

Chanakya Niti [UPSC Notes]

Chanakya Niti is a collection of the ancient Indian philosopher Chanakya's ideologies and ideas some of which are relevant even to this day. This topic is important for the [UPSC exam](#) as it can help tackle questions in the GS4 paper pertaining to Ethics. It can also help aspirants compile answers for related questions in ancient history. Chanakya's quotes can also be used in [UPSC mains](#) answers.

Chanakya Niti

Chanakya Niti is a collection of aphorisms composed by Chanakya. It is a set of ideas and statements given by the ancient Indian teacher and statesman many of which give valuable tips on how to lead a good and productive life even in this day and age. Chanakya Niti was written between the fourth and third centuries BCE.

Who was Chanakya?

Chanakya, also known as, Kautilya and Vishnugupta, was the chief minister and advisor of the first Maurya King, [Chandragupta Maurya](#) (322-185) BCE. It was Chanakya who helped Chandragupta in acquiring the throne of Magadha from the Nandas, the most powerful kingdom in ancient India at the time. He is credited as the force behind the establishment of the [Maurya Empire](#) and also for the sound administrative machinery that the kingdom had.

Chanakya was a pioneer in the fields of political science and economics. He is also the author of the Arthashastra which is a treatise on statecraft, military strategy and economic policy.

Chanakya's ideas and principles are known to be shrewd and practical and reveal a deep insight into the human mind. He is often compared to Italian statesman Niccolò Machiavelli and sometimes also to Aristotle and Plato.

According to Chanakya, a king's happiness lies in the happiness of his subjects.

Chanakya's Philosophy

Chanakya expounded many ideas on political science, ethics, economy, statecraft, espionage, military strategies, etc. His philosophy finds resonance in today's world also especially in the field of politics, management, and even personal life. Some of his famous thoughts and statements are given below.

- According to Chanakya, a leader (king) is the face of a nation. He is a reflection of the society since he is responsible for everything that is happening to the society.
- The welfare of the people must be the ultimate goal of a king, who should strive for attaining this.
- A king will lose his subjects' loyalty if his actions are unjust.
- He should propagate only Dharma, punishing the wicked and ensuring that the innocent are not punished in any way.
- Chanakya also propounded that justice should not be delayed and matters should be heard urgently.
- It is not prudent for a leader to antagonise the elders and the wise.

- The king should be a promulgator of Dharma and should be a role model for the masses in his character.
- Even though the king has the power to bring in new laws, they should abide by the principles laid down in the Shastras.
- A ruler should ensure that there is no wasteful expenditure.
- Those parents who do not educate their sons are their enemies; for as is a crane among swans, so are ignorant sons in a public assembly.
- Fondle a son until he is five years of age, and use the stick for another ten years, but when he has attained his sixteenth year treat him as a friend.
- Religious austerities should be practiced alone, study by two, and singing by three. A journey should be undertaken by four, agriculture by five, and war by many together.
- Of what avail is a high birth if a person is destitute of scholarship? A man who is of low extraction is honoured even by the demigods if he is learned.
- If the king is virtuous, then the subjects are also virtuous. If the king is sinful, then the subjects also become sinful. If he is mediocre, then the subjects are mediocre. The subjects follow the example of the king. In short, as is the king so are the subjects.