



# MAURYAN ADMINISTRATION

Ashok Saha

M.A, NTA UGC NET, WBSET QUALIFIED

## ABSTRACT

From Bimbisara's ascension to the Magadha throne until Kalinga's conquest, we see a monarch's relentless attempts to conquer ever-larger regions. Ashoka's vast empire covered nearly the whole subcontinent, with the exception of a few areas in the deep south and the northeast. Why did the rulers of the Magadha Empire keep trying to conquer more and more territory?

Maybe the goal was to take command of more and more resources.

These resources include things like mining, trade routes, arable land, and natural resources.

Effective administration of these resources may increase state revenue, which was essential for a state's survival, according to the Arthashastra. Strict control over these riches, which were scattered over the empire, required an efficient and well-run administrative structure. The Mauryans were aware of this fact, as evidenced by the organization of the administration, which is considered to be one of the most important features of this dynasty.

This essay provides a detailed analysis of the Mauryan Empire's administrative structure, highlighting its centralization, bureaucratic efficiency, and intricate governance. The Mauryan Empire (322–185 BCE), a pivotal era in ancient Indian history, was notable for its extensive territorial conquests, creative administrative structures, and long cultural imprint. The head of the Mauryan government was the emperor, who was supported by a council of ministers and held absolute power. The central secretariat, which was made up of several departments under the direction of high-ranking officials, made it easier to develop, coordinate, and carry out policies throughout the enormous empire. The administrative apparatus was further strengthened by the emperor's network of spies, who were strategically positioned to obtain intelligence and guarantee internal security. To some extent, provincial governance was decentralized, with nominated governors overseeing local issues while following imperial commands. Village chiefs and district officers were essential in upholding law and order and supervising local economic activity. The Mauryan Empire had a strong military structure, including a standing army with chariots, elephants, infantry, and cavalry. The empire's defense systems were strengthened by strategic fortifications and naval prowess, which also made it easier for it to control land and maritime routes.

In order to pay for its administrative and military expenses, the Mauryan government relied on a complex income structure, trading networks, and state-owned businesses. Economic stability and fair trade practices were encouraged by standardized weights and measurements. Due process was enforced by the Mauryan Empire's legal and judicial system, which had courts at different levels and penalties appropriate to the seriousness of crimes. Spies also had a part in the legal system, supporting investigations and guaranteeing that the law was upheld.

**Key Word - Devanampiya, Pataliputra, Arthashastra, Megasthenes, Chapada**

## INTRODUCTION

The Mauryan Empire is a pivotal period in Indian political and administrative history. After Alexander's retreat and the fall of the Nanda kingdom, the Mauryas were able to create the first pan-Indian empire. They governed from the Himalayas in the north to the Deccan plateau in the south, and from Afghanistan in the west to Bengal in the east. The empire created a sophisticated administrative framework that ensured welfare, efficiency, and order in addition to providing political unity to India. Ashoka, the third Mauryan monarch, transformed the empire into a welfare and moral state. Power and morality were unprecedentedly united during his reign. Ashoka changed from expansion to moral leadership and from conquest to compassion after the Kalinga War. His administration style gave equal weight to artha (statecraft) and dharma (righteousness), a balance rarely seen in human history. The administrative framework of the Mauryan Empire, Ashoka's reforms, and their enduring influence on Indian political culture are all examined in this essay.

First, we will look at the kind of administration and government described in Megasthenes' Indica and Arthashastra. This could be informally understood as the government of Chandragupta Maurya. According to the Arthashastra, the ultimate governance consists of two parts:

1. The king (raja)
2. The Councillors (mahamatras) and the Assessors (amatyas or sachivas)

Now let us consider these two in some detail :

### The King

King was the head of state. Devanampiya (Beloved of the gods) is revered despite being mortal like other humans. The monarch honored porana pakiti (old rule) and established his administration and government around it despite his wealth and power. However, current study indicates that because porana pakiti is referenced in Ashokan edicts, it cannot be dated to Chandragupta Maurya. A good administration was seen as essential to the correct development of society and the enhancement of people's different capacities.

The king was endowed with numerous powers. He was in charge of the legislative, executive, military, and judicial branches of government. According to the Arthashastra, a war was one of the important occasions when the king left the palace to take leadership of the army. Using the senapati, he devised and plotted military strategies to combat the enemy. In terms of judicial power, he was the highest court of justice. He was supposed to be extremely cautious when making decisions. No matter how busy he may be, the king should always be available to hear petitions and administer justice, according to the Arthashastra. It further specifies that he must immediately answer any urgent calls. The king's legislative role is significant since the Arthashastra refers to him as dharmapravartaka. Importantly, Rajyashasana is listed as one of the legal sources in the Arthashastra. The translation of Rajyashasana is "royal prescriptions." The Ashokan edicts provide a perceptive example of rajyashasanas. The king also carried out some executive functions. Along with being a major contributor to the creation of public welfare policies, he also handled accounts and expenditures, appointed superintendents, ministers, and priests, communicated with the mantriparishad, received envoys, collected secret information from spies, and posted watchmen, among other administrative duties. According to the Saptanga theory, the Arthashastra similarly places the king at the top of the list of the seven elements of the state. Councillors and Assessors Kautilya made it very evident that "Rajatva (Sovereignty) is only with assistance, single wheel cannot move." The Sachivas and Amatyas are Megasthenes' "seventh caste" representatives. The Arthashastra states that among the Amatyas and Sachivas, mantrins, or high ministers, were a significant elite. The mantrin of the Arthashastra corresponds with the mahamatras of the Ashokan VI Rock Edict. The Arthashastra states that a mantrin's yearly salary is 48,000 panas. Mantrins carried out the following different duties:

1. They assisted the king in the examination of the characters of amatyas.
2. They gave advice to the king on administrative affairs.
3. In case of emergency, they were also summoned along with the mantriparishad.
4. They also accompanied the king to the battlefield and gave encouragement to the troops.

Kautilya was perhaps one of the mantrins.

### The Mantriparishad

The mantriparishad was an assembly of council members or the council of ministers (amatyas). They are mentioned in Ashoka Rock Edicts III and VI. Members of the Mantriparishad differed from Mantrins. The former were probably at a lower position than the latter in reality. The Arthashastra states that the mantriparishad members make 12,000 panas a year. Although they were usually not consulted on administrative matters, they were called in the case of an atyayika karya emergency. The king was supposed to abide by the majority's choice in certain circumstances. The mantriparishad was also present when the envoys arrived. The Arthashastra states that the mantriparishad should consist of twelve amatyas. They were to be selected from a range of amatyas. While Kautilya pushed the king to establish an akshudraparishad, a large council, Manavas, Brihaspatyais, and Aushanas supported khshudraparishad, a tiny council. Administrative and Judicial Amatyas Apart from the mantrins and mantriparishad, judicial and administrative posts were held by another group of officials called amatyas. To ensure that the right people were in the right places, the Arthashastra outlines a number of recommended checks:

- **Dharmopadhashuddha** amatyas were those who passed 'religious' tests and were employed in civil and criminal courts.
- **Arthapodhashuddha** amatyas passed 'money' tests and were employed as samahartri (chancellor of exchequer and minister of interior) and sannidhatri (high treasurer and keeper of stores)
- **Kamopadhashuddha** amatyas passed 'love' tests and were employed in pleasure grounds.
- **Bhayopadhashuddha** amatyas were those who passed 'fear' tests and were appointed to do work requiring immediate action and attention (asanna karya). Those who could not pass the tests were employed in mines, forests and manufactories.

Those with these qualities were also appointed as nishrishtartah (ambassadors), lekhakas (ministers of correspondence), and adhyakshas (superintendents) in addition to these amatyas. Adhyakshas: The most important group of bureaucrats

during the Mauryas were Adhyakshas. Their primary responsibility as superintendents or supervisors was to make sure their department operated efficiently. The following is a list of notable adhyakshas and their specializations:

- **Nagaradhyaksha:** In charge of cities
- **Baladhyaksha:** In charge of military affairs
- **Navadhyaksha:** Chief naval superintendent
- **Goadhyaksha:** In charge of the cowherds.
- **Ganikadhyaksha:** Controllers of entertainers
- **Koshadhyaksha:** Superintendent of the treasury
- **Lohadhyaksha:** Superintendent of metals
- **Dhyutadhyaksha:** Controller of Gambling
- **Akaradhyaksha:** Controller of mining and metallurgy
- **Ayudhagaradhyaksha:** Controller of ordinance
- **Pautavadhyaksha:** Controller of weights and measures
- **Sitadhyaksha:** Supervisor of the crown land
- **Sulkadhyaksha:** Controller of customs and octroi
- **Madradyaksha:** Passport officer
- **Panyadhyaksha:** Control of state territori

### Judicial System

**Code of Law:** The Mauryan Empire developed a comprehensive legal code to govern its subjects. The legal system was based on customary rules and ancient Indian customs, as well as the Arthashastra, a text on statecraft and administration composed by Chanakya (Kautilya), Chandragupta Maurya's principal counselor.

**Judicial Hierarchy:** The judicial system of the Mauryan Empire was organized in a hierarchical manner. At the top was the emperor, the supreme arbiter. Beneath the emperor were district and provincial courts, each presided over by appointed judges.

Village chiefs also had the authority to resolve minor disputes.

**Legal Proceedings:** Due process was respected under the Mauryan Empire's legal system. Trials were conducted fairly, and both parties were given the opportunity to present their case. Depending on the severity of the behavior, criminal sanctions varied from fines and physical punishment to the death penalty.

**Role of Spies in Justice:** Using its network of spies, the Mauryan government gathered evidence and monitored the actions of officials and citizens. Spies were crucial in providing the empire with intelligence on criminal activities, corruption, and other security threats. This information was used to ensure law enforcement, support legal procedures, and maintain public order.

### Provincial Government :

The administrative and territorial decentralization of the Mauryan empire was as follows. The empire's provinces were further divided into a number of districts, or "aharas." There were multiple villages in one district. The exact number of provinces under Chandragupta is uncertain, despite Ashoka having at least **five**. These were:

Provinces	Capital
Uttarpatha	Taxila
Avantiratha	Ujjaini
Dakshinapatha	Suvarnagiri
Kalinga	Toshali
Prachya or Prachina	<i>Pataliputra</i>

Every province had a viceroy. A prince of royal lineage was called kumaramatya when he was named viceroy; otherwise, he was called mahamatra. Pradeshtis was also in charge of divisions, and Samahartri held them responsible. There were other areas with some autonomy, such Saurashtra and Kamboja, in addition to the previously named provinces. According to legend, Pushyagupta, a yavana, was Chandragupta's governor (rashtriya) of Saurashtra. Tushaspa was the province's governor under another Yavana Ashoka.

### District and Rural Administration :

Elders helped gramika, gramabhojaka, or ayukta with village administration and legal concerns, according to the Arthashastra.

The Arthashastra says that the king's country servant was either gramabhritika or gramabhojaka, but it makes no reference

of gramika. Next to Gramika in the hierarchy was Gopa, who was in charge of five to ten villages. Beside the gopa was the sthanika, who was in charge of a quarter of a vishaya, ahara, or janapada (region). The Samahartri supervised each of these officers' operations with Pradeshtis' help. The Mauryan rural governance was exceedingly successful.

The Ashoka Administration The primary source of information utilized to rebuild Ashoka's government is his inscriptions. New terms not found in the Arthashastra are being used, despite the fact that his administration was substantially the same as that of his predecessors. This means that we have to use Ashoka's inscriptions to analyze his administration. Rock Edicts III and VI make reference to Parisha. The parisha of these edicts could be compared to the mantriparishad of the Arthashastra. This means that we have to use Ashoka's inscriptions to analyze his administration. Rock Edicts III and VI make reference to Parisha. The parisha of these edicts could be compared to the mantriparishad of the Arthashastra. With the exception of Magadha and Prachya, Ashoka also upheld the system of regional governance, assigning all four provinces to princes of royal lineage (Kumara or Ayaputa). The bodies (nikayas) of officials that supported these princes are described below.

➤ **The Mahamatras:** They had a big impact on the administrative structures of all the empire's cities and provinces. In Kalinga edicts, they are specifically called nagalaka and nagalaviyohalaka (nagaraka and paura vyavaharika of the Arthashastra). They administered justice in the cities. Edict I refers to the antapalas of the Arthashastra as amtamahamatras; Stridhyaksha of the Arthashastra (Guard of Ladies) and Ithijhaka Mahamatras of Edict XII are probably the same.

➤ **The Rajukas:** They were situated near the Kumaras in the province and possessed broad judicial jurisdiction. In terms of rewards and penalties, the king (Ashoka) had granted them a significant level of liberty. They are associated with the yutas in RE III and PE IV and the rathikas in the Eerragudi inscriptions.

➤ **The Rathikas:** They signified "officials of the districts" and matched the rashtrikas found in the Junagarh inscription. The Pradeshtikas were probably "subordinate governors," but they are sometimes likened to the Arthashastra's pradeshtis (king's informant).

➤ **The Yutas:** They were employed at the Mahamatras' office as secretaries. It seems that their main responsibility is to formulate royal commands.

➤ **The Pulisa:** Pulisas may have been the king's operatives, much like the purushas, raja-purushas, or gudha-purushas in the Arthashastra. They might have been separated into intermediate, low, and high ranks. They had many subordinates and ruled over the Rajukas.

➤ **The Pratedakas:** They were the reporters, and they certainly resemble the charas of the Arthashastra.

➤ **The Lipikara:** MRE II explicitly mentioned *Chapada*, one of the royal scribes.

➤ **The Dutas:** They were the envoys. They have been mentioned in RE XIII. They were classified into three categories, according to the Arthashastra:

(i) **Nishrishtarthah duta:** They were full-fledged Ambassadors.

(ii) **Parimitarthah duta:** They were negotiators who could not go beyond instructions given to them.

(iii) **Shasanahara duta:** They were only special messengers who carried the royal writs. They are comparable with the lekha-harakas of the Harshacharita.

➤ **The Vachabhumikas:** They were inspectors of cow pen.

➤ **The Ayuktas:** They are mentioned in the Kalinga Edicts. They could have been village officials. During the Gupta era, a vishaya (district) was governed by the ayuktas. The full name there is Ayuktapurusha.

➤ **The Karanakas:** They are mentioned in the Eerragudi copy of MRE. They perhaps refer to scribes, teachers or judicial officers.

**Megasthenes.** Pataliputra's administration was supervised by a thirty-member commission made up of six bodies with five members each. The initial board was responsible for managing all aspects of the industrial arts. This authority was in charge of setting wages and guaranteeing the caliber of the materials utilized in the various businesses. The second board was responsible for the care of foreigners. This board's responsibilities included organizing their lodging, keeping an eye on them, directing them around the area, seeing to their medical needs in the event of illness, and arranging for their burial in the event that they died while there. The third board focused on the systematic documentation of births and deaths. The fourth board focused on trade and commerce. Among other things, it was responsible for controlling sales, weights, and measurements. Monitoring the licensing tax that needed to be collected from shops was also essential. Any deception in this area was punishable by death, and the sixth board was in charge of collecting sales taxes. Manufacturers were under the jurisdiction of the fifth board.

Social and Cultural Administration:

Caste System: The Mauryan Empire and other ancient Indian civilizations were built on the caste system, which created social hierarchies based on occupation and place of birth. Members of different castes had distinct rights and responsibilities, and the government recognized and maintained the caste system.

**Religious Tolerance:** The Mauryan emperors adopted a policy of religious tolerance that allowed people of different religions to freely follow their faiths, despite their support for Hinduism. Emperor Ashoka specifically promoted religious concord and the spread of Buddhism throughout the kingdom. This inclusive approach improved social cohesiveness and stability.

**Education and Learning:** In order to advance education and learning, the Mauryan government founded universities, or institutes of learning (Mahavihara). These institutions attracted instructors and students from around the empire and beyond in order to foster intellectual exchange and the advancement of knowledge in a range of fields, including as philosophy, science, and literature.

**Cultural Integration:** The Mauryan Empire was home to a wide variety of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. The government encouraged cultural assimilation and integration to make it easier for ideas, traditions, and artistic expressions to spread across different areas. This cultural exchange increased Mauryan society's vitality and resiliency.

#### **Legacy of the Mauryan Administration :**

The administrative structure of the Mauryan Empire served as a model for subsequent Indian dynasties and empires. Its focus on **centralized governance** efficient bureaucracy, and law and order set a precedent for later leaders. The Mauryan administration paradigm influenced administrative practices in neighboring regions, which led to the spread of administrative advances throughout South Asia.

#### **CONCLUSION**

The administrative structure of the Mauryan Empire is a remarkable illustration of the ingenuity and pragmatism of ancient Indian governance. The Mauryan Empire's decentralized province administration, concentrated power, and efficient bureaucratic machinery allowed it to carefully combine local autonomy with imperial control. This administrative framework supported effective governance, economic expansion, and military dominance throughout a vast and diverse area. The Mauryan Empire's influence extends beyond its territorial conquests and administrative reforms. Indian civilization was improved by its emphasis on intellectual pursuits, religious tolerance, and cultural fusion. The empire's commitment to fostering intellectual and spiritual pursuits is exemplified by Emperor Ashoka's endorsement of Buddhism and the establishment of educational establishments. Additionally, by serving as a model for following Indian dynasties and empires, the Mauryan administration model impacted administrative practices and governmental frameworks for generations to come. The Mauryan Empire's enduring impact on Indian history indicates that it was a pivotal period in the development of Indian culture. The Mauryan administrative structure continues to inspire scholarly research and appreciation in contemporary debate due to its organizational sophistication and pragmatic approach to governance. knowledge the administrative dynamics of the Mauryan Empire provides valuable insights into the complexities of ancient Indian polity and administration, which improves our knowledge of historical and cultural narratives.

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