

Mauryan Administration, Provincial, Judicial and Military Administration

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The **Mauryan Administration system**, detailed in the **Arthashastra**, Greek accounts, and Ashokan inscriptions, demonstrated a centralized and efficient bureaucratic framework. Under the leadership of Chandragupta Maurya, Bindusara, and Ashoka, it emphasized welfare and justice, marking the beginning of political unity and administrative uniformity in Indian history. This system set the stage for a cohesive empire, fostering stability and effective governance.

The Mauryan empire was divided into provinces, each governed by a prince or a royal family member to ensure efficient control. During Ashoka's reign, the empire was formally divided into five parts, with Magadha and its neighbouring Mahajanapadas directly managed by the central authority. This structure strengthened administrative efficiency and consolidated power.

Mauryan Administrative System

Mauryans developed an organized and elaborate system of administration. Decentralization was prevalent, as the village units played a significant role as the base of grassroots administration.

- **Division of Mauryan Empire:** The empire was divided into provinces, provinces into districts, and districts into rural and urban centers for efficient administration.
- **Saptanga theory of State:** Kautilya enumerated and clarified seven Angas, Prakritis, or elements for describing "the nature of the State" in its entirety. These are:
 - **Swami (Sovereign King):** The Swami is the chief executive head of the state and is, thus, "the consummation of all other elements".
 - **Amatya (Minister):** Kautilya describes an elaborate system of recruitment of the Amatyas and other officials who were morally and ethically pure, honest in financial matters, and of good character.
 - **Janapada (People and Territory):** This distinctive Saptanga feature is the State's symbol, representing a "territorial society." Kautilya's Janapada encompasses both territory and population.
 - **Durga (Fortification):** Kautilya regarded fortification as essential for the **defence** and protection of the state. He desired that the state fortify the territories on all sides.
 - **Kosha (Treasury):** Kautilya desired a prosperous treasury, and he specifically directed the king to obtain the nation's wealth only through legitimate and righteous means, rather than unfair and immoral means.
 - **Danda (Army or Force):** He accepted a strong and hereditary **Kshatriya army** as the most important requisite of the state.
 - **Mitra (Allies):** Kautilya considered the Mitra or the Ally a vital factor. Kautilya recognizes two kinds of **allies**, namely **Sahaja and Kritrima**.

Mauryan Administration Central

The Mauryan central administration was marked by strong centralization, with the King as the supreme sovereign holding executive, legislative, and judicial powers. Supported by a Council of Ministers and a structured bureaucracy, the administration ensured efficient governance and cohesion across the vast empire.

- **Powers of King:** He had his supreme executive, legislative, and judicial powers vested.
 - **Appointment:** He appointed ministers and other royal administration officers.
 - **Supreme Commander:** He was the army's supreme commander and oversaw the entire military.
 - **Hindu State Before Ashoka:** The Mauryan Empire was essentially a Hindu state before Ashoka's reign.
 - **Dharma as Supreme Sovereign:** According to Hindu principles, 'Dharma' or law was the supreme sovereign, and the King served as its guardian.
 - **Role of Mantri Parishad:** The King was aided and advised by a Council of Ministers, which guided him in day-to-day administration.
- **Influence of Brahmins:** The Brahmins significantly influenced the King, who could not disobey them.
- **Decentralization:** The Mauryan government's powers were decentralized; the provincial governor and ministers had the right to be consulted by the King, particularly on all provincial matters.
- **Bureaucracy:** A well-organized hierarchy of bureaucrats looked after the **executive, judicial, and revenue offices**.
- **Departmental Structure:** The entire administration system was divided into departments, each headed by a Superintendent known as an 'Adhyaksha.' Clerks, accountants, and spies assisted the Adhyaksha.

- **Other Key Officers:** Besides, there were other officers like the Army Minister, Chief Priest, and Governor of Forts.

Mauryan Administration Provincial

The Mauryan provincial administration was designed to ensure effective governance across the vast empire, blending central oversight with localized autonomy. The division of the empire into provinces, districts, and smaller units enabled efficient administration and streamlined operations.

- **Division of the Empire:** The empire was divided into two parts: the King's direct rule and vassal states.
- **King's Territory:** The King's territory consisted of several provinces called 'Janapadas,' governed directly by the Mauryan administration.
- **Provinces under Ashoka:** Ashoka's empire had five provinces with capitals at Taxila, Ujjain, Tosali, Suvarnagiri, and Pataliputra.
- **Hierarchy within Provinces:** Each province was divided into districts, which were further subdivided into smaller administrative units.
- **Autonomy of Vassal States:** Vassal states enjoyed significant autonomy despite being under Mauryan control.
- **Provincial Administration Structure:** The provincial administration followed the model of the central administration to maintain consistency.
- **Direct Rule by the Emperor:** The central and eastern parts of the empire were directly governed by the Mauryan Emperor.
- **Role of Governors:** Provincial Governors were tasked with managing the daily affairs of their provinces.
- **Support Staff in Provinces:** District officers, reporters, and clerks assisted Governors in maintaining an efficient provincial administration.

Local Mauryan Administration

The district administration was in charge of '**Rajukas**', whose position and functions are similar to today's district collectors. 'Yuktas,' or subordinate officials, aided him. In the urban area, there was a **Municipal Board**. The administration of cities was managed by six committees, each with five Board members.

Committee on	Function
Industrial Arts	It looked after industry and crafts. It inspected such centres and looked after fixing wages, etc.
Foreigners	It looked after the foreigners. Its functions included arranging their food, stay, comfort, and security.

Registration of Births and Deaths	Registration of births and deaths.
Trade and Commerce	It looked after trade and commerce. It inspected weights and measures, markets, etc.
Supervision of Manufactures	Inspected manufactured goods, made plans for their sale, and took steps to distinguish between new and used goods.
Collection of Excise and Customs duty	It collected taxes on goods sold at a rate of one-tenth.

- **Village Administration** was in the hands of '**Gramani**', and his superior was called '**Gopa**,' who was in charge of ten to fifteen villages.
- **Census** was a regular activity, and the village officials were to number the people along with other details such as their castes and occupations.
 - Conducted by municipal officials, mainly to track the movements of both foreign and indigenous populations.

Mauryan Administration Judicial

The Mauryan judicial system was structured with the King at the apex, overseeing the judicial functions as the final authority. The judiciary was decentralized, with various courts and officers handling legal matters at different levels of administration.

- **Supreme Court of Appeal:** The King presided over the Judiciary and the Supreme Court of Appeal.
- **Dharmathikarin:** The Chief Justice, called 'Dharmathikarin,' headed the Supreme Court in the capital.
- **Punishments:** Punishments were based on the nature, gravity, and circumstances of the offense, as well as the varna of the offender and plaintiff.
- **District-Level Courts:** Subordinate courts were overseen by 'Amatyas.'
- **Town-Level Courts:** Legal disputes were settled by '**Nagara Vyavaharika Mahamantra**' in towns.
- **Village-Level Courts:** The 'Gramavradha' handled legal cases at the village level.

Mauryan Administration Military

The Mauryan military administration was highly structured and efficient, with a focus on the organization of various branches of the armed forces. Each wing of the military was managed by dedicated committees and overseen by specialized officers to ensure smooth functioning and preparedness for war.

- **Overall Command:** The Mauryan army was controlled by a 'Senapati' (commander-in-chief), with a Board of 30 members overseeing military matters.

- **Military Committees:** The Board was divided into six committees, each responsible for a specific branch of the military.
- **Board of Infantry:** Headed by 'Padadhyaksha'.
- **Board of Cavalry:** Headed by 'Asvadhyaksha'.
- **Board of War Chariots:** Headed by 'Rathadhyaksha'.
- **Board of War Elephants:** Headed by 'Hastyadhyaksha'.

Significance of Mauryan Administration

The significance of the Mauryan administration lies in its establishment of a highly centralized and efficient governance system, which unified a vast and diverse empire. Under the leadership of Ashoka, the empire emphasized values such as Buddhism, non-violence, and ethical governance through his edicts and policies, leaving a profound legacy that extended beyond the empire's borders.

- The Mauryan administration's focus on justice, welfare, and infrastructure development ensured prosperity and stability, making it one of the most powerful and enduring empires in Indian history.
- These achievements not only strengthened the empire during its rule but also influenced future political and governance structures in India.

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