

IDEOLOGY OF BUDDHISM AND ADMINISTRATION OF MAURYAS



Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh

Kripa Drishti Publications, Pune.

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AND
ADMINISTRATION OF MAURYAS**

Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh

Associate Professor,
Dept. of AI and AS, S. B. A. N. College,
Darheta- Lari, Arwal.

Kripa-Drishti Publications, Pune.

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Author By: **Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh**

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Chapter 1

Introduction & Sources

1.1 Introduction:

The post-vedic Brahmanic literature falls into several sections and reflects some social and political development, but, as a whole, it is characterized by the same tone and temper. In the sphere of governmental theory, the Epics, the political and legal treatises, the Puranas and general literature start from the same fundamental assumptions. But from the fifth century B.C. onwards, Brahmanism had to contend with two vigorous Protestant movements - Buddhism and Jainism. They experienced many vicissitudes of fortune until one of them disappeared from India and the other sand into a small sect, but they produced a vast literature and gave rise to many social theories.

It is the Asokan Edicts of the third century B.C. which in the light of the latest researchers, have claim to be examined before any literary works for Buddhist ideas on government. The 'beloved of the gods' appears as the moral teacher and spiritual guide of his subjects. The state over which he presides is a missionary state exerting its utmost resources in the propagation of Buddhism and piety and morality in general.

The third Rock Edict, for instance, requires administrative officers of proceed on circuit every five years as well as for their other business, as for this special purpose, namely, to give instructions in the law of piety. Censors were appointed to watch over the Law and the operation of justice.¹ Asoka enunciates the paternal character of his government in so many words. In the Borderer's Edict of the Kalinga group, he wants his officers to make the people realize that:

"The king is to us even as a father he loves us even as he loves himself; we are to the king even as his children. |

Hospitals, alms-houses, rest-houses, watering places, shady trees on the highways, and irrigation works are provided by the state.² The use of meat was hedged round by the restrictions.³ The example and precepts of Asoka had a profound influence on Buddhist theory of government. The new elements which is introduced is that the state is given dynamic missionary functions.

The dates of Buddhist works are almost as doubtful as those of Brahmanical literatures. The word of the Buddha is supposed to be contained in the Tripitaka or Three baskets:

¹ Ashoka's Rock-Edicts, V. XII.

² Pillar Edict, VII.

³ Pillar Edict, V.

- Sutta comprising the five Nikayas or collections.
- Vinaya giving rules of monastic life for monks and nuns in five sections- the Patimokkha, Mahavagga, Chullavagga, Suttavibhanga and Parivara.
- Abhidhama, comparatively inferior, in which metaphysics is discussed in seven works.

The whole canon exists in two versions:

- In, Pali the hieratic language of the Buddhist of Ceylon, Saim and Burma and
- In Sanskrit or mixed Sanskrit.

The sacred language of Buddhism in Tibet, China and Japan. Rhys Davids, who relied chiefly on the Pali canon, worked on the hypothesis that the four Nikayas- the Digha or Long, Majjhima or Middle, Samyutta or Miscelleneaus and Anguttara or Numerical, representing the sayings of the Buddha were put together:

"Out of older material at a period about half-way between the death of the Buddha and the accession of Ashoka."

That is, in the fourth century B.C. Other sayings, ascribed mostly to the Buddha's disciples, had been put into a supplementary fifth Nikaya, the Khuddaka or minor collection to which additions were made as late as the reign of Ashoka. But latterly there has set in a reaction against the acceptance of Buddhist traditional chronology.

The dates of the Buddhist Councils, including the third one believed to have been held under the reign of Ashoka about 247 B.C., have been called in question. Te Ceylonese tradition is, from the chronological point of view, now almost entirely set aside. It is argued that the whole Buddhist canon is posterior to Ashoka and could not have taken shape before the second of first century before Christ. Sylvain Levi shows that the Pali idiom itself, which is the language of the southern canno, did not arise till sometime after Ashoka.

Buddha and Mahavira, the founder of the Jainism, preached in some form of Prakrit, Magadhi or Ardha- Magadhi. Nor does Ashoka use Pali in his Edicts. For purpose of discussions, therefore, one must start with the assumption that the Nikayas existed about the first century B.C. The Pali canon is earlier than the Sanskrit. It can only be surmised that the Nikaya which is mentioned last is probably later than the others. It is clear that the Nikayas do not represent the work of a single mind or age.⁴

Buddhism branched off into the southern Hinayana and northern Mahayana paths and later still into Mulasarvastivada, Sarvastivada and other sects, but it need hardly be added that Buddhists of all schools and particularly of the northern Sanskrit took over many Brahmanic ideas on society but, as rebels against Brahmanism, they recast their heritage and, in several respects, furnish a welcome antidote to the old tradition.

⁴ See Rhys Davids, Sacred Books of the Buddhists, Vol. II

Buddhists did not believe in a creator and could not call his interference to explain every earthly phenomenon. They indulge in fancy and mythology, but reason necessarily plays a greater part in their speculations than in those of Brahmanas.

In their political theory, human initiative and enterprise replace the divine hand and, altogether, count for more in social philosophy.

Indian political theory generally keeps close, perhaps too close, to political facts, but there is one form of Utopianism which is occasionally met with. The philosopher was sometimes lost in the poet, and soared into a golden age with which the world began. But, as time passed, he quickly descended to the more solid earth, forgot his heavenly excursions, and busied himself with the phenomena around him. Thus, in the Digha Nikaya, one of the most important of Buddhist works, the Brahmas Vasettha inquires of the Buddha, if the Brahmanic claim to supremacy was just. The Buddha, or rather the author, replied in the negative, and called a fanciful history to support his view. There was a time when people were perfect, so perfect that they had nothing corporeal about them. The ethereal beings shone in splendor, enjoyed peace and effulgence, danced in the air, and lived for long. The trance of happiness and tranquility lasted for ages. But at last the pristine purity declined, and rottenness began. Differences of sex manifested themselves, and then came distinctions of colour. In a word, life fell from the ethereal into the physical plane. Now shelter, food and drink were required. People entered into agreements among themselves and set up the greatest of human institutions- the family and private human property. But new problems arose. There appeared theft and certain other forms of unsocial conduct. Once more the people gathered together and agreed to choose a chief who would maintain the social order and judicially inflict punishment. In return they would give him a part of their paddy. So, the most gracious and powerful of individuals was elected chief. He was the Mahasammata of Great Elect. He was the Rajan - one who delighted the people. The king is the leader and guide of the people. In the Kutadanta Sutta, a king supplied food, seed- corn, capital and wages to the followers of various occupations according to their needs and thus freed his realm from disorder, increased his revenue and brought peace and security to all. The same story occurs in a 'mixed sanskrit' Life of the Buddha, the Mahavastu Avadanam, which is full of Jataka and other tales and which displays strong Brahmanic influence. Here creatures gather together and raise the mightiest of individuals to the kingship in order to reward goodness and punish evil.⁵

The Buddhist tradition of the origin of society and government is faithfully reproduced in the fifth volume of the Tibetan Dulva, the Vinaya compilation. It appears as the story of the renovation of the world after its destruction. Many of its previous inhabitants had been born in the region of the Abhasvara devas where they had ethereal bodies, free from all impurity, perfect in appearance, radiant with light, feeding on joy, perfect in appearance, radiant with light, feeding on joy, moving at liberty through space and living to great ages. Gradually, solid earth was formed, the sun and moon and stars appeared; distinctions of time became perceptible.

⁵ Agganna Suttanta, Dighanikaya, Vol. 3. Sec. 27.

The manifestation of sex was allowed by feelings of love and conjugal relationships. When the practice of eating commenced, differences in the quantity and quality of food produced differences of colour.

Then "sinful beings" commenced the practice of building houses and of hoarding, which led to heart-burning and to the deterioration of the grain itself. "Then these beings assembled together in sorrow, grief, and lamentation, and said:

"Sirs, formerly we had ethereal bodies..... Let us draw lines of demarcation and establish boundaries between each one's property."

They did so and said:

"This is thine- this is mine."

Theft appeared a little later. Then the people thought:

"Let us, in view of what has just happened, assemble together, and choose from out of our midst those who are the finest -looking, the largest, the handsomest, the strongest, and let us make them lords over our fields, and they shall punish those of us who do what is praiseworthy, and from the produce of our fields and of the fruits we gather we will give them a portion."

So, they selected a chief and made him lord over their fields with these words:

"Hence forth, they select and punish those of us who deserve punishment, and thou halt recompense those of us who deserve recompense, and we will give these a portion of the produce of our fields and of the fruits we gather."

The chief was a regular king. From his receiving the homanges of many, he was called "Honored by many, or Mahasammata, and as he was lord over the fields and kept them from harm, he received the name of "Protector of the fields or Ksatriya" and as he was righteous man and wise, and one who brought happiness to mankind with the law, he was called "King or Raja"⁶ Sometime after appeared caste, based on distinction of occupation.

Noticing the origin of property in the first building of houses, the author remarks that the lawfulness of otherwise of the division of houses depends on the decision of the king "who is the lord of the law."⁷ With the exception of the few passages, a similar account is given in the third volume of the *Dulva*.⁸ Here divine interposition is conspicuous by its absence, reason and expediency alone determine the formation of the state. Government derives its validity from consent. It exists to fulfill certain definite needs.

⁶ The Life of the Buddha by W.W. Rockhill, pp. 1-7.

⁷ Ibid, pp. 8, 5.

⁸ Ibid..... p. 1.

It is difficult to ascertain whether the idea of the pact originated with the Buddhists or they borrowed it from previous Brahmanic thinkers and merely stripped it of its supernatural elements. The latter hypothesis is the more probable. But it is clear that the idea owes its full development to Buddhist influence. It lost ground in the age of the Smritis and Puranas but it did not altogether die out. A Hindi Ms. of Bundela genealogy of the 17th century has a curious preface in which government originates in a pact through supernatural aid is also called in.⁹

Buddhism represents a revolt against Brahmanism. Buddhist social theory confers no privileges on Brahmanas. It denies sanctity to those who commonly passed as Brahmanas. Referring obviously to Brahmanic practices, the northern Dhammapada, an anthology of verses taken chiefly from five Nikayas, remarks that nakedness, long hair, dirt, fasting, sleeping on the ground or sitting motionless does not bring purity and does not resolve doubts. One does not become a Brahmana by his family, by his long locks, by his lineage. Real Brahmanas are those who are endowed with virtue and purity and who know the law.¹⁰

The Majjhima Nikaya admits the primacy of the Brahmanas and Kshatriyas in social etiquette,¹¹ but later in the dialogue of the Madhura Sutta, it expressly denies the utility of caste in securing happiness in this life or in the next. It denies caste privilege before the law and more than anything else insists that caste is wholly immaterial in ascetic life.¹² In the Digha Nikaya, a Brahmana, Ambattha, repeats the current Brahmanical doctrine that Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras had been created to serve Brahmanas but the Buddha does not admit the claim and silences the interrogator by some awkward questions on his own parentage. In the same dialogue, Kshatriyas are shown to be higher than Brahmanas.¹³

A similar sentiment about caste-privileges is evident in the Jatakas, the stories of the Buddha's previous births, one of the noblest monuments of Buddhist literature. Tradition will have it that 550 Jataka stories were taken by the royal missionary Milinda to Ceylon during the reign of Ashoka in the middle of the third Century B.C. They were translated from the Pali into Sinhalese and back into the Pali by Buddhaghosa in the fifth century A.D. It is this translation that the Jatakas have come down to us. But in accordance with the tradition they were long believed to reflect the thought and conditions of the Buddha's time or the period immediately following. Recent research, however, has considerably brought down their dates. "The Jataka Book," remarks Prof. Keith, "is a strange conglomerate of old and new Buddhist sculpture and a stray citation or two, go back to the Asoken epoch or shortly after; as folklore its contents are often of undeniable age, but as Buddhist fables their antiquity is uncertain." The bulk of the Jataka stories may be presumed to have existed about the commencement of the Christian Era, though some are later still. In numerous passages, they breathe a puranic atmosphere. All the more it is interesting to compare their tone and ideas with those of the contemporaneous Brahmanical literature. In the Jatakas caste is

⁹ Journal of the U.P. Historical Society, 1922.

¹⁰ Udanavargaa, Ch. XXXIII.

¹¹ Majjhima Nikaya, 90.

¹² Majjhima Nikaya, 94.

¹³ Digha Nikaya, III, 1,15.

assumed to exist. The institutions were too powerful to be ignored or uprooted. But the exaggerated claims based on birth are not admitted.

In the Dasabrahmana Jataka, a debate between two young men on birth of action as the basis of caste, is referred to Gautama, who declares that the followers of pastoral, agricultural, industrial, commercial or martial pursuits could not be called Brahmanas. Here the obvious allusion is to those who claimed Brahmanic privileges on the score of caste but who had renounced scholastic or priestly callings. The Jatakas do not proclaim like the Brahmanic dharmasastras that one of the prime duties of the kings is to enforce the rules of the social order and set everyone to the performance of his caste function. Times without number it is emphasized that caste is useless for Nirvana, the Sum mum bonus of life. In many stories again, Brahmanas play a rather ignominious role.¹⁴ From the point of view governmental role. From the point of view of governmental theory, it is highly significant that in the Jatakas Kstrariyas are generally mentioned before Brahmanas. Here as Fick, observes about the pali texts as a whole, the term Khattiya is to be understood in a narrow rather sense roughly corresponding to Vedic Rajanyas and thus practically confined to the ruling class. They symbolize the state. But excepting a few passages in the early Brahmanas, no brahmanic writer would accord them precedence over Brahmana. It is probable that the Jatakas only reflect the actual state of things in some part of the country, probably Eastern India, where Buddhism had obtained a firm hold.¹⁵ It is possible to glean something further about social and political conditions from the Jatakas, but unfortunately, these long works contain very little governmental theory. In the Dasarajadharmas or the catalogue of the Ten duties for the king, there is nothing political. The king is required to lead a religious, upright life, inter alia, to cultivate patience and a yielding disposition and not to cause any pain to anybody.¹⁶ In other passages the king is enjoined to be truthful, righteous, and incorruptible and to refrain from cruelty and drunkenness.¹⁷ In the paucity of direct political theory, it may be permitted to refer to a tragedy in the Padakusalamanava Jataka which illustrates the author's conception of the position and duties of the king vis-à-vis his subjects. A young Brahmana discovers a king and his purohita to be thieves and cries out to the people:

"May the householders and citizens assembled here listen to me! What should be water is fire, where safety is expected, from there comes danger."

"The king plunders the land as also the Brahmana, the purohita. Be on your guard, from your protector is your evil generated." The people are enraged, take up sticks and hammers and beat the king as well as his purohita to death. They raise to the vacant throne the young Brahmana who had caused the hubbub.¹⁸

In the Jatakas as elsewhere in Indian literature the king is expected to protect the people against forming aggression and any form of internal disorder or oppression and to administer impartial justice. The ministers should help the king in the performance of his

¹⁴ Sambharva Jataka, V. 27.

¹⁵ See the Uddalka Jataka.

¹⁶ Jatakas, III, 274, 320.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Padakusalamanava Jataka.

duty. In the Rathalatthi Jataka, the minister of justice who happened to be the Bodhisattava, the Buddha in a past life, impresses on the king the necessity of due investigation into a cause before pronouncing the sentence.¹⁹ There was an idea that the king could do as he liked with those who had violated the law but that he could not regard himself as a despotic sovereign in general.²⁰

The Jatakas mentions the king's share of the produce, but do not embody any theory or rules of taxation. It is clear that the property of those who died without heirs escheated to the king.²¹ The Jatakas mention ministers and Senapati or commander of the forces. These officers are not always drawn from the Kshatriya or Brahamana caste but no attempt is anywhere made to demarcate their functions. The purohita or domestic priest of the king is frequently in evidence in the Jataka. He appears as the king's friend and adviser and now and then as a regular state officer deciding law-suits.²²

Far different in style from the Pali Jatakas is the Sanskrit works called Jatakamala ascribed to Arya Sura. It belongs to the northern Buddhist canon and was composed probably in the 4th century A.D. All its legends, thirty-four in number, are derived from the traditional store and have been identified with the corresponding ones both in southern and northern collections. But the author modifies them in the narration and adds touches of his own. Taranatha, the great Tibetan historian of Buddhism, identifies Arya Sura, with the well-known Buddhist poet. Asvaghosa, who flourished about the first century A.D. The statement is open to doubt but the florid kavya style of Arya Sura certainly points to be period when that species of narration was widely cultivated in India. Arya Sura has probably suffered from interpolations but the main text seems to be pure.²³ He is not too rich in political reflections but the Buddha was a king or a high personage in so many of his previous births that every Jataka writer must sketch an ideal monarch, minister or mayor. Once when he was a king of the Sibis, he is represented as 'distinguished by energy, discretion, majesty and power,' He embodied all the virtues pertaining to Dharma, Artha and Kama- a reminiscence of Brahmanic thought. Of course, the Bodhisattva "ruled his subjects as if they were his own children." He rejoiced at the sight of mendicants who he could relieve. In all parts of the town he erected alms-houses and provided every kind of grains, goods and utensils. "In this way he poured out the rain of his gifts, not unlike a cloud of the Krita Yuga. " Everyone got what he wanted - food, drink, couches, seats, dwellings, meals, perfumes, wreaths, silver, gold or anything else. Everyone was summoned by proclamation to declare his need.²⁴ In the next story, as king of Kosala, the Bodhisattva displays the same virtues and generosity.²⁵

In the eighth story as king Maitribala he appears as entering into all the joys and sorrows of his subjects, handling both his sword and his law in the protection of his subjects. His sword,

¹⁹ Rathalatthi Jataka, III, 104.

²⁰ Jataka, I, 398.

²¹ Mahayaka Jataka, III, 299.

²² Jatakas, II, 376, 282, 187.

²³ The Jatakamala.

²⁴ Jatakamala Story, II.

²⁵ Ibid.

however, was merely an ornament, for other kings waited on him respectfully for orders. He dealt out punishments and rewards without infringing righteousness."²⁶ In the tenth story, Bodhisattva as a universal sovereign finds his realm afflicted by a famine and is strongly advised by his Brahmana Councillors to neutralise the disaster by performing a Vedic Sacrifice. But he would not consent to sacrifice animals and gets out of the difficulty by proclaiming to assembled townsmen his intention of sacrificing a thousand blackguards and thus leading all behave righteously. He ends by providing relief to all who were in want of anything.²⁷ In Buddhist as in Brahmanic literature, the monarchy is the predominant type of polity but in the Digha Nikaya, Gautama Buddha is represented as laying down the conditions which would secure prosperity to the republican vajjian clans. He gives a dose of conservatism to those who might be inclined to rush headlong into innovations. He insists that time-honored customs and usages must be maintained. Nothing that is not already established should be enacted. Nothing that has been enacted should be abrogated. The elders must be honored, esteemed, revered and supported. It must be a point of duty to hearken to their words. Justice and fairness must be followed. Women or girls should not be detained by force or abducted. The spiritual interests should not be neglected. The Arhantas or the Buddhist ascetics must be protected, defended and supported.

The sacred temples must be revered and supported. The sacred temples must be revered and supported. Turning to constitutional affairs, Buddha wants the republicans to hold full and frequent assemblies. They must "meet together in concord and rise in concord and carry out Vajjian business in concord." So long as these wholesome rules were observed. "So long may the Vajjians be expected not to decline but to prosper."²⁸

One of the notable figures in Buddhist literature in Asvaghosa who composed in Sanskrit about the first century A.D. and who may be regarded as the forerunner of Kalidasa. Sprung from a Brahman family, he was a master of Sanskrit learning. In his Saundaram Nandam Kavyam, Asvaghosa tells us that some princes founded a city but discovered that if its affairs were to prosper, they must have a king. The earth without a supreme lord is like the firmament without the moon. So the princes raised to sovereignty one of themselves who was senior to the rest in age, 'discipline', and accomplishments. Here the kingship rests on the basis of consent and is purely secular in origin, thanks to Buddhist influence. The scepter is always to be wielded for the sake of virtue, not for the sake of selfish gratification. The king should be the guide and teacher of his subjects.²⁹

In the Buddha Charita or life of Buddha which enjoyed tremendous vogue all over the Buddhist world, Asvaghosa paints Suddhodana as the mighty and glorious leader of his people. "He illumined his people on every side, showing them the paths which they were to follow."³⁰ He had numberless councilors.³¹ Suddhodana was not really a king but the chief of a republican clan. But by the time of Asvaghosa republics were a thing of the past and

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Digha Nikaya, VII, 19.

²⁹ Saundara Nandam Kavyam, Asvaghosa, Ch.X.

³⁰ Ibid., I, 14.

³¹ Asvaghosa, Buddha Charita, I, 12.

the clansmen were taken to be counselors. Asvaghosa wants that princes should receive as thorough education.³² The king takes one-sixth of the produce as price of the protection he affords. Suddhodhana was gentle and kind to all. Guilty persons were reformed with gentle words.³³

In other remarkable work called *Sutralankara*, a collection of pious legends after the *Jataka* and *Avadana* pattern, Asvaghosa repeats similar ideas. In an interesting passage he wants an heir- apparent to study the following subjects:

"The Veda, archery, medicine, sacrifices, astronomy, grammar, the origin of writing, the performance of sacrifices, eloquence, rhetoric, the art of love, interest, purity of families, the ten names, computation, chess, dice, the study of origins, music and song, the art of playing on the conch, dancing and laughter, the art of the prestidigitation, education, the making of garlands of flowers, massage, the science of precious stones and valuables materials for clothing, silk, sealing, weaving, wax work, strategy, sewing, sculpture, painting, literature, arrangement of garlands, interpretation of dreams, interpretation of the flight of birds, horoscopes of boys and girls, the training of elephants, the art of playing on the tambourine, the rules of battle array, the domesticating of horses, the carrying of the lance, jumping, running and fording a river."

A still more interesting passage occurs in the *Vajrasuchi*, another of the numerous works of Asvaghosa. Here caste is attacked on psychological ground. All human beings are -

" In respect of joy and sorrow, love, insight, manners and ways, death, fear and life all equal."³⁴ Another famous Buddhist author, who, according to Taranatha, was a king in Saurashtra or modern Gujarat, wrote a compendium called *Sikasasamuchchaya*, a commentary on his *Karikas*. But he is content to repeat the ordinary precepts and is, on the whole, disappointing.

About the third century A.D. Aryadeva incidentally offered some political reflections in his *Catuhshatika*. The king is the servant of the people and the revenue represents his wages. Righteousness is supreme. If it is forsaken by a king, the world goes to ruin. In all public affairs, military or diplomatic, the rules of morality must be observed. Aryadeva did not believe in the doctrine of Reason of State.³⁵

The *Lalitavistara*, one of the most sacred of Mahayan Texts, a work in Sanskrit prose and mixed Sanskrit verse, which has had many Chinese, Tibetan and Burmese versions, gives the life of Buddha and frequently refers to royal affairs, but it is content, to repeat, in a fragmentary way, the political wisdom of its predecessors.³⁶

³² *Ibid.*, II, 24.

³³ *Ibid.*, II, 42, 44.

³⁴ G.K. Nariman, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-40.

³⁵ Aryadeva, pp. 462-464.

³⁶ *Lalitavistara*, Ed. Rajendra Lal Mitra, 1877.

Both the Jatakas and Dhammapada formed the subjects of huge commentaries which have been ascribed to Buddhaghosa, the great Buddhist writer who flourished about the fifth century A.D. But their language and style are so entirely different from the undoubted productions of Buddhaghosa that the traditional authorship cannot be accepted.³⁷ But it has not yet been possible to discover their real authors. The two commentaries breathe the same tone, in fact, the Dhammapada commentary is dependent on that of the Jatakas. The former is probably later than the fifth or sixth century A.D. the Dhammapada Atthakatha, as it called, illustrates the Buddha's dialogues by 299 stories.³⁸ The Buddhists who specialized in the art of imparting moral instructions through tales, ransack all walks and situations of life of inculcate ethical doctrine. In the Attha- Katha, as in the Jatakas, kings and ministers flit across the stage. The worthlessness of regal splendor is only too often brought out but there are numberless exhortations to righteous rule, impartial justice, mercy to the distressed, protection of all. Here as elsewhere, the ideal of a universal empire is tacitly accepted and approved.

³⁷ See Rhys Davids, *Buddhist Birth Stories*, pp. LXII-LXVI.

³⁸ The stories have been translated by E.W. Burlingame, in the *Buddhist Legends*, Harvard Oriental Research, Vol. 28-30.

Chapter 2

A Brief Survey of the Administrative System of the Mauryas

2.1 Introduction:

The Mauryas not only established an all-India empire but very seriously made the earliest attempt in Indian History to devise a well-organized administrative structure on well-defined principles, and for avowed objectives. The account left by Megasthenes, as preserved in the writings of Strabo and Arrian, is a contemporary commentary on the administration under Chandragupta Maurya, in whose court Megasthenes was representing the Syrian Emperor Selucus Nikator.¹ Presuming that the Greek ambassador was unacquainted with Indian languages and ignorant of special nuances of Indian administrative terms and practices, his account is to be judged critically, and often his statements such as "No Indian uses slaves" are proved to be contrary to facts. But one should not forget that he was a political animal of the politically conscious and developed Greece. Therefore, in his account of the administration of Chandragupta we may often find here and there a well-educated Greek's keen observation and assessment, with the view of enlightening his people about an empire which had proved its mettle against the Greeks. The inscriptions of Ashoka are again authentic contemporary records which shed interesting light on the working of the administrative system in his time.

Kautilya's Arthashastra is another source of information for the period. But there has been a long controversy about its authenticity and date. The use of the word 'Cinapatta' and also the suggestion of a large number of petty states clustering around the king desirous of victory² suggest to many scholars a time earlier or later than the Mauryan period. But even without vouchsafing for every word in the extent Arthashastra as Kautilya's own and even realizing that interpretations and loss of a few pages here and there could be possible,³ there is a general tendency among scholars to look upon the Arthashastra of Kautilya as mirroring the administrative policy and structure of the Mauryan State.⁴ The Mauryan empire did not arise out of nothing less. The empire of the Nandas preceded it.

There is no evidence about the administrative measures taken by the Nandas for the empire they conquered, rather, the traditional account of greedy Dhanananda would lead one to suspect that the Nanda empire was more predatory in nature rather than constructive or productive. Information gleaned from the early Buddhist sources about the administration under Bimbisara is scanty but it indicates that such a setup could not have served as the

¹ R.C. Majumdar, *Classical Account of India*, p. 271.

² K.A. VI.2.

³ D.C. Kosambi, *Culture and Civilization of Ancient India*, p. 142.

⁴ *Comprehensive History of India*, Vol. 2, p. 52, CHI, I.p. 49.

basis for the far-flung empire of Chandragupta. The failure of the Indian kingdoms against Alexander and the easy uprooting of the Nandas must have taught a lesson to the architects of the new empire- Chandragupta and Chanakya. It is not unlikely, though no direct proof is available, that the example of the Achemenid imperial system, and developments taking place under the necessary inspiration and model, for a 'strong centralized monarchy'. Socio-economic conditions also posed new problems demanding solution. Iron had come into use near about 1000 B.C.,⁵ and it had helped not only in the manufacture of improved weapons, but also of tools, which could clear the dense tropical forests. Iron plowshares drawn by hardy bullocks improved agriculture and contributed to a diversity of products and a large surplus. Crafts had also multiplied. All this had promoted brisker trade and commerce, and consequently, the rise of cities. This process was by 600 B.C., well advanced, as revealed by early Buddhist Literature. And now small independent political divisions must have appeared to be anachronistic and behind times. Longer trade-routes, extensive highways, and their maintenance and protection from robbers and other anti-social elements demanded a large political entity, a strong and more centralized political authority whose writ would be applicable over large areas. Contemporary political situation in West Asia and the extension of money economy pointed in the same direction. The social scene was no less conducive to some kind of development. New Protestant religions attracted a large number of people. The Brahmanic Asrama systems- the four-fold order-which reserved the religious life for old people, was being given up, and men and women of productive capacity, were being lured away by monastic orders. This not only transgressed the Brahmanic socio-economic orders, but must also have hindered production, and created a climate against materialism even in villages. A large number of boys and girls, wives and mothers, unmarried daughters, widows were left uncared for when earning members became shave monks. It needed a strong restraining hand to counter this situation. Kautilya clearly envisaged appropriate action, and deterrent legal provisions to stem this tide and protect production.⁶ Military consideration also pointed to the desirability of having a strong unified political state. As we have seen, iron was very much in use, and, it can be presumed, easily available. Iron-equipments were being manufactured. It was necessary that the use of the weapons or equipments be restricted to a responsible few, to prevent large people-militia under adventurers from being constituted. Such an eventuality would have posed a danger to peace, so necessary for socio-economic development. It, therefore, followed that the political authority should be so strong and invulnerable as to exercise some kind of monopoly over arms.

We know that in the time of Chandragupta Maurya no private person could own a horse or an elephant⁷ and no one could manufacture arms on wages except for the king.⁸ Actually it appears that there was a kind of ban on carrying of arms by private citizens without license.

"People shall move unarmed, except those permitted with a sealed license."⁹

⁵ R.K. Mookerji, *Age of Imperial Unity*, Ch. II.

⁶ K.A., BK, II. 1. 26-34.

⁷ McCrindle, Meg. & Arrian, pp. 89-90.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ K.A.V., 3.38.

It is clear that the need for a strong and powerful state was fulfilled by the Mauryas having a large standing army, with monopoly over cavalry, elephants and ship-building. According to Shastri, the Hellenistic model also influenced the character of the Maurya polity.¹⁰ According to Smith, the little touches of forging manners in the court and institutions of Chandragupta are Persian, not Greek¹¹. Ghoshal after discussing the subject regards the questions as an open one.

"In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare. Whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as his good, but whatever pleases his subjects, he shall consider as his good."¹² In no clearer and other words can the ideals and nature of a welfare state be stated even today."¹³

It is not possible to be definite about the theory on which the Mauryan state was established. Kautilya does not specially state the theory of the origin of the state that he believed in.

But from the contents of the Arthashastra it is clear that at that time two important theories of the origin of the state -Original Compact theory and Divine Vaivasvata, is said to have been the first chosen by the people sick of matsyanvaya to afford them protection, and in return the people were to pay him taxes and tolls.

Further it is also said that the king was Yama and Indra on the earth, and those who show disrespect to him, suffer divine punishments as well.¹⁴

However, these statements put in the mouths of royal secret agents were actually made to win the disaffected people to the king's side, or to threaten, the irreconcilable, with both the king's and gods¹⁵ anger and displeasure. But there is no doubt that the Mauryan state's main justification lay in providing protection to the people, and promoting their Yogakshema-welfare. Only by ably discharging this duty could the king hope for heaven after death.¹⁶ This obligation was rightly taken by Ashoka as a debt which he was righteously bound to repay. It is on this foundation- the promotion of the welfare of the people- that the extensive and even rigorous application of law and royal authority in all walks of the subject's lives are sought to be justified. The interests and the welfare of the people were, so to say inextricably mixed with those of the state. Only a strong state could ensure the happiness and welfare of the people.

This is, therefore, why the ruler was the kingpin of the administration, as the success of the failure of the government depended on the character and ability of the king. Kautilya recognizes seven constituent elements of sovereignty. The king not only heads the list, but

¹⁰ Sastri, K.A.N., *Age of the Nandas and the Mauryas*, pp. 174-75.

¹¹ E. Hg. III. Edn. p. 145.

¹² K.A. I. 19. 34.

¹³ For detailed discussion see JBRS. XI. Pt. II, p.193.

¹⁴ BR. I. 13, 10-11.

¹⁵ K.A. VIII. 2.1.

¹⁶ K.A. III. 1. 41.

is also responsible for the progress or downfall of the other elements. The king is, as it were, the aggregate of the Prakritis. So much depended on the king that Kautilya held:

"A wise king can make even the poor and miserable elements of sovereignty happy and prosperous, but a wicked king will surely destroy the most prosperous and loyal elements of his kingdom."¹⁷

At another place he observes:

"What character he has, that character the constituents came to have, being dependent on him in the matter of energetic activity and remissions. For the king is in the place of their head."¹⁸

Kautilya recommends succession of the eldest son of the king normally, though he advises the king to select the self-controlled son out of many sons.¹⁹

It was therefore necessary that in a dynastic monarchical system great stress be laid upon the training of the princes- they would be kings. For such training Kautilya prescribes a comprehensive study of military sciences and history which included the Purans, the Dharamasastra and the Arthasastra.

The young prince every had to revise the old lessons and learn new ones. Company influences and makes the man and so the prince was to associate with experienced and disciplined experts. As a student he was to study sciences under specialized teachers, Varta under government superintendents and Dandaniti under academic teachers and active politicians.²⁰ A well-educated and disciplined king who devoted himself.

" to good government of his subjects and bent on doing good to the people, that king will enjoy the earth unopposed."²¹

The safe and long rule of a king is dependent on his contributing to the welfare of the people. It is therefore not surprising that Kautilya asks the king to be kind, to show favours to the people as a father²² and Ashoka proclaims that subjects are as his children.²³ Who is more interested in the welfare of his children than a father?

The rigorous training, education and association with the elderly and the wise men from childhood must have ordinarily conditioned the mind of the prince to enable him to play the role of a righteous king. On becoming a king, he was to remember that control of the senses

¹⁷ Ibid. VI. f.

¹⁸ Ibid., VIII. 1.17-18.

¹⁹ I. 17.52.

²⁰ Ibid., I, 5. 7-8.

²¹ Ibid., VIII. 1.17-18.

²² Ibid. II. 1. 18.

²³ IKRE, II.

was necessary, study of history would have informed him of kings ruining themselves and their kingdoms by becoming victims of even one of the six-fold vices, and of kings who ruled successfully by exercising restraint on their senses. If later traditions are to be believed, Chandragupta had received good education under expert teachers like Chanakya. It appears that royal princes were also given practical training and experience in administration. Ashoka served as Viceroy in Taxila and Ujjain before he became emperor.

Chandragupta had a busy time-table. Kautilya provides an ideal daily routine for the king. Both day and night were divided into eight parts, and most of the time was engaged in looking after state business, though a part of it was reserved for private study, recreations and religious affairs. Urgent calls were to supersede the routine and were never to be put off. Ashoka asked his reporters to inform him about the affairs of his kingdom whether he was eating or in the harem, or in the inner apartment, or even in the farms, or in the place of religious instruction, or in the parks.²⁴

The Mauryan king was to be "energetic and ever- wakeful."²⁵ Example being better than precept, only an energetic king could inspire his subjects to be similarly energetic, in the interest on increasing production.

But the Mauryan king was wakeful also for his own safety. Bhardavaja, quoted by Kautilya, holds:

"Princes like crabs have a notorious tendency of eating up their begetter. So the king had to take proper care against the ambitions of princes often backed by one or the other party factions in the kingdom. The king had to ensure that the prince was trained under proper discipline. He was to be always watched by the king's spies who were to restrain him from unrighteous paths. When found qualified, the prince was to be appointed commander-in-chief or Yuvraja. A prince under restraint was a potential rebel. So the king had to wisely guard against such action. The king could have more than one wife. Ashoka had many. A king had to be careful with his wives in the harem."

And Kautilya refers to kings having been murdered in their own harem.²⁶ The harem was to be watched and administered by a large contingent of men and women, and meticulous care was taken for the personal safety of the king who was always protected by armed women bodyguards, whether granting interview to saints or ascetics or meeting ministers or foreign envoys or going and coming into the capital.²⁷ Megasthenes also says that the care of the king's Person was entrusted to women. Even hatred against the king was punishable, and the death penalty was prescribed for sedition. Thus, well-protected the king carried on state business. He was vested with supreme executive, judicial and military powers. He was the head of the government.

²⁴ RE, VI.

²⁵ K.A., I. 19.5.

²⁶ Ibid., 20, 15-16.

²⁷ I. 21, 1. 24.

Amon his extensive powers, appointment of ministers and other high officials, consultation with mantris or mantriparishad, institution of spies and exercise of financial and military powers particularly,²⁸ may be mentioned. Giving personal attention to the business of gods and Brahmanas, to religious places, to interests of minors, orphans, affected, aged or helpless, and women was among his other duties.²⁹ We know from Ashoka inscription that he constituted a special class of officers called the Dharmma Mahamatras³⁰ and toured his empire to oversee the execution of his programme.³¹

He also gave orders to his officers to tour the country periodically³² and to carry on duties as delegated by the emperor. He was particularly interested in the execution of public welfare activities like agriculture, industry and trade. He was the highest court of appeal and he heard complaints in person.³³ Kautilya observes:

"When in the court, he shall never cause his petitioners to wait at the door, for when a king makes himself inaccessible to his people..... he may cause thereby public disaffection³⁴ He was to award just punishment, neither mild nor excessive.³⁵ There is some uncertainty about the law- making powers of the king.³⁶ According to Hindu legal texts, Sruti, Smriti, Myaya and Sadacara are the four sources of law. The king does not appear as the source of law in early Dharmasastra." The king administered law, moved the wheel of law, was Dharmachakra pravartaka but was not the creator of the law. But Kautilya includes Rajasasana, edicts of the king as one of the four legs of law, the other being, Dharma, Vyavahara and Charitra, and if in conflict, the royal edict supersedes the rest. It has been argued that this means that the royal edict was the dominant law. But it is to be pointed out that the verse in the context is liable to another interpretation.³⁷

However, it has to be conceded that both Kautilya's Arthsastra and Ashokan inscriptions show that a large number of royal edicts were issued regulating trade, commerce, agriculture, market and socio- religious life, and these were justifiable i.e. the person affected could go to the court against the government or the government could prosecute citizens for defying the royal edicts, and adequate punishments were prescribed and meted out. Thus, royal edicts were for all practical purposes regulatory laws, if not substantive or positive law.

The king was the head of the military and often led the army in the battle-field.³⁸

²⁸ K.A. 1.7, 1.8. 1.19.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ P.E. VII. R.E.V.

³¹ R.E. VIII.

³² KRE- I.

³³ McCrindle, op. cit. p. 71.

³⁴ K.A. BK. I.

³⁵ I. 4.8.

³⁶ JBRS, 1954, pp. 28ff.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ K.A., X. 2.20.

Chandragupta solved the problem of ruling over extensive lands by a device of political ingenuity, which was first adopted by the Achaemenian emperors, viz., by splitting up the unwieldy area into convenient and manageable units, each of which was placed under a provincial governor and governed according to a common pattern. Thus the difficulties of distance and communication were solved by a decentralized scheme of administration. It was difficult in those days of primitive transport to aim at a centralized administration. The authority had to be divided into a hierarchy of jurisdiction from top to bottom. Even within the limited local area, much of the sovereign authority had to be shared with the various self-governing groups of the country. The village community functioned like a self-governing corporation or a republic, giving the villagers healthy scope for the exercise of governance, and of managing their own local concerns and affairs. Thus the Indian polity of those days was broad-based and built upon truly democratic foundation.

The king was the supreme head of the state and had military, judicial, executive and legislative functions. We learn from various sources a great deal of the king's own part in administration. He was a very hard-worked official. Megasthenes states that:

"The king does not sleep in daytime but remains in the court the whole day for the purpose of judging causes and other public business which was not interrupted even when the hour arrived for massaging his body. Even when the king has his hair combed and dressed, he has not respite from public business. At that time, he gives audience to his ambassadors."

In an epoch of great monarchies, it was natural to exalt the power of the monarch. According to the general theory of Hindu polity, the king was only the guardian of the law, not its maker, laws depended for their validity on their intrinsic conformity to the standard of equity and on the sanction of social usage, and every decree of the king had to conform to both these sources of legal right.³⁹ According to Kautilya, on the other hand, the royal decree had an independent validity of its own, moreover, its validity was of so overriding a character that it had to be taken to prevail against equity, private treaty or contract, and social usage.⁴⁰

This view of the supremacy of the royal decree is exceptional among Indian writers, it occurs for the first time in Kautilya, and is traced only in Narada among subsequent texts. Kautilya also exalts reason above the prescription of texts in cases of conflict between the two and boldly justifies this on the plea that texts became corrupt with lapse of time. These statements placed by Kautilya at the head of the section on the administration of justice in the Arthashastra, clearly mark an attempt to evolve a new norm in civil law, in the establishments of which the royal authority would be actively exerted both directly by the king himself, and indirectly by the judgements and rulings of the higher officials of state delivered in the name of the king. The same feature obtained in all the contemporary Hellenistic monarchies, and it is by no means unlikely that Kautilya was influenced by these foreign practices when he put forward this new principle in his work.

³⁹ Parasara, III, p. 13.

⁴⁰ K.A. III. 1.

Mauryan monarchy, however, was by no means a mere copy of foreign institutions any more than Mauryan art was an unthinking imitation of foreign models, in both cases specific features were borrowed but assimilated into the indigenous scheme so as to produce a harmonious whole. That these efforts left no permanent mark in Indian tradition is another matter.

The king was the wielder of the scepter and his chief function was to maintain the social order by restraining wrong-doers and ensuring the peace necessary for lawful men to pursue their avocations without hindrance⁴¹. Kings were described in this period as *devanampriya*, beloved of the Gods, and perhaps also as *privadarsana*, of gracious appearance. The throne looked for support to the sacerdotal power and generally got it, this is apparent from the relation in which Kautilya stood to Chandraguotam, from the importance of the Purohita in the state as the special advice of the monarch with whom he conferred alone in difficulties and from the comprehensive statement in the Arthashastra which clinches the traditional view saying:

"Royal power triumphs even without arms and ever remains invincible when it is upheld by the Brahmins, is sanctified by the Council of Ministers, and follows the precepts of the Sastras."⁴²

The king led a strenuous life and was ever intent in the promotion of the well-being of his subjects. His daily routine was prescribed by the textbooks and Kautilya also reproduces this model time-table, but he adds wisely that the monarch is to adjust the programme of work according to his capacity and inclination.⁴³

He should ever be prepared to deal with urgent matters and should not make himself inaccessible to persons who wished to meet him on business, as this would lead to grave political disaffection.

Diligence was his first duty. Ashoka lived up to this exacting ideal, we have no reason to believe that Chandragupta and Bindusara did otherwise. The observations of Megasthenes on the arrangement in the royal palace and the precautions taken for ensuring the safety of the king's person are fully borne out in the chapters of the Arthashastra.⁴⁴

All personal services to the monarch were performed by women, the risks of food poisoning and intrigues in the harem were carefully guarded against, and on the occasions when the king ventured forth from the palace, his route was guarded by armed soldiers.

A careful watch was kept over visitors in the audience hall. The princes were trained carefully and employed in situations suited to their capacity and taste.

⁴¹ K.A. I.4.

⁴² Ibid., I.9.

⁴³ Ibid., I.19.

⁴⁴ Ibid., I, 20-21.

On this question, apt to the particularly vexatious owing to the prevalent polygamy of kings, Kautilya dismisses all the antiquated and ingenious views put forward in the works known to him, and lays down the course dictated alike by common sense, propriety and the public good. He is very clear that in no case should an ill-disciplined prince, even if he happened to be the only son of the reigning monarch, be employed in the affairs of the state or permitted to sit on the throne. III-natured princes were to be put under restraint and kept out of harems away.

The power, function and position of the king changed according to the needs of the situation. With the growth of administrative machinery and the expansion of territories, the power of the king increased and he became the pivot of the system. By the time of Kautilya, monarchy was the prevailing and accepted form of rule and had become hereditary. The king was expected to be acquainted with the Vedic culture and according to Kautilya, he should also be an expert in economics and polity. Both the Mahabhartha and the Arthashastra are agreed on the point that the king should be adept in drafting, accounts, diplomatic behaviours, military tactics and should possess all the necessary qualities of a statesman. Kautilya and Megasthenes have described the busy routine of the king, with hardly six hours' rest. According to Kautilya, a king should be quick in action and remarkable in energy was the fountain head of all governmental action. He could issue edicts, prescribe a definite course of conduct and even set aside the advice of ministers, if necessary in public interest. Foreign policy and peace and war were determined by the king. He presided over the council of ministers. He was the supreme head of the executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary. He was also the supreme commander. He could order release of prisoners or grant them reprieve mercy-petition. Kautilya assigned to the king the highest position in the state. The office of the king was created to protect private property and so great was their responsibility that it was incumbent on the king to restore to the subject his stolen wealth. He should be capable of acquiring, preserving and distributing wealth. It was the duty of the king to prevent adultery, honour the wealthy and safeguard the poor. It was the obligation of the king to preserve the Varna System.

All-important officials were appointed by the king as he occupied the highest position in the body politic. According to Kautilya, monarchy was an inevitable factor in the formation of a state as the territory itself. The royal duty amounted to securing the stability of the social order. The king should avoid excessive indulgence or extreme asceticism and should always be alert and energetic.

According to Kautilya, the following are the chief qualities of the king which would enable him to properly perform the duties of a state:

"Noble birth, force of mind, valour, ability to see through the eyes of the age persons, love of virtue and truth, straightforwardness, gratefulness, comprehensiveness of outlook, enthusiasm, promptitude, resoluteness of spirit, love for discipline, sharp intellect, a well-built stature, versatility, ability to confer rewards and inflict punishments, capability to guard against dangers, dignity, foresight, readiness to avail one's self opportunities, resourcefulness, freedom from passion, anger, greed and such other vices, a beaming countenance, and the observance of traditional usages and customs." The king was the guardian of his subjects.

Kautilya appears to conceive of royal duties as the taking of protective and disciplinary measures for the solidarity and progress of the community committed to his care, by offering all possible opportunities to its individuals for the attainment of the three Purusharthas. As a symbol of the state, his utility was decidedly greater than other elements of the state. He was the supreme lord authorized to weed out enemies and entrusted with the responsibility for the preservation of law and proper administration of his kingdom.

Whatever are his powers and authority, the king was not an absolute despot, either in theory or in practice. There were certain limitations on his powers and authority. The Brahmanas wielded a strong authority and that was a great check. We see in the Punarabhisheka ceremony that the king had to descend from the throne and make obeisance to the holy power of the Brahmaanas. It is evident from the Aitareya Brahmana and the Arthashastra that even a powerful king like Janamejaya was humbled by the Brahmanas and even Janaka of Mithila met his doom for a crime against a Brahmana maiden. The ministers and other officials, individually or collectively, also exerted some influence over the king. Kautilya exhorts the king to be one with the people. The loose character of the monarch was considered detrimental to the interests of the state. Kautilya lays great emphasis on moral and cultural attainments of the king. The influence of Dharma was mainly responsible for restraining the Kautilyan prince from abusing the absolute sovereignty with which he was invested.

It was because of absence of proper training, in some cases, that the king tended to become arbitrary, tyrannical and whimsical and, therefore, Kautilya laid emphasis on the proper training of the prince. The high ideals, enunciated in ancient Indian political works, were there to guide the king and any deviation from the accepted point of view was considered immoral. The king had to take into consideration current public opinion and go by the advice of the elders and ministers. If he turned tyrannical, the people were to take action against him.

Kautilya holds that Danda must be applied with justice if authority is to have the respect of the people. The unjust exercise of powers is bound to produce chaos and confusion. An oppressive king is contemptible. Restraints on the authority of the king were not merely formal, but those imposed by obligations. Misuse of royal powers was to be opposed by the people. It was the law, and not his subjects, that punished the erring king. The power of the Brahmana is never to be discounted. The ministers exercised a powerful check over the activities of the king who was advised to surround himself with men of unimpeachable character. The king was to unite power with wisdom as well as with law and moral sanctions rather than constitutional and political ones. The subservience of the king to Dharma and customary practice and usages, the emphasis on the responsibilities implied by the power, the strategic position of the Brahmanas and the practical problems of administrative show that the king was not a despot, and absolutism and arbitrariness bound no place in the administrative machinery.

The Kautilyan king was not an absolutely free agent either in theory or in practice. The king was to rule according to Dharma. The laws of the communities, professions and guilds were to be respected by the king. These were recognized and recorded in proper registers for reference, as taxes were levied in accordance with the customary usage and law of the regions concerned.

The king was bound by the local law, and respect for established customs was essential in dealing with the conquered territories. The fact that the king had to make good the loss, created by theft or robbery, is indicative of the king's legal responsibility to protect the people. The king should not take note of public reaction to his administrative measures. The threat of people's disaffection was one of the deterrents against the tyranny of heavy taxation, according to Kautilya. He warns the king not to enrage the people by insulting the good and commending the wicked. In spite of all these checks, there was no constitutional machinery to prevent the king acting tyrannically and to keep him within bounds. We cannot agree with Jayaswal and others that the Mauryan king was a limited monarch. The king had the upper hand over the ministers and he was the ultimate authority. The ministers of the Kautilyan state were not popular representatives and not possible to any parliament. They were responsible only to the king who employed spies to watch over their activities. The king did accept their advice and to rule with moderation.

It is physically and humanly impossible even for a highly accomplished sovereign to assume all the duties of the government and hence he must, rely on his ministers. The appointment of these officials was the king's voluntary choice and thus a matter of pure expediency. The king did not actually delegate authority, he rather sought to lessen his burden but not his responsibility. Final decisions always rested with him.

The king was assisted by a number of ministers, the purohitas being in a separate and highly respected category by himself. The ministers were generally men of proved ability and character. There was no hard and fast the regarding their numbers at any time, and they often met in council for transacting public business, and in cases of difference in views decisions were taken by majority of votes. Ministers who were absent from the court were sometimes consulted by letter. The king considered himself free to consult a single ministers, or a number of them, or the whole council according to the requirements of the subjects on hand.⁴⁵

In his chapter on the Mantradhikara, Kautilya says:

"In critical moment, the king shall summon his ministers individually and collectively and deliberate with them. He shall either act upon the decision of the majority or on that which appears to bring success."

All kinds of administrative measures were preceded by deliberations. The king presided over the Mantriparishad. It was only a consultative body with powers of initiating measures. The king sometimes deputed ministers to do some important work. In the course of his advice to the Prime Minister concerning his behavior towards the sovereign. Kautilya says-

"..... the life of men in royal service is as dangerous as that in fire..... king has the power either to destroy or the exalt his servants."

⁴⁵ Ibid. I. 15.

In the opinion of Kautilya, the position of the Prime Minister entirely depended upon the will of the monarch. Though morally liable to follow the opinion of the majority. It was left to the king to select the means which was best calculated to bring him success. The Prime Minister was the joint head of the Mantrins and the Amities or the Chief Executive officers who were in-charge of the manifold departments of the state.

Parishad is referred to in the Rock Edict of VI of Ashoka but the word mantin was not known to Ashoken Sources. Kautilya used the word Saciva as adviser of the king. He also refers to the amatyas and their creation, and distinguishes them from mantrins,⁴⁶ But at another place, the distinction is blurred and while the chapters deals with the creation of Mantrin and Purohita, the qualifications of amatyasampat are mentioned, and he speaks of action by amatyas.⁴⁷ The three words aamatya, saciva and mantra have the same meaning, a counselor or a minister. But Kautilya must have used these words in the technical sense, meaning different ranks and work of the three. In this chapter on the creation of amatyas he clearly says that they are to be employed not as mantries but as amatyas. He also refers to the creation of the office of the Mahamatras⁴⁸. It is not easy to distinguish these officers from one another. It may be said that the amatyas constituted the cadre of imperial senior civil service which of three grades, high, middle and low. Out of these, those who successfully underwent all the rigorous tests, were appointed mantrins.⁴⁹ Those who were successful in all respects but were not appointed as mantrin were probably designated as Mahamantras and may have been members of the Mantriparishad. Mantrins were probably recruited from amongst those who were experienced administrators. It is difficult to place Saciva exactly. The term probably referred to advisers of the king in general. Out of the cadre of the highest grade of the amatyas, were appointed the superintendents of the departments.⁵⁰

The king heard the opinions of the amatyas and mantrin. Kautilya held that the number of mantrins should be three or four.⁵¹ These appear to be the king's most confidential advisers. He could consult all the ministers together or two or one, as time, place and work demanded. One of the constant advisers of the king was Purohita, who was expected to be well- versed in Vedic literature and in the science of government, and was also capable of reading portents.

Kautilya advises the king to follow his high priest as a pupil his teacher, a son of the father, and a servant his master.⁵² The consultation with mentrin or mantriparishad was to be absolutely in secrecy and any one quits of divulging the secret deliberations was punished severely. The council chamber was to be so constructed as to ensure strictest privacy.⁵³ The king ordinarily was free to accept or reject the advice of the ministers. But he had to seek

⁴⁶ B.K. 1.8.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 1.19.

⁴⁸ II. 5.5.

⁴⁹ I. 10. 14. Sarvopadhasuddham Mantrinah Kuryat.

⁵⁰ II. 9.1.

⁵¹ I. 15. 34.

⁵² 1.9.10.

⁵³ 1.15., 2.5.

advice on all matters of state before taking a decision or starting a work.⁵⁴ The mantrins advised the king in appointing certain classes of spies.⁵⁵ The ministers also accompanied him in the battle field and encouraged the warriors.⁵⁶ Among important matters of business over which the king sought the advice of his mantrins were, ways and means to begin a project, marshalling men and resources for it, fixing the time and place for the project, considering the means to ward off possible dangers in the execution of the work and assuring the ultimate success of the project. The king with the help of his mantra and high priest selected departments for the amatyas after putting them to severe tests, and only those who had high intellectual qualifications, practical experience, good heredity and firm loyalty, all of which were well ascertained by responsible persons and an excellent intelligence system, were eligible for the highest cadre of the amatyas from whose rank ministers were chosen. Under the circumstances, it is quite natural to presume that the king gave due weight to the advice tendered by his mantrins. The mantrin played an important role during the illness or death of the king and helped in ensuring succession the royal line.⁵⁷ the Mantri's importance is obvious from the fact that he daily waited upon the king at the palace in the fourth hall in the morning.⁵⁸ While the mantrin was appointed by the king and held office during his pleasures he was at best anmantris with the king only shows that he was to govern the kingdom with their advice.⁵⁹

But the king also consulted the mantriparishad, which could consist of as any members as was thought necessary and the deliberations were kept secret. Members of the mantriparishad were inferior in rank to mantrins. Members when out of station could give the advice in writing if required by royal orders. This explains the great importance of this council in the eyes of the king.

This was more like an executive council whose main function was to see that the work decided upon is started in right earnest, work under progress is completed, and completed work is improved upon. It was this council which saw that orders were strictly obeyed⁶⁰ and the work decided upon went on as scheduled. To us it appears that while the mantrins advised the king about policy formulation and execution of the schemes, the Mantriparishad was like the Secretariat the body responsible for the execution of the council supervised the works in progress and he often reviewed their progress with members near him or with those at a distance by a message.

The Mantriparishad was active and important in the time of Ashoka also. In R.E. III Ashoka directs yuktas, rajukas and pradesika that when they go on tour every five years for official business, they should also instruct people in the Dhamma which, besides performing others meritorious deeds, also included amassing and spending little. The yuktas particularly were instructed to inspect the accounts of individual citizens, to see that the above principle of

⁵⁴ 1.15.2, Mantrapurvah Sarvambhah.

⁵⁵ I.II. 1.

⁵⁶ X. 3.32.

⁵⁷ Goosal, op. cit., pp. 25-26.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Goosal, op. cit., pp. 26.

⁶⁰ K.A., 15, 22.

Dhamma was adhered to by the people. Ashoka often issued proclamations of donation of gave urgent oral instructions to his officers. Those were executive orders and they could be debated in the Parishad, and Ashoka's only anxiety was that he should be informed of such debates in the parishad over his order or proclamation of donation or urgent instruction to his officers.⁶¹ This shows that the Parishad was fully seized with all executive matters, and the king's oral orders on which there could arise some doubt in the Parishad had to be explained by the king.

It also means that the king was not always present during the deliberations over executive matters in the council. K.P. Jayaswal's opinion that this meant that the Parishad could reject the oral proclamations of the king issued without the council's prior approval⁶² is not easy to accept.⁶³ What is certain is that the council had the right to debate over such oral instructions of the king, and the latter considered it important enough to be informed of this immediately so that he could explain or clarify the facts and their context. Ultimate decision appears to rest with the king. By and large it is clear that the Parishad played a very important role in the administration during the time of Ashoka. While the decisions of the mantriparishad during normal times may not have been binding upon the king, there is no doubt that in any emergency the king called the mantrins and mantriparishad jointly and explained the situation to them.

It is clear from Kautilya that the king was bound to accept the advice of the majority or the course of action suggested by them for obtaining success in the emergency.⁶⁴

In the Arthashastra,⁶⁵ the distinction between the ministers and the department head is not very clear. Important heads of the departments were generally ministers. The officials were called Adhyaksas.

In the second book of the arthashastra, we have the duties of the Superintendents. The Chamberlain had to see to the construction of the treasury house, trading house, the store house of grains, forest produce, armoury and the jail. Other official besides him were the collector general, who was responsible for forts, mines, buildings, gardens, forests, roads etc, the superintendent of accounts and the Commander-in-chief etc. They were the major administrative officials with higher salaries. They were various other officials with higher salaries. They were various other officials who we shall consider later. The last three chapters of the fifth book of the Arthashastra seem to be exclusively designed by Kautilya for directing the Prime Minister in the proper performance of his duties. The council of ministers was to be composed of an inner and outer body. The inner body was concerned with the deliberation and policy making and the outer body was charged with executing these decisions. Meetings of the council were held in strict secrecy. Kautilya goes so far as

⁶¹ R.E. VI.

⁶² Hindu Polity XXVI, p. 296.

⁶³ Barua, Ashoka and his inscription, p. 213.

⁶⁴ K.A., 1.15.59.

⁶⁵ Ibid., V. 3.

to exclude certain boards and animals from the council chambers for fear of their transmitting information of the proceedings.

According to Kautilya, the Cabinet secret could leak out through Pramada (Carelessness), mada (intoxication), Suptapralapa (talk during sleep) and Kamadi (sensuality) of councilors. According to Kautilya, the agenda of the council comprised deliberations on the following five items:

- a. Means of commencing operation
- b. Providing men and materials
- c. Selection of place and time
- d. Counteraction of disaster
- e. Successful accomplishment.

These five aspects had to be duly considered in regard to every item of work put before the council for consideration, the councilor being questioned both individually and collectively, and asked to justify their views.

When a resolution was approved, it was to be acted upon at the earliest opportunity. Secrecy was to be maintained before the action was taken.

Though it was recommended that the king be to the Purohita, as a servant to his master, the Purohita, in the Arthashastra does not have the eminence that he enjoyed in the Dharmashastra.

Kautilya also discusses the proper number of councilors to be allowed at each sitting and then discusses the number of ministers who should form the mantriparishad. Manu recommends twelve, Brahaspati recommends sixteen, and Ushana twenty but Kautilya holds that the number dictated by the practical needs of the time. It is doubtful if all the councilors were members of the Mantriparishad. A minister must be a member of a high family, influential, of unimpeachable character, possessed of foresight, wise, and of good memory, bold, eloquent, skillful, intelligent, possessed of enthusiasm, dignity, endurance, pure in character, affable in manners, of excellent and honest conduct, strength, health and bravery, not given to procrastination and indecisiveness and free from such qualities as arouse hatred and enmity. The Purohita is included in the components of sovereignty only as one of the ministers. He is devoid of his old powers since the king in the scheme of the Arthashastra is more important than any other element. The chief duties of the Mantriparishad may be categorized as follows:

- Commencement of the work not begun
- Completion of the work begun
- Improvement of the accomplished work
- General supervision of the working of the administrative machinery.

Though the king was the fount ahead of the administration, he could not do anything merely to satisfy his personal whims. His actions were governed by a system of checks and balances. The executive authority vested in him was exercised by him through the officers enumerated earlier. They formed the executive council or the ministry which looked to the

interests of the state. The Mantriparishad sided and advised the king on all important matter of state. The State business was formally discussed in the council. Kautilya says:

"Every act and venture ought to be preceded by proper deliberation."

The king should not do anything without deliberations. Even in times of emergency, the council was summoned to advise the king, while in normal times the whole polity of the state was previously deliberated upon in the council. Kautilya prescribes that the king should consult three or four ministers and should take into consideration all the factors. It should be noted that the council did not reflect the independent opinion of the people, but even then it had its peculiar importance. Even the absentee member had his say, and the majority opinion in all matters was accepted.

Since all the ministers were appointed by the king and held office during royal, pleasure, they were more of courtiers than custodians of public rights. They were not maintained and supported by the people and the theory of ministerial responsibility.

In the modern sense, did not exist. But for all practical purposes, the Parishad was the highest executive body in the state. It initiated a survey of the country to undertake new agricultural and industrial ventures. It formulated the broad outlines of the policy of the government and looked after the interest of the state.

It was consulted in matters of high appointments and it also concerned itself with the civil, military, and executive services. The council also discussed departmental finances, foreign affairs, and other important matters relating to the state and the nation. All important matters were initiated in the council. The administrative measures were preceded by deliberations in the council. On complex issues, it was prescribed by Kautilya that the sovereign should consult three or four ministers at a time either individually or collectively. There was every chance of two ministers being rift by mutual dissension and hence the necessity of three or four. A consultation with such a group would enable the sovereign to arrive as satisfactory conclusions. Kautilya further prescribes that in accordance with the requirements of time, place, and nature of the work in view, the sovereign, if he thinks proper, should deliberate, with one or two ministers or by himself. Kautilya clearly distinguishes between the council of Ministers and ministers themselves. In cases of emergency, the king and should do whatever the majority of the members advised as the proper course of action. The inner cabinet consisted of four or five persons consisting of the Yuvraja, the Prime Minister, the Purohita, the Commander-in-chief and the Treasurers. The Mantriparishad was associated with all important functions of the state.

Since all administrative work is preceded by formulation of policy, it was recognized that the policy must be decided in secret. Mantra of Policy is described as Panchanga i.e., is bound up with the consideration of following five subjects:

- A. Ways and means of ensuring defense of the country;
- B. Resources of the state in men and materials;
- C. Determination of time and place;
- D. Provision against unforeseen calamities;

E. Successful prosecution of administrative measures;

The king had to transact certain categories of administrative business with his whole council of Ministers in attendance. Kautilya advocated a large council and the king was advised to act on the opinion of the majority in the joint meeting of his councilors and the Parishad. Kautilya insists that the king can be successful only if he adopts three general practice, i.e.:

- A. Give equal attention to all matters;
- B. Always remain active and ready to take action, and
- C. Never slacken in the discharge of his duties.

Such an ideal could only be achieved by an extensive network of officials. The Mantriparishad acted as a political check on the king. The council had no consistent political position and its power varied from time to time according to the caliber of its members. Mantriparishad could only be effective where public opinion was against any policy made by the king.

Generally, it was mainly responsible for the enactment of the policy decided by the king. Strong personalities like Chanakya or Radhagupta might have been exceptions who influenced the king's decisions. The Arthashastra mentions the Chief Ministers or Mahamantri including the Chief Minister formed the inner cabinet of the large body.

Chapter 3

Provisional Administration

3.1 Introduction:

Mauryan empire was divided into a number of provinces each under a governor, and that princes of royal blood were employed as governors whenever possible, becomes clear from Asoken inscriptions and Buddhist literature. The avadanas contain stories of oppression by wicked ministers in outlying provinces like Gandhara, and of the revolt of subjects against such oppression. But few definite facts bearing on the details of provincial administration are forthcoming, and we do not know exactly the relations of the governors to the central government on the one hand and the autonomous tribes and kingships existing within their spheres of control on smaller replicas of the imperial court at Pataliputra, from which the emperor directly administered the home provinces. The distinction between rural and urban administration must have prevailed in the provinces also. There is a short and pithy reference in the Girnar inscription of Rudradamana (A.D.150) to the construction of lake Sudarsana by the Rashtriya vaisya Pushyagupta in the reign of Maurya Chandragupta, and its extension and improvement by the addition of pipes, sluices and so on by the Yavanaraja Tushaspa acting on behalf of Ashoka¹ This is solid testimony to the continuous attention given by Mauryan emperors to large works of public utility and to the efficiency of their bureaucracy. Two records, the Sohagaura copper-plate from the U.P. and the Mahasthan inscription from Bengal, both fragmentary, are engraved in characters of the Mauryan epoch, and may well belong to that age, but difficulties of interpretation detract much from their value to the historian. The Sohagaura plate seems to record an order of the Mahamatras of Sravasti issued from their camp at a place called Manavasiti. The order mentions the koshthagaras of some places and the articles stored in them.² Store-houses also find a place in the Mahasthana record, the importance of which is still uncertain.³ Even these faint indications should serve as warning against the facile characterization of the vast administration of the Mauryan empire as 'no doubt more effective in theory than in practice.' During the time of Kautilya, the empire had become too expensive to be ruled by one central Executive body. It was not possible to have direct dealings with the distant provinces. For administrative efficiency, the empire was divided into a number of provinces and they were constituted as separate units under the princes of royal blood or governors. The unit of administration in the Kautilyan scheme was the Janapada or province which normally consisted of 800 villages with hundred to five hundred families.

The provincial defenses were well organized. The approaches to the provinces were protected by frontier guards under Antapala, the warden of the frontiers, while the interior was protected and policed by a special staff recruited from deer trappers. Sabarasm

¹. EL. VIII. 43.

². I.A. XXXV. 261-5, JRAS, 1907, p. 501.

³. E.I. XXI, 83 ff, IHO, X, 57-66.

Pulindas, Chandalas and forester. In the four extreme corners of the province were constructed four forts, which utilized the natural fortifications afforded by water or mountain, desert or forest.

During the Mauryan period, there were four viceroyalties, at Taxila, Ujjain, Toshali and Suvarnagiri. The viceroys were recruited from the princes of the royal family. The heir apparent also sometimes acted as viceroy. Kautilya provides for an emergency which may result in the king's absence from the country, in which case an officer would take his place thus rendered vacant and would apparently be called Sunyapada. Toshali was created during the time of Ashoka. The traditional names of the five provinces of India are:

- a. Udichya (Northern India or Uttarpatha).
- b. Madhydesa (Central India).
- c. Prachya (Eastern India).
- d. Aparanta (Western India).
- e. Dakshinapatha (Deccan or South India).

The viceroy had his council of ministers and he also appointed ministers of Mahamantras for overseeing, Judicial Administration. Alongside the viceroyalties, there were governorships and the governors were known as Pradeshika Mahamantras and also Rajjuka. The governor was also sometimes called a Rashtriya, rastrapala or Rashtramukhya and Ishwara.⁴ During the time of Chandragupta Maurya, Vaisya Pushyagupta was the governor of the western provinces of Saurashtra.

Among the Mauryas, Bindusara, Ashoka and Kunala served as viceroys. The viceroys enjoyed high and wide powers. They had to maintain law and order in their respective areas and protect the empire against external enemies.

They had their own courts and ministers. The orders of the central government were communicated to them by the royal edicts or prescripts. The home province, that is, the Prachya and the Madhydesha were ruled by the emperor himself with the assistance of the Mahamantras and high officials stationed at important places. The viceroys had to supervise revenue collection and to take steps to augment the resources of their provinces by constructing and repairing works of public utility like irrigation and dams and to strengthen the foundations of the empire by ensuring good government and promoting public confidence. There were occasional recalls and transfers of provincial governors.

They acted as links between the central and the local governments. They enjoyed a certain amount of autonomy in their respective areas. The governor was assisted by a body of officials, viz. Mahamantras, Rajjukas and Pradestara, appointed by the central government and they formed the executive council of the governor. The Mahamantras were of the status of king ministers. The provincial council took into account the views of the Paura- Janapada assembly.

⁴. K.A. II.10.

The Samaharta was usually the head of the provinces and he controlled a number of district collectors within his province. Each province was divided into four districts,⁵ each of which was placed under an officer called Sthanika. The Samaharta was responsible for the realization of the provincial revenue derived from various sources, each of which required a special administrative department for its utilization. All the departments that existed at the center must have had their replicas in the provinces. The balance that remained after meeting the charges of the provincial administration was sent to the imperial capital. The Samaharta, was also in charge of the police. Besides the Samaharta, Kumaras or Aryaputras also used to be in charge of the provincial administration. The appointments of the princess of royal blood to these posts were made with the intention of training them in these posts were made with the intention of training them in administrative methods. Governors of smaller areas within the unit of the province were selected from among the local people and in cases of tribal peoples, local leaders were usually preferred. Such territories enjoyed a sort of local autonomy.

From the events of Mauryan history, it is apparent that, the provincial councils of ministers had a lot of power and they seem to have been in direct contact with the emperor. The council acted not only as a check upon the provincial viceroys they also sometimes determined the course of action. The council of ministers assumed more powers at Taxila during the rule of Bindusara and as such there was disturbance. It is said that Ashoka ordered the blinding of Kunala. These evidences go to show that the central administration kept a strong surveillance over the provincial administration and did not fail to intervene when occasion so demanded. Since the Mauryan empire was a vast one, external vigilance was necessary. As a realist, Kautilya⁶ had rightly warned that a period of vice royalty could also be used to his advantage by a prince. Kautilya⁷ opined that to give a prince complete control over a province was not free from danger and he may, sometimes, try to establish his own position in opposition of the king.

Hence an effective control over the individual princes were necessary. The viceroy had the power to appoint some of his officials, while some were appointed by the centre. Sometimes the emperor directly addressed his ministers at the province.

The Edicts refer to four princely viceroys, viz. those governing the provinces with headquarters at Taxila, Ujjain, Tosali and Suvarnagiri (Kalinga Edict I, Kalinga Edict II, Dhauli Version, Minor Rock Edict I, Brahmagiri Version). Gandhara is mentioned by Fa-Hien as another vice royalty under prince Dharmavivardhana. Since Dharmavivardhana, according to Divyavadana, was another name of Kunala, who was sent out by Ashoka towards the end of his reign as his Viceroy to Taxila for subduing its hostility, we may take it that the province of Gandhara had its headquarters at Taxila. Sometimes instead of the princes, we find local chiefs appointed as viceroys. Thus Pushyagupta, the Vaisya, was Chandragupta's Viceroy of the western provinces with Girnar as headquarters, which under him in gaining the throne and in his administration, and was his agramatya.

⁵. K.A. II. 35.

⁶. K.A. II. 29.

⁷. Ibid. II. 33.

The Viceroys, too, had their own minister. The northern books tell us how the people of Taxila during the reign of Bindusara revolted against the oppressive ministers, and not against the princely Ciceroy. In the legend of Kunala, the Viceroy of Taxila, it was the ministers who achieved a spurious dispatch from headquarters, directing that he be blinded. The Kalinga Edict II shows how the Viceroys, like the king, were empowered to appoint their own officers of the status of Mahamatras for periodical inspection and supervision of judicial administration.

That viceroys were associated with Mahamatras, or Minister is also shown by the Minor Rock Edict I, Brahmigiri text, and the Kaling Edict I, Dhauli Text. In the former the prince, acting with his Mahaamatras, addressed the king's message to the Mahamatras of Isila, in the latter, the king addressed the Prince and the Mahaamatras together. Again the Juagada text of the Kalinga Rock Edict II mentions a class of Mahamatras who are described as Lajavachanikas, i.e., those who were entitled to receive the king's messages directly, and not through the royal viceroys.

Thus these Mahamatras might be regarded as provincial Governor, as they are given independent charge of their province. Samapa or Isila⁸ was the seat of such a governorship, as Tosali was of a viceroyalty. In the same way, the Kausambi Edict is addressed by the king directly to the Mahamatras or Kausambi, which must have been, therefore the headquarters of another province. Perhaps these Mahamatras were distinguished from the other classes of Mahamatras by the designation, *pradesika Mahamatras*.

The term *Pradesika* is used in R.E. III. for a class of officers who were expected to tour through their charges completely every five years, just as the Mahamatras are required to do on K.R.E. I. And so these *pradesikas* had really the status of a Mahamatra. Strictly speaking the large of a *Pradesika*- Mahamatras was like the commissionership of a division, as P.E. IV makes the *Rajjuka* the provincial Governor proper.

Sometimes, however, the lofty ideals of duty set before the governors were not realized. Cases of their neglect of duty or indifference to his injunctions called forth vigorous but dignified protests from the emperor, like the following:

"With certain natural disposition success is impossible, to wit, envy, lack of sustained efforts, harshness, haste, want of application, indolence, and lassitude.

You must desire that such dispositions be not yours. At the root of the whole matter lie steadiness, and patience. He who is tired in administration will not rise up, but one must needs move, advance, go on. There will be special officers to remind you of your obligations to the king and of his instructions. Fulfillment of these bears great fruit, non-fulfillment brings greatly calamity. By those who fail, neither heaven nor royal favour can be won. By fulfilling my instructions you will gain heaven and also pay your debt to me.⁹

⁸. M.R.E. R.

⁹. K.E. I.

In these we probably hear the very words of Ashoka, still bringing home to us his impassioned exhortations across the centuries. Let his words are forgotten by those for whom they are meant, the emperor, besides having them indelibly engraved on the rocks, ordered that they be recited publicly.

"At the beginning of each session of four months on the Tisya day,"¹⁰

It may even once a month on the Tisya day, and in the intervals between the Tisya days, and on fit occasions even to a single person.¹¹

Thus Ashoka's government was from the very nature of the case partly imperial, i.e., directly under the emperor, and partly local, i.e., under the viceroys and Governors. The charge of a Viceroy was more extensive than that of a Governor. Details are wanting as regards the extent of the administration which the emperor took upon himself as his own work. From the Edicts we may infer that the emperor's first duty was to settle the fundamental principles on which he wanted his government to be based, the policy to be pursued by his administrators, and to issue his notifications for them time to time as occasion arose. In Ashoka's case, the Imperial Edicts announcing his policy, principles and his measures to be taken for their realization remain permanently recorded on "tablets or pillars of stone." Thus the subjects of legislation seem also in certain matters to have been imperialized. The laws of the realm passed by Ashoka on his own initiative have been already indicated from the Edicts. The subject of the public works of utility seems also to have been an imperial concern from the accounts of the same already given. The Department of Dharma was also under the imperial government. The Ministers of Morals do not appear to be provincial officers, as their work embraced the entire area of the empire, and even areas outside of it. The Buddhist Church came to be one of the concerns of Ashoka who practically assumed its temporal leadership as appears from the several Edicts bearing on the subject.¹²

These Edicts announce the imperial decree fixing the penalty for those who promote schism in the church and the means of its publication and enforcement. Lastly, Ashoka made periodical touring through his empire one of the duties, as he enforced this measure upon all his local officers.

It is apparent that the emperor could not satisfactorily discharge these manifold and heavy duties and responsibilities single handedly. His general supervision of the work of the government was exercised with the aid of a special set of officers- his private secretaries, who were to report to him on the affairs of the people at all hours and places, and were thus called Pattivedakas. Next, the emperor was also assisted in his administrative work by his Privy Council of Parishad, referred to in his Rock Edicts III and VI. The number of Cabinet is not known. Kautilya makes it depend on the requirements of administration. According to tradition, Bindusara had a Privy Council of 500 members.

¹⁰. K.E. II.

¹¹. Ibid.

¹². B.E. Sarnath, P.E., Kausambi, P.E., Sanchi, P.E.

The inscriptions indicate how the king's administrative orders were issued. They are called Sasanam¹³ and Anusasanam.¹⁴ They were written down by the Pikikara¹⁵ in accordance with the king's words,¹⁶ when the king's order was proclaimed, it was called sravanam.¹⁷ The preamble to the king's orders was of the form, "Thus said the king" or "thus ordains the king."¹⁸ The first form, according to Kautilya¹⁹ applies to prajnapanalekha, and the second to ajna- lekha i.e., writs of information and command respectively.

As regards the Provincial governments, some sort of a general scheme is indicated in the Edicts. The head of the administration, the highest local officer, was the rajjuka, while a smaller jurisdiction was placed under the Pradesika,²⁰ the divisional commissioner.

There were also the Head of Departments, called Mukhas,²¹ also known by the general title of Mahamatras, while the department assigned to them was indicated by its name being prefixed to that title. The Edicts tell us of the Dharma-Mahamatras in charge of the Department of Morals, the Stri- adhyaksamahamatras in charge of the affairs of women and the Anta- Mahamatras in charge of the frontiers.²² The Mahamatras in charge of cities were called Mahamatranagarakas or Mahamatras- Nagaravyayavaharakas.²³ Where the name Mahamatra is used by itself without any prefix, it denotes the Ministers.²⁴ This is borne out in a passage in Rock Edict VI, where the king is said to entrust matters of urgency to the Mahamatras for discussion by the Council of Ministers, Parisat, of which the Mahamatras are also members. Lastly, the Mahamatras were also deputed abroad to work as the king's dutas or ambassadors, not merely in the frontier states among the Antas, but also in foreign states, viz., those of the five Greek Kings, the Cholas and Pandyas, and the island of Ceylon, as mentioned in R.E.V. and XIII. edicts are kumara and aryaputra. The former may have been the title of the sons of the king.²⁵ and the latter may have referred to other close relatives. They were generally viceroys or governors of the provinces of the empire. These provinces were administrative divisions and were placed under viceroys. The appointment of princes as viceroys served the practical purpose of training them as administrators. Where the relationship between the king and the prince was good, there was the added advantage that the prince as viceroy would confirm to the king's policy. There would be less likelihood of an insurrection under a prince loyal to the king. But the disadvantages were also known and warned against by the theorists. A period of vicereignty could be used to advantage by a prince, in order to establish his own position in opposition to the king. The arthashastra warns that the prince can be a source of danger, and to give him complete control over a

¹³. Sarnath, P.E.

¹⁴. K.R.E. I.

¹⁵. R.E. XIV.

¹⁶. K.R.E. II.

¹⁷. M.R.E. I.

¹⁸. R.E. III.

¹⁹. K.A. II. 10.

²⁰. Rock Edict, III.

²¹. P.W. VII.

²². P.E. I.

²³. K.E.

²⁴. Ibid. II.

²⁵. Hultzsch, *Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum*, Vol. I. p. XI.

province can encourage irresponsible action on his part.²⁶ As provincial viceroys, there must have been considerable competition between princes who were brothers, leading eventually to wars of succession, where they could use the provincial forces against each other.

This must certainly have happened among the sons of Bindusara, when the struggle for the throne began. It is probable that Ashoka's successful viceroyalty further convinced him of his ability to succeed Bindusara.

Governors administering smaller areas within the unit of the province were probably selected among the local people. At Girnar, mention is made of Tusaspa, a local personality of foreign extraction who is referred to as the governor.²⁷ In the case of tribal peoples local kings were probably confirmed as heads of administration. This would tend to cause less disruption in organization when an area came under Mauryan Control, apart from the fact that a foreign administrator might be resented more than a local ruler. In such cases local autonomy may have been retained at a lower level of administration.

In provincial administration the council of ministers had more power than their counterparts at the center. They acted even in practice as a check on the prince and were, if occasion demanded, in direct contact with the king. This is apparent from two events before and during the reign of Ashoka. The revolt in Taxila during the reign on Bindusara was against the local ministers and officers and not against the prince.²⁸ It would seem that ministers had assumed more power than their situations demanded. The second indication was the story of the blinding of Kunala at the orders of Ashoka.²⁹ This story suggest that direct orders from the king to the ministers, without the viceroy knowing about them, were a regular occurrence. Since the ministers were not surprised at the prince being kept in ignorance of the king's order. The Viceroy had the power to appoint some of his officials. For instance, whose mahamatras who made tours of inspection every five years would be appointed, some by the king and others by the viceroy.

²⁶. I, 17.

²⁷. Sircar, Select Inscriptions....., p. 169.

²⁸. See. Ch., II.

²⁹. See Chap. II.

Chapter 4

City & Municipal Administration

4.1 Introduction:

Megasthenes also describes the working of Mauryan municipal administration. He calls the town officials *Astynomoi* and describes their duty as follows:

"Those who have charge of the city are divided into six bodies of five each. The members of the first look after everything relating to the industrial arts. Those of the second attempt to the entertainment of foreigners. They keep watch over their modes of life by means of assistants to those persons whom they themselves appoint. They escort them on the way when they leave the country, or, in the event of their dying, forward their property to their relatives. They take care of them when they are sick, and if they die, bury them. The third body consists of those who inquire when and how births and deaths occur, with the view not only of levying a tax but also in order that births and deaths among both high and low may not escape the cognizance of the government. The fourth class superintendents trade and commerce. Its members have charge of weights and measures, and see that the products in their season are sold by public notice."

No one is allowed to deal in more than one kind of commodity unless he pays a double tax. The fifth class supervises manufactured articles, which they sell by public notice. What is new is sold separately from what is old, and there is a fine for mixing the two together. The sixth and last class consists of those who collect the tenths of the prices of the articles sold. Fraud in the payment of this tax was punishable by death.

"Such are the functions which these bodies separately discharge. In their collective capacity they have charge both of their special departments, and also of matters affecting the general-interests, as the keeping of public buildings in proper repair, the regulation of prices, the care of markets, harbors, and temples.

The city of Pataliputra has been described by Megasthenes as being administered in the fashion.

M egasthenes also throws light upon district administration under the officials called the *Agronomoi*. He refers to various classes of officers.

"Who superintendent the rivers, measure the land, and inspect the sluices by which water is let out from the main canals into their branches so that everyone may have an equal supply of it."

Besides these officers in charge of land and irrigation, Megasthenes also mentions those in charge of Agriculture, Forestry, Timber works, Metal Foundries, Mines and Roads.

Most of the work of the town committee were distributed between collection of taxes from markets, and supervision or inspection of handicrafts, workshops and of weights and measures. Care of foreigners, when foreigners were quite a few at this time, was a special responsibility. Maintenance of up-to-date census register is to be noted. Kautilya, while not specifying the various groups into which city administration personnel was divided, refers to the Nagarka and his subordinates chiefly responsible for the administration of the city. For administrative convenience, the city was divided into four parts, each under a Sthanika and over every unit of twenty, thirty or forty families a Gopa was appointed. It was the duty of the Gopa to maintain an up-to-date register of the names, caste, gotra, profession of all the male and female members of every family, and also their income and expenditure.¹ The Sthanika would be responsible for the same for the quadrant in his charge. For the security of the state and citizens, entry of outsiders was regulated. The Gopa or Sthanika was to be informed by charitable institution which allowed people to stay, about wayfarers coming to reside therein, and any such ascetics and men learned in the Vedas were allowed to stay who were known to be reliable. Similarly, merchants, vintners, artisans or handicraftsmen would allow such outsiders belonging to their profession to stay with them who were reliable and they had to furnish full particulars about such guests to the city authorities. Even physicians undertaking to treat secretly a patient suffering from ulcer or excess of unwholesome food or drink had to report to the Gopa or Sthanika about such patient, otherwise, both the patient and the doctor were liable to be punished. Even householders when entertaining guests from outside had to report to the city authorities about the full particulars of their guests residing with them during the night, otherwise for any theft committed during the night, both the host and the guest could be declared guilty. Any person walking on the road in a suspicious manner, suffering from wound, or carrying a heavy load, or possessing a destructive weapon could be apprehended by any citizen under the suspicion that he might be a criminal making good his escape after committing the crime, or is about to commit a crime. It was utmost regard for law and order, that moving on the road during certain parts of the night when the trumpet had sounded was considered an offense. During the time of curfew, only physicians, midwives, members of funeral procession, visitors to city, official on business, or persons carrying a lamp with them were allowed to move. However, to reduce the abuse of this privilege to apprehend potential mischief-makers by watchmen, the latter were punished if they harassed bonafide persons moving on the road during the curfew hours. Spies were appointed in the city to search for suspicious persons especially at night in workshop, in houses of vintners and sellers of cooked rice where undesirable persons were expected to be present. The city officials were also to be watchful about the outbreak fire. Megasthenes informed us of the wooden structures of Pataliputra, since confirmed by excavations. Kautilya also speaks of houses built of woods etc. besides of stone. A small fire could engulf the entire city. Therefore, every house owner was required to keep ready five pitchers of water, a water jar, a water-tub, a ladder, an axe, a winnowing basket, a hoot, pincers, and a leather bag. Each householder had to be present at the door of his own house, to be made responsible for the outbreak of fire or for fighting it.

The city officials were to maintain a kind of fire brigade by providing for thousands of water pitchers in systematically arranged rows on cross-roads and at places in big streets.

¹. K.A. II. 36.3.

Householders and renters were punished with fines if they did not help in fighting fires. Kindling of fire was prohibited during the two middle most parts of the day when it is very hot and windy, in summer, violators of this prohibitory order were punished with fines. Blacksmiths who had constantly to work with fire were concentrated in a special locality. Cooking under the roofs was restricted. Willfully setting fire could result in the guilty being thrown into fire, and careless persons who unconsciously caused outbreak of fire were fined. The city-officials took measures to maintain sanitation in the city. Whoever threw rubbish on the street was fined, and whoever caused collection of water on the road was also punished.² Every house owners had to provide for a dung hill, a drain, and a well, every house was so constructed as not to encroach upon others. Drains, latrines, and dung hills of one house were not to cause annoyance to others.³ It appears that scavenging and sweeping facilities were provided by the city authorities and persons could collect rubbish either in dustbins or in specified places near the streets, whoever, committed nuisances in place of pilgrimages, reservoirs of water, temple and royal premises was heavily fined and so were throwers of animal carcasses on the roads.⁴ We have already referred to a complete census of men and the resources in a town by Gopa and sthanika.

². Ibid.

³. K.A. III. 4-10, 22-29.

⁴. II. 36. 42.

Chapter 5

Village Administration

5.1 Introduction:

The villages were, as ever in ancient India, semiautonomous, enjoying a good deal of freedom in ordering their affairs, they regulated land and water rights, cultivation and payment of revenue through the gramani, and official of the central government. The village-elders are often mentioned in the Arthashastra¹ and they must have had a large share in guiding the people generally and in assisting the officials of the government in disposing of petty disputes arising in the village. Cultivable land was parceled out in estates belonging to individuals, while pasture and forest lands were held in common.

The checks and controls of the bureaucracy was provided not only by officials specifically charged with such duties and inspection, audit and report like the Cradeshttris, but also by the regular employment of spies. The role of spies is no doubt greatly exaggerated in the scenes of the Mudrarakshasa which purports to dramatise the revolution by which the empire of the Nandas was overthrown and that of the Mauryas founded by Kautilya and Chandraputa, but the constant use of secret means in administration, diplomacy and war was everywhere taken for granted and few modern governments could be said yet to have outgrown the practice.

The Harsacarits² refers to a village official called gramakasaptalika who is said to have given Harsa a new made golden seal with the bull for its emblem. We agree with R.S. Tripathy³ who takes him to be a village notary. During this and the following periods the village headmen was called by different names in different kingdoms in North India. In Bengal and Bihar, under the Mauryas the headmen were designated as gramapati whereas the Paramara kingdom he was known as patakila. Under the Gahadavala king in Uttar Pradesh the title of the village headmen was mahataka. The Agnipurana, a work of the contemporary period describes the village headmen variously as he gramaadhipati, gramesa, gramani, and gramabhartha. The post of the village chief was usually hereditary as was the case in the earlier days. He was a person of no mean importance as even the king used to consult him at the time of granting a piece of land in the village. The village headmen were a custodian of records and had an accurate information of the revenue of the village and of the ownership of the different pieces of land situated in it.

It was therefore but natural it should have been consulted at the time of land grant. The consultation was probably to ascertain whether there were any administrative difficulties it doesn't suggest that the constant of the headmen was a sine-qua-non for the grant of a village

¹. K.A., II.I, III. 5.9, 12.

². p. 274.

³. HK, p. 141.

or a piece of land by the king. The post of the village headmen doesn't appear to have been restricted to the Brahmin families alone.

But the village headmen could hardly be an autocrat in the discharge of his duties and responsibility. The village elders like the Mahattaras and Mahattamas find prominent mention in the contemporary documents. They are referred to in connection with the land grant. The Kulavayamala refers to the gramamahataras as playing an important part in village administration. It records the mayaditya having done ill to a friend approached the gramamahattras and decided to throw himself into the blazing fire. But the chief mahatarra advised him to enter the holy water of the river Ganges and the other elders agreed to the proposals. This distinction between the mahattamas and the rajapurusas proves that the former were not royal servants but were probably elected by the villagers. In any case these village elders must have helped the village headmen in carrying on the local administration and kept him under control. It is suggested that the king should appoint in towns and villages his own officers who should be endowed with many qualities of head and heart.

Inscriptions do not help us at all to ascertain how the appointment of the village headmen was made. The Agnipurana⁴ however, states that it was the king who would appoint the headmen of the village.

Sukra gives us useful information about the village headmen but how far his system of village administration was introduced in the contemporary period cannot be definitely known.⁵ Sukra enjoys the gramapa, who should be a Brahman by caste to be alert in protecting the villages with paternal care from aggressors, thieves and greedy officers.⁶ Thus the head of the village was primarily concerned with the preservation of law and order within the village. Sukra further says that having determined the land revenue of the village the king should receive it from one rice man in advance or guarantee of that either by monthly or periodical installments. Or the king should appoint officers called Grampas by paying 1/16th, 1/12th, 1/8th or 1/6th of his own receipts.⁷ We thus see that the gramapa was sometime entrusted with the collection of revenue, payable to the king, and in return he was entitled to receive a portion of the king receipts.

Again, the statement in section V of Chapter IV⁸ that the documents of gifts, sale and purchase of about immovable goods are valid only when approved by the receivers and having the gramapas or village officers as witnesses leads us to presume that the presence of headmen was needed at the time of the tara section of any gift. Sale or purchase of any gifts, the Sukraniti further states that the trial of disputes was one of the main functions of the village headmen. Besides the gramapa the other officers connected with the various functions of the village were the following:

⁴. 223.1.

⁵. II, 812.

⁶. II. 343-344.

⁷. IV, 248-252.

⁸. IV. 348-349.

- A. The Sahasadhipati:** He was the magistrate to deal with criminal cases and was of Ksatriya origin.
- B. The Bhagahara:** This officer, a ksatriya by caste was to collect the revenue and devote special care to the tending of trees.
- C. The Lahaska:** This officer who was well versed in accountancy and several spoken languages kept accounts of income and expenditure corresponding to the kulkarnis of the Deccan. He was a Kasathya by caste.
- D. The Sulkagraha:** They used to a Vaisya levied tolls in such a way that producers did not incur any loss.
- E. The Pratihara:** He was the guard at the village gate and was as sudra by caste. He was strongly build and skilled in the use of weapons and humble in conduct.

The office of the village headmen was popular in south India also. He is described as Gramani in the Gatha Saptasati.⁹ He was also designated as Auktaka.

He figures in an inscription, noted by Luders,¹⁰ as granting a piece of land with all immunities. Interesting information about him may be derived from the Gatha Saptasati¹¹ which implies that it contains a definite allusion to the succession to the office of the father by his son. It further narrates how a village headmen endangered the peace of the locality.¹²

Generally, the Gramika was in charge of the village only, but as, the Gatha Saptasai would make us believe, in exceptional cases his jurisdiction extended to five, and sometimes even to ten villages.

The villages were to be separated by well- defined boundaries such as river, hill, forests, shrubs, valleys, embankments, trees etc. They should be within a cross of each other. The rural collective life was promoted by organizing every ten villages into a common administrative unit called Sangrahana, every two hundred villages under Kharakatika, till the culmination was reached in a unit of eight hundred village called Mhagrama, also called Sthaniya. It was the centre of all activities of the entire locality and that enable the people to cultivate corporate habit. The state granted lands, free of rent and taxes, to persons religious practicing works, or teaching and technical work for the benefit of a village. Such lands were inalienable by sale or mortgage. Apart from its arable lands, a village should have uncultivated land for the purposes of pastures, religious studies and practices, ascetics, royal hunt, stocking animals of different varieties, plantations, factories, colonies of foresters and for rearing of wild animals.¹³ The work of rural development, undertaken by

⁹. 1.30-31, VII. 24.

¹⁰. Luders List, No. 1327.

¹¹. VII. 31.

¹². VII. 31.

¹³. Ibid.

the state, included mining operation, plantations, and transport facilities including waterways and land routes and market facilities. Provisions for rural water supply were to be made by constructing dams and reservoirs. It was the duty of the state to contribute stipulated amounts towards cooperative undertakings in a village. All these were necessary for the growth of a healthy village life. The helpless, the young, the aged, the orphan and disabled persons and the like, were entitled to get aid from the state. The village elders were enjoined to protect the property of minors and of temples. Failure on the part of one, who is otherwise able to maintain one's own dependents, was punishable.

The revenue department, as we have seen above, comprised three grades of officials, viz., Samaharta, Sthanska and Gopa.

The four divisions or circles of a Janapada were under Sthanska. Each division was further sub divided into groups or unions of five to ten villages under the charge of Gopa. In addition to the Sthanskas and the Gopas, the rural staff working in a village included the Adhyaksas, Sankhayaka, Anikastha, Chiktisaka, Asvadmaka, Janghika and Durgesagatagatajivi. The village records were accurately maintained. The records of the following were maintained:

- Pariharaka: Revenue free lands.
- Ayudhiyam: Contributing military service in lieu of taxes.
- Contributing regularly as tax assessed prescribed quantities of rice or grain crops, number of animals of different kinds, assessed quantities of precious metals, and labour.

Registers recorded the accounts of each village, its economic values and resources and the kind of contribution it made to the general welfare of the country. The villages were classified according to the kind of contribution they made to the general revenue of the state. Each village was studied with reference to the following particulars separately:

- A. The exact area of a village:
- B. Measurement and description of plots as (a) cultivated, (b) uncultivated and waste (c) high and dry, (d) paddy fields, (e) park, (f) orchards, (g) plantation of sugarcane and the like, (h) woods, (i) inhabited, (j) trees for workshop, (k) temples, (l) irrigation works, (m) cremation ground, (n) alms houses, (o) sources, (p) places of pilgrimages, (q) grazing grounds and (r) roads.
- C. Registers recording the boundaries, woods for common use, approaches to plots, plots acquired by gifts, plots acquired by sale, amount of loan advanced to agriculturists and remission of revenue.
- D. Census of households showing (a) number of each house in the register, (b) taxed or tax free, (c) composition of each household as to the numbers of the Brahmanas Kshtariya-Vaisya-Sudra living in it, (d) number of cultivators, herdsmen, traders, artisans, workmen, serfs, (e) number of men and livestock, (f) amount contributed by each household to the state in form of cash, labour, tools and military service, (g) number of males and females with ages in each household, (h) occupations according to varna or caste, (i) customs of the village and the family concerned, (j) domestic budget of each family indicating its income and expenditure.

Thus it appears that Kautilya was the real precursor of the idea of having a most scientific village directory for the purpose of administration.¹⁴ The village records enabled the government to have complete control over the country in all its detail. Even modern statistical department cannot think of such an accurate picture. Periodical survey was a regular feature and the Census Department was kept as a standing institution. The village officer maintained these records and similar records were prepared and maintained at all levels of the various departments of the government. Inspectors were appointed to go about the country in disguise. The village records and accounts were occasionally inspected, minutely, by the District officer. The records for inspection were kept ready in the following manner:

- A. Fields under the head of area and output.
- B. Householders under the heads of revenue assessed and revenue remission.
- C. Families under the heads of caste, occupation, and number of members, income and expenditure.
- D. Information about the movement of people, to and from the village, of doubtful character.
- E. Another set of Inspectors checked the quantity, quality and price of various products.
- F. Other Inspectors checked import-export, trade, examined the toll, road-cess, Conveyance-cess, military-cess, ferry charges and other details of revenue accruing.
- G. Spies also surreptitiously verified these reports and confirmed the statement otherwise obtained. The Directorate of inspection was headed by the pradeshtaraha. Tax paying cultivators could mortgage or sell their lands only among themselves and revenue-free lands could be sold only to such persons as were already granted such lands. The basis of assessment was usually a share of products due to the state, normally one-sixth. Anyone constructing new irrigation means was entitled to a remission of tax for five years, for repairing such a work for four years, for bringing new land into cultivation
- H. for three years and so on.¹⁵ For specific undertakings, the Samaharta could raise money by appealing to the people.

The village administration was carried on under the supervision of the village headmen, who appears to have wielded sufficient powers and had a variety of functions to perform. According to Kautilya, he was the officer in-charge of the militia and watch and ward. Besides this, he had to collect the government revenue, to maintain village records, to preside over the village council and to supervise the working of the various activities of the village life. The villagers used to organize works of public utility and recreation, settle the village disputes amongst themselves, and act as trustees of the properties of the minors. There is no direct reference to the existence of the village council in the Arthashastra as such. Fines imposed by the village court upon the offenders formed an important source of village revenue. Whenever any village project was beyond the financial capacity of the locality, it was entirely financed by the centre. At time of necessity the central government also advanced loans, gave requisite materials free of cost or at concessional rates.

¹⁴. Majumdar, Classical Account of A.I. pp. 2624.

¹⁵. K.A. III. 9.

The two important officers associated with village administration were the sthanikas and the Gopas and it seems that there was an intermediate level of administration between the district and the village levels. The Gopa had multifarious duties including the maintenance of all kinds of village records, mentioned above. The tax, collected from a village, was transmitted to the sthanikas who worked directly under the Pradeshnikas. Together with Gopas, the sthanikas were subjected to periodic inspection by revenue and other officers. The village officials were responsible to the Gopas, who, in turn, were responsible to the sthanikas. The village headmen were elected from among the village elders. Village discipline and defense were his primary concern. In smaller villages, he was possibly the lone functionary. Officers of the central government were paid by the state in the form of land etc. There was a chain of officers from the samaharta to the Gopas. The relation between the centre and the rural administration was maintained through these officials. Each village formed a close corporation invested with large powers and wide responsibilities.

The king was bound to respect the local usage. Kautilya¹⁶ prescribed laws for cooperation in village life. Royal officers supervised the cleaning of village roads or sewers and stringent regulations were promulgated punishing offenders who caused nuisance to public health.

The smallest unit of administration was the village. The Gramika or Gramakuta,¹⁷ the village headman was the head of the village administration. It is not clear whether he was elected by the villagers or was appointed by the king. However, spies were employed to detect headmen harassing the villagers. But we know that for helping him in the administration there were village servants- grambhrtakas- who received 500 panas as salary.¹⁸ Disputes arose in a village between house- owners regarding boundaries of house, drains, placing of fire- place, cattle- shed, a grinding mill or the pounding mechanism or boundary wall or village road or lane. Rules were in operation regulating these activities, and transgression of rules by any house- owner was punished with varying fine.¹⁹ We have already referred to the complete inventory of the village prepared by a Gopa and checked by a sthanika.

The underlying principle governing the affairs of a village was that neighbours or village-elders were the best persons to help in the government. Any owner who wanted to sell his house, park, field, tank etc., had to proclaim his intention and the price he wanted for it in the presence of 40 neighbouring families, and the purchaser was given title to the house if he paid the price and no objection was made there.²⁰ Villages were separated from each other by defined boundaries. A river, a mountain, a forest, a stretch of pebbles, sand, cavern and embankment, a sami tree, a Salmali tree, or a milk tree could mark the boundary.²¹ In case of dispute about boundaries between two villages, villagers, village- elders among the farmers, cowherds or even outsiders who had, previously, property in the village, were best witnessed to point out the boundary- marks. And if their statements regarding boundary

¹⁶. K.A. V. 3. 18.

¹⁷. Ibid. IV. 4. 9.

¹⁸. Ibid. V. 3. 23.

¹⁹. Ibid. III.

²⁰. Ibid. III. 9. 3.4.

²¹. Ibid. II. 1. 3.

marks were found on examination to be contrary to the fact, they were fined, 1000 panas. The same fine was imposed on those who were proved to have removed the boundary marks pointed out by the village- elders.²² Boundaries of fields were also well- defined, and any one breaking or removing these boundary marks was fined 24 panas. The disputes regarding the boundaries of fields, penancegroves, pasture-lands, highways, cremation grounds, temples, sacrificial grounds and holy places were to be decided by village- elders, who were residents nearby and if there was division among them, the opinion of the majority was decisive, or they could try to being about a compromise between the disputants.²³

It is clearly laid down that all disputes shall be decided on the testimony of the neighbours.²⁴ If there was no decision in favour of either party or an owner was not to be traced, the king could forfeit the property or allot it to someone else.²⁵ the importance of village- elders is clear from the fact that Ashoka in his Dharmayatras always met the Vrddhas.²⁶

Cooperative efforts in the village were encouraged. On festive occasions each villager was expected to contribute his share in cash or kind or manual labour in the arrangement of public celebration. A defaulter was to pay double the wage of work if he did not like to do the work. A non- contributor and his family were prevented from witnessing the shows and any attempt to see or listen to the performance was liable to a fine of double his stipulated share. If the villages decided or any one of them wanted to carry out a project beneficial to all and if it was agreed upon, anyone withholding his cooperation from it was fined 12 panas and any conspiracy against such a person who orders the execution of the beneficial work or any assault on him would make the conspirators liable to double the fine prescribed for such an offence. Villagers, who built dykes which were beneficial to the country, or bridges or roads or executed works beautifying the village or strengthening the defenses of the village, were favoured by the king. 1

The village headmen had some police functions. He was to expel from the village a thief or an adulterer, but if he expelled one who was neither, he was liable to a fine. The village was also fined. On official business, concerning the village, the headmen had often to go out of the village and it was the duty of villagers to accompany him by turn, and if one whose turn came butt he did not do so, he was fined.2

It appears that villagers enjoyed a great deal of autonomy. Rapson rightly observes:

"We find already in operation that system of village autonomy under the headman which was prevailed in India at all periods."

²². Ibid. III. 9. 10. 13.

²³. Ibid. III. 9. 15-16.

²⁴. Ibid. III. 1. 24

²⁵. Ibid. III. 9. 17.

²⁶. R.E. VIII.

Chapter 6

Police Administration

6.1 Introduction:

The most characteristic feature of the Mauryan administration was the extensive network of intelligence service all citizens and even members of the royal family. The secret agents were appointed by the king and were to do the same guise as persons among whom the secret agents were to work. Kautilya informs us the sharp pupil, the apo- state monk, the householder, trader, ascetic, secret agents, the brave, the poisoner and the nun, were the main secret agents. A spy in the disguise of these people worked amongst the respective sections of society and made reports immediately to the king and the minister who alone were his authorities.¹⁶³ Spies were provided with necessary money to work, to start a trade etc. to pose successfully as one of the active members of the class over which they were to spy. It was the duty of the minister to arrange for their livelihood and work.¹⁶⁴ The secret agents of these five categories were given due honour and satisfactory wages.¹⁶⁵ Kautilya describe the methods to be adopted by the secret agents to get the desired information.¹⁶⁶ Secret agents of the class of sharp pupils, monks, fallen from vow and appearing as householders, traders and ascetics received 1000 panas. Secret agents of the class of assassin's poison-givers and female mendicants got 500 panas. Roving spies got 250 panas, which could be raised according to their work.¹⁶⁷

Secret agents were recruited from amongst such people as orphans, who were recklessly brave and ready to fight for the sake of money, those who were cruel to their kinsmen, and wandering nuns seeking a secure livelihood or widowed Brahmana ladies. These were employed with disguise suitable as regards country, dress, profession language and birth.¹⁶⁸

Women teachers their being conversant with various kinds of signs and language.¹⁶⁹ Secret agents were appointed independently and were assigned duties by the Institutes of espionage. They did not know each other, and the information they collected was transmitted to the institutes through assistants who used sign- language. The report by one secret agents was compared with that of another about the same matters, and only when there was agreement in the reports of three spies, was credence to be given to the information. In case of continuous mistakes on the part of a spy he was silently dismissed.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³. K.A.I. II.

¹⁶⁴. Ibid. 20.

¹⁶⁵. Ibid. 22.

¹⁶⁶. Ibid. 4.19.

¹⁶⁷. Ibid. 4. 19.

¹⁶⁸. K.A. 1. 12. 11-6.

¹⁶⁹. Ibid. II. 27.30.

¹⁷⁰. Ibid. I. 12. 15.

Some of the principal officers were recruited as secret agents to spy on the prince who was out of favour and even kill him if found necessary.¹⁷¹

Secret agents loyal to the king, were to spy on the Minister (Mantrin), Chaplain (Purohita), Commander-in-chief (Senapati), Crown Prince (Yovraja). The Chief palace usher (Kauvarika), the chief of the palace Guard (Antarvasika), Director (Praasastra), Collector-General (Samaharta), Director of Stores (Sannidhata), Magistrate (Pradeshtr), Commandant (Nayaka), City-Judge (Pauravyavaharika), Director of Factories (Karmantika), Council of Ministers (Mantriparishad), Superintendents (Adhyaksha), Dandapala (Chief of the Army staff), Durgapala (Chief of the Fort), Commandant of Frontiers (Antapala), Forest chieftain (Atavika), to assess their loyalty to the king (government).¹⁷² The Samaharta stationed secret agents in the guise of ascetics, wandering monks, cart-drivers, jugglers, astrologers, physicians, artists, actors, brothel keepers, vintners, to ascertain the integrity or otherwise of village officials. A spy could entrap judges who are suspect by offering bribe to influence his judgment, he would falsely inform the village officer of the wealth of a person and would get the officer punished for extortion if the person was actually deprived of his wealth by the officer. Similarly false witnesses were entrapped and thus persons having secret ways of income were to be found out by spies.¹⁷³ Spies were also set on the citizens of the city and the countryside.¹⁷⁴ Secret agents at the holy places, in assemblies, in communal gathering and other congregations of the people would start debates among themselves, one taking the side of the king and justifying the taxes and fines imposed by the king as share to Manu for the protection the people desired from the beginning of government,¹⁷⁵ and the other speaking ill of the king.

Thus, they would be able to impress on the people the wisdom and righteousness of obeying the king and would also come to know rumors current among the people against the king, and would also watch the interests of the people in the fake debates and assess the popularity or unpopularity of the king and come to know about men opposed or favourable to the king. Similarly, ascetic spies would wander throughout the kingdom and could visit any home and would come to know about the attitude of such people who had been helped by the king in many ways. And on the reports of these spies the government would try to conciliate the discontented, and would try to win their sympathies away from such hostile elements as forest chieftains, pretenders to the throne or unfriendly neighbouring kings.¹⁷⁶ Secret agents were also sent to foreign countries with a view to win over the seducible and non-seducible parties in the enemy's territory to the king's side. They were to cause dissatisfaction among the subjects of the enemy king.¹⁷⁷ It was the duty of the king's envoy in the other king's territory to regulate the work of the secret agents in the disguise of traders, ascetics, pupils, disciples, or physicians who should work among beggars, drunken persons, person in sleep,

¹⁷¹. Ibid. I. 18.13.

¹⁷². K.A. 1. 12.6.

¹⁷³. Ibid., IV.

¹⁷⁴. Ibid. 1. 13.1.

¹⁷⁵. K.A. I. 13.2.

¹⁷⁶. Ibid. 15.18.

¹⁷⁷. K.A. 1. 14.

and from pictures, writings or signs on holy places, should gather information for the envoy, who would then further investigate.¹⁷⁸

The king received spies every day for keeping himself upto date about the exact state of affairs in his kingdom and in the hostile kingdoms during the 5th or the 8th parts of a working day. Then they would again see his secret agents during the first part of the night.¹⁷⁹ and during the seventh part of the night he would in consultation with minister, dispatch secret agents.¹⁸⁰

The king was to be always watchful for his security in his harem, palace, court, or in journey, or in meeting the people, or in interviewing ascetics and even in getting his meal prepared. And just as the king keeps a watch over others through secret agents, so he should being self-possessed, guard himself against danger from others.¹⁸¹

The activity of the departments were to be watched by spies under the instruction of the superintendent of accounts so that the officer-in-charge of the department does not cause loss of revenue due to ignorance of rules, or due to addiction to pleasure of senses.¹⁸² The income and expenditure of the officers was to be ascertained by the spies.¹⁸³ Similarly secret agents were to investigate the conduct of revenue officers who were niggardly and send out royal money outside or stored it in their own officers, and then the secret agents were also to find out his kinsmen, friends and department who might be a party to the dishonest deals. The personal kills, and the honest assistants of the specially trained superintendent or those trained in the army would work as spies over the accountants and others.¹⁸⁴ Secret agents were employed to check evasion of duty on goods at the toll-houses by the traders and also to send secret information to the government about the site of the caravan of traders, and the collector of customs was accordingly informed, who would show his omniscience to the trader by discharging the high and low value of the goods.¹⁸⁵ Secret agents also worked in public bars and were to ascertain the normal and occasional expenditure of the customs and get information about strangers. They also made an inventory of ornaments, and noted the castes, of the customers who were intoxicated or asleep, presumably to see that the vintners licensed to trade in liquor did not misappropriate some of these, and in the case of loss of these, they had to made good the loss.¹⁸⁶ Secret agents in the guise of householders under the direction of the Samaria were to find out the number of fields, houses and families in those villages where they were stationed, the size of the fields, the number of members of the family, their varna and occupation, income and expenditure, and were to try to find out the reason for the coming and going of men and women from a house. Similarly spies in the guise of traders would find out the quantity and price of the king's goods provided in his own country, obtained from miners, water-works,

¹⁷⁸. Ibid. I. 16.

¹⁷⁹. Ibid. 18.

¹⁸⁰. Ibid., 22.

¹⁸¹. Ibid. 1. 21.

¹⁸². Ibid. II. 7.9.

¹⁸³. Ibid.

¹⁸⁴. Ibid. 25-30.

¹⁸⁵. K.A. II. 21.

¹⁸⁶. Ibid. II. 25.12.

forests, factories and fields. They also had to find out the number of various kinds of taxes. In the same manner agents in the guise of ascetics should ascertain the honest or dishonesty of the farmers, cowherds, traders and of the departmental heads.

Even spies of the collection-general spied over the working of other spies.¹⁸⁷ Spies were to apprehend any one in suspicious circumstances or condition of walking on the road in the city and should search for undesirable persons in desert places, workshops, aim houses, cooked-rice houses, cooked meat-houses, gambling dens and assemblies of heretics.¹⁸⁸ Suspected criminals were also enticed by secret agents.¹⁸⁹

Secret agents of the king were considered most useful in finding out and destroying the principal officers of the king who were suspected of treason and of being harmful to the kingdom, and could not be openly suppressed because of their power, and the unity among mahamatras. The Secret agents could even cunningly secure the murder of such an officer by their own relatives estranged from him by Secret agents, or later, could cause their death in an enemy's territory where the king would send him with a weak army. The Secret agents in the disguise of a cook, physician, holy man, would cause the end of such officer.¹⁹⁰ Secret agents also helped the king in getting more handsome contributions from the citizens for replenishing the treasure.¹⁹¹ Secret agents were of great help in diplomacy and war. We find espionage was used in general administration, for maintenance of law and order, in inter-state relations and for miscellaneous purposes.

It is clear that Secret agents were to be found anywhere and in any disguise amongst the princes, ministers, high officers, amongst people of different occupations and amongst the citizens of the country side and towns. Their number was bound to be large. It is therefore not surprising that Megasthenes included overseers as constituting one of the seven castes in the society. He says:

"The sixth caste consists of the overseers. It is their province to enquire into all that goes on in India, and report to the king."¹⁹² Thus it was through the intelligence service that the king kept himself in touch with the people and it was also used to maintain his popularity. Nevertheless, this network of espionage affecting the highest officer and the lowest citizens must have had a terrifying impact on the officers and the citizens, and thus constituted a potential risk to the stability of the empire and its administration.

The organized administrative system and judiciary was based on an efficient police system. The king adopted various police measures for the protection of the state and for the efficient working of the administrative system. The frontiers were protected by officials appointed for that purposes. The frontier-guards were very active in watching the newcomers whose antecedents were enquire into. They were not allowed in without passports, and if found to

¹⁸⁷. K.A. II. 35. 8.

¹⁸⁸. Ibid., 36, 1.13.

¹⁸⁹. Ibid.

¹⁹⁰. Ibid. V. I.

¹⁹¹. Ibid.

¹⁹². McCrindle, Megasthenes and Arrain, p. 41.

be possessing any arms, they were disarmed before being allowed to enter the kingdom. In all important centers of administration there were police offices. There was a Sangrahana in the midst of ten villages, a Kharavatika in the midst of two hundred villages, a Dronamukha in the midst of four hundred villages, a Sthanika in the midst of eight hundred villages. All-important places were garrisoned by troops and commanded by officers of various grades. Civil and military functions were practically combined. In most cases, in those days. The Samahara maintained peace and order and under him was a Sthanika.

In case of emergency, the troops lent assistance. Local by areas, the people were entrusted with the task of preserving peace.

The Nagaraka was in charge of the city police and the Gramika was in charge of the village police. In the intervening areas, the vivitadhyaksa was entrusted with this task and he had some criminal and police powers. The police guards used dogs and royal carrier's pigeons. Chandalas, Savaras and Pulindas were employed for police duties. The travelers were checked at various places by the police officials. The vivitadhyaksa protected travelers from thieves, decoits or wild animals and made arrangements for supplying the region with water and caused places of rest to be established. There were guards under him who, when apprehending danger, informed the villagers.

An organized police system was a guarantee against criminal activities. Even persons traveling within the country had to carry identification cards showing their bonafides, and these could be examined by the dhyaksa, Navadhyaksa and officers at the town gates. The police also employed spies for gathering information. Some important classes of spies were Kapatikas, Udasasthitas, Vaidehakas, Grhapatikas and Tapas- Vyanjakas, Saatrins, Tikshnas and Bhiksukhis, they collected information about everything, e.g., thief's adulterers, criminals, coiners, forgers, poisoners, assassins and anti-social and anti-state elements and passed on necessary information to their respective authorities. The state imposed responsibilities on the local authorities for the maintenance of law and order. The merchants, on entering the villages, had to inform the headmen about their goods and if anything was lost, the village chief had to make good the loss. If the theft was committed during a journey from one village to another village, the Vititadhyaksa had to make good the loss. A special officer called Chorrarajjuka was employed to detect the thieves and a special tax was levied on the localities. With a view to curbing the criminal tendencies and activities, the police authorities imposed restrictions on indiscriminate trading in arms. Merchants from abroad had to deposit their arms with the frontier guards. Carrying arms at night was forbidden. Detectives helped in preventing and tracing crime. In matters of criminal law, the magistrates and the police officials were assisted by spies. A safe transport system, aided by an efficient police system, build up the trade of the country on a sound basis. Both in the civil and military affairs espionage played an important role in ancient India. We learn from the Rigveda that Varuna had his own spies and similarly spies are attributed to other vedic deities. The system of espionage is essential for the safe conduct of administration and Kautilya rightly recognized its necessity as an important adjunct of the administrative machinery.¹⁹³ He divided spies mainly into the classes, viz., Samstthaha and Samcharah. To the former category belonged the following categories viz. - Kapatika-chatra

¹⁹³. K.A. II. 8. 13.

(Fraudulent disciple), Udasthita (recluse), Grihapatika (Householder), Vaidehaka (merchant) and Tapasa (Ascetics) while under the latter category came Satri (class-mate), Tikсна (Fire brand), RRasada (Poisoner) and Bhiksuki (mendicant women).

Among the mendicant spies, Kautilya also included Munda, Jatila, Parivajika etc. The spies were not to be known to each other and the king was not to rely on the report of a single spy. There were the following important functions of the spies:

- a. Controlling the entire intelligent departments.
- b. Checking and verifying the reports coming from different sources.
- c. Cipherr working was to be used by the spies.
- d. Carrier pigeons were to carry secret intelligence.

The spies had to perform a number of odd jobs. They had

- To keep a strict vigilance over all cadres of government officials from the highest to the lowest.
- To keep the king informed about the trend of public opinion in the kingdom.
- To detect sedition and crime.
- To assist in the administration of justice and
- To collect information about the working of the neighbouring state and neutralize the plan of the enemy, if any.

They detected young men with evil tendencies. Even for the purpose of civil administration, they were placed at the cross-roads, ruined temples, chaityas, ferries, wine shops, brothers and important market places. Spies were classed into the following important groups:

- a. Idlers watching the movement of men and women and ascertaining the motives of their action.
- b. Fortunetellers acquainted with palmistry and astrology.
- c. Spies with agricultural profession.
- d. Spies with trade profession.
- e. Ascetics.

Besides these, there were women spies, cooks, nurses, prostitutes and mendicants. The wandering spies were under the supervision of the government and had no knowledge of the work carried on by the above five institutes. Any action could be taken only when the reports of all the spies tallied. Espionage was the backbone of the Kautilyan system and the daily audience given by the king to spies proves that it was a trustworthy department and was the need of the hour.¹⁹⁴ Spies had to do all types of heinous work. Cold blooded murder, poison fire, intrigue etc., were some of the important works of the spies. That is why Kautilya had been condemned by Bana as a cruel tyrant bereft of moral principles of right and wrong and justice and injustice. Kautilya felt no hesitation in advocating an

¹⁹⁴. K.A. II. 13.

unscrupulous exploitation of the religious susceptibilities of the people.¹⁹⁵ He justified means by the noble ends sought to be achieved. He considered himself justified in successfully achieving his end by employing all means. His aim was to safeguard the state by a system of checks and balances and therefore he employed the spies to gather public opinion and the information, thus collected, helped him in bringing about the solidarity and harmony of the state. Bureaucracy was liable to corruption and hence a sort of check was necessary. Spies were to put on an unlimited variety of disguises. Kautilya espionage system was well known for its efficiency and severity.¹⁹⁶

Spies were recruited from all classes of people including the Brahmanas and included all descriptions of men and they had a wide sphere of activity. Kautilya had given an elaborate treatment of this subject and he is very emphatic about its use. The spies formed auxiliary links of army and the fighting forces. There were mobile and stationary spies and their activities included both open and secret methods. The system of espionage formed an integral part of the system machinery. Spies, though having unlimited powers, incorrect, they were severely punished. Military espionage procured accurate information regarding the military resources of hostile states, plans and movements of the hostile army and safeguarded one's own camps from the enemy's spies. There are references to spies saying:

"Regarding as traders in enemy's country, as cultivators in enemy's villages and as living as cowherds." The spies were to keep up the morale of the army by declaring the success of their own operations and permissible the enemy's side. All methods were permissible for the spies, viz., spying, lying, bribing, poisoning, women's wiles and the assassin's knife, practice of all kinds of frauds, incendiaries and robbery. In case of a weak king, menaced by a strong, neighbouring, Kautilya advises reliance on the report of the spies and to were mantrayuddha and kutayuddha.¹⁹⁷

In relation to foreign states, Kautilyan system of espionage took three forms, viz., political, diplomatic and military. The first involved an attempt to get in touch through secret services with the discontented and disloyal elements in the hostile state and utilize their services. Kautilya has elaborately discussed this aspects of political espionage. Diplomatic espionage was carried on by ambassadors and diplomatic agents. The military espionage consisted of the employment of Secret agents to procure accurate information regarding the military resources to the enemy. Important as the ambassadorial system was, espionage was even more valued. From the diplomatic point of view, the system of espionage had a greater utility since it was on the report of the spies that the king could take any action. There was a regular secret service of intelligence department in the scheme of Kautilyan state. According to Bhasa, spies were king's eyes and ears. Some spies were sent to the foreign kingdom to secure employment, and these were paid from the home department so that they would secretly furnish first had information regarding the enemy, these officials therefore went by the name of Ubhayavetas.

¹⁹⁵. Ibid., 36.

¹⁹⁶. Ibid., IX. 15.

¹⁹⁷. K.A. VII. 10.

Chapter 7

Financial Administration

7.1 Introduction:

Land Revenue is perhaps the oldest tax. It came into existence with the origin of the state. In every country it had been and even now it is an important sources of income of the state. From the economic standpoint land has been grouped as under:

- Cultivable land
- Homestead land
- Pasture land
- Garden land and forest land
- Waste land.

In Amarkosa¹ land has been grouped according to fertility, physical composition and situation-

- A. Urvara (fertile land);
- B. Usaraa (barren land);
- C. Maru (desert land);
- D. Aprahataa (fallow land);
- E. Sadvala (grassy land);
- F. Pankila (muddy land);
- G. Jalaprayamanupam (wet land);
- H. Kachcha (land contiguous to water);
- I. Sakravaati (sandy land);
- J. Sarkara (land full of pebbles);
- K. Nadimatrka (land watered by river);
- L. Devamatrka (land watered by rain).

The arable land is therefore generally classified under two categories - dry land requiring more water for cultivation and wet land requiring less water for cultivation. The need for irrigation is more in the former land than in the latter. Land might be owned directly by the state or by the private individuals although the ultimate ownership of land was held by the state. In the land granted under nividharma the original endowment must not be diminished or destroyed. It must be preserved in tact in perpetuity. Nividharma, Aksaya- nividharma indicate the same kind of tenure ship of land.

¹. Amar, I, 5-6, pp. 70-71.

Under Apradad harma also the donee had all the rights to enjoy the land so granted and also the income that would accrue from the endowed land but had no right to alienate or destroy or diminish it. He had no right to make a further gift. The tenure ship of land under Bhumichhidrayaya indicates permanent land tenureship and the land endowed under this system could freely be handed down from generation to generation.

The area of the fields was measured and the soil was classified according to the fertility and all these details like the area, grade, nature of the produce, ownership etc. were recorded in the registers of the Government. The villages were grouped into three categories -first class, middle class and lowest class² and the officer in charge of the village recorded in his register the land under different categories like cultivated, uncultivated land, plain land, wet land, garden land, vegetable land, irrigated land etc. The general rate of land revenue was one sixth of the produce. Baden power all³ called this system as a quite simple one and could be easily understood as -

"Being share of the gross produce there was no question of any complicated calculation of cultivator's profit or the cost of production nor about the relative value of land or the productiveness of the season. Whatever the land produced, little or much was heaped on the threshing floor and the king's official superintendent the division in kind."

Another advantage of this sort of simple percentage conceived was that tax remission in times of famine, drought or crop failure was automatic. When the crop was little the state took less.

But this sort of primitive simplicity in the rule could not be found in Manu, Kautilya, and Sukra, before assessment of land revenue, a careful gradation of land was made, a detailed survey and measurement taken, calculation of outturn made and the expenses of cultivation per unit of land computed. Stringent rules were made framed regarding leaving a producer's surplus. The share of the king was determined after considering-

- Fertility of the soil;
- Need of the state and
- Producers surplus.

The share of the produce of land was the regular, customary, and legitimate share of the king on the agricultural produce of the revenue-paying land.

The rates of bhaga as fixed by Manu⁴ varied between one sixth, one eighth and one twelfth, obviously according to the quality of the land Kautilya⁵ fixed the lower limit at 1/6th, Gautama⁶ and Baudhyayana⁷ agreed to 1/6th. The rate of 1/6th or 16.66% may appear fairly

². Arth. II, 35.

³. Land revenue in British India, p. 35.

⁴. Manu, VII, 130.

⁵. Arth., I, 13.

⁶. Gau., X, 24.

⁷. Baud., I. 10. 18.

high compared to the modern usual rates of 7% to 10%. But the old average rate of 16.66% was levied not on the gross produce of the land as is now made but on the profits made. The commentators of Manu explained the position asserted by Manu. Kulluka explained Manu in the sense that the share was to be estimated on the increase upon the capital employed. Nandana explained it as sarvatra-vyayatikta-labha-visayabhaga- kalpana⁸ the share was in every case on the profit made after deducting expense. In the Santiparva⁹ it has been enjoyed that taxes should be fixed not on the gross income but after examination of income and expenditure. In other words, on the net profits taxes should be levied. Moreover, the rate of 1/6th was the average rate. Kautilya¹⁰ recommended that upland and lowland were to be entered separately in the field register of Gopas and enjoined a threefold gradation of villages. This together with the remarks made in book V-2¹¹ of Arthashastra indicates that different rates for different classes of land were prescribed and intended. Agnipurana¹² mentioned the rates of land revenue as coming in between 1/6th and 1/8th for different kinds of paddy crops. Thus, the assessment varied according to the quality of land and the nature of the crop, and rate of land revenue was not on the gross produce of the land but it was computed after taking into account the gross income and also expenditure per unit of land and also after considering the producers' surplus.

The cadastral survey of necessary for:

- A. Proper assessment of land revenue,
- B. Safeguarding the interests of the land-owners against anomalies arising of land disputes, land sale etc.,
- C. Furnishing the administration with an accurate land assessment and thus helping proper collection of land revenue.

Thus, for an accurate assessment of land revenue and to collect correct amount of land tax, survey of land is absolutely essential. This aspect was adequately emphasized by the Indian jurists and the survey of land was a part of regular administrative duty of royal officials. Even in Vedic age land was measured. Life in the Vedic age was sufficiently organized. Lands were measured with measuring rods.¹³

Kautilya mentioned about minute and detailed survey of all types of land. Apastamba¹⁴ frequently referred to the boundaries of the village. In the vedic age land was classified as -

- a. barren¹⁵
- b. waste¹⁶

⁸. Manu, VIII, 307.

⁹. Mbh. Santi Parva, Ch. 120.

¹⁰. Arth. II. 35.

¹¹. Arth, V, 2.

¹². Agni. 223-26.

¹³. R.V. II, 15.4, III, 38.3, X. 336, i. 100.18, i. 100.5.

¹⁴. Aps. I. 3.9, 16; I.3, 11,9.

¹⁵. A.V., VII, 115-4.

¹⁶. Ibid. VII, 117-1.

- c. forest¹⁷
- d. cultivable land.¹⁸

The fields were definitely marked out.¹⁹ Epigraphical evidences of land survey are also present.²⁰ Negative proofs are there to conclude that there was land survey.

When we find that penalties prescribe for the violation and destruction of boundary²¹ we can safely come to idea of land disputes presupposes the demarcation of boundaries. Resurvey of land²² was also done when flood washed out the boundary marks.

The success of the Government of our period must have rested on the sound finance, for finance is said to be the very source of all achievements.²³ The treasury of the king always serves an useful purpose in distress as well as prosperity.²⁴ It is a sound government whose sources of revenue are abundant and items of disbursement are limited. The treasury should be full of precious metals like gold and silver and many other currencies.²⁵ This treasury is the very life of the king.²⁶ The king whose treasury is empty generally robs his subjects and then the kingdom is ruined. Somadeva further stresses that it is the treasury and not the person of the king which is the real sovereign.²⁷ He alone wins victory who has got wealth. Only he who has wealth is reckoned to be great and well- borne.²⁸ The wealth for the treasury should be acquired by lawful means, not illegally by bribes, etc.²⁹

In the Amatya-samuddesa of the Nitivkyamrta, the administration of revenue is put under a minister.

7.2 Source of Revenue:

The splendors of the court, the salaries of the officers and establishments, the army and multifarious activities of the state, necessitated a vast revenue. According to Kautilya and Somadeva agriculture, cattle breeding and trades were the main sources of revenue in ancient India. Their prosperity was the prosperity of the state itself.³⁰ Revenue during our period was derived partly from taxation and partly from sources other than taxation. From sources other than the Jain we know that the land tax was the primary sources of revenue, but as

¹⁷. Ibid. XII, 1.11.

¹⁸. R.V. VII., 80, 60.

¹⁹. Ibid., I, 110.5.

²⁰. Junnar Buddhist Cave Inscription delimits the donated fields. LL No. 1169 A.S.W.I. Vol. 14, p. 96.

²¹. Arth. III, 9.

²². Strabo, XV, i. 50.

²³. Nitiva, p. 27.

²⁴. Ibid., p. 202.

²⁵. Ibid., p. 202.

²⁶. Nitiva, p. 203.

²⁷. Ibid., p. 204.

²⁸. Ibid., p. 204.

²⁹. Ibid., p. 183.

³⁰. Ibid., p. 93.

most of the Jain sources of the period are to religious character, they seldom yield the name and kinds of the taxes lived on. It cannot be said with certainty what exactly was the share of the product from land that was actually collected by the state. But it is reasonable to assume that the traditional of the produce was collected in the period under review.³¹

Land however was measured for the purpose of taxation, for the measurements of land are often given in the inscriptions of the time. Thus the Kalvan Jain plates of Yasovarman refer to Nivartana, a kind of ancient measurement which is considered to be equal to 60 yards.³² Another measurement by seed capacity was also in vogue during this period. The length and Breadth were specified by the seeds of wheat measured by four gonis.³³

Sometime dronas of seeds were also applied in measurement. We also find in the Jain inscriptions that fields had their names and were always mentioned in grants with their boundaries, the word for which is Aghata.³⁴ Villages are also described by their boundaries.³⁵

Some of the grant made to the Jain temples, however throw some light on the nature of taxes lived on to meet the expenses of the temple. The most important of such records is the Bijapur Jain inscription of the Rashtrakuta Dhavala of Hathundi. It records the permanent endowments renewed by Vidagharaja previously made by his father Mammata.³⁶ The description is as follows:

- A. One rupee for each twenty loads carried for sale,
- B. One rupee on each cart filled.
- C. One Karas per ghat at each oil mill.
- D. 13 copllikas of betal leaves by the bhattas.
- E. Pellaka- Pellaka by the gamblers.
- F. One adhaka of wheat and barley from each araghatta well with a water wheel.
- G. Five palas for pedda.
- H. One vinsopaka coin for cotton, copper, saffron, gum and so forth and
- I. One manaka for each drone of wheat, mung barely and such other objects can be measured.

The chief need of temples was oil and incense. To meet the expenses of oil there are certain taxes recorded by the Jain inscription. From the Nadlai inscription of Nadol Chamana Rajpal we get the information that for daily use.³⁷ These gifts were called Dharmadayas or dharmayapradatti.³⁸

³¹. Ibid., p. 88.

³². EI., XIX, pp. 69-75.

³³. Ibid., II, pp. 232-240.

³⁴. Ibid.

³⁵. Ibid., XIXZ, pp. 69-75.

³⁶. See Supra, p. 182.

³⁷. Jain Lekha sangraha pt. I, p. 213.

³⁸. Ibid.

From the above description an opinion can be formed that taxes of such nature also were levied to meet the expenses of the state.

There were also taxes collected from guilds of merchants and artisan classes. There were organized associations of bankers, traders and merchantsthana and Western India. They were the wealthy classes of the state and paid good sums of money in the shape of taxes. The relationship between them and the state was cordial. The occurrence of the term Mandipika such as Sulkamandapika Vadarya mandapika, Samipati mandapika in some Jain inscription and³⁹ inscription other than the Jain and Jala mandapika and sthala mandapika in the Puratana ptabandha sangraha⁴⁰ shows regular custom houses in town and elsewhere.

The chief revenue was collected in kind and in some cases in cash. Though the taxes on trade brought in money yet the circulation of money in every state was very limited. Every trade transaction was carried on for the most part by barter, but references to coins are not wanting in the Jain literature and epigraphs. The Vasudeva Hindi mentions pana and karsapana, the two coins as means of exchange.⁴¹

It also frequently to dinar a gold coin. The chief coin which our inscription mention is the drama.⁴² The half drama was called Drammardha. The Bijapur Jain inscription of Dhavala⁴³ and several other inscriptions refer to the use of rupaka which in Mohammadan period come to be known as rupees, perhaps it was equal to one fourth of drama. The minor coins that are mentioned are the vinsopaka presumably the 20th part of drama and the kapardika, kakini and varataka.⁴⁴ Hemachandra in his Dvyasraya- kavya mentions some of the interesting coins. Among the minor coins he names supra.⁴⁵ One garland cost two supras in those days. He also refers to prastha and bhagika the latter being equal to about half a rupee in value.⁴⁶ We also find mentioned there some valuable coins of gold. A coin is referred to as equal to 20 or 40 rupees, which seems to be made of heavy gold. Other gold coins mentioned are niska, vista and pala.⁴⁷

7.3 Other Sources of Income:

Unclaimed property and treasure were some other sources of income to the king. Thus, we learn that the Chaulukya kings used to take the property off the deceased who had no sons after them from their estates. Large tributes from the feudatories and valuable presents from the merchants of other countries also yielded a profuse income to the state. Fines and forfeiture formed another plentiful source of income.

³⁹. Ibid., pp. 209, 212, 233.

⁴⁰. SJGM., II, p. 56.

⁴¹. Bhavnagar edition, pp. 15, 257, 268.

⁴². Ibid., p. 289.

⁴³. See supra, p. 182.

⁴⁴. DV. Canto XVII, V. 88.

⁴⁵. Ibid., Canto XVII, V. 48.

⁴⁶. Ibid., Canto V, 94 and 100.

⁴⁷. Ibid., Canto IV, V. 45, XVII, V. 83-84.

7.4 Expenditure:

The state had to employ so many paid officials to maintain the departments. Besides the expenditure of the royal household the king had to meet the pay and pension of the officials including the menials. A good sum of income was used up by the military department to maintain the soldiers, leaders, animals and other Paraphernalia of the army. The king of our period spent the state income for religious and benevolent purposes also as we see in the case of Bhoja, paraamara, Jayasimha Siddharaja, Kumarapala, and the illustrious ministers Vastupala and Tejahpala.

7.5 Accounts Department:

Somadeva emphasizes that accounts of income and expenditure should be kept in an orderly manner and submitted periodically for audit and approval. If there be any discrepancy, it should be checked by the expert accountants.⁴⁸ This department was a part of the big secretarial and consisted of the five officers: adayaka, nibandhaka, pratikantaka, vinigrahaka and rajadhyaksa.⁴⁹ The capital, free from inaccuracy in the debit and credit side, is known as nibi.⁵⁰ That nibi is to be checked through the accounts-books by the experts.⁵¹ The general terms for the officials of finance departments are niyogi.⁵²

The king is advised to keep watch over them through spies or to transfer their duties frequently or to offer them royal honour so that they could not create any trouble.⁵³ Thus accused they must have to yield immense wealth to the state. We, however, do not know much about the working method of this department from the Jain sources of our period. Sea and land customs duties were earlier in origin than all other taxes except land revenue. They were called customs duty, because it had become a custom to pay such dues by the merchants. Custom duties are the duties charged by law upon commodities imported into or exported out of the country. When the merchandise was to cross the boundaries of the state. The duties charged on them are custom duties.⁵⁴

The general rate of import duty was 20% on the value of the goods, while the rate of export duty was 10%. Baudhyana⁵⁵ agreed with the rate of 10% as import duty. According to Vishnu⁵⁶ it should be 5% which was the similar to rates shown in Agnipurana⁵⁷ Kautilya⁵⁸ prescribed the import duty of the salt as 1/6th portion of the imported salt.

⁴⁸. Nitiva., p. 189.

⁴⁹. Ibid., p. 188.

⁵⁰. Ibid.

⁵¹. Ibid.

⁵². Jain Lekha Sangraha, I, p. 209.

⁵³. Ibid., p. 189.

⁵⁴. Arth., II. 22.

⁵⁵. Baud., I, 10. 18, 14-15

⁵⁶. Vis. III, 29-30.

⁵⁷. Agni., 223-224.

⁵⁸. Arth., II. 22.

In position of custom duties presupposes the existence of foreign trades. In the Arthashastra⁵⁹ mention has been made Chinese fabric manufacture, cotton fabrics of madhura, woolen products of pandeya, various articles for example pulse from Kamarupa (Assam) and Shimla (Ceylon) and Persia etc.

"Large quantities of Indian merchandise were conveyed by the Oxus to the Caspian Sea".⁶⁰

And the merchandise is brought down from Arabia and India to Myos Hormos. According to Pliny⁶¹ Indigo and crystals were imported into Rome from India.

In the East, the leading entrepôts of Roman Empire were Antioch to which case the Chinese goods and Alexandria, the second city of the great Roman Empire was entering port to which came the products of India. The state took up positive measures to boost up foreign trade. Merchants importing foreign articles enjoyed a sort of insurance benefit without paying any insurance premium, the officers in charge of the boundary made good of any loss incurred on the way and arranged for the safety of the merchandise.⁶² Moreover they were granted exemption from Vyaji.⁶³ The exemption from Vyaji was an incentive. The amount of Vyaji⁶⁴ as follows in respect of the commodities sold.

- By cubical measurement- 1/6th of the quantity of the commodities.
- By weight- 1/20th of the quantity of the commodities.
- By number- 1/11th of the quantity of the commodities.

Mariners and merchants importing foreign merchandise got remission in trade tax.⁶⁵ Foreigners were also exempted from being used for debts. But import was made on a definite state policy. Import of articles of great benefit and import of seeds were encouraged and were not taxed. Import of items which were encouraged and were not taxed.

Import of items which caused harm or were useless to the country was not allowed. Thus foreign goods which were harmful are useless to the country was not allowed to be imported, most probably to protect the indigenous industries. So far as the exports were concerned elaborate measures were taken for export promotion.⁶⁶ First of all the foreign markets were to be surveyed. The cost of materials and the payment to be made to the foreign things in the shape of the toll charges (sulka), road cess (Vartani), conveyance cess (Ativahika), ferry charges (Taradeya) and the tax to be paid at the military stations (Bulamadeya) subsistence of the merchants and their followers the share (Bhaga) for the foreign king were to be calculated.

⁵⁹. Ibid., II. 11.

⁶⁰. Strabo, XI, VIII, 3.

⁶¹. Pliny, XXXV, c6.

⁶². Arth, II. 21.

⁶³. Arth, II, 16.

⁶⁴. Ibid, II. 16.

⁶⁵. Ibid, II. 16.

⁶⁶. Arth, II, 16.

The sale value of the articles to be exported was then computed and compared with the value of the said article prevailing in the foreign country. If the comparative value was favorable, article was to be exported. In sort proper consideration was made while determining the articles of export the comparative cost of the articles was arrived at, before actually exporting it.

Exports of those articles were considered fit and were permitted where the comparative cost were less and the export appeared profitable.

At the time off dispatch or even during the process of dispatch of the commodities intended for export, if adverse reports of the market of that commodity were known, the merchandise was diverted to their countries where it could be sold at a profit. Thus step taken in regard to the export of commodities were quite calculated. In this field of foreign trades imports were controlled on the one hand keeping in view the interests of the state and on the other hand exports of commodities were made in a planned and calculated manner so that exports were profitable or in other words the state enjoyed a favourable balance of trade.

7.6 Excise Duty Is:

"The duty charged on home goods either in the process of manufacture or before their sale to the consumer."⁶⁷

It is an internal tax imposed at some stage in the production of article. License duties and fees come under excise duty. Manufacture and sale of liquor was made under state control. But on special occasion like fares and feasts and during the period under festivals. Private manufacture of some kinds of liquor was permitted, for the concerned days.

The state collected license fees from such private manufacturers for the few days for which the license was granted.⁶⁸ Apart from the license fees there was 5% duty on imported liquor. Dealers in certain kinds of liquor like Circa, medakas, arista, phalamla, paid on impost because their business deprived the state of the profits, that would have been accrued to the state. Similarly in the case of manufacture of salt, which again was a state monopoly, private persons were permitted to manufacture salt on payment on requisite license fees.⁶⁹

The manufacture of salt and sale of salt were controlled by the state through the superintendent of salt. The duties on salt were threefold:

- Excise duty
- Customs duty
- Consumer tax.

⁶⁷. Enc. Britt., Vol X, p. 58.

⁶⁸. Arth, II, 25.

⁶⁹. Ibid., II, 12.

Soon after the crystallization of salt the superintendent of salt collected the tax. A person permitted to manufacture salt had to obtain a license after paying the license fees. He had to pay the government either a fixed quantity of salt or money rent, prokraya.

If the tax was paid in kind and additional share of 5% was to be paid as Vyaji and if paid in cash an extra amount of 5% of the value of the salt was to be paid.

imported salt had to pay 1/6th portion to the king. These 1/6th again was also measured in royal weights and measures which were 5% heavier or larger than the market weights and measures. The state thus derived an extra revenue of 5% as vyaji. The trader of salt had to pay toll charges. In respect of imported salt manufactured under license an impost was there in shape of compensation being the amount equivalent to the loss entailed on king's commerce, or in other words equivalent to the loss entailed on king's commerce, or in other words equivalent to the amount of profit that would have accrued to the state, this being a monopoly item. If the taxes were not paid, the traders were fined 600 panas. There was also consumer tax on salt. But men learned in the Vedas person engaged in penance, the laborers were exempted from paying the consumer tax on salt, only when they used salt as food. The criteria for exemption of labourers was their inability to pay and consideration was that of poverty.

Sales tax or turnover tax, lived on the sale of the commodities; was of two kinds:

- Tax on the sale of particular articles;
- Tax lived on sales in general.

Sales tax was common in India. A general sales tax of 10% and valor am on the sale price of all articles existed. According to Sukra the rate varied from 3% to 6.6%.⁷⁰

Apart from the general sales tax, taxes were lived on the sale of rubies, gems etc. Lands and buildings were sold at public auction and the buyer had to pay a tax on the purchase value. In addition to the immovable property the sales of most goods were conducted through public auction and thus the duty was lived on the sale of goods of all kinds.⁷¹

The main disadvantage of the general sales tax great chance of its evasion. But since the penalty prescribed for tax evasion in this case was confiscation of merchandise, nobody would dare to evade. But sales tax being an indirect tax, the incidence of this impost was ultimately transferred to the consumers. The businessmen were entitled to a certain amount of profit,⁷² being the amount due to them as organizer. Normal profit was permitted as the remuneration for the organizer, an element of the factor of production and it also served as an incentive for undertaking a venture. But an excess over the normal profit was taxed so that-

⁷⁰. Ibid., Arajapanyah panchakam Satam Sulam dadyat.

⁷¹. Arth, II, 21.

⁷². Ibid., IV, 2.

- a. There should not be huge accumulation of wealth in the hands of the trading people.
- b. King's authority was not challenged by the mercantile people and traders holding huge funds, from which power emanates.
- c. People might not suffer due to high prices, and
- d. social justice could be established.

Apart from all these ethico-political reasons the main reason for this impost was purely economic. Businessmen were allowed a profit of 5% on local commodities and 10% on foreign produce. The percentage of profit was not determined arbitrarily. The price of a commodity was fixed by the state taking into account the cost of production of that article and also the difference duties and taxes charged, and then the normal profit was determined. The superintendent of commerce fixed a profit of 5% over the fixed price for local commodities and 10% on foreign goods. This was considered as the normal profit. Any excess profit made over and above this normal profit was charged and taxed. The excess profit could have originated either from-

- An incorrect measure
- An incorrect scale
- Deceitful mixture of commodities or
- adulteration.

In all these cases, however, the trade was fined and had to make good the loss. The commodities were sold by auction and had a declared price based on the cost of production including the normal profit. If the bidders committed to increase the price over the declared level it was the state which reaped the benefit of excess over the declared price.⁷³

Generally bidding over the declared price with a view to enhancing the price was not permitted. Merchants who enhanced the price or realized extra profit even to the extent of half a pana over the declared price, either in the sale or purchase of a commodity, were punished with a fine of 5 panas. The price of any commodity, if enhanced beyond the proper value, the king shall receive the enhanced amount.⁷⁴

The element of unearned income was also brought under the category of excess profit. Lands and buildings were sold by public auction when the bidders enhance the value, they increase over the declared price went to the state. A tax *parsva* was collected "were there was some margins left for such collection." This tax was in the nature of excess profits tax. The excess profits tax was a regular tax in ancient India unlike the modern practice of imposing these taxes generally in times of financial stringencies. Traders had to pay every day *kakani*⁷⁵ towards the charge of stamping the weights and measures. This was charged for the certificate of the correctness of weights and measures. Another item of trade tax was paid by the importers of foreign goods.

⁷³. Arth, II, 2.

⁷⁴. Ibid., II, 21.

⁷⁵. Arth, II, 19.

In respect of certain profession, the professional tax was levied in the form of license fees. The actors, dancers, musicians, mimics etc. had to pay a license fees of 5 panas. The prostitute had to pay a fee of 1 and a quarter pana per month. If she was under the protection of an individual in urban areas the artisans and the handicrafts men formed guilds. A license fees on such guilds was charged. It was a sort of fees for the recognition of the guild by the state and sort of fees for the recognition of the guild by the state and might be in the nature of registration fees for the guild. The guilds enjoyed some special privileges granted by the state.

Income tax is levied on the income of a particular class of people. Not all the persons have to pay income tax nor all the income are taxable. These present days' conception of income tax was also found in ancient India where certain classes of income were taxed.

Income tax was levied on prostitute, actors, dancers, musicians, jugglers, singers, players of musical instruments, buffoons, mimics, rope dancers, heralds and wondering bards. The prostitute was to furnish a statement of income showing the amount of their daily fees, their expected income and their paramours. Every prostitute paid every month twice the amount of her daily earning as tax to the government.

Thus, the income tax was paid monthly and not annually as at present. Moreover, the tax was not progressive one, because the rate of tax was the same whatever would be amount of income. The actors, dancers, musician, mimics, and others also had to furnish the statement of income and had to pay income tax. But the income tax on the prostitutes, actors, dancers, musicians, mimics was in the nature of indirect taxation on their patrons.

Bali is the oldest Indo- Aryan term for the royal revenue and it occurs in most of the early Indian literature. But there is a great controversy regarding the exact nature of this source of income.⁷⁶ In the Rgveda it is the king's dues both from his subjects and from conquered kings. Macdonell and Keith, however suggest that Bali was from the very beginning, of the nature of a tax not depending solely upon the free will of the subject. In fact, it seems to have been known as compulsory contribution payable by the subjects. In fact, it is hardly likely that even a kingdom of the primitive tribal type of the early vedic age could subsist on purely voluntary contributions, it is not unlikely that in mid-eastern India there continued for some time the contradiction between the revenue terminology and its actual content. With the gradual development of revenue nomenclature and the emergency of new item of taxation, the word bali appears to be all the more intriguing in its connotation.

Bali as used in the Arthsastra is essentially of the nature of a petty cess over and above the king's normal share of the produce, whereas in the Jatakas the term of ten means additional and oppressive cesses.⁷⁷

In contrast to the sources mentioned above, the Milindapanho⁷⁸ mentions bali as emergency tax from which the four chief monoggers are declared free. This may imply that the import

⁷⁶. R.V.X. 173, 6.

⁷⁷. R.V.X. 173, 6.

⁷⁸. Ait, Br. VII, 29.

of the term underwent some change in Post-Mauryan times. But the Junagadh inscription of Rudradaaman (A.D. 150), which is the only epigraph of our period recording bali in the sense of a tax, does not corroborate the view incorporated in the Milindapanho. The mention of bali in the Milindapanho in the sense of an emergency levy cannot be taken to be a local variation because the area of composition of the work, and Junagarh where the inscription of Rudradaman is found, are quite near to each other. Nor does any other source take bali to mean an emergency impost. It is, therefore, not unlikely that the use of bali in the sense of an emergency-tax in the Milindapanho is a case of misrepresentation.⁷⁹

The bali of the inscription has often been taken to mean a religious tax. Shamasastri, Smith and F.W. Thomas interpret bali to mean some kind of religious tax. This general sense is also to be found in the Rummendei Pillar inscription of Ashoka, where bali or additional tax was remitted and the regular bhaga 1/6 or 1/4 or whatever, it was reduced to 1/8. Maity also takes it to be a religious tax on the ground that the word occurs in the grants of the Gupta period along with Caru and Settra, which are two important sacrificial rites. The inscriptions of Rudradamana, where bali occurs in the sense of a tax, records it with other fiscal terms such as sukla and bhaga. The epigraphs of Gupta period, however, invariably treat bali as one of the five sacrificial performance, the four others being caru, settra, vaisvadeva and agnihotra. Hence from these it seems that the term bali of the inscriptions has often been taken to mean a religious tax.⁸⁰

Bali is mentioned as a tax mostly in legal and literary writings, which often ignore bhaga in its technical sense. In connection with the rate of land tax Visnu as well as Manu refer to bali and not to the bhaga, similar is the case with the rajadharma section of Mahabhartha. Asvaghosa also mentions bali in the sense of regular land tax. Brhaspati who probably belongs to the Gupta period, refers to bali in the same sense. At one place in the Mahavamsa, a work of the Gupta period, the levy of bali is said to be very essential, which may imply that it was perhaps the basic land tax. In the Amarakosa asingnable to about the 5th century A.D., the term is used as a synonym of Sukla and Kara in the general sense of tax. Thus, in view of the conflicting interpretations of their term bali, it seems that bali of the Dharmasutras and of the general literature is identical with the bhaga of the inscriptions.

The term bali in the Saivadrnanda Kavya of Asvaghosa has been taken by Johnston in the sense of land revenue at the legal rate of 1/6th share of crops. At one place, Bhattasvamin, the celebrated commentator on the Arthashastra, has pointed out the rate of bali as one-tenth or one-twentieth other than the ordinary rate of one-sixth. Five of the commentators on Manu explained bali as the regular 1/6 of the grains share and only Nandana- the sixth, regards it as indicating all taxes- normal and additional. A.N. Bose suggested that there were two taxes, one the regular bhaga and another irregular bali which was fixed at 1/4. Thus we may conclude that bali seems to be an extra cess besides the normal share of the produce (bhaga). It may have included in itself some religious contribution by the people. But whether it was strictly religious case in our period is rather difficult to ascertain.

⁷⁹. Vedic Index, p. 72.

⁸⁰. J.R.A.S., 1909, p. 461.

Kara has been differently interpreted by different authorities. The commentators of our period used this term in the sense of annual land-tax or as a periodical tax levied primarily upon agricultural land over and above the king's normal grains share levied universally on the villagers. Thus Medhatih⁸¹ paraphrases takes it in the sense of the gift of commodities. Sarvajananayana makes it as a fixed cash payment on land. Ramachandra takes it to be a contribution in the form of grass, wood etc. Kulluka considers it to be a contribution from villagers and townsmen, either monthly or in Bhadra or Pausa. Bhattasvamin in his commentary on the Arthashastra defines the terms as the annual tax paid during the Bhadrapada vasanta and the like.

On the authority of Bharrasvamin, Meyer has interpreted kara as annual take and has suggested it to be possibly ground tax. The Arthashastra text quoted by Ksirasvamin explains it as a charge upon all movable and immovable articles. Haribhadrasuri in his commentary on the Kalpasutra translated it as a property tax when describing it as the amount payable every year to the king on every cow and the like. Asvaghosa takes the term in the broad sense of taxes.

The term kara also occurs in the Junagadh inscription Rudraman, where the king's treasury is said to have been filled by balisulka- bhaga in the while the Sudarsana dam is said to have been built without oppressing the people with kara, forced labour (visit) and benevolence (Pranava). This may suggest that kara used to be probably levied in times of emergency as well as for building and repairing works of public utility. In the Allahabad parasasti off Samudragupta, kara is used in the senses of a tax in general.

Further the spurious Gaya Copper Plate of Samudragupta provides that the tax-paying (karada) cultivators and artisans should not be allowed to settle in a certain gift village. Here the mention of artisans as tax-paying (karada) may indicate that kara is used to denote all the taxes, including those paid by the cultivators as well as the artisans.

The word kara appears at many places in the Vasistha Dharmasutra and the Manusmriti.

It has been rendered by Buhler as tax or duty. Manu and the Mahabharata tells us that the king was required to impose kara on the traders after having fully considered the rates of sale and purchase, the expense for food and condiments and profits etc. The latter authority also impresses upon the ruler to levy kara in a just manner. According to Raghavananda, however, kara is a monthly payment by villagers. Likewise, in the land grants akaradayi denotes one who is exempt from taxes in general.

D.C. Sirkar, interprets kara as an additional tax, over and above the king's share. R.C. Majumdar takes it as a funeral property tax, with whom B.P. Majumdar agrees. Maity, on the basis of Rudraman's inscription, regards it as an oppressive tax which might be remitted by conscientious kings. The term kara has also been illustrated by R.K. Dikshit. He interpreted it as a local tax. But his dictum is not supported by any independent evidence. At one place in the Arthashastra, Shamasastri also translated kara to be a subsidy paid by

⁸¹. Manu, VIII, 307.

vassal kings and other persons. A number of inscriptions and literary works have also supported kara as a tribute being paid by kings or Chiefs to their landlord.

It follows from above discussions that the term kara is used indiscriminately in both general and specific senses in varying contexts and hence it is difficult to ascribe any definite meaning to it. Moreover, it seems to have been some kind of land- revenue,⁸² but its exact nature cannot be determined in the present state of our knowledge. Those who could not contribute in the form of money and materials must contribute in the form of services.

Services of these types were called Simhanakaa. It has been stipulated by Manu⁸³ that sudras, craftsmen, artisans were to pay their dues by work. The main advantage of the labour tax was that the state received services from those who were otherwise unable to pay any tax. The idea that labour played an important role in the creation of wealth was fully appreciated and taxation was made on all the factors of production. Those who had only their labour as their capital and had no other source to meet the state demand had to pay taxes in the form of labour which was utilized by the state in the creation of wealth.

There was an another kind of labour tax called visti. Visti was in the nature of an additional tax and very in India. Manu⁸⁴ Gautama⁸⁵ and Visnu⁸⁶ prescribed that the artisans should work for the king one day in the month the development of the community and was actuated with cooperative spirit.

Gradually this spirit degenerated an entire system underwent a complete change and took the shape of forced labour and exploitation caused by landed aristocracy.

Remnants of this forced labour were found till recently in Bengal where the system is known as Begarr. Poor people, generally landless labourers had to render free service to their landlords.

A Poll tax is a capitation tax levied on individuals. Like all contemporary civilized country there was poll tax in India. It is of two kinds:

- General
- Special

General poll tax was levied on every member of the family and presumably included children. The inclusion of children in the purview of tax is presumed from the fact that the details of children were recorded in the register of the gopas.⁸⁷ Had it been attacks only on adults the recording of the adults would have been quite sufficient. The purpose of the other

⁸². Manavdharma Sastra, Vol. II, 256.

⁸³. Manu, X, 120.

⁸⁴. Manu, VII, 138.

⁸⁵. Gau., X, 31.

⁸⁶. Vis., III. 32.

⁸⁷. Arth, II. 35.

kind of poll tax was mainly political. The undesirable foreigners had to pay a tax to enter into the city. Gambling is an eternal weakness in man. Almost every state tried to make a capital out of this weakness and levied taxes on it. Betting tax is also a common item of tax at present and is prevalent almost in every country in the modern world- the most glaring instances being the betting tax on horse races. In ancient India betting or gambling tax was there. Dice play was the most common item. The yield from the gambling tax was definitely considerable in as much as prescription for the running of an establishment by the government under the charge of a superintendent was made by Kautilya.

Of course, there were other practical and administrative considerations for the creation of this establishment apart from the financial one. In the gamblers den foreign spies, criminals, spendthrifts, and also the anti-social elements congregate and so it would be easy for the state to keep a close watch on these elements and to take effective measures to control them. Moreover, unauthorized centres of betting and gambling spread vice.

Hence the state control over the gambling dens was essential. People found to gamble outside the authorized place had to pay a fine of 12 panas. A license fee was charged for the permission to gamble. The dice was supplied by the state at a rate of one Kakani⁸⁸ per pair. Fines were also imposed on deceitful activities. The state maintained gambling houses and there was a tax of 5% on the stakes won.⁸⁹ It was to be paid by the winner.

The losing gambler raised funds by sale or mortgage of his property. Here again the state intervened in the transaction and presumably took certain percentage.⁹⁰

The state, however, was conscious of the evils associated with gambling. Manu said that:

"The king should suppress gambling and betting, because they are regarded as open theft."

By levying taxation on betting there was some chance of its being regulated because taxation on gambling and control on the number of gambling coupled with the vigilant activities of the state restricting gambling in an unauthorized den, would certainly diminish the number of gamblers and reduce the malpractice and evils associated with it. But the fact remains that the state allowed it because of the large revenue it yielded.

The source of revenue called *vastuka* was mentioned by Kautilya under the head *Durga*.⁹¹ The term has been translated as "building site" by Shamasastry.⁹² The nature of this source of revenue could better be understood, if the meaning of the word *vastu* is explained. Kautilya defined the term *Vastu* as houses, fields, gardens, buildings of any kind, lakes, and tanks.

⁸⁸. Ibid.

⁸⁹. Ibid.

⁹⁰. Manu IX, 222.

⁹¹. Arth, II. 6.

⁹². Ibid.

Again, the term vastu had been used in the restricted sense meaning house and buildings only.⁴ Between any two houses or between the extended portions of any two houses the intervening space should be four padas or three padas. Inscriptional evidence also supports the explanation in the restricted sense.

In the Damodarpur Copper plate 4 it had been stated that "Application had been properly made by him, for vastu to be given to him in the neighbourhood of those cultivated lands for the purpose of building temples and state rooms."

So by the term vastu is meant sites and by vastuka is meant houses or buildings. In the Jatakas the term Vatthu denotes sites. ⁶ In Bengal the term Vastu denotes the homestead land. The revenue from the sites and houses and buildings were:

- a. revenue from letting out the buildings and sites owned by the state. This assumption could be made because when the state owned land, mines and manufactories, it could also hold land and buildings and leased them; or
- b. The revenue from the sale of sites and buildings owned by the state; or
- c. Revenue in the nature of the tax on the sale & transfer of sites & buildings owned by private individuals.
- d. The revenue derived from the tax levied on houses and abodes. In the Sukraniti⁹³ it has been stipulated that the king should receive taxes from houses and abodes.

Although this tax was classified under urban category, it appears that this tax was applied to the country parts as well.⁹⁴ One of the duties of the Gopas was to number the house⁹⁵ as taxpaying and non-tax paying and also to collect from each house gold, grain, cattle or raw material or free labour. So, it appears that vastuka represented the revenue from taxes on houses and building sites. Two terms Rajju and Chorarajju have been mentioned in Arthashastra as sources of revenue coming under country parts.⁹⁶ These two terms need a bit elaboration. The term rajju has been translated by Shamasastri as rope.⁹⁷ It has been stated in the Arthashastra as unit of length for measurement of land.⁹⁸

The rajukas originally held the rope in order to measure the fields of the riots and to assess the land tax. Thus the word became the designation of a revenue settlement officer just as in British India the Chief administrative officer of a district was called a "Collector" because his special duty was the "Collection of revenue." Rajju was probably a survey tax.

Kirpta was a tax levied on villages on sea shores or on the banks of rivers and lakes. The tax was probably levied on places which possessed the advantage of being ports and harbors and hence had more facilities for trade.

⁹³. Sukra, IV, 2-256.

⁹⁴. Arth, II. 6.

⁹⁵. Ibid.

⁹⁶. Ibid.

⁹⁷. Arth, p. 58.

⁹⁸. Arth, II. 20.

Pindakara was a tax imposed on village and not on individuals and was collected annually in kind. Bhattasvamin⁹⁹ explained Kirpta and pindakara, that they were in the nature of the collective assessment of the whole village. In the post Mauryan period or Gupta period pindakara or any other item of similar impost cannot be found. It may imply the absence of collective assessment of any tax of an entire village during the period.

Pranaya were emergency revenue. In times of financial crisis, the state resorted to pranaya for replenishing the depleted treasury by way of enhancement of the standard rates of taxes. It was levied on the cultivators, dealers, and craftsmen and animal breeders.

The rate of pranaya in respect of the cultivators was assessed as one fourth share of the grains but the rate could be enhanced to 1/3rd according to the nature and quality of the soil. Manu¹⁰⁰, however, determined the highest rate of emergency tax on agricultural land as 1/4th.

Taxes under such category were collected on the occasion like the birth of a prince. Bhattasvamin¹⁰¹ explained it as:

"Utsanga rajnah putrajanamdishu paurajanapadadattamiti kechit salakadikamityapara." Some interpret the term utsanga to mean presentation to the king, made on occasion like the birth of a prince while others regard it as an excess paid by the tax-payers over and above the fixed amount.

The Jatakas have a story that the people brought a kahapana each of a new born prince's milk money which the pious king did not want to keep but the people pressed and left back.

"During the hair washing ceremony of the king, the people vied with one another in making him rich presents, " writes Strabo.¹⁰²

But present to the king had been termed a 'aupayankikam'¹⁰³ which is a miscellaneous sources of revenue. So utsanga might be a special tax levied occasionally.

Senabhakta¹⁰⁴ was a tax paid when the army was marching for expedition. This tax was paid in the form of provision supplied by the people for the army such as oil, rice, salt, etc. It appeared that this tax was levied in times of war and not in times of peace.

⁹⁹. J.B.O.R.S., Vol. XI, pt. III, p. 83.

¹⁰⁰. Manu, X, 118.

¹⁰¹. J.B.O.R.S., Vol. XI, pt. 3.

¹⁰². Strabo, XV, i. 69.

¹⁰³. Arth, II. 15.

¹⁰⁴. Ibid.

Conclusion

The Mauryan administration was oriented towards public welfare activities. It was not a laissez faire state designed for maintenance of law and order only. The administration, while fully alive to its police and judicial functions, was actively interested in promoting the welfare of the common people. It is true, as we have seen, that in the interest of security of the king or the state intensive espionage was practiced, and for augmenting the treasury varieties of taxes were imposed. But the mutually dependent interests of the king and the people made the administration active in keeping the people happy and contented.

Only this guaranteed the loyalty of the citizens, a population noted for its loyalty was one of the principal characterizations of Janapada,¹ and one of the seven essential elements of sovereignty. Loyal subjects were the strength of the king; it was said:

"A king of considerable power, because of estranging his subjects by taking himself away to evil ways, becomes assailable."²

Therefore, in his own interest the king had to do good to the people as on this basis alone he could himself be happy and prosperous. Possessed of subjects who are indifferent to the king's interests, the king was easily overpowered by his enemy.³ Therefore, Kautilya advised the king to take prompt remedial measures to remove the causes of disaffection among his subjects.⁴

In numerous ways the administration carried out schemes of public welfare. Development of roads must have been one of them. The success of any administration claiming to be interested in the welfare of the people, is to be judged by how it treats its weakest and most helpless citizens. Kautilya accepted the traditional joint family system with wide responsibilities of the head of the family.

The rule was enforced that any person with means who neglected to maintain his or her child, minor brothers or sisters, widowed girls and unmarried daughters was liable to fines.

Similarly, any person embracing asceticism without making provisions for his wife and son was punished. But still there could be some destitute and orphans and it was the responsibility of the administration to maintain the children, the aged, the infirm, the afflicted and the helpless. The state also provided sustenance to helpless women who had no children and to the children they gave birth to.⁵ We have already seen that from amongst the dependent and helpless men, secret agents were recruited. The state must have been aware thought, of the fact that offer of free food or money alone is not desirable. It has been well said that idleness corrupts, and the feeling of not being wanted demoralizes. Therefore,

¹ K.A. VI. 1. 8.

² Ibid. 2. 38.

³ Ibid. 1. 13.

⁴ Ibid. VII. 5.28.

⁵ K.A. II. 1.28.

such work as spinning of yarn was to be given to widows, retired Devadasis, the crippled girls, medicant women, mothers of prostitutes and old women servants of the king and even women of good family who had no means of maintenance having regard to their status.⁶

Much care was taken to ensure the health of the citizens. Sanitary measures were taken in the cities and villages, wells, bathrooms, drains and latrines were to be provided in houses. Every householder had to provide for a dunghill and outlet for refuse water.⁷

Throwing of refuse or dirt was an offence. Fines were also imposed for voiding faces in a holy place, in a place of water, in a temple and on royal property.

Throwing of the dead body of a cat, a dog, an ichneumon, or a serpent or of a donkey, camel, a mule, a horse, or cattle, or a human corpse was punishable with varying rates of fines.⁸ The Nagarraka's daily duty was to inspect places supplying water, and also water courses.⁹ Adulterations of grains, oils, alkalis, salt, medicines and scents were punished with fines.¹⁰

Those who hold stale meat, of foul smell or of dead animals, presumably for eating, were fined.¹¹ All these measures were taken with a view to prevent the outbreak of disease of epidemics among the people. But for those who fell ill there were physicians or surgeons in the city and the countryside. In case of epidemics physicians were to treat the people, presumably free of charge.¹²

Unalienable lands were settled with physicians in newly set up villages by the king.¹³ A physician was paid 2000 panas as salary.¹⁴ Megasthenes informs us that when foreigners fell ill, physician were called to attend on them. It is quit natural to presume then that at least similar facility was provided to the ordinary citizens of the empire. Physicians were to report any patient suffering from serious sores, and doctors were punished if patients died because of their neglect or lost a limb due to incorrect operation.¹⁵ Medicines were manufactured from forest produce.

⁶. K.A. BK. III.

⁷. K.A. III.

⁸. Ibid. II. 36.

⁹. Ibid. 36. 43.

¹⁰. Ibid. IV.

¹¹. Ibid. V.

¹². K.A. IV.

¹³. Ibid. II. 1.7.

¹⁴. Ibid. V.

¹⁵. Ibid., II.

The arishtas were manufactured as prescribed by the physicians for each malady.¹⁶ In the layout of the royal city a room for strong medicines was provided.¹⁷ This was meant for the public. There was a separate private medical store for the king.¹⁸

While it is true that physicians and experts skilled in detecting poisons were employed in royal service,¹⁹ there were physicians to treat common people also. There appears to have been provision for mid-wifery and paediatrics at least in the royal palace.²⁰

Even animals were treated for disease. Physicians of horse were to prescribe remedies against the decrease and increase in the weight of a horse, and they also had to prescribe proper diet according to the season.²¹ Riding a horse reserved for treatment by physicians was an offence punishable with fines.

Any neglect of the disease or improper withholding of treatment of the ill horse led to severe fines, and its death due to negligence might result in the guilty paying the full price of the animal.²²

Physicians who received rations in the elephant stables were to treat elephants affected by long journey, illness, work, rent or old age.²³ Intensely humane and solicitous for the welfare of all. Ashoka appears to have intensified the efforts for the care of the sick, whether men or beasts. Ashoka provided for medical care and treatment of men and beasts throughout his dominion, and in the independent kingdoms of South India and Ceylon, and also in the dominions of King Antiochus II and his neighbours. He also provided for the planting of medical herbs beneficial to both men and animals everywhere, and where these were not found, they were imported from outside and planted.²⁴ Kautilya also required to superintendent of Crown to grow medicinal plants,²⁵ and duty on medicines was 1/20 or 1/25.²⁶ Ashoka also established at regular distances on roadways, rest-houses and watering places for both animals and men.²⁷ Kautilya refers to rest- houses and sheds for drinking water in the village.

The Maurya government also took effective and energetic measure to relieve the distress of the people. Elaborate precautions and remedial measure were enforced during famines, floods, droughts, maintenance, outbreak of fire, maintenance from serpents and wild animals and evil spirits. To prevent outbreak of fire in summer, city and village people were

¹⁶. Ibid., II.

¹⁷. Ibid., II.

¹⁸. Ibid.

¹⁹. Ibid., 9.

²⁰. Ibid., I. 20.

²¹. K.A. II. 30.42.

²². Ibid., 46-48.

²³. Ibid., II. 31.

²⁴. R.E., II.

²⁵. K.A., II. 24.32.

²⁶. Ibid., 20.7.

²⁷. R.E., II.

required to cock outdoors, and never under the roof. Every house-holder had to keep ready ten fire-fighting implements. People who worked with fire were to live in one locality.²⁸ To avoid danger from floods, villages on the bank of the rivers or lakes were to be placed away from the level of the floods and boats, bamboos and wooden planks were to be provided for the villagers to escape the flood or rescue flood victims. During outbreak of disease physicians with medicines were to treat those affected, and holy ascetics or magicians worked with charms to ward off disease. Even epidemics among cattle was to be combated by taking resort to magic and prayers to gods.²⁹

Droughts and famines were not unknown. Megasthenes says that famine has never visited India.

But according to Jain tradition recorded in a later inscription, a severe famine spread over India during the time of Chandragupta Maurya. Kautilya refers to famine relief measures. Indra, Ganga, mountains and Mahakaccha were to be worshipped for rains. During famines the government distributed seeds and foodstuffs to people. The Sohgaura and Mahasthana inscriptions refer to royal granaries from which grains and other things reserved for use only in emergencies were distributed among the people.³⁰ The king gave the famine-stricken people work on construction of forts and water works as relief measures. Intensive sowing of grains, vegetables, roots and fruits along the water sources and hunting of animals, birds, or catching fish were some of the measures to fight the menace of famine.³¹ Rats constituted a real menace and the state encouraged the killing of rats, and even taxes were instituted in rats, i.e., tax payers could pay in dead rats. Of course, large scale use of cats was made to kill rats. Magic rites and propitiatory worship but holy ascetics were also resorted to. Even rats were worshipped.³² In those days when such of the country was still not cleared of forests, wild animals could have often been a menace to regions bordering on forests. So hunters were encouraged to hunt these animals, and carcasses of cattle mixed with poison were left there to tempt the wild animal to death. Even soldiers were employed to kill these animals and the killer of such an animal was rewarded. Mountains were worshipped to restrain the activity of wild animals. Serpents were also similarly dealt with by the use of magic charms, Atharvavedic mantras and even by worship.³³ For the physical comfort of men and animals Ashoka got shady trees planted on roads, watering places provided and resthouses constructed.³⁴ The government not only constructed water-works for irrigation such as the Sudarsana lake but also encouraged and gave concession to villages to construct these, by themselves. Agriculturists in time of distress were allowed remission of taxes, and granted loans, grains and seeds.³⁵

²⁸ Ibid., IV. 3.3.

²⁹ K.A. IV. II.

³⁰ D.C. Sircar, select insc.,

³¹ K.A. IV. 3. 17-20.

³² K.A. IV. 3. 21-26.

³³ Ibid. 3. 28-35.

³⁴ R.E. II.

³⁵ K.E. II. 1.13-1.15.

Common people are often cheated or defrauded by traders and other professional communities whose services are essential for the people. The Mauryan government took measures to protect the people against the anti-social practices of these classes. Prices for sale of goods were fixed.

Traders were not to charge enhanced prices, and were fined for weighting more or less and for using non-stamped weights and measures to serve their selfish interests. Goods intended for marriage, for religious sacrifices, for confinement of women, and the like were exempt from toll. Seeds and medicine of great value to the people were freely imported.

The consumers were protected against the concerted hoarding or cornering of goods by merchants.³⁶

The labourers, wage-earners, and slaves were granted legal rights and employers or masters were not free to ill-treat them with impunity.³⁷ It appears that often proper relationship according to law did not exist, and that is why Ashoka had to emphasize the maintenance of proper relations between the employer and the employee as an article of the Dhamma he propagated³⁸ and held that proper treatment of the slaves and wage-earning servants was a dharmamangala.³⁹

It would be proper here to refer to the running of industries, agriculture and trade by the government. While this was a good source of revenue, it also has to be admitted that indirectly it served the interests of the people. Private traders, miners, landowners and factory-owners had to work under limitations and to that extent their exploitation of the people was checked.

Moreover, the state revenues thus augmented by state-run activities were partly spent over public utility and welfare projects mentioned above. Among the items of expenditure may be mentioned charity, royal kitchen, payment for remedial measures against sudden calamities, public works etc.

Mauryan administration under Ashoka was not only interested in the material welfare of the subjects but was equally if not more anxious for their spiritual upliftment.

Ashoka claimed that his efforts had borne fruits and men so far unassociated with gods have become associated with them.⁴⁰ His endeavour was to make them happy here and help them in attaining happiness in the other world.⁴¹

³⁶. K.A. II. 21.

³⁷. Ibid., III. 13.

³⁸. R.E. V, R.E. XI.

³⁹. R.E. IX.

⁴⁰. MRE, 1.

⁴¹. R.E. VI.

He asked his people to perform dhammamangala which would win for them both this and the next world.⁴²

We have already seen that Ashoka left no stone unturned to achieve this end and utilized the imperial and provincial civil services in propagating the Dhamma amongst the people and tried to regulate the socio- religious life of the citizens in a manner which he considered would ensure them happiness here and in the hereafter. It is quite another thing that this suited also the imperial interests as it helped in maintaining unity among the subjects belonging to diverse religious sects and in harmonizing various conflicting and even contradictory local, social and religious laws.

The Mauryan administration was almost an all embracing one, affecting practically all aspects of national and individual life. With the king as the directing and controlling head, the administration was fairly centralized in spite of the fact that local laws and institutions were given some recognition. The government officers and the secret agents were active even in villages, and the civic administration was under complete government control. Agriculture, industry, trade and markets were regulated by state regulations and administered by government servants. In Ashoka's time even religious and socio-economic life of the individual citizens was directly brought under governmental ambit. It is therefore not possible to agree with Mookerji⁴³ that the Mauryan administration was largely decentralized. The centralization was primarily motivated by the desire to secure the safety of the king and the kingdom. Measures were provided for keeping the ministers and officers in check. That was why the espionage service was so thoroughly organized on a very large scale. Treason, and crimes against the king and the kingdom were severely punished.

⁴². R.E. IX.

⁴³. Mookerji, R.K., Chandragupta Maurya and His times, p.47.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Dr. Sunil Kumar Singh

Dr. Singh is currently working as Associate Professor in the Dept. of AI and AS, S. B. A. N. College Darheta- Lari, Arwal. He has published several research papers in national and international journals. He has participated and presented his paper in many national seminars / conferences/ workshops. He is member of different learned societies. He has keen interest in the field of research. Currently, his interest is in the field of Buddhism and Jainism.



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