CHAPTER IV

ORGANIZATION OF THE SECRETARIAT SERVICES
The King and his Council of Ministers together constituted the brain-centre of the government. But just as the brain can function through the instrumentality and cooperation of a number of senses and organs, so also the King in-Council requires the assistance of a Central Secretariat and the Heads of a number of Departments. We shall describe in the present chapter the organization of the Secretariat and of the different Departments of the Central government. Here again we have to observe that the data are very meagre; we shall have to generalize from a few disconnected facts that we can gather from different governments flourishing in widely different provinces and centuries.

PRE-MAURYAN PERIOD

MINISTRY:

In the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, we find no mention of the King’s ministers, probably because there was no occasion to refer to them. The Apastamba Dharma Sutra does refer to the word Amatya in the context of a Mantri and the Aitareya Brahmana also speaks of Sachivas. But the Rigveda mentions three government officers i.e., Senani,

1. Apastamba Dharma Sutra, II. 10. 25. 10.
Gramani and Purohita.\(^1\) The Senani was the military general and Deputy Commander of the army. He led the State troops to battle along with the King and in peace times discharged civil functions in all probability.\(^2\) The Gramani may have been the Village-headman and also a Captain in the army, exercising both civil and military functions.\(^3\) The Purohita was concerned with sacrificial offerings to the gods. The King’s victory was ensured because of the knowledge and skills of the Purohita.\(^4\)

As seen already, the Later Samhitas and Brahmanas\(^5\) refer to some high functionaries known as Ratnins or jewels to whose house the King repaired to offer the Ratnim-havinshi honours as part of the Rajsuya sacrifice, whereby he could become a Raja.\(^6\)

We have a total list of seventeen Ratnins, ten of which have found mention in all the texts.\(^7\)

---

1. Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 311; Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, pp. 357-60.
2. S.G.A.I., p. 311; The Vedic Age, pp. 359-60.
3. Ibid.
4. S.G.A.I., pp. 311-12; R.V., IV. 50-7-9.
5. T.S., I. 8.9; II. 6.5; IV.3; XV. 4; T.Br., I. 7.3ff; S.Br., V. 3.1.
7. Ibid., V. 3.1; T.S., I. 8.9; M.S., II. 6.5; IV. 3; K.S., XV. 4; T.Br., I. 7.3 ff.
The Brahmana/Purohita or the Royal Chaplain was indispensable in the Later Vedic age when victory on the battlefield depended largely on the divine favour procured by the Purohita. Apart from this, ancient Indian political thought advocated the supremacy of Dharma over the King and there was none more competent than the Purohita to interpret Dharma to the King. He was learned and wise, well-versed in both sacred and secular laws, sincere in his devotion to the State and King and served as a spiritual and religious guide to the King.

The considerable influence he exercised during the ascendancy of the Vedic sacrifices declined with the rise of the Upanishadic, Jain and Buddhist movements.

The Mahishi (Chief Queen) was a symbol of motherhood, having the capacity to nurture and sustain. She is also proof of the popularity of polygamy prevailing in society.

1. R.V., II. 33; Macdonnel and Keith, Vedic Index, II. p. 261; Susima Jataka; Cf. Beni Prasad, S.A.I., p. 35.
4. S.Br.; V. 3.1.1.3.
Though the Parivrikti bore no son for the King it was necessary to appease her as she had the power to grievously harm the King and his office.¹

The Senani as Commander-in-Chief² kept the Kingdom secure from all external aggressions and acquired new territories for the King. He was usually a Kshatriya entrusted with military organization and allied affairs.³

The Suta may have been many things -- a Chronicler/Bard,⁴ Commander of the Chariot Corps,⁵ Chariotmaker⁶ or Sthapati.⁷ As Sthapati he could have functioned as an architect, sculptor, carpenter, wheelmaker, Chief Judge or a local chief or Governor.⁸ His office

1. S.Br., V. 3.1.4.
2. Ibid., V. 3.1.1; R.V., VIII. 20.5; IX. 96.1.
5. S.Br., V. 3.1.5.
7. S.Br., V. 4.4. 17-18.
was important in both war and peace.\(^1\) As charioteer and chariot-maker he was involved in physical labour and in the latter Later Vedic age his prestige declined; in the early phase of the Later Vedic age he and the Gramani were referred to as royal supporters (Upasti).\(^2\)

The Gramani was both Village-headman and Leader of the Host on the battlefield. 'As Vaisya Gramani he could have been the head of a Vis\(^3\) or a Vaisya by caste.\(^4\) It is doubtful whether he was the head of the Town\(^5\) or if he collected taxes for the King.\(^6\) As the most important among all Village-headmen he represented them on the Ratnini Council. He represented royal authority in local administration but his powers were more civil than military.

The Kshattri was the Royal Chamberlain\(^7\) whose power was declining in the last years of the Later Vedic age.

\(^1\) Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 436; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 166.

\(^2\) A.V., III. 5.7.

\(^3\) Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., Hd. tr., p. 141.

\(^4\) Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 162.


\(^6\) Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., Hd. tr., p. 141.

The Samgrahita was incharge of the Kosa, or may have been a junior charioteer in the King's service. He was respected in society because of the popularity of the Goharana sacrifice and was the fore runner of Kautilya's Sannidhata.

The Bhagadugha as the distributor of Bhaga was entrusted with the division of spoils among the King's officials. He may have collected the royal share (taxes) and thus have been the forerunner of the Mauryan Samahantri.

The Akshavapa was Keeper of the Dice, King's companion at the game-table and incharge of organizing games and recreation.

The Govikartana as Chief Hunter was the King's

---

2. Ibid.
3. S.Br., V. 4.3.
5. Eggeling, J., S.B.E., XLI, 63; S.Br., I. 1. 2.17.
7. Ibid.
8. Ibid.; S.Br., V. 3.1.10.
Companion in the Chase. It is doubtful if we can identify him with the Chief of the Hunters mentioned by Megasthenes.  

The Taksha (Carpenter) and Rathakara (Chariot-maker) were skilled in the working of metals. Their office was important as social organization was still in an early stage and craftsmen were indispensable.

The Palagala was a Duta, courier/ambassador and Vavata was the Favourite Queen. We are uncertain regarding the duties of the Rajanaya and the Yajaka.

The Ratnins were persons of political importance and have been mentioned as "bestowers" (Rajakrit/Rajakartri) or

1. Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 166.
4. Ibid.
"takers away" of Kingdom. They were a vital limb of the State's power. The glory of the Kingdom depended on the calibre of the Ratnins. They consecrated the ruler for Kingship and strengthened his position. They formed an integral part of the administrative machinery, but their constitutional status is none too clear. Though Jayaswal has referred to them as high officers it is difficult to ascertain the hierarchy of the various Ratnins. They worked collectively as a Rajaparishad advising and assisting the King as any other regular Parishad.

In the Later Vedic period the organizational machinery was much more developed than during the Rigvedic period. The tribal democratic organizations of the Rigvedic age now proved insufficient for the needs of the Aryans who had now spread widely over the land and had acquired stability too. As the peoples needs had grown, very many

1 S.Br., III. 4.1.7.; XIII. 2.2.18; T.Br., I. 7.3.1; Cf. A.V., III. 5.7; Ramayana, II. 43.2.
2 M.S., IV. 9.8.
3 Ibid.
4 P.Br., XIX. 1.41.
6 Ibid., p. 203.
7 Ibid., p. 255.
8 P.Br., XIX. 1.4.
new officials were required to cater to them. All Varnas and social groups found representation in the Ratninparishad, viz. the industrial, serving and agricultural. It is difficult to say whether the Ratnins were elected officials or not.

The Ratninam-havinshi sam skara was the product of a developed political, social and economic organization where tribal and matriarchal elements were declining while class consciousness, territorial and patriarchal elements were rising. The presence of half-a-dozen Ratnins associated with military duties is proof that the King was still a military leader primarily.

The curious procedure whereby the King repaired to the houses of the Ratnins for the Ratninam-havinshi sam skara proves beyond doubt that a new type of nobility that of royal service, had emerged by the side if not in place, of the old nobility by birth. It is an indirect testimony to the growth of a solid hierarchy of officials and the efficient organization of the machinery of administration.


2. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 436, fn. 16.
Isolated references give us some idea of the great power and influence of the official nobility.

With the gradual disappearance of Vedic sacrifices, the conception of Ratnins also faded away from society. With an increase in the size of Kingdoms there were additions in the responsibilities of the State. The Ratnins however, did not disappear without leaving a more effective body to discharge their functions, viz. the Council of Ministers, the members of which were known as Mantrins, Amatyas and Sachivas.

During the Later Vedic Period the Parishad functioned as a conclave of scholars and a royal court, both being dominated by Purohitas.

Panini says that the Parishad performed multiple

-----------------------------------------------------


2. H.C., p. 82; Cf. Mbh.,S.P., 83.48; A.S.,I.7; 1.15.

3. A.S., I. 15; Mbh., S.P., 85.6; Kane, P.V., D.K.I., II, p. 623 ff; Ramayana, I. 7.3; I.8.4; II. 1.42; Cf. Sukra, II. 94-95, 103-106.

4. Khadira Grihyasutra, III. 1.25; Gobhila Grihyasutra, III. 2.50; Paraskara Grihyasutra, III. 13.4.5.
functions, was small in size, prestigious in nature and exercised great influence on the King. The Dharamasutras state that it was a Sabha of Purohitas.

The chief function of the Parishad was to advise the King on intricate and disputed points of law; it was probably a general body of advisors on all matters, religious, political, social and judicial. Its importance is underscored in references where the King is called Parishad-bala (one whose strength lies in the Parishad).

Jayaswal suggests that ministers were in origin part of the Samiti and 'King-makers' (Ratnins) and if this is accepted then the ministers emerge as the most important persons in the administrative set-up of the Kingdom. Interestingly the Purohita figures as a member of the Council of Ratnins and ministers. The ministers were

Reference:
1. Agarwal, V.S., India as Known to Panini, p. 359.
2. Ibid., p. 899
4. Panini V. 2.112.
5. R.V., VI, 28.6; VIII. 4.9; X. 34.6.
7. S.Br., V. 3.1.2; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 169.
noted for their honesty and integrity and were supposed to advise the King on all matters of the State. This much is certain that in the early days ministers must have been confidants of the King, the Sabha and the Samiti.

Ministry or a Council of Advisors has been regarded by ancient Indian political thinkers as a very vital organ of the body-politic and indispensable for good government. The importance of ministers for the King is very well brought out in the Ramayana when it calls them the King's *sahaya* and *suhrid* nay, his very *svajana*. Moreover the epic apprehends total ruin of a State in which a self-willed

---

1. *Mbh.*, S.P. 80. 22-29; 83. 3,8,14,19,38,41;65.28; 237.15-19; *Ramayana*, II. 100.15; *Manu*, VII. 58,54.
2. *R.V.*, VI, 28.6. VIII. 4.9; X. 34.6; X. 97.6.
3. पहायक्य राज्यभ वर्लंग न बदति।
कृत्वत सभिएस्टम्यालेष्या च श्रुप्यामनतम।
प्रि गताकरं कर्म तस्येकन दुष्करम्।
विनौतोड़स्फायाणि किन राज्यं मदवयम॥
*Manu*, VII. 55.
4. *Ramayana*, V. 89.15; V. 100.9.
monarch acts without consulting his ministers; the position of such a King remains ever unstable. A minister was considered to be the King's best help and it was he who advised the King about his welfare. The State policy has to follow the counsel (Councillor), for it is in the counsel of Councillors that a King's victory is rooted.

The Mahabharata has used the terms Sachiva and Amatya interchangeably while the Ramayana sometimes equates Amatyas with Mantris and at other times differentiates between the two. A detailed study reveals that Counsellors were known as Mantrins while the executive officers were known as Amatyas or Sachivas. The two groups taken together formed the King's Ministry. Moreover, since the Amatyas or Sachivas were also ex-officio members of the

1. Ramayana, III. 40.6.
2. Ibid., III. 45.17
3. Ibid., V. 100.8.
4. Ibid., V. 81.24-25.
5. Ibid., V. 77.6.
7. Ramayana, I. 7.3.; I. 8.4.
8. Ibid., I. 2.17.
9. Ibid., VI. 7.2.
Ministry they are also sometimes styled as Mantrins.¹

The Amatyas or Sachivas constituted the Sachivamandalā² which was permanently incharge of the State affairs; it also had the right of counselling the King.³ Thus the members of this group acted in a dual capacity; they were Counsellors or Mantrins as well as Executive heads of their Departments or Amatyas. The members of the second group, on the other hand, were merely Counsellors or Mantrins. They had no executive duty to perform, nor did they perhaps permanently reside in the capital. Whenever any emergency arose or very urgent matters of the State had to be transacted, they could be summoned by the King most probably through the agency of the Punohita who, besides being one of them was also the most influential member of the group, and as it were, their permanent spokesman at the Centre.⁴ Thus to a certain extent they performed the same function as the Parisha of Asokan inscriptions⁵ and the

1. Ramayana, I. 7.2-3.
2. Ibid., II. 115.13.
3. Ibid., II. 3.35.
4. Ibid., II. 3.28; II. 73.1; II 73.3 ff., II. 74. 4 ff.; II. 92. 28; VII. 77.3-5; VII. 93.2-3; VII. 98.2-5.
Mantri-parishad of Kautilya which had to be summoned on occasions of an atyayika-karya. As wise Brahmarshis, the repositories of penance and Vedic learning this class of Mantrins has sometimes been referred to also as Guravah or Rajaguravah, Dvijah and Brahmara. Thus the King’s Mantrimandala was a joint body constituted of the Sachivas or Amatyas and also the Brahmana Counsellors.

The Ramayana refers to a Mantri-parishad of eight ministers and another of three to four. Similarly the Mahabharata reveals the presence of three Mantris and also thirty seven Sachivas. This gives rise to the belief that there was a mini Parishad of three or four ministers and another full fledged Parishad of eight or more ministers.

2. Ramayana, I. 8.4. II. 73.1; II. 73.3; II. 74.1.
3. Ibid., I. 7.2-3.
4. Ibid., II. 100.71.
5. तस्मात् सर्वप्रसिद्धेषुस्मथिना: पूज्यति: I
   मौनस्य: प्रकृतिः: युक्त्यवधश महर्षिःस्वः II
   Mbh., S.P., 83.47.
6. Ibid., 85.7-9.
The *Mahabharata* throws interesting light on the composition of the Council of Ministers. The Councillors were to be drawn from all sections of the society viz., four Brahmanas, eight Kshatriyas, twenty-one Vaisyas, one Suta and three Sudras.\(^1\) Apparently there was a majority representation from the Vaisya community as they were the industrial backbone of national wealth and prosperity.\(^2\) The Suta here seems to have been a representative of the artisan community and the Sudra too, had not been neglected, as he was in subsequent ages.\(^3\) The above reveals the importance of various communities and ensures their active participation in the administration of the State.

The exact details of the working of a Ministry are not clear from the Epics. In every matter the King consulted the most important of his ministers, generally one, two or three.\(^4\) After preliminary deliberations with

---

1. पच्चुरेब्राह्मणान् वैष्णव प्राक्षेत्र नातककुण्यैः ।
अन्तर्त्यां तथा पादनव विस्तिन: परस्यमाणि: ||
बैश्यान्ति विश्वमव्यस्ननक्विश्वसास्यस्य: ||
वर्षम शृङ्गाक्षतं विनितंश्च शृङ्गीनं क्रमण धृक्ति ||
आषाधिधिष्ठ्व गुरुवेवपूजस्तं सुतं पौराणिकं तथा।
पशुराशुभं श्रावस्तवं भ्रात्रभाषयुक्तम् ||
*Mbh.* 85, 7-9.


3. Ibid.

them he was to place the matter before the Ministry as a whole, giving them the fullest liberty to express their views. The ministers were expected not to misguide the King being actuated by their own desires, interests or passions.¹ They were to be guided by the scriptures and speak salutary words for the good of the King.² Very important matters, affecting the welfare of the State had also to be placed before a General Assembly called the Sabha or the Parishad.³ It was considered salutary to consult the Mantri-parishad in secrecy⁴ so that no outsider could come to know about the policies of the State.

There must have been occasions when the interest of the State demanded that the ministers should differ from the King.⁵ That deliberation was the best, where ministers engaged in deliberations arrived at a unanimous decision in accordance with the Sastras.⁶ To work in harmony was the

³. Sharma, R., A Socio-Political Study of the *Ramayana*, Ch. XIX
⁴. *Mbh.*, S.P., 140.24; Sabha Parva, 5.27; *Ramayana*, II. 100.16.
objective of every Ministry. A minister who wilfully obstructed the business of a Council, could be asked to leave it.\(^2\)

The Epics\(^3\) have given a list of the qualities sought after in an Amatya and have even detailed the vices which prevented a person from becoming a minister.\(^4\)

The appointment of the ministers was done by the King. Loyalty to the State was the primary qualification for selection as minister, hence the persons selected came from local, rich and noble families that had been in the

\(^1\) Ramayana, I. 7.11; V. 77.16.
\(^2\) Ibid., V. 90. 62-63.
\(^3\) Ibid., I. 7.7-14; II. 100.15; mbh., S.P., 118. 2-3.
\(^4\) Ibid., 80.25-28.
service of the King for some generations in the past. A very large number of ministers was selected from the royal family itself. The ministers joined their masters in military expedition, they were heroic, possessed of prowess and masters of military technique. This shows that mostly the ministers entrusted with executive functions were recruited from the Kshatriya class and that they combined civil and military duties. Ability was another consideration in the selection of a minister. Worthy of mention among the accomplishments of a minister are his learning, proficiency in the art of war and peace, discrimin-

1. Ramayana, II. 114.35.
3. Ramayana, I. 50.10; VII. 13.1.
4. Ibid., II. 114.10.
5. Ibid., I. 7.7.
7. Ibid., I. 7.1,9
8. Ibid., I. 7.18.
mining understanding in matters of religion and law, skill in replenishing the treasury and the levy of troops, cleverness in reading the motives of others and vigilance in guarding the State secrets.

Ministers were expected to be wise, pure, resourceful, endowed with enthusiasm and dignity, steady, unavaricious, self-controlled, free from partiality and men of integrity.

Ministers of that early period were very closely associated with the King. They had to assist him not only in the task of administration but also in the transaction of personal affairs and were the King's constant companions at all times in all places and on all occasions. They had to protect the weak, the poor and ensure justice and sympathy for all citizens. They had to see that peace reigned in the kingdom.

1. Ramayana, I.7.7.
2. Ibid., II. 114.57-58; I. 7.10.
3. Ibid., I.7.7.
4. Ibid., II. 100.15.
5. Ibid., II. 100.16; I. 7.14; 7.19; Mbh., S.P.,118.2-3;80. 25-28; 83.41-46; 7. 140.24; Sabha Parva, 5.27.
6. Ramayana, I. 7.2-7; II. 114.17; VII.38.6.
7. Ibid., I. 7.8; II. 114.59.
To defend the State the ministers resorted to military measures as well as diplomacy. They deputed spies to the Department of every Tirtha. Sometimes they acted as envoys and ambassadors. They determined the King's course of action and took every care to keep their counsel absolutely confidential.

A good minister never acted in a manner which went against the King's interests. Ministers had no joint or collective responsibility. They were appointed by the King and were responsible to him alone. The King listened to the opinions of his ministers and accepted their counsel but was not bound to accept them, constitutionally. But we have instances where the ministers did not approve of the King's choice and he had to bow before the wishes of the Ministerial Council. The measure of confidence and respect a minister enjoyed depended to a very large extent upon the King.

1. Ramayana, II.114.48.
2. Ibid., V. 46.15.
4. Ibid., I. 7.19.
5. Ibid., III. 44. 6-7.
7. Ramayana, II. 63.21-22; IV. 25.10-23; III. 43.8-11; V. 90.32; VI. 5.5; III. 43. 22-23.
The Popular Assembly known as Sabha was an important institution in the administration of the Epics. It consisted of Officials and Non-officials. The first group was constituted of the Mantrins (i.e. the Brahmana Councillors) and the Amatyas and Sachivas of the King. The second group consisted of the representatives of the people viz., the Paura-Janapadas, the Naigamas and tributary kings.¹

In a restricted sense the word Sabha stood for Ministerial Councils also. It could be convened in the absence of the President, the King.² The President did not address the envoys directly but through the Secretary of the Council.³ Sometimes the Sabha functioned as an exclusive War-council in times of emergency it appointed spies to gather information of the enemy movements⁴ and took effective measures to defend the towns.⁵ The Queen and the Queen-Mother were not only present in these War-councils⁶

2. Ramayana, II. 74.1 ff.; II. 74.1 ff.; II. 90.4 ff.
3. Ibid., V. 46. 2-3.
4. Ibid., V. 100. 5-11.
5. Ibid. VI. 12.16-21.
6. Ibid., VI. 8.39-40; VI. 10.25-28; B.D.S., II. 5.12; Mbh., IX. 47.
but were competent to summon them too. 1 The Yuvarajas too attended these meetings. 2

The King was the ex-officio President of the Sabha and he was free to express his own mind openly in the meetings 3 and the members too could do the same 4 as long as they were mindful of the karya-gaurava and spoke only in that light. 5

The Yuvaraja appears invariably to be associated with the Ministry. It is not clear whether he had any definite portfolio but it is certain that he was associated more or less with the reigning sovereign in the task of administration and in attending to the important affairs of the State. He led small operations against turbulent elements in the kingdom 6 and Yuvaraja does not necessarily seem to be a title of the eldest son. 7

3. Ibid., II. 4.2 ff.; p V. 77.19.
4. Ibid., VI. 11.30; V.92. 25,5; V. 83.9.
5. Ibid., V. 92. 25.
6. Ibid., II. 4.22.
7. Ibid., VI. 109. 114-116; IV. 10.20 , V. 90.32.
The country had been exhausted by a waste of resources after the *Mahabharata* war which left a deep impression on the course of future political set ups.

Magadha began gradually to expand its power and territory from the time of Bimbisara, c. 520 B.C. and by c. 450 B.C. Anga, Videha, Kasi and Kosala were all incorporated in the Magadhan empire.\(^1\) The founders of Magadhan Imperialism were contemporaries of the Buddha and Mahavira.\(^2\) Subsequently, a more aggressive dynasty of the Nandas rose to power and India came in close foreign contact during their reign. At the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great, the whole of the Gangetic plain was under Nanda suzerainty.\(^3\)

Available evidence shows that the Ministry functioned in historic times too in most of our States. In the earliest historical dynasty of Magadha it was only with the help of a strong and competent body of ministers and officers that Bimbisara was successful in laying the foundations of the Magadhan empire. He exercised rigid


\(^2\) Rhys Davids, T.W., *Buddhist India*, Ch.II.

control over High officers (Rajabhasas),\(^1\) dismissing those who advised him badly and rewarding those whose advice he approved of.\(^2\) The result of the purge was the emergence of the type of officials represented by Vassakara and Sunitha in the time of Ajatasatru.\(^3\)

The Rajabhasas were divided into several classes, viz., Sabbathaka (the officer in charge of general affairs),\(^4\) the Jatakas refer to him in the capacity of minister-pleni-potentiary,\(^5\) Sena-nayaka Mahamattas (generals), Voharika Mahamatras\(^6\) (Judges) and Gramabhojakas/ Gramakutas (village headman for levying tithe on produce).\(^7\) It is interesting to note that Bimbisara had separated the judiciary from general administration.

Prasenjit, King of Kosala and a contemporary of

1. Chullavagga, VII. 3.5.
Bimbisāra and Ajatasatru relied upon the advice of his ministers Mṛgadhara and Siri-Vaddha in carrying out important schemes.¹ A body of capable ministers did exist in the Nanda kingdom, but they proved no match for another traditional figure whose name is indissolubly linked with the fall of the Nandas.²

SECRETARIAT AND DEPARTMENTS:

As the art of writing was either unknown or not much in use in the Vedic period it is natural that a Secretariat should not have developed in that age. Government orders must have been orally issued by the King or the Samiti and communicated to the units concerned, by word of mouth through messengers. The States were small and the procedure was convenient. We have no data to draw a picture of the Secretariat as it might have gradually evolved in the post-Vedic period. The art of writing was coming into more extensive use, kingdoms were developing into empires; functions of government were becoming numerous; some kind of a Central Secretariat must have existed in the courts of the legendary Kings of the Epics.

The scope of the Ministry included the whole admini-

1. Uvasagadasao, II. Appendix, p. 56.
stratification and so it is but natural that this work should have been divided among themselves by the ministers, each one taking one Department. We have already made reference to the Purohita and the Treasurer (Samgrahita) in this context.

From the references available in the epic literature we can easily infer that the main tasks with which a Ministry could be concerned were maintenance of law and order, defence of the State, justice, financial administration, foreign affairs and ensuring the unobstructed performance of one's duties -- religious as well as secular.

On the basis of these functions we can think of the existence of the following Departments:

DEPARTMENT OF ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS:

In the epic period too, religious affairs were a very important area of life and the Purohita who was perhaps in-charge of them was one of the most important functionaries of the State. He was the royal Upadhyaya and the Chief Counsellor; in certain spheres he was in no way inferior to the King himself. The Purohita was a Brahmarshi fully conversant with mantras. The qualities

1. S.Br., V. 3.1.2,8.
2. Ramayana, II. 7.4.
sought after in a Purohita have been detailed in the Mahabharata too. He was consulted in all matters, specially in religious ones where he was almost the final authority. He performed Samskaras, read omens and suggested means to ward off presaged evils. He was practically the Chief Minister, though the designation Mahamatya belonged to another minister.

The Purohita presided over the Sabha in the absence of the King and carried on the administration during the period of interregnum. He was the spokesman of the members of the Sabha and could propose a candidate for the office of King. He helped the King in the task of adjudication. All in all the Purohita was, no doubt, a powerful personality.

3. Ibid., II. 87. 1 ff.
4. Ibid., I. 70. 11-14.
5. Ibid., II. 39.18.
6. Ibid., II. 73, 74, 92.
7. Ibid., II. 92. 3, 23.
8. Ibid., II. 74. 4-7.
9. Ibid., VII. 77.3.
Another important Department was that of Defence. It was probably under the charge of the Senapati. He was the Commander-in-Chief of the royal forces and was expected to be proficient in the science and art of war, confident, endowed with intelligence and fortitude, sprung in respectable race and devoted and able. The ceremony of Abhisheka took place in case of the Senapati also. The army was the only instrument through which Danda could be wielded by the King. The importance of the army can well be understood from the fact that along with the King and the ministers, the army also constituted one of the limbs of the body-politic.

By the time of the Epics the army had evolved into a Chaturangabala, having chariots, elephants, horses and foot soldiers. In ancient India when the functions and powers of the State were limited, a King could not afford a

1. Dikshitar, V.R.R., War in Ancient India, p. 222.
2. Ramayana, II. 114.43; 100-30; Mbh., Sabha Parva, 5.46; S.P., 85. 31-32.
3. Ramayana, VII. 66.11.
4. Ibid., IV. 22. 11; Cf. A.S., VI. 1; Yaj., I. 353.
5. Ramayana, II. 94. 3 ff.; Cf. Mbh., Sabha Parva, 5. 63.
large standing army before the 6th century B.C. In times of need, he had to depend upon different sources for raising his army. Based presumably on the area or source of recruitment, a sixfold division was thus recognized—maula, bhrritya, sreni, suhrid, dvishad and atavi bala. By adding the commissariat (Vishti), navy or admiralty (navah), spies (Charah) and advisors (Desikah) to the Chaturanga an eightfold division of the army is also mentioned. The army has been mentioned as Shadanga also by the addition of the force of counsel (mantra) and the power of treasury (Kosa).

The Senapati was his master's spokesman and probably the convener of his War-councils. He was also the war-minister. Under the Senapati were various military

3. Ramayana, II. 91.1 ff.; II. 95.10.
4. Ibid., II. 95.10.
5. Ibid., III. 37.9.
7. Kamandaka, XIX. 24; Cf. Ramayana, II. 114. 11; V. 77.6; VI. 40.23; Mbh., S.P., 103. 38.
8. Ramayana, V. 46. 2-3; V. 90.61.
9. Ibid., VI. 8.39.
officers like the Vahinipati,\(^1\), Baladhyaksha,\(^2\), Yuthapas,\(^3\), Nayakas\(^4\) etc. There are references to a medical corps as an organization allied to the armed forces.\(^5\)

DEPARTMENT OF ESPIONAGE:

In India, which consisted of a large number of small independent and semi-independent States where one was always eager to swallow the weaker neighbour, the Chara and the Duta were indispensable instruments of security for a King which he achieved by keeping a vigilant watch both within and without through them. Traces of such diplomatic agents are found in Indian literature as early as the Vedas. We find mentioned in the Rigveda, besides the Spasa (spies) of Varuna, the Duta and the Chara;\(^6\) and in the Taittiriya Samhita the term Prahita has been used as distinct from the

---

1. Ramayana, III. 27.7; III. 28.18; VI. 34.32; VI. 34.50, VI. 50.26.
2. Ibid., VI. 2.12-42, VI. 29.19; VI. 33.17; VI. 56.9; VI. 74. 22-23.
3. Sharma, R., A Socio-Political Study of the Ramayana, Ch. XXII.
4. Ibid.; Ramayana, V. 42. 42; V. 42. 2; VI. 45.37; VI. 72. 2; 81.12; VI. 2. 29; VI. 3.15, 11.
5. Mbh., Bhishma Parva, 120.55.
6. Dikshitar, V.R.R., War in Ancient India, p. 339; R.V., I. 21.1; I. 161.3; 8.44.3; 10.108. 2-4.
The Epics recognize a distinction between a *Duta* (envoy) and a *Chana* (spy) — the former being an open representative of his master while the latter, a secret one. The *Chana* was a secret emissary and was indispensable in times of war. In war a King employed a regular Secret Service Department, whose principal functions was to assess the strength of the enemy, to study his fortification, and to discover his military plans and movements. It was also to detect the secret agents of the enemy moving in disguise; ascertain the loyalty of the fugitive officers or relations of the enemy seeking friendship or service with the King; secretly contrive to murder the enemy or his officers.

1. T.S., IV. 5.7.
4. Ibid., VI. 1.4
5. Ibid., VI. 13.7.
6. Ibid., VI. 9.17; VI. 82.6.
7. Ibid., VI. 1.17; VI. 5.24.
8. Ibid., V. 92. 17.
9. Ibid., III. 60.27.
The head of the Intelligence Department employed his personal Sachivas as spies to gather information about enemy plans. In order to collect such information about the strength and plans of the enemy the spies roamed about the land, variously disguised.

The treatment accorded by the enemy to the Chara was rather unsparing. He could be beaten, handled roughly and ultimately put to death.

DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS:

Early India had a large number of States. As everyone of them was eager to increase its power and influence or to maintain at least its distinct individuality, inter-state relations naturally happened to be a matter of vital interest to them. Ancient political thinkers refer in this connection to the Mandala theory, which with the Vijigishu at the Centre seeks to explain his relationship with the other States around him. Though the

1. Ramayana, VI. 13.33.
2. Ibid., VI. 13.7; VI. 82.6, 9-15.
3. Ibid., VI. 1.11; VI. 13.7; IV.2.2; Mbh., Udyoga Parva, 34.34; Drona Parva, 75.4; S.P., 69. 8-12; 140. 39-42.
5. Ibid., VI. 82.6, 9-15.
terms Vijigishu, Mitra, Amitra, Madhyastha and Udasina\textsuperscript{1} do occur in the Epics, the texts do not elaborate the theme, but herein is distinctly present the nucleus of this theory. The *Ramayana* displays familiarity with Shadgunya or six-fold policy which embodied the guiding principles for a King in determining his relationship with the foreign States.\textsuperscript{2}

The six policies enumerated under Shadgunya are Sandhi, Vighraha,\textsuperscript{3} Asana, Yana, Samsraya and Dvaidhibhava. Of these there is no reference to the Dvaidhibhava in the aforesaid epic.

We do not find any specific mention of permanent resident embassies for fostering friendly relations between the allies. But we read occasionally of Dutas who were sent to the courts of neighboring rulers for carrying out specific missions.\textsuperscript{4} The Dutas have been called "the eyes of a King." A conscientious envoy was one who when asked to achieve an object, having fulfilled his principal purpose, accomplishes many more without marring the primary one.\textsuperscript{5}

\textsuperscript{1} Ramayana, III. 21.7; I. 7.6; II. 5.31; I. 7.6.

\textsuperscript{2} A.S., VII.

\textsuperscript{3} Ramayana, VI. 11.11; VI. 41.22; IV. 10.8-20; VI. 35. 33-39; VII. 22.30; IV. 54.12; VI. 11.10.

\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., I. 9. 86-87.

\textsuperscript{5} Ibid., V. 38.5.
The Duta was empowered to negotiate an alliance;\(^1\) was capable of reasoning out matters for himself;\(^2\) always regarded his master's interest as extremely desirable;\(^3\) could defeat members of the enemy camp;\(^4\) possessed strength, valour,\(^5\) insight, imagination and absolute authority\(^6\) and was shrewd enough to distinguish between a friend and foe.\(^7\)

The responsibility of a Duta was great. An indiscreet move taken by an unreflecting Duta regardless of the exigencies of time and place could set at nought actions even on the verge of fruition.\(^8\) Hence, high qualifications were demanded of a Duta.\(^9\) He was to be a native, learned, upright, imaginative or resourceful, representing the truth and possessed of wisdom.\(^10\) He was to be well-versed in the lores, clever in the employment of speech, well-disposed, well-grounded, well-versed in the lore.

---

1. Ramayana, IV. 2.
2. Ibid., V. 38. 3-4.
3. Ibid., V. 38.7; V. 49.21.
6. Ibid., IV. 34.6.
7. Ibid., IV. 62. 32-34, 60-61.
8. Ibid., V. 24.37-38.
9. Ibid., II. 100.35; Mbh, S.P., 85.24; Uddyoga Parva, 37.27.
10. Ramayana, II. 100. 35.
wise, of unimpeachable honesty and born in a high family.\(^1\) While delivering his message he was not to get provoked but was to employ a conciliatory tone.\(^2\) For achieving success he was to be endowed with endurance, audacity, vigour and skill.\(^3\) Moreover, the office of a Duta was a very high one; they were called Amatyas\(^4\) or Sachivas.\(^5\) Sometimes even Yuvarajas functioned as Dutas.\(^6\)

The treatment accorded to the Chara and the Duta by the enemy differed in as much as the official status of the two differed - one was an open representative of his master while the latter was a secret agent. Since the Duta was supposed to be delivering the message *adverbum* in pursuance of orders from his master, he was not held responsible for any stiffness in its word or spirit.\(^7\) For the biggest offence the highest punishment prescribed for him was flogging and deforming.\(^8\)

---

1. *Ramayana*, V. 82.16.
5. *Ibid.*, IV. 2.28; V. 47.2.
7. *Ramayana*, V. 48.10; VI. 94.35.
An important function of this Department of Foreign Affairs perhaps was to collect intelligence through spies about the plans of the allies, neutrals and foes and to advise the King on the fourfold policy of Sama, Dama, Danda and Bheda. It had also to keep an eye on the various high officials of the State viz., the Tirthas -- a measure necessary in the interest of the security of the State. A regular corps of spies, envoys and ambassadors was thus maintained by this Department.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE:

Ancient Indian political thinkers fully realized the importance of finances for the progress and security of the State. They recognized Kosa as an important element of the body-politic. Artha was the most important in the Trivarga (for a King), in as much as, Dharma and Kama

1. Sharma, R., A Socio-Political Study of the Ramayana, pp. 287-88;

Mbh., S.P., 119. 16.
depended upon Artha for their realization. In short, 'Finance' was one of the essential constituents of a kingdom; a kingdom devoid of Dhana and Dhanya was as worthless as Sura bereft of its spirituous contents.

The main source of filling the treasury was taxes, which were a sort of wages received by the King from his subjects in consideration of the protection granted by him to them. Collection of the taxes and protection granted by him to the people, were inter-dependent; the one could not be justified without the other.

Obviously the most substantial contribution to the State revenue was the one made by the Vaisyas, who were engaged in the profit-making occupations of those times, viz., trade, agriculture and cattle-rearing. Besides taxes, there were two more sources of State revenue, namely, fines realized from convicts and gifts (Bali) or Upahara tributes received by the King on ceremonial occasions from his vassals, allies and subjects. The share of the King has been stated as one-sixth of the income (agricultural) of

1. Ramayana, VI. 61.40.
2. Ibid., II. 39.12.
3. Ibid., II. 114. 57-58.
4. Ibid., II. 92.7.
the subjects. It may further be added that in times of pecuniary hardships, for example, in a state of emergency caused by a war, a King must have been constrained to discover new methods of increasing his income. The King was to tax the people reasonably and equitably; \( ^2 \) taxes were to be raised gradually; \( ^3 \) taxes were to be imposed at the right time and place \( ^4 \) and any increase in taxes was to be explained to the people before its imposition. \( ^5 \)

The revenue was mostly collected in kind and so were the gifts offered to the King. \( ^6 \) Naturally the Finance Department required the services of several officers to fully discharge its responsibilities. It may have been under a minister called the Kosadhyaksha; \( ^7 \) the Dhanadhyaksha's \( ^8 \) main function seems to have been the collection of wealth. \( ^9 \) When a State went in financial

\begin{enumerate}
\item Ramayana, II. 83.7; Mbh., S.P., 87.
\item Mbh., S.P., 88. 4-6; Uddyoga Parva, 34. 17-18.
\item Ibid., S.P., 88. 7-8.
\item Ibid., 88.12.
\item Ibid., 87. 26-33.
\item Ramayana, VII. 41. 8-9.
\item Sharma, R., A Socio-Political Study of the Ramayana, pp. 323, 334.
\item Ramayana, II. 41.14.
\item Ibid., I. 65.2; II. 41. 14-17.
\end{enumerate}
difficulties it was only a minister proficient in financiery science who could help the King by his counsel. The King was to prefer such a Pandita to a thousand fools.\footnote{Ramavarna, II. 114.17.}

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE:**

For the effective enforcement of law there was invested in the King the authority to punish. Thus like Yama, the divine chastiser, he was the supreme \textit{Danda-dhara} on earth.\footnote{Ibid., VII. 79. 22.} The King should not employ \textit{Danda} arbitrarily or recklessly,\footnote{Ibid., VII. 81.8.} for the suffering of those who were wrongfully punished were sure to ruin the King along with his family and belongings.\footnote{Ibid., II. 114.60; Mbh., Anusana Parva, 6.38;70.} For the administration of justice, the King was required to appear every day in the \textit{Sabha} (Court of Law) and there being seated on the \textit{Dharmasana}\footnote{Ramavarna, VII. 61.3.} he was to grant audience to the petitioners.\footnote{Ibid., VII. 61.6.} The \textit{Sabha} was presided over by the King himself and the members of the \textit{Sabha} known as \textit{Sabhyas} assisted the King in the administration of justice.\footnote{Ibid., VII. 63.32.}
Justice may have been under the charge of Dharma-
mantri, perhaps of the status of an Amatya. As the State,
in ancient India, was not competent to enunciate new laws,
it was only to enforce Dharma and the practices of the
apta-jana often this must have presented conflicts and
doubts to remove which, there was a consultative body like
the Sabha, as noted earlier. The Royal priest, learned
Brahmanas competent to interpret sacred and secular laws,
Mantris fully conversant with law, Kshatriya Counsellors who
were experts in politics, and Naigamas constituted the
Sabha. The above mentioned members were usually men well
advanced in age. No doubt, the decision in every case was
taken by the King himself. But according to the nature of
the case he must have consulted, the above-noted members who
represented the different Varnas and interests of the
society. About the the King's Sabha we may presume that it
also served as the final Court of Appeal in the State.

1. Sharma, R., A Socio-Political Study of the
Ramayana, p. 323.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid., VII. 61.4; VII. 40.17-18.
PALACE DEPARTMENT:

The officers connected with the King's harem are Antahpuradhyadksha\(^1\) and Stryadhyaksha\(^2\) and there is a possibility that the two designations belong to one officer.\(^3\) He can be equated with the Antarvam sika or Antahpuradhikrit of the Arthasastra.\(^4\) He was an old man wearing yellow robes, holding a staff in his hand as a mark of his office and having free access to the inner apartments of the King.\(^5\) Connected with the Royal Household are two more officers - one is the royal Vaidya\(^6\) and the other a tutor for the princes, who besides training them in the military science, taught them the Arthasastra.\(^7\)

The administration of the kingdom was carried on by the King with the help of high officials known as Tirthas. the Epics refer to them along with their number (eighteen)\(^8\) but do not supply their designations. The list included,

---

2. Ibid., II. 17.3.
3. Ibid., VI. 95.14, 17.
5. *Ramayana*, II. 17.3.
6. Ibid., II. 13.10.
7. Ibid., II. 114.9.
8. Ibid., II. 114.48; *Mbh*, Sabha Parva, V.38; S.P., 69.52.
besides the Departmental heads of varying ranks, officers of the royal household as well.

Some kind of a Central Secretariat must, therefore, have existed in the courts of legendary Kings like Yudhishthira and Jarasandha and historical emperors like Ajatasatru and Mahapadama Nanda. Unfortunately we have no data to ascertain its nature. Scattered references point to offices (Lekhagara) where important records were maintained;\(^1\) it was in one such office that Mahavira, the founder of Jainism had breathed his last.\(^2\) The first Nanda King left to his sons not only a big empire but also a large army, a full exchequer and an efficient system of civil government.\(^3\)

Except for a few scattered references of *Dutas*\(^4\) and *Spasa*\(^5\) in the Rigvedic period, there is very little evidence of minor officers in the early stages of kingship. First of all we must remember that there was a lack of writing material which made it impossible for recording the actual working of the official hierarchy, for posterity. Some

---


4. *R.V.*, I. 12.1; I. 161.3; VIII 44.3; X. 108. 2–4.

scholars go to the extent of contending that people did not know the very art of writing.\(^1\) Another reason for this lack of reference is the nature of trade and commerce; barter was the popular mode of transacting business\(^2\) and taxes too were collected both in cash and kind, kind being the more popular.\(^3\) As very little accounting was to be done there was no need to maintain an elaborate body of officers for that purpose. Yet another reason was that the King issued verbal orders which were carried out by his subordinates, without the involvement of any writing work.\(^4\) Adjudication was one of the duties of the King\(^5\) but crimes were few and only minor and petty offences were brought before the King.\(^6\) Usually all that he was required to do was give final sanction to the decisions of the Village-Sabhas and Village-Elders,\(^7\) doing away with the need for maintaining a large Secretariat at the capital.

---

2. Rigvedic Culture, p. 139; Cf. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, pp. 399-400, 530.
5. Ibid., p. 247 ff; Manu., VII. 14-24.
In the time of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru, provinces were under royal Viceroys$^1$ who must have had an administrative hierarchy similar to the one maintained at the Centre.

The Buddhist and Jain literature$^2$ throws welcome light on the organization of the Secretariat, though the evidence is confined to republican governments.$^3$ We hear of Mote-Halls (Santhagaras)$^4$ where meetings of the Central Assembly were held at a pre-arranged time. Very probably, the venue was located within the Royal Secretariat and its proceedings were recorded by the Lekhakas$^5$ attending upon the members of the Parishad. We are informed of the presence of four officers who were deputed to write down the speeches (Vuttavachana) and proceedings (Pachchhanusitha vachana)$^6$. There is evidence regarding the existence of separate offices (Adhikarana) housing rooms (Lekhagara) where important records were carefully preserved.$^7$

$^1$ Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 207.
$^2$ Ibid., p. 208.
$^4$ Rhys Davids, T.W., Buddhist India, p. 10.
$^5$ A.S., II. 10; Sukra., II. 120; Bom. Gaz., XVI. pp. 582, 605; Cf. Mookerji, R.K. H.C., p. 213.
$^6$ Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, II. 270.
$^7$ Kalpasutra, 122; Mookerji, R.K., H.C., p. 231.
MAURYAN PERIOD

MINISTRY:

The *Arthasastra* reminds the King that he can succeed only if assisted by competent Councillors, "one wheel alone does not move the carriage." By maintaining a regular Council of Ministers (Mantri-parishad), the Mauryas re-emphasized that the two important limbs of the highest level of administration were the King and his ministers. As Ministry was regarded as essential for good government the Mauryan Crown-princes and Viceroyys had their own Mantriperishads; the Mauryas thus promoted decentralization in the organization of services at the lower level by having Mantri-parishads not only at the imperial capital but also at the provincial level.

---

1. सम्मानसाध्य राजनाथ यहनै जिनमैं न बर्तते।
   क्वर्तीत सारिन्नास्तमालेश्व व श्रृण्यामात्रम्।
   आ.स., I. 3.

   न च प्रशास्तु राज्य पलिन्यमें भारत।
   प्रशान्तवर्ता तात नैवायतः: कैविन्यम्।
   लक्ष्मी लक्ष्मी हुण्पि सदा रक्षितः भरतसः।
   दस्या भुविजनः: स्वाय जनाधिकारन कौशिकः।
   जितैै विलिशः पिन्यः स राज्य फलमयूः।

   पूर्वेण पूर्वेण पिन्यं द्रष्टः शुद्धिभ्रमय।
   मात्रवाहुनभेररमेनरुमनः।
   न दि तस्मसकलं तातं नरेशकेन द्रष्टः।
   अतः सम्मानन्तरवेगः राज्यभिःबुल्ले।
   दिना प्रकृतिसम्बंधराण्यनाशो भवेद भुविम।
   रोभनेन भृतवेतनालका हस्तं: सूम्प्तिष्णः।

Though Kautilya recommends the appointment of as many ministers as may be necessary, he was rather in favour of a large Council in order to get an overall view of the various Departments and sections of the administration which were under the control and supervision of ministers. We can safely assume that the number of ministers was equal to the number of Departments in the State with a few extra to liaison between the civil administration at the Centre and the military and provincial administrations. The ministers of the Mantri-parishad were drawn from amongst the Amatyas. The Greek historians speak of them as “Councillors.” The members of the select ministerial cabinet were selected from amongst the Amatyas and were known as Mantrins. Kautilya suggested that the King should consult the ministers whose portfolios may be connected with the issue under consideration. The President of the Council was not the

2. Ibid., II. 5-36; I. 15; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 282.
3. A.S., II. 5-36; I. 15.
5. Chinnock, Arrian’s Anabasis, p. 413.
7. Ibid., I. 11,15.
King but a separate officer known as the Mantriparishad-adhyaksha. The decisions of the King and the ministers were to be always aimed at the interest of the realm and the people, and the ministers had authority to review the oral orders of the King and decisions of the Departmental heads, taken in urgent cases.

We know that the work of the Ministry was divided by the ministers among themselves, but strangely enough the Arthasastra and Asoka's inscriptions make no mention of ministerial portfolios. It is possible that often the Departmental heads (Adhyakshas) were not differentiated from ministers and hence Kautilya does not mention the ministerial portfolios separately. The Purohita and Senapati still continued to maintain a pre-eminent position in the Mauryan administrative hierarchy while three more ministers are seen vying with each other for importance, the Samaharta (Revenue minister),

2. A.S., I. 15.
6. Ibid., pp. 173, 326.
Sannidhata (Treasurer) and the Dharmmahamatras\(^2\) (incharge of carrying out a policy of moral regeneration initiated by Asoka). The King and the Purohita selected the most competent Mantrin to be the Prime-Minister.\(^3\)

Kautilya avers that amatavyasana was very serious work. From the Amatya or "Councillor" class were appointed Adhyakshas, high officers of the Secretariat, judicial officers of the city courts, officers incharge of frontier administration, women's welfare, religious harmony, moral regeneration etc. In Asoka's time the senior Amatyas were called Mahamatras. The Amatyas of the Mauryan period had a position similar to that of the I.A.S. officers of the present day who fill in most of the Departments of the Indian Government.

Men of noble extraction, family traditions, high training, mature judgement, keen intellect, popularity, military leadership, eloquence, endurance, knowledge in the science of politics, boldness, skill, enthusiasm, dignity, affability, knowledge of several languages, strength, health, bravery, character, administrative capacity,

---

3. A.S., I. 8-10; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., pp. 80-81.
influence, foresight, wisdom, quick decision, remarkable energy, sterling integrity, unquestioned loyalty, men who were old fellow students of the King, natives of the country, free from hatred and enmity, adept at divinations, and motivated by the welfare of the State and people,\textsuperscript{1} were appointed as ministers. A foreign national, an old or infirm person and a tribal were as a rule, automatically disqualified as incumbents for the office of ministership.\textsuperscript{2}

The \textit{Upadhasuddhi}\textsuperscript{3} tests were designed to test the calibre and attainments of each candidate and the King judged their abilities by the \textit{pratyaksha} (visible), \textit{paroksha} (invisible) and the \textit{anumana} (inference) methods.\textsuperscript{4}

Worthy members of tried and trusted families were appointed as ministers; later their sons and relatives were also accommodated in the administrative machinery. This gave rise to the practice of hereditary ministership (\textit{anavayaprapta sachivya})\textsuperscript{5} which later resulted in nepotism and eventual decline in the services. We have seen already

\begin{flushleft}
2. A.S., I. 2,9,21.
\end{flushleft}
how a capable Amatya could become a Mantrin and even a Mantrparishad-adhyaksha. Similarly officers from the lower ranks could rise to the prestigious class of Amatyas if their service record was meritorious. We hear of a probationary period for all new entrants to the ministerial office during which their work was evaluated. It is possible that capable and ambitious ministers may often have held more than one portfolio; evidence helps us assume that ministers in charge of not so sensitive Departments were transferred from one Department to another to promote efficiency.

SECRETARIAT AND DEPARTMENTS:

The Arthasastra, Megasthenese, Mudra-Rakshasa and epigraphs of Asoka reveal to us a well developed and full fledged Secretariat and an empire manned by a vast net-work of bureaucrats at all its various levels. The Central Secretariat must have received a great deal of information

1. A.S., I. 12.
4. Ibid.
5. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 73, 79, 81; Basak, R.G., Asokan Inscriptions, p. 120; Mookerji, R.K., Asoka, p. 51 ff; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 379.
from the different parts of the State and considerable correspondence between the various branches of the same Department and inter-departmental ones, would have been quite voluminous. Further, such information must have been carefully scrutinized, presented to the ministers or Heads of the Departments and also carefully preserved for further references. All this would have entailed a big establishment, which may roughly correspond to the present-day Secretariat.

The senior and high officers of the Departments were known as Lekhakas whose status was akin to that of Amatyas and position and pay were inferior only to those of Mantrins. The Karanika of the Arthasastra has been generally equated with Lekhaka, by scholars.

The efficiency of the administration was greatly dependent upon the ability of the Secretariat officers and the accuracy with which they drafted the orders of the Central government. "Government is writ and writ government", say Kautilya. Government took great care in

2. A.S., II. 10.
3. Ibid., II. 7; E.I., VIII. p. 158; XVIII; p. 224, n; XX, p. 44.
4. Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 188.
the selection of the Secretariat officers as ministerial appointments often went to senior and experienced secretaries of proven capacity. They were required to possess qualifications almost as high as ministers as far as ability, education and reliability were concerned; over and above all, they had to be experts in drafting. It was their business to listen to the oral orders of the King or ministers and to draft these properly and accurately in as short a time as possible. They were to look into the previous files, assure themselves that there was no contradiction of earlier views or orders and then frame the wording of the new communique, which was to be characterised by relevancy, completeness, sweetness, dignity and lucidity. Redundancy was to be avoided, facts were to be stated either in their chronological sequences or according to their importance; the description was to be impressive and cogent reasons were to be adduced for the action that the government was taking.

Tours of inspection were recommended to the King and his officers by Kautilya. Royal officers had a natural tendency to become corrupt, oppressive and partial; the King and his officers should, therefore, go on tours every now and

---

1. A.S., II. 13-33; I. 8-10.

2. Ibid., II. 10; Sukra., II. 172.
then to find out whether the people were pleased or displeased with the administration. Asoka exhorted his officers to undertake tours of inspection at fixed intervals of three or five years.

The Central government maintained reporters, informers, and spies as an indispensable class of officers to keep a strict vigil on officials and non-officials and to keep the King informed about the developments in the provinces. The *Arthasastra* refers to the *Pradeshtri*, *Sanstha*, and *Sanchara*, while Asoka's inscriptions speak of *Prativedakas*. Arrian presents the "Overseers" before us and Strabo reveals the presence of "Inspectors" within the Mauryan scheme of administration.

By now it is amply apparent that the Central Government was run with the assistance of a large number of officers.

---

1. A.S., II. 10.
5. A.S., I. 12.
officers dealing with the numerous affairs of the State. Hence a big Secretariat was maintained at the imperial capital where the various Departments had their offices. The *Arthasastra* refers to the traditional number of eighteen Departments (*Tirthas*) mentioned in the Epics. Other legislators have furnished different lists and a thorough study of the *Arthasastra* reveals the presence of more than thirty Departments and their heads. The term *Tirtha* has been variously explained by the scholars to denote a Superintendent or both the officer and his office.

Since the *Mantriparishadadhya* has been enumerated in the list of 18 *Tirthas* we can readily infer that there was a Council House for the meeting of the *Mantri-parishad* where the President of the Council maintained an office for conducting correspondence with the various Departments and the members of the Council and

---

1. A.S., II. 3-4.
2. Ibid., I. 8; *Ramayana*, II. 100.36; *Mbh.* , II. 5.38; S.P., 69.52.
4. A.S., II. 7-36.
Cabinet. Possibly, each of the Cabinet ministers maintained a separate office within the Secretariat. Though at such a distant time after the roll of several centuries it is neither easy nor possible to be precise about such Council-Halls, establishments and the officer incharge of its proceedings; yet it is conceivable that such meetings were held at a pre-arranged time and place, within the Royal Secretariat; its proceedings were duly recorded by the Lekhkás who then made arrangements for maintaining the records of such meetings.

The Mauryan Departments were presided over by Superintendents known as Adhyakshás. Often there was no distinction between the Superintendent of the Department and the minister incharge of it and that may be the reason why the Arthaśastra and Asoka's inscriptions do not refer to the ministerial portfolios. Though the Adhyakshás were accountable to their own ministers, they functioned as heads of their respective Departments in cases where the Department had a minister and an Adhyaksha. The Adhyakshás were assisted by accountants, scribes, coin examiners, stock takers and secret overseers or spies.

1. A.S., II, 10; Sukra., II. 120; Bomb.Gaz., XVI, pp. 582, 605; Cf. Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.I., p. 213.
Though we have a great deal of information regarding the qualifications deemed essential for administrative officers in general, and ministers in particular, the information regarding their fresh appointments to the office of Adhyakshas is annoyingly vague. Very often Adhyakshas were appointed from amongst the Amatyas and could then move vertically upwards to become members of the ministerial council or cabinet and finally to claim the coveted office of the Mantrparishad-adhyaksha, after having proved their merit, calibre and loyalty. Similarly junior and minor officers could rise through the services to become the Superintendents of Departments.¹

It would be inconvenient and tedious to enumerate these Departments as they are given in the Arthasastra and will, therefore, group them together under the heads of administration well known to a modern mind.

PALACE DEPARTMENT:

The central administration was carried out under the direct supervision of the King who resided in an imposing palace and led a life of grandeur. Several palace officials are noted in the Arthasastra, but it appears that the duties of the Antarvamsika were taken over by the Pratiharas and Mahapratiharas. The Antamahamatra may also

¹ A.S., II. 13-33; I. 8-10.
refer to an officer incharge of the royal palace. The Royal Chamberlain looked after the needs of the royal household, with regard to meals, pleasure, security and the like. He issued passports and controlled entrance and exit. Altekar refers to him as Dauvarika. We may presume that the appointment to this very important office must have been made by the King himself and the Royal Chamberlain commanded his best confidence.

ARMED FORCES DEPARTMENT:

The Military Department was undoubtedly an extensive one as also the most important. The army consisted of four arms - infantry, cavalry, elephant and chariot corps. Kautilya refers to the camel and ass corps too. Apart from these fighting forces the army had a corps of sappers, miners and labourers. Their duty was to examine camps, roads, bridges, wells and rivers. It must have had its own Superintendents and officers. The army was naturally accompanied by a contingent of spies and secret service men to gather all possible information about the strength of the enemy forces and their plans.

2. Ibid., II.2.
3. Ibid., II. 11.
4. Ibid., X. 4.
The ambulance corps is referred to by the Arthasastra too. It had doctors, carrying their medicines and surgeons their instruments, helped by bands of nurses carrying balms and bandages. 1

The infantry, the cavalry, the elephant force and the war-chariots were welded into common units at the time of fighting. A Padika commanded not only a force of 200 infantry, but also of 10 elephants, 10 chariots and 50 horsemen. According to Kautilya, the Senapati was an officer over 10 Padikas and a Nayaka over 10 Senapatis. 2 Probably the designation of these officers may not have been uniform during the Mauryan period. Kautilya himself uses the term Senapati elsewhere in the sense of Commander-in-Chief. 3

According to Megasthenese, the administration of the army was controlled by a Council of 30 members, divided into six Boards in charge of Infantry, Cavalry, Chariots, War-elephants, Transport and Admirality. The Arthasastra does not mention these Boards but refers to several Superintendents. One of these, the Rathadhyaksha, was in-charge of the organization and manufacture of war-chariots,

2. Ibid., X. 6.
3. Ibid., II. 23.
another named Hastyadhyaksha looked after the capture and training of the war-elephants. Asvadhyaksha supervised the organization of cavalry. Fort commanders, (Durgapalas), and armoury officers (Ayudhagaradhyakshas) must obviously have worked under the Military Department. The same probably was the case with Antapalas (wardens of the marches), who had to watch the frontiers. The Department of passport and spies must have worked in close cooperation with the Military Department and the Foreign Department.1

FOREIGN OFFICE:

The Indian scheme of administration did not envisage the establishment of a Foreign Office as the term is interpreted in the present terminology. While discussing foreign relations we have, therefore, to consider the inter-state relations of the various kingdoms in ancient India.

The ideal of total abandonment of war was too high to be realised, as we know from the efforts unsuccessfully made by Asoka. War could not be altogether tabooed but its chances could be minimised by a judicious balance of power among the different States with which the country was studded. Kautilya has enumerated a six-fold theory known as

the Shadgunya theory consisting of Sandhi, Vignaha, Asana, Yana, Samraya and Dvadhihbava. The Mandala theory is yet another beautiful exposition by Kautilya in the area of inter-state relations. He speaks of the Ari (enemy), Mitra (ally), Arimitra (enemy's ally), Mitramitra (one's ally's ally), Arimitramitra (enemy's ally's ally), Parshnigraha (one who attacks in the rear), Akranda (ally in the rear), Parshnigrahasara (ally of the rearward enemy), Akrandasarara (an ally of the rearward ally), Madhyama (indifferent), Udasina (a king with similar potentialities, but not contiguous to the conquerer) and lastly the Vijigishu (ambitious king) himself. The sole guiding principle in making the choice is the material welfare of the State. Kautilya is not guided by any spirit of chivalry when it is not conducive to the material interest of the State.

It is doubtful whether there were permanent resident embassies in vogue in Mauryan times. Megasthenese resided at the court of Chandragupta and Deimachos at that of Bindusara. It is quite likely that the Mauryas might

1. सन्निधि विग्रहऽपनवान्हैंपीभावः बाहुः सम्पत्ति इति।
   तत्र पुणक्षणः सन्निधि, सप्तकारः विग्रहः, उपेक्षणमाफन्म, सम्भूच्यो भान,
   परार्थं संख्यः, सन्निधिविग्रहोपवान्हैंपीभावः इति बहुः।
   A.S., VII. 1.
2. Ibid., VI.2.
have sent their own ambassadors to the Seleukidan court, but we have no definite information on the point. There are very few instances of Indians other than scholars being sent to the courts of neighbouring rulers. Asoka is known to have sent religious missions to the kingdoms of Antiochus, Ptolemy, Antigonos, Magas and Alexander. We shall not be wrong in assuming that these religious missions must have been working in close co-operation with the political embassies, especially because the Buddhist missionaries had been dispatched there to preach Dharma. We, however, do not know whether the Greek ambassadors lived for a few months or whether their embassies were permanent.\(^1\) The Sanskrit word for ambassador, *Duta*, literally means a messenger and suggests that he visited the foreign court for a particular purpose or mission. The instructions given to the *Duta* in the *Arthasastra* show that he was to reside in the foreign court only till he felt there was still a possibility of his mission succeeding; otherwise he was to return.\(^2\)

That there was a more or less regular diplomatic intercourse between different States is proved by Kautilya's long dissertation on the mission of envoys. The envoys are divided into three grades according to status, and probably

---

2. A.S., I. 16.
also, as their names imply, with reference to the powers vested in them. To the highest category belongs the Nisrishtartha ambassador (plenipotentiary) vested with full discretionary powers of negotiations. The second class of Parimitartha ambassador (charges d'affairs) had limited powers and could not deviate from his instructions and was probably despatched with a particular object in view. The Sasanahara ambassador (conveyor of royal writ) was merely to deliver the message and take back the reply. ¹

Due honour was paid to envoys who were to start on their missions to other kingdoms. They were provided with expense money and conveyance for their belongings, goods and services. ²

In ancient as in modern times, the ambassador was a licensed and open spy; during his stay at the foreign court, he was to cultivate friendly relations with the officials with a view to get a clue to the real policy of the government. He was to secure information about its internal condition including military strength, the state of parties and public opinion. For this he should employ spies and send his reports home in a cipher code (gudhalekha). ³ He

1. A.S., I. 16.
2. Ibid.
was also to see that the terms of earlier treaties were observed by the King to whose court he was accredited and also to impress upon him how his own King was very strong and had rich resources. His other duties include contracting alliance, intrigue and sowing dissension among allied powers, gathering information about the movement of spies, securing release of hostages etc.

We have positive information about the care taken by the State to look after visiting foreigners. According to Megasthenese the municipal administration had a Committee to look after the foreigners.¹ Kautilya too enjoins the ruler to keep an eye on the activities of the foreigners and mentions the Departments or the minister who was entrusted with these activities.²

Unfortunately nothing is known about the emoluments of the minister in charge of this Department and his subordinate staff; it can only be suggested that these salaries were equivalent to the officers of other Departments.

TREASURY AND REVENUE:

Efficiency in the administration and prosperity and stability of a State, all depend on sound finances. A prosperous treasury and ample reserve funds form an essential constituent of the State in the view of Kautilya and other ancient political thinkers.¹

From the earliest of times people paid taxes to the State for the safe social life and protection it accorded to them.² Kautilya recommends a reasonable and equitable rate of taxation, and extra cesses were to be levied only in dire emergencies.³ The Arthasastra lays down sound principles for partial or total remission of taxes too.⁴ The Mauryan scheme of administration was a comprehensive one.⁵ Bhaga (land tax) now became the mainstay of government revenue and was usually collected in kind⁶ at the rate of 25% in

---

1. Manu., IX. 294; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., pp. 73-75.
2. A.S., V. 2.
7. A.S., II. 15.
biannual instalments. The all important Bali of the pre-
Mauryan days was relegated to the category of a religious
 tax. Customs, octroi and excise dues imposed on trade
and industry, income from crown-lands and property;
tributes from vassals; fines, heirless property, corvee,
benevolences etc. formed other important sources of income
for the Mauryan State.

The realization of revenues from all the above
mentioned sources must have involved the appointment of an
army of officers and collectors. Heading the Revenue and
Treasury Departments were the Samaharta and Sannidhata,
respectively. Under the Samaharta were a host of Adhyakshas
in charge of various Departments connected with revenue and
taxes.

1. A.S., II. 2.
2. Ibid., II, 1.
3. Ibid., Maity, S.K., E.L.N.I., pp. 83-84; Sircar,
4. A.S., II. 22; Manu., VII. 131-32.
5. A.S., II. 15-17, 21; Sukra., IV. 217-41.
7. Ibid., pp. 173, 326.
8. A.S., II. 15.
For example the Sitadhyaksha\(^1\) was in charge of crown-lands; the Vivitadhyaksha\(^2\) of waste-lands; the Goadhayaksha\(^3\) of the State herds; the Panyadhyaksha\(^4\) of the markets; the Sulkadhyaksha\(^5\) of tolls; the Sutradhyaksha\(^6\) of the Weaving Department, the Suradhyaksha\(^7\) of the State breweries; the Ganikadhyaksha\(^8\) of the Department controlling prostitution, the Suvarnadhyaksha\(^9\) of the Department regulating licensing, gold-smiths etc. There were officers who realized taxes from cities, city-markets and townships,\(^10\) and still others who did the work of liaison between the Revenue Department and those who did the actual collection work.\(^11\) Since the work of the Revenue Department entailed a great deal of correspondence and paper work, the Arthasastra lays considerable stress on the appointment of

2. Ibid., II. 34.
3. Ibid., II. 29.
4. Ibid., II. 16.
5. Ibid., II. 21.
6. Ibid., II. 23.
7. Ibid., II. 25.
10. Ibid., II. 6-25.
11. Ibid., II. 35.
Lekhakas and Lipikas. The Adhyakshas were required to submit accounts of revenue collection to the Centre quarterly, half-yearly and annually.

A battery of clerks carefully maintained files on different Departments connected with revenue and taxes. They worked under the supervision of Adhyakshas for 354 days in a year. Their family members or servants had to update their work if the clerks failed to do the same, according to Kautilya.

ECCLESIASTICAL DEPARTMENT:

The Centre maintained a Department of religious affairs headed by the Purohita. As noted earlier the position of the Purohita had started to decline from 4th century B.C. The Royal Chaplain was incharge of the sacrifices performed in the palace for the well-being and prosperity of the King and his subjects. He was to take steps against possible calamities by using the charms

1. A.S., II. 10; Bom.Gaz., Vol.XVI, pp. 582, 605; Sukra., II. 120.
2. A.S., II. 5,7; VIII. 4.
3. Ibid., II. 7.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
prescribed in the Atharvaveda. The temples in the kingdom were under his supervision and the charity of the King was under his guidance. Dharmamahamatras, whose posts were created by Asoka, probably worked in cooperation with the Purohita. They tried to bring about harmony among the different sects, promote morality and righteousness in the public, establish a concord between masters and servants, help the poor, the aged and the destitute, offer succour to families of prisoners and secure their release if possible. Asoka also appointed lady welfare officers known as Stridhyakshamahamatras.

DEPARTMENT OF ESPIONAGE:

Kautilya, Megasthenese and Mudra-Rakshasa all furnish evidence of an efficient system of espionage in the Mauryan scheme of administration. The system of espionage is an important constituent of every form of government because it furnishes information on the attitude of the people towards the State; the conduct of the people;

2. Ibid., p. 262-63; Cf. E.I., XXIV, p. 276; Majumdar, P.K., B.K.P.A., p. 56.
inter-State relations, success or failure of governmental policies etc. We have already mentioned the presence of several types of espionage agents informers and reporters in the administration of the Mauryas, viz., the Sanstha, Sanchara, Prativedakas, Pradeshtri, Inspectors and "Overseers". The Sanstha\(^1\) were stationed at a particular place, while the Sanchara\(^2\) were itinerant agents. The Prativedakas had the privilege of access to Asoka in all places and at all times to impart news concerning the State.\(^3\) The "Inspectors" of Strabo were trustworthy and efficient men as their job was of a sensitive nature;\(^4\) the "Overseers" of Arrian kept the king informed of all that was happening in the kingdom.\(^5\) Thomas\(^6\) suggests that the Pradeshtri of Kautilya were akin to the "Overseers" and "Inspectors".

Before being recruited to the services the spies were tested for honesty, integrity, physical fitness,

---

1. A.S., I. 11-12.
5. Chinnock, Arrian's Anabasis, p. 413.
ability to keep secrets, their flair at disguise, linguistic skills and mastery in cipher writing (Angavidya)\(^1\). Spies were recruited from all sections of society.\(^2\) Ministers, priests, teachers, students, astrologers, traders, merchants, ascetics, actors, dancers, orphans, deformed persons, widows, women of easy virtue, mendicant-women, nuns, female ascetics, people living in forests, chiefs of wild tribes, prisoners, criminals and inn-keepers\(^3\) were usually recruited as espionage agents.

Kauṭilya justifies the employment of spies in the guise of clerks, and ordinary servants in government offices for ascertaining the true character of ministers and the goings on in the various Departments.\(^4\) Other spies were to collect information on neighbouring countries, be responsible for the safety of the King, keep him informed of all plots and conspiracies against him and be alert in border areas.\(^5\)

---

1. A.S., I. 11-12.
2. Ibid., I. 10-13.
5. Ibid., XII. 4-5; I. 12; Cf. Smith, V.A., E.H.I., pp. 130-31.
There were several categories of spies and some were accountable only to the King and the highest officers of the State; their identity was revealed only through secret signs, seals and marks of identification. They must have been amongst the most competent and reliable. Kautilya refers to spies who were entrusted with extremely dangerous missions like brewing revolts, assassinations and generating dissatisfaction in the neighbouring lands. We can safely assume that they received a remuneration higher than other ordinary spies.

All information gathered by the spies must have been sent to a central intelligence office. Kautilya recommends that action be taken only after the accuracy of the information had been ascertained by these different sources. If the information was found in-correct, the spies were punished. There were strict regulations that spies were not to know each other. The intelligence bureau had a class of secret spies who were there to report on the

2. A.S., XI. 1; C.M.H.T., pp. 122-23.
4. Ibid., I. 11-12.
5. Ibid., I. 12.
accuracy of the information furnished by ordinary spies. ¹

We are not certain whether spies were appointed by the State in a permanent capacity or they were paid wages in proportion to the importance and usefulness of the information they provided. All that we are certain of is that they were paid according to the distance they travelled. ²

From all the copious information provided by Kautilya on the nature of the recruitment and training of spies ³ it is very clear that there was a complete divorce between morality and State-craft in those days.

JUDICIARY:

Theory lays the greatest stress on the administration of justice as an essential part of the protection to which the people are entitled from the government. The judiciary forms one of the most important limbs of the State for no State can function properly and discharge its obligations without a well established judicial system. Adjudication did not form a part of the State's duties in early times and the principle of self-

¹ A.S., I. 12.
² Ibid., XI, 1; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., pp.81, 121.
³ A.S., I. 11-12.
help was in vogue; even criminal cases were resolved by the wergeld (Vairadaiya) system. Petty and small matters were decided by the Village-elders and only grave matters were brought before the King.

We hear of several types of courts during the Mauryan age - Dharmasthiya, Kantakasodhana, fixed, moving, those organized under the royal seal, the King, Kula, Sreni, and Gana/Puga. The Dharmasthiya was organized at the imperial capital directly under the King. This court was manned by three officers (Dharmastha) well-versed in the sacred law, along with three ministers of the King. The Dharmasthas were non-official jurors. These courts decided cases relating to contracts, agreements, gifts, sales, marriages, inheritance, boundary disputes, property mortgage etc. The Kantakasodhana courts were run by three Pradeshtas and three Amatyas to deal with measures to suppress disturbances to peace (lit. removal of thorns). They took

2. Ibid., pp. 107-108.
5. A.S., IV. 1.
notice of offences against the society.\textsuperscript{1} Officers of the State referred crimes to the heads of the local administrative units who then sent them to the Kantakasodhana courts.\textsuperscript{2} Lower courts seem to have dispensed justice in ordinary matters but if a crime was grave, it was referred to the Provincial Governor or to the King himself.

The fixed courts were established in cities, towns, and villages. The moving courts were in conformity with the practices of kings undertaking tours in a particular region and dispensing justice to the people. The courts organized under the royal seal seem to have been periodically constituted by the orders of the kings presumably for clearing up pending cases. Finally came the court which was constituted and presided over by the King himself. Besides, there were courts for forest-dwellers, soldiers in the camps, traders in caravans and ascetics.\textsuperscript{3}

The Puga court of the post-Mauryan period had its fore-runner in the Grama-vriddha court of the Arthasastra.\textsuperscript{4} This Court dealt with a variety of

\begin{enumerate}
\item A.S., VI. 1-2.
\item Ibid., I. 10; III. 1; IV. 1; Nath, B., J.A.A.I., pp. 38, 50, 61-66.
\item A.S., I.10; II. 5; IV. 1-13; J.A.A.A.I., p.75. Brihaspati Smriti, I. 25; Manu., VIII. 41.
\item A.S., III. 9.
\end{enumerate}
disputes regarding boundaries, temples, Brahmanas, women, minors, old and invalid persons and ascetics. The *Kula* court was an informal body of family elders. The *Sreni* courts were the courts of the guilds. These courts were of a semi-official nature and appeals could be made from the one to the other in descending order.

The persons working in the official royal courts were appointed only after they had qualified in the *Dharmopadhasuddhi* test which tested their knowledge of the Dharmasastras. The officers of the official royal courts were assisted by interpreters, subordinate officers and *Lekhakas*. The *Lekhakas* recorded the entire proceedings of the court. There was yet another officer who was responsible for ensuring the presence of the litigants and witnesses. It is quite possible that the judges had the freedom to appoint their subordinate officers.

5. A.S., II. 10; *Sukra.*, II. 120; *Bom. Gaz.*, XVI, pp. 582, 605.
Early Mauryan justice was harsh and Asoka tried to bring about a modernization in dispensing justice to criminals.\(^1\) Brahmanas had immunity from punishment in criminal courts\(^2\) reflecting caste distinctions and disabilities in the dispensation of justice.\(^3\)

DEPARTMENT OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS:

Within the Mauryan scheme of administration there was a fully developed Municipal Department catering to the manifold needs of the imperial city and other important towns. The *Arthasastra* refers to the City Magistrates as *Nagarakas*\(^4\) while Asoka's inscriptions mention them as *Nagalavlyohalakas*.\(^5\) They were exercising executive, revenue and judicial functions. Several Superintendents of trade and commerce worked under them. Kautiya refers to the *Adhyakshas* in charge of the administration and defence of the city as *Nagaradhyaksha* and *Baladhyaksha*.\(^6\) According to

---

Megasthenese there was a Town Committee in the capital city with thirty members on its Board. This Board was then subdivided into six sub-committees of five members each. These committees dealt with foreigners; vital statistics regarding births and deaths; industrial arts; trade and commerce; supervision of factories and manufactured goods and collection of sales-tax from the market places. It is but natural that some of the Adhyakshas of markets, tolls, weights, measures etc., may have been appointed members of the Municipal Board.

The thirty members were collectively responsible for all aspects of life in the city—defence, transportation, health and hygiene, fire fighting, means of recreation, protection, care of the under-privileged, old and infirm, industrial development, census, recording the income and property of families, foreigners etc. All this information presents us with valuable insight into the degree of local self-government enjoyed by the people and permitted by the State. We also become aware of the exquisite planning which went into the organization and

2. A.S., II. 34.
development of services at the municipal level in ancient India, during the time of the Mauryas.

Provinces were governed on the same pattern in which the Central government was run. Official orders emanating from the Central Secretariat were sent to provinces which also maintained Secretariats on the lines of the Central Secretariat. The officers who manned these services were required to possess the same qualifications as were deemed essential for the Central services, at least during the rule of the Maurya and Sunga rulers.

The provincial capitals were laid out on the pattern of the imperial capital as seen earlier and we can safely assume that the District head-quarters must have been equally well-housed for the various officers working and residing there. The Mauryan District offices Sthaniyas carefully preserved the records pertaining to the District. This office must have been a large one in order to be able to accommodate all relevant records which reached it from all quarters of the District. The term Rajasthaniya used in connection with the Sthaniya has been interpreted to mean an officer who was incharge of 800 villages.

2. A.S.,II. 1,3; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p.93.
3. Ibid., II.1.
4. Ibid., II. 35.
Offices similar to the Sthaniya must have been maintained at lower levels of administration viz. at the headquarters of a Dronamukh of 400 villages, Kharvatika of 200 villages and Sangrahana of 10 villages.¹

The Gramika² and the Gopa³ were responsible for a careful survey of the Village lands, maintenance of proper land-records and records of all income and expenditure. While there is very little evidence of an office being maintained at the village level in the North, we do have ample evidence of these being maintained in the South,⁴ but unfortunately this goes beyond our purview of study.

POST-MAURYAN PERIOD

MINISTRY:

In the post-Mauryan period there was not much departure in the ministerial structure. The Purushita had ceased to be a member of the Ministry from c. 200 A.D. and among the ministers only the Koshthagarika/Bhandagarika (Treasurer) figure in the records.⁵

1. A.S., II.1.
2. Ibid., III.10; Manu., VII. 116.
5. E.I., XX. p. 28.
The Council of Ministers exercised great influence on the administration under the Sungas and the Sakas;\(^1\) it flourished under the Sungas, even in the provincial courts of their princes.\(^2\) The Saka rulers of Western India ruled with the assistance of a Council of Matisachivias and Karmasachivias.\(^3\) The Buddhist literature of the Kushana period refers to a Council known as Parishadyam,\(^4\) the members of which assisted the King in administration. The King's Councillors are mentioned as Tulaka\(^5\) and Rajamatya.\(^6\) The Kushana administration was essentially based on a military pattern and we have evidence to prove that the generals of the army were not pulling on well with the ministerial council.\(^7\)

Manu and Sukra recommend a small ministry of 7 or 8 members.\(^8\) Ministers were still selected on grounds of

\(^{1}\) A.S., I. 15; Malavik., Act., V ; Bhandarkar, D.R., Asoka, Hd. tr., pp. 241, 253.
\(^{3}\) E.I., VIII. p. 36 ff.
\(^{4}\) Div., p. 359.
\(^{5}\) Ibid., p. 291.
\(^{6}\) Puri, B.N., I.U.K., p. 80.
\(^{7}\) Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 476.
\(^{8}\) Manu., VII. 54; Cf. Sukra., II. 71-72.
qualifications and mental attainments. Personal factors greatly determined the position and powers of ministers. When kings were strong the administration was Rajayattatantra and when it was Ministry-controlled, it was known as Sachivayattatantra. When power was shared by both there was complete harmony (Ubhyayattatantra).

SECRETARIAT AND DEPARTMENTS:

The practice of maintaining separate offices seems to have been fully established in the post-Mauryan age for Provincial and District offices etc.

The tradition of employing spies still seems to be popular for we come across ample references in the Epics and the Dharmasastras in this regard.

Particular information about the judiciary is found in the Smritis revealing to us an organized judicial

----------------------------------------------
3. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 312-13, 324, 326; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., pp. 475-76.
4. Ramayana, VI.25. 3,5; Mbh., S.P., 87.4-5.
The Manusmriti seems to be the earliest work furnishing precise and detailed information regarding the legal procedure and the proper functioning of the courts. Manu has failed to shed light on the actual organization of the courts but Kautilya has come to our rescue; in fact, both writers supplement each other's account. The Kula, Sreni and Puga courts are seen still functioning as popular and semi-official. Manu states that the officer presiding over royal official courts in the absence of the King should be a learned Brahmana and an appointee of the King. The King was assisted by Brahmanas and experienced Councillors; Adhyakshas were helped by Brahmana Councillors (Sabhyas). The number of the Sabhyas varied from place to place. The Adhyakshas and Sabhyas were assisted by accountants, Lekhakas, bailiffs, petty officers, peons and attendants. The judgement was pronounced by the Adhyakshas. Kautilya gives the composition of the Dharmasthinya and Kantakasodhana.

2. Nath, B., J.A.A.I., Chs. I-IV.
3. Manu., VIII.
4. Ibid., VIII. 9-11, 20.
5. Ibid.; Jatakas,II. 181; II. 105; V. 208.
courts differently but the Smritis make no distinction. According to them both civil and criminal courts should have the King, judge/Adhyaksha, Purohita, Sabhyas, ministers and assessors.¹ The Smritis are somewhat lenient in recommending the awarding of punishments in comparison to Kautilya.

The system of Town administration of the Mauryan period was continued in the later centuries and Manu refers to the authority of the Nagara Sarvartha Chintaka² who was probably akin to the Nagaraka of Kautilya.³ He looked after the City administration with the assistance of older men elected from the city people.⁴ He was to possess honesty, learning, an unimpeachable character and integrity.⁵ Yajnavalkya recommends punishment for a negligent and erring Nagara Sarvartha Chintaka⁶.

---

1. Manu., VIII. 1, 9-11; Brihaspati Smriti, I.59, 63; 1.65, 67-70; Cf. Majumdar, R.C., Classical Age, p.362.
2. Manu., VII. 121.
3. A.S., II. 35.
The elaborate rules laid down in the Smritis for the selection of the ministers and the Departmental officers are very similar to those enumerated earlier by Kautilya with only minor modifications.¹

The post-Mauryan era was marked by political instability in Northern India. The division of the former Mauryan empire into big provinces was abandoned under the later Mauryas when the empire had shrunk in size.² The Sungas made attempts to expand their holdings and we hear of the presence of two major provinces, Vidarbha and Vidisa.³ Small powers who had risen after the dismemberment of the Mauryan empire were fighting amongst themselves for two centuries, leaving no room for any sort of organization under one banner. The strength of these petty rulers was sapped-up by foreign invasions and it was only with the arrival of the Kushanas in the first century A.D. that peace and order was restored.⁴

1. Manu., VII. 54-64; Brihaspati Smriti, I. 10-15; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 320-23; A.S., II. 3-4; V.3; I. 8-9; Beni Prasad, S.A.I., pp. 268-9; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 81. A.S., II. 6-25.


There had been decentralization at the lower levels of Mauryan administration viz. Provinces, Districts and Villages; the hallmark of the Mauryan administration being its over-centralization. The post-Sunga new-comer royal families found this system both alien and difficult to comprehend. They had gained domination on the grounds of their military leadership and consequently they had to reward their military generals for the services they had rendered. The rewards came in the form of governorships of provinces. These Governors were now known as Satraps. This system had earlier been used successfully by the Persians and Greeks outside India and by the Indo-Greeks, Sakas and Kushanas within the country. Apart from introducing the new element of Satrapal organization the Kushanas easily accustomed themselves to the prevailing system which had been current in the country from the time of the Mauryas and modified under the rule of the Sungas.

The word Satrap was accepted in its Sanskritized form Kshatrapa and became popular in Northern and Western

India. The Satrapal system was marked by a hierarchy evident to us in the presence of Kshatrapas and Mahakshatrapas in the Kushana empire. The two officers are seen ruling jointly in Northern India under the Kushanas. Under the Sakas they were ruling independent of each other in Western India.

The Kshatrapas were assisted by Dandanayakas and Mahadandanayakas who had judicial, police and military powers.

The District head-quarters also had numerous offices on the pattern of the provincial set-up. According to some scholars lower divisions of the District, like Tehsils and Paraganas had fully equipped offices dealing with various administrative affairs. The Village also must have had some sort of office which was connected with the Paragana, Tehsil, District and Provincial headquarters in

1. Sircar, D.C., Sel. Ins., p. 137; Thaplyal, K.K., S.A.I.S., pp. 44-46, 90 etc.
2. Sel. Ins., p. 137.
some way, which we are unable to visualize in the present stage of our knowledge.

Unfortunately the Kushana inscriptions being mostly religious in nature throw little light on civil, revenue or judicial administration. Legends indicate the presence of a Council of Ministers and the generals of the army, both jostling for power and supremacy.¹

The entire evidence pertaining to the post-Mauryan period would have us believe that there was less of administrative centralization compared to the Mauryan age.

Several new features emerge in the post-Mauryan scheme of administration. We come across Karmasachivas² or ministers who had executive powers and Matisachivas who were akin to the "Councillors" of Megasthenese.³ This was not an altogether new innovation but it gave rise to a class of courtiers who wielded considerable influence over the King. Very possibly, the Matisachivas had an upper hand on the Karmasachivas.⁴

2. Ibid.
Another feature worthy of notice is the lack of separation between the military/judiciary and civil/executive wings of the Kushana administration.¹

Another peculiarity noticed in this period is that members of the royal family along with their near and dear ones were associated in the administration. Father and son were seen ruling conjointly² and often independently³ under the Indo-Greeks⁴ Parthians, Kushanas and Sakas.⁵ Earlier administrative set-ups were organized on the basis of indigenous representation; with little scope for monarchs to accommodate their kith and kin beyond bestowing them with Provincial Governorships. But the Sakas and Kushanas were foreigners who relied on their military leaders to help them maintain their suzerainty and royal position⁶ and were naturally less thoughtful in supporting the native administrative system. Apart from this they were not too

---

4. Ibid.
familiar with the Indian administrative scheme as they were not natives of the land. Now, under the Kushanas, even relatives could be introduced as important officers and the ancient practice of appointments being made on the basis of qualifications seems to have been relegated to the background.¹

OFFICE ESTABLISHMENTS

We have evidence of the fact that there was a great deal of correspondence between the Central and Provincial offices,² between the Central Secretariat and the industrial organizations³ and finally between the various Departments of the Central Secretariat itself.⁴ All the above activity bears witness to a big Central Secretariat and various Departments which had their different offices within the Secretariat itself.⁵

It has generally been assumed that cities in ancient times developed without adequate planning and royal

¹ Rapson, E.J., Comprehensive History of India, p. 528.
² Thaplyal, K.K., S.A.I.S., p. 344.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., pp. 1ff. 66 fn.
⁵ A.S., II. 3-4.
establishments together with the Secretariat were situated according to the availability of suitable place for the buildings. But the evidence of Kautilya and Megasthenese points to the contrary.¹ Their accounts tell us that the imperial city was well planned and certain portions of the land within the fort were earmarked for different types of establishments. The Secretariat was situated in the most secluded spot within the fort. The King's palace was built in the centre of the fort and on strong grounds.² Kautilya lays down separate rules for the construction of departmental buildings in different areas within the fort.³ The Secretariat was generally beyond popular residential quarters.

The Accountant's Office, record rooms, the foreign office and the treasury were all situated in the South-eastern corner of the fort,⁴ while the stores and the arsenal buildings were in the South-west.⁵ This very probably had been done with a view to ensure the safety of the records even when the arsenal was blown-up. Kautilya

1. A.S., II.9; Cf. Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.I., p. 81.
2. A.S., II.4.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
 stipulates that those who planned the buildings of the treasury should be condemned men, who were put to death after the completion of the buildings, to safeguard the secrecy of the building plans.\textsuperscript{1} Another treasury, perhaps the one from which regular expenditure of the services was met, was situated in the North-east corner.\textsuperscript{2} The offices of the Adhyakshas\textsuperscript{3} and the army headquarters had their place in the Southern side,\textsuperscript{4} which goes to prove that in times of emergency, help of the army could be easily available.\textsuperscript{5} The offices and the residences of the ministers were located on the East by North of the royal palace, in a separate locality away from the Secretariat.\textsuperscript{6} Offices of ministers of the cabinet rank were situated elsewhere and this implies that there was complete liaison between the ministerial office and Central Secretariat through officers appointed for the purpose.

The buildings were adequately protected from moisture and were paved at the base with stone slabs. The

\begin{align*}
1. & \quad A.S., II, 5. \\
2. & \quad Ibid., II.4. \\
3. & \quad Ibid. \\
4. & \quad Ibid. \\
5. & \quad Ibid., II. 3-4. \\
6. & \quad Ibid., II. 4. 
\end{align*}
sites itself were paved with stones. The buildings were
three storeys high with very many compartments. The roof
was supported by strong timber and access to the Secretariat
building was through only one door. Upper storeys were
reached by movable staircases. There was adequate provision
for water within the fort.¹

Kautilya mentions certain precautions that had to
be taken by officers in maintaining, running and safe-
guarding the office buildings.² Foreigners and outsiders
were not allowed without proper identification papers and
permit-cards, especially at night.³ There was a constant
hazard of fire and so lighting of fires at unspecified times
were considered an offence.⁴ Thousands of water pitchers
were kept in front of all royal buildings for extinguishing
of accidental fires and people had to offer voluntary
service in putting out such fires.⁵ Guards and watchmen
were placed at all strategic points for purposes of safety.⁶

¹. A.S., II. 3-4.
². Ibid., II. 15-36.
³. Ibid., II. 34.
136-37.
⁵. Ibid.
⁶. Ibid.
Offices were cleaned, and colour-washed in keeping with the norms of sanitation.¹ The buildings were kept free of all insects and pests which might have eventually destroyed valuable records. All office buildings had built-up shelves for the filing and maintaining of office records.² It would thus appear that adequate care and precaution was taken in the construction and maintenance of secretarial buildings during the Mauryan age.³

In ancient times forts played a vital role as strongholds in the defence of the State.⁴ As such provincial capitals like imperial ones selected naturally favourable locations for the construction of forts which housed the offices and residences of the officers.⁵ The same considerations were kept in mind while setting up a fortified capital for a Sthaniya. The Treasury-house was well-guarded and rooms were provided for the minor staff too.⁶

---

1. A.S., II.36; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 137ff; Smith, V.A. E.H.I., p. 149.
2. A.S., II. 7.
3. Ibid., II. 4-5.
4. Ibid., VI. 1; Manu., VII. 70-76; IX. 294-97; Yaj., XII. 351-52; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 307.
5. A.S., II. 1,3; Cf. Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 93.
7. A.S.,II. 1,3,5; Mookerji,R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 93.
After a survey of the evidence at hand we come to the conclusion that no government whether monarchical oligarchical or republican can run efficiently without the help of a well-organized and efficient Secretariat. Ancient thinkers in India had fully realised the importance of such an office, working at the highest levels, and manned by tried and trusted officers. The King ruled directly and indirectly with the assistance of ministers, high officials and minor officers. Policy making was not confined to the King alone, he needed the counsel and support of the ministers and the specialists while all responsibility of legislation and administration was to be shared jointly by the above with public interest and welfare foremost in mind.