CHAPTER -II
ADMINISTRATION

The word administration is a combination of two Latin words 'ad' and 'ministiare' which means to serve. "Administration", writes Gladden, E.N., "is a long and slightly pompous word but it has a humble meaning, for it means to care for or to look after people, to manage affairs". In other words administration involves the management which is practised by all kinds of organisations right from the household to the most complex system of the government.

Village being the primary unit of State Administration, throughout ancient India including early medieval Indian period, attracted the attention of any such scholar writings on State Administration. Kautilya addressing the problem observed if the maximum prosperity was to be attained, the agricultural population must be more or less evenly distributed. Emigration should be encouraged from congested areas to new sites or old ruins. Only in the rare cases, scarcity of population should be remedied by encouraging emigration. New villages were, thus, to be founded. Old or new village, as a rule was not to exceed four square miles. Wherever possible, rivers or hills, caves or artificial structures, trees or forests were to form the boundaries of villages. The population should range from a hundred to five hundred families. Each group of ten, two hundred, four hundred and eight hundred

1. Vasudev Sharan Agarwal, India as described by Manu, p. 47-48.
villages should be guarded by fortresses of varying strength\(^1\). Manu, in Manusmṛti\(^2\) has also expressed the similar views to that of Kautilya's.

VILLAGE AS A PRIMARY UNIT OF ADMINISTRATION

To repeat village continued to form the unit of day-to-day administration during the period under review, kingdom was divided into a number of provinces governed by viceroys\(^3\) (Vishayapati) province was partitioned into circles of eight hundred, four hundred, two hundred, one hundred and ten villages administered by officers of corresponding status as is evident from various contemporary sources like Manu's Manusmṛti and Kautilya's Arthaśāstra. Surprisingly Kautilya though was aware of the importance of village as an administrative role of a village as an important organ of administration but has almost completely ignored the village institutions. Probably he favoured centralization and was averse to granting any authority to a village council or committee. The provincial and local officials were to be frequently transferred from place to place or office to office, lest they should strike deep root into the soil. Their department like those at the centre, were to be adequately staffed by clerks (Karṇaṣ), accountants (grāmksapatalika)\(^4\), messengers and so forth.

2. Manu, Ch. 7, Vol. 117
3. E.I., XXXII, p. 54.
4. Ibid. IV, p. 254, fn-1.
VILLAGE OFFICERS

The headman was the Chief of the village administration. He was at the tope of administrative podium. Mention of palliparivṛdhā in Harshacarita gramani in the work of poet Yogeswara, grāmādhipati, grāmādhipa, grāmeśa and grāmabhārttā in the Agni Purāṇa, pallīpati in the Āryāsaptaśatī and the Subhāṣītaratnikosa and grāmasvāmī in the Āryamaṇjuśrīmūlakalpa clearly testifies to the existence of village headman throughout north India.

Generally a local person of power and repute was made the headman or the chief of a village. But, sometimes even an influential outsider could be the ruler of a village settlement if the villagers so desired and the king assented. This is evident from the appointment of Udayamani, a merchant from Ayodhya, as the rājā (ruler) of the village (Pallī). Bharamarśālmali by king Ādissimha of Magadha at the request of the villagers, as recorded in the Dudhapani rock inscription of Udayamana. The villagers agreed to his headship only because he undertook to pay the royal dues or provide food to the royal party on their behalf. This inscription led us to assume that mostly the very poor villages, had compromised in the selection of their headman and we can say that such villages were represented by the agents appointed by the king. On the other hand a verse in the Kathāsarisāgarā states that a

1. H.C., p - 58.
2. Sadukitikaranamrita, 2.84.3.
3. Ag., Ed. by Rajendralala Mitra, p.222 and 223, 257-60
4. Ārya. - VV .140, 415 and 476..
5. Subhāṣītarathnakosa - VV-1033 and 1664.
7. E.I., II, No. 27.
sonless dying chief of a non-Aryan village (pallāpati) on the Southern border of Uttar Pradesh near Mathura, had offered his village principality (pallārājya) to his daughter. This shows that the office of the village was hereditary among the non-Aryans. This might have been the practice among the Aryans as well. But the hereditary headship in Aryans could not be ascertained because of the limited information available from the source material in the understudied period (650-1206 A.D.).

As far as the duties of a headman were concerned, one of the main duties was to maintain law and order in the village. A verse in the Yājñavalkyasūtra shows that the village headman was responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the village. Vījñānāsvāra commenting on it states that if any human or other life is destroyed or if theft of property takes place inside a village, the village chief (grāmpati) should be held responsible for the incident, should catch hold of the thief lurking in the village and fetch him to the king. If he is unable to do then he should compensate the loss by offering wealth to the victim. This shows that the village chief was answerable for breach of law and order in the village.

The law book of Manu states that if any trouble, in the sphere of administration arose in the village, the village chief personally should report the matter to the chief of ten villages, the latter to the chief of twenty villages, who again should inform the chief of one hundred villages and lastly, it

should be brought to the notice of the chief of one thousand villages.

The Agnipurana reiterated this partly and advised that in case of any trouble in the village, the village chief himself should deal with it and if he finds himself incapable of doing so, he should personally report it to the chief of ten villages. In normal circumstances, the village chief is responsible for the welfare of the village.

Some land grants of Pala and Sena of our period indicate that there were several royal officers to collect various types of taxes from villages. They were called sașthādhikṛta [officers in charge of the collection of the sixth part of the produce], Bhogapati [officer in charge of collecting bhoga], Cauroddharanika [officer in charge of police tax], Anparika [officer in charge of uparikara], Aulhkhēti [officer in charge of uthkētana] etc. In the collection of revenues and dues, the village chief was supposed to offer his full co-operation to these officers. A reference of daily collection of royal dues (rājapradeya) by the village head has also been found in the Manusmṛti. These taxes were paid by the villagers in the form of grain, drinks, faggots, etc., a part of which was kept by the headman as his remuneration.

2. E.I., IV No. 34, 11.44-45.
3. H.C., of Bana, p - 212
5. Ibid, 1.2;
6. Ibid, 1.2 ;
7. Manu, 7.118.
A verse (148) in the Ṛyāsaptasatī indicates that the village chief kept an eye on the social behaviour of the people and awarded punishment even for an act of slight indiscipline. The village chiefs had to discharge their duties under strict royal vigilance. Their actions and movements were always watched by royal spies. This shows that they had to remain faithful to the king. Though our records do not contain any evidence, it appears from the role assigned to the village headman and his constant residence in the village that he might have been of immediate help to the people in times of distress, such as floods, fire, famine, etc.

The social and economic condition of the village headman was much superior to those of the people of his village. Financially, he was sound and his social status was like a mountain among rocks. The samayamatrka of Ksemendra states that the Damāras or the village lords in Kashmir lived in forts and led a luxurious life. These Damaras could very well be compared with the feudal lords of medieval Europe. They were engaged in constant warfare with the kings of Kashmir.

The mahattara was also an important village functionary. Monier Williams described him to be "the headman or the oldest man

1. Arya, V - 140
2. Nityameva tathā Kāryāṁ teṣāṁcaṛaiḥ parĪkṣaṇām, Ag. 222.2.
3. Samayamatrka of Ksemendra*(Kavyamala) Pt.2
4. E.I., XVIII, No. 11, 7-8.
of a village

Pargiter opines that "the Mahattaras were the men of position in the villages, the leading man". They are also represented as 'the leading man of the locality'. D.C. Sircar states that they were 'elders or leading man of the village'. According to P.V. Kane, mahattara in the Harshacarita means village head but Cowell and Thomas translate it along with the word "Jarat" as aged elders. Jogendra Chandra Ghosh interprets mahattara as head man of a village. Thus, there is no definite opinion about the mahattara and some take the mahattara to be village elder or a leading man of the village or locality and others consider him to be a village headman. In our opinion, the first view seems to be correct and is supported by Katyayna. He enjoins that villages and associations of caste, class or community should have their own adjudicators in the person of old mahattaras having extensive knowledge and experience. This shows that mahattaras were eminent or leading persons of the village or locality who acted as adjudicators of local disputes.

The mahattara as mentioned in a verse of Agni Purana may look like a village head, but he does not enjoy the status of the grāmapati or the grāmabharṭṭa duly appointed by the king. He is, perhaps, the leading or the prominent person living in the village probably because of his social status.

1. A sanskrit, English dictionary by Monier Williams, new edition - 1956, p - 794
2. I.A., XXXIX, p-213.
5. H.C., P - 272 (Jaranmahattarattambhitambhah).
6. Ibid (Cowel), P-208
7. Grāmaśreniganādinām bhaveyuh Kāryaicitakāh, Sucayo vedadharmajñā
8. Kutumbāḥ Pāñcabhirgrāmaḥ Śāhastatra mahattarāḥ, Ag., 165.11.
Every village how so ever small could not have a village chief appointed by the king. So a village of five or six families managed its affairs under the supervision of its own leading man. The mahattara of a very small village acted as the non-official village head. In larger villages, village chiefs seem to have been duly appointed by the king and probably assisted by several leading men or mahattaras representing the interests of particular classes or communities to which they belonged. Thus, mahattaras do not seem to have been village chiefs or village heads. In fact, they were the leading or influential persons of the village who enjoyed prestige on account of age, experience, learning and wealth. They probably, acted as representatives of the various classes of people who inhabited the village.

The term mahamattara in the Khalimpur plate of Dharmapāla indicates that the mahattaras of several villages of a particular area formed some sort of union of their own and the mahamahattā was the chief representative or the head of this organisation; he might have been a royal officer to supervise the activities of all the mahattaras of a certain locality.

It appears from epigraphic evidence that the designation "mahattara" ceased to exist from the middle of the 9th Century A.D. in north India and the title mahattama took its place. The mention of term mahattara in the pala land grants is found in the Monghy grant of Devapala. Mahamattama first appears in the Nalanda plate of Devapala and it continues to occur in almost all the subsequent pala land grants. Mahamattama again occurs in the Bengal Asiat

1. E.I., IV, No. 34, 1-47.
Society's copper plate grant of Trilocanapala of the pratihar dynasty of Kanauj, the Basani plate of Govind Chandra, the copper plate grant of Mahanapala and Govind Chandra. The Benares copper plate grant of Govinda Chandra and the Nalanda plate of Dharmapāl in the Bengal Asiatic Society's plate of Samvat.

The office of the Mahattama was exactly the same as that of the mahattaras. This is clear from the use of the term mahattār exactly as a substitute for mahattara in the pala land grant. Rama Niyogi states that the mahattama was probably the headman of the village. On the other hand in the land grants of Narayanapāl and his successors. The mahattama appears to be a functional different from the village headman (grāmpati) as both are mentioned in the same list of officials. The change of designation from mahattara to mahamattara could be explained by the rise of a new class of village dignitary called uttama who might be the leader man of a particular clan or of a particular class of people living in the village. The name mahattara does not sound well with uttama. Thus uttama also appears to be a type of village elder or leadir

1. I.A., XVIII, pp-33, FL. 1.4 this is also called Jhusi inscription of Trilocanapala
2. Ibid - pp - 101, FL. 1.11.
3. Ibid - XVIII, pp.14, FL. 1.12 this is also called the Rahanapāl
4. E.I., II, No. 29.1 Samvat 1162.1.9.
5. J.A.S.B. XXXI, pp-123, FL vide the Nalanda plate of Dharmapāl (1.16) and the Monghyr (1.36) and the Nalanda (1.32) grants of Devapāl, in particular.
man but he was lower in rank than mahattama. These two types of village dignitaries (mahattara or mahattama, and uttama) may have been very much like the gramavṛddhas (village elders) of the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya, and working as non-advisory body they may have rendered much assistance to the village chief in the smooth running of the village administration.

The word kutimbīn which occurs along with viṣayapati and adhikaraṇas in the Asharāfpur plates of Devakhaḍge and appear again first with mahattama and then with mahattara and uttama in the pala land grants, is interpreted differently. It generally means head of a family or household including even the joint family. But the Abhidhanaratnamala takes it to mean farmer or agriculturist. The expression Caturudhadhi Kedāra Kuṭumbi in the Harṣacarita also suggests that the Kurumbi was a farmer. D.C. Sircar appears to be correct in asserting that Kuṭumbin "is the origin of Koormi or Kuṭumbi a prominent agriculturist caste of north India." But the Kutumbin of the pala records were certainly not agriculturists, for the pala land grants always use the word Ksetrakara for agriculturists. They appear to have been heads or rather prominent heads of households who enjoyed some voice in the general organisation of the village, at least in the Pala Kingdom and who were, perhaps, occasionally consulted on matters relating to village. the expression mahattmota makūṭumbi in the land

4. Kṣetrajīvāḥ kṛṣīkaḥ kṛṣivalahkārsakaḥ kuṭumbīca, A.R.M.-2.419
5. H.C. ,p-77.
grants of Mahipala\textsuperscript{1} I, Vigrahapala III\textsuperscript{2} and Madanapala\textsuperscript{3} also suggests that Kuṭumbi stood for heads of household in the palaterritory.

The terms Kuṭumbi, Uttama and Mahattama appear here probably in the graded series, denoting family heads, clan heads and class or community heads respectively. If mahattama and uttama could be counted as influential persons on account of age, experience and social status, family heads deserved some respect on account of having experience of managing household affairs or it be that the Ksetrakars were ordinary cultivators and the Kuṭumbins were cultivators of importance who could be of some help in matters connected with village organisation. This gradataion of the Kuṭumbin, Uttama and Mahattama suggests some sort of stratification in the village population on the basis of social, economic and political status rather than on the basis of caste. Thus, Sudra Kutumbin, Uttama and Mahattama might have been as much prominent as the Kuṭumbin, Uttama and Mahattama of the other higher castes. In modern times, it is observed that mahotam or mahto, a derivative from mahattama, is the family title of some sections of the Sudras as well of the higher castes in Bihar. This suggests that mahattamas and other such persons did not belong to a specific any caste in the village. It could, therefore, be concluded that social, economic and political factors overrode considerations of varna in the early medieval villages. Karna in the Khalimpur plate

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1. E.I., XIV, No. 23.11, 41-42
of Dharmpala appears to be a village scribe or accountant. It is, however, definitely known from the Indra copper plate of the Kamboja king Nayapaldeva (10th century A.D.) that the Karnas, i.e., clerks, scribes or accountants lived in the village of Brhatchattivana lying in the Dandabhukti mandala of the Vardhamana bhukti, perhaps modern Chhatina on the suvarnarekha in the district of Midnapore. Certain land grants mention the word dohśādhika, dauḥśādhasādhanika and mahādauḥśādhasādhanika. The mahādauḥśādhanika probably supervised the work of the dohśādhikas, was appeared to be in charge of watch and ward of the whole local area including even the villages. The village chief might be deriving assistance from them in their work of apprehending thieves.

The brāhmaṇs played an important part in the village administration. They were expected to impart education and to interpret the law books. So preference was given to them in the appointment of judges for the royal village courts. Some sena land grants also indicate that the brāhmaṇs living the villages were held in high esteem. The Tezpur rock inscription of Harijjaravarman clearly refers to the brahmans - lahlli jha and others, taking part in the settlement of a dispute between the

1. E.I., IV, No. 34, 1.48.
2. E.I., IV, P-254, FN-1.
4. Ibid - P - 154.
5. E.I., XII, No. 8, 1.33 and Sena land grants.
6. Ibid. IV, No. 29, 1.8 almost all the Pala land grants.
8. Infra, p-227.
9. I.B., 111, No. 16, 1.21; E.I., XII, No. 8, 1.36.
boatman and the toll collectors\(^1\).

Accountant, clerk, etc. were among the village officers working in the department dealing with village records. The grāma<ksapatalika, mentioned in the Harṣhacarita\(^2\), might have been the keeper of the village records and accounts. P.V. Kane also supported this on the basis of the use of word aksapatala in the Arthaśāstra of Kauṭilya\(^3\) and stated that these village officers did not live in villages. He was perhaps a royal officer entrusted with the work of supervising village records and accounts and lived at the court or in the capital. But the mention of this officer has only been found in Harṣhacarita and Harsha. Other contemporary records are just silent on it. Though a large number of the land grants of period under study refer to mahāksapatalika or aksapatalika\(^4\) but not to grāmāksapatalikas. From above discussion it could be inferred that probably mahāksapatalika or aksapatalika took over the job of grāmāksapatalika.

These instances lead us to infer that such scribes or accountants might have lived in all other villages also where regular accounts were maintained. An accountant called as 'Patwari' could be compared with the old 'Karaṇa' in respect of their system of functioning.

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2. H.C., of Bana (Cowel and Thomas) p-203.
3. Ibid (Notes by P.V.Kane, Ch-7, P.167.
4. E.I., Vol. IV, 293 (The land grants of UP ,Bihar and Bengal
POLICE SYSTEM

It seems that the village chief was mainly responsible for the maintenance of law and order in the village. In case of murder or theft inside the village, he had to trace out the culprit, perhaps with the help of the village people and had him over to the king. Among other officers and persons connected with the village system, were dohsādhika, cauroddhariṇika, cāṭa and bhaṭa. Every police personnel was given a specific duty according to his rank. The dohsādhika according to the Āryāsaptāsāti, caught hold of the thieves. The derivative meaning of the word seems to be dorbhyanāṃ sādhnoti or sādhāyati-accomplishes or causes to accomplish with (the strength of) arms. This suggests that the dohsādnikar were physically strong and hard persons well suited to the duty of dealing with the thieves. They were sentries or watchmen (Yamika) according to vyāṅgartha dīpanā of Anand Paṇḍita. The rātrisaṅcārīnaḥ of Nādi and the Khaṇḍanakhāṇḍa Khadya of Sriharsha also refers to (night) watchman as yāmika. The land grants of Bihar, Bengal and Assam also referred to something related to villages police system. The terms sacawrodharanah cauroddharanika and Cauroddharana were the different ranks of village police system. Cauroddaraṇa was the tax paid by the villagers for protection

1. Arya., V - 133
2. Ibid - V - 133
3. Grāmeṣvanveṣaṇam kuryuṣcandalāvadhakādayah rātrisaṅcārino ye ca bahih kuryurbahiṣcarahayah, K.K. -XII, P-545.
4. K.K.K., P-227
5. E.I., XIINO. 8, p.248 (Pala land grants).
7. E.I., XXXII No. 33, 1.42.
against thieves and dacoits. U.N. Ghoshal rightly call it police tax. The police officer incharge for the collection of this tax was perhaps cauroddharaniks, who, D.C. Sircar identify with the modern police inspector. P.V.Kane calls him a thief catcher. It appears that he either collected taxes for protection from the thieves or apprehended thieves or performed both the functions. The Nowgong Plate of Balavarman III of Assam includes the cauroddarinika in the list of cruel and oppressive officers that visited the village regularly. This shows that he discharged his duties ruthlessly and cauroddhāraṇa was an oppressive tax levied on the villagers.

Despite existence of various level of police officers, incident of burglary was very common. Although punishment was very severe, ranging from imposition of fine to amputation of limbs and some times even upto death penalty, as prescribed in the Dharmasastras of Manu, Kātayāna, HārīkaVyāsa and others, thefts and burglarly had spread in the society. The art of stealing had developed to such an extent that it found place in the literature of that period. The Mrūchhakaṭika refers to one KanakaSatī as the writer of the book on stealing. It also narrates how burglary was committed by the brāhmaṇ sarvilaka at night. This shows that some poor brāhmaṇ had also taken to this profession. The Kathāsaritsāgra tells of a brāhmaṇ Vasubhūti

5. K.K., XII, Ch. 70, PP - 505-555.
6. Iha Khalu Bhagavata kanakaśaktinā caturvidhaḥ samdyupāyo
darśitaḥ, Mṛuchhakaṭika, Act. 3, P-88.
living in a large village where he acted as chief of the gang of thieves. The Āryamañju Śrīmūla-kalpa contains reference to thieves. The Carya songs refer to theft at midnight. The Khandana-khanda-khādyā of Śrīharśa refers to theft while watchmen slept. Thus, thieves were a constant source of trouble and peoples' property was not safe despite the presence of strong police system. The royal machinery approved to be inadequate to prevent thefts and people, perhaps, depended much upon themselves for the safety of their property. This might have led to the unwillingness of the people to pay the police tax and it was called oppressive tax considering the incompetence of the police system.

ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

The statements of certain Smriti writers provide us the same information about the administration of justice in the rural areas of north India between the period 650-1205 AD. The spirit of rigid organization which pervaded the judicial system was recognised as a bedrock of sound government. Although Brhaspati classifies judicial court (sabha) into three categories namely Pratiṣṭhitā, Apraṭiṣṭhitā and Mudritā. Śāsite states that

2. Āṅgana gharpana suna bho viātī
   Kāneṭa cauri nila adhāratī
   Sasuṛā nida gela bahudī jāgaa,
   Kānetacore nilakā gai māgaa,
   Bauddagana au dāha - Song No. 2, P - 5.
villages also have stationary courts like the town courts. Out of the four types of courts, first two were very common. According to Candeśvara the grāma of Hārita means royal village (rājagrāma), grama and nanagrama means (other village). This may suggest that the villages under the direct supervision of the king had stationary courts and other villages had peripatetic courts (aparstisthita).

But according to Kautilya's Arthasastra there were two grades of courts called Dharmasasthiya and Kantakasodhana. The former consisted of a bench of three judges well grounded in law who dealt with contracts, relations between master and servant, employer and employee, slavery debts, deposits, rescissions of sales, resumption of gifts, sales of the property other than the owner, rights of the ownership, the sale of house property, partnership, inheritance and succession, damage to agriculture to pasture lands or to public roads, boundary disputes, gambling, detection of criminals by ascetic spies, arrest of robbers on suspicion, improper social intercourse and other such offences. Breaches of discipline in the public service came before them and the trial of homicide formed one of their special prerogatives. defamation, violence and robber, conjugal relations, rules of procedure and miscellaneous offences. The Kantakasodhana courts dealt with the protection of artisans and merchants, measures against national calamities.

2. Pratiṣṭhitā pure grāme nanagrāme' pratiṣṭhitā, Rajanitiratnakara of candesvara, P-18. Ibid.
"Suppression of the wicked", The conducted postmortem examination, inflicted fines and mutilations, and death with or without torture. Cross examination formed the striking feature of their proceedings. The court should hold their sessions in the big towns at the headquarters of eight hundred villages, four hundred villages and at the head quarters of village circuits. Below them were village tribunals. In certain important cities and at the boundaries of districts justice used to be administered by three ministers and three other judges well acquainted with sacred law. The whole judicial administration was presided over by the chief judge. Above him stood the king, assisted by his ministers and lawyers.

The law which these courts were told to administer was rather flexible and not without a certain element of vagueness. It was an amalgam of sacred law, contractual relations created by the parties, custom and statutory law. In a conflict of the first two or the last, the former prevailed over the latter. It is laid down that equity prevailed over the latter of the law.

Brhaspati instructs that the farmers artisans, money lenders, dancers mendicants and thieves should decide their cases in their own way. Kātyayana states that villages and associations of artisans etc. should have adjudicators from among their own men but these should be old and eminent persons (Vyṛddhā, mahattārāḥ) adapt in all matters having knowledge of the vedas, pure and non-convetous vyasa speaking of associations and persons recommended to act as adjudicators mentions that the persons

2. Kināsāh kārukāḥ śīlbikusIdiśrennartakāh liṅgīnas taskarāḥ kuhruḥ srena dharmena nirnayam, Bruhaspati quoted in K.K. -XII, Ch. 3, P - 31.
authorised by the king, village sreni, gana, kula, the preceptor, employer or master, head of the family, father, eldest brother and grand father were to look into the disputes on matters under the authority of command. Thus it could be concluded from the above given details that the disputes related to village administration of justice were solved by the villager's themselves.

The Kautilya penal code was very stern and much of it prevailed in the period under study (650-1205 AD) also. Ordinary wounding was punished by the corresponding mutilation of the offender. In addition to the amputation of his hand, if the injured person happened to be an artisan devoted to the royal service, the penalty was death. The crime of giving false evidence was visited with mutilation; and in certain unspecified cases, offenders were punished by the shaving of the offenders hair, a penalty regarded as specially infamous. Injury to a

2. Dharamkosa - I , Pt. I, P - 64.
sacred tree, evasion of the tax on goods sold, and intrusion of the royal procession going to the hunt, invoked capital punishment. 

The terms dasāparaśā or dasāparācāra in most of the pala sena and other Bengal land grants and dasāparāhaśadanda in a few Gāhaśavāla land grants, suggests that the state took cognizance of ten offences in villages. It is, however, difficult to indicate the exact nature of these ten offences in villages. According to Nārada, they were as follows: disobedience or insubordination to royal orders, murder of women, vāraṇasāṅkara (mixture of vāraṇas), adultery, theft, pregnancy without husband, violent speech, undesirable speech, assault and abortion. The smṛiti chandrikā states that the king was to deal with all such crimes even through there was no applicant to institute a case.

Thus, it appears that disputes and crimes were numerous in villages and several types of court existed to deal with them. But the important court was formed by the people in their own way with the help of the mahattaras or mahattamas and other noted clan or class personalities of the village.

Some inscription of Gujarat and Rajasthan point to the existence of 'panchkula' or panchayat (modern version) or the assembly of five elders in a village. This might be an indication of some form of local self government.

1. Kautilya's Artha, Ch. XIII, PP- 235 & 263.
2. Etamścavedakaṁ vinā svayaṁ rājā vicāryediti śeṣaṁ, S.C., PP - 63-64.
3. Ibid. III, Pt I, P 63.
Lekhapadhati the puñchkula\(^1\) headed by a state officer formed the executive body of a pathaka, an administrative unit comprising a fixed number of villages. Thus the puñchkula proclaimed the royal orders and recognised the sale, purchase, and grant of land was entitled to certain taxes\(^2\). Most of the inscriptions state that the members of pañchakula in a village were appointed by the king\(^3\).

A reference has been made earlier to the stationary and non-stationary courts, which might have been formed according to the directions laid down in the law books. Brhaspati states that a court should have three, five or seven brāhmaṇa judges well versed in local usages, vedas and the laws of the land\(^4\). But Kātyāna states that where brāhmaṇa scholars were not available the kṣhtriyas or the vaisyas having knowledge of the law books were made judges\(^5\). This indicates that the courts set up by the king in villages had three, five or seven judges of the brāhmaṇa, kṣhtriyas or vaisya caste. Brsahaspati further adds that a court should also have an accountant (ganaka) to keep records of the amount collected and clerk (lekhaka) to write judgement\(^6\). They were qualified persons, well versed in grammar, arithmetic and difficult scripts.

In the preceding pages the endeavour has been made to describe the important features of the village administration during the early medieval period in northern India.

1. Lekhopadhati, PP - 9, 10, 12, 13, 15.
2. Ibid, PP - 9, 10, 12, 13, 15.
4. Lokavedāngadhmajñāssapta Pañcata-rayopivā yatropaviṣṭā viprāgrīh śā yaj纳斯adīsī sabhā, K.K. -XII, P-27.
5. K.K., XII, P - 28.
6. Ibid - XII, P - 27.
The village administration revolved around the village headman and his council members. They had the powers to solve the local disputes. The central government exercised only a general supervision. Although at some places the headman appears to royal agents rather than the well-wishers of the common people whose main task was to maintain peace and order. But the common people were generally satisfied by the headman's work as most they elected the headman of their choice. Although some tribal villages appear to have been brought under royal control, those situated in the remote hilly and forest areas were perhaps independent. These villages in general had each a hereditary headman, whose duties and responsibilities are unfortunately not known to us.

Among other village dignitaries mention may be made of mahattaras, mahattamas, uttamas and kutumbins. The mahattaras, later called mahattamas, were the leading personalities of the village enjoying power and prestige on account of age, experience, learning or wealth. Uttama seems to be a class of village dignitary who made his appearance during the Pala period. Rank, however, was lower than that of the mahattama. Similar kutumbins were either the family heads of the village households or big cultivators.

Some sort of police arrangement under the supervision of the headman existed in the village. Doṣādhika and Cauroddharan appear to be the persons connected with police system. Since the total liability was of headman to look after the well being of the...
village, the villagers felt secured and safe.

Disputes among the villagers were generally settled by themselves, but the royal courts having three, five or seven judges of the brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya or the vaiśya caste also existed in the countryside. These judicial courts or committees, however, were different from the early medieval committees of south India. Justice was provided regardless of the social status of the offender.

On the whole it could be inferred that the common people in village were generally happy and contented as they were trained/prepared by our Dharamsastrakass to remain contented with whatever they have.