CHAPTER II

ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES IN THE MAURYAN PERIOD
We have seen already how we get only a very dim and fragmentary picture of the administration of the Vedic and post-Vedic periods. The case, however, is quite different with regard to the Mauryan administration. Here also the picture is far from complete; we would have liked to have more light and information on a number of important administrative details, practices, institutions and offices. But when compared to the earlier and later periods, the author has to admit with gratitude that the Mauryan sources enable her to give a remarkably satisfactory picture of the administration. The period under review is very rich in data concerning political theory, administrative organization and law and legal institutions. We have not only important indigenous contemporary sources like the Arthasastra of Kautilya and inscriptions of Asoka but valuable though fragmentary accounts given by Greek writers, some of whom had direct and first hand knowledge of the country and its government. We are fortunate to have excerpts from the writings of Megasthenese, in the quotations of later day writers. It is sad for us to confess that the Indika of

1. Bhatt, J., Asoka ke Dharmaekha, Hindi, p. 28 (Ka-Kha).
Megasthenese is now lost to us in its original form. The religious chronicles of the Sinhalese have preserved detailed information on the Mauryas, while the Buddhist and Jain canonical literature from our own country throw light on the areas mentioned above.

The Arthasastra is a treatise dealing with the science of polity. This was long regarded as the most ancient standard text on the subject and we have many references to and quotations from it in works of ancient authors. But the text of this important work was discovered only at the beginning of the present century. It ascribed itself to the famous Brahmana Kautilya, also named Vishnugupta and Chanakya, who according to tradition overthrew the last Nanda King and placed Maurya Chandragupta on the throne.

The Arthasastra deals with economics and sociology too and so it cannot be regarded as a book solely on political science. The overall impression gathered by any reader of the text confirms beyond doubt that the primary and sole objective of Kautilya's thoughts and writings was the enhancement of the State's power. While elaborating on State-craft, he covers a host of topics like the seven-limb theory of the State; the training, duties and probable shortcomings of a King; appointment and functions of Amatyas.
and ministers; civil and criminal laws; Srenis and Nigamas; Ganas; inter-state relations; military organization etc. In comparison to other earlier literary texts like the Dharmasutras, Smritis, Epics and Puranas, the Arthasastra is more practical and less influenced by religious ideas. In fact Kautilya has made positive efforts to divorce politics from religion and ethics. He has referred to 13 ancient thinkers in his Arthasastra which is ample proof of the fact that the science of polity had been fully and independently established by his time.

R. Shamasastry who published the text, regarded it as the genuine long lost work on polity composed by Chanakya, the Prime Minister of Chandragupta Maurya. However, there is a great controversy about the date of the Arthasastra. Shamasastry, Ganapatishastri, N.N. Law, Smith, Fleet and Jayaswal hold that the work proceeds from the pen of the famous minister of Chandragupta, while Winternitz with Jolly, Keith and D.R. Bhandarkar holds that the work is a later one, written in the early centuries of the Christian era. Conclusive evidence supporting either view is lacking and the question has become complicated owing to the work.

1. ॐ भष्य एव प्रभान इति कागिय:; अर्जयूलो हि धर्मकाष्यिति।
   A.S., I. 6.

being occasionally retouched in later times. But apart from a few passages, the work seems to be substantially of the Mauryan age.

Though the antiquity of the book might be controversial we have no doubts regarding the greatness of Kautilya as a visionary and political thinker. He and his school of thought have rightly been accorded an exalted position in the haloed portals of Sanskrit literature.

The Arthasastra of Kautilya some scholars suggest, provides us with the general scheme of the Mauryan administration and some of its details too. Shamasasctry and Mookerji strongly believe that the basic structure of the Mauryan administration is represented in the Arthasastra. References in this work prove beyond doubt that there were many works on the science of polity at the time Kautilya wrote and these were fully utilized by him. The very opening sentence of the book, states that "this Arthasastra is made as a compendium of almost all the Arthasastras which in view of acquisition and maintenance of the earth, have been composed by ancient teachers." The importance of

1. A.S., p. xvi ff. (Introd.).
3. पृष्ठथ्या तापे पालने व वानन्त्यवाङ्गियानां पूर्णांशेः।

प्रस्थापितानि प्रायस्यास्तानि संतत्त्यैःसमयांशेः कृतम्।

A.S., Intro.
political science is also indicated by Kautilya in his enumeration of the different sciences. Different schools of thought as quoted by him regarded the number of sciences variously but each included Dandaniti or the science of government in his list.

ORIGIN OF STATE:

We are already familiar with the two theories of the origin of State or Kingship prevailing up to now; the theory of social contract was known to Kautilya. According to both the theories, State and Kingship, evolved out of necessity caused by the wickedness inherent in human character. Hence special stress is laid on the importance of Danda. According to Kautilya, on Danda depends the progress of the arts and sciences and the well being of mankind. Kautilya believes that the King must exercise this Danda judiciously.

But Danda is hard to be administered by men with unproved minds, and Kautilya gives elaborate directions for

1. A.S., I. 13; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 305.

2. मुख्यालयप्रणीति हि दण्डः प्रजा भर्मार्थकमेवाज्जवित।
   A.S., I. 3.
the proper education and training of the King. The right of the people to rebel against a wicked or tyrannical King is not only recognized but held up as a dire consequence to a vicious King. Though we do not hear so much of direct constitutional checks against the arbitrary exercise of power by the King, it is his duty to follow the Dharma or eternal principles of law, laid down by the sages.

CONCEPT OF STATE:

The King was not the State but merely a part of it. The State was conceived as an organic whole, its different constituent parts being called angas or limbs. They are described as the "King, the minister, the country, the fort, the treasury, the army and the friend". In other words a fixed territory, organized administration, economic self-sufficiency, adequate means of defence and recognition by
other States were regarded as essential requisites of a State.1

There was never an \textit{a priori} limit set to the activity of the State. It could not be restricted to merely police functions, or the administration of justice. This is the reason why the duty of the State is frequently summed up as protection. Protection covers not merely hindrances to good life, but it is also stretched to comprise the whole programme of spiritual, cultural and economic welfare.2

\textbf{FACTORS INFLUENCING THE ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES:}

Any government whether monarchical, oligarchical or republican, can boast of effectiveness and stability only if its administrative services are efficiently organized. Though in ancient India, the concept and functioning of a Hindu State was somewhat different from those in other parts of the world, a practical aspect like the organization of

\begin{footnotesize}

1. \textit{स्वाभाविकमत्स्यजनपदबुधिकोशवर्णमहिष्रणे प्रकृतय: ।}
\textit{A.S., VI. 1.}

2. \textit{Ibid., II; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 308; Mbh, S.P., 71-26-27; 72. 18; 75.36-37; 68.}
\end{footnotesize}
services was usually the same everywhere. The services were organized in such a way as to not only provide protection and promote economic development but also to raise the moral standards of the people. The concepts on which a Hindu State rested and functioned, were deeply influenced, by certain factors which need to be looked into briefly at this point of our study.

India's governmental machinery, like that of any other country in the world, is profoundly affected by the living conditions (and the factors which contribute to it), of its inhabitants. While Hindu sages accredit Kingship or monarchy with a divine status and philosophise a great deal on the nature of this institution, the Buddhist and Jain texts champion the cause of democracy. Though these governments were fundamentally different, the reason behind their very existence was the same. The Mahabharata has discoursed at length on those ideals of a monarchical form of government which had been visualized by the Hindu political thinkers of yore. The State, they envisioned was responsible for the protection of its subjects; for the promotion of their economic standards through encouraging

---

1. Mbh., S.P., 67.2 ff.; 120. 1 ff.; 71.26-27; 72.18; 75.36-37.
agricultural and industrial pursuits; for maintaining social order, for upholding the laws of the land; for punishing the errant and the guilty and for granting religious freedom. In exchange the State received a portion of the earnings of its subjects in order to accomplish all these tasks. ¹ The monumental epic speaks of a period when the King alone with a small and select body of chosen men could carry out all these tasks easily and effectively - an age when civilization was still in its early stages and the needs of the people were few and limited. Though the States were steadily growing territorially, they were still small in extent and had yet to assume the dimensions of empires, as a consequence of which, the persons selected to assist the King were not over-burdened with the task of administration. ²

From very early times the Hindu States had problems in disassociating themselves from the tenacious grip of religion and their functioning was considerably hampered by the heavy hold which the priestly class had on them. At the time of the King's annointment, and consecration, early Vedic literature tells us, that the priests declared to the

². Cf. Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., Chapter II.
people assembled for the solemn occasion. "This man, 0 ye people, is your King; but of us Brahmanas, Soma is the King."¹

The services had to be organized in a manner not found offensive to the priestly class because the King was constrained and limited by certain ceremonies performed at the time of his coronation.² The upholding of the moral standards of society and the maintaining of the laws of the land were responsibilities which fell under the purview of the bureaucracy. In the pre-Mauryan period we hear of no moral welfare officer or any separate government Department for this purpose; but the Purohita was very much there offering advise and guidance to the King on all moral and ecclesiastical matters. With the advent of Asoka, this scene underwent a change as the emperor appointed a new class of officers devoted to securing the moral welfare of the people. We shall have occasion later to discuss them in detail.

The manner in which Indian society was arranged was also responsible for influencing the machinery of government. The caste system had become firmly established and each individual had been assigned a particular place in

¹ Mookerji, R.K., H.C., p. 122.
² Ibid.
society and was expected to discharge his obligations and
duties according to the place accorded to him. Of course,
we do have references, where people were performing tasks
not assigned to them by virtue of their place in the social
order. The services of the State were usually manned by
members of the Kshatriya class, but in times of national
emergency, members from other classes also took up arms in
the defence of the State. Men of merit, honesty, integrity and
belonging to the Vaisya community were often
appointed to high offices in the State's services. Vaisya
Gramani and a Nishada Sthapat-i are heard of in the Vedic and
Sutra literature, respectively. The Nishada was either a
'Governor' or a 'Chief Judge', which is proof of the fact
that a person while seeking State employment was not
handicapped by barriers in the society or restrictions
imposed by caste. Exceptional qualities and attainments,
even in a foreign national, guaranteed him employment in the
services of the State. Pushyagupta Vaisya served under

1. Majumdar, R.C., *Vedic Age*, p. 249.
3. Smith, V.A., *E.H.I.*, p. 100; Majumdar, R.C.,
   *A.I.U.*, p. 50.
   195-97; Majumdar, R.C., *Vedic Age*, p. 493; *S.Br.*,
   V. 4.4.17; V. 3. 1.6; Macdonnel and Keith, *Vedic
   Index*, I. 247; II. 334.
Chandragupta Maurya, in the exalted position of Governor of Saurashtra and Kathiawar; while an enlightened Asoka went one step further by appointing Tushaspha, a foreigner, as Governor of the Kathiawar regions. From the above references we see that though traditions laid stress on the employment of Kshatriyas in the State's services, there were several instances when persons of other castes and even foreigners were not prevented from occupying offices, even high positions, in the services of the State in ancient India.

Scholars point out that the Kshatriyas had always dominated the Rajanyavarga in the early stages of the organization of services. The factor responsible for this peculiarity in the social set up was an overwhelming military necessity. The goal of the hour was an extension of territorial boundaries through aggression and invasion and also a need to defend and safeguard the areas already under control. In other words an army of able bodied men was what was sorely and primarily needed for purposes of attack and defence. The class of sturdy men to which the people looked to, for ensuring the security of the entire population was that of the Kshatriyas. As they had already

3. Ibid., p. 97.
been vested with the responsibility of protection they were now further entrusted with administrative functions also. It would be naive to believe that except for those who enjoyed the confidence of the King and were blessed with outstanding merit, any others could hope to be appointed to man the services. All appointments to the services were made with the interest of the entire community in mind. Elaborations in the following pages, will help make these issues clearer.

The Brahmans were looked upon not only as the intellectual class in society, but also as the custodians of the cultural heritage of the country. Often we have references of Brahmans wielding a great deal of authority on the basis of the support of the entire population, which they enjoyed. In the battle of the Ten Kings, though King Sudasa won a glorious victory, it was his preceptor, the sage Vasishtha who walked away with equal credit and laurels.¹ The governments in ancient India were not wholly aristocratic in the true sense of the term as they were in the ancient Greek cities or in the Western countries of the Middle Ages.² Scholars like Ghoshal contend that the intellectual class constituted by the Brahmans could not

1. R.V., VII. 33, 2,5; 83.8; Cf. Mookerji, R.K., H.C., pp. 85-86.
2. H.C., p. 311.
have wielded any great deal of influence over the administration as there was no organized church in ancient India like the Protestant and Roman Catholic Churches in the West. Further, the Brahmanas as priestly class could boast of only high prestige, courtesy their noble birth, but were severely handicapped in the area of finances, which was an essential requisite for membership to the elite aristocratic class. Since their sustenance was dependent on the offerings of the people, both rich and poor, they had no chance to concentrate any sort of power in their hands. The learned scholar, further believes that the Kshatriyas were in no way associated with the task of administration. A superficial view makes his argument seem plausible but if we delve deeper into later day treatises we hear them calling upon the Kshatriyas specifically, to "wield the rod." It would be best to conclude that at a time when society was still in a State of flux, all castes could receive representation in the governmental machinery, so as not to make any one of them feel neglected. Since the socio-political organization was basically rural in nature and concept, all

elements of society found representation in the services of the State. This seems possible in the early ages when all sections of society were jointly responsible for the defence of the State and might have been jointly entrusted with administrative responsibilities too. Later, with a change in circumstances, the warrior class of Kshatriyas began dominating the State's services. Several republics in the Buddhist period display an administrative machinery manned solely by the Kshatriyas.\(^1\) But we are hard put to believe that the republic of the Vajjis had no Brahmans, Vaisyas or Sudras in their midst. The political scenario was now predominated by the warrior class with the other classes playing second fiddle to it in the matter of the organization of services.\(^2\)

Apart from the organization of society along lines of caste, the basic set up of the early Indian society is also to be studied as a factor contributing to the organization of services in ancient India. Scholars are unable to reach a consensus regarding the fact that the Aryans were capable of running an administrative machinery smoothly or even having an established system of Kingship.\(^3\)

\(^1\) Rhys Davids, J.W., Buddhist India, p. 11 ff.
\(^2\) Ibid., p. 29.
\(^3\) Cf. Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 76 ff.
Some scholars believe that when the Aryan migrants reached India they found Kingship as a well evolved institution. But then the presence, nature and functions of democratic bodies like the Sabha and the Samiti hint towards an earlier age when important and crucial decisions were taken as freely as was the practice in the independent and autonomous tribal communities. The fact that popular bodies like the Sabha and the Samiti could select, dethrone, reelect the same person or chose another, to lead them in war and secure their interests in peace-times, speaks volumes for the sweeping powers these institutions enjoyed in their early stages of existence. The Sabha and Samiti were viewed as divine institutions from the earliest of times. They had the authority to criticise and comment on the activities of the King and his assistants, in their meetings. All this leads us to suggest that these bodies could not only look into the organization and functioning of the services but could control the activities of the King also. These supreme bodies indirectly controlled the

appointments of the King's assistants through their approval or disapproval.

Though the process of amalgamation of the Aryan and non-Aryan elements had created a fluidity in the society, it had in no way prevented the formation of empires and by the time of the Buddha the situation had resolved itself and fluidity had now been replaced with full stability. The republics still persisted with the practice of organizing their States on the basis of clans while the monar chies rose to meet the challenge of the changing times by breaking away from this tradition. This gave Magadha a chance to establish its imperial ascendancy over its contemporary counterparts, the republics.\(^1\) As seen earlier any detailed study of the organization of services is possible only from this period onwards. Certain characteristics in the State of ancient India have their parallel in the States of ancient Greece and Rome,\(^2\) according to certain scholars. They argue that features like the Kings of ancient India entering into a partnership with the bourgeois of the land\(^3\) and the existence of democratic bodies like the Sabha and Samiti are all proof of this. These analogies seem superficial after a careful inspection.

\(^1\) Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 18 ff.
\(^2\) Agarwala, V.S., India as known to Panini, pp. 477-79.
The annals of Indian history bear witness to the importance of the closing decades of the fourth century B.C. and the opening decades of the third century B.C. The inherent weakness and inbuilt flaws of the Indian political set-up became glaringly evident with the invasion of Alexander.\(^1\) Even the Greeks bear testimony to the fact that Indians fought with valour and courage but were woefully lacking in unity.\(^2\) The fragmentation of the country into small principalities bred disunity,\(^3\) and was the primary cause of their defeat. Any hope of withstanding a future foreign invasion of the country was possible only with the establishment of a strong government and an adequate and competent fighting force. The chilly and desolate winds which had been sweeping Northern India soon blew over and an uneasy calm prevailed over the country with the departure of Alexander the Great. With the emergence of Chandragupta Maurya on the political horizon, and the consequent unification of the land, things began to look better and brighter for everyone concerned. Chandragupta Maurya proved to be a brilliant military leader who scorched any hopes which Seleukus might have had in the nature of an Indian

\(^1\) Smith, V.A., E.H.I., pp. 116-17.

\(^2\) Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 244 ff.

\(^3\) Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 44, 52.
victory when he led his Greek forces towards the Indian borders.¹

Chanakya, the preceptor and minister of Chandragupta Maurya fired the ambition and potential of his young protegee to a point where the Mauryan King’s authority and influence were asserted over a major part of India. Though the process of the unification of the country was complete, a fresh challenge confronted Chandragupta Maurya in the creation of an administrative system which would provide peace and prosperity to his newly founded empire. The Mauryan system of government has received a lot of flak from certain corridors of history which have referred to it as "benevolent despotism", but there are other quarters which have praised it to the skies.²

It is inessential for us to probe into the political achievements of Chandragupta Maurya and we only need to confine ourselves to an analysis of his governmental machinery. Before Chandragupta Maurya, the Nandas and their predecessors, had governed the country in the traditional manner of old and it was left to Chandragupta Maurya to


formulate an administrative system based on scientific principles.\(^1\) Chandragupta Maurya and Kautilya devised a standard system of administration for the country as they both were thoroughly aware of the pressing need of the hour; the country's requirement was a governmental machinery built along the principles and lines, laid down for the guidance of Kings, by the sages of old.

At the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great, there were a large number of republics in the Punjab, Eastern Uttar Pradesh and Northern Bihar. We get only occasional references to them in the Arthasastra, and detailed references by the classical writers like Megasthenese, Strabo, Arrian and Curtius.\(^1\) It is not impossible that all these republics were integrated into the Mauryan empire; and that Kautilya's references are rather to what was the reality before the establishment of the new empire of which he was the distinguished Chancellor. It is, however, more likely that several of the republics continued to exist as separate political units, as feudatories of the new power. The Provincial Governors may have supervised over them as they did over feudatory Kings. An account of

\(^1\) Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., pp. 233-34.
\(^2\) Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 316.
their administration has already been given in the previous chapter. Kautilya urges upon the Kings to destroy these non-monarchical States by exploiting their weakness, chiefly by sowing dissensions among the members of the Assembly\(^1\) a policy anticipated by Ajatasatru in dealing with the Lichchhavis. Kautilya was a strong champion of the monarchical form of government,\(^2\) and did not hold the oligarchies and republics in high esteem. It is possible that his choice of this type of government was necessitated by the country's fundamental need of political unification. He was anxious for the entire population to be governed by a similar pattern of administration built on scientific grounds. He was fully conversant with the weaknesses that plagued India's people and its laws\(^3\) and though he desired to have a unified pattern of administration, he was duly respectful of the local traditions and customs existing in society, from time immemorial and he counselled everyone, including the new constitution itself, to grant them the honour which was due unto them\(^4\).

\(^1\) Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 334.
\(^2\) A.S., I. 4; XI. 1.
\(^3\) Ibid., I. 4.
\(^4\) Ibid., III. 1.
Monarchy was the prevailing form of government in the Mauryan period and it had become hereditary by now. There are no references to any election of Kings in contemporary records, either indigenous or foreign. Usually the eldest son succeeded to the throne. Kautilya advocates the selection of a King from the Kshatriya caste. He laid great emphasis on the physical, mental, moral and political training of a King in his early years. He was a witness to the life of leisure which the princes led and so advocated rigorous training and strict discipline for them. He goes to the extent of remarking that princes were like crabs which after growing up, devoured their own parents. He goes on to say that a too intelligent son posed a constant threat to his father, the King, while a stupid son was the

---

1. ब्रजामोन्नासनरायणः पिता पुजितो भवेत्।
   अन्यशाप्य श्रेष्ठेऽवर्य ज्योशभागिन तु पुज्यते।।
   A.S., I. 16.

2. Ibid., I. 2.

3. Ibid., I. 4-5.

4. पुज्रक्षणं जन्मभ्रममिति राजयुज्यान् रक्षेत्।
   कर्महस्तपराणां दि जनकभक्षा राजयुज्याः।।
   Ibid., I. 16.
cause of his undying worry and regret. ¹ All these observations are proof of his keen insight into the problems which beset the office of a King. Considerable care was taken to train the heir-apparent in the art of government and administration. He was well acquainted with the traditional culture as embodied in the Vedic lore (Trayi), but the Arthasastra emphasised that he should be an expert in economics (Varta) and science of government (Dandaniti) too. ² For this purpose special effort was made to train him in drafting, public accounts and various military tactics and exercises. He was to attend upon elderly Statesmen and imbibe from them their accumulated experience. ³ The Arthasastra is particular about describing in detail the qualities that a King was to cultivate and the training he was to receive. It appears as if he was anxious that the head of the monarchical State, which was now becoming popular, should possess all the necessary qualities to make monarchy more acceptable to the people, than the republic.

¹ A.S., I. 16.
² Ibid., I. 1.
³ Ibid., I. 4.
Kautilya prescribes the King to follow a rigid time table, in order to be able to discharge all his duties, unremittingly. Kautilya and Megasthenese refer to the extremely busy daily schedule of the King which permitted him hardly six hours rest at night. Only a small part of his time was spent in bath, meal and rest. Almost throughout the day he was busy either in receiving reporters and officers or in participation in the meeting of the Ministry, or in surveying the military parades or in judging cases and suits. The Arthasastra recommends that above all a monarch should be quick in action and remarkable in energy. Asoka tells us in his inscriptions that he never felt satisfied that he had done his utmost for his government and instructs the official reporters to come to him even when he was dining or resting in order to report upon people's business. The Mauryan Kings showed untiring energy in the prompt despatch of official business. This was one of the secrets of the success of the Mauryan administration.

2. Ibid.
The King was no doubt the fountain source of all governmental activity; the army and treasury, the keys to all powers, were under his immediate control. He was guided by his Council of Ministers, but he could set aside its advice, if he deemed it necessary in the public interest. He could issue edicts prescribing a definite course of conduct, prohibiting slaughter of animals or announcing administrative innovations. Nevertheless the Mauryan emperors did not degenerate into selfish autocrats. They followed the advice of the *Arthasastra* and regarded the welfare and interest of their subjects as more important than their own.\(^1\) Asoka observes in one of his inscriptions that all his subjects were to him like his children and that his one anxiety was to promote their spiritual and temporal well being.\(^2\)

The King was in charge of the administration of the entire Kingdom. Though he was a mortal he was a gift from and beloved of the gods.\(^3\) He was the custodian of all the resources and master of all the land within the Kingdom.

---

1. प्राणिमुखेस्य सूचं राजः प्राणायं चीति हितम्।
   नामप्रियिः हितं राजः प्राणायं तू प्रियं हितम्।
   *A.S.*, I. 18.


These privileges vested in him made him enormously powerful but still he had to follow the ancient laws (Porana pakiti) of the land. The people were considered to be an important constituent of the State and so the King was responsible for their welfare. This could become a possibility only with an efficient system of administration. The King had extensive powers and had to perform certain military, judicial, legislative and executive duties. He led the troops on the battlefield¹ and discussed the strategy of war with the Senapati.²

While holding court he fulfilled judicial obligations and did not tolerate any interruptions while he was absorbed in the task of adjudication. As far as his legislative duties were concerned the Arthasastra refers to him as Dharma Pravartaka.³ He had the power to promulgate royal ordinances which were known as 'Rajasasanas, and were the very source of administration.⁴

2. A.S., I. 18; II. 33; X.3.
3. Ibid., III. 1.
4. Ibid., II. 10.
Regarding the King's executive responsibilities, scholars state that he kept a watch over all income and expenditure, appointed guards, ministers, Purohitas, inspectors and spies. He corresponded with the Mantri-Parishad regarding the affairs of the State and welcomed the ambassadors of different States to his Kingdom.¹

He determined the principles behind the Kingdom's various policies and directed his officers through periodical instructions. In Chandragupta's time, the emperor exercised total control over the distant and far-flung provinces through spies and informers. Asoka, sought the help of intinerant jurors to accomplish the above. The King provided communicational facilities by a vast network of roads and maintained law and order by stationing army units in places of strategic importance within his Kingdom.²

There is no evidence to show that queens were taking any active part in the administration of the Mauryas.

The Mauryan King ruled over one of the biggest empires known to contemporary times, and his court had

naturally a pomp and grandeur of its own. The audience hall was a big structure. The King had a strong body guard.\textsuperscript{1} The royal processions were majestic. The King was dressed in fine muslin embroidered with purple and gold. All possible precautions were taken to ensure the safety of the King when he was out on the roads\textsuperscript{2} or within the precincts of the palace.\textsuperscript{3}

Thus we see that with the emergence of a fairly big sized empire, the power of the King was on the increase. The disappearance of the Samiti or Popular Assembly naturally helped the process. Effective power in administration was now shared by the King and his Ministry, and the nature, capacity and ability of these two rival limbs of the body-politic being the deciding factor as to whether it would be a King-centred or Ministry-dominated administration.

\textsuperscript{1} Altekar, A.S., \textit{S.G.A.I.}, 318.
\textsuperscript{2} निर्णित भिन्नताएँ व राजमार्गाःभिन्नताः
कुतार्कशं दृष्टिभिन्नतां साधस्तप्रभावितव्यां गच्छेत ।
A.S., I. 20.
\textsuperscript{3} \textit{Ibid.}, I. 20.
CENTRAL ASSEMBLY:

As we have already dealt with the Mauryan King and his place in the administrative machinery we will now consider the Central Assembly. The Sabha and the Samiti both Popular Assemblies controlled the Kings of the Vedic period. K.P. Jayaswal has argued that the Sabha and Samiti of the Vedic age did not disappear without leaving their successors in the body-politic of the later period in the form of the Paura-Janapadam,¹ a constitutional body consisting of the representatives of the capital and the country, and the erstwhile scholar has contended that they flourished from 600 B.C. to 600 A.D.

Though Kautilya was a strong advocate of the monarchical form of government he still stated expressly that public opinion should definitely find representation in the corridors of administration² and it was extremely essential and beneficial for the government to establish and maintain rules for popular association. The Pauras and Paura-Janapadas were bodies of local or popular representatives who aided in the task of administration at various levels.³ The evidence that the civic

1. Jayaswal, K.P., H.P., Part II, Chapts.XXVII-XXVIII.
2. A.S., I.4, 9; II. 14.
administration of the town was the responsibility of persons representing various trades, industries and allied activities within the State has found mention in the accounts of Megasthenese also. Strangely, the *Arthasastra* does not provide us with clear grounds on the basis of which popular representation was made in the government of the day.

As the Mauryan empire was built upon the remains of republics which had flourished not long ago, it is not surprising that in the creation of the *Paura-Janapada*, the Mauryas seem to be influenced by the popular democratic bodies of the *Sabha* and *Samiti* of earlier days. The *Paura-Janapadas* at the Central and Provincial levels provided good counsel to the Governors and enhanced the efficiency of the civil administration as they had members who not only held responsible positions in their respective organizations, but had found representation on the *Paura-Janapadas* courtesy, a due process of election. This makes it essential for us to look into these popular bodies and their organization. *Puga, Samgha, Nikaya*, etc. were the various names by which

these bodies were known. These guilds became more and more powerful with the passage of time. They served as bankers and custodians of several charitable and benevolent institutions. Their respective trades and industries had associations and organizations which were governed by their own laws and regulations which were binding on all their members. As the nation's entire trade both inland and foreign, was controlled by these guilds, they played a significant role in the nation's economy and her governmental machinery. In subsequent times, these guilds were custodians of permanent endowments, which meant that a definite sum was deposited with them and the interest accruing was used for the purpose for which the endowment had been made.

The danger of these guilds assuming greater powers with the passage of years was a threat which Kautilya had

3. L.G.A.I., pp. 82-83.
5. Sircar, D.C., Select Inscriptions, pp. 292-93.
the foresight to envisage. Shrewd and wily, as he was, this remarkable Bhrahmana had no intention of allowing the guilds to exercise undue control or influence over the administrative officers and so he recommends a periodical inspection of the accounts maintained by these guilds by officers of the State in order to assess their capital. This would give the State a chance to justly and equitably tax these guilds thereby enriching the treasury too. It is possible that Kauti1ya was anxious for the State to control these bankers by forcibly attaching their funds in times of national emergency. But the chances of such opportunities presenting themselves must have been few and far apart. The State appointed Superintendents to look closely into the affairs of these guilds and thus the influence of the guilds on civil administration was curbed some more. The extent of the influence which the Presidents of the guilds exercised on civil administration was further restricted by the presence of these Superintendents. But it was

1. A.S., IV.2.
2. कोशमकोशः प्रत्यक्षपियारकः संगृहणीयात्। हिरण्यकरमममण्यानांदार्यैः। न वेषाः कृत्तपराधं परिदर्शिः। तै रघुरोहितसम्भविनी विक्रमीर्यन्। इति व्यवहारिष्ठ प्राणवः।
   Ibid., V. 2.
3. Ibid., II. 16; IV. 1-2.
4. Ibid., IV.1; Cf. VIII. 4.
extremely essential that all these restrictions on the
guilds should not harm the industries,\(^1\) thereby impeding the
growth of the nation’s economy and so Kautilya permitted
these guilds to have their own rules and regulations, but he
made doubly sure that the relations between the guilds
controlling respective industries and the workmen employed
in these trades were controlled by officers appointed by the
State.\(^2\) It was necessary to apprise the State about all
labour disputes and the State had powers to resolve them by
stepping in if need be; on one hand by providing certain
regulations the State strengthened the hands of the
bureaucracy, while on the other hand it granted certain
privileges to allow the industries to continue their work
unhampered. Thus we find the State in an invincible
position where it had an indirect, though nevertheless,
crucial control over these guilds.

Neither the King nor the Samiti claimed and
exercised legislative powers in the Vedic period. However,
as we have seen already the King did have the power of
issuing Rajasasanas or royal decrees,\(^3\) but his power was not

1. A.S., II. 12, 14, 6.
2. Ibid., IV. 1-2.
3. Ibid., II. 10; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 158;
as extensive as the modern power of edicts to guide the subordinate officers in order to secure a uniformity of administration. The power to issue Rajasasanas could result in the considerable enlargement of the royal powers and the curtailment of the rights of the people, since they were not effectively represented at the Central Government by a Popular Assembly, when Kings came to be invested with these new semi-legislative powers; but this danger was effectively averted in the Mauryan period by the presence of the Paurava-Janapadas which were representative of popular opinion.

MINISTRY:

The two important limbs of the highest level of administration were the King and his ministers. The Ministry or a Council of Advisors has been regarded by ancient Indian political thinkers as a very vital organ of the body-politic. The Arthasastra reminds the King that he can succeed only if assisted by competent Councillors; one wheel alone does not move the carriage. In the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, we find no mention of the King's ministers. The Samhitás of the Yajurveda and the Brahmana

1. महायसक्य राजवं चक्रवर्ती न जोति।
कुर्वीत सतिवालस्मालेष्व ो श्रुववादन्मताम्।।

A.S., I. 6.
literature however mention some high functionaries known as Ratnins (jewels),\(^1\) who probably formed the Kings's Council. The Ratnins did not disappear without leaving a more effective body to discharge their functions; this was the Council of Ministers.\(^2\) The Mauryas too had a regular Council of Ministers known as Mantriparishad.\(^3\)

Ministry was regarded as so very essential for good government that Crown-Princes and Viceroyys used to have their own Council of Ministers in their courts. The Yuvarajas and Viceroyys had the status of feudatory rulers and it was, therefore, but natural that they should have had a Ministry of their own, as was the case at the imperial court. The Mauryas thus promoted decentralization in the organization of services at the lower level by having Mantriparishads not only in the imperial capital but also at the Provincial level.

---

1. T.S., I. 8.9; M.S., II. 6.5; IV, 3; K.S., XV.4; T.Br. I, 7.3ff; S.Br., V. 3.1.
2. Ramayana, I. 7.2-3; II. 100.71; Mbh., S.P., 83.47; 85. 7-9.
The political thinkers differed widely as to the strength of the Ministry. It is clear that this difference of opinion on the question is due to the differing needs of the different States which the writers had in mind. Kautilya states that the actual number of ministers should depend upon the needs of the situation in the States concerned, and was averse to lay down any rigid rule; he recommends the appointment of as many ministers as may be necessary. His statement that a King with a small Council lacks an important source of power and that Indra is called thousand-eyed because his Council of Ministers had a thousand members, would suggest that he was rather in favour of a large Council.

It was essential to have a Council of Ministers

1. Ramayana, I. 7.2-3; II. 100.71; Mbh., S.P., 83.47; 85. 7-9; A.S., I. 9,15; Cf. Bhandarkar, D.R., Asoka, Hd. tr., pp. 241, 253-54.
2. Manu., VII. 54.
4. Ibid., I.14.
which was numerically large 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.¹

It would be safe to assume that the members of the Council of Ministers were equal in number to the number of Departments in the State with a few extra to liaise and establish links between the civil administration at the Centre with the military and provincial administration.

The ministers who constituted the Mantri-parishad were known as Amatyas.² The Arthasastra shows that the Amatyas were no doubt high officials and Departmental heads but inferior in status to and much larger in number than Mantrins. The Mantrins received a salary of 48,000 panas per annum while the Amatyas had a salary of only 12,000 panas.³ A person qualified to become an Amatya was not regarded as necessarily fit to become a Mantrin. Despatch and secrecy of policies become difficult to maintain with a large body of ministers and so there was a smaller Cabinet of important ministers, four or five in number, consisting of the

---

Yuvaraja, the Prime Minister, the Purohita, Commander-in-Chief and the Treasurer. Kautilya suggests that the King should consult the Cabinet Ministers whose portfolios may be connected with the issue under consideration. The Mantri-parishad as a body was not consulted except in case of emergency.

The King was not the head of the Mantri-parishad. Rock Edict VI of Asoka records his order that differences of opinion among the ministers should be at once reported to him. It is therefore, clear that on some occasions not the King but one of the ministers presided over the Cabinet meeting and the Arthasastra refers to the President of the Council as a separate officer, known as the Mantriparishadadhyaśakha or Mahamatya.

---

1. श्रेष्ठ पट्टव हेतु नै नीतित्वं कृत्याधुपयोगः महावोधम।
   उपसन्ते तु महत्वं। ततः परेषु कृत्याः पार्यानियोगः गमये, मन्त्री वा रक्षये।
   A.S., I. 14.


3. मात्यायिन्यं कार्यं मन्त्रणो मन्त्रिपरिषदं वायुव बुधात।
   तत्थ यद्य भूषिष्ठः कार्यनिष्ठिनर्वा वा बुधस्ततुष्कुर्वत।
   Ibid.

Ministers were to be personally present for the Council meetings; if one was unavoidably absent a letter was sent inviting his opinion. The Council met at fixed intervals, if however, there was an urgent matter, a special meeting could be held. Normally the opinion of the majority prevailed, if there was no unanimity. Kautiliya recommends that even on critical occasions, the King should usually accept the advice of the Ministry or the view of its majority, though it was open for him to adopt a course which he thought to be advantageous. The King could, however, decide in favour of the minority view, if it would be in the interest of the realm. Rock Edicts III and VI of Asoka throw further light upon the working of the Council of Ministers. The third edict shows that the Council's orders were to be duly recorded and explained to the public by local officers. The sixth edict discloses that the oral orders of the emperor as well as the decisions of the Departmental heads taken in urgent cases, were subject to review by the Council of Ministers. It was not merely a recording body, for very often it used to suggest amendments to the King's orders or even recommended their total reversal. It appears that the Council of Ministers

2. Ibid.
continued its normal meetings even when the King was out on tour. In the absence of the King, ministers often felt it difficult to pass final orders on difficult and delicate issues. Asoka had left instructions that they should be immediately reported to him for decision. Conversely the oral orders issued by the King on tour were sometimes passed in a hurry, and they came to the Council for final recording; very often the Council would on such occasions respectfully suggest a variation in the proposed course or even its abandonment.\(^1\) There can be no doubt that the emperor himself must have taken the final decision, but the fact that the Council used to suggest revision of royal orders, necessitating their reconsideration by the King, shows that its powers were real and extensive.\(^2\) We have now seen how ministers were an integral part of the administration. It is but natural to presume that their corporate body, the Council, exercised great influence upon the administration of the Mauryas.

\(^1\) R.E., VI.
It is likely that most of the castes and interests were represented in the Ministry. It was the first and foremost duty of the ministers to control the King and to see that he did not follow the wrong path. They also kept the Yuvaraja under control to some extent. They accompanied the King to battle and encouraged the troops on the battlefield.

The scope of the work of the Ministry included the whole administration. It was to enunciate new policies, to ensure their successful working, to remove any difficulties that may crop up, to supervise and direct the State policy regarding taxation and expenditure, to take steps for the proper education and training of the princes, to participate in their coronation and to direct the foreign policy both with reference to internal feudatory Kings and external independent States. The Ministry reviewed old policies in the light of the resources available in men and money. Kautilya is naturally particular that the Council of Ministers should be associated with all important formal functions. The King is advised to summon its members when, for instance, foreign ambassadors were to be received or

2. A.S., I. 17.
formal durbars were to be held on auspicious or important occasions.\(^1\)

It is but natural that the work of the Ministry should have been divided among themselves by ministers, each one taking one Department. It is rather strange that neither the Arthasastra nor the inscriptions of Asoka give us an idea of the portfolios of the different ministers. It appears that the heads of the Departments (Adhyakshas) were not always differentiated from ministers; hence probably the Arthasastra does not separately mention the ministerial portfolios.

Till the end of the Brahmana period the Purohita and other priests tried to extend their sway over the monarch and through him over the State, but from about the fourth century B.C. the influence of theology on the State began to decline. Politics developed into a special science and princes naturally studied it assiduously in preference to the Vedic lore or the Upanishadic philosophy. Positive law began to be differentiated from religious rituals and

\(^1\) A.S., I. 14.

Ibid., VIII. 1.
traditional customs; and the school of politics began to aver that the former was more important than the latter.\(^1\) The Mauryan Purohita stood in the relation of a spiritual preceptor to the King. He was a friend, philosopher and guide to the King and used to advise him on all political and secular matters of the State.\(^2\)

Another important member of the Ministry was the Prime Minister, who was the King's confidant in the true sense of the word.\(^3\) The most competent minister was selected by the King and the Purohita to serve as the Prime Minister.\(^4\)

The War-minister was next in order of hierarchical importance within the Ministry. He was known as Senapati under the Mauryas.\(^5\)

\(^1\) A.S., I. 6.

\(^2\) Ibid., I. 8-9; Mookerji, C.M.H.T., p. 81; Cf. Sastrī, K.A.N., A.N.M., pp. 175-76.

\(^3\) A.S., I. 8-9; X.3.

\(^4\) Ibid., I. 8-10; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., pp. 80-81.

After the Senapatī came the Foreign minister. If a small Kingdom like that of the Silaharas required two officials at the foreign office, both of the status of a minister, one can well conclude that the Ministry of a big Kingdom like that of the Mauryas must have had several foreign ministers or secretaries working under the directions of a chief Foreign minister.

In order to carry out the policy of moral regeneration of his subjects Asoka created a new class of officials, known as Dharmamahamatras who among other things were to preach Dharma during their tours and direct charity into proper channels. Their duty was to encourage all religions impartially; no distinction was usually made between the followers of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism; when distributing State patronage. They had the authority to order a fresh hearing for court cases already decided and could reduce punishments and even death sentences. They were ever present in Pataliputra, in far off Kingdoms and in royal households.

The next minister was the Revenue minister whom Kautilya refers to as Samaharta (bringer together). The

Treasurer (Sannidhata) worked in close cooperation with him. The Samaharta was the Collector-General of Revenue and as such he was a very important officer. He supervised over the collection of all revenues, both in cash and kind. The Sannidhata's designation literally means that he ever attends upon the King. He seems to have been in charge of the Treasury, including stores of all kinds. He worked in close cooperation with the Samaharta. Census of men and cattle, which used to be taken in the Mauryan administration, was probably organised by the Revenue Department. It was the duty of one of its subordinate officers, the Gopa, to keep records of the number of villagers, cattle and fields in his charge. Strangely, the epigraphs of the Mauryan period have not referred to the Samaharta and Sannidhata. Conversely the Greek writers have talked of Treasurers of the State and Superintendents of the Treasury.

Apart from the Amatyas and the Mantrins who constituted the Council of Ministers and the ministerial-

2. A.S., II. 5; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 323.
cabinet, there was yet another class of Amatyas who filled
the administrative and judicial services after clearing the
Upadhasuddhi tests; the untested Amatyas were placed in
routine jobs.

Diodorus, Strabo and Arrrian agree with one another
in stating that the administrative service was manned by
"Councillors" of State, who deliberated on public affairs.
We are told that it was the smallest class looking to the
numbers, but the most respected one on account of the high
character and wisdom of its members; from their ranks were
the advisors of the King taken, as also treasurers of the
State and the arbiters who settled disputes.² Arrian tells
us that on account of their superior wisdom and justice they
enjoyed the privilege of choosing Governors, chiefs of
provinces, deputy Governors, Superintendents of treasury,
generals of the army, admirals of the navy, controllers and
commissioners, who superintended agriculture.³

--------------------------------------------------------
1. मनुष्यानुभव जीवन: कुर्यातां सर्वार्थसिद्ध ज्ञानरूपः सर्वप्राचीन सामृद्ध्यमिति का मनुष्य जीवन
   A.S., I. 9.
   Mc Crindle, J.W., Megasthenese and Arrian, p. 17;
   Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 81.

2. C.M.H.T., p. 141; Smith, V.A., E.H.I., p. 140 fn.
   2; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 63; Chinnock, Arrian's
   Anabasis, p. 413; H. & F., Vol. III, p. 103;
   Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., pp. 283-284.

These "Councillors" of the Greek historians were not members of any caste but corresponded to that class of the Amatyas, mentioned in the Arthasastra which have been referred to earlier. Members of this class were to be of noble extraction and high training, mature judgement and keen intellect, quick decision and remarkable energy, sterling integrity and unquestioned loyalty.¹ The Arthasastra informs us that Mantrins were selected from among them,² as also all the members of the Adhyaksha class,³ and the higher officers in the Secretariat who drafted important documents.⁴ The judicial officers in the City courts were also recruited from the Amatya class.⁵ In one place Kautilya avers that amatyavyasana is

2. Ibid.
3. अमात्यसम्प्रदेशपाल: सर्वाधिकारः शक्तिः कर्मसूत नियोज्यः।
   Ibid., II. 89.
4. तल्लामात्यसम्प्रदेशपालः...लेखकः स्यात्।
   Ibid., III. 10.
5. भर्मात्यासुत्रयोऽमात्यः व्यावहारिकान्यर्थं कृतः।
   Ibid., III. 1.
a very serious one, because all important government activities proceed from them, e.g. successful carrying out of projects, protection against external and internal enemies, protection against calamities, colonization, recruiting of the army and collection of the revenue. It is thus clear that the Amatyas of Kautilya were discharging most of the functions of the "Councillors" of the Greek historians; their position was similar to that of the I.A.S. officers of the present day who fill in most of the Departments of the Indian Government.

It appears that in Asoka's time the senior Amatyas were called Mahamatras. In the Asokan administration Mahamatras were members of the Central as well as the Provincial Cabinets, heads of the district administration and judges of the City court. When appointed to promote religious harmony, piety and charities they were called

1. A.S., VIII. 1.
3. Ibid., pp. 287-88.
4. Ibid., p. 289.
5. Ibid., pp. 284-86.
Dharmamahamatras,\(^1\) when charged with the work of frontier administration, they were called Antamahamatras, and when they were entrusted with promoting the welfare of women called Striadhya:khmahamatras.\(^2\) This last term would indicate that Adhyakasha and Mahamatra were officers of the same cadre.

Megasthenese has referred to the "Councillors" as a caste (the seventh) along with the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas etc. It is possible that the Greek ambassador being a foreigner did not comprehend the nuances of the caste system in India and was led to believe that the "Councillors" too formed a caste like the Brahmanas, Kshatriyas etc,\(^3\) and certain circumstances prevailing in ancient India were responsible for this misconception of Megasthenese. In a monarchical set up members of families which had been tried and tested and found worthy were appointed to the State's administrative services.\(^4\) Later their sons and relatives were also accommodated in the administrative machinery.\(^5\)

1. A.S., pp. 267-68.
2. Ibid., pp.262-63.
This practice had been popular in ancient India not only in the time of Megasthenese but also from several centuries earlier. Records of the Guptas and other later dynasties have also used the term *anvayaprapta sachivyā* (hereditary ministership) time and again. To an onlooker it gave the impression that hereditary selection of administrative officers from a particular class was the rule rather than the exception in the country. If Megasthenese ascribed the selection of his Councillors to this seventh caste, he is not very far from the truth because the popularity of hereditary selection might have germinated this idea of a seventh caste in his mind. The *Arthasastra* does not confirm the presence of any seventh class/ caste in the Mauryan society as described by Megasthenese. We need not suffer from any feelings of discomfiture at the thought of hereditary selection prevailing in ancient India because this practice was in vogue in other parts of the ancient world too. The fact that it later gave rise to nepotism and eventual decline is another issue altogether.

Kautilya suggests different rules for the selection of *Amatyas* and *Mantrins* and his views receive support in the postulations of Kamandaka.

unanimous upon the point. A discussion recorded by Kautilya throws interesting light on this point. He dwells at length on the opinions of preceding writers and the criticism urged against them. We are told that Bharadvaja advised the King to select ministers from among his old fellow students, but Visalaksha demurred to it as ultimately destructive of royal prestige. Parasara emphasized loyalty as the foremost qualification, but Pisuna pointed out that capacity, intellectual and administrative, was the essential desideratum. Kaunapadanta laid stress on family traditions and recommended the appointment of those whose fathers and grandfathers had been ministers before but Vatavyadhi explained that new men versed in the science of politics were safer. Bahudantiputra believed that theoretical knowledge was to be coupled with practical experience and persons of noble families, intelligent, loyal and brave were to be appointed as Amatyas.

3. Ibid. 4. Ibid.
5. Ibid. 6. Ibid.
7. Ibid. 8. Ibid.
Kautilya however decried each of the above views and recommended the selection of persons combining as many qualifications as possible.\(^1\) According to him an ideal minister should be a native of the country, born of high family, influential, well trained in the arts, possessed of foresight, wise, strong in memory, bold, skillful, eloquent, intelligent, possessed of enthusiasm, dignity and endurance, pure in character, affable, affectionate, firm in loyal devotion, endowed with excellent strength, health and bravery, free from procrastination and fickle-mindedness and such defects as hatred and enmity.\(^2\)

The *Mudra-Rakshasa* tells us that Kautilya had made great efforts to secure the services of a man named Rakshasa for Chandragupta Maurya; Rakshasa was an accomplished and intelligent administrator, who had continued to be faithful and devoted to the Nanda family even after the defeat and death of his lord and master Dhanananda at the hands of Chandragupta. It was because of this quality of fidelity that Kautilya had sought to enlist Rakshasa's services for the Mauryan King.\(^3\) This Sanskrit drama though written

\(^1\) A.S., I. 7.

several centuries after the Mauryan period does provide us with valuable nuggets of historical evidence and its information cannot be brushed aside cursorily.

The norm of popularity was also included by Kautilya as essential for an incumbent to the office of minister, as there had been some defects and shortcomings in the administration of the Nandas earlier. The Nanda Kings had been extremely unpopular with their subjects because of the faulty administrative policy as a result of which taxes fell heavily on their subjects. This faulty taxation policy was reflected in the unpopularity of the administrative officers of the State, causing Kautilya to recommend popularity as one of the essential requirements for persons aspiring to join the administrative services.

Kautilya was in favour of promoting officers from lower ranks to the office of Amatyas after their service record, credentials and character had been thoroughly checked, because such persons brought with them practical experience in comparison to men who were fresh entrants into the Ministry. This projects Kautilya in the

2. Ibid., p. 268; Smith, V.A., E.H.I., p. 123.
3. Cf. ante.
light of a champion of the cause of meritorious service.\footnote{Cf. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 321.}

Kautiya has even recommended hereditary selection of ministers in the *Arthasastra*\footnote{Ibid., I.21.}.

In actual practice, all these qualities could not be ensured in every minister; it was therefore recommended that an effort should be made to make the selection in the light of the ideal.

Kautiya has detailed certain rules by which undesirable persons would be automatically disqualified or barred from entering the administrative services. A foreign national\footnote{Ibid., IX.2.}, an old or infirm person and a tribal\footnote{Ibid., I.10; Cf. Sastri, K.A.N., *Cholas*, p. 511; Majumdar, R.C., *Struggle for Empire*, p. 252.} were not to be appointed to the administrative offices of the State, however intelligent or noble they might have been.\footnote{Ibid., I.10; Cf. Sastri, K.A.N., *Cholas*, p. 511; Majumdar, R.C., *Struggle for Empire*, p. 252.} More details regarding these restrictions will be dealt with later.
Though Kautilya states expressly that foreigners should not be appointed to the State's administrative services, we do have instances where foreigners of exceptional merit and ability were offered appointments in the administrative services of the Mauryas.\(^1\) Asoka, grandson of Chandragupta Maurya had appointed Tushaspha, a foreigner, as governor of Saurashtra and Kathiawar according to the epigraphical evidence available.\(^2\) Ministers were required to be military leaders as well.

All ministerial appointments were made by the King. Mookerji goes as far as to say that the King, the Purohita and the Prime Minister formed a body similar to the Public Service Commission of modern times to select Mantrins for the ministerial cabinet.\(^3\) Men with very high qualifications, a blemishless record of service and unimpeachable integrity were appointed to the ministerial cabinet by a committee consisting of the King, the Purohita and the Prime Minister.\(^4\)

1. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 61-62; Majumdar, P.K., Bharat ke Prachina Abhilekha, p. 110.
4. C.M.H.T., p. 81.
We have no doubts regarding the office of the Purohita and the Prime Minister who have been described by Brihaspati as the father and mother of the King.\(^1\)

We have seen already that there existed no Popular Central Assembly in historic times to which ministers could have been responsible. They were, therefore, directly responsible to the King and only indirectly to public opinion. Influence of ministers, therefore, largely depended upon personal factors and not upon the constitutional backing of a Popular Assembly.

Some thinkers suggest tests to evaluate the potential of candidates anxious to enter into the Ministry, but unfortunately they have not provided us with any clear-cut guidelines regarding the same.\(^2\) Kautilya also refers to some tests for the selection of Amatyas and scholars and presume that they were oral in nature. The candidates who qualified in these tests had to serve as apprentices during a probationary period of fixed duration. After the completion of the stipulated period their work was evaluated.\(^3\) If found satisfactory they were taken into confidence and became a part of the Ministry only after their character had

\(^1\) Brihaspati Smriti, I, 60.
\(^2\) Ibid., I, iv.
\(^3\) A.S., I, 9.
been thoroughly checked in several different ways.  

Capable and ambitious ministers may have often held more than one portfolio. Kautilya lays down that before being appointed to the Ministry, the King himself should test them to find out whether they were above the temptation of wealth, wine and women and possessed the minimum qualifications. The King did not rely solely on the reports of the ministers and high officers in matters of appointment and selection, but judged the attainments of such persons himself, by the pratyaksha (visible), paroksha (invisible) and anumana (inference) methods. Pratyaksha meant that he looked into the working of the concerned individual personally, in order to ascertain his merits. When he indirectly assessed a person's performance on the basis of reports received from other individuals, it was paroksha, and anumana was when work was evaluated and assessed on the basis of inference.

While making all such appointments the important and decisive factors of time and place, were also kept in

2. Ibid.
3. प्रत्यक्षार्थी दिन राजार्थिति। स्वयंकृत्य प्रत्यक्षः, परोपकृत्य परोक्षः, कम्भसः कृतेनाकुशलविकारणमन्ययः।

Ibid., I. 8.

mind. Persons who belonged to a particular locality were naturally more familiar with the problems and issues peculiar to that place in comparison to others who did not belong to the aforesaid area. Similarly a person's ability to quickly and comprehensively assess a situation and make prompt decisions to prevent the situation from deteriorating, was another quality which enhanced his chances of being selected to the Council of Ministers. Presence of mind, promptness in making decisions and taking action, and offering accurate and timely advice to the King regarding a particular situation, were all considered essential requisites in a future minister. 2

Apart from these three ways by which the King could ascertain the suitability of candidates, Kautilya speaks of some more tests known as the Upadhasuddhi tests. These tests of four types, had to be conducted in secrecy and the records of the test results were to be kept confidential. The first test was Dharmopadhasuddhi. 3 Persons who were knowledgeable about and well versed in the Dharmasastras were promoted to offices attached to the judiciary. 4

2. Ibid., I.8.
4. Ibid.
training they had acquired during the course of their previous service would come in helpful in their present appointment as judges. The second test was Arthopadhasuddhi. Candidates who were above taking bribes, could not be lured by money, had sound judgment and were well-grounded in financial matters, were selected to fill posts in the Treasury Department. The third test was Bhayopadhasuddhi. Those possessing qualities of courage and valour passed this test with flying colours and were then assigned responsibilities associated with the army and the defence of the State. The fourth test was Kamopaddhasuddhi. Men blessed with a strong and unimpeachable character were put in charge of the royal palace, care of the princes, princesses, person of the King and his royal harem. The tests were conducted at various stages in the career of administrative officers and the records of these tests were strictly maintained. This automatically resulted in the creation of a very extensive record office which was manned by men who had integrity and were beyond reproach. When promotions were due these records were sent to help in the

2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.
Only after a thorough scrutiny of the evaluation process and an assessment of their capabilities were officials transferred vertically upwards. This brings to light the fact that Kautilya championed the cause of meritorious service as against seniority. All the tests mentioned above were to be used both at the time of selection and also promotion within the ranks. The incumbents who failed to qualify these tests were to be given assignments in mines, lumber-woods, elephant-forests, factories etc.

We have evidence regarding the practice of transferring Viceroy (Kumaras) and other Provincial Governors during the time of the Mauryas and we can safely presume that this practice was followed at other levels of administrative services too. Ministers were transferred from one Department to another, to promote efficiency. Any other reason for advocating transfers would have rendered the entire process meaningless. But there were certain

4. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 73, 79, 81; Basak, R.G., Asokan Inscriptions, p. 120; Mookerji, R.K., Asoka, p. 51 ff.
Departments, the ministers of which were not transferred as they were in charge of the safety and defence of the Kingdom. Such ministers could be transferred only by the King's own edict.¹

As ministers occupied so important a place in the body-politic, it was but natural that Kautilya held that a ministerial debacle was the greatest calamity that could fall upon a Kingdom.²

Personal factors counted for a good deal in determining the position and powers of ministers. When Kings were strong and powerful, they were the centres of power and the administration was known as 'King-centered' (rajayattatantra); when they were weak and incapable, ministers were the virtual rulers and then the administration was known as 'Ministry controlled' (sachivayattatantra).³ When weak, vicious and fickle minded Kings were on the throne, ministers selected by them were often worthless sycophants. Ministers harboured an ambition to usurp the throne when Kings were weak and incompetent. Tradition

2. रितनपक्षीयेव राजस्वेष्टानारः। व्यापेषु चाष्टना। परोपकारः।
   कैलुण्येऽऽ प्राणाध्य: प्राणान्तिकचिन्त्ताय इति।
   A.S., VIII. 1.
asserts that Chandragupta Maurya was completely in the hands of his Prime Minister Kautsiya. Asoka's extravagant charity was checked by his ministers, and eventually he could present only half an amalaka fruit to the church.

Usually the relations between the King and his ministers were cordial. Kings had a high regard for the ministers and confided in them. Ministers on their part were loyal to the King and also solicitous about the interests of the people. Power was shared both by the King and the Ministry and the administration was dependent equally on both. The Ministry usually exercised a wholesome influence upon the administration and though not constitutionally responsible to the people, sought to protect and promote their interests and welfare to the best of its ability.

CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AND DEPARTMENTS:

The *Arthasastra* shows that the Secretariat had developed into a full fledged and well-developed organization in the Mauryan period. This much is certain that the Mauryan empire was manned by a vast network of

bureaucrats at all its various levels.¹ Megasthenese, Kautilya, and the Mudra-Rakshasa all throw light on the appointment of administrative officers. But the most important and reliable source in this context is epigraphical, viz. the inscriptions of Asoka.²

The senior officers of the Departments were called Lekhakas or writers. These Lekhakas were not mere clerks, as one may be inclined to think; for Kautilya lays down that the Lekhakas were to be of the status of Amatyas whose position and pay were to be inferior only to those of Mantrins.³ The efficiency of the administration depended to a great extent 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 govern-ment", says Kautilya.⁴

3. तत्समादमात्रसम्प्रत्येकसहिं: सर्वप्रथममेवविवाहुः, ग्यानार्थार्थो लेखकस्य लेखक: एयात। A.S., I. 10.
4. शासने शासनमित्यापक्षते।

Ibid., II. 10.
Ministerial appointments often went to senior and experienced secretaries of proven capacity. Government, therefore, used to take great care in the selection of the Secretariat officers; they were required to possess qualifications almost as high as Amatyas as far as education, ability and reliability were concerned; above all they were to be experts in drafting.

The Secretariat naturally had a big record office. Ordinary or routine orders were not preserved for a long time, but those which granted lands or assigned revenues were kept with great care for future reference.

One of the most important duties of the Central government and Secretariat was the supervision and control of the provincial, district and local administration. It was the duty of the Secretariat to communicate the decisions of the Central government to the local authorities through its messengers.

Tours of inspection were recommended to the King and his officers by Kautilya to find out whether the people were pleased or displeased with the administration. The

1. A.S., II. 9-10.
2. Ibid., II. 10.
3. कृतमाधामाल्यापरः: पौरजनपवदानपसपविल्ल।
   Ibid., I. 12.
Central government maintained reporters, informers and spies, as a class of officers who formed an indispensable part of the administration. The Arthasastra has referred to Pradeshtri, Samstah and Sancharah while Asoka's inscription speak of Pativedakas. Arrian's accounts reveal the presence of "Overseers", while Strabo has made mention of "Inspectors". The above class of officers kept the Central government in touch with the developments in the provinces and reported on the conduct of both officials and non-officials.

We will not consider the different Departments, their offices and their functions at this point of our study and will deal with them at a somewhat later and more appropriate stage. The Arthasastra provides us with detailed information on this aspect of Mauryan administration which is largely confirmed by the inscriptions.

5. H. and F., Strabo, III. p. 103.
The Departments were presided over by heads or Superintendents called Adhyakshas in the Mauryan age. Scholars differ in their views regarding the number of Departments existing during the Mauryan period, but the general consensus will have us believe that we can classify them in modern terminology as follows: Palace, Espionage, Foreign Affairs, Revenue, Treasury, Judiciary, Ecclesiastical and Military. Adhyakshas were assisted by accountants, scribes, coin-examiners, stock takers and the like.

Often there was no distinction between the head of the Department and the minister in charge of it and that may be the reason why the Arthasastra and Asoka's inscriptions do not mention the ministerial portfolios.

Though the Superintendents were accountable to their own ministers, they functioned as heads of their respective Departments in cases where the Departments had a minister and a Superintendent.

1. Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., Ch. V-VIII; Tripathi, R.S., Prachina Bharata ka Rajniti ka Itihasa, p. 117; Mookerji, R.K., Asoka, pp. 132-33, fn. 3; Puri, B.N. History of Indian Administration, Pt.I. pp. 55-56; Sastrl, K.A.N., A.N.M., p. 180; Cf. Ramayana, II. 100.36; Mbh., S.P., 69.52; II. 5.38; A.S., II.
Very often Adhyakshas were appointed from the Amatya class of officers. Conversely minor officers of the State could rise through the service ranks and reach the office of the Adhyaksha, Amatya, Mantrin or even Prime Minister after having proved their calibre and loyalty by undergoing periodical evaluation tests.¹

Though we have a great deal of information regarding the grounds on which administrative officers in general and ministers in particular were to be promoted, the information regarding their fresh appointments to the office of Adhyakshas is annoyingly vague. The Hindu jurists are vague regarding the appointment of junior officers; Kautilya too, doesn't enlighten us much. Though we can possibly assume that there were no hard and fast rules for the appointment and selection of officers filling the lower levels of administration, this much is certain that all were expected to maintain good health and remain physically fit in case their services were requisitioned by the military in times of emergency.²

Except for the personnel of certain highly sensitive Departments, the ministers and officers of all

¹ A.S., I. 7-9; II.
² Majumdar, R.C., Classical Age, p. 349.
other Departments were deemed transferable by Kautilya.¹

The *Arthasastra* lays down certain principles for salary fixation of the various categories of officers employed by the State keeping in mind their status in the administrative set-up and the nature of work they performed.² Salaries were paid regularly and in cash; often during emergencies officers were paid in kind i.e. through land-grants.³ The *Arthasastra* refers to travel and medical allowances, pensions, bonus and compensation for dependents of officers who died in the service of the State.⁴

Officers of the status of provincial and subordinate grades were probably recruited from local areas; means of transport being slow and unsatisfactory; their transfers could not have been common.


2. A.S., V. 3.


The administrative divisions of a big empire, like the Mauryan one, were almost similar to those of the Union Government today. It was divided into provinces often as big as any in modern India. Provincial administration in the modern sense of the term existed only in big kingdoms. The Mauryan empire was divided into a number of provinces; unfortunately, the Arthasastra does not mention what they were. The Asokan inscriptions refer to three Viceroys stationed at Taxila (in Uttarapatha), Tosali (in Kalinga) and Brahmagiri (in Mysore); Buddhist tradition refers to a fourth Viceroy at Ujjaini (in Avantirashtra). A later Saka inscription incidentally refers to a fifth Viceroy at Girnar (in Kathiawar).\footnote{Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., pp. 287-288; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 320; Div., p. 407; The Questions of King Milinda, Part II, p. 250 n; Mahavamsa, Ch. XIII; Mahabodhivamsa, p. 98.} We may well presume that very probably there was a Viceroy for Eastern Punjab and Northern U.P. with his capital at Ahichchhatra, and another for Southern U.P. and Kosala with his capital near Maski. Maharashtra, Bengal and Dakshinapatha (Suvarnagiri) were also probably under different Viceroys. Prachya and Madhyadesa were directly administered by the King with the help of
Mahamatras and high officers stationed at Pataliputra and Kausambi.¹

Heads of the provincial administrations were officers of very high status. These Viceroys enjoyed wide powers. The Divisional Commissioners must have worked under their instructions. Very often princes of the blood royal were appointed Viceroys. Thus under the Mauryas, Bindusara (at Taxila) Asoka and Kunala (at Ujjaini) had all served as Viceroys in the different provinces of the empire.² The Viceroy at Brahmagiri is expressly described as a Kumara or prince in the Asokan inscriptions.³ It is therefore clear that some important provinces had princes of the royal blood as their Viceroys.

The Viceroy in Kathiawar under Chandragupta was a Vaisya named Pushyagupta.⁴ He was known as the Rashtriya of Chandragupta. The Rashtriya earned a salary equivalent to that of a Viceroy from the royal family. In all probability he had the status of a modern day Imperial High Commissioner.⁵ This appointment gives rise to several

baffling questions in our minds—firstly, Pushyagupta was in no way related to the royal family; secondly, he was not a member of the nobility or ruling class and finally he was posted in a highly sensitive and strategic province of the empire; all this forces us to concede that any person of exceptional merit could rise to a position normally reserved for scions of the royal family and that barriers of caste did not prove to be an impediment for a meritorious person aspiring to some of the highest offices of the State. The Viceroy in Kathiawar under Asoka was a Yavana named Tushaspha.¹ Though Kautilya stated expressly that foreigners were not to be appointed to the State's administrative services, we do have instances where foreigners of exceptional merit and ability were offered appointments in the administrative services and Tushaspha is one such example.² Chandragupta Maurya had appointed Tushaspha, a foreigner, as Governor of Saurashtra and Kathiawar, according to the epigraphical evidence available.³ A later day inscription informs us that a Provincial Governor of Chandragupta Maurya, by the name of Pushyagupta Vaisya had started work on the Sudarshan dam which was later completed.

in the time of Asoka by Tushaspha his Greek Provincial Governor of Saurashtra and Kathiawar.¹

This makes it clear that the principle regarding the appointment of foreigners to the administrative services of the State were not followed in the time of subsequent Mauryan Kings. It is possible that this Greek governor had been appointed for a specific purpose. Though work on the dam had begun in the time of Chandragupta under the supervision of Pushyagupta Vaisya, the dykes and conduits had still to be built and it is possible that it was for this special purpose that Tushaspha had been appointed and not because of his administrative abilities. We all know what great builders and architects the ancient Greeks were and the dams and dykes which they built were marvels of architectural engineering and masonary perfection, and keeping this attribute in mind Asoka might have appointed Tushaspha to the office of Provincial Governor. In other words it was his engineering skills which had helped him secure this important assignment and there is a possibility that after the completion of the dam, Tushaspha had been relieved of his office.

The matrimonial alliance between the Mauryas and the Greeks, established with the marriage of Chandragupta

¹ Smith, V.A., E.H.I., pp. 139, 159.
Maurya with the daughter of Seleucus might have softened Asoka's approach towards the Greeks and promoted him to appoint Tushashpha as one of his Provincial Governors. We have no details regarding this marriage but the Greek historians have referred to it in their accounts. There is yet another possibility that as a result of this marriage some Greeks might have been indigenized and Tushaspha may have been the member of one such family which had been completely Indianized by the time of Asoka.

It is only on these grounds can we justify the violation of this directive of not admitting foreigners to the administrative services, given by Kautilya. It is quite likely that some of the Viceroys may have been selected from among the members of the ex-ruling families or of the Executive Councils of the Punjab and Sindh republics. It is clear that some Viceroys were commoners, but belonging to the official cadre.

Military leadership was regarded as an essential qualification not only for ministerial but also for

viceroyal posts. Viceroy's had to maintain internal order, protect the empire against the external enemies contiguous to the territories under their charge and keep a watch over the feudatories and frontier people.

Provincial Viceroy's, being often royal princes, had their own courts and ministers. These Viceroy's ran the administrative machinery in the Province in a manner akin to that of the Centre. Like the King, all the Provincial Viceroy's were assisted by a Council of Ministers (Parishad) who were of the status of Mahamatras.¹ The people of Taxila, who had risen in rebellion, pleaded in extenuation that they were not at all disloyal to the King-Emperor; only they could not tolerate the tyranny of the local ministerial clique². In Brahmagiri edict of Asoka the wishes of the emperor are communicated to the local administration at Isila not through the Prince-Viceroy alone but through the Prince-Viceroy-in-Council. Asoka addressed his second Kalinga edict to the Prince-Viceroy and the Mahamatras who formed his Council.³

Viceroy's were required to follow the policy of the Central Government as communicated to them either by

² Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., 363.
imperial writs or through special messengers. What amount of local autonomy was enjoyed by the provinces is not disclosed by the available evidence but since communications were difficult, they must have naturally enjoyed considerable autonomy.

The precise work of the Provincial Government has not been expressly described and we have no definite evidence about the part which the Viceroys played in the civil and revenue administration of the province. They must obviously have been in charge of its supervision and guidance in the light of the orders received from the capital. They had to collect the taxes for the Central government, co-operate in the work of its different Departments and take steps for developing the resources of their provinces by constructing and repairing works of public utility like irrigation tanks and canals¹ and to strengthen the foundation of the empire by ensuring good government and promoting public confidence.² They reported the general situation to the Centre and received instructions from the latter, which they used to transmit to the district headquarters, as was done by the Viceroy at Suvarnagiri.³

2. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 73, 79.
Some events in the time of Bindusara enlighten us on the practice of transferring Provincial Governors. When an elder brother of Asoka, posted as Viceroy at Taxila,¹ was unable to quell a revolt in the Province, he was recalled to the capital and Asoka was sent as a replacement. This makes it clear that transfers were done in order to promote efficiency in the administration, whether Central or provincial. After Bindusara's demise Asoka was called back to the capital and was considered the most favoured by the ministers for the Mauryan throne, because of the merit he had displayed during his tenure as Viceroy at Taxila.²

In many of his edicts Asoka instructs his Provincial Governors to complete their tour of duty and inspection within the period stipulated for them so that they could then be placed in charge of other areas. Those who were in distant provinces had to complete their tour in three years while those close to the capital were allowed five years.³ This makes it amply clear that the office of Provincial Governors was open to transfers just like the office of the Viceroy was, as mentioned already.

---

1. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 73, 79.
2. Ibid.
DIVISIONAL ADMINISTRATION:

Provinces were subdivided into Divisions and the latter into Districts. A Mauryan Division roughly corresponded to the size of a Commissioner's Division. The officer over the Division was known as Pradesika. The Pradesika of the Asokan inscriptions appears to be the same as the Pradeshta of the Arthasastra, who was directly responsible to the Samaharta.\(^1\) The Pradesikas corresponds to the modern Divisional Commissioners. They were to supervise the work of their subordinates and the Superintendents of the various Departments, probably within their own territorial spheres.\(^2\) They were charged with executive, revenue and judicial functions. They were usually mentioned among the officers who are requested not to interfere with the peaceful enjoyment of the lands or revenues assigned to donees. It is probable that they constituted the highest court of appeal of the Division. Kautilya recommends that a commission of three Pradesikas or three Amatyas shall deal

\(^1\) Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 319; E.I., XXII.

\(^2\) समाधर्म प्रवेष्टाः पूर्वमम्ब्रिज्ञामन्यमम्ब्रिज्ञासृज्याणां व नियमनं कुर्छः।

A.S., IV. 9.
with measures to suppress disturbances to peace (lit. removal of thorns). These bodies were tribunals appointed, in addition to ordinary law-courts to deal in a summary manner with various abuses and malpractices of administration. Whether Pradesikas were assisted by any Advisory Council, official or popular, we do not know. They had extensive powers over their subordinate officers. If the latter became disloyal or disaffected, they were arrested by them and sent up for further action. Since Vishavapatis had small forces under them, so very often Departmental action against them meant a small military expedition as well. The Pradesikas, therefore, had sufficiently strong military forces under their command, which were used for controlling subordinate officers. The patronage which the Pradesikas exercised must have been considerable under the Mauryas.

Rajukas ruled over several hundred thousand of persons during the Mauryan administration. They were in-charge of a territorial division known as Ahara, which must have been at least as large as a District. Rock Edict III

mentions Rajukas and Pradesikas in ascending order, and so Rajukas seem to be inferior to the Pradesikas. They were both assisted by a large number of subordinate officers known as Yuktas. The position of the Rajukas was to a great extent similar to that of the Collector in the modern administration.

Asoka had followed a policy of decentralization and granted large powers to the Rajukas. Pillar Edict IV gives us a vivid idea of the duties and responsibilities of the Rajukas. Subject to the general imperial policy, they had full administrative powers in civil, revenue and criminal affairs. Originally, they were revenue officers and the term Rajukas implies an intimate connection with the measurement and assessment of lands. Revenue settlement of villages or their reassessment necessitated by causes like the drying up of canals, must have been carried out under their supervision. Even though they were revenue officers, in the beginning they exercised judicial functions too. Asoka's exhortation to his Rajukas to follow a uniform policy on punishments implies that they had judicial powers as well. He had granted them greater freedom both in investigation of crimes and their punishment. They could

1. I.H.Q., 1933, p. 117.
also grant remission in punishment in deserving cases. They were to devote themselves to the welfare and happiness of the people in their charge and to confer favours as demanded by the situation. All in all the Rajukas had to collect the land revenue, maintain proper roads, promote trade and industry and carry out public works like roads and irrigation.

The Vishaya of the Mauryan empire corresponded with the District of the modern administration. The head of the Vishaya was naturally called Vishayapati or Vishayadhyaaka.\(^1\) He is mentioned in the Asokan inscriptions immediately after the Rajukas and is required to go on tours like him.\(^2\) The district officers like the modern Collectors were responsible for maintaining law and order in their districts; they had also to supervise the collection of government taxes and revenues. In order to maintain law and order, the Vishayapatris used to have a small military force under them.

Between the District and the Village there were some administrative divisions. The District was subdivided into four Sthaniyas usually comprising of about 800

\(^{1}\) Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., P. 215.

\(^{2}\) Ibid.
villages. Next we hear of a Sthanika who supervised a quarter of a Janapada or District. Each Sthaniya consisted of two Dronamukhas having 400 villages each. The next territorial division was a Kharvatika consisting of 200 villages. The Dronamukhas and Kharvatikas correspond to modern Tehsils. The officers in charge of their administration must have wielded powers similar to those of the Vishayapatis, but of course on a smaller scale. The Kharvatikas consisted of 20 Sangrahamas each having 10 villages. The officer who supervised over a Sangrahana was called Gopa. The Gopas, Sthanikas and Superintendents were all under the supervision of the Pradeshtas. The officers of the subordinate grades working under the heads of these divisions were known as Yuktas. The Yuktas were exhorted not to disturb the peaceful enjoyment of alienated villages.

1. Cf. Ibid., II. 35; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 93.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., II. 1, 35; IV. 9.
VILLAGEL ADMINISTRATION

Since earliest times, the Village has been the pivot of administration in India. Its importance was very great in an age when communications were slow and industrialization unknown. Towns played a relatively unimportant part in ancient Indian life; the Vedic hymns frequently pray for the prosperity of Villages but rarely for that of towns and cities. The prosperity of a Kingdom was described by the large number of prosperous Villages included in it. In later times, even when Kingdoms became large (like that of the Mauryas), there was no change in the situation, because the Village was the natural pivot of administration in a rural society. There is no doubt that the Villages in the Mauryan period were the real centres of social life and important units in the country's economy. They sustained the edifice of national culture, prosperity and administration.

The Village administration was carried under the supervision and direction of the Gramika\(^1\) or Village headman assisted by an informal Council of Village-elders Gramavridhhas.\(^2\) The King appointed Gramabhritakas to help

administer the Village. The work of the Gramika, Gramabhritaka, Gopa, Sthanika was supervised by the Samahanta or the Pradeshta. In Asoka's time their work was supervised by a special category of Mahamatras known as Pulisa and Rajuka. In the Mauryan period regular Councils had yet to be evolved for the Arthasastra refers to Village-elders (Gramavriddhas) and not to any Village Council or its sub-committee. The Gramika was the most important officer of the Village administration and the most influential person in the whole Village. The fact that he is not included in the list of salaried officials given by Kautilya has led some scholars to hold that he was not a paid servant of the crown, but was a royal or State officer elected by the Villagers.

Defence of the Village was the most important duty of the Village-headman; he was the officer in charge of its militia and watch and ward. Life was much more unsettled in ancient times and owing to slow communications the help of the Central government could not be always expected at the

1. A.S., V.3; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 292-293.
nick of time when there were sudden raids of bandits and robbers. The Villagers therefore had to be self-reliant in defence.¹ The collection of the government revenue was the next important duty of the Gramika. In the Mauryan period Villages used to organise works of public utility and recreation, settle the disputes between their residents and act as trustees for the property of minors.² We can safely presume that the informal Village-Council spent a small percentage of the revenue collected in the Village for financing its own activities with the Central Government's permission. Fines imposed by the Village court upon the offenders were another source of revenue.³ The Central Government would also occasionally help these informal Councils, by direct grant or by giving the requisite material free or at concessional rates.⁴

A special class of officers were appointed by the State to look into the affairs of the Village and they usually endorsed the decision of the Village-headman and

¹ A.S., II. 1.
² Ibid., III. 10.
³ Ibid.
⁴ Ibid., II. 1.
elders. If there were disputes and infighting amongst the Villagers which hampered the task of administration, then these officers stepped in and resolved the crisis through active interference.¹

The office work pertaining to the Village administration was done by the Gopa, who used to keep careful records about the number of the houses and their inmates, the extent, boundary and ownership of fields and gardens, crops grown upon them, the taxes due from them and the condition of roads, water-courses, inns, temples, etc.² Village-elders used to settle petty civil disputes; others were decided by a court consisting of three officials and three jurors.³

It is thus seen that the Central Government exercised only a general supervision and control over the Village-headman and elders. It left the initiative to them as a result of which these Village functionaries enjoyed

2. "सीमावरीभैन गामांचे कुटकाळातिरत्नेतरारामगुणवात्ववायूकत्रिकरांगुणस्तुत्पूर्यं गृहसेवितस्वभवनान्-
स्मापापुण्यस्यनिवीतपपिसंस्यायनकेश्वरां
तेन हृद्योऽस्माने य भवारण्यप्रियकामस्माराणस्य—
विक्रयानुसारपरिवर्तिकारिन्द्रानन्दधान्तृरावेधगुराणै
म्न गृहाणां च करवारकर्मसंचारने।
A.S., II. 35.

3. Ibid., III. 10; IV. 4; II. 35.
large powers. They made effective arrangements for the
defence of the community, collected taxes for the Central
Government, settled Village disputes, organized works of
public utility and recreation and functioned as trustees and
bankers. They played an important and creditable part in
defending the interests of the Villagers and in promoting
their material, moral and intellectual progress.¹

**TOWN ADMINISTRATION**

We have very little information about the cities
and their administration in the Vedic Period. The
civilization was mostly a rural one and towns and cities did
not form its important feature. Very little is known about
the town-life of the period of the later Samhitas and
Brahmanas, too.

When we reach the historic period proper, we find
that Punjab was studded with a large number of towns and
cities on the eve of the invasion of Alexander the Great².
Most of them were autonomous to a great extent. The Greek
historians have referred to these cities which were governed
by their own Councils and magistrates.³ How these Councils

1. A.S., III. 10; II. 1, 35.
3. Chinnock, Arrian's Anabasis, p. 413.
were constituted is not however described; very probably experienced elders were co-opted on them by a general consensus of public opinion. The magistrates were called Nagarakas\(^1\) in the *Arthasastra* and Nagalaviyohalakas\(^2\) in Asoka's inscriptions. They were exercising executive, revenue and judicial functions. They had to keep a watch over inns, serais and places of entertainment, especially to find out the arrival of foreigners and persons of bad character. Superintendents of trade and commerce worked under them. Stringent action was taken against persons committing nuisance, throwing rubbish on roads, or helping out-break of fire by their negligent action.\(^3\) For administrative purposes cities were divided into a number of wards. The City had its own court of justice, where the judge was assisted by a number of non-official jurors.

The administration of the capital city differed from that of an unimportant town, but there were certain principles underlying the constitution which must have been common. Megasthenese has supplied us with interesting information regarding the municipal government of the towns

and the imperial city. The accounts of Megasthenese corroborate the information given by Kautilya in this regard. The officers in-charge of the administration and defence of the City have been referred to as Nagaradhyaksha and Baladhyaksha by Kautilya.

Megasthense provides us with details of the area of Pataliputra, its defences and fortifications. But this area of municipal administration is not of much use to us in the furtherance of our study except that it indirectly tells us that the King and his highest officers must have been responsible for the above and it shows the large degree of control they exercised over this area of municipal administration.

The imperial capital was divided into thirty wards and each ward was represented on the town-committee by a single member. These thirty members constituted six sub-committees with five members each.

2. Cf. Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.I., p. 3-5, 10-12, 19, 71.
5. A.I.U., pp. 63-64.
Smith believes that Kautilya was unaware of the Boards in charge of the City's municipal and military affairs and thinks that these Boards were innovations introduced by Chandragupta. But in the Arthasastra we have evidence to counter this view.

Out of these sub-committees, the one dealing with foreigners, watching their movements and providing for their needs, must have existed only in big capitals or busy ports, where they resided in large numbers. Another committee dealt with vital statistics and carefully registered all births and deaths. This committee seems to be a Mauryan innovation and did not become popular in later times. A third committee devoted itself to the industrial arts and must have usually existed only in industrial towns and cities; a fourth, to trade and commerce, including strict supervision of weights and measures; a fifth, to the supervision of factories or manufactured goods and the last to the collection of taxes from the sale of goods in the markets. The sixth committee was the most important from the administrative point of view. We have no reference to

2. H. & F., Strabo, III, p. 104; XV, 1.46.
3. A.S., II. 34.
any public works committee, probably because Pataliputra, being the imperial capital, its needs in this connection were met by the officers and Departments of the Central government. None of the sub-committees is seen administering trust funds for the benefit of the community too. Probably this work was done by some purely non-official bodies, as indicated by the Arthasastra. The Greek writers do not inform us about the constitution of this Board and its different sub-committees, whether they were official or non-official, elected or nominated. Pataliputra being the imperial capital of a big empire, it is but natural that many officials must have been appointed on the Board like the Superintendents of the markets, tolls, weights and measures etc. There is however no direct evidence on the point. The Board of the moffusil towns consisted mostly of non-officials.

It would be facetious to think that a Municipal Board entrusted with such monumental responsibilities functioned effectively without the support and control of the State. Megasthenese and Kautilya have not apprised us as to what happened in the case of disagreement between the members of the Board; but the only way in which such a

2. Ibid.
crisis could be resolved was for the State to step in, intervene and adjudicate. This again lends credence to the view that the municipal administration was ultimately under the control of the State.¹

Though we do not know whether the men working under each committee were in the employ of the corporation, Municipal Board or the State, this much is certain that they were all conscientious in the discharge of their duties.² If we go by the evidence of Kautiliya then these officers were under the employment of the State,³ because nowhere does he state that officers were employed by the corporate bodies; on the contrary, he says very expressly that all officers were to be employed by the State, alone.⁴ In this way the municipal administration was conducted through the Municipal Board which formed an indirect part of the administration of the State itself.

The thirty members of the Board were collectively responsible for defence, protection, transport, control of epidemics, holding of religious festivals, care of temples

¹ Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., pp. 133-147.
² Ibid., p. 89 ff.
³ Ibid., pp. 93-94.
⁴ A.S., I. 9.
and other religious establishments, issue of passports etc. The entire Board was responsible for all important aspects of civil life. The Board was further responsible for the entire transportational facilities within the Town; for the inspection and patrol of the wards, for cleanliness and fire-fighting equipment; for organization of fairs, festivals, dramas and similar entertainments and for preventive measures in time of epidemics. Passes were issued to only certain categories of people like actors, dancers, musicians, runners and physicians allowing them the privilege of moving around the City during the night-hours when a curfew was imposed daily within the limits of the City for the rest of the population. The streets of the town were patrolled by the officers of the State, and all antisocial nocturnal activities were reported to the authorities concerned. The Board was entrusted with the care of the aged and infirm, the helpless and destitute and was assigned to look after the property of people who had gifted it for some special charitable purpose.

5. Cf. Ibid.
The six committees with five members each were in charge of different aspects related to industrial development and checking of products and quality for purposes of export.¹ Proper and adequate harmony was established and maintained between the employees and employers in the industrial section of society by the committee in charge of industrial arts and development.² The committee responsible for weights and measures meticulously checked these and all violations of the law in this regard were severely punished.³ The committee which deserves special mention is the census committee. It maintained a strict and accurate record of the members in each family, young and old, male and female, the property and cattle they owned and the income accruing from the earnings of the family members.⁴ These records were constantly updated and regularly checked by inspectors appointed by the State.⁵ The last committee was responsible

2. Ibid., II. 16.
4. कुलानी व स्त्रीपुरुषाणि बालवृज्ञक्रमपरिवाराणरविविधाय विधात। A.S., II. 35.
5. Ibid.
for not only keeping a track of the entry and departure of all foreigners but also for ensuring their comfort and welfare during their stay. 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 development of services at the municipal level in ancient India, during the time of the Mauryas.

AN ASSESSMENT:

Popular use of baked bricks during the Mauryan period led to a growth in cities in Northern India and the use of coins resulted in the development of trade and commerce which made it possible for the Mauryan State to pay its employees in cash. Megasthense states that the Maurvans took great interest in the regulation of agricultural, irrigational and urban-economic activities.

The Mauryas had carved out an empire which included all of India except the far south and its boundaries could be kept intact only at the point of a sword. Internal peace and external defence necessitated the maintenance of a large, standing army and an efficient Dandavyavastha. This led them to a search for new sources of income.
The Mauryan State accorded a very high and important position to its King. Sovereignty was vested in the Rajasasanas based on Dharma. The King was the Dharmapratik and could interpret Dharma according to the changing circumstances. Even the social and religious life of the people was not left untouched by Rajasasanas.

A vast and complex bureaucratic network brought all things under the State's purview. It is possible that the 18 Tirthas mentioned by Kautilya were Amatyas/ Mahamatras or high officials. In Asoka's time they were incharge of urban, rural and border areas. In their most important role of Dharmamahamatras they implemented the social and political systems ordained by Asoka.

Kautilya has referred to 27 Adhyakshas who had to perform economic, military and social functions, respectively. These Adhyakshas are different from the Tirthas. In the list of salaried officials most of the Tirthas but only a few Adhyakshas have been mentioned. The Gopa, Sthanika and Dharmastha are not referred to in either list but they too were entrusted with important tasks. The Arthasastra reveals a growth in the number of State officials and this is confirmed by Megasthenes and Asoka's inscriptions.

Kautilya's *Amatyas* were required to possess certain essential qualifications and pass some tests before they could be appointed to the State's services.

The fact that the bureaucracy was totally hierarchical is evident from the pay scales of the officials mentioned in the *Arthasastra*. The wage difference was in the ratio of 1:4800.

The power of the State was seen in all its fullness in the development of the *Dandasakti*. Chandragupta Maurya's army was triple the size of the Nanda infantry. Apart from the four traditional limbs of the army those of the Navy and Commissariat were now added to the Mauryan army. The craftsmen who fashioned weapons were under State monopoly which further added to the invincibility of the State.

The effective use of the police force and *Danda* was made first under the Mauryas on the basis of an efficient and widespread system of espionage. Urban-economic offences were taken care of by the *Kantakasodhana* courts. The *Dandavyavastha* of Kautilya was a totally indigenous creation. The same can be said of his espionage system.

The officers who implemented this *Dandavyavastha* combined in themselves the duties of policemen and magistrates. The *Pradeshta* was primarily a police official.
and magistrate but he was also an officer of the revenue department. The Samaharta, Sthanika and Gopa were basically revenue officers but they were police officers and magistrates too.

An increase in the economic activities of the State and urbanization resulted in the creation of municipal administration. The accounts of Megasthenese reveal the efforts of the State in this regard. Kautilya too has hinted at the administration of towns. He does not refer to the city people contributing in the municipal administration; on the other hand he allows the State to impose it from above. The Nagaraka of Kautilya was the Nagalaviyohalaka of Asoka.

The City was divided into several wards which were looked after by the Sthanikas and Gopas who worked under the Nagaraka. Originally the Sthanikas and Gopas were associated with Village administration but later on urban needs necessitated their involvement in municipal administration too.

The main objective of Village administration under the Mauryas was the correct fixation and collection of revenue. The Samaharta incharge of the Janapada was responsible for the above. The Sthanikas and Gopas assisted him by collecting accurate figures relevant for this task.
The Antamahamatras were advised by Asoka to be humane in their handling of the border States and tribal peoples. If the people failed to abide by the social norms they were to be threatened with Danda.

The contributions of the Mauryas in the realm of taxing the agriculturists, craftsmen and traders in new ways has proved useful for posterity. Tax collection, for the Mauryas, was more important than the keeping of taxes and so naturally any lapses by the Samaharta were deemed graver than those of the Sannidhata.

Though a comprehensive list of taxes is given in the Arthasastra, even they were insufficient to meet the needs of the Mauryan army and bureaucracy and so the State had to devise new ways for filling the royal coffers.

The above information reveals the Mauryan administration to be a highly centralized one. We have no definite evidence on the working of the Gramaparishads but the Srenis of the traders and craftsmen did enjoy a degree of autonomy. The Arthasastra and the edicts of Asoka have some strong examples of decentralization. Asoka had granted vast judicial and executive powers to the Rajukas in his empire who were incharge of many hundred thousands of people.

1. A.S., II. 1; V.3.
A strong police and army, a well organized revenue system all coupled with centralization accorded a unique and powerful position to the State and this was revealed in its administrative machinery. Kautilya advised the King to keep the treasury and army in his own hands which is proof of the importance of these two Angas of the body-politic.

Kautilya did not formulate his administrative system on the outlines of those prevailing in Western civilizations; rather his system was a climax of certain powers and processes existing in the pre-Mauryan period. Even if Kautilya did seek his inspiration from foreign lands all changes were dictated by internal needs.

The growing importance of the Kshatriyas in the pre-Mauryan period was responsible for according a special and high position to Rajasakti in the Mauryan scheme of administration. The influence of the Kshatriyas was now felt not only in the realms of religion and society but also polity. The policy of imperialism pursued by Magadha had brought the Kshatriyas to the forefront of society. We find Kautilya and Asoka undermining the influence of the Brahmanas in the above mentioned three areas. As the power of Purohitas was the sole important check on the powers of

1. A.S., VIII.2.
the King, a decline in their powers resulted in a proportionate increase in the powers of the King.

A survey of the nature and scope of activities and organization of services of the Mauryan State shows that it was largely a welfare State. It regarded itself as the trustee of the population as a whole and tried to harmonize the conflicting interests of its different classes. It tried to keep the scales even between the employer and employee. It protected the consumer by regulating the prices of articles and while doing so gave full consideration to the cost of manufacture, raw material and transportation. Frauds on the customers were sought to be minimized by making the use of standardized and stamped weights and measures compulsory, and merchants selling adulterated goods were severely dealt with. The State tried its best to help the traders and industrialists by providing roads, traffic-safety and emporiums. The State no doubt took land-tax but financed irrigation works to help agriculture. It helped community-projects and works of public utility by granting tax-exemption to people who worked on them. The Mauryan State recognised its responsi-

1. A.S., II.16.
2. Ibid., II. 19.
3. Ibid., IV.2.
bility to the destitute, diseased, those in temporary difficulty and persons not provided for. The welfare State of the Mauryan period paid full attention to public hygiene, provision of relief during famines, floods and fires.

The moral welfare of the subjects was also a concern for the State; gambling, drinking and prostitution were under rigorous control. Literature and education were encouraged, and articles required for sacrifices and temples were exempted from custom duties.

All these activities presupposed a full treasury and an effective organisation of services. An impartial observer will have to admit that the Mauryan administration was not only a very efficient and successful one, but also much in advance of its time. During the ancient period, India was perhaps most efficiently administered under the Mauryas.

There was ample scope for local self-government at the lowest level of administration viz., the Village as the representatives of trading communities like the artisans, caravan leaders etc. were also associated with the official

1. A.G., II.1.
2. Ibid., III. 8; II. 36; IV. 2-3.
administrative network of the State. The State valued and respected this association with the members of the trade guilds because they brought with them enormous amounts of revenue to the State's treasury in their capacity as representatives of the industrial sections of society.

When we assess the machinery of Mauryan government we realize that it was a quaint but nevertheless, successful combination of bureaucracy and local self-government. The State wielded all its powers through a vast network of officers of various grades and categories. At the lowest levels of administration viz., the Village and Town, a great deal of popular representation was allowed. The King at the apex of all power, formulated policies with the help of men thoroughly grounded in all principles and aspects of administration while on the lower-most rungs of the administrative ladder, people had the privilege and freedom to self-govern themselves. The Mauryas displayed sound political sense and administrative acumen when they appropriated all important aspects of governance in the network of the State's administration while leaving the responsibility of

1. A.S., VIII. 4; IX.2; VII.11; V.3.
3. Ibid.
civil affairs in the hands of the people's representatives. The major benefits emanating from such a policy were the liberty which the State had, to concentrate on the defence of the Kingdom and the levying of taxes, while issues such as public works and civic affairs became the responsibility of the people's representatives. In other words, the State pledged responsibility towards the defence of the land, foreign affairs, taxation and promotion of industry; while building of roads, transport facilities, religious affairs and medical care, all fell under the purview of the Board of thirty members mentioned earlier.

When Megasthenese refers to a class or caste of "Councillors" and "Overseers" from which officers of the State were duly recruited, he was not entirely incorrect. Ancient India did encourage hereditary service, and ministers could ensure high and responsible offices for their sons as a routine. The bureaucracy too was open to, albeit, dominated by this practice of hereditary service. The fact that the popularity of this tradition had not

diminished with the passage of centuries is evident from later day inscriptions. An interesting though slightly contradictory view is presented to us by the epigraphical evidence which states that persons of high merit and qualifications were also recruited into the services of the Mauryan State. This would suggest that when the Mauryan system fell into disuse and decline, the evils of nepotism became blatantly evident. Ministers now began abusing their powers and influence to coerce the rulers into assigning plum positions to their sons and relatives.

Kautilya did not prefer soldiers from the middle country and specified areas from where they were to be recruited. If he was so particular about a minor aspect of military administration like the one mentioned above, there must have been traditions by which persons having competence and merit in certain areas, were inducted into the administrative services of the State. We have seen already how a person could rise from the lowest cadre to the top most position of administrative authority if he qualified the Upadhasuddhis and Kautilya championed the cause of such

1. Sircar, D.C., Sel. Ins., p. 280; Sinha, B., Decline of the Kingdom of Magadh, p. 346.
2. A.S., I. 9; IX. 1-7; X. 1-6.
3. Ibid., I. 9.
discerning candidates. We have also seen how persons not associated with the bureaucracy could also be appointed to high offices in the government's machinery.

If we abide by the information of the Mudra-Rakshasa we will be forced to believe that Kautilya was scouting around for a person fit to be Chandragupta Maurya's Prime Minister and this does not seem entirely untenable because the Mauryan Kings were blessed with competent and outstanding ministers like Khallataka and Radhagupta who had shaped and moulded the destiny of the Mauryan Kings and their dynasty, too.

We have seen already that there was a class of spies which kept a close watch on the princes, ministers and high officers of the State and kept the King informed of their activities.\(^1\) The bureaucracy was thus effectively checked and kept under control. Harsh punishments have been laid down by Kautilya for officers who failed in their responsibilities or misappropriated royal funds.\(^2\) This too proved a deterrent for officers and prevented them from wandering too far from their areas of responsibility and

\(^1\) कृतमहामात्यायपर्व: पौराणवनपवातित।

A.S., I. 12.

\(^2\) Ibid., II. 8.
jurisdiction. With the implementation of all these measures the Mauryan bureaucracy functioned efficiently and successfully during the reign of the first two Kings viz., Chandragupta Maurya and Bindusara; but Asoka and his successors brought with them the fatal legacy of several wars of succession,\(^1\) which ultimately weakened the administrative machinery of the Mauryas. Brothers fought for possession of the throne, and the officers and ministers began taking sides.\(^2\) Buddhist literature apprises us that Asoka had procured the throne with the assistance of Kallatataka and Radhagupta.\(^3\) This gives us a glimpse into the powers of the ministers who could even decide and dictate succession to the throne. The internecine conflict being fought at the level of the royal family members filtered down to the lower levels of administration too. Merit and other qualifications were no more regarded as essential requisites for recruitment to the services and the practice of hereditary recruitment was increasingly gaining ground with the Provincial Governors recruiting their own favourites and supporters to subordinate offices at the provincial level of

---

3. Ibid.
administration; their powers and influence began burgeoning considerably and the hold of the later Mauryan Kings began to slip. A combination of all these factors played havoc with the smooth functioning of those very administrative services which had worked so effectively during the time of the first two rulers.

Asoka ushered in an era of benevolence in administration, advising his officers to overlook the defaults of his subjects on humanitarian grounds. The emperor went as far as to institute reforms in the very code of punishment itself. The officers aware of Asoka's unstinted devotion to the cause of Buddhism preferred to please the King, not with a display of effectiveness in their area of responsibility but rather with their sychophantic zeal towards Buddhism. A time came when the Mauryan economy began to groan under the dead weight of measures being taken for the propogation of Buddhism and simply fell apart at the seams. By now the people had realized that the officers were misusing the nation's resources by spending more on the spread of Buddhism and

less on the running of the State's administrative machinery. Gradually the control of the State on its officers began to loosen, thereby, giving the Provincial Governors an opportunity to liberate themselves. Attempts at independence, on the part of these Provincial Governors were given commendable support by the administrative officers who were in complete collusion with them. Corruption became rampant in the corridors of the State's central administrative machinery and the once healthy and vigorous empire began suffering from a malaise which defied all medication. While time stood still in Northern India, Pushyamitra Sunga, the Senapati of the Mauryan army stepped on centre-stage as the long hoped for messiah and brought an end to the people's woes and the disgrace and degradation of the prevailing period. The dynasty of the Mauryas met an abrupt and violent end when the military intervened to slay Brihadratha¹ the last Mauryan King. The Mauryan royal family which had been launched into prominence by its brilliant founder-ruler Chandragupta Maurya on wings of hope and optimism, now met its end on a sad note of depression and anarchy.