses and if they are not available, the employer should be examined (3.13.31.32). It was considered obligatory on the part of the employers to pay wages regularly to labourers. If an employer was found guilty of not paying the wages was punished with the fine which amounted to ten times the amount of wages or six paṇas. If he misappropriated the wages, he was punished with a fine of twelve paṇas or of five times the amount of wages (3.13.31-34).

Arthaśāstra gives more information about the working conditions of herdsmen, who seem to have been employed in large numbers by the state, under the direct control of Go’ḍhyaksa. The wages and conditions of work of the herdsmen were more or less similar to those of the agricultural labourers. Kauṭilya’s descriptions tell that their wages were fixed by contract and in the absence of any specification one-tenth shares of the butter clarified were given by the way of wages (3.13.28). As to the wages of elephant-handlers and physicians, Kauṭilya prescribes that they are to be given wages and allowances of food, ‘one prastha of boiled rice, a handful of oil and two palas of sugar and salt’ (2.32.17). Excepting the physicians, others shall also receive ten palas of meat. Apparently the physicians came from vegetarian classes. 93
In *Arthaśāstra* it would seem that artisan’s guilds were not the only ones in existence. Washermen, tailors, dyers, weavers also formed separate guilds. They were paid on the basis of the contract fixed for them. Separate rates are fixed for stitching, dying and washing, one paṇa for good work, half a paṇa for medium and one fourth of a paṇa for ordinary work (4.1.22). The rates of wages for weavers were quite like those for washermen. Trustworthy persons and experts decided disputes about colour and wages (4.1.21). Kauṭilya was of the opinion that the proper wage for weaving cotton cloth was the equivalent money work of cotton, while the wages for weaving silk or woolen cloth were equal to one and a half times and the twice the value of silk and wool respectively (सूतभूत्वं वानज्वेतनं, शौभकोशयायामध्यवर्णं, पत्तोणिक्कम्बलदुक्क्लानां द्विगुणम् । 4.1.10). The wages of the weaver depended on the nature of threads namely spun fine, coarse, or middle quality and in proportion to the quantity woven (2.23.3). Both guilds and private weavers were given work on the basis of fixed wages. Wages were to be paid as per the amount of work completed. Special rewards were made for work done during holidays (2.23.5). These were in addition to the normal wages. Thus, no indication is given by Kauṭilya of the actual amount for a particular piece of work.\(^{94}\)

The wages of goldsmiths for making ornaments of silver were one māṣaka (equal to one sixteenth of a paṇa) for one ornament and one eight the value of gold in case of gold ornaments (4.1.32). Double these rates were payable for those ornament which required special skill (4.1.333). Similarly
the wages for making ornaments and wares from metal like copper, brass, lead, bronze, iron etc. were five percent of the value of the metal (4.1.35).

The Gaṇikā according to Kauṭilya was also paid salary from the royal treasury and the Pratigaṇikā, her short-time substitute, received half the amount (2.27.4). Their annual salary paid by the state was between 1,000 and 3,000 paṇas. A Rūpājivā’s fees were 48 paṇas, she usually lived with actors, wine-sellers, and meat-sellers, people who sell cooked rice and Vaiśyas generally. It is obvious that she kept company with people who controlled ready cash.\textsuperscript{95}

Salaries

Salaries to be paid to state servants are also prescribed and the scale varied from service to service depending on its importance and state utility, the standard of living to be maintained and, and the price index. One fourth of the total revenue was reserved for salaries, which included incidental and other expenses for government purpose. The text shows a wide gap between the pay of the higher officials who were recruited from the higher classes, and the artisans who belonged to the lower orders.\textsuperscript{96} The higher officials were extremely well paid. Salaries ranged from as high as 48,000 paṇas to as low as 60 paṇas for the different categories of state employees. Unfortunately no clear idea is provided in the text about the value of the paṇa as to whether these salaries were paid yearly or monthly. However, different scholars and historians suggest that the amounts mentioned against the names of the employers refer to the salary for a year.\textsuperscript{97} The proportion of
the wages paid to various officials is clear. Some others think that the salary
was fixed on monthly basis.\textsuperscript{98} Payments to some servants were partly in cash
and partly in kind.\textsuperscript{99}

Kaou̇liya sets out the salaries of different officers and servants as
follows. The highest pay is provided for the highest dignitaries of the state.
The sacrificial priest (Ṛtvij), the preceptor, the minister, the chaplain, the
commander-in-chief, the crown prince, the king’s mother and the crowned
queen received a salary of 48,000 paṇas each per year (5.3.3). The text says
‘With this much remuneration, they become insusceptible to instigations and
disinclined to revolt’ (5.3.4). Other high dignitaries like the Antarvāraṇīśika,
the Dauvārika, the Praśaṇṭṛ, the Samahartṛ and the Sannidhāṛt were to
receive 24,000 paṇas (5.3.5). Kaou̇liya thinks ‘With this much, they become
efficient in their work’ (5.3.5-6). The princes, the mothers of princes, the
commandant, the city judge, and the director of factories, the members of
the council of ministers, the provincial officer and the frontier officer were
paid 12,000 paṇas. ‘For, with this much, they help in strengthening the
entourage of the master’ (5.3.8). Lower category officers are recommended
a salary of 8,000 or 4,000 paṇas. The salary of Heads of banded troops,
Commandants of elephants, horses and chariot corps and Magistrates was
8,000 paṇas. Superintendents of infantry, cavalry chariots and elephants and
guardians of material and elephant forests received 4,000 paṇas each
(5.3.11). The chariot-fighter, the elephant trainer, the physician, the horse
tamer, carpenters and breeders of animals (Yonipoṣaka) are given a salary of
2,000 paṇas (5.3.12). The fortune teller, the soothsayer, the narrator of
Purāṇas, the charioteer and the bard, the chaplain’s men (Purohitapuruṣas) and all superintendents will receive one thousand paṇas each (5.3.13). The King’s charioteer should get 1000 paṇas. Trained foot soldiers, the accountants and clerks received 500 paṇas (5.3.14). Instrumental Musicians and instrumental makers are recommended a salary of 500 paṇas. The actors get 250 paṇas only (5.3.15). The Grāmabhṛṭaka is to get 500 paṇas (5.3.23).

The scale of payment to the learned men and teachers was a minimum of five hundred and a maximum of one thousand. This was fixed as an honorarium (pūjāvetana) according to their merit (5.3.16). Kautilya divided the grades of spies in term of salary. The five kinds of secret agents (Saṁsthās) will receive 1,000 paṇas. The Saṅcāras are to be paid 500 paṇas. The lower staff of the spy establishments were given 250 paṇas or more according to the labour involved (prayāsavitddhavētana) (5.3.22-24).

Dūtas (the average envoys) are to be paid ten paṇas for carrying messages up to ten yojanās, and twenty paṇas for a distance up to hundred yojanās\(^{100}\) (5.3.19).

Artisans and artistes are recommended to be paid 120 paṇas. The smallest salary of 60 paṇas is recommended for servants, valets, attendants and quads of quadrupeds and bipeds and foreman of labourers (5.3.17). Some scholars hold the view that the annual salary of 60 paṇas is equivalent to one āḍhaka (four prasthas) of grain a day, enough for four meals of a single individual. This will be equivalent to four liters or between three to three and a half kilos of grain per person per day.\(^{101}\) As per the text, ‘fixing one āḍhaka for a servant with a wage of sixty, he should fix food in
accordance with the cash wage’ (पश्चिमोत्तर स्थानशास्त्र कुला हिरण्यानुरूप भर्त्त्व कुर्बान) 5.3.34). Kangle observes, ‘this seems to mean that to a servant entitled to a wage of 60 paṇas a year, a ration of one ādhaka of grains is to be given as part payment per day’ the cash wage being correspondingly reduced. Apparently this is restricted to menials entitled to this wage only, hardly to those with 48,000 paṇas for a year.102

The whole account regarding salaries mentioned by Kauṭilya clearly proves that there was a great disparity between high officials and lower grade servants. The wages of slaves, agricultural workers and field watchmen were fixed as one and a quarter paṇas per month in addition to food grains which were fixed in proportion to the work. S.R. Goyal in this regard says ‘if the Arthaśāstra belongs to the Maurya period it will be a significant piece of evidence of the emergence of feudalistic tendencies in the state service’.103 Besides giving land to farmers, Kauṭilya prescribes that, the distribution of lands should include tax-free grants to Brahmins (brahmadecyā) in their capacity as priests, preceptors, chaplains and Vedic scholars and to government servants, such as heads of departments and accountants and to Gopas, Sthānikas, elephant trainers, physicians, horse trainers and couriers without power to sell or mortgage (2.1.7).

Pensions

Kauṭilya introduced, for the first time in the known history of ancient India, a government relief and assistance scheme for some persons who were not able to maintain themselves. Arthaśāstra provides pensions and gratuities to government servants. There were regular pensions for those
disabled in state service and for the helpless dependants of servants and officials who died during their term. The text says ‘the sons and wives of those die while on duty shall get subsistence and wages. Young children, aged persons and ailing persons related to the dying officers shall be shown favour. On occasions of funerals, sickness or child birth the king shall bestow money and honours on them’ (कर्मसु मृतानां पुत्रदाराभक्तवेत्तनं लभेरन् बालवृद्धश्वाभित्ताः श्रेष्ठामुग्राह्यः । प्रेतव्याधिरस्तिकृत्वेषु चैवमर्मानकर्मं कुर्यात्। 5.3.28-30). This rule also seems to refer to those of all state servants.¹⁰⁴

Gaṇikās, being king’s servants, had the right to a pension scheme in case they lost their beauty, became old, or incapable of gaining any money (2.27.8). ‘These women were employed by the state and had earlier paid taxes to the state regarded partially as provident fund contributions against old age, disability, retirement and penury’.¹⁰⁵ All theses provisions from Kauṭilya’s Arthaśāstra show how states in ancient India were engaged in almost all the activities of modern states and had an equally complicated machinery of administration and an army of high and low officers.¹⁰⁶

From the ongoing discussions it can be concluded that Arthaśāstra represents more advanced stages of social and political development. Kauṭilya himself claims to have studied all the sciences in detail and practices prevailing in the contemporary period. And hence, his rules and regulations related to different systems of labour to a great extent seem to reflect the actual conditions of that age. The roots of these systems can
definitely be traced to actual forms of condition and bodies of law existed in ancient times, probably during the early centuries of Common Era.

Notes:

1 See R.S. Sharma, Šādras in Ancient India–A Social History of the Lower order down to circa A.D. 600, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1990, p.188.
2 R.S. Sharma, India’s Ancient Past, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, 2008, p.303
4 Uma Chakravarti, Everyday Lives Everyday Histories: Beyond the Kings and Brahmanas of Ancient India, Tulika Books, New Delhi, 2007, p.70.
6 Uma Chakravarti, op.cit., p.81.
12 A. Bose, Social and Rural Economy of Northern India, Culcatta, 1942, p.143, quoted in Romila Thapar, Ibid.
30. See Uma Chakravarti, *op.cit.*, p.75.
42. Uma Chakravarti, *op.cit.*, p.84.
43. R.S. Sharma, *op.cit.*, pp.165-166.
44. Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, p.89.
49 R.C. Majumdar (Ed.), *The Classical Age*, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, New Delhi, 1988, p.60.
50 गृहयोजनमेंद्रशास्त्रसाधारण: सन्मानविक्षिप्तम्

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51 *Nāradasmrī* (9.3) and *Yānjavalkyasmrī* (2.194) also refer to this practice. See P.V. Kane, *op.cit.*, pp.476-477.
52 According to Kautilya, the threefold activity of state is agriculture, cattle rearing and trade. Thus, this three constitute Vārṭā, one of the four main branches of knowledge (1.4.1).
53 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, p.70.
54 R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 2.29.5.
58 See R.P. Kangle, Part II, Note on 2.18.1.
68 R.S. Sharma, *op.cit.*, 1990, p.185
73 L. Sternbach, Legal Position of Prostitutes According to *Kauśītya’s Arthāśāstra*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 71, No 1, Jan-March, 1951, p.35.
76 According to Kangle Vṛṣala referred to by Kauśītya must have been the follower of heretical sects and Mūḍha has had the custom of shaving the head prevalent among nuns of such sects. See R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 1.12.4.
80 Romila Thapar, Asokan India and Gupta Age, in A L Basham (Ed.), *Cultural History of India*, Oxford University Press, New Delhi, p.41.
87 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, 1999, p.112.
92 In the opinion of R.P. Kangle, the above persons are not ordinary labourers, but belong to a higher category. *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 3.13.30.
93 R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 2.32.17.
94 Romila Thapar, *op.cit.*, 2000, p.414
95 Sukumari Bhattacharji, *op.cit.*, p.204.
R.P. Kangle suggests that ‘the rates given here would cover the travelling expenses for the envoy and his retinue. The envoy is usually of the rank of a minister; it is possible that he would be entitled to his regular salary, over and above these expenses’ (See *Arthaśāstra*, Part II, Note on 5.3.19).


R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 5.3.34.


R.P. Kangle, *op.cit.*, Part II, Note on 5.3.22.

Sukumari Bhattacharji, *op.cit.*, p.211.

P.V. Kane, *op.cit.*, p.121.