INTRODUCTION
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There is no doubt about the fact that a number of works have appeared on different aspects of ancient Indian polity in recent years, but no comprehensive work based on a variety of original sources that are at our disposal have been brought out to bring out in high belief the genesis and development, the nature and functions and also the constitutional importance of the Council of Ministers in ancient India. It is true that this council is a post Vedic institution but its genesis can safely be traced to some Vedic agencies and instruments of political power. It is natural to suppose that it had unprecedented importance during the Mauryan period for the first time which also witnessed the establishment of an all India empire having intimate diplomatic contacts with the outside world. The combined testimony of the Arthasastra of Kautilya, the Indika of Megasthenes and the Asokan Inscriptions needed the reappraisal of the overall character and scope of functioning of this council.

The Council of Ministers continued to find cupous illusions in the post Mauryan period. A
reference to it in one of the Gupta Inscriptions and more lucid references in the works of Kālidāsa and Kumandaka Vauchasē for its continuance during the age of the Guptas. Though these works do not mention the portfolios of the ministers, they leave us in no doubt that the extensiveness of the Gupta empire and the multiplicity of the functions of the state under developed had obliged the Council of Ministers to expand its scope of activities enormously. The evidence of the Mauryan period co-related with those of the Gupta period shed profuse light on how much the ancient Indian monarchy depended on its Council of Ministers for its preservation.

That the Council of Ministers continued to exist during the age of the Vardhanas is made out by the testimony of Yuan Chwang and Bāra. The Inscriptions of the early Mediaeval period in the vast literary sources at our disposal attest to its existence till the age of Sukra who wrote his masterly work on ancient Indian Polity namely the Šukranītisāra. During the course of revision is has been our attempt to co-relate the literary, epigraphical, numismatic and foreign testimony to
construct a critical and comprehensive story of
the rise and fall of this constitutional organ, on
the basis of modern researches, in ancient India
on which depended to a great extent the Indian
empire through the ages. Interalia we have tried
to bring out the difference which really existed
between the institutions of the Mantrins in
particular and the Amâtyas in general. The method
of their recruitment, their gradations, the
qualifications laid down for their recruitment
the policy of promotion, the incentives for better
output, the individual and collective responsibility
of the Mantrins and their relationship with the
head of the state are some of the topics which have
been dealt within this thesis in the light of our
critical and comparative study of the source material.