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Laws Regulating Market Competition in Arthashastra During Gupta Period: An Analysis

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ABSTRACT

This research is an exiguous endeavour to highlight the rules and regulations related to trade regulation and promotion of market competition provided under the greatest work of Kautilya, the Arthashastra. Firstly, the paper highlights the features of trade and market during the periods of Guptas. Further, the paper discusses the laws made by Kautilya to maintain competition in the market and prevent abuse of monopoly in that era. It also explains the concept of merchant guilds in the Gupta Empire and how these guilds remain in control of the Kings. This paper in its present visage endeavours to attest the fact that how Arthashastra is an elixir of laws and regulations governing trade and commerce, aimed at maintaining fair competition, preventing monopolies, and protecting the interests of traders and consumers and further put forth a comparative analysis of the various provisions which can be moulded to be more effective with the help of an analysis made.

Keywords*: Arthashastra, Fair price, Competition, Monopoly, Cartel.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the time immemorial, the competition exists inherently in the market. Actually, it took birth with the inception of the market in the economy. Competition can be defined as the rivalry between or among individuals or companies involved in the business of selling products and providing services with the aim of earing profit and achieving highest possible growth in the market. For the market players namely manufacturers, producers, suppliers, distributors, wholesalers, retailers etc., knowing, analysing and understanding the prevalent competition in the market is crucial as it helps in designing a successful marketing strategy. Identifying the prevailing competition in the market and staying informed about the products and services is the key to remaining competitive in the market. It's also crucial to the survival of any business and its long-term growth.

Market competition motivates companies to search for the best possible economic performance

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to fulfil consumer demands efficiently and effectively. Companies often utilizes the four components of the marketing mix, named as the four P's to increase satisfy the consumer demands and increasing their own growth. These P's stand for product, place, promotion, and price. However, to gain more profit and create a monopoly in the market with respect to products or services, companies often get into anti-competitive agreements which involves anti-competitive practices such as cartel, output limitation, price fixing, bid-rigging, etc. Anti-competitive agreement is an agreement between or among business made with the object of preventing, restricting or distorting competition in the market by anti-competitive practices. The effects of these agreements include high prices of goods and services, creation of artificial scarcity of goods, restriction on new entrants in the market, decrease in product quality etc.

At present, any countries around the world enacted various competition laws to regulate competition and prevent anti-competitive agreements in the market. For example, USA has anti-trust laws, which is a group of three acts namely Anti-trust Sherman Act 1890, Clayton Act 1914 and Federal Trade Commission Act 1914, Canada enacted Competition Act with the aim to encourage competition in Canada, England has Competition Act 1998, which prohibits such concerted practices that might affect trade in UK, India enacted Competition Act 2002 with the aim to; promote and sustain competition in markets, prohibit such practices which have appreciable effect on competition, protect consumer’s interests, and ensure freedom of trade. The names of these laws may differ from each other, but the main objective of these laws are one and the same i.e. promotion of healthy competition in the market, prohibiting anti-competitive practices and abuse of dominant position, protection of public at large, etc. These laws ultimately lead to development and growth of economies of countries and world economy as a whole.

Competition is prevalent in the economy as it takes birth with the market and develops with it. Therefore, birth and development of competition laws around the world is not new. In ancient India, laws were already there related to competition, and one of the most effective ancient literature which dealt with market regulation and promoting competition in the market was *Kautilya’s Arthashastra*, which was originally written by Vishnugupta, who was a great Indian philosopher and states-man also known by the name of Kautilya or Chanakya. He was the prime minister of Chandragupta Maurya. The exact date of this book is uncertain, however, historians claim that it must have been written during the 4th century B.C. and 150 A.D.[3]. This ancient text is considered to be the practical guide to the socioeconomic welfare of human beings living

[3]CHANAKAYA, KAUTILYA: THE ARTHASHASTRA 43 (L.N. RANGARAJAN, PENGUIN BOOKS 1992) (1987).

in the world. It consists of various laws regulating every affairs of the country. Kautilya in this book provided various rules to promote competition in the market by prohibiting anti-competitive practices by the traders.

II. TRADE AND COMMERCE DURING *GUPTAS*

The Gupta Empire, which lasted from around 320 to 550 CE, was a period of great prosperity and cultural flourishing in India. During this time, the Gupta rulers encouraged trade and commerce, and the economy of the empire thrived. One of the most important factors in the Gupta Empire's economic success was the development of a well-organized system of trade and commerce. The empire had a network of roads and waterways that facilitated the movement of goods and people across the subcontinent. Traders travelled along these routes, exchanging goods such as spices, textiles, precious stones, and metals.The textile industry, which was considered to be an essential industry in the Gupta era, along with other industries developed rapidly during the Gupta period. Various items such as silk, muslin, cotton, calico, linen, wool etc. were traded and exported.

The Gupta Empire also had a thriving maritime trade with Southeast Asia, China, and the Roman Empire. The ports of the west coast of India, such as *Baruch, Sopara,* and*Kalyan*, were important centres of trade with the west. Merchants from these ports sailed to the Persian Gulf and beyond, carrying with them goods such as textiles, spices, and precious stones. Meanwhile, ports on the southern coast, such as *Muziris, Arikamedu*, and *Kaveripattanam*, were important centres of trade with Southeast Asia and China. Indian merchants traded spices, textiles, and pearls with traders from these regions.

Under the *Guptas*, the state also played an active role in promoting commerce. The empire maintained a system of weights and measures, which helped to standardize trade and prevent fraud. The government also provided protection to traders, ensuring that they were not subjected to robbery or extortion. The *Guptas*levied *shulka* (taxes) on trade, but these taxes were relatively low and did not hinder commerce.As trade grows, financial system of the *Guptas* also developed. The system was headed by a *nagarashreshthi*, which is also known as a chief banker.[4] "Merchant guilds were also there in this era. The *Jambudvipaprajnapti*, a Gupta-era document, describes eighteen ancient guilds, including silk weavers *(pattailla)*, napkin dealers *(ganchhi)*, calico-printers *(chhimpa)* and tailors *(sivaga)"*.[5]

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[4] Dr. Krishan Lal Grover & Dr. Ritu Singh, *Trade and Commerce in Ancient India*, 5 International Journal of Law Management and Humanities, 2186, 2190 (2022).
[5] Ibid.

It can be said that, the Gupta Empire was a period of great prosperity as trade and cultural activities flourished at that time, and its success was due in no small part to the development of a well-organized system of trade and commerce.

III. Competition regulating rules in 'Arthashastra'

In chapter 18 of Arthashastra, Kautilya asserted that,

"प्रजासुखेसुखंराज्ञःप्रजानांतुहितेहितम्।नात्मप्रियंहितंराज्ञःप्रजानांतुप्रियंहितम्॥

"तस्मान्नित्योत्थितोराजाकुर्यादर्थानुशासनम्।अर्थस्यमूलमुत्थानमनर्थस्यविपर्ययः॥"

It means that "In the happiness of his subjects lies the king's happiness; in their welfare his welfare. He shall not consider as good only that which pleases him but treat as beneficial to - him whatever pleases his subjects"[6] and "The king shall be ever active in the management of the economy. The root of wealth is economic activity and lack of it brings material distress. In the absence of fruitful economic activity, both current prosperity and future growth will be 1destroyed. A king can achieve the desired objectives and abundance of riches by undertaking productive economic activity."[7]

These shlokas implies that a king's duties must be directed towards the welfare of his people and development of the whole empire. He must not make arbitrary rules depending upon his moods and will. He must make such rules which keeps his people healthy and happy. He must not think himself as the ultimate superior. He must work for the happiness of his people. He must develop a trading system as trade is the way to earn wealth. He must allocate the resources reasonably and according to the demand and supply of the products. He must perform his duties related to trade because wealth is crucial for the development of welfare of his people.

We can analyse the scope and purpose of *Arthashastra* from the following verse of the *Arthashastra* itself that: "The source of the livelihood of men is wealth, in other words, the earth inhabited by men. The science which is the means of the attainment and protection of that earth is the Science of Politics [Arthashastra]"

He also explained in his book that *artha*is not limited to wealth, it also includes the well-being of the people of the nation. A king must determine and establish a balance between the welfare of the people and the allocation of resources of the economy. In ancient India, the empire had the system of *kosha* or treasury, which in modern times named as the treasury of the state. The king must formulate such economic policies, which helps in the accrual of income in the *kosha.*

[6] CHANAKAYA, *supra* Note 1, at 149
[7] Ibid

The *kosha* was not the personal property of the king, instead it was used for the welfare and development of the empire and its people. According to Kautilya, for a smooth functioning of trade in the empire, maintenance of law and order and an adequate administrative machinery is crucial. In the book, Kautilya provided techniques to identify the anti-competitive practices and rules to prohibit them such as appointment of various officers at local levels in every small and big industry and a strict punishment for the violation of the laws.

In the Kautilya's economy, state was involved in almost every sector of economy. Sometimes the state enter the sector alone and sometimes in association with private traders. This shows that the ancient Indian economy was a mixed economy. State, however, exercised monopoly in certain sectors of economy such as minerals, mining, salt production, brewing liquor etc. The involvement of the king in the economy ensures the welfareof the people as it works as shield for consumers against the extreme market forces. However, the king had the power to provide the license of production and sale of salt and jiggery in the empire. So, licensing system was also therein the ancient India. A Superintendent of Salt is also appointed to look after the trade by private merchants in the licensed industry. This ensures prevention of abuse of dominance.

Some of the laws and regulations framed by the Kautilya to prevent anti-competitive practices and regulating competition in the market are mentioned below:

(A) Designated Markets For Sale And Purchase Of Goods

According to the law, the goods can't sell at the place of their manufacturing or production. Certain areas were organized as markets for the purpose of sale and purchase of goods. This was done to endure that no person would purchase the goods in bulk with the main motive to create artificial scarcity of the goods in the market and to increase its prices to gain excessive profits.

(B) Appointment Of Chief Controller Of State Trading (Panyadhyaksa)

The king and his council is required to appoint a Chief Controller of State (*Panyadhyaksa*[8]*)*. Trading to fix the reasonable prices of certain commodities such as rice, oil, ghee, medicine, etc. The prices shall be fixed on the basis of quantity, quality, duties, interest, demand, cost of transportation etc. This was done to avoid manipulation of prices by the traders. He is empowered to punish the merchant involved in the manipulation of prices. He is also responsible to determine the profitability ratio of trade with foreign nation in order to determine the quantity of export of commodities. This was done to prevent the scarcity of essential

[8]Vikas Kumar, *Cartels in the KautiliyaArthasastra*, 6 Czech Economic Review, 59, 65-67, (2012)

commodities in the local markets. Under that system of price fixation of certain commodities, profit rates were also fixed by the chief controller. The rate of profit for indigenous commodities was 5% and that for foreign goods was 10%.[9] Any merchant who tries to increase the rate of profit by going against the law was liable for punishment and fine. There shall also be a Superintendent of Commerce, who shall analyse the increase and decrease in the demand and supply of various commodities, including the fluctuations of prices.

(C) Strict sanctions for traders involved in anti-competitive practices including cartels

Kautilya was an admirer and supporter of honesty and justice in the trading as trade is the force behind the functioning and development of a nation. “According to him, unscrupulous merchants and craftsmen who are no better than robbers have to be suppressed to stop exploitation, (*EvamchoranachoraJchyanvanik~karu-Kusilavan...varayetdesapida – na*)”[10].Therefore, he prescribed fines and punishments for traders and merchants involved in the practices that are aimed at destroying fair market competition, establishing unlawful monopoly, fixing unreasonable prices of the goods and provision of services, abusing their power of dominance etc.

Severe punishments and heavy amount of fines were imposed on the merchants who form cartels to fix the high prices of commodities to gain high amount of profits.[11] Cartels were treated more seriously than the individual person involved in the collusive manipulation of prices, which shows that cartels at that time also were considered to be the carrier of highest risk of removing competition from the market.

Kautilya in his book Arthashashtra makes an interesting observation about cartels, “[T]raders, joining together and raising or lowering the (prices of) goods, make a profit of one hundred *panas* on one *pana* or of hundred *kumbhas* on one *kumbha*. (VIII.4.36, emphasis added) (*Pana*, a silver coin, was the basic unit of money, whereas *kumbha* refers to a measure of weight”.[12] He imposed the fine of one thousand *panas* on every individual artisans and artists, who are a part of cartels and lowers down the quality of commodity or increases the prices or prevents the sale and purchase of goods by creating artificial scarcity or hindering the fair competition in the market. The fine was imposed irrespective of the amount of profit it earned and the size of the

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[9] Pradeep S. Mehta, *Economic Regulations, Competition, and Consumer Protection in Ancient India*, 63, The Antitrust Bulletin, 1, 2-3, (2018)
[10]Bimala Prasad Mukerji, *Some Regulations of Trade and Profit in Ancient Text*, 32 Proceedings of the Indian History Congress, 157, 160 (1970)
[11]Monsurur Rahman et al. *Commercial Practices In The Ancient Indian Peninsula: Glimpses From Kautilya's Arthashastra*, 13International Business & Economics Research Journal, 653, 654-655 (2014)
[12]Vikas Kumar, *Supra*Note 6

cartel. He categorized cartels as a most serious crimes by outing it with other serious crimes such as murders, dacoity, etc. For individuals, manipulating the prices and distorting the competition, fine of minimum 40 *panas* for every 1% profit above the reasonable rate of profit.[13] Fines were also imposed on persons who sales or exports, or tries to sale or export goods under state monopoly along with confiscation of such goods. The difference between the severity of punishments between individuals and cartel was sensible as cartels have great capacity to reduce and ultimately remove the competition from the market and manipulate the prices in comparison with the individual manipulating the prices. To completely prohibit the cartelization and exercise of anti-competitive practices by individuals, Kautilya prescribed heavy fines and severe punishments for the official who took bribes from cartel member and other individual violators of the law.

(E) Exemptions to merchants trading in necessities

Merchants involved in the trading of desired commodity or necessities and making no profit or suffered loss were exempted from paying taxes and duties. It was done to ensure the regular supply of those commodities, reduce the burden on the traders and to avoid the conditions which might force those merchants to get involved in any anti-competitive activities or malpractices.

(F) Rules governing labor and wages

Kautilya also provided for a system of pre-determined wages in order to provide protection to laborer. The labor wages must be determined depending upon the quality of service, type of industry etc. Since the diversified nature of the trade and industry, a flat uniform rate cannot be fixed and even if it is, then such rate might not be favorable for every worker. He has also specified that in a case where the wage rate is not pre-determined then the labor would get 10% of his produce along with the wages. Kautilya knew that the labors are the backbone of agriculture and economy and he made such a rule to ensure that labors would not get exploited by the hands of merchants and land owners. This is well stated by Benoy Chandra Sen in his treatise, *Economics in Kautilya*, in the following words, “A uniform and flat rate of wages for laborers of all sorts is impracticable in an advanced economic condition where commodities of various gradations of value representing different kinds and degrees of manufacturing skill are produced and used by consumers. The wages of a laborer cannot but be dependent on the market-value of the article produced. The latter again depends on the cost of its production, including the cost of material used. Thus the settlement of just wages is a complicated matter depending not only on the skill of the worker employed but also on the total out-turn of his

[13]Vikas Kumar, *Supra*Note 6 at 70

work; i.e., both the quality and quantity of the job completed by him."

(G) Price and profit control policies

Kautilya was an advocate of price and profit rate fixation of certain commodities, as he knew that various traders in order to gain excessive profit will, in case of no barriers or restrictions, manipulate the prices and exploit the consumers. That is why, he prescribed the fixation of just and fair prices and profit rates. Kautilya in order to maintain a balance between market forced and reasonable price, imposed heavy duties on imports of luxury items, whereas, on the goods of common consumption or necessary goods, very less or light duties were imposed.

(H) Rules concerning retail sales

Kautilya framed certain rule and provided guidelines for retails and wholesale sales. Retailers and wholesalers were required to register with the government and obtain a license to operate. This helped the government keep track of business activities and prevent fraud. Retailers and wholesalers were not allowed to charge excessive prices for their goods. The government would set price limits to ensure that consumers were not exploited. Retailers and wholesalers were responsible for ensuring the quality of the goods they sold. If a product was found to be substandard, the retailer or wholesaler would be punished. The officer of commerce were also required to keep a check on the quality of goods. Retailers and wholesalers were required to use standardized weights and measures to prevent cheating. They both had to pay taxes to the government and the tax rate was based on the value of the goods they sold. They were not allowed to trade in certain goods, such as weapons, without government permission.

There was also a reference of Chief Controller of State Trading and Chief Controller of Private Trading in the Kautilya's *Arthashshtra.*[14] The controller of state trading was entrusted with the duty and responsibility of distributing the local as well as the imported goods equitably in the given areas. He was also responsible for the sale of goods of the state. The chief controller of private trading had the duty to regulate the activities of merchants and keep a check on them through periodical inspections and ensuring that they did involve in the anti-competitive agreements or forming any cartels.

(I) State monopoly of certain commodities

Kautilya suggests that the state should reserve monopoly in the manufacturing and sales of certain commodities such as salt, alcoholic drinks, precious metals etc. in order to control their production, distribution, and pricing. This would enable the state to generate revenue, regulate

[14] CHANAKAYA, *supra* Note 1, at 76

the economy, and ensure social welfare. Private individuals or groups should not be allowed to produce or sell these goods, and those who do so should be punished. The state should regulate the prices of these goods to ensure that they are affordable to all segments of society. It should also regulate the quality of these goods to ensure that they meet certain standards. The state must also control the transportation and distribution of these goods to prevent hoarding black marketing and other anti-competitive activities. The revenue generated from the sale of these goods should be used for the welfare of the people, such as the construction of public works, the support of the poor and the needy, and the maintenance of law and order. He believed that state monopoly was necessary to maintain social and economic stability, and to ensure that the benefits of economic activity were distributed fairly across society.

He also made several laws related to the state's licensing system. According to Kautilya, the state should regulate the granting of licenses for various economic activities in order to ensure that they are conducted in a fair and orderly manner. Under the Kautilya's licensing system, licenses was granted by the state for certain economic activities, such as mining, agriculture, and manufacturing. These licenses were granted only to individuals or groups who meet certain criteria, such as having the necessary skills and resources. He also made rules to regulate the conditions under which these economic activities are conducted to ensure that they are in the public interest, and to ensure that these license holders would not be able to abuse their position of dominance and tweak the prices unreasonably high. In order to get the license, merchants must pay the prescribed fee to the state, which was used by the king for public welfare. Under the system, officers were appointed to monitor the quality of the products or services produced by those holding licenses. The officer was empowered to take action against those license holders in cases of violations, and the king was empowered to revoke licenses from those who violate the conditions of their license or engage in unethical and anti-competitive practices. For instance, the subject of industry of manufacture, distribution and sale of liquor in the Kautilyan economy was covered under the state monopoly. There were very few private merchants whowere under the trade of alcohol, and those too were strictly controlled. The Chief Controller of Alcoholic Beverages was appointed to regulate the trade of liquor by licensed private merchants.

Kautilya believed that the state's licensing system was necessary to regulate economic activity and ensure that it was conducted in a fair and ethical manner. By granting licenses only to those who met certain criteria and regulating the conditions under which economic activity was conducted, Kautilya ensured that the state could promote economic growth and social welfare.

(J) Rules concerning merchant guilds

Merchant guilds were there at the Kautilya's time and he also made certain rules for the functioning of the guilds as well as against the abuse of dominance by any member of the guilds. The head of the guild has the highest prominent position and regulate the functioning of the guild according to the rules prescribed. Kautilya in his book, used the words such as '*SambhuyaSamutthatarah', 'Samghabhabhutah',* and '*Sreni'* for guilds of workmen and persons who were involved in the cooperative works.[15] For the purpose of *kshattriya*guilds, those were involved in the trade as well as war, he used the term '*Kamboja', 'Surastra', 'kshattriya-srenyadyo', Varta –sastro-pajibinah'*.[16] The main reason behind the formation guilds was the caste system of ancient India. People of different castes were involved in different occupations and gradually this resulted in the industrial specialization. As trade grows, it becomes more complex and wide, hence for the purpose of mutual cooperation, brotherhood and commercial interests, the whole concept of guild system came into existence. These guilds were so wealthy and strong that they used to give advances and loans to people and even empire in cases of emergency and crisis. They were basically performing the functions of what we call today modern banks. People used to entrust their investments with the guilds, which shows that they were popular and honest among the people and within the empire. According to various historians and archeologists in India, these guilds have their banks set up in the empire and they have such as prestige that, the kings like *Chandragupta II* and his successor *Kumaragupta I,* have their deposits with them.[17] There were many guilds during the Gupta period such as guilds of architects, blacksmiths, perfumers etc. According to Kautilya, guild were a source of great military power for the empire as in times of wars these trade guilds were also acted as warriors.

However, Kautilya prescribed that the guilds must have a set of rules for governance according the *dharma.* These guilds must also get registered themselves with the king to work. Unregistered guilds were not allowed to function and were declared illegal. This registration was done along with the agreement between the guild and the king, which provided that the guild comes under the strict control and protection of the king. Members of the guilds must follow the rules of the guild and in case of violations, they were responsible for punishments such as confiscation of goods or mild punishments and banishment from the empire or death penalty was prescribed in case of continued violations. This was done to ensure to prohibit the guild members from abusing their powers in the market and doing anti-competitive practices to gain higher profits and create their own monopoly. These guilds were also entrusted with the

[15]HARIPADA CHAKRABORTI, TRADE AND COMMERCE OF ANCIENT INDIA, 286, 315(1 ED. 1966
[16] Ibid
[17]Ibid.

responsibility of doing public welfare activities or other types of philanthropic activities etc.

IV. Conclusion

Kautilya's *Arthashastra* played a prominent role in regulating the competition in the market and restricting the anti-competitive practices in the *Gupta* period. To ensure fair competition and prevent monopolies, it also provides concept of *shulka,* which refers to the payment of taxes or duties on goods traded. These taxes were used to support the administration of the region and were collected by officials appointed by the rulers. In addition to these laws, there were also regulations to ensure consumer protection. Traders were expected to provide accurate descriptions of their goods, and any attempts to sell substandard or adulterated products were strictly prohibited. There were also rules regarding weights and measures to prevent fraud and ensure fair trade. In the modern era, the competition laws evolved and developed with the ever-changing economic and social conditions and the advancement of the technology. In England, the evolution of contemporary world laws began with the enactment of the Monopolies and Restrictive practices (Inquiry and Control) Act, 1948. This was enacted after the Second World War and the main agenda behind this act was to strengthen the corporate power to serve the social purpose by providing the full employment to the people of Britain in a competitive economy. World War II left various nations with unstable economy, Britain was one of them, and no competition was left in the state. This act helped in the restructuring of a competitive environment in the economy of the nation after the war. This act aimed towards prohibiting anti-competitive behaviour for the purpose of maintain a fair competition in the market by wiping out the monopoly power and its abuse against workers and small businesses. For the purpose of enforcement of the act, an authority was established named as Monopolies and Restrictive Practices Commission (MRPC). However, the act proved to be ineffective due to its limited coercive power, vagueness in the "public interest test" etc.

Restrictive Trade Practices Act 1956, which was made by the Parliament with the aim to prohibit such agreements among parties that involved reduction or elimination of competition from the market. The act was implemented with the promise that it will provide stronger an effective treatment of anti-competitive and restrictive practices. The act also provided for the establishmentof the "Restrictive Practices Court". This agency under the act was entrusted with the power to investigate and adjudicate on the matters directly or indirectly related to the anti-competitive agreements. The main purpose of the act was to promote competition and to keep a check on the anti-competitive and restrictive agreements. With time, various laws were made such as Resale Prices Act, 1964, Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1968, Fair Trading Act 1973 and finally in the 1976 all of the laws were consolidated in to a single act called Restrictive Trade Practices Act, 1976. Initially, the act was successful but with time many loopholes got uncovered. To handle the growing criticism and the rise of abuse of monopoly power, the parliament came up with the Competition Act 1980. This act expanded the scope of competition law to cover abuse of dominance and mergers. The Competition Act also established the Competition Commission, which had the power to investigate and adjudicate on anti-competitive conduct. The act formally launched the concept of "anti-competitive practices" and formulated various ways to tackle with the problem vertical agreements among the businesses having monopolies in their respective industries. However, this act was no success

Finally in 1998, a new Competition Act was passed to prohibit anti-competitive practices and abuse of dominant power. The act also established the "Office of Fair Trading (OFT)," which is entrusted with wide investigatory and regulatory powers. Along with this Enterprise Act, 2002 was also made to cope up with the changing regime of mergers of companies. These two acts, complement each other and serve the purpose of maintaining and promoting fair competition in the UK.

Hence, the after lot of cogitation and discussion on the archaic laws prevailing in Arthashastra of Kautilya, it can be concluded that the Arthashastra is an elixir of laws and regulations governing trade and commerce, aimed at maintaining fair competition, preventing monopolies, and protecting the interests of traders and consumers. These laws emphasized fairness, honesty, and integrity in all business dealings, and played an essential role in shaping the economic system of the region during the *Gupta* period. The Arthashastra of Kautilya can be utalized in the present scenario to boost up the competition laws in domestic scenario as well as globally.

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