CHAPTER VII

ADMINISTRATION IN WAR: SUPPLIES, MEANS OF TRANSPORT

MEDICAL COVER AND WOMEN IN THE CAMP
It is an old adage that an army marches on its belly. Supplies and administration thereof, is essential to keep alive the fighting machine. It is an affair which calls for foresight and planning of provisions, keeping in view all the operational plans of the commander, the country, local availability of supplies; economy in use to facilitate carriage, sustenance of long drawn operations, simplicity of arrangements and rapport between the supplier and the supplied.

The Mauryas had a sound system of military supplies. A board of five members was responsible for transport and commissariat. This department worked in co-operation with the officer in charge of bullock trains "which were used for transporting engines of war, food for soldiers, provender for the cattle, and other military requisites.... To the sound of the gong they send out foragers to bring in grass, and by a system of rewards and punishments, ensure the work being done with despatch and promptness. ¹ We can trace the establishment of this department to the days of the Mahābhārata, wherein the Pāṇḍava camp consisted of experienced artisans, and had an adequate supply of weapons of sorts, food, water, fodder, chaff, honey, clarified butter and pounded lac. Duryodhana's camp had materials for "th repair of chariots, tiger-skins to cover the chariots, spare spear-blades and sticks, spare quivers......oil, molasses...... syringes, water......oil-cloths...."² Kautilya

1. McCrindle, Ancient India, pp. 54-55
2. The Mahābhārata, quoted by V.R.R. Dikshitar; War in Ancient India, pp. 186-87 and Ramji Upadhyaya; Prachin Bhartīva Sahitya ki Sanskriti Bhumika (Hindi), p. 606
recommended the establishment of commissariat stores along the route of the army's advance for which detailed plans were drawn out before the commencement of the march. The halts were to be regulated keeping in view, the ability of various villages to supply grass, fire-wood, and water. The logistical plan envisaged the carrying of food stuffs double the quantity required for actual consumption, the half being reserve for meeting unforseen eventualities.

This practice of gathering military supplies at selected places seem to have been continued by Harsa. Emissaries of Elephant forest-rangers used to report to the commissariat stores at villages, towns and marts, for obtaining their rations in anticipation of elephants moving into their zones.

Describing the camp on the march Bāna, brings out another system where by supplies were collected from villages enroute, may be by the military contractors, who found it difficult to obtain their requirements from unco-operative villages - "these poor (old) unattended nobles overwhelmed with the toil and worry of conveying their provisions upon fainting oxen provided by wretched village house - holders and obtained with difficulty, themselves grasped their appurtenances" and swore to throw off their servitude of the Camp which was pinnacle of all the misery. We find a graphic account of the military

3. Arthasastra, Bk X, Ch. II
4. Harṣacarita of Bāna (Tr Cowell and Thomas), p. 190
5. Ibid., p. 207
suppliers unloading their ware, may their full fledged shops at a halting station, in the Sisupalavadha. Hemachandra the great Jain Scholar of Gujarat of 12th century A.D. in his celebrated and rare work Dwaiśhraya says, "where the Army of Mulāraja halted, traders plied their callings as in their shops in the city." This confirms our belief that at times the troops depended for their supplies upon the petty contractors and shop-keepers who accompanied the military caravans. It may, however, be pointed out that this system of procuring supplies locally was not free from defects. The instances are not lacking when the ripe crops were cut and villagers forcibly made to part with their grain. However, at times, the supplies were collected in advance and carried along with the army or sent from behind.

According to the Prabandha Chintamani, once while the Chāhamāna army was on the march, the officer-in-charge the kitchen pleaded with Prāthvirāja III to allot him more she-camels as 700 allotted to him were not enough to carry the kitchen service. It speaks for well organised commissariat and transport service. But what was true of Bara's days about the exploitation of people along the route of army in advance, the armies of Guarā Pratiharas were no exception to the rule. "The Sadhanikas (officials in charge of horses) took away straw from

6. Sisupalavadha, Ch. V, S' 24
8. Harṣacarita, Cowell and Thomas, pp. 208-209
9. Rājatarangini, VIII, 629
the barns. Soldiers had to be kept off from food crops, fields of sugar-cane and the produce of kitchen-gardens. Villagers tried to conceal all they could. Even dung-cakes were carried to the back-yard, vegetables were transferred to the house from the adjoining pleasure-grove, money was put in bronze vessels and carried to the house of bāladbhikra as a nyāsa with his ladies.  

For the purpose of transporting supplies, elephants, camels, oxen, mules, donkeys were widely used. When the animal transport was not available, "The army itself should be entrusted with the business of carrying them." The difficulty of arranging supplies could be partly overcome by arranging storage in a central place. Even the free labourers were employed for the purpose of making "Camps, roads, bridges, walls and rivers; carrying the machines, weapons, arms, instruments and provisions...." This system later developed into corvée - The obligation of performing gratuitous labour for the sovereign, in the Kashmir valley, whereby all able-bodied Youth who did not otherwise join the army as combatants were called upon to carry rations, fodder and other war material. Although the imperial

11. Dhan̄balaśilakmanyari, pp.96 ff; Dāshrath Sharma, Rajasthan Through the Ages, pp. 237-38
12. Harsacarita (Cowell and Thomas), p. 200  
16. Ibid., p.207; Cambridge History of India, Vol. III, p.23, Sigunālavādhā, Ch. V, 57  
17. Arthasarstra, Ek X, Ch. II  
18. Ibid.  
19. Ibid., Ch. IV  
Kerkottak seem to have paid for the services of these labourers, the later rulers took recourse to begar or forced-labour. We also gather from the Harṣacarita that the practice of making payments to labourers was in use.

The Sultan Mahmūd had a department of supplies placed under the Ārid. On an expedition every soldier was required to arrange his own supplies and was paid his salary in advance for this purpose. But the Ārid did cater for reserve rations in case of prolonged expeditions. Once in the enemy's country the Turks lived off the land. In 1021 A.D., Mahmūd's army while on way to Lahore, "instead of besieging Lahore, dispersed throughout the neighbouring country in order to subsist upon it...." They also laid waste the enemy territory and looted what ever was of their use. At times they (the Turks) relied upon their allies to fill their sacks with necessities of life. When Mahmūd decided to advance against Thanesar, "Anandpal agreed to provide him the passage as well as the supplies."

The Muslims too at times received essential supplies from the home country i.e. vinegar which "was transported in a concentrated form. Cotton was saturated in it and dried and the

21. Ibid., IV 172-4
23. Harṣacarita (Cowell and Thomas), p. 208
26. Ibid., p. 24
27. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. II, p. 452
operation was repeated until the cotton would hold no more; the essence could then be extracted by the simple process of soaking the cotton in water."\(^{28}\)

The Indian princes at times (very rare although) are known to have embarked upon career of conquest without adequate supplies and lived off the land. Kandarpa, when vexed by Harša's (1089-1101 A.D.) reproaches set out to conquer Rajaury although "he had no supplies."\(^{29}\)

No discussion of administration in war will be complete unless a special mention is made of the camel as a versatile means of transport at this juncture. Sukra regarded this animal as the best means of transport next only to the elephant.\(^{30}\) The cam-els were highly valued by Harṣa. Bana, describing the Camp of Harṣa noted "troops of camels sent or being sent as presents or brought back in return for others...... decked with strings of ever jingling golden ornaments; having long tufts of hair and variegated threads of wool of five colours hanging near their ears; all tawny - red as monkey's cheeks."\(^{31}\) In Rajasthan the sandy nature of the country admirably suited them and they became the most sought for means of transport.\(^{32}\) In Prthvirāja III's war against Narājuna of Guipura, his colours were carried on camels.\(^{33}\) They also became the foremost animals of Sind, both

\(^{28}\) Cambridge History of India, p. 5
\(^{29}\) Rājarājasimha, VII, 972-74
\(^{30}\) Gustava Coppert, p. 102
\(^{31}\) Harṣacarita (Cowell & Thomas), pp. 46-47
\(^{32}\) Dāshrath Sharma, Rajasthan Through the Ages, p. 364
\(^{33}\) Ibid., J.R.A.S., 191?, p. 279
in utility as well as numbers. In the mediaeval period it carried whole of the merchandise from the sea to Kandahar. It carried weight equal to 12 stones, travelled by night and rested by day in stages of 16 to 20 miles. It fed heartily where most other animals would starve to death. Without camel the desert cannot be conceived as a habitable place. Talking about the Arabian Camel, Philip K. Fitti Says, "The Camel is the nomad's nourisher, his vehicle of transportation and his medium of exchange. The dowry of the bride, the price of blood, the profit of Maysir (Gambling), the wealth of a Sheikh, are all computed in terms of camel. It is Bedouin's constant companion, his alter ego, his foster parent. He drinks his milk instead of water (which he spares for the Cattle); he feasts on his flesh; he covers himself with his skin; he makes his tent of its hair; its dung he uses as fuel, and its urine as a hair tonic. To him the camel is more than "the ship of the desert," it is the special gift of Allah. The Bedouin...... takes delight in referring to themselves as ahl-al-Ba'ir- the people of the camel. Musil states that there is hardly a member of the Ruwalah tribe who has not on some occasion drunk water from a camel's paunch. In time of emergency either an old camel is killed or a stick is thrust down its throat to make it vomit water. If the camel has been watered within a day or two, the liquid is tolerably drinkable......... The Arabian Camel can go for about twenty five days in winter and about five days in summer without water...."35 It may be of interest to note that

35. History of the Arabs (Fifth edition), pp. 21-22
during our period, camels were not used for the purpose of fighting from their back. This innovation can be credited to the Persians in the 18th century A.D.\textsuperscript{36} 

**MEDICAL COVER.**

Although elaborate system of evacuation of casualties, as it exist today was not in practice, during our period or even later. Nevertheless, the sick were tended and the war-wounded shown due attention. The wounded were treated as neutral and their wounds dressed by skilful surgeons even if they became prisoners-of-war. The physicians were kept in the rear for looking after the war casualties.\textsuperscript{37} Kauṭilya enjoined that at the time of the commencement of action, "Physicians with surgical instruments, machines, remedial oils, and cloth in their hands \ldots \ldots should stand behind uttering encouraging words to fighting men."\textsuperscript{38}

The responsibility of carrying the wounded was that of the free labourers.\textsuperscript{39} The Rājataranginī mentions of the field-ambulance which was responsible for removing the dead and the wounded to a place of safety, and disposing off the dead and treating the wounded. When suṣṣāla (1112-20 A.D.) was besieged in Srinagar, "even he was seen arranging that the wounded should have their hurts bandaged, the arrow-heads removed and proper presents given. The sums which the king spent on the troops

\textsuperscript{36} Dāshrath Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, p. 214
\textsuperscript{37} The Mahābhārata, Sāhitiparva, XCV, 13,12; Bāsham, The Wonder that was India, p. 131; also Bhikṣūṭar, p. 186
\textsuperscript{38} Arthasastra, Bk X, Ch. III
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid., Ch. IV
by...... gratuities and medicines, were beyond calculation. Strethers or litters, were at times improvised with spears broken or otherwise for the evacuation or the removal of the wounded and the dead. According to one version of the rout of Muhammad Ghori at the hands of Prthviraja III, the sultan was brought to the harbour in a litter improvised with broken spears.

WOMEN

Women of high rank and courtesans formed part of the war-camp right from the early period. According to Kautilya, the king along with the harem should position himself in the centre of the army while it is on march or is in the camp. The same concept was approved of by Kāmandaka. Harsa’s glamorous camp had in its train “high-born noble’s wives” who were “thronged with roguish emissaries sent by princes of rank.” Women in Dahir’s camp had fallen into the hands of Arabs. Queens and concubines and maid-servants in the camp have been described by Māgha also “The prostitutes pitched their tents, spread their beds, made themselves more attractive by putting on new robes, and like old residents with offerings of water and betel-leaf, began to receive strangers.”

40. Rajatarangini, VIII 740-41
41. Dshrrath Sharma, Early Chauhan Dynasties, p. 83
42. Arthaśāstra, Bk X, Ch. II
43. Chakravarty, p. 98
44. Harsacarita, (Tr. Cowell and Thomas), p. 200
45. Elliot & Dowson, Vol. I, p. 170
46. Siṁhāsnavadha, Ch. V, S’ 17,27,7; (Hindi Tr.) by R.P. Tripathi Shastri, pp. 121,125,129
the march, Dashrath Sharma says that "Villagers in general felt entertained by the sight of courtesans on elephants...." 47

No wonder, that the Indian armies too heavy and too slow to move, were simply gorgeous, with fluttering-banners, clinking-bangles and melodious music to the accompaniment of blinding clouds of dust.

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47. Rajasthan Through the Ages, p. 337