



THE JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION OF 'MAURYAS': MILITARY AND GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

Although, justice is the first virtue of any empire as truth is of systems of thought. Hence, global heavenliness was generally connected with the liberated ruler, the lord in times past. The certain sublime nature changed into all around related with the freed ruler, the master in a long time ago. The headway of the Hindu contraption towards a machine having a managerial ascertain changed tirelessly alerted the master that a judgment isn't only beside its far given in congruity with the rules of the sastras. The Maurya Empire (322 – 185 B.C.E.), told by strategies for the Mauryan tradition, become a geologically liberal and incredible political and equipped power domain in significant India. Beginning from the realm of Magadha inside the Indo-Gangetic fields of contemporary Bihar, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bengal, the area's capital city become at Pataliputra close present day Patna. The paper widely talks about the judiciary, administration and military governance under the Mauryan Emperors and its various functions of the society.

INTRODUCTION

The process of the rise of Magadha Empire which started from Bimbisara was completed under the Maurya emperors. For the first time, a huge Chakravarti kingdom was established in the country, whose capital was Pataliputra. There were two kinds of law courts during the Mauryan period called 'Dharmasthiya' or court of civil law and 'Kantakasodhana' or the court of criminal law. There were various courts in towns of the Mauryan Empire. However, three judges and three commissioners led the cases in these courts. In an atmosphere of political unity and strength, the way for material and cultural progress was paved. Chandragupta was the father of the Mauryan system. He was not only a great conqueror but also an administrator of a high order. He was more diligent in peace time than he was in wartime. Under his leadership, India first had the vision of political centralization and the concept of the Chakravarti emperor was given practical form. Although many elements of the elaborate system that he laid the foundation of were taken from the Iranian and Greek rule, yet it was wonderful and original in substantial parts.

The ultimate goal of this system of governance was to serve the public interest in every situation. Important information about the administration of Chandragupta Maurya comes from Kautilya's Arthashastra and Megasthenes' Indika.

KING

The form of governance of Chandragupta Maurya was monarchical. For the first time in Kautilya's Arthashastra we find a clear definition of the state where he calls it the aggregate of the seven natures. In these, the position of the emperor was 'kutasthaniya' (tat kutasthanio hi swami iti).

All rights and powers were vested in the king. The emperor did not believe in his divine origin, yet he was considered a favourite character of God. He was the supreme authority in military, judicial, legal and executive matters. He was considered the greatest commander of the army, the chief justice of justice, the maker of laws and the enforcer of religion. When there was a conflict between the scriptures and the king's justice (dharmanyaya), only the last was considered as proof.¹

He appointed all the important officials of the empire and thus was the main source of administration. His routine was very strict. Megasthenes tells us that he did not sleep during the day, but used to sit in the Rajya Sabha and listen to the reports of the subjects throughout the day to deliver judgments or other public works.

He could not bear any kind of obstruction in this work. When his body was pressed with ebony tusks or it was time to massage his body, he used to listen to the grievances of the subjects. Even at the

¹ <https://www.preservearticles.com/essay/essay-on-the-judicial-system-of-the-mauryan-rulers-india/13733>



time of shaving and grooming his hair, he had no leave from public work. During this time, he used to listen to the ambassadors.

Kautilya also had a clear opinion in this matter that the king should always be accessible to listen to the grievances of the subjects and should not make the subjects wait for long. He clearly warns that- 'A king whose sight is rare for the subjects, his officers disturb the affairs of the subjects, due to which the king becomes either angry with the subjects or becomes a victim of enemies.'

Therefore, the king should always be engaged in industrial work. This is his fast. The emperor mainly lived in the capital and resided in the huge palace. His court was full of opulence and magnificence. He took special care of his personal safety. He was always surrounded by armed bodyguards. Armed soldiers were deployed on the way out of the palace to protect him. Thus, in Kautilya's system, the emperor had complete control over all areas of political and social life.

He gives the highest position to the emperor (swami) in the seven wings of the state. Its remaining parts- Amatya, Janpad, Durg Kosha, Bal and Mitra- are governed by the emperor and depend on him for their existence (Raja Rajyamiti Prakriti Summary).

AMATYA, MINISTERS AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

The emperor used to get help from the Amatyas, ministers and officials in his work. The amatya or secretary was a general authority from whom all the chief functionaries of the state were aware. Greek writers call them 'members and determiners. They used to assist the emperor in public works. Although their number was small, yet they were very influential.' The chief officials of the administration were selected in consultation with them. But they were not all ministers.

He used to appoint a minister from among his amatyas, who used to be beyond all kinds of attractions. These ministers were members of a small sub-committee called "Mantrinas". It had a total of three or four members. The 'Mantrinah' was consulted in the matters of Atyyik (about which immediate decision was to be taken). Probably these included the prince, the prime minister, the commander and the sannidhata (treasurer) etc.

In addition to the 'Mantrinas', there was also a regular Council of Ministers, whose number of members would certainly be quite high, because according to Kautilya, having a large council of ministers is in the king's own interest and this increases his 'mantra power'.

In this context he refers to the council of ministers of Indra having a thousand members, due to which he was called 'Sahastraksha'. The members of the Council of Ministers received an annual salary of

12,000 panas. Its assembly was convened to decide about the necessary works and decisions were taken by majority, but the emperor had the right to ignore the decision of the majority and accept the decision of the minority, if it was in the interest of the nation to do so.

What was the relationship between the Council of Ministers and the Minister, it cannot be determined with certainty? But it seems that the members of the Mantrinah were more superior than the members of the Council of Ministers. The members of the Mantrina received an annual salary of 48,000 panas. The king usually used to do governance work only with the advice of Mantrinah and the Council of Ministers.

In Arthashastra, the Council of Ministers has been described as a statutory requirement. According to him- "Kingdom is possible only with the help of all, only one wheel cannot move. Therefore, the king should appoint secretaries and take advice from them.

Similarly, other instruments are described, there are three types of royalty - direct, indirect and permissible. What is seen with one's own eyes, that which others may tell, that is indirect and it is permissible to estimate the rest by looking at the works done. The king has many tasks which cannot be completed simultaneously. These works are done in different places and the king alone cannot complete them. Therefore, by appointing king ministers, get those works done.

Unfortunately, in economics there was no significant difference between ministers and presidents. That is why Kautilya has not mentioned the departments of the ministers separately. The work of the Council of Ministers has been described as 'to start the work that has started, to complete the work started, to improve the completed work and to get the government orders strictly followed'.

CENTRAL ADMINISTRATION

A very detailed description of central administration is found in Arthashastra. For the convenience of governance, the central administration was divided into several departments. Each department was called a 'tirtha'.

The principal functionaries of 18 pilgrimages have been mentioned in the Arthashastra:

- (i) Ministers and Priests
- (ii) Collector
- (iii) Sannidhata
- (iv) Senapati
- (v) Yuvraj
- (vi) The Presidency
- (vii) Nayak
- (viii) Karmantik,
- (ix) Practical,
- (x) The Council of Ministers,
- (xi) The magistrate,



- (xii) Antpal,
- (xiii) Durgpal,
- (xiv) Citizens,
- (xv) Prashasta,
- (xvi) Dauwarik,
- (xvii) Intrinsic and
- (xviii) Atvik.

Among them were ministers and priests, prime ministers and chief religious officials. During the time of Chandragupta Maurya, both these departments were under Kautilya. The collector was the chief officer of the revenue department, the sannidhata was the chief officer of the state treasury, the commander was the minister of the war department, the crown prince was the successor of the king who helped him in the administrative work during his father's reign, the judge was the judge of the criminal court, the operator of the Nayak army, the principal inspector of the industries of the Karmantik country, the judge of the practical civil court, the head of the council of ministers, the head of the council of ministers, the chief officer mobilizing the materials of the dandapala army, the guard of the frontier fortifications, the fortification manager within the country, the chief officer of the Nagarak city, the principal officer who kept the royal documents safe and the state orders were recorded, the principal officer to look after the royal palaces, the head of the bodyguard army of the inter-caste emperor and the chief officer of the Atavik forest department.²

However, these were high-ranking officers. Apart from the above-mentioned officials, many other office bearers are also mentioned in the Arthashastra. He has been called 'President', who was responsible for some government department. There is a long list of departmental heads and their functions in economics. Probably these presidents have been called 'magistrates' by Greek writers.

The names of some of these are as follows- Panyadhyaksha (head of commerce), Suradhyaksha, Sunadhyaksha (president of slaughterhouse), Ganidhyaksha (inspector of prostitutes), Sitadhyaksha (head of state agriculture department), Akaradhyaksha (head of mines), Warehouse head, Kupyadhyaksha (The head of the forest and its estates), the head of the ordnance, the head of the duty, the head of the thread (head of the spinning-weaving department), the iron head (the head of the metal department), the sign head (the head of the mint house), the gold head, the goshyaksha (the head of the livestock department), Vivitadhyaksha (head of pasture), Mudradhyaksha (head of passport department), Navadhyaksha (head of shipping

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http://www.allahabadhighcourt.in/event/TheIndianJudicialSystem_SSDhavan.html

department), Pattanadhyaksha (head of ports), Sansthadhhyaksha (head of trade routes), Devatadhyaksha (head of religious institutions).³

In the central administration of the Mauryas, the presidents held an important place and they were paid 1000 panas annually. Describing the functions of the magistrates, Megasthenes writes that- 'Some of them were officers of the market, some of the city, some of the army.

Some took care of the rivers and inspected the closed reservoirs, through which the water flowed in the rivers, so that everyone could get equal water. They were also officers of the hunters and they also had the right to reward or punish. They collected taxes and supervised land-related occupations, such as wood-cutting, carpentry, brass and miners. He used to inspect public roads and set up pillars every ten stadia to tell the distance. Those who were the officials of the cities were divided into six councils of five members each.⁴

It is worth mentioning here that departmental heads were also appointed from amongst the Amatyas. In this way, we can say that the members of Amatya Mantri of the first class, Radha, the members of the Amatya Council of Ministers of the second class, were the departmental heads of the third class Amatya.

PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE OF MAURYAN EMPIRE

The vast empire of Chandragupta Maurya must have been divided into provinces, but we do not know the exact number of provinces of his empire.

From the inscriptions of his grandson Ashoka, we know the names of his following provinces:

(1) Udichya- (Uttarapatha) this included the North-Western region. Its capital was Taxila.

(2) Avantirth - The capital of this region was Ujjayini.

(3) Kaliga- The capital here was Tosli.⁵

(4) Dakshinapatha - This included the region of southern India whose capital was Suvarnagiri. Of S. Iyengars identify this place with modern Kanakagiri located in Raichur district.

(5) Oriental or Prasi - This means eastern India and its capital was Pataliputra.

Out of the above-mentioned provinces, Uttarapatha, Avantiratha and Oriental were certainly existing even

³ <https://byjus.com/free-ias-prep/ncert-notes-mauryan-administration/>

⁴ S. N. Sen (1999). Ancient Indian History and Civilization. New Age International. ISBN 978-81-224-1198-0.

⁵ <https://gkchronicle.com/ancient-history/Administration-of-Mauryan-empire.php>



during the time of Chandragupta Maurya. It is not impossible that the Dakshinapatha was also a part of his empire. The governors of these provinces were usually 'kumars' related to the royal family.

But sometimes other qualified persons were also made governors. Chandragupta appointed Pushyagupta Vaishya as the governor of Kathiawar. According to the Arthashastra, the Governor used to get an annual salary of 12,000 panas. He used to run the administration of the provinces with the help of many amatyas and presidents. He also had his own council of ministers.

CIRCLE, DISTRICT AND MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION

In each province there were several divisions, whose affection we can establish from the modern commissionerates. The officer named 'Pradeshta' mentioned in the Arthashastra was the head of the board. In the writings of Ashoka, it has been called 'territorial'.

He used to supervise the work of the heads of various departments under his board and was responsible to the collector. The division was divided into districts which were called 'Ahaar' or 'Vishaya'. Below the district was the 'local' which had 800 villages. There were two 'Dronmukhs' under the local. Each had four hundred grams.

There were 20 collections under the Kharvatika and Kharvatik below the Dronamukh. There were two hundred grams in each Kharvatik and Dum grams in each collection. The heads of these institutions, exercising judicial, executive and revenue related powers, used to perform their work with the help of officials called yuktas.⁶

The head officer of the collection was called 'Gopa'. Megasthenes calls the officers of the district Agronomoi. He refers to different classes of employees who ran the administration of different departments of the district. There were different officials to manage land and irrigation, agriculture, buns, wood industry, metallurgical workshops, mines and roads etc.

In the Maurya era, the administration of major cities was carried out by municipalities. For city administration there was an assembly whose head was called 'Nagarak' or 'Puramukh'. Megasthenes has mentioned six committees of the city council of Pataliputra with five members each.

The first committee supervised various types of industrial arts and looked after the interests of artisans and artists. The second committee used to make arrangements for food, accommodation and

⁶ Upinder Singh (2008). A History of Ancient and Early Medieval India: From the Stone Age to the 12th Century. Pearson. ISBN 978-81-317-1677-9.

medical treatment of foreign travelers. It used to lead them if they went out of the country and also arranged for funeral rites when they died. It was also the work of this committee to keep a close watch on the conduct and activities of foreigners for the security of the state.⁷

The third committee kept the account of the census. The fourth committee looked after the trade and commerce of the city. Its function was to control the items of sale and the measure and weight. No person was allowed to sell two articles until he paid double the tax.

There was the fifth industrial committee which used to prevent adulteration in the goods sold in the markets and get the traders punished for the crime of adulteration. There was a separate arrangement for selling both new and old items. There was the sixth tax committee whose work was to collect tax on the goods of purchase and sale. It was 1/10 of the sale price. Those who evaded this tax were given the death penalty.⁸

Megasthenia calls the office bearers of the city as Est nomoi. Although we do not know about the governance of other cities, on the basis of this description, it can be inferred that there must have been committees in other major cities like Pataliputra. It is clear from this that the cities had autonomous rule in the Mauryan Period.⁹

VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

The village was the smallest unit of administration. The head of the village was 'Gramani'. He was elected by the villagers and was not a salaried employee. Arthashastra refers to 'Village Council'. In this, there were prominent people of the village who used to help the villager in the village administration. The state generally did not interfere in the governance of the villages.¹⁰

The villager had the right to manage the land of the village and to arrange for the means of irrigation. The council of village elders also did the work of justice. It could decide petty disputes in villages and impose fines etc. The villager used to collect land tax from the farmers and deposit it in the state treasury.

⁷ Thapar, Romila (2013), The Past Before Us, Harvard University Press, ISBN 978-0-674-72651-2

⁸ H. C. Raychaudhuri; B. N. Mukherjee (1996). Political History of Ancient India: From the Accession of Parikshit to the Extinction of the Gupta Dynasty. Oxford University Press.

⁹ ibid

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https://rfppl.co.in/subscription/upload_pdf/Tulishree%20Pradhan_7021.pdf



The work of the office of the Gram Sabha was done by an employee named 'Gopa'. He kept the details of the houses and residents of the village properly and also kept an account of the taxes received from them. Some information is obtained from the writings of Sohgaora (Gorakhpur) and Mahasthan (located in Bogra district of Bengal Desh) about Chandragupta Maurya-era village government. In these, there is a mention of the warehouses built for the safety of the public.¹¹

There is also a discussion of building a warehouse in economics. From this it seems that tax collection was also done in the form of food grains and these were stored in treasuries. This food was distributed among the rural people in times of divine objections like famine, drought.

JUDICIARY IN MAURYAN EMPIRE

In the monocratic rule of the Mauryas, the emperor was the supreme judge. It was the last court to hear all kinds of cases. Apart from this, there were many courts throughout the empire.

Courts were mainly of two types

1. Religious and
2. Particulate-purification.¹²

The difference between these courts is not very clear, yet we can generally call them civil and criminal courts. In these two, three judges used to sit together and do the work of justice. Special types of courts were organized to try the cases of foreigners. The punishments were very harsh. Common crimes carried monetary fines.

Kautilya mentions three types of punishments:

- (1) Prior courage punishment- It ranged from 48 to 96 panas.
- (2) Medium courage punishment- It ranged from 200 to 500 panas.
- (3) Uttam Sahas Danda- It ranged from 500 to 1000 panas.

Apart from this, the punishment of imprisonment, whipping, mutilation and death penalty was given. Death penalty was given for organ-mutilation of artisans. Similar punishment was also given to those who evaded taxes and scammers of state money. The Arthashastra shows that officers named Yukta often used to kidnap money. It is mentioned at one place that – 'Just as no one can see the fish moving in the water while drinking water, similarly no one can know the yuktas appointed to the economic post by kidnapping money.'

The Brahmin rebels were put to death by immersing them in water. In the crime in which no

proof was found, divine tests were taken by water, fire and poison etc. Megasthenes' description shows that crimes were not often committed due to the harshness of punishments. People left their homes unsafe and did not enter into any written agreements.¹³

Apart from some people took refuge in the law. Once when he went to Chandragupta's military camp, he came to know that- 'The value of the things stolen in the whole army was less than 200 drakams.' Arthashastra shows that the amatya who is 'dharmopadhashuddha' means pure by religious temptations. Those with character were perfect, they were made judges. The judges had to decide the punishment only after studying religion, behavior, character, and governance.

Of these four, Rajashasan (King) was considered the best. Punishment was also made for the employees of the courts. Judges and court employees were punished for making false statements, imprisoning an innocent person, acquitting the offender.

ACUMEN

The success of Chandragupta Maurya's elaborate administration was to some extent based on efficient acumen or intelligence. This department was placed under an amatya called 'Mahamatyapasarpa'. Detectives are called 'enigmatic men' in Arthashastra.

Those persons were appointed in this department, whose purity and integrity of character were tested in every respect, dubhabhih sudhamatyavarga gudhapurushanutpadayat. The network of spies was spread throughout the empire. He used to travel in various guises and inform the emperor about the day-to-day affairs.¹⁴

He supervised the activities of all types of officers. The Arthashastra states that- 'Spies should be appointed to keep an eye on the activities of all kinds of kings and to keep an eye on the eighteen pilgrimages of enemies, friends, medium and indifferent.'

Greek writers have called him observers and observers. According to Strabo, highly qualified and reliable persons were appointed to both these positions. Arthashastra mentions two types of spies-institution: i.e., living in one place and communication; those who travel everywhere. Apart from men, clever women also used to spy. Arthashastra shows that prostitutes were also appointed to the posts of spies.

If a spy gave false information, he was punished and removed from office. Apart from

¹¹ <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/41688888.pdf>

¹² <http://www.panchmuramahavidyalaya.org/fckeditor/userfiles/file/Administration%20System%20of%20the%20Mauryan%20empire.pdf>

¹³ <https://www.legalserviceindia.com/legal/article-4877-the-legal-system-in-india-an-analysis.html>

¹⁴ *ibid*



intelligence, there was also police for the maintenance of peace and prevention of crimes, which in Arthashastra has been called 'Rakshin'.¹⁵

MANAGEMENT OF MAURYAN ARMY

Chandragupta Maurya had a very large army. There were 6 lakh footmen, 30 thousand cavalymen, 9 thousand elephants and possibly 800 chariots. The number of soldiers was the largest in the society after the cultivators. Soldiers were paid in cash and special attention was paid to their discipline and training. The job of the soldiers was only to fight. In times of peace, they lived a life of joy and comfort. All the materials related to war were provided by the state. Awards were also given to him in honor of the victory.

The salaries of the soldiers were so high that they could take care of themselves and their dependents with great ease. The description of Megasthenes shows that this army was managed by six committees. Each committee had five members. Their work was different. The first committee used to arrange for the water army. The second committee used to arrange material, transport and logistics, the third looked after the foot soldiers, the fourth arranged the cavalry's army, the fifth arranged the gaj-army and the sixth committee arranged the chariot army.

The commander was the head of the war department. The post of commander was very important and he was a member of 'mantrina'. He was given an annual salary of 48000 panas. The four parts of the army (horse, gaj, chariot, foot) had different heads, who worked under the command of the commander. He used to get an annual salary of 8000 panas. The officer operating the army in the battlefield was called 'Nayak'. After the commander, the post of Nayak was the most important in the military organization, which received 12000 pan annual salary.¹⁶

The Mauryas also had a powerful navy. In the Arthashastra, there is a mention of an officer named 'Navadhyaksha' who was also the head of the merchant ships in addition to the warships. The frontier territories were protected by strong fortifications. An officer named 'Antapal' was the head of the forts.¹⁷

CHARITY ACTS

Although Chandragupta Maurya was an autocratic ruler, he took many measures with the aim of making the material life of his subjects happy and convenient. Huge highways were built for the

convenience of traffic. For the convenience of irrigation in western India, Pushyagupta Vaish, the governor of Chandragupta's Surashtra province, had built a history-famous lake named Sudarshan. It was constructed near Girnar (Junagarh) by constructing artificial dams over the water bodies of Raivatak and Urjayat mountains. Kautilya stresses on the need to build dams for irrigation. It seems that inspired by this the lake was formed.¹⁸

Irrigation was done by taking out canals from it. During the time of Ashoka, his governor Tushasya had made roads for the drainage of water from the lake. This increased its usefulness. We can call this lake an excellent example of Mauryan engineering art. Apart from this, many types of dispensaries and schools were also established by the state for the health and education of the citizens. It is clear from the above description that the governance system of Chandragupta Maurya was philanthropic. His concept of government was paternalistic.¹⁹

Despite being autocratic himself, in practice he used to rule according to religion, ethos and justice. He had a constant concern for the public interest. Extensive measures were taken to protect the public from the exploitation of the merchants and to protect the slaves from the tyranny of the masters. The state used to bear the responsibility of maintaining orphans, widows, dead soldiers and employees. Prajahit was given the highest place in the detailed administration outlined by his guru and Prime Minister Kautilya, and this is the biggest feature of this government.²⁰

The governance philosophy of Chandragupta Maurya is clearly manifested from these lines of Arthashastra- "In the happiness of the people lies the happiness of the king, in the interest of the subjects lies his interest. It is not in the interest of the king to love himself, but in doing what is for the people, it is in the interest of the king.

Thus, Chandragupta's system of governance realized the concept of a welfare state. But all was not well in the administration of Chandragupta. There were some flaws in it which we cannot ignore. In this elaborate administrative system, the central control was so strong that individual liberty was completely crushed and the common citizen was forced to live under strict control. The institutions representing public opinion were almost insignificant.²¹

A network of spies was spread throughout the empire, who interfered not only in public but also private affairs of the individual and kept the emperor

¹⁵ ibid

¹⁶ <https://indianexpress.in/mauryan-administration-system-mauryan-government/>

¹⁷ ibid

¹⁸ <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-worldhistory/chapter/the-maurya-empire/>

¹⁹ https://www.worldhistory.org/Mauryan_Empire/

²⁰ https://www.worldhistory.org/Mauryan_Empire/2

²¹ <https://blog.ipleaders.in/independence-judiciary-modern-administrative-state-india/>



informed of all kinds of activities. The powers of the bureaucracy were wide and the scope for oppression of the subjects remained equal. The punishments were very harsh. Death penalty and inhuman torture were common.

Therefore, the criticism of some modern scholars is quite strong that – ‘Chandragupta sacrificed civil liberties on the altar of security and converted the empire into a police state.’ It was a good thing that Ashoka later administered these administrations. Recognized the shortcomings and rectified them suitably to make it more philanthropic and friendly to the interests of the subjects.

EMPEROR AND COUNCIL OF MINISTERS

Ashoka was the sole ruler of a vast empire. He assumed the title of ‘Devanam Piya’. According to Shastri, its purpose was to get the support of the priests. In contrast, according to Romila Thapar that the aim of this title was to express the divine power of the king and to distance himself from the mediation of the priests.

It is noteworthy that there is no mention of ‘purohit’ in the writings of Ashoka. It was an important post in the time of Chandragupta. This also indicates that the interference of the priest in political matters was over. In principle, despite being autocratic and omnipotent, Ashoka was a Prajavatsal emperor. He considered his subjects to be sons and thus his conception of kingship was paternalistic. He gave utmost importance to the interests of the people.

Expressing this sentiment, Ashoka in his sixth inscription says- ‘The welfare of all is my duty, it is my opinion. There is no other work than the welfare of all. Whatever valor I do, it is so that I can be free from the debt of ghosts. May I make them happy in this world and they can attain heaven in another world.’²² It is clear from these lines how lofty his ideals of kingship were. It is noteworthy that here Ashoka talks about the debt of the people towards the king, which can be repaid only by doing good to the subjects. This idea was completely new and original.

The word ‘Parisha’ is also mentioned in Ashoka’s inscription. She was the ‘Council of Ministers’ of Economics. Buddhist literature shows that Ashoka’s prime minister (Agramatya) was Radhagupta. The council also had the power to supervise and give directions to the high officials.

The third and sixth inscriptions throw light on the work of the Council of Ministers. The third article shows that the orders of the council were duly written, which were communicated to the public by the local officials. The sixth inscription shows that

²² <https://lawbhoomi.com/comparison-between-indian-judiciary-system-and-the-kautilyan-chanakya-legal-system/>

the Council of Ministers used to consider the fundamental orders of the emperor and the decisions taken by the departmental heads on important matters.

He had the right to make recommendations to the emperor for amending or even changing them. Ashoka says that if such a situation arises or if there is a difference of opinion in the Council of Ministers on any matter, then its information should be sent to him immediately. Sending the royal orders to the emperor for reconsideration or change proves that the Council of Ministers was not only an advisory body, but it had real and detailed powers.

The Divyavadana also shows that Ashoka had to stop the wastage towards the Buddhist Sangha due to the opposition of the Council of Ministers. Thus, the position of the ‘parisha’ was like that of the modern secretariat which acted as an administrative body between the emperor and the Mahamatras.²³

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT

For the convenience of administration, Ashoka’s vast empire was divided into many provinces. The names of five provinces are found in his inscription:

- (1) Uttarapath (capital-Takshashila),
- (2) Avantiratta (Ujjayini),
- (3) Kalinga (Tosali),
- (4) Dakshinapatha (Suvarnagiri) and
- (5) Oriental or eastern region (Pataliputra).²⁴

Apart from these, there must have been more provinces. In the provinces of political importance, only the persons belonging to the royal family were appointed as governors. He was called ‘Kumar’ and ‘Aryaputra’. Such Kumars were appointed in Taxila, Suvarnagiri, Kalinga and Ujjayini.

The Divyavadana reveals that Ashoka’s son Kunala was the governor of Taxila. It is known from the Mahavansh that he appointed his younger brother Tishya as the ‘Uparaja’, after which Ashoka’s son Mahendra was appointed to this post when he became a monk. Probably the post of ‘Uparaja’ was like that of Prime Minister.

In other provinces, other high-ranking governors were appointed. Appointments to these posts were made without any discrimination of caste or religion. The Girnar inscription of Rudradaman I shows that the Yavanajatiya Tushasp was the governor of Ashoka in the Kathiawar province.²⁵

It seems that in the appointment of governors in small provinces, only local people were given priority. There was also a council of ministers to

²³ <http://www.barcouncilofindia.org/about/about-the-legal-profession/legal-education-in-the-united-kingdom/>

²⁴ ibid

²⁵ <http://davcae.net.in/File/CIs-VI%2013-18.pdf>



assist the governor in the provincial administration. Its powers were more than that of the Central Council of Ministers. It controlled the autocracy of the provincial rulers. Sometimes it took direct orders from the emperor and carried them out, as indicated by the story of making Kunala blind in the Ashokavadan.

Under the provinces there were the rulers of the districts, who were not appointed by the emperor but by the governor of the respective province himself. This is proved by the Siddhapur small inscription. In this, Ashoka, not giving direct orders to the Mahamatras of Isla, sends orders only through Kumar of the southern province.

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

The names of some important officials of his administration are found in the writings of Ashoka.

The names of three functionaries are found in the third inscription of Ashoka:

- (i) Yuktas,
- (ii) Rajuk and
- (iii) Regional.

Their details are as follows²⁶

(i) Yuktas

These were the officers of the district who collected and kept accounts of revenue and also managed the property of the emperor. They also had the right to spend money in that work which could increase the revenue. In Arthashastra also there is mention of office bearers named 'Yukt' or 'Yuktas'.

There the description of 'Yukt' is found as an accountant. It is clear that these were subordinate employees whose one function was to record the decisions of the superior officers and also to present them before the Council of Ministers. He used to go on tour with Rajuk and Pradeshik.

(ii) Rajuk

Buller has told that this officer is related to the 'Rajjugahak' (rope catcher) of the Jataka texts. Such officials used to keep a rope with them to measure the land. He was like the 'settlement officer' of today.

The post of Rajuk was important. They were appointed over several lakhs of people. In his fourth column article, Ashoka, while expressing full faith in the Rajuks, says- 'Just as the parents are convinced by snakes in the hands of a qualified mother-in-law, in the same way I have appointed Rajuks for the happiness of the rural people.'

Rajuk used to work only for the revenue department but later he was also given judicial powers. They could also give relaxation in punishments. Rajuk used to take care of the comfort

and convenience of the people under him and also used to give them gifts.

Thus, the position of 'Rajuk' was like that of a District Magistrate in modern governance, who has to look after both the work of revenue and justice. It is worth mentioning here that Strabo refers to a class of magistrates in the Mauryan administration who looked after the rivers, measured the land and had the power to reward and punish.

Clearly this is a sign from the kings only. According to Romila Thapar, the Rajuks were the backbone of the rural administration. He had to decide all the disputes related to land and agriculture. He had to decide the tax-assessment, exemption of taxes, water-related disputes, pasture-related disputes between farmers and pastoralists and disputes of rural artisans. For this reason, Ashoka had increased his rights.²⁷

(iii) Territorial

He was the head officer of the Mandal. His work was like that of the present-day 'Divisional-Commissioner'. He also had to do justice. It seems that it was the regional office bearer named 'Pradeshta' mentioned in the Arthashastra, who had to look after the work of the heads of various departments.

It is clear from this that the regional was the senior of the above two officers. The regional and rajuks used to get help from subordinate officers called yuktas in their work. In his third inscription, Ashoka says that he has ordered Yukta, Rajuka and Pradeshika to go on a five-year tour. This type of tour is called 'Anussayana'.

In these, along with administrative work, he also used to do the work of propagation of religion so that the transcendental life of the people could be happy. Ashoka himself used to tour his vast empire and personally tried to relieve the sufferings of his subjects.²⁸

The Names of Three More Office Bearers are found in the Twelfth Inscription

- (a) Dhammahamatra,
- (b) Lady President Mahamatra and
- (c) Brajbumik Mahamatra.

Their introduction is as follows:

(a) Dhammahamatra

These were Ashoka's own works which he appointed in the thirteenth year of his consecration. His work was to maintain harmony between different sects, to receive donations from the king and his family members and to make proper arrangements

²⁶ <https://www.clearias.com/officers-mauryan-empire/>

²⁷ *ibid*

²⁸ *ibid*



for it. He also used to see that unnecessary punishment or torture was not given to any person.²⁹

(b) **Styadhyaksha Mahamatra**

It was an officer looking after the moral conduct of women. It seems that one of his functions was also to spread religion among the emperor's entourage and women.

(c) **Brajbhumi Mahamatra**

He was the officer to look after the gopas residing in the transit-bhoomi (Braj). In economics, animals like cow, buffalo, goat, sheep, horse, camel etc. have been called Braj. It is possible that Brajbhumi also takes care of the protection of animals and their growth.³⁰

In the inscriptions of Ashoka, there is also a mention of office bearers named 'Nagalviyohalak' and 'Antamahamatra'. The town-practical was the judge of the city. Bhandarkar is of the view that this officer has been mentioned in the Arthashastra by the name of 'Pour Vyavak'.

In the writings of Ashoka, he has been called 'Mahamatra'. It seems that his post used to be equivalent to that of Kumar. Romila Thapar is of the view that the towns were practical judicial officers who worked under the citizen. In special circumstances the citizen could interfere in their work.

The 'Antamahamatra' were the officials who used to go to the border regions for preaching religion. Some scholars describe Antamahatra as the high authority of the frontier province or its protector, but in the writings of Ashoka, the word 'Anta' has been used only for the ruler of the frontier province or its subjects.

These officials worked among the marginalized people and the semi-civilized tribes and were responsible for conveying the policy of the emperor to those people. It seems that Mahamatra and Purusha were a broad noun, which was understood by all the high officials.³¹

CONCLUSION

Finally, the paper explains the judicial administration and military governance of Mauryas and though, it merely talks the central and provincial laws of the society. It also indicates that there is no law without society. In this period mainly two courts (Dharmasthiya and Kantakasodhana) were prevalent.

²⁹ https://www.brainkart.com/article/The-Mauryan-State-and-Polity_33563/

³⁰ <https://www.vedantu.com/question-answer/describe-governance-in-the-mauryan-empire-class-7-social-science-cbse-5fdb877c7dd0d60c2b402c0c>

³¹ *ibid*

Perhaps, their ultimate desire was to maintain the law and order in their provinces. During this there the severe punishments were given for serious crimes. However, the cases were decided according to the traditions and customs of Hindu caste under the panchayat system and the 'King' was the highest court of appeal. Thus, there were civil and criminal courts at local level. However, his system of administration was of an extremely brought together sort having an incredible administration at the middle, yet much was left for the nearby self-Government. The administration gave due consideration for commerce, business, industry, farming and public government assistance exercises. Obviously, the need of a 'King' was intrigued yet it was similarly accentuated that they needed to govern as indicated by the Dharma and for the foundation of the Dharma which was helpful for the most elevated and great.