

# **Intellectual Origins And Academic Evolution Of Public Administration In India: A Pre-Wilsonian Context**

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## **Abstract**

*This paper explores the rich tradition of administrative thought and practice in India before Wilsonian discourse, emphasising a distinct, integrated governance model. Ancient Indian texts like Kautilya's Arthashastra advocated a balance between ethical governance (Dharma) and material well-being (Artha), shaping a comprehensive statecraft framework. Medieval India, particularly during the Mughal era, saw further development of these principles through systems like Mansabdari, which combined centralisation with local autonomy. Centres of learning like Nalanda and Takshashila blended practical training with moral governance. This historical analysis traces the continuity of administrative practices from ancient to colonial India, contrasting it with Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy. Indian governance focused on moral, localised, and economic dimensions, offering a culturally unique approach. The study underscores the ongoing relevance of Indian administrative thought to modern public administration, challenging Western-centric narratives with its emphasis on ethical and localised governance.*

**Keywords:** *Public Administration, Pre-Wilsonian discourse, Administrative Thought and Practice, Ancient India, Institutionalisation of Public Administration Literature.*

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## **I. Introduction**

Public administration as a discipline is often considered to have originated in the West, with Woodrow Wilson's 1887 essay 'The Study of Administration' marking a significant milestone. Wilson's advocacy for the politics-administration dichotomy laid the foundation for modern public administration, particularly in Western governance models (Wilson, 1887). However, long before Wilson's ideas took shape, administrative systems were flourishing in other parts of the world, particularly in India. Indian administrative thought had evolved over centuries, deeply rooted in ancient traditions and medieval governance systems. In India, administration was not a distinct entity from politics, religion, or social systems; instead, it formed a holistic approach to governance. Ancient Indian texts like Kautilya's Arthashastra provided a comprehensive framework for statecraft, diplomacy, taxation, military organisation, and public welfare, blending ethical governance with state functions (Sharma, 2012). British colonial administrators later documented and adapted these systems, evident in reports such as the Report on the Administration of Public Affairs in the Bengal Presidency (1855) and The Annals of Indian Administration (Townsend, 1858). These records highlight the reliance of colonial officials on existing Indian administrative structures, particularly for revenue collection and local governance, emphasising the sophistication and adaptability of India's pre-existing governance frameworks. The idea of ethical governance was central to both ancient and medieval Indian administrative thought, long before the British arrival. Indian rulers were expected to adhere to Dharma (moral and righteous duty), which influenced the administration's focus on public welfare and justice. The documentation by British colonial authorities often noted the continuity of these values, even under their rule (Government of India, 1861, 1862). For example, in the Annals of Indian Administration, several volumes detail the interaction between traditional Indian administrative practices and the colonial state (Townsend, 1859; Government of India, 1861, 1864). This paper argues that India had a well-established and intricate system of administrative thought and practice long before Woodrow Wilson's introduction of the politics-administration dichotomy. The purpose of this research is to challenge the Western-centric narrative that

public administration began with Wilson's dichotomy by exploring the rich and complex administrative thought and practice that existed in India long before the formalisation of public administration as a discipline in the West.

## **II. Research Methodology**

Secondary sources, including academic books, articles, and historical reviews, consulted by using archival method to help contextualise the administrative thoughts and practices. The content and discourse analysis methods have been used to explore themes of foundations of administrative thought in ancient India, institutionalisation of public administration in Indian academia and issues on governance. A comparative approach is also adopted to trace shifts in administrative thought across different periods, highlighting the distinctiveness of Indian administrative traditions before Western influences, particularly the Wilsonian discourse. This multi-dimensional approach provides a nuanced understanding of historical governance in India, emphasising indigenous systems and their evolution over time.

## **III. Literature Of Review**

The literature on Wilsonian public administration centres around Woodrow Wilson's seminal 1887 essay, *The Study of Administration*, which is often regarded as the foundation of modern public administration theory. In this essay, Wilson introduced the politics-administration dichotomy, arguing that administrative functions should be separated from political processes to ensure efficiency, neutrality, and professionalism in governance (Wilson, 1887). Subsequent scholars expanded on this idea, emphasising the importance of hierarchical organisation, merit-based civil service, and accountability. For instance, Goodnow (1900) further developed the dichotomy by advocating for a clear distinction between policy-making and administrative execution. However, the dichotomy faced criticism in the mid-20th century as scholars like Simon (1947) and Waldo (1948) challenged its practicality, arguing that politics and administration are inherently intertwined. This ongoing debate laid the groundwork for contemporary views on public administration as a field that balances both technical and political dimensions, while continually evolving to meet modern governance challenges (Rosenbloom, 1983).

The literature on pre-Wilsonian administrative thought globally highlights those sophisticated systems of governance existed long before Woodrow Wilson's politics-administration dichotomy, with various civilisations developing distinct models of administration rooted in their cultural, religious, and political contexts. Ancient China's Confucian bureaucracy, emphasising meritocracy and ethics in governance, is one of the earliest examples of structured administrative systems (Creel, 1964). In India, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* (c. 300 BCE) provided detailed guidance on statecraft, emphasising the king's duty to maintain law and order through a well-organised bureaucracy (Rangarajan, 1992). Similarly, ancient Egypt and the Roman Empire developed administrative systems that were integral to their governance, involving taxation, military logistics, and justice (Jones, 1986). The Islamic Caliphates also contributed to administrative thought with the concept of Shura (consultation) and the Diwan (bureaucratic departments), which structured the governance of vast empires (Lambton, 1962). These early forms of administration reveal that structured governance systems were crucial to maintaining political stability and economic management, laying the foundation for later developments in public administration.

The study of administrative practices in ancient civilisations often highlights the sophisticated systems of governance that existed well before modern public administration theories were developed. However, India's contributions to administrative thought have frequently been overlooked in mainstream historical analyses. Existing studies suggest that administrative systems in ancient India, as illustrated by works such as the *Arthashastra* by Kautilya, provided a comprehensive guide to governance, economics, and statecraft. Kautilya's text emphasised the central role of a well-structured bureaucracy and the importance of efficient administrative oversight for ensuring prosperity and stability (Rangarajan, 1992). Colonial-era reports such as Gentleman's (1828) *Examination of the Principles and Policy of the Government of British India* and various British presidency reports (e.g., Bengal, Bombay, Mysore) offer insights into the continuation of these ancient principles in later Indian governance structures, adapted to British colonial objectives (Gentleman, 1828; British India Bengal Presidency, 1855; British India Bombay Presidency, 1856). Furthermore, Townsend's *Annals of Indian Administration* (1858, 1859) documents how traditional administrative practices were synthesised with colonial frameworks. Scholars such as Banerjea (1916) have also highlighted how ancient Indian administrative thought, particularly regarding justice, taxation, and land revenue systems, laid the groundwork for the British administrative structures in India. Despite the impact of colonial administration, India's indigenous contributions—especially in terms of land revenue and justice systems—were significant in shaping governance in the region (Banerjea, 1916; Colchester, 1874).

## **IV. Foundations Of Administrative Thought In Ancient India**

Ancient Indian philosophies, particularly Dharma (ethical governance) and Artha (material well-being), have significantly influenced governance practices and principles throughout Indian history. Dharma, often

defined as the moral law governing individual conduct and societal order, underscores the necessity of ethical leadership and justice in governance. Kautilya's Arthashastra explicitly articulates the relationship between Dharma and effective statecraft, emphasising that a ruler must adhere to moral principles to maintain legitimacy and stability in the state (Rangarajan, 1992). Kautilya posits that adherence to Dharma ensures the ruler's moral authority, which is essential for maintaining order and prosperity. Artha, on the other hand, focuses on the importance of economic and material well-being as foundational elements of governance. This philosophy emphasises that a ruler's primary responsibility is to promote the welfare of the state through effective economic management and resource allocation. According to Kautilya, a successful ruler must adeptly balance the principles of Dharma and Artha to achieve a prosperous and stable kingdom (Rangarajan, 1992). The dual emphasis on ethical governance (Dharma) and economic prosperity (Artha) laid the groundwork for comprehensive governance practices that addressed both moral and material needs of society. Furthermore, the moral economy concept prevalent in ancient Indian texts illustrates how governance was not solely about power but was intertwined with ethical considerations and the well-being of the populace (Dumont, 1970). The integration of Dharma and Artha reflects a holistic approach to governance that remains relevant in contemporary discussions of public administration and governance ethics.

**Table-1**  
**Books of Kautilya's Arthashastra Related to Public Administration**

Book No.	Title of the Book	Key Themes Related to Public Administration
I	Concerning Discipline (Vinayadhishtika)	Training and duties of the king, ministerial selection, ethical governance, organization of administration
II	The Duties of Government Superintendents (Adhyaksha-Pracara)	Detailed departmental structure, roles of Adhyakshas (superintendents), administration of economy and society
III	Concerning Law (Dharmasthiya)	Judicial administration, civil and criminal law, legal procedures, duties of judges
V	The Conduct of Courtiers (Tantra-yukti)	Administrative discipline, control over ministers, prevention of corruption, internal oversight mechanisms
VI	The Source of Sovereign States (Mandala-yoni)	Saptanga theory (seven elements of the state), foundational theory of public administration
VII	The End of the Sixfold Policy (Shadgunya)	Strategic administration, diplomacy, and external affairs involving state machinery
VIII	Concerning Vices and Calamities (Aparadha-yoga)	Administrative challenges, failures, internal threats, and governance under crisis
XII	Concerning the Weaker King (Mandala – Utsādinī)	Adaptive governance, public administration under limited authority or external pressure

Source: Kundu, R. K. (2025). Evolution of Indian Administration and Philosophical & Constitutional Framework of Government in Tripathi, S. N. Vishandass, A. Misra, S. & Pathania, M. public administration in India: Theory, Policy & Practice. Indian Institute of Public Administration. 264-65. Also in Shamastry, R. (1915). *Kautilya's Arthashastra*. Mysore Printing and Publication House.

The table-1 demonstrates that Kautilya's Arthashastra presents a comprehensive and well-articulated framework of public administration, integrating normative principles with practical governance. The selected books collectively cover the entire administrative cycle—from leadership training, ethical governance, and ministerial selection (Book I) to departmental organization and economic management through specialized superintendents (Book II). Judicial administration and the rule of law are systematically addressed in Book III, while Book V emphasizes administrative discipline, ministerial control, and anti-corruption mechanisms, highlighting the importance of internal accountability. The theoretical foundation of administration is articulated through the Saptanga theory in Book VI, which conceptualizes the state as an organic system of interdependent elements. Books VII and VIII extend the administrative perspective to strategic decision-making, diplomacy, crisis management, and governance under adverse conditions. Finally, Book XII underscores adaptive and pragmatic administration when state capacity is constrained. Overall, the table reveals Arthashastra as an early and sophisticated treatise on public administration that combines organization, law, ethics, strategy, and resilience in governance.

## V. Administrative Practices In Medieval India

Administrative practices in medieval India were marked by a blend of indigenous traditions and adaptations from various influences, notably Islamic governance. The Mughal Empire, in particular, showcased a sophisticated administrative system that emphasized centralised control while also allowing for local autonomy. This period saw the establishment of a bureaucratic framework that integrated various administrative practices, including revenue collection, justice, and public works. The introduction of the Mansabdari system by Akbar exemplified this evolution, where officers were assigned ranks (mansabs) and given responsibilities based on their status and performance, effectively creating a meritocratic element within the administrative structure.

(Sarkar, 1920). Additionally, the Zamindari system played a crucial role in land revenue administration, where zamindars (landlords) were tasked with tax collection, which facilitated a more organised approach to governance at the local level (Banerjee, 1916). The emphasis on ethical governance, as derived from Hindu and Islamic traditions, influenced the conduct of rulers and officials, promoting accountability and justice. The integration of these practices laid the foundation for administrative structures that would be further developed under British rule, illustrating the enduring legacy of medieval Indian administration on contemporary governance in India (Thakore, 1922). Education in public administration was imparted through madrasas, focusing on Persian, Islamic jurisprudence (Fiqh), logic, governance, and record-keeping. Future administrators, nobles, and scribes (Munshis) were trained academically and refined through practical experience at court (Rizvi, 1975). A robust system of documentation was maintained through daftars (departments), demonstrating an advanced approach to information management (Kundu, 2025).

## **VI. Governance Education In India: Pre-Wilsonian Context**

Administrative training and education in pre-Wilsonian India were significantly influenced by ancient centres of learning such as Nalanda and Takshashila (Taxila), which played pivotal roles in shaping the intellectual landscape of governance. Nalanda, established in the 5th century CE, emerged as a renowned monastic university where scholars from various regions gathered to study subjects including philosophy, medicine, and governance (Mookerji, 1962). The curriculum emphasised ethical administration, drawing from texts such as Kautilya's Arthashastra, which outlined the principles of statecraft and the responsibilities of rulers (Rangarajan, 1992). Similarly, Takshashila, which flourished earlier, around the 6th century BCE, was another vital educational hub that offered training in various disciplines, including administration, law, and military strategy. The institution attracted students from different parts of the world, contributing to a diverse exchange of ideas on governance and administration (Ray, 1986). The educational methodologies employed at these ancient universities emphasised critical thinking and practical training, fostering a generation of administrators who were well-equipped to handle the complexities of governance in their respective states. The legacy of these institutions highlights the rich tradition of administrative education in India, which laid the groundwork for subsequent developments in public administration.

## **VII. Indian Comparison With Wilsonian Administrative Thought**

The comparison between pre-Wilsonian Indian administrative thought and Woodrow Wilson's principles of public administration reveals significant contrasts and continuities in the understanding of governance. Woodrow Wilson's dichotomy between politics and administration emphasises the need to separate the two spheres, positing that administration should be an objective, technical function devoid of political influence (Wilson, 1887). In contrast, India's historical administrative practices reveal a more integrated approach, where politics, religion, and administration were intertwined. In ancient and medieval India, governance was often seen as a manifestation of dharma, where ethical and moral considerations guided administrative actions (Banerjea, 1916). For instance, the role of religious texts in shaping administrative practices illustrated how governance was deeply rooted in ethical principles. Texts like the Arthashastra emphasised not only economic policies but also the moral responsibilities of rulers, thus blending political authority with ethical governance (Kale, 1913). During the Mughal era, administrative practices were similarly influenced by cultural and religious values, where the emperor's legitimacy was tied to his role as a protector of the faith, impacting both governance and policy implementation (Sarkar, 1920).

Furthermore, the British colonial administration, while attempting to impose a dichotomy, still leveraged existing local practices that integrated political, social, and religious dimensions to maintain control (Hector, 1880). The adaptation of traditional systems into the colonial framework exemplifies this continuity of an integrated approach, which persists in post-independence governance, as seen in the ongoing role of local governance structures rooted in historical practices (Puri, 2008). Thus, while Wilson advocated for a clear separation, India's administrative evolution reflects a complex interrelationship among politics, religion, and governance. Indian practices of decentralised governance, particularly at the local level, present a stark contrast to the centralised, hierarchical systems prevalent in Western public administration post-Wilson. In India, decentralised governance is rooted in the Panchayati Raj system, which empowers local self-governments in villages to make decisions regarding local issues, reflecting a bottom-up approach (Bhatnagar, 2012). This system embodies principles of participatory democracy, allowing for greater community involvement in decision-making processes and fostering accountability and transparency (Bhatnagar & Tiwari, 2021). In contrast, the Western model, particularly following Wilson's dichotomy of politics and administration, has emphasised a centralised, bureaucratic approach to governance. This system often prioritises efficiency and uniformity through a hierarchical structure that limits local autonomy (Peters, 2010). The focus is on standardisation and adherence to established procedures, which can lead to a disconnect between policymakers and the communities they serve (Hood, 1991).

Moreover, while Indian decentralised governance emphasises flexibility and responsiveness to local needs, the centralised approach in the West tends to prioritise stability and control over local affairs (Awasthi, 2019). This difference reflects the underlying cultural and historical contexts that shape administrative practices in each region. In India, the local governance structures are influenced by traditional practices and social networks, which are often more adaptable to community-specific needs (Kumar, 2014). In contrast, Western systems are often influenced by enlightenment ideals of rationality and order, which can result in bureaucratic rigidity (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2011). Ultimately, the comparative analysis reveals that while Indian decentralised governance aims to empower local populations and enhance democratic participation, the centralised Western model often emphasises bureaucratic efficiency at the expense of local engagement, leading to differing outcomes in governance effectiveness.

### **VIII. Continuity Of Indian Administrative Practices Post-Colonialism**

The continuity of administrative practices in India post-colonialism reflects a blend of inherited colonial structures and the evolving needs of a democratic society. After gaining independence in 1947, India retained many aspects of the British administrative framework, including a centralised bureaucracy and a legal system rooted in common law (Khan, 2014). This continuity can be observed in the Indian Administrative Service (IAS), which was modelled on the British Civil Service, maintaining a tradition of meritocracy and professional training aimed at effective governance (Maheshwari, 2000). However, the post-colonial period also ushered in significant reforms aimed at addressing the unique challenges of a diverse and democratic nation. The introduction of new policies focused on decentralization, public participation, and welfare-oriented governance reflects an adaptive approach to administrative practices that consider social equity and grassroots involvement (Puri, 2008). Moreover, the emphasis on transparency and accountability in governance has gained traction, as evidenced by the implementation of the Right to Information Act in 2005, which aims to empower citizens and enhance administrative responsiveness (Ghosh, 2014). Thus, while the foundational structures established during colonial rule persisted, the post-colonial administrative landscape evolved to address the aspirations of a democratic society.

Several elements of ancient and medieval Indian administrative systems persisted under colonial rule and were later adapted into post-independence Indian governance, reflecting a continuity of practices despite the dramatic shifts in political authority. One of the key features retained was the hierarchical structure of administration, characterized by a centralised bureaucracy. This structure, evident in ancient texts like the Arthashastra by Kautilya, emphasised a well-defined system of governance and the importance of administrative efficiency (Rangarajan, 1992). The British colonial administration adopted and institutionalized these hierarchical principles, leading to the establishment of a bureaucratic system that mirrored pre-colonial governance in its organization, albeit with a focus on serving colonial interests (Khan, 2014). Moreover, the role of local governance, as seen in medieval practices, also found its way into colonial and post-independence administrative frameworks. The British utilized existing local governance structures, such as village panchayats, for revenue collection and law enforcement, thus integrating traditional systems into their administrative machinery (Puri, 2008). After independence, the Constitution of India recognized the significance of local self-governance, as reflected in the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which institutionalized the panchayati raj system, empowering local bodies and ensuring grassroots participation in governance (Rai, 2010). This adaptation illustrates the enduring influence of ancient and medieval practices in shaping contemporary governance structures in India.

### **IX. Institutionalization Of Public Administration Literature In India: Pre-Wilsonian Context**

The institutionalization of public administration in Indian academia can be traced through a rich tapestry of historical texts that reflect the evolution of governance from ancient to colonial times. Public administration education at Nalanda University, which thrived from the 5th to the 12th century CE, was influenced by Buddhist principles that emphasised moral governance, ethical leadership, and public welfare. Though primarily known for its focus on Buddhist philosophy and monastic education, Nalanda also offered teachings on governance and ethics that shaped administrative practices (Ghosh, 2006). The university's curriculum integrated concepts of *Dharma* (righteous rule) and *Dharmrajya* (the welfare state), encouraging future administrators to prioritise the moral and ethical dimensions of governance (Levy, 2011). These teachings influenced governance models in regions where Nalanda's scholars served as advisors, promoting the ideals of non-violence, justice, and the well-being of the people. The educational atmosphere at Nalanda, thus, played a role in shaping early forms of public administration, particularly in Buddhist-influenced regions of Asia (Scharfe, 2002). Public administration education at Takshashila University was deeply embedded in the study of statecraft, law, and governance, making it one of the earliest centres of learning in these areas. The university, which flourished between the 6th century BCE and 5th century CE, is best known for its association with Kautilya (also known as Chanakya), whose treatise *Arthashastra* laid the foundations of political science and administrative theory in ancient India. The curriculum

at Takshashila included subjects like law, military science, and economics, which were crucial to the education of future administrators and rulers (Basham, 1967). Students were trained in the responsibilities of a ruler, the roles of ministers, and the art of diplomacy, all of which are essential elements of public administration today (Thapar, 2003). Kautilya's Arthashastra also detailed the hierarchical structure of government, the management of finances, and the maintenance of public order, which are foundational principles in contemporary public administration (Boesche, 2003).

**Table-2**  
**Literary Roots of Public Administration Education and Research in India**

Decades	Public Administration Education and Research Literature
1828	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gentleman, A. (1828). <i>Examination of the Principles and Policy of the Government of British India</i>. London: Hurst, Chaney and Co.</li> </ul>
1850-60	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British India Bengal Presidency (1855). <i>Report on the Administration of Public Affairs in the Bengal Presidency</i>. Calcutta: Government of Bengal.</li> <li>• British India Bombay Presidency (1856). <i>Report on the Administration of Public Affairs in the Bombay Presidency</i>. Bombay: Government of Bombay.</li> <li>• British India Government (1856). <i>Report on the Administration of Mysore</i>. Mysore: Mysore Government Press.</li> <li>• Government of India (1857). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration</i>.</li> <li>• Townsend, Meredith (1858). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration</i>. Serampore: J.C. Murray.</li> <li>• Townsend, Meredith (1859). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration- Volume III</i>. Serampore: J.C. Murray.</li> </ul>
1861-70	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of India (1861). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration-Volume V</i>. Serampore: Marshal D'Cruz.</li> <li>• Government of India (1862). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration-Volume VI</i>. Serampore: Marshal D'Cruz.</li> <li>• Government of India (1863). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration-Volume VII</i>. Serampore: Marshal D'Cruz.</li> <li>• Government of India (1864). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration-Volume VIII</i>. Serampore: Marshal D'Cruz.</li> <li>• Government of India (1866). <i>The Annals of Indian Administration-Volume X</i>. Serampore: Marshal D'Cruz.</li> </ul>
1871-1880	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colchester, Lord (1874). <i>History of The Indian Administration</i>. London: Richard Bentley and Sons.</li> <li>• Hector, John (1880). <i>Underlying Principles of Indian Fiscal Administration</i>. London: Chapman and Hall Limited.</li> </ul>
1881-1890	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strachy, Sir John (1888). <i>India its Administration &amp; Progress</i>. London: Macmillan and Co.</li> </ul>

Source: The Author

During colonial records such as The Annals of Indian Administration (1863) and Lord Colchester's History of the Indian Administration (1874) document the transition from East India Company dominance to formal British colonial rule, while Hector John's Underlying Principles of Indian Fiscal Administration (1880) delves into the fiscal policies that supported this control. Subsequent analyses, such as Paul Reinsch's *Colonial Administration* (1905) and Alexander Kenney's Administration Practice in India (1907), critique British governance techniques, emphasising their experimental nature. Joseph Chailley's Administrative Problems of British India (1910) offers a broader critique of the socio-political environment of colonial administration, contrasting with V.G. Kale's Indian Administration (1913), which serves as a practical resource for civil service aspirants. The foundational works of scholars like Pramathanath Banerjea in Public Administration in Ancient India (1916) and B.K. Thakore in Indian Administration to the Dawn of Responsible Government (1922) explore ancient and early colonial administrative systems, respectively. These texts not only laid the groundwork for the study of public administration but also emphasised civic education and engagement, illustrated by Bani Prasad's The A. B. C. of Civics (1933) and M.R. Palande's An Introduction to Indian Administration (1937). Together, these scholarly contributions underscore the critical development of public administration as an academic discipline in India, reflecting the growing importance of civic education, administrative reform, and the need for self-governance during British colonial rule (Palande, 1941; Puntambaker, 1938; Ram & Sharma, 1945).

Following independence, the government recognized the necessity of training civil servants to address the challenges of nation-building. This led to the establishment of institutions like the Indian Institute of Public Administration (IIPA) in 1954, which played a pivotal role in promoting the study of public administration in India (Maheshwari, 2000). Indian universities also began offering courses in public administration, with early pioneers such as Osmania University and the University of Delhi integrating the discipline into their curricula (Arora, 1979). The establishment of the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration (LBSNAA) further solidified the institutionalization of public administration by providing structured training for Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officers (Sarkar, 2009). Over time, Indian scholars integrated indigenous administrative practices, drawing on texts like Kautilya's Arthashastra, thereby blending local and global perspectives in the academic study of public administration (Bhattacharya, 2001). Today, public administration

in India continues to evolve, with a focus on addressing modern governance challenges while maintaining a strong academic foundation.

Woodrow Wilson's seminal essay, *The Study of Administration* (1887), is widely regarded as the foundation of public administration as an academic discipline, particularly in the United States. In this essay, Wilson introduced the politics-administration dichotomy, arguing for the separation of political decision-making from the implementation of policy, which was to be handled by a neutral, professional civil service. Wilson's thought also contributed to the institutionalization of public administration as a field of study in universities. Schools and departments of public administration were established, offering formal education and training for future civil servants. Programs in public administration grew rapidly in the 20th century, particularly in the United States, with a focus on both the theoretical and practical aspects of governance. In sum, Woodrow Wilson's vision of public administration as a field of study significantly influenced the development of the discipline by emphasising efficiency, professionalism, merit-based civil service, and the potential for administration to be a neutral, technical process. While modern scholars have debated the practicality of Wilson's strict politics-administration dichotomy, his contributions to the field remain foundational, marking the emergence of public administration as a distinct and systematic area of academic and practical inquiry.

## X. Conclusion

Ultimately, pre-Wilsonian administrative thought in India represents a rich and sophisticated tradition that significantly diverged from the Western notion of public administration, particularly the politics-administration dichotomy introduced by Woodrow Wilson in 1887. Indian governance systems, as exemplified by ancient texts like *Kautilya's Arthashastra*, presented a holistic model in which governance, politics, religion, and ethics were intricately intertwined. This integrated approach to administration, which emphasised ethical principles (Dharma) alongside material governance (Artha), formed the foundation of Indian administrative thought, laying the groundwork for later governance models during the Mughal and colonial eras (Sharma, 2012). During British colonial rule, administrators engaged deeply with these pre-existing systems, documenting and adapting indigenous governance frameworks. Reports such as the Report on the Administration of Public Affairs in the Bengal Presidency (1855) and The Annals of Indian Administration (Townsend, 1858) highlight how British officials relied on traditional Indian systems, particularly for revenue collection and local governance, indicating the continued relevance of Indian administrative practices even under colonial governance. These insights reveal that Indian governance was adaptable and sophisticated, influencing both colonial and post-colonial administrative frameworks.

This paper of pre-Wilsonian Indian administrative thought is highly relevant for creating a more inclusive approach to the discipline of public administration by integrating non-Western perspectives. By challenging the traditionally Western-centric narrative, this paper reveals how ancient and medieval Indian systems offered alternative models of governance, promoting an integrated approach that combined ethics, politics, and administration. These insights broaden the field of public administration, enriching it with diverse global perspectives and making it more contextually relevant and culturally inclusive for addressing contemporary governance challenges. Future research could further explore regional administrative practices in kingdoms like the Marathas or Vijayanagara, analyze pre-colonial administrative training systems at institutions such as Nalanda and Takshashila, and compare these indigenous systems with colonial and post-colonial practices. These research directions will continue to challenge Western dominance in public administration scholarship and deepen the understanding of India's historical contributions to global governance.

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