FUNCTIONS OF THE MAINAINS
The Vedic literature does not provide us any information regarding the existence of the ministers and their functions. We can say that in the Vedic period the Ratnins were entrusted with the task of choosing a king. That is why the Taūtirīya Brāhmaṇa calls the Ratnins as *Ete Vai Rātrasya Pradātārah.*

But with the evolution of the ministerial council in ancient India various functions came to be performed by the ministers.

The first and the foremost duty of the ministers was to give sound advice to the king. It was the duty of the Minister to restrain him following an evil path and to do what was beneficial to him. The Rāmāyana recommends that a minister who does not prevent a king following an evil path should be killed. In the absence of a king it was the duty of the minister to run the administration of the state. We find in the Rāmāyana that on the death of king Dasaratha, Vāśishtha acted as the Chief Minister and regent till the arrival of Bharata. The ministers collected informations regarding both friends and foes, with the help of spies. It was left with the charge of Ministers to replenish the treasury. But in collecting money they were neither 'to set free a thief who had been caught, interrogated and found with the stolen property nor
fine a respectable pure minded and innocent person. In addition to the above mentioned functions the Ramayana lays down that the ministers accompanied the king when the latter received a sage. He was assisted by ministers while performing the works relating to Paura. The ministers associated him in an military expedition. The king received an envoy in the company of his ministers and some time they themselves acted as an ambassador. We find in the Ramayana that Lomapada received Vibhandaka with his ministers. King Dasaratha went with his ministers to Risya Srnga. Guha was accompanied by his ministers when he received Rama. Rama was associated with his ministers when he received Rama. Guha was accompanied by his ministers when he received Rama. The Ministers of Ravana joined him when he went out on a military expedition. Ravana received Hanumam in the company of his ministers. The king consulted the ministers on all important matters of state as well as in the transaction of his personal affairs. We learn that the King Dasaratha consulted his ministers regarding the king Janaka's and the sage Visvamitra's proposal of the marriage of Janaka's daughter Sit with Rama. After their consent he set out for Mithila.

The Mahabharata states that the kingdom of that king certainly thrives who pays proper honour to his ministers and employs them in measures of policy and
This indicates that the ministers took part in the formulation of policy and fighting battles. The Ministers were required to give sound advice and check him from autocracy according to the *Mahābhārata*. The great epic refers to the Ministers of Nala who advised him not to play dice. Similarly, Vidura advised Kauravas to adopt right path by giving due share to the Pāṇḍavas. The Ministers looked after the state activities during the ailing period of the king and when the latter went on hunting expeditions. We are informed that king Parikshita entrusted the state affairs to his ministers when he went on hunting expedition. The king Sambaraṇa asked his ministers to look after the state affairs in his absence. The ministers accompanied the king in military expedition is quite clear from the *Mahābhārata*. Duryodhana is said to have invaded the Trigartas in the company of his ministers. Jayadaratha is described as consulting his ministers on the battle field and Vṛṣavarma, the minister of Dhṛtarāṣṭra was killed on the battle field of Kurukshetra.

The ministers arranged for the education of the prince and crowned him to the throne on the sudden death of the king. We find that the ministers of Parikshita at his sudden demise made arrangements for
his son Janamejaya and enthroned him and looked after the state activities. The ministers looked into the weak points among the elements of their own state as well as of those of the enemies.

The Jātaka stories throw some light on the functions of the ministers during that period. On the death of the king the activities of the state sometimes fell to their charge and during the occasional absence or incapability of a king the minister looked after the state affairs.

Udayana, the king of Vatsa, consulted his ministers and especially his chief minister Yaugandharaṇa on every matter including his marriage with Vāsavatā and Padmavatī.

The policy of the government was shaped by the Council of Ministers after full discussion during the Mauryan period. Great importance has been attached to the Mantra by Kautilya. The main functions of the Council of Ministers were executive in character. The following points appear to have engaged most of its attention.

1. Means of undertaking works including expeditions into enemy's territory.
2. Gathering of resources in men and material in relation to the internal and external policy of the kingdom.

3. Use of discrimination in undertaking with reference to place and time.

4. Means of averting possible danger and calamities arising from own state and from that of the enemy.

5. Results arising from such works undertaken.

After full discussion of the meetings the ministers arrived at definite conclusion detailed below which were then put to execution accordingly:

1. To undertake a new work.
2. To complete the work already begun.
3. To improve what has been accomplished.
4. To enforce strict obedience of the orders passed.

It was the Mantri Parisad which enforced the execution of king's order by the officials.

'The seventh class consists of the counsellors and accessors of those who deliberate
on public affairs. It is the smallest class looking to number but most respected on account of the high character and wisdom of its members. To them belong the highest posts of government the tribunals of justice and the general administration of affairs.

The ministers occupied a very high place during the Mauryan period and they were the most trusted advisors of the king. Like the previous works the Arthasastra maintains that the ministers were responsible to see that the king did not follow the wrong path. Bhāradvājaopined that 'deliberation in council, securing the fruit of deliberations, carrying out undertaking, managing income and expenditure, infliction of punishment warding off of enemies and forest tribes. Protection of the kingdom, taking steps against calamities, guarding of princes and the installation of princes are all dependent on ministers.'

This is why he says that of calamities befalling the king and the minister, the calamity of the minister is more serious. He further adds that in the absence of ministers those activities are stopped and there is a loss of all activity on the part of the king as of a bird without feathers.

Kauṭilya states that the ministers should
take the following steps in the calamity of the king. 'Even before there is fear of (the king's) death, he should by winning the support of these dear and beneficial (to the king), establish audience' (with the king) at an interval of one or two months, under the pretext that 'the king is engaged in a rite for removing the troubles of the country or for destroying enemies or for securing long life or for getting a son'. He should show, a person appearing like the king to the subjects and envoys of allies and enemies. Through the Chief Usher and the Chief palace guard he should cause the king's daily duties to be carried out. He should cause disfavour or favour toward those who do harm as it may be pleasing to the subjects. He should cause the treasury and the army to be collected at one place in the fortified city or on the frontier in charge of the trustworthy men, also (bring together) members of the (royal) family, princes and principal officers under some pretext. If any principal officer shows hostility he should get him won over or he should send him on an expedition full of danger or to an ally's family. He should cause that vassal, from whom he apprehends danger, to be brought under control under the pretext of a festival, a wedding, an elephant hunt, a horse sale, or grant of land, or through his own ally. Acting in this manner winning the support of the members of the royal family he should
show the prince already crowned. If there was any objection to it by the principal officers or any vassal, he should invite him saying 'come here I shall make you the king', and get him killed. He should get rid of him by using 'remedies against trouble'. In this way after gradually transferring the burden of the kingdom to the crown prince he should announce the calamity of the king.  

But Bhāradvāja gives altogether a different opinion and says that 'when the king is dying the minister should make members of the family, princes, and principal officers fight among one another or against (other) principal officers. When any one fights he should get him slain by a rising of the subjects or, getting rid of members of the family, princes and principal officer by silent punishment and he should seize the kingdom himself'.

The Mālavikāgnimitra also informs that the Council of Ministers could transact business even in the absence of a crown prince, its decision were later on sent to the king for acceptance. The Vidarbha issue was discussed by the Council of Ministers themselves and later on it was sent to the emperor for acceptance.
Manu states that the king should deliberate on ordinary matters of peace and war, the condition of the kingdom, wealth, protection and pacification of acquired territory with his ministers. At another place he says, 'when wearied of regarding the affairs of men, let him put in that place the chief of the ministers, knowing law, discerning subdued, born of a good family'.

Yājñavalkya lays down that a Brāhmaṇa minister should be asked to look after the state affairs and adds that the king should consult his ministers on all affairs related to peace and war. Kātyāyana says that the king should not decide even a law suit by himself, and that he should do it along with the council.

The epigraphical records bear the testimony that the ministers were very influential members of the government and performed various functions. The Udaygiri cave inscription informs us that Vīrāśena accompanied the king who was seeking to conquer the whole earth. Harisēna, the foreign minister of Samudragupta, was also a General. We find that Chamundraya, the minister of the Ganga king Marasiṁha, had won the battle of Gonur for his king. A minister named Hamadri has also been described as leading an expedition against a chief in Jhandi district. Nagaras the premier of the king Kṛṣṇa has been styled as a great soldier.
The *Raghuvamsa* also shed some light on the functions of the ministers. It was the duty of the ministers to invest the new king with the royal insignia with the powers of the full-fledged sovereign. The same work adds that the ministers were to see that no chaos or anarchy worked out at the death of the king and during the period of transition when the powers were to be transferred to the heir apparent. In case of absence of a male heir apparent to the throne a pregnant queen obtained the royal authority with the help of the ministers who instantly invoked a gathering of chief citizens from among the subjects. We have the following:

"That queen - who occupied the Golden throne and whose orders were not transgressed - governed the kingdom according to law with the help of hereditary old ministers while she held it (foetus) concealed (in her womb) just as the earth holds concealed underground a handful of grains sown in the month of *Jarāvana* who were eagerly awaiting the hour of delivery".

During the absence of the king he left the charge of administration in the hands of his ministers. We learn that with a view to perform a ceremony for the sake of issue the heavy responsibilities of the kingdom being taken down from his (own) arms was...
temporarily entrusted by him to his ministers. The Kāmandakaśīra does not mention the duties of the ministers individually but collectively they were required to hold counsel, to look after the income and expenditure, to administer justice, to subjugate enemies and to promote the welfare of the king and the kingdom. Kāmandaka like the previous writers states that it was the duty of the minister to check the king going astray and act as a guide as well as associate of the king. He compares a minister with the driver of an elephant who keeps him on the right path. The ministers, according to Kāmandaka, were required to help the king to come out of the ditch of affection pride and arrogance. Kāmandaka appears to assign some military functions to the ministers. He calls the Prime Minister as Mahāmatrā and Mantri Parvara. He describes the minister as hands of the king. Like Manu and Kautūlya, Kāmandaka also lays down that the king who does not follow the advice of his ministers is himself crossed by his enemies.

The Harṣacharita throws abundant light on the functions of the ministers during the Harṣa's period. We are informed that when Rajyāvardhana was treacherously assassinated the ministers told Harṣāvardhana that they were to blame for the misfortune for they ought not to have allowed Rajyāvardhana to go to a foreign king's camp unguarded.
The Kādambari also informs us that the ministers looked after the work of the administration of the kingdom. The Skanda Purāṇa critically remarks that the ministers were the branches of the kingly tree.

The same source adds that the main function of the ministers was to give advice to the king and destroy the policy of the enemy. At another place it states that the ministers were to look after the affairs of the state in the absence of the king. In addition, it is stated that the ministers accompanied the king in hunting excursion, and took part in the defence of the kingdom. It was their duty to install the heir apparent on the throne after the death of the king.

The Agni Purāṇa does not refer to the functions of the ministers separately. However, we can form an idea of the functions of the ministers from their qualifications. We are told that the ministers were required to be well versed in the policies of war and peace and to possess the knowledge of the secret counsel and preparations being carried on by the neighbouring countries.

On the basis of the above mentioned qualifications we can say that the ministers were required to guide the king on all important matters of the kingdom relating to war and peace and collect the informations of the
know all about the army. The Mantri is one who is adept in diplomacy. The Pandita is the person who is well up in the theory of religion and morals. The Prādvivāka is he who has knowledge of men, Śāstras and Morals. The Amātya is a person who has knowledge of land and records. The Sumantra is he who knows all about incomes and disbursements. 57

Sukra says that the Pratinidhi should always advise the king as to when a thing should be done even though it is evil and when to refrain from doing a thing though it is good. The Pratinidhi made the king act upto his advice and if he did not abide by it, the former was to keep on explaining his point of view. The minister is the Rājarāstrabhrt or the bearer of the responsibility of the king and the state. 69
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