

Mauryan or Chandragupta Maurya's Administration

1. **The Central Government.** The constituents of Central Government were the King, the Council of Ministers and the high officials. The King possessed the supreme authority. He was the fountain-head of all civil and military administration. He led a splendid life and lived in a spacious place. But he never forgot his duty towards his people. There was a council of ministers to aid and advice the king. Each minister was entrusted with a special department to look after. There were several officials like superintendents or Adyakshas, Amatyas, Rajukas and Pradeshilaks to help the king and the ministers in discharging their duties. Their conduct was watched by a class of special official called 'Dharma Mahamtras, who themselves were men of proven honesty and noble character.

2. **Provincial Administration.** The whole Mauryan Empire was divided into four provinces, for the purpose of efficient administration.

- a) ***The Central Province*** had its capital at Pataliputra and was administered by the king himself.
- b) ***The North-west Province*** had its capital at Taxila.
- c) ***The Western Province*** had its capital at Ujjain.
- d) ***The southern Province*** had its capital at Swarnagiri.

All these provinces were administered by governors who were usually of the royal family. The conduct of these governors and other officials was strictly watched by specially appointed spies who reported even the smallest happening in the empire to the king. The Provinces were further divided into districts which were administered by the 'Sthaniks'. The next units of administration were similar to modern tehsils, which were groups of four to ten villages and were administered by the 'Gupas'. The village head was called the 'Gramika'.

3. **Municipal Administration.** There was a special administrative set up for cities like Pataliputra. There was a council of thirty members to look after the administration, which were divided into six boards. Each board consisted of five members to perform its functions which were as follows:

- (1) The first Board looked after the development of craft and industries and fixed the wages of the workers and artisans and helped them in time of need.
- (2) The Second Board was incharge of the foreigners and looked after their comforts. It also provided them whatever they needed and kept a strict vigil on their activities.
- (3) The third Board kept a record of births and deaths for the purpose of efficient administration and proper taxation.
- (4) The Fourth Board was entrusted with the task of regulating trade. It also checked weights and measures used by the traders and punished the offenders.
- (5) The Fifth Board kept supervision on the quality of the manufactured goods.

(6) The Sixth Board was responsible for collecting taxes on the sale of goods.

(4) Income and Expenditure. Land Revenue was the major source of income which varied from 1/4 to 1/6 of the total produce depending on its fertility. The other sources of income were taxes on mines, income from forests, toll-tax, ferry duties and fines etc. This income was used on expenditure in connection with the king and his court, salaries to the armies and officials, construction of roads and hospitals, charity, irrigation, projects etc. In this way, heads of income and expenditure were well regulated.

(5) The Judicial System. The Mauryan kings gave a special interest to the administration of justice and themselves looked it. In the villages justice was dispensed with by the Panchayats while in cities, the cases were decided by the city courts, which were competent to try both the citizens and the officials. The cases against the decisions of the local courts were heard by the Provincial Courts, while the king was the highest court of appeal. He heard appeals against the Provincial Courts. Punishments were severe. Fines, flogging and chopping of hands etc. were common while in extreme cases death sentence was also awarded. Ashoka made these punishments somewhat lenient. The judicial system was so efficient that offences like theft were very rare. In this connection Megasthenes writes that average daily theft in Pataliputra with a population of about 6, 00,000 did not exceed eight pounds.

(6) Works of Public Utility. Whatever projects were undertaken by the Mauryan rulers, they were aimed at promoting the public welfare. Dividing the empire in small units, introduction of efficient judicial system, awarding severe punishments to offenders, setting spies on dishonest functionaries and appointment of Dharma Mahamatras by Ashoka are evidence of their desire to promote the public welfare and to protect their interests. They also constructed canals and dug tanks of irrigation, constructed roads for the development of trade and planted trees on either side of the roads.

(7) The Military Administration. Chandragupta kept a big army, which included 6, 00, 000 foot soldiers, 3, 000 cavalry men, 9,000 elephants and 8,000 chariots. Each elephant and chariot was manned by three or four soldiers respectively. In this way, his army was about 7, 00,000 strong. They were given cash salaries. Only men of tested bravery and patience were recruited as soldiers. The king was the commander –in-chief of his armies, who led them in war. There was also a separate department of thirty members for the administration of army. This department was divided into six Boards which looked after the functions of (1) Admiralty (2) Transport and Supplies; (3) Infantry; (4) Cavalry; (5) Chariots and (6) Elephants. The different wings of the Mauryan army were well-equipped with latest weapons.

What are the main sources of history of the Mauryas? Write a note on each of the source.

The following are the sources of history which gave us information about the Mauryan period.

1. **Account of Megasthenes**: The chief source of history of the Mauryan Age is Accounts of Megasthenes i.e. the book named Indica. Although the book is not available in full but some parts of it are found in some books of Greece. Megasthenes throws light on the following features of India:

- (i) There was no check on the emperor of the Mauryan age. He was the chief of the army and the judiciary.
- (ii) Patliputra was the capital of the Mauryan Empire. The administration of the State was done by six councils.
- (iii) The subjects were divided into seven castes. The people of every caste were occupied in special trades.

2. **Kautilya's Arthashastra**: Kautilya (Chanakya) was the mentor and Prime minister of Emperor Chandragupta. He composed a great book the Arthashastra. The book is a historical account. He has described the principles of administration in this book. He writes:

- (i) The king should be a great warrior. He should be aware of enemies like anger, vanity, greed, flattery, luxury and carnal desires for dispensing justice.
- (ii) The King should seek the advice of his advisers for effective administration
- (iii) The king should keep in view the welfare of the people. There should not be dearth of eatables in the country. All these things are visible in the Mauryan age.

3. **Mudrarakshsa**: 'Mudrarakshsa' also throws light on the life of the Mauryans. It is a historical play, which was composed in the 15th century. The famous writer of the Gupta period, Vishakhadatta wrote it. The book tells how Chandragupta put an end to Nanda dynasty, how he established his empire with the help of Chanakya and how he made friendship with Porus. The 'Mudrarakshsa' also tells us about the caste of Chandragupta Maurya.

4. **Puranas**: The Puranas are also a rich repository of information. They tell us that the rulers of Nanda dynasty were Sudras. Chanakya ended them and put Chandragupta on the throne.

5. **Jain and Buddhist Traditions**: The Jain and Buddhist literatures have also given us a glimpse into the Mauryan Empire. The 'Mahavams', the 'Deepvams' and the 'Mahabodhivams' can be mentioned in this regard. The 'Kalpsutra' of the Jains is also noteworthy. This book tells that Chandragupta Maurya had become a follower of the Jainism in the last years of his life. The Buddhist scriptures tell that Ashoka was very cruel before the adoption of the Buddhism. But, later, he became a benevolent king. The Buddhist literature tells us that Ashoka had summoned the third Buddhist Council.

6. **Inscriptions**: In addition, there are inscriptions which give us information of that age. Ashoka made inscriptions on pillars, stones and in caves. They impart information regarding the

administration, religious policy, education system and character of Ashoka. The Rudradaman and Junagarh inscriptions tell that the empire of Chandragupta Maurya was extended in the south also.

7. **Other Sources** – Coins: in addition, the coins also give us a historical background of the Mauryan Empire.

Who was Chandragupta Maurya? How did he establish the Mauryan Empire?

Early life: Chandragupta Maurya was the founder of Mauryan dynasty in India. He seemed to have belonged to an ordinary family. According to the Brahmanical tradition he was born of Maura, a sudra woman, and that is why, he was called a Maurya. But according to the Buddhist tradition he belonged to a Kshatriya clan called Mauryas living in the Neplese terai. He got his education under the guidance of Chanakya, and with his organized a vast military.

Conquests: The chief conquests of Chandragupta Maurya were as under:

1. **Conquest of Punjab:** Punjab was ruled by the Greeks in those days. Philip was working as the representative of Alexander there. He was murdered in 325 B.C., and it caused dissension and confusion in the state. Chandragupta, with the help of Chanakya drove out the Greeks from Punjab and annexed it to his empire.

2. **Consquest of North-Western India:** The next territory that became Chandragupta's target was North-Western India. Soon he conquered and occupied it.

3. **Conquest of Magadha:** Magadha was the most powerful state in northern India. It was ruled by the Nandas who had 6 lakh infantry, 10,000 cavalry, 2000 chariots each, led by four horses and 3000 elephants. Chandragupta along with Chanakya declared a war against the Nandas and killed the king Ghananand and his family. This made Chandragupta the indsiputed master of the northern Inida. So immediately after the conquest of Magadha, he occupied the throne in 324 B.C.

4. **Conquest of Bengal:** Chandragupta now advanced towards Bengal and soon he was successful in capturing it.

5. **War against Seleucus:** Seleucus was the General of Alexander. After Alexander's death, he wanted to recover all those Indian provinces, which Alexander had conquered. In 305 B.C., he had to fight a war against Chandragupta in which Chandragupta came out victorious and Seleucus had to sign a treaty with him.

6. **Other Conquests:** Besides the above-mentioned conquests, Chandragupta also conquered the territories of Mysore and Saurashtra.

Character and Achievements of Chandra Maurya

Character of Chandragupta Maurya. Chandragupta Maurya was the first historical emperor of India. Some of the chief qualities of his character are given below:

1. **Fond of Hunting.** Chandragupta was fond of hunting. Forests were especially reserved for him where the king could go for hunting. Common men were not allowed to poach in these forests. During hunting, his escorts were mainly women warriors. He always took special interest in chariot race, horse race and animals fights.

2. **Lover of Beauty and Luxury.** Chandragupta was a great lover of beauty and luxury. His capital-city of Pataliputra was a beautiful city. His own palace was unique in beauty and spaciousness. There were clusters of trees, lakes and fountains etc. attached to it. He lived in style and led a life full of luxury.

3. **A Great Diplomat.** Chandragupta was a great diplomat. His qualities as a diplomat are revealed in his successful maneuvering in winning over friendship of Chanakya and the confidence of the Punjab chiefs and to capture the throne of Magadha with their help. Thus eventually he became the emperor of India. All these achievements clearly prove that he was a great diplomat.

4. **A Just King.** Chandraghupta Maurya was a just king. There were several courts to give justice to the people. Deterrent punishments were awarded to the criminals so that the crimes were rare. There was a secret force to help in the detection of crime.

5. **A Benevolent Despot.** Chandragupta was a benevolent despot. He was the foundation head of all powers. The punishments were heavy. Taxes were numerous. The administration was harsh. But the king himself was not cruel. He had taken all these measures for the welfare of his subjects for maintaining peace and order. Chandragupta was a kind and generous king and he never bothered even for his own comfort in his resolve to provide all comforts to his people. He was a despot who always looked to the welfare of his subjects.

Achievements of Chandragupta Mauray. Chandragupta was a great, able, brave, courageous and warlike king. He occupied a high place in Indian history. He was a great nation-builder. He was the first to found in India a united, strong and mighty empire. He is usually considered as the first historical emperor of India. He drove the alien invaders out of the country and introduced a new and an efficient system of government. He was undoubtedly the mightiest ruler of his time and one of the most lustrous stars in the firmament of monarchy.

1. **As a Conquer.** Chandragupta was a great conqueror. Though born in a poor family, he rose by dint of his courage to found a strong and extensive empire. He brought to an end the vestiges of the foreign rule. A wretched person as he was, derived out of Magadha, he was so successful as to become the first emperor of the great Indian empire. His empire extended from Brahmaputra to the far south.

2. **As an Administrator**. Chandragupta was not only a great conqueror and a diplomat but he was also an efficient and able administrator. He not only ruled a vast empire but also administered it well.

ASHOKA THE GREAT

Ashoka's Accession and his Early Rule:

Ashoka was the third and the most popular of the Mauryan kings. He was born in about 302 B.C. During his father's reign (Bindusara's reign) he served as the governor of Taxila and Ujjain and had thus got enough experience of administration. He succeeded to the throne after his father's death in 273 B.C.

Extent of Ashoka's Empire

Ashoka's empire was a very vast one. It extended from the Brahmaputra in the east to the Hindukush in the north-west and the Arabian Sea in the west and from the Himalayas in the north to river Pennar in the south. Some portions of Nepal and Kashmir also formed a part of Ashoka's empire. Outside India, it included the provinces of Kabul, Herat and Kandhar. It was thus the biggest empire in ancient India.

Ashoka's Dharma of Dhamma

Though Ashoka himself followed Buddhism, he preached only good things of human conduct. His 'Dhamma', which is the Prakrit form of the Sanskrit word 'Dharma' was not dogmatic but a set of moral principles.

Main Principles of Ashoka's Dhamma

1. **Respect of Elders** – In one of his edicts, Ashoka says obedience must be tendered to the father and the mother. In the same way, the student must show respect to the teacher.
2. **Proper Treatment of Younger** – Elders, superior and officers should be polite and kind to their youngers, inferiors and subordinates.
3. **Ahimsa** – Ashoka not only forbade the slaughter of animals but himself gave up hunting and flesh-eating.
4. **Tolerance** – In one of his edicts, Ashoka says there should not be honour to one's own sect or condemnation of another sect. Other sects should also be honoured.
5. **Truthfulness** – A man should speak the truth at all times. It is better than various religious ceremonies.
6. **Charity** – One should give education to the illiterate, money to the poor and the knowledge of Dhamma to everyone.
7. **Pure Life** – Ashoka favoured a pure and simple life. Anger, cruelty, pride and jealousy are great sins.

Thus Ashoka's Dhamma consisted of principles which were common to all religions.

Ashoka's Measures to spread Dhamma (or Buddhism)

Ashoka adopted the following measures to spread his Dhamma or Buddhism:

1. He himself set an example before his people. He himself gave up hunting and taking of meat.
2. He engraved the principles of his Dhamma on rocks and pillars so that all should read them carefully.
3. He used Pali, the language of the people, to carry his message in all corners of his empire.
4. He directed his officers to follow these principles and preach his religion among the common people.
5. He appointed Dhamma Mahamatras whose duty was to improve the general life of his people.
6. Ashoka himself toured his empire and visited holy places.
7. He sent monks to preach the religion of the Buddha to far-off countries. His own son, Mahendra, and his daughter, Sanghamitra, went to Sri Lanka.
8. Ashoka called the Third Buddhist Council at Pataliputra to remove differences among different groups of the Buddhists.

The Kalinga War, 261 B.C.

The Kalinga War was the important event of Ashoka's reign, which was fought in the third year of his accession. Ashoka had inherited a vast kingdom but did not include the Kalinga region on the Bay of Bengal and between the rivers Godavari and Mahanadi. Ashoka marched at Kalinga as the head of huge army in 261 B.C. He could succeed only after a fierce war and unlimited carnage. No less than hundred thousand people were killed, more than hundred thousand were taken prisoners and several millions died of disease and epidemic.

Results or Impact of the Kalinga War:

Such a large scale carnage and bloodshed had deep effect on Ashoka's mind and he started hating himself. Smitten by conscience he changed his course of life. Now he was a totally changed person and he also changed his administrative principles. *"The Kalinga war proved a turning point in the career of Ashoka and produced results of far reaching consequences."*

1. Now he adopted a policy of Dharmavijaya instead of the policy of imperialist expansions and conquests. Instead of conquering other territories he embarked upon the mission of leading people to the path of righteousness which became the very breath of his life.
2. He also became inclined towards Buddhism. Probably without this war, he would have never been a Buddhist nor staunch preacher of the Buddha's ideals.

3. Before the Kalinga War, Ashoka like his father and grandfather was fond of hunting, flesh-eating and other pleasures of worldly life. But this war made him devote his mind and energies towards the well-beings of his own people. Now he spent his time in mitigation of the sufferings of his people and their service became the chief aim of his life.
4. The Kalinga War had also some ill-effects on his state policy. It harmed his martial skill. The large Mauryan army without any wars or conquests became indolent and weak.
5. The Kalinga War expanded his empire still further and now it included the whole of Northern India, the Southern India upto Mysore, Nepal, parts of Kashmir and outside the territorial limits of India, it extended upto Kabul, Herat, Baluchistan and Bactria.

How did Ashoka promote Buddhism?

When Ashoka ascended the throne he had no interest in Buddhism. He lived a life of pleasure like his father and grandfather. But the Kalinga War proved a turning point in his life and he sought refuge in the teachings of the Buddha. Influenced by the magnetic personality of Upagupta, he also became a member of the Buddhist Sangha and devised various measures to spread his faith.

Measures for the Spread of Buddhism:

Ashoka dedicated his whole life, time, energy and money – to the cause of spreading the message of Buddha and took the following measures in this direction:

1. **Personal Ideals:** The first thing that Ashoka did was to personally set an example by following the ideals that he preached to his people. He gave up eating meat, hunting, watching amorous dances etc. and began to lead a simple, religious life.
2. **Adopting Buddhism as the State Religion:** Ashoka also declared Buddhism as the state religion. In those days, wise people believed that a benevolent king was the god incarnate, thus they did not hesitate in following his religion as well.
3. **Administrative Measures:** Ashoka geared his whole administrative machinery towards this end of spreading the religion of Buddha. He directed all his officers and other functionaries to spread that religion.
4. **Wide Publicity:** Ashoka got the tenets of Buddhism inscribed on pillars and rocks. He also got the pillars erected on popular highways so that the travelers might read and follow the ideals.
5. **Pilgrimages to the Holy Buddhist Places:** Ashoka visited all the holy places associated with Buddha's life. He visited Gaya where Buddha attained knowledge, the Lumbini Garden, where he was born, Sarnath where he gave his first discourse; Kapilvastu, where he reunited the world and Kushinagara where he attained Nirvana.

6. **Dharma Mahamatras:** Ashoka appointed a class of officials called Dharma Mahamatras, whose duty was to spread teachings of Buddhism. These Mahamatras did a lot of work in making Buddhism popular.
7. **Construction of Viharas or Monasteries:** Several monasteries or Viharas were built for the Buddhist monks, Bhikshus, which proved quite helpful in propagating the Buddhism faith. The Buddhist scholars were helped generously out of the state exchequer.
8. **Work of Public Utility:** As a true followers of Buddhism, Asoka build roads and planted shady trees on either on either side of the roads, dug wells and built hospitals for both men and animals. All these works made both Asoka and Buddhism popular.
9. **Third Buddhist Conference:** To sort out differences that had crept among the followers of the Buddha, Ashoka summoned conference of the Buddhist scholars in 252 B.C.at Pataliputra. The conference was held for 19 months and succeeded to a great extent in resolving differences among the Buddhist scholars. It also brought about an awakening among the Buddhist Bhikshus.
10. **Despatching Buddhist Scholars to other Countries:** Ashoka sent Buddhist missionaries not only to different parts of India but to other countries as well. These missionaries carried the message of Buddha to Myanmar, Sri Lanka, the Himalyan Kingdom, Egypt, Syria, Macedonia and Greece etc.

Ashoka's concept of Dhamma:

Ashoka wanted to raise the moral tone of his people. So he picked up some of the great principles of Ethics from various religions and these principles collectively styled as Dhamma were as under:

1. **Respect to Elders:** Ashoka held that one should respect one's parents, elders, superiors and teachers.
2. **Proper Treatment of Youngsters:** The second cardinal principles of Ashoka's Dhamma was that the superiors should be kind and polite to their dependants, inferiours, servants and slaves etc. And the rich should help the poor.
3. **Ahimsa:** Ahimsa formed an important doctrinal element of Ashoka's Dhamma. According to it, none should slaughter animals and injure the feeling of any human beings.
4. **Life free from Sins:** Man should lead a life free from sin. He should keep himself away from ail sinful acts like jealousy, anger, vanity and lying etc.
5. **Charity:** Another important principle of Dhamma was charity. But the true charity was to impart knowledge of principles of Dhamma to others.

6. **Truthfulness:** Ashoka's Dhamma also demanded that people should always speak the truth even at the cost of material loss.
7. **Toleration:** Ashoka considered all religions as equals. So we must give our regard to all the religions.
8. **True Ceremonials:** A man, according to Ashoka's Dhamma should lead a highly moral life and perform all kinds of noble deeds. In fact, these are the true customs.
9. **Theory of Karma:** According to Ashoka, everyone has to bear the fruit of his past action. So one must always do noble deeds.
10. **Self-analysis:** Ashoka emphasized that all should look into themselves in order to become morally high. This is the way that relieves man of all his bad habits.

Discuss the causes of the decline of the Maurya Empire:

Following were the causes responsible for the decline of Mauryan Empire:

1. **Weak Successors:** Ashoka's successors such as Dashratha, Sampati, Brihadratha were weak, and were incapable of holding the reins of such a vast empire.
2. **Vast Empire:** The Mauryan Empire under Ashoka became very vast and could be controlled only by such capable rulers as Ashoka and Chandragupta Maurya. Their weak successors lacked their qualities and thus failed to hold the empire together.
3. **The Law of Succession:** There was no law of succession among the Mauryans. And the death of a ruler signaled the war of succession. Even Ashoka succeeded to the throne only after the slaughter of his 99 brothers. These civil wars eroded the power of Mauryas.
4. **Internal Revolts:** The death of Ashoka marked the beginning of innumerable rebellions. Many provincial governors declared their independence. Consequently, Mauryan Empire began to fall like a house of cards.
5. **Lack of Finance:** Money holds a key to the efficient administration. But Ashoka emptied the exchequer for the spread of Buddhism and works of public welfare. Consequently, it affected the efficiency of administration and failed to crush the revolts.
6. **Atrocities by the Officials:** The Mauryan administration in far-flung areas was below the mark. The state officials committed atrocities on the people. These atrocities gave rise to revolts which shattered the Mauryan Empire completely.
7. **Lack of Military Strength:** After the war of Kalinga, Ashoka adopted the policy of non-violence and gave up war altogether. So he paid little attention to strengthen his military power. Consequently; the Mauryan Empire began to weaken militarily.

8. **Foreign Invasion:** The foreigners, too, took advantage of the declining Mauryan Empire and led expeditions against the weak Mauryan rulers. This particularly caused the fall of Mauryan Empire.
9. **Enmity of the Brahmanas:** Ashoka, by embracing Buddhism, gave a direct affront to the Brahmanas who developed an innate hatred for the Mauryas and their empire. So immediately after the death of Ashoka they began to work for the destruction of the Mauryan Empire and succeeded eventually in overthrowing it.

What is Arthashastra? What significance does it have in the history of India?

Arthashastra that deals with various aspects of the arts of government is a huge work of great historical significance. It was compiled by Kautilya, a great scholar and prime-minister at the court of Chandragupta Maurya. He has described the principles of administration in his book. This work not only provides us information about the Mauryan period but throws ample light on the administration and other achievements of Chandragupta Maurya. It also tells us about the society in the Mauryan period. The most remarkable thing about this book is that the principles of administration described in it. It still serves as guiding principles for the modern politicians.

Concepts

1. **Dhamma:** Emperor Ashoka presented the practical form of Buddhist principles for the moral uplift of the people. In history it is known as Dhamma or "The Law of Piety."
2. **Rajuka:** Rajukas were a type of officials appointed by Ashoka. They could punish as well as reward the people.
3. **Bherigosha:** Bherigosha means the declaration of war and conquering people by wars.
4. **Shramanas:** Shramanas was sect in the time of Ashoka.
5. **Dharamam**-hamatra: Dharamam-hamatras were the officials appointed by Ashoka for the propagation of religion.
6. **Dharmapravartika:** Dharmapravartika was a name given to king. This name was given by Kautilya. He called the king Dharmapravartika or the organizer of the social order.
7. **Tirthas:** Senior officials were called Tirthas during the rule of the Mauryas. This category included ministers, priests, commanders-in-chief and crown princes. They were paid in cash.
8. **Pana:** Pana was a kind of silver coin which weighed three –fourth of tolas. All higher officials received as much as 48 thousand panas while the junior officials were given 60 panas.
9. **Samaharta:** Samahara was the official who assessed taxes in the Mauryan period.
10. **Sannidhata:** Sannidhata was the chief custodian of the state treasury and store house during the rule of the Mauryas.

