
UNIT 16 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL SYSTEMS IN NORTH INDIA

Structure

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16.1 INTRODUCTION

The study of administration in early India has to be understood in terms of the nature of polity and politics. While it is true that early Indian states were mostly monarchical, early Indian polity was not static, but experienced many changes. There is indeed a rich historiography of early Indian polity and administration. The study of the administration in India in the past was initiated, like many other facets of Indian history, by western—more precisely, colonial historians. In this historiography India was perceived as a country steeped in religious and philosophical speculations and paid little attention to mundane matters, including power and statecraft. Later, the historians of the Utilitarian school derided early Indians as incapable of political activities and experiences. The polity that existed before the colonial times was characterised by the concepts of Oriental Despotism and the eternal village community. Both the concepts denied any possibilities of change in political and administrative system. A turning point was the discovery of Kautilya's *Arthashastra* in 1905 by R. Shamasastri. The availability of the edited Sanskrit text and its English translation in the next ten years clearly demonstrated that early Indian thinkers considerably contributed to political ideas. This led to the publication of a plethora of studies on early Indian statecraft and administrative systems. Many of these studies were penned by nationalist historians who often argued that many of the modern political ideas were anticipated by ancient Indian thinkers. Thus the prevalence of republics, democratic polity, constitutional monarchy and even a welfare state was argued for in this kind of historiography. From the 1950s onwards Marxist historiography highlighted that early Indian polity and administration was neither static nor changeless, but had a dynamic character which were further interlinked with existing society, economy and culture. It was also pointed out that administrative systems in early India were not mere applications of the ideals laid down in the theoretical treatises like the *Arthashastra* and the *Dharmasastras*. In-depth studies of inscriptions and various types of literary sources suggest that administrative systems did not always conform to political precepts which are recommended by law-givers. The recent decades have paid particular attention to the formation of the state in early

India. The very search for a 'process' implies that the polity in early India underwent several phases or stages. The emergence of the state from the pre-state situation was not merely a political event, but was associated with major changes in society, economy and culture. The advent of a state is generally connected with the growing social complexities and a sharper social differentiation than one finds in a pre-state situation. In this unit you will be introduced to the continuity and changes in the administrative system in North India from the Vedic times to the post-600 A.D. period.

16.2 ADMINISTRATION IN THE VEDIC TIMES

The earliest traces of a complex administrative system in India may go back to the days of the mature Harappan civilisation (c. 2600-1750 BC). Though the nature of the Harappan state cannot be grasped at the present state of our knowledge (because the Harappan script is yet to be deciphered), there is little doubt that an impressive authority held its sway over the far-flung Harappan civilisation. But for this administrative authority it would have been impossible to maintain for several centuries the very high standard of civic life, urban layout, a standardised weights and measures system and some uniformity in its material culture.

The earliest literary creation of India, the *Rigveda* (c. 1500-1000 BC) offers only meagre information on political life. The term *Raja*, generally translated as king, is already encountered in the *Rigveda*. Recent studies of the *Rigveda* however do not accept that the *Rigvedic raja* was a full-fledged monarch. Typical features of a mature monarchy, like a well defined territory, a subject population, dynastic succession, a strong army and a resource base, are conspicuous by their absence in the *Rigveda*. The *Rigvedic raja* did not bear usual epithets of an ancient Indian king, such as *Narapati* (lord of men), *Bhupati* (lord of the soil), *Adhipati* (overlord), *Mahipati* (lord of the earth). He was known as *Gopati* (lord of cattle), *Vispati* (leader of the clan or tribe), etc. A perusal of the *Rigveda* shows that the *Rigvedic* society was not a fully sedentary one, but was a combination of pastoral and agricultural pursuits. The *Rigvedic raja* did not rule over a fixed territory but was the chief of a clan. Thus the most famous political personality of the *Rigveda*, Sudas, was a *Raja* of the Tritsu-Bharata clan but he was not known to have been a ruler over a definite territorial unit. The *Rigvedic raja* seems to have corresponded more to a chieftain of a clan than the head of a monarchical state. He was the leader of the clan regularly participating in wars which were called *Gavishti* (literally search for cattle). Thus the wars in the *Rigveda* were fought largely for cattle but not for territorial expansion, a feature typically associated with the monarchical state. Under such circumstances it is unlikely to find any reference in the *Rigveda* to the administration of a kingdom.

At this juncture one comes across in the later *Vedic* texts (c. 1000-500 BC), the earliest possible references to some assistants of the *Vedic* ruler. They are described in the later *Vedic* texts as the 'bejewelled ones' (*Ratnins*). Among them were the leader of the fighting force (*Senapati*), the collector of a share or one who apportioned the share (*Bhagadugha*), the keeper of the dice (*Akshavapa*) and such like. These definitely do not signify regular administrative offices, but speak of growing complexities in the Vedic polity that required the presence of a few functionaries serving the ruler. The later Vedic literature also refers to the earliest known collection of an impost, or a levy probably on agricultural produce (*Bali*). But this does not imply either a regular revenue demand or the prevalence of a revenue collection

machinery. The rate of the *Bali* was not a fixed one and therefore there is little possibility of the assessment of the leviable agrarian revenue. In view of the uncertainties of the collection of *Bali* it was perhaps not possible for the Vedic ruler to raise resources sufficient to maintain a regular army. In view of the possible absence of a regular army and also of a revenue system the Vedic polity was at best a proto-state, on the threshold of the complex state system. But a full-fledged territorial state polity had not probably emerged yet. Moreover, the Vedic literature highlights the importance of three popular assemblies, the *Vidatha*, the *Sabha* and the *Samiti*. It is difficult to ascertain the exact nature of these three assemblies. However the *vidatha* seems to have been a more primitive assembly than the *sabha* and the *smiti* because it combined in it political and cultural functions and was also involved in the distribution of the available social wealth among the members of Rigvedic clans (*Jana, Gana, Vish*). The *Sabha* and the *Samiti* were attended by the members of the clan and by the Vedic Raja as well whose power seems to have been to some extent checked by these popular assemblies. Though the *Sabha* and the *Samiti* faded out in the subsequent periods with the emergence of monarchical polity, the possibilities of popular participation in polity continued in the non-monarchical organisations (*Ganasangha/ganarajya*) of the post Vedic period.

16.3 ADMINISTRATION DURING THE AGE OF THE JANAPADAS

The period from c. 600 BC to 325 BC marks the advent of territorial states (*Janapada/Mahajanapada*) in North India. Most of these *Mahajanapadas* were kingdoms (*Rajya*) and a few of them non-monarchical oligarchies or chiefdoms (*Ganasanghas/Ganarajya*). The polity in a monarchical set up undoubtedly revolves around the king who ascended the throne by virtue of being born in a particular ruling house (dynastic succession). The king rules over a subject population (*Praja*) over a specific territory (*Janapada*, literally meaning a territory where a people or *Jana* first set its feet or *Pada*). This is surely a much more complex and impersonal system than the chiefdom where the chief of the clan is often connected with other members of the clan by kinship ties. The political history of North India during the 6th and 5th centuries B.C. demonstrates the presence of a few large monarchical powers which commanded formidable armies and subjugated their lesser contemporaries. One can, therefore, reasonably infer the presence of a regular army in the monarchical polity. It is also no accident that the ruler would be assisted by regular administrators in the management of the state. The Buddhist canonical literature informs us about two very efficient and high ranking functionaries of Magadha Mahajanapada, namely *Vassakara* and *Sunidha* who served under the powerful king Ajatasatru. That his father Bimbisara had already been served by many rural level administrators would be evident from the reference to *Gramanis* appointed by Bimbisara.

On the other hand the non-monarchical Sakya clan obviously had no single ruler but 7707 Rajas who were not kings but Kshatriya chiefs. Matters of administration and politics were openly discussed and debated in the *Ganarajya* of Vajji in the assembly hall (*Santhagara*). Pali canonical texts tell us about the seven stages of judicial administration in the same *Ganarajya*. The *Ganarajyas* also had a commander of the fighting force (*Senapati*). Whether the non-monarchical clan had the sufficient resources to maintain a large and strong army like the monarchies is difficult to ascertain.

The importance of administrators and state functionaries was for the first time clearly recognised by the *Arthashastra*, a celebrated ancient Indian treatise on statecraft. The *Arthashastra* laid down that the state was composed of seven elements (*Prakriti*). The most important element was of course the ruler (*Svami*) followed by second element, *Amatya*. All political theorists of ancient India uniformly recognised that only the ruler or the king was more important than the *Amatya* which stands for an administrator, an officer of the state. Kautilya explains the indispensability of the *Amatya* in this way: ‘Rulership is possible only with assistance; a single wheel cannot move a vehicle’. It clearly implies that though the king was certainly the head of the monarchical state he could not rule single-handed without the assistance of administrative officers or *Amatyas*. Most theoretical treatises would consider the three terms – *Amatya*, *Mantri* (minister) and *Sachiva* (secretary)— as interchangeable or synonymous terms. The *Arthashastra* presents a different opinion. According to it, an *Amatya* is to be appointed on the basis of the performance of a candidate in a test of deception (*upadha*). There are four such tests of deception relating to money, fear, lust and righteousness. A person for example will be placed in the department of Finance if he is not allured by the deception in money matters. Thus the appointment of *Amatya* to a particular administrative department is based on his performance in a given test. The *Arthashastra* further recommends that the person who passes all four tests of deception is obviously a more capable administrator and therefore he should be appointed as a minister (*Mantri*). Thus the *Arthashastra* clearly distinguished a minister from an ordinary administrator. In the *Arthashastra* we also find the first attempt at the gradation of the administrative offices on the basis of a differentiated salary structure. The highest officers of the realm are entitled to a salary of 48,000 panas while the lowest ranked officials were paid 720 panas per year. In another list of officials Kautilya mentions 18 highest administrators of the realm.

16.4 ADMINISTRATION OF THE MAURYANS

A much clear image of the administrative system in a large monarchical state emerges with the coming of the Maurya Empire (c. 325 to 187 BC). At the height of its power the Maurya empire embraced a vast territory from Afghanistan in the North West to Karnataka in the South and from Kathiawar in the West to Orissa (if not North Bengal also) in the East. It was indeed a nearly pan Indian empire with its capital at Pataliputra (Patna). The availability of diverse source materials has enabled historians to understand the Mauryan administration system. The Greek accounts of Megasthenes (and its summary and quotations by later Greek writers), Asoka’s edicts and the *Arthashastra* throw light on the Mauryan administration. The possibility of a central and provincial (and also locality level) administrative organisation is seen for the first time in the Maurya realm. The pivotal feature of the entire Maurya administration and specially central administration was the Maurya emperor himself. The central administrative machinery seems to have been operative in what were ‘metropolitan’ (Magadha) and ‘core areas’ (located in the Ganga Plains). In spite of their mastery over almost the entire sub-continent the Maurya rulers used the rather simple title *Raja* (literally translated as malka and basileos respectively in the Aramaic and Greek edicts of Asoka.) Megasthenese, the Greek ambassador to the court of Chandragupta Maurya, impresses upon us the personal zeal of the emperor in administration and his very busy daily schedule. This has a close correspondence to Asoka’s personal efforts and striving (*Pakama/Prakrama*) to disburse matters of statecraft (*Athakamma*). Kautilya places before the ruler the lofty ideal of

ensuring happiness of his subjects (*Prajasukha*), and not pursuing his own. What is good for the subjects is, according to the *Arthashastra*, beneficial for the ruler. An even loftier ideal of paternalistic rulership was announced by Asoka who declared that all men were his children (*Sabe munise paja mama*). Asoka also considered that all his efforts were in a way a repayment of his debt to his subjects.

The Maurya ruler was indeed the head of all executive functions of the realm. All principle functionaries of the government were directly appointed by and responsible to the Maurya emperor. Most of the early Indian theoretical texts considered the king to be only an upholder of the established norms, customs and law (*Dharmaprayatana*), but not a source of law. The *Arthashastra* seems to have departed from this tradition as it recognised the royal proclamation (*Rajasasana*) to be an effective source of law. Significantly enough, Asoka's edicts as administrative promulgations form a close parallel to the *Rajasasana* of Kautilya.

Though the *Arthashastra* certainly recommended the appointment of full-fledged ministers, no edict of Asoka categorically mentioned any Maurya minister. Megasthenes informs us of the 'the counsellors and assessors' from among whom the highest officers of the realm were recruited. One may guess but cannot prove that the counsellors – different from assessors – could have been the Maurya ministers. In two edicts of Asoka are mentioned the *Parisa*. The term *Parisa* is often taken to mean *Mantriparisad* or a council of ministers. The *Arthashastra* differentiates a member of the *Mantriparisad* from a full-fledged *Mantri* since the former receives 12000 *Panas* as salary against the salary of 48000 for a *Mantrin*. In other words a member of the ministerial council was given a rank inferior to that of a full-fledged minister. Asoka instructs his messengers to inform him at any time in case there was a difference of opinion among the members of the *Parishad*. It is, therefore, reasonable to infer that the *Parishad* was a deliberative body, but in which the presence of Maurya emperor was not mandatory. It is unlikely that the *Parishad* had any executive authority. The *Arthashastra* recognised that the actual burden of the administration should be assigned to a large number of departmental heads (*Adayaksha*). However, the term *Adayaksha* never occurs in Asoka's edicts. The officers under Asoka are termed as *Pulisas/Purushas* (*Rajapurushas*). They were of three different grades; high (*Ukaya*), middle (*Majhima*) and low (*Gevaya*). The highest ranked officers during Asoka's time were known as *Mahamatras*. They were of the following types:

- a) those in charge of frontier areas (*Amata-mahamatra*)
- b) those in charge of the pasture grounds (*Vachabhumika-mahamatra*)
- c) those in charge of women or the inner chamber of the Mauryan palace (*Itihaka-mahamatara*)
- d) those in charge of propagation of Ashoka's *Dhamma* or the Law of Piety (*Dhamma – mahamatra*)

One of the salient features of the Maurya central administration was the army. The Greek accounts narrate that the Maurya army consisted of six lakh soldiers. While this is definitely an exaggerated figure it nevertheless reflects the very large size of the Maurya army by which the Mauryas carved out a very extensive empire. What is evident from the Greek account is the presence of at least four units in the army: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephant forces. Megasthenese reports that the Mauryas maintained a navy by which he probably implied a flotilla of boats on the navigable rivers, but not a full-fledged navy in the modern sense of the term. According to

Megasthenese, administration of the Maurya army was entrusted to six boards each consisting of five members (therefore in all 30 members). No such boards appear in the *Arthashastra* which entrusts the management of infantry, cavalry, chariot and elephant forces to respective *Adhayakshas*. Closely connected to the military administration was an espionage system. The Mauryas were probably the first Indian power to have developed and implemented a regular secret service. Megasthenese spoke eloquently of the trustworthiness of these secret agents. The *Arthashastra* divides the secret agents (*Gudhapurusha*) into two broad categories; the roving (*Sanchara*) and the stationary (*Samstha*) spies who are sub-divided into nine types. The *Arthashastra* recommended the employment of the spies not only to gather secret information but also to eliminate a suspect element, if necessary, by force, fraud and other dubious methods.

It is not difficult to imagine that the maintenance of a large and diverse category of officers and also a sizeable army required the availability of enormous resources. The collection and mobilisation of resources could be ensured by an efficient revenue system. Kautilya recommends the collection of taxes by the *samaharta* (the Collector General of Taxes) from as many as seven heads of revenue:

- 1) fortified urban centres (*Durga*)
- 2) countryside (*Rashtra*)
- 3) mines (*Khani*)
- 4) irrigation projects (*Setu*)
- 5) forests (*Vana*)
- 6) pasture ground (*Vraja*)
- 7) trade routes (*Vanikpatha*)

Of these the most important was of course the taxes from agrarian sector. Megasthenese and other Greek writers corroborate that the peasants had to pay a share of the crops produce and also had to pay a rent. During Asoka's reign at least two agricultural taxes were collected; a *bhaga* or the share (possibly $1/6^{\text{th}}$ or $1/4^{\text{th}}$ of the produce) and *bali*. The significant point that emerges from a perusal of *Arthashastra* and the Greek accounts is that the Mauryan administration probably levied taxes on both the agrarian and the non-agrarian sectors of the economy. The possibility of extracting revenue from animal breeders, forest dwellers, artisans and merchants can not be ruled out. The *Arthashastra* in fact lays down elaborate steps to gather information on the income, expenditure incurred by a family and proposes to estimate the amount of revenue to be derived from each household in an administrative/fiscal area. The *Arthashastra* further advises the ruler to impose extremely harsh revenue measures (*Pranaya*) in case the ruler faces a calamity or emergency. Under such a situation the ruler is recommended to demand high rate of taxes from agriculturists, breeders, artisans, and merchants. If these harsh measures failed to replenish the treasury, the *Arthashastra* frankly advocates a number of dubious and fraudulent measures to fill up the royal treasury.

The Mauryas are to be credited for introducing a provincial system of administration for the first time in Indian history. Inscriptions of Asoka inform us about the existence of four provincial headquarters at Taxila, Ujjaini, Tosali, (near Bhubaneshwar) and Suvarangiri. There were at least four provincial headquarters in four cardinal directions; the administration of provinces was often entrusted to a prince of royal blood, labelled as *Kumara* and *Aryaputra*. Though both the terms denote royal princes

the *Aryaputra* probably is synonymous with the *Aryakumara* in Panini's grammar which explains the term as the heir designate (*Yuvaraja*). The *Aryaputra*, therefore, was possibly of higher rank than an ordinary *Kumara*. *Aryaputra* is mentioned only in the context of Suvarangiri, the headquarters in the Southern sector. The appointment of an *Aryaputra* at Suvarnagiri was possibly due to the recognition of the importance of the Deccan which was rich in mineral resources viz. mines of gold and diamond. The perspective of four provincial headquarters in four cardinal directions probably presents too neat an administrative arrangement. There was indeed another *Kumara* named Samba, probably in charge of Manemadesa (in the central part of MP) as will be evident from an Asokan edict from Panguradiya. The presence of the fifth *Kumara* could signify the existence of more than four provincial divisions. The Kathiawad peninsula was certainly one such provincial division where the governor under Chandragupta was Vaisya Pushyagupta. The same area was governed by Yavanaraja Tushaspha during the reign of Asoka. Tushaspha was possibly of Iranian extraction. Thus in Kathiawad the Mauryas appointed persons outside the royal family – in fact even someone of Iranian origin – as provincial governors. The *Kumaras* though apparently of equal rank did not possibly enjoy equal powers. Two edicts of Asoka from Orissa give instructions that the provincial governor at Taxila and Ujjaiyini could send their own official on tours of inspection (*Anusamyana*) after every five years. The same type of tours were to be sent out from Tosali after every three years not by the *Kumaras* there but by the emperor himself. It would be therefore logical to infer that the provincial governor at Taxila and Ujjaiyini enjoyed more power than their counterpart in ancient Kalinga.

Provinces in the Maurya empire appear to have been further divided into districts which are called *Ahara* and *Janapada* in the Asokan edicts. Megasthenes enlightens us about a class of officers called *Agronomoi* who were in charge of the countryside. They were entrusted with the measurement of land, supervision of irrigation and administration of justice at local level. The Buddhist texts were aware of a type of officers who held the rope for the measurement of land (*Rajjuggahaka-amachcha*). Their function as a settlement officer corresponds to one of the functions of the *Agronomoi*, i.e. the measurement of land. Asoka employed a large number of *Rajjukas* over a vast multitude of dwellers in the countryside. The term *Rajjuka* may have some correspondence to *Rajjuggahaka-amachcha*. Asoka further assigned to them the local level administration of justice. The emperor explicitly expressed his trust on the *Rajjukas*: they were compared with expert nurses, attending to new born babies. In short the *Rajjuka* of Asoka's inscriptions may logically be compared with *Agronomoi* of the Greek accounts and therefore appear to have been an important officer at the district level. Kautiliya prescribes a different scheme of rural level administrative tier. At the top of the tier was the unit called *Sthaniya* consisting of 800 villages. Then came *Dronamukha* of 400 villages; further below stood *Karvatika* of 200 villages and at the lowest level, the *Samgrahana* consisting of 10 villages. One is not sure if and whether this scheme of rural level administrative blocks in a descending order was ever applied in the Mauryan realm.

16.5 ADMINISTRATION IN THE POST-MAURYAN PERIOD

The collapse of the Maurya Empire in c. 187 BC was followed by the emergence of several states and political powers in the sub-continent. Put differently, there was no single paramount political power. In Northern and Western India a few political powers like the Greeks, the Sakas and the Kushanas established their control by

entering the sub-continent through the North Western Border land. A significant aspect of statecraft during this phase was the advent of the monarchical state in peninsular India for the first time. In Northern India, monarchy as a political institution continued uninterrupted, although not bereft of a few new features.

The growing power of the king himself is best illustrated by the use of several grandiose political epithets used by rulers. This was in sharp contrast to the rather simple title *Raja* used by the mighty Maurya emperor. Rulers of this period assumed high sounding titles like *Ekarat* (the sole ruler), *Rajadhiraja* (king of kings), *Sarvalogisvara* (lord of beings), *Mahisvara* (lord of the earth) etc.,. Bactrian Greek rulers for the first time introduced royal portraiture on their coins many of which were in circulation in North Western part of the sub-continent. The visual representation of the ruler on coins was intended to instil a sense of might and right of political authorities over their subjects. What is particularly noticeable is the performance of Vedic sacrifices (*Asvamedha*, *Vajapeya*, *Rajasuya*) by Pushyamitra Sunga and the Satavahana rulers of the Deccan. These Vedic sacrifices were performed to claim enhanced power and glory by a ruler. The distinction from the Maurya practice is once again obvious. As such sacrifices were conspicuous by their absence in the Maurya realm, by performing such Vedic sacrifices the ruler was considered to have been elevated to the position of the divinity and/or as equivalent to a God. The dignity claimed in this case is not based on the concept of divine position or descent of the ruler, but the elevation of the ruler to divine status by the virtue of his performance of sacred sacrifices on auspicious occasions. Some scholars would find in such claims by rulers the element of 'occasional divinity'.

A much stronger claim of the divinity of king is visible from the Kushana period onwards. The Kushana kings regularly used their dynastic epithet, son of God (*Devaputra*). This concept was possibly derived from the Chinese idea of considering the ruler as the son of heaven. An inscription introduces Kushana king Vasishka as a man-god (*Deva Manusha*). An almost parallel thought to this will be clearly evident from the dictum in the *Manusamhita* that even an infant king must not be disobeyed and disrespected, because he is truly a great divinity in human form. The Kushana coins regularly portray the Kushana emperor with a halo behind his head implying his supra-human and supra-mundane position. There were at least five dynastic sanctuaries (*Deva kula*) in the vast Kushana empire. In these *Devakulas* images of the deceased Kushana emperors and that of the reigning Kushana king as well were installed. The Kushana emperors visually projected themselves as venerable deities and established a cult of the emperor. This ideology of divine kingship and the deliberate creation of a political iconography contributed to elevation of the might and power of the Kushana emperor/empire to enormous height. Since the Kushana empire included in it a vast multitude of different ethnic, religious and socio-economic groups, the cult of the emperor made the Kushana king as a cementing factor amidst immense diversities. This in other words helped the Kushanas to integrate an expansive empire.

The *Manusamhita* and the *Santiparva* of the *Mahabharata* also strongly uphold the concept that the foremost duty of the ruler was to render protection to his subjects and to maintain the ideal social order based on the *Varnasramadharmas*. These two texts also recognised that the king was entitled to collect taxes because he provided protection. In this concept may be seen the elements of the contractual theory of kingship or at least the notion of an agreement between the ruler and the ruled to render their respective duties and obligations.

As dynastic succession became increasingly regular, it further contributed to the strength of monarchy. In the Kushana empire, however, can be seen the practice of conjoint rulership comprising the reigning Kushana emperor as the senior ruler and his future heir as the junior co-ruler (e.g. Kanishka and Vashishka, Vashishka and Huvishka, Huvishka and Kanishka II and Huvishka and Vasudeva I). Whether such a system of conjoint rule precluded a struggle for succession cannot be ascertained.

The practice of assigning the bulk of the burden of administration to high ranking functionaries, like the *Amatya*, became quite regular during the period under review. The majority of the theoretical treatises viewed the *Amatya*, the *Mantrin* and the *Sachiva* as interchangeable and synonymous terms, meaning officers of very high rank including the minister. In the Buddhist Jatakas one comes across ministerial families (*Amachchakula*). Does this mean that the *Amatyas* could have been appointed on a hereditary basis and/or from handful number of families of high pedigree? Both the *Manusamhita* and the *Mahabharata* do favour the appointment of ministers from the two upper *Varnas*. The Saka ruler Rudradaman I (A.D. 150) had two important functionaries under him: *Karmasachiva* and *Matisachiva*. While the former certainly denoted executive officer, the latter signified those who possessed intellect. The *matisachiva* being distinct from the *Karmasachiva*, appears to have offered counselling and therefore may be equated with the minister. Many *Amatayas* were also appointed in the core territory of the Satavahana realm in the *Western* and the *Central Deccan*.

The organisation of the army must have been brought under the supervision of the central administration. The four principle units of the army continued as before: infantry, cavalry, chariots and elephant forces. The commander in chief was usually known as the *Senapati*, an epithet Pushyamitra Sunga continued to bear even after he had overthrown the Maurya empire and established the Sunga rule. In the Kushana realm the commander of the army was known as the *Dandanayaka* (danda=army, nayaka=leader/captain). This period also recognised the importance of secret agents for the efficient management of affairs of the state. Spies were compared with the eyes of the ruler. But the theoretical texts of this period do not present the image of a systematic espionage network recommended by Kautilya.

The collection of revenue must have been one of the major concerns of administration especially the central administration. Revenue terms like *Bhaga*, (share of the produce), *Shulka* (tolls and customs) continued from the preceding period. Rudradaman I is said to have collected taxes according to the just (*Yatha*) and prescribed manner without taking recourse to exploitative revenue policy. His treasury is said to have been over-flowing with resources collected in an appropriate manner. During this period one encounters for the first time the regular practice of imposing a cess on salt production (*Lonakhadakam*). This system very frequently occurs in the Satavahana realm. Pliny (death A.D. 79) informs us that the levy on salt manufacture in the region of Mount Oromenus (the Salt Range in Pakistan) far exceeded the taxes levied by the ruler even from a diamond mine. Though the law books emphasise on the collection of appropriate and just taxes, the *Mahabharata* allows significant departure from this norm. The king should increase the burden of taxation slowly and in stages, like the wagon driver gradually piles upon the merchandise on his beast of burden. No less interesting is another recommendation: the king should imperceptibly draw out more and more resources from its subjects like a leech which sucks blood from a person in sleep without waking him up. That the ruler could on certain occasions exact forced labour (*Vishti*) and emergency

taxes (*Pranaya*) is indicated by Junagarh inscription of Rudradaman, although the inscription actually eulogises the ruler for never having afflicted his subjects with these extortionate demands.

In Northern and Western India, the provincial administration was on several occasions entrusted to *Kshatrapas*. The origin of the system goes back to the days of the Achaeminid empire of Iran where Satraps were appointed to look after the provincial administration. Thus Sodasa, a prominent *Kshatrapa* governor was in charge of Mathura, Chastana and his grandson Rudradaman-I both were *Kshatrapas* in charge of Gujarat and Kathiawad and served their Kushana overlords till 150 A.D. When Rudradaman assumed full independence (as a *Mahakshatrapa*) he appointed a provincial governor of the rank of an *Amatya* for Kathiawara region. Kanishka I had two governors at Varanasi named Kharapallana and Banasphara. One was a *Kshatrapa* and the other belonged to the rank of a military commander (*Dandanayaka*). This probably indicates that high ranking military officers in the Kushana empire could also be appointed as civil administrators.

16.6 ADMINISTRATION FROM 300 TO 600 A.D.

The major parts of these three centuries were dominated by two important monarchical powers, the Guptas in North India and the Vakatakas in the Northern and the Central parts of the Deccan. There were several other monarchical powers of lesser prominence in different parts of India. The polity of this period was pre-dominantly monarchical. The last remains of non-monarchical *Ganarajyas* can be seen in the 4th and early 5th centuries A.D. In the early 4th century A.D. the Lichhvis definitely existed as a *Ganarajya* in the region of modern Vaishali; but it subsequently became a part of the Gupta realm and gradually was brought under a monarchical system. Among the powers that paid tribute to Samudragupta and obeyed his order were a few non-monarchical groups in Central India, Malwa and Rajasthan. Since the last quarter of the 4th century A.D. these non-monarchical groups are no longer visible in our sources. They eventually were incorporated in the Gupta empire and came under the fold of monarchical system.

North India was very much under the dominance of the Gupta rulers from c. 320 to about 500 A.D. The central administration definitely revolved around the king. The exalted position of the Gupta emperor is clearly betrayed by the use of grand titles like *Maharajadhiraja*, *Parameshvara* and *Paramabhataraka*. The Vakataka King in contrast to the Gupta king used a much simpler title, *Maharaja*. The portrait of the Gupta emperor on coins as slaying a lion or a tiger projected the image of a valorous and heroic ruler. There is a distinct tendency in the Gupta empire to stress the divinity of kings. Samudragupta was equated with Indra, Varuna, Yama and Kuvera. He was also eulogised as a deity residing in the earth and as an incomprehensible being (*achintyapurusha*). The Gupta rulers themselves being devout Vaishnavas often showed preference for the depiction of the boar (*Varaha*), the incarnation of Vishnu. As Vishnu in his boar incarnation rescued the earth, the Gupta ruler was visually projected as protector of his realm.

It is difficult to find any concrete information whether ministers (*Mantrin*) were appointed either in the Gupta or the Vakataka domains. Virasena Saba held the position of a *Sachiva* under Chandragupta II. As the term *Sachiva* was synonymous with *Mantri*, he could have served the Gupta emperor as a minister. Inscriptions of the Guptas and the Vakataka rulers clearly indicate a major proliferation of

administrative posts. There were palace guards (*Pratihara*) who were headed by the *Maha-pratihara*. The officer named *Vinayasura* announced and escorted visitors to the ruler when the royal court was in session.

The prominent officer in the military department was *Dandanayaka* whom we have already mentioned before. In the Vakataka inscriptions one comes across a more or less similar position of the *Senapati*. A significant feature of military administration of this period was the tendency to introduce different grades in official hierarchy. The Vakataka inscription enumerates in an ascending order, the following positions *Dandanayaka*, *Mahadandanayaka*, *Sarva-dandanayaka* and *Maha-sarvadandanayaka*. Similarly, the *Maha-senapati* was placed above the *Senapati*. A general officer in the infantry, and cavalry units was known as *Bhatasvapati* and the officer looking after a unit of elephant forces was given the epithet of *Katuka*. A completely new administrative position appears from this period onwards. He is the *Sandhivigrahika*, the functionary in charge of peace (*Sandhi*) and war (*Vigraha*). It appears that he was assigned to what may be called the Department of External Affairs. Above the *Sandhivigrahika* there was, as expected, a very senior officer, the *Maha-sandhivigrahika*. Maintenance of law and order seems to have been assigned to the officer called *Danda-pasadhikarna* which denoted the chief of the police force (Basadh seals). Regular and irregular police forces were given the epithets of *Chata* and *Bhata*. Close to the end of the 5th century A.D. an administrative position was introduced in Western India to apprehend thieves (*Chauroddharanika*).

A remarkable feature of the administrative system of this period was the appointment of high ranking officers on a hereditary basis. Harishena, the composer of the Allahabad *Prasasti* was a *Maha-dandanayaka*, his father too had functioned in the same capacity. Virasena too was appointed to the post of *Sachiva* on hereditary consideration. While Chandragupta II had Sikharasvami as a *Kumaramatyia*, his son Prithvishena served the next Gupta emperor Kumargupta I in the same position. No less significant is the practice to appoint the same person in different departments. Thus Harishena held the position of the officer in charge of war and peace, a senior military commander and possibly the officer in charge of the royal kitchen. Information regarding revenue collection and revenue administration is largely gleaned from contemporary inscriptions which offer an image of the increasing number of revenue terms. This may imply that the rulers extracted revenues from more sources than ever before. In addition to the traditional revenue terms like Share (*Bhaga*), enjoyment (*Bhoga*), tax in general (*Kara*), tolls and customs (*Sulka*), many new revenue terms begin to appear in copper plate charters. Thus *Udranga* probably denoted a fixed tax on permanent tenants. Most of the taxes were possibly paid in kind and a similar portion could have been realised in cash (*Hiranya*). A copper plate of 592 A.D. from Kathiawad demonstrates that a cess was levied on the following professions: braziers, cloth makers, armour makers, dyers, weavers and shoe makers. The image of the increasing burden of taxes therefore can hardly be denied. If these belong to the category of customary taxes, the Vakataka records refer to diverse types of irregular and non-customary dues levied on bulls and cows, flowers, grass, hides and charcoal and taxes on fermenting of liquors and salt digging. The Vakataka inscriptions leave little room for doubt about the exaction of various types of forced labour (*Sarva vishti*). This was indeed an extra-economic form of coercion and was possibly exacted from blacksmiths, carpenters, barbers and potters and other similar professional groups. The period under review is marked by a high demand for various types of taxes though the Chinese Pilgrim

Fa-Hsien (travelled in India 399 A.D. to 415 A.D.) spoke of very light burden of taxes. Fa-Hsien, obviously, did not provide an accurate picture in this regard.

The extensive Gupta and Vakataka kingdoms were divided into provinces which were designated either as *Bhukti* or *Desa*. The provincial governor was directly appointed by the Gupta emperor at whose feet the governor is said to have meditated. The expression implies his declared allegiance to the central authority. The provincial governor in charge of a bhukti was generally given the designation, *Uparika*. But from c. 475 A.D. onwards they came to be known as *Uparika Maharaja*, the suffix Maharaja certainly underlines the growing importance of the provincial governor during a phase when the Gupta central authority was waning.

Below the province stood the district known as *Vishaya* and *Ahara*. The district comprised of villages (*grama*) which were the lowest units of administration. However, there were several more tiers of administration between the district and village. These were variously known as the *Vithi*, the *Mandala*, the *Patta*, the *Pathaka* and the *Petha*. The officer in charge of the district was the *Vishayapati* who had his office at the district headquarters (*Vishayadhistanadhikarana*). The district office also maintained records of local land revenue and land transactions. The record keeper was known as the *Pustapala* while the *Kayastha* functioned as the official scribe. The most remarkable feature of the Gupta district and locality level administration was the incorporation of a few non-governmental persons in the local administration. They were the chief merchant of the city, the leader of the caravan traders, chief of the artisans, representatives of the well to do peasants and such like. None of them were salaried officials of the state but the Gupta administrative system accommodated their active presence in local administration. This was a new experiment in local administration never known to have been attempted before in Indian history.

Several scholars have put forth the opinion that the Gupta administrative system was more decentralised than the Mauryan administrative system. The decentralised nature of administration allowed for the active presence of non-governmental personages in local administration. This has been indicated as a marker of the gradual decay of the political control of the central authority. But the interpretation has been contested by others who have pointed out that the Gupta administration ably integrated the local elements in the district level administration. This is seen as further strengthening the fabric of the Gupta empire and helping it last for nearly two centuries and a half.

16.7 ADMINISTRATION IN POST 600 A.D.

A brief overview of the administrative system of the post-Gupta days may be presented here. The period, also called the early medieval phase in Indian history, was marked by the presence of many political powers. There was no single political master over the whole of North India. While this phase witnessed endemic clashes among many powers, these political powers were mostly local or regional powers. There is little trace of non-monarchical elements in the polity. The spread and proliferation of monarchical system has been explained by different scholars who have significantly contributed to the debate on the nature of the early medieval state. The multiplicity of powers is explained by many Marxist historians as an outcome of the disintegration of a centralised state system which gave way to a decentralised and fragmented polity. The parcellisation of the sovereignty of the apex political authority resulted in the emergence of many political pockets which came to be

controlled by local and regional rulers who rose to prominence at the cost of a central and /or an apex political authority. The polity is often characterised as 'feudal', as opposed to the centralised system. This explanation has been strongly contested by many other scholars. Their principal point of explanation is that the proliferation of the powers suggests the unprecedented growth of monarchical polity which actually penetrated into areas that did not experience a territorial state polity before. There was no break down or crisis in administrative or political organisation.

Perhaps the most striking feature in the political organisation of this period was the emergence of the *Samantas*. The term *Samanta* in the *Arthashastra* stood for a neighbouring king, but its connotation changed significantly in the third century A.D. The term began to denote a subordinate ruler or a vassal who served a suzerain. The *Samanta* had already appeared in some inscriptions of the Gupta period. The *Samanta* became a familiar and powerful element in the post-Gupta polity and figured regularly in both textual and epigraphic sources. The relationship between the *Samanta* and his overlord (*Sarvabhauma* or a ruler over many lands, *Sarvabhumi*) is an important facet of the post-Gupta polity. The *Samanta* system is also considered as the hallmark of the feudal polity in the Marxist historiography of early medieval India. It has been suggested that the period from c. 600 to 1200 A.D. experienced a major slump in commerce and circulation of coins. This seems to have created severe problems in ensuring the payment of salary in cash to the officers who therefore had to be paid in terms of land grants in lieu of cash. This kind of service grant gradually made the officer a master of the area granted to him. The service grant not only transferred revenue to the recipient but also transferred many administrative prerogatives to him. This is seen as a process of weakening of the central authority and the consequent rise of the *Samanta*. Literary texts often refer to vassals under the term *Rauta* (*Rajaputra*) and also speak of several ranks among the *Samantas*. The *Samantas* of a higher rank were known as *Mahasamanta* or *Mahasamantadhipatis*, distinct from minor *Samantas* (*Laghusamantas*). The sharp hierarchy in the rank of the *Samanta* is a significant feature of the system. The *Samantas* could have rendered valuable military assistance to the overlords during wars which were incessantly fought during this period. The *Ramacharitam* of Sandhyakaranandin portrays how the Pala ruler of Bengal had to plead the circle of his *Samantas* (*Samantachakra*) to provide help in his bid to recover the lost area of Varendri (north Bengal). The *Samantas* in this case had to be won over by lavish gift of land and other wealth. The account has been interpreted as a marker of the growing importance of the *Samanta* feudatories at the expense of the central authority.

In Kashmir, as Kalhana's *Rajatarangini* bears it out, the ruler was reduced to a puppet as a result of the growing power of the vassals. The vassals in Kashmir were variously known as *Damara*, *Ekanga* and *Tantrin* who became the actual masters of the land. Kalhana lamented that because of the multiplicity of rulers (*Bhurirajake*) the entire administration (*Samastavyavahara*) actually succumbed to anarchy (*Arajaka*).

A large number of royal functionaries regularly appear in copper plate charters. Many of the positions continued from the Gupta period. The importance of the *Sandhivigrahika* seems to have increased during the early medieval times when warlike activities among formidable regional powers were virtually ceaseless. The tendency to appoint ministers on a hereditary basis or from a particular family became a well established practice during this period. Several generations of *Brahmana* ministers served the Pala rulers of Bengal and Bihar and had their

importance recorded in Sanskrit *Prasastis*. The enormous increase in the issuance of landgrants seems to have brought two officers to greater prominence than the previous times. They were the messenger (*Duta*) and the scribe (*Kayastha/Karana*). The messenger often carried the royal order of granting landed property from the political centre to the actual area of property transfer. Princes of royal blood are known to have served in the capacity of a messenger. The *Kayastha* as the scribe was accorded considerable importance in an age when numerous landgrant charters were issued. As a literate person the *Kayastha* had access to official records, especially land revenue records. In course of time the *Kayastha* was often placed in the land revenue department. The rapacious nature of the *Kayastha* in the revenue department was not unknown. Kalhana viewed the *Kayastha* as dangerous as a snake.

Landgrants of this period are replete with revenue terms as these inscriptions often recorded remissions of revenue. Apart from the well established taxes like share (*Bhaga*), enjoyment (*Bhoga*), tax in general (*Kara*), tax in cash (*Hiranya*), tolls and customs (*Sulka*) and ferry dues (*Tara*), many new and non-customary levies were imposed. This definitely caused immense hardship to the common folk. In the landgrant the usual synonym for tax is 'affliction' (*Pida*). That involuntary labour was exacted by rulers will clearly be evident from the widespread practice of the imposition of forced labour (*Vishti*). Besides the regular taxes, all possible local resources were also levied, e.g. mango and mahua (*Amramadhuka*), jackfruit (*Panasa*), salt (*Lavana*), betel and coconut (*Guvaka-narikela*), fish and tortoise (*Matsya-kacchhapa*)

The earlier practice of dividing the realm into provincial units (*Bhukti, Desa*, etc.) continued in North India. The locality level administrative units were districts (*Vishaya*), circles (*Mandala*) and *Vithi*. The possibilities of participation of non-governmental personages in local administration—in vogue during the Gupta period—became remote during this period. On some occasions, however, the town councils in *Western* India and the Gang-Yamuna doab area appeared to have accommodated locally important people. These were often called *Panchakulas*, literally a committee of five members.

16.8 SUMMARY

This Unit discusses the administrative and institutional system in North India, during the 'early historical' and 'early medieval period'. The political formation of the Vedic period is generally regarded as a pre-state or proto-state polity. With the emergence of the janapadas the monarchical and oligarchical pattern came into existence. The establishment of Mauryan empire heralded the era of large monarchical states with elaborate administrative machinery. In the post Mauryan period especially during the Kushana period the notion of divine kingship became prevalent. In the period between 300-600 A.D. the Guptas and the Vakatakas dominated the political scene. Their administrative system is categorised as decentralised by many scholars. The polity of this period was predominantly monarchical. The *Samanta* system is regarded as the hallmark of Post 600 A.D. political formation.

16.9 EXERCISES

- 1) Discuss the salient features of administrative system under the Mauryas.
- 2) Give an account of the administrative system in the post Gupta period.

UNIT 17 LAW AND JUDICIAL SYSTEMS

Structure

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Sources of Law
- 17.3 Classification of Law
- 17.4 Administration of Justice
- 17.5 Summary
- 17.6 Exercises

17.1 INTRODUCTION

The earliest concept of law which is found in the *Rig veda* is represented by the word *rta*. This word denotes the supreme transcendental law or the cosmic order which rules the universe and to which even the Gods owe allegiance. Subsequently the concept of *Dharma* took the place of *rta*. Though 'Dharma' is generally used in the Smriti literature to denote law, it cannot be dissociated from considerations of ethics and morality. According to Kane, the word 'Dharma' passing through several transitions of meanings, came to denote the privileges, duties and obligations of a man, his standard of conduct as a member of one of the castes and as a person in a particular stage of life. In the *vedic* literature *Dharma* is identified with law and custom. In the *Mahabharata*, *Dharma* denotes a number of duties like the *Rajadharmā* (duties of the ruler), the *Prajadharmā* (duties of the subjects) and the *Mitradharmā* (duties of the friend). Upholding the supremacy of *Dharma* depended on *vyavahara*, which is known in English as 'law' and *vyavahara* has been defined by several commentators as based on evidence leading to removal of various doubts which includes formal law, legal procedure and administration of justice. Thus in the context of ancient India *Dharma* was an expression of socio-ethico-religious ideas and was not merely identified with religion. In this Unit you will be introduced to the sources of law in Ancient India, different categories of law and how justice was administered in that period.

17.2 SOURCES OF LAW

As regards the sources of law, we have to fall back upon Manu. Manu defined *Dharma* as: 'The whole Veda is the source of Dharma, next the traditions (smriti) and the tradition and practice of those that know it (the Veda), and the customs of holy men and finally self satisfaction.' (II.6). Medhatithi and Yajnavalkya agree with Manu and thus we have three recognized sources of *Dharma*, namely, *srauta* (derived from the *srutis*, that is *Veda*), *smarta* (derived from the *smritis* that is *Dharmasastra*) and *sadachara* (the usages of virtuous men who know the *Vedas*). Kautilya, however, lays down that '*Dharma* (sacred law), *Vyavahara* (contract), *Charitra* (custom) and *Rajasasana* (royal decree) are the four legs of law, the later one superseding the earlier one (*dharmas-cha vyavaharas-cha charitram rajasasanam vivadarthas-chatuspadah paschimah purva-badhakah*). Thus the king becomes the highest authority for promulgating law. The four sources of law as given by Narada (I.10) is almost a repetition of Kautilya. Brihaspati's explanatory statements clarify the statement of Kautilya and Narada. According to him (I.19-21, IX.2-7), when a decision is based on the admission on oath by the defendant

it is said to be *Dharma*. When a decision is based only on sastra or evidence or arguments it is said to be a *vyavahara*. When a decision is based on inference or usages or customs of corporations it is said to be *charitra*. When a king decides a disputed case in a manner which is neither opposed to sastra nor is against the opinion of the sabhyas, it is called *rajajna* and this order overrides local customs etc. It is to be noted that *vyavahara* which included documentary evidence, cannot be called a source of law. As for transactions, like sale or mortgage, the deeds had to be drawn in conformity either with sastra rules or local customs or both. Normally three sources of law were accepted: *srauta*, *smarta* and *sadachara*.

The subject matters of litigation could be many and varied. Manu gives us a list of eighteen titles of the law (*vyavahara pada*) which are also more or less agreed by Yajnavalkya, Narada and Brihaspati. These are :

- 1) Non-payment of debt
- 2) Deposit and pledge
- 3) Sale without ownership
- 4) Concerns among partners
- 5) Resumption of gifts
- 6) Non-payment of wages
- 7) Non-performance of agreements
- 8) Rescission of sale and purchase
- 9) Disputes between the owner (of cattle) and his servants
- 10) Disputes regarding boundaries
- 11) Assault
- 12) Defamation
- 13) Theft
- 14) Robbery and violence
- 15) Adultery
- 16) Duties of man and wife
- 17) Partition (of inheritance) and
- 18) Gambling and betting.

That this list of eighteen topics is not exhaustive is made clear by both Medhatithi and Kulluka. The reason behind this is that with the passage of time society had become much more complex and naturally there was increase in the causes of litigation. Similarly in the *Dharmasutras*, which have discussed a few topics of law like murder, adultery, theft, defamation and inheritance, we do not get the other titles of law as in Manu as the society was much more simpler in the days of the *Dharmasutras*. But even then slow development of civil and criminal law is clearly perceptible in the *Dharmasutras*. Gautama says, 'Cultivators, traders, herdsmen, money-lenders and artisans have authority to lay down rules for their respective classes. Having learnt the state of affairs from those who in each class have authority to speak, the king shall give the legal decision.' Thus emerging important social groups like traders, money lenders and artisans were given due recognition.

17.3 CLASSIFICATION OF LAW

The first clear recognition of the division between civil and criminal law was made by Brihaspati. The fourteen titles of law, according to him, comprise money lending, deposits, invalid gifts, concerns of partnership, non-payment of wages, non-performance of service, disputes about land, sale without ownership, rescission of sale and purchase, breach of contract, relations between husband and wife, theft and inheritance as well as gambling. These fall within the purview of civil law. On the other hand, the four titles of law comprising the two kinds of insult (*parushya*), violence (*sahasa*) and criminal connection with another's wife spring out of injury to others were within the domain of criminal law.

To begin with civil law, we find that Manu deals with it in an elaborate manner. A few of them may be cited. The monthly interest on debt is allowed at the rate of 2,3,4 or 5 per cent according to the order of the castes. Inheritance was a very important matter and minute rules are prescribed to meet various contingencies. Property was divided only after the death of the father and the eldest brother got as his share, either the whole property or a larger share than the other brothers. Maiden sisters also got a share, which was normally one-fourth of the brother's. As regards ownership of a property Manu opines that the enjoyment of property for more than 10 years gives a prescriptive right to it. Yajnavalkya observes that title is superior to possession in all cases except where possession has descended from a line of ancestors. According to him while possession without title creates no claim except in cases of long continuity, title without possession has no force. As regards partition of property he says that partition may take place either during the life time of the father or else after his death. In general if the father divides his property, the best share goes to the eldest son or else equal share to all the sons. But if the partition takes place after the death of the father, then it is divided equally among all the sons, both the assets and the liabilities. The mother also gets an equal share as the sons and the daughter one fourth of the son's share. Yajnavalkya, thus gives the widow the full right to succeed. But the picture is different in *Narada smriti*. He does not give the right of succession to the widow. She is granted only the right of maintenance till her death. The term '*stridhana*' is used in the *Smritis* not in the etymological sense of all property possessed by a woman, but in the technical sense of 'certain kinds of property given to a woman on certain occasions or at different stages of life.' The different classes of *stridhana* are what was given to a woman before the nuptial fire (*adhyagni*), what was given at the time of the bridal procession (*adhyavahanika*), what was given to a woman through affection (*prtidatta*) and what was received from the brother, the mother or the father. To this Katyayana adds other kinds of *stridhana* such as the bridal price (*shulka*), what was obtained by a woman after marriage from the family of her husband or of her parents (*anvadhya*) and what was obtained by a married woman in her husband's house or by a maiden in the house of her father (*saudayika*). As a result "all property (whether movable or immovable) obtained by a woman, either as a maiden or at marriage or after marriage from her parents or the family of relatives of the parents or from the husband and his family (except immovable property given by the husband) is included within the scope of *stridhana*". Again according to Narada, if the father divides the property, he distributes the property equally or unequally after keeping two shares for himself. In case of division after his death, the sons get equal share after paying the debt. In case of laws of debt, narada refers to four kinds of interest: periodical (*kalika*), stipulated (*karita*), corporal (*kayika*) and compound (*chakravridhi*). The last three are condemned by Manu but interestingly they are approved by *Gautama Dharmasutra* (XII.34-35). While dealing with the

recovery of debts, Brihaspati mentions that creditor shall lend money after securing a pledge (*adhi*) of adequate value or a deposit (*bandha*), or a trustworthy security, or a bond written by the debtor himself or else attested by witnesses. Moreover he adds two more kinds of interest namely *shikha vridhhi* (hair interest) and *bhoghalabha* (interest by enjoyment). Hair interest is so called because it grows constantly like hair and does not cease till the cutting of the head, while the latter is based upon the use of a mortgaged house or the produce of a field.

Criminal law reflected caste privileges and disabilities. Punishment depended on the caste of the criminal and so for identical offences, punishments varied. As a general rule Brahmanas were to be exempted from capital punishment. The worst punishment for a Brahmana was banishment but even then he was allowed to take with him all his property. Manu's law on defamation clearly underlines the role of caste. For defaming a Brahmana, a Kshatriya was to be fined a hundred panas, a Vaishya from one hundred and fifty to two hundred, while a Sudra was to suffer corporal punishment. On the other hand, a Brahmana should be fined fifty, twenty five and twelve panas for defaming a Kshatriya, a Vaishya and a Sudra respectively. There was a uniform penalty of twelve panas for a Brahmana for defaming a fellow Brahmana. Similar distinctions are also made by Manu in the case of assaults. Manu says, 'With whatever limb a man of a lower caste injures a man of three higher castes, even that limb shall be cut off.' For adultery various penalties were imposed according to the caste of the accused and the circumstances under which the crime was committed. The penalties included fine, forfeiture of property, imprisonment and even death (except for a Brahmana). Yajnavalkya more or less follows Manu's dictum on criminal law. But his views on offences dealt through public justice are quite strong. According to him, a person not giving evidence is liable to pay the entire debt together with an additional one tenth, while he who knows the facts of the case but refuses to give evidence is liable to the same punishment as a false witness. Narada is much more systematic regarding various crimes and their punishments. Treating theft as a separate offence from *sahasa* (violence) Narada divides it into three grades according to the value of the property stolen. The punishment for theft varies from fine to corporal punishment, mutilation and death, according to the amount or value of the object stolen. Theft was regarded as a sin and a thief confessing his guilt is freed from sin. Brihaspati too echoes the sentiment of Narada or goes a step further when he says that punishment for theft or violence is proportioned to the gravity of the offence without reference to the caste of the offender.

In the matter of fixing penalties, there is no doubt that the king enjoyed a great latitude in criminal matters. While imposing a penalty, Manu and Yajnavalkya recommends that the king should take into consideration the motive, the period and location of the offence, also the capacity of the culprit to endure the penalty, in particular his age and gender. Thus the sentence is determined by the circumstances of each case. It is extremely variable and depends largely upon the will of the king who must remain master of his own justice.

Chronological Table of the Texts (according to History of *Dharmasastra*)

Dharmasutras : 600 B.C.—300 B.C.

Manusmriti : 200 B.C. –200 A.D.

Yajnavalkya smriti : 100 A.D.—300A.D.

Narada smriti : 100 A.D.—400 A.D.

Brihaspati smriti : 300A.D.—500 A.D.

Katyayana smriti ; 400 A.D.—600 A.D.

17.4 ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Administration of justice was an essential part of the protection to which people are entitled from the government. Manu(VIII.1-2) and Yajnavalkya(II.1) felt that though the king should normally preside over the law courts, he should not dispense justice alone. So a king should be assisted by learned Brahmanas and experienced counsellors. In the opinion of Manu, if the king is absent in the court, he should appoint a learned Brahmana to perform his duties and three sabhyas should be associated with this Brahmana. This provision is also found in Yajnavalkya and Narada, though they do not set any limit to the number of sabhyas. Giving justice is equivalent, say Manu (VIII.306) and Yajnavalkya (I.359), to performing a sacrifice capable of procuring the highest spiritual benefits. Brihaspati repeats this formula on several occasions and does not hesitate to identify a law case (*vyavahara*) as a sacrificial act (*yajna*). Just as if he were performing a sacrifice, the king ought, then, scrupulously to observe the rules laid down by the text. He is bound by the terms of the sastras like a sacrificer by the ritual manual. However the king must always seek out the truth and make sure that he does not come to a hasty judgment. Moreover no legal rule may be applied until he has obtained complete familiarity with the matter. According to Brihaspati, 'A judgment should not be passed in reliance upon the text of the sastras alone, for a trial of a case without taking account of the circumstances of a case leads to a loss of Dharma.'

Brihaspati (I.57-58) maintains that courts of justice were of four kinds : a) *pratishthita*, established in a fixed place such as a town, b) *apratishthita*, not established in a fixed place but moving from place to place, c) *mudrita*, the court of a judge who is authorised to use the royal seal, and d) *sasita or sasrita*, the court in which the king himself presides. The king is indeed the supreme judge in his realm and is held responsible as a matter of duty to protect his subjects and to warrant that their disputes shall be settled justly. It is reasonable that he should be guided and counselled by smriti writers. Besides these courts there were other tribunals recognised as integral parts of the judicial system. Yajnavalkya (II.30), Brihaspati (I.92,94) and Narada (I.7) declare that law suits may be decided by *kula*, *sreni*, *gana* / *puga*, the royal judges, and the king in order of precedence. The jurisdiction of these courts is illustrated by the rules that *kulas* (families), *srenis* (associations of merchants and craftsmen), *ganas*(group of artisans dependent on mutual help) / *pugas*(association of persons belonging to different castes and following different occupations but living in the same place) and so forth, which are duly authorised by the king, shall decide all cases other than those relating to *sahasa*. The Mitakshara states that from the *kula*'s decision one could appeal to a *sreni* and from the latter's decision to a *puga*. From the *puga*'s decision appeal lay with the king, and here Vijnanesvara, the author of Mitakshara quotes Narada as his authority.

In the opinion of Yajnavalkya (II.8) and Brihaspati (I.17), there are four stages or feet of a law suit, namely, the plaint (*bhasa-pada*), the reply (*uttara pada*), the evidence or proof (*kriya-pada*) and the decision (*nirnaya pada*). Kautilya prescribes fines and even corporal punishment for corrupt judges. Yajnavalkya, Narada and Katyayana prescribe heavy penalties for sabhyas (associate judges) who were corrupt.

Elaborate judicial procedures are given by the *Smriti* writers. According to the general smriti rule, he who first approaches the court with his plaint is the plaintiff. A plaint may be amended at any time before the answer of the defendant has been

filed. Narada gives the plaintiff the right of keeping the defendant under legal restraint of four kinds which includes such processes as arrest before judgment or temporary injunction till the arrival of the king's summons so that the defendant cannot abscond. Following the claim of the plaintiff, the defendant has to put in his answer. According to Narada, the answer may be of four kinds, namely, denial, confession, a special plea and a plea of previous judgment. The defendant was expected to file his reply on the same day, but under certain circumstances a short period was allowed for the defendant to file his reply. After the statements of the plaintiff and the defendant had been recorded, the evidence had to be placed before the court. Proofs were of two kinds, namely, human and divine. The former consisted of witnesses and documents, the latter being ordeals. All the smritis lay down that ordeals were to be resorted to only when none of the human means were available or possible. Brihaspati gives elaborate rules of procedure regarding evidence in these words, 'A witness prevails over inference, a writing (document) prevails over witnesses, undisturbed possession for three generations prevails over both.'

Finally the parties were asked to leave the court to enable the sabhyas to deliberate after considering the evidence. The victorious party received a document of victory called the *jayapatra*, while the defeated party was to be punished by the king according to the sastra. Some of the *jayapatra*'s bore the king's seal and others, the seal of the chief judge. The Mitakshara holds the *jayapatra* to be a judgement giving a summary of the plaint, the reply, the evidence and the decision. When the plaintiff was defeated, the document was called a *hinapatra*.

17.5 SUMMARY

Thus what appears is that social order was in constant need of being regulated through a body of rules which were called *Dharma*. Custom played a very important role in making law progressive, thereby changing it from time to time to bridge the difference between the letter of the law and the requirements of changing social needs. In case of a conflict between the practice and the precept, the practice would prevail. The rules of *Dharma* were recommendatory and not mandatory in character.

17.6 EXERCISES

- 1) Write a brief note on the sources of law and different categories of law.
- 2) Analyse the judicial system prevailing in Ancient India.

SUGGESTED READINGS

Kesavan Veluthat, *The Political Structure of Early Medieval South India*

Burton Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*

K. A. Nilakanta Sastri, *The Pandyan Kingdom : From the Earliest Times to the Sixteenth Century*

_____, *The Colas*

_____, *Studies in Chola History and Administration*

T. V. Mahalingam, *South Indian Polity*

C. Minakshi, *Administrative and Social Life Under the Pallavas*

R. S. Sharma, *Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India*

Romila Thapar, *The Mauryas Revisited*

_____, *Early India From the Origins to A.D. 1300*

S. K. Maity, *Imperial Guptas and Their times*

A. S. Altekar, *The Rashtrakutas and Their Times*

_____, *The State and Government in Ancient India*

H. S. Maine, *Ancient Law*

K. P. Jayaswal, *Hindu Polity*

S. Supakar, *Law of Procedure and Justice in Ancient India*

Ramakrishna Mission (Institute of Culture) Golpark, Kolkata, *The Cultural Heritage of India Vol. II*

G. Yazdani, *Early History of the Deccan*

UNIT 18 ADMINISTRATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES IN PENINSULAR INDIA

Structure

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 The Sangam Polity
- 15.3 The Pallavas
- 15.4 The Pandyas
- 15.5 The Cholas
- 15.6 Administrative System in the Deccan
- 15.7 Summary
- 15.8 Exercises

15.1 INTRODUCTION

The task of the reconstruction of the history of Peninsular India was initiated in the 19th century by western scholars especially Colonel Mackenzie who prepared a compendium of manuscripts which included works on tradition. The epigraphists like G. Buhler, Robert Sewell, F. Keilhorn, Jas Burgess studied the copper and stone inscriptions found in South India. The discovery of the Sangam literature and other ancient Tamil literary texts further contributed to the knowledge of South Indian history. The *Bhakti* literature has also been analysed by historians to understand the dynamics of South Indian history. M. Jovean Dubrueil, S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar, R. Gopalan published several works on South Indian history in the 20th century but Prof. K. A. Nilakanta Sastri's works provided a definite historical methodology for the treatment of South Indian history. His approach which was based on the glorification of the past and the centralised state model was adopted by many other historians such as C. Minakshi, T. V. Mahalingam etc. The first attempt to demolish this conventional approach was made by Burton Stein in his work *Peasant, State and Society in Medieval South India* who put forward the segmentary state model (model of decentralised polity characterised by ritual-sovereignty). His view has been challenged by historians like N. Karashima, D. N. Jha, etc. who subscribe to the feudal model. The theoretical debate enables us to analyse the nature of political formation in Peninsular India.

15.2 THE SANGAM POLITY

The Sangam polity was one of the earliest political formations of peninsular India. The Sangam literature (Tamil literature comprising of anthologies dated to early centuries of Christian era) together with the testimony of archaeology, numismatics and the Graeco-Roman travellers' accounts help us in reconstructing the history of this period. The literature of the Sangam age describes micro peasant communities forming settlements in the geographical area comprising of the plains (especially Kaveri valley). It appears that the tribal subsistence economy which was characterised by hunting and pastoralism was on the verge of getting metamorphosed. The clans led by chiefs (heroes) were engaged in warfare for acquiring cattle. These incursions resulted in the accumulation of wealth in the form of war booty. The wealth was

brought before the gathering of the community from where it was redistributed (*undattu*) a process in which the warrior chief played a pivotal role. Through this process the 'chief' acquired a central place in the society. The bards who composed poems eulogising the chiefs played an important role in legitimising the chief's position in society and polity. The bardic poetry is an important constituent of the Sangam literature. Vedic sacrifices were also a means for providing legitimacy to the chief as the political leader. They are also mentioned in the Sangam literature.

Three important chiefdoms developed in the ecological zone referred to as the marutam in the Sangam poems. This area comprised of the fertile river valleys on the plains. The peasant groups which settled here brought about the transition from hunting and pastoralism to agriculture based economy. The emergence of trading activities inter-regional and long distance led to the establishment of urban centres in the interior as well as the coastal areas. The chiefdoms of this period were able to exercise control over the surplus derived from the trading and agricultural activities in the region. This resource mobilisation through trade and agriculture helped the Muventar (the three crowned kings) viz. the Cheras of Vanji, the Pandyas of Madurai and the Cholas of Uraiyur in consolidating their power. Their seats of power were located in the trade centres.

An important source for studying the polity of Sangam period is *Kural* (a post-sangam work) by Tiruvalluvar. Tiruvalluvar refers to the *Nadu* (rastra) as the foundation of the polity. He points out that the king's treasury should be stocked through various sources of income viz. land revenue, transit duties, custom and also through annexation. *Ahanamuru* (anthology, part of Sangam literature) refers to the treasury of the Cholas. The *Silappadikaram* (Tamil epic) and *Manimekalai* (Tamil classic) refer to *Aimperungulu* and *Enperayam* which have been interpreted as royal associates. The *Kural* refers to *Avai* which probably indicates the king's *Sabha*. In other works *Manram* (hall) is also mentioned. Evidence is available regarding judicial system in Uraiyur. *Sabha* and *Manram* were the assemblies which performed judicial and other miscellaneous functions. The units of measurement of land were *ma* and *veli*. The importance of peasants and traders is reflected in the sources such as *Kural* and *Pattinappalai* (gives an account of the Chola capital). The latter refers to customs officials which bears testimony to the thriving foreign trade. The mention of prisons indicates that the legal system was well established and punishment was given to those who deviated from the lawful path. The heads of the army were bestowed with the title of *Enadi* (commander) by the chief. The *Vellalar* (agriculturists) were categorised into those who themselves cultivated the land and those who employed others to cultivate the land. The latter also occupied official positions (civil and military) and were endowed with the titles *Vel* and *Arasu* under the Cholas and *Kavidi* under the Pandyas.

The Sangam period was followed by rule of the Kalabharas which is referred to as a 'dark period' till the 6th century A.D. when the Pallavas of Kanchi, the Chalukyas of Badami and the Pandyas of Madurai rose to power. However, in the 8th century A.D. the Chalukyas were replaced by the Rashtrakutas of Malkhed.

15.3 THE PALLAVAS

The Pallavas emerged powerful in the 7th century A.D. The agricultural tracts in the river valleys of Pennar and Palar were the focal points which sustained the Pallava authority. In this process of agrarian expansion the category of intermediaries who

were not peasants acquired superior rights over land as the representatives of the king. The epigraphical evidence (copper plate grants and stone inscriptions) provides information regarding the establishment of *Brahmadeyans* in settled and unsettled regions. This was made possible by the subjugation of the cultivators of the settled areas or by creating new peasant settlements. Brahmans played an important role in the expansion and consolidation of the Pallava rule. Thus the agrarian system was predominantly *Brahmadeya*-temple centric and proved advantageous to the Brahmans and royal power. The Brahmans were able to secure important positions in the administrative system and the close cooperation between the kings and the Brahmans determined the nature of the state. The kings sought legitimacy from the Brahmans (since they were the guardians and interpreters of moral and religious system) and in return endowed them with official positions and land grants. S. Krishnaswamy Aiyangar considers the Pallavas as the feudatories of the Satavahanas in south eastern India who established their rule after the decline of the Satavahana power. The inscriptions of the Pallava period can be grouped into three categories: Prakrit copper plate (3rd to 4th century A.D.), Sanskrit copper plates (4th to 6th century A.D.) and stone and copper plate inscriptions (7th century A.D. onwards).

Pallava Kingship

There are several mythical traditions regarding the origin of the Pallavas. The *Prasastis* of the Pallavas are similar to the *Itihas-Purana* traditions of North India. They comprise of genealogies and try to correlate the mythical traditions regarding their pedigree to the historical facts of the ruling family. The Pallavas claim to be *Chandravamsis* as is evident from a literary work titled *Nandikkalambagam* (Tamil work). The Sanskrit copper plates refer to them as belonging to the *Bharadavaja gotra*. The Pallavas ascribe to themselves *Brahmakshatra* status. This was a means to legitimise their power by tracing their lineage to Brahmans who possessed the attributes of kshatriyas. They also trace their connection to the Naga chief. The Pallava *Prasastis* (copper plate inscriptions) throw light on the dynastic traditions which eulogise the Pallavas as the custodians of *varnashramadharma*, who conducted sacrifices etc. Genealogies mentioned in copper plate grants describe the accomplishments of the king, depict him as a hero of victories attained in wars against adversaries and portray him of pure descent.

The Pallava kings made use of *danda* (force) for maintaining social order and in return exacted *raksabhoga*. The Pallava kings reigned supreme over the earth as mentioned in the records and they adopted several high sounding titles viz. *Dharmamaharajadhiraja*, *Maharajadhiraja*, *Dharmamaharaja* and *Maharaja*. We come to know about these from the evidence of Sanskrit, Prakrit and other charters. The Hirahadagalli plates inform us that the Pallava king Sivaskandavarman is referred to as '*Agnisttomavajapeyasvamedhayaji*' (one who conducted the *Agnistoma*, *Vajapeya* and *Asvamedha* sacrifices). The coronation ceremony was marked by *Abhisekanama* i.e. the bestowment of a new name to the king. The *Birudas* (eulogistic titles) were adopted by the Pallava kings and these were engraved on the cave temples. The various *Birudas* adopted by kings were *Chitrakarappuli* (Tiger among artists) and *Vichitrachitta* by Mahendravarman I, *Mahamalla* (great wrestler) and *Kaviprabodha* (reviver of poetry) by Narasimhavarman I, *Tribhuvana Dipa*, *Abhayankara* and *Jnanasagara* by Rajasimha. The intellectual attainments of Pallava kings are attested by the information contained in the inscription on temples and copper plates. Mahendravarman I wrote Sanskrit plays, was a musician and also had interest in painting. Though the Pallava kings were patrons of Saiva sect of Hinduism but they were generally liberal towards other religions and sects.

Practice of election of the kings was also prevalent under the Pallavas. The Pallava kings were bestowed with characteristics of divinity. The Pallava king Paramesvaravarman is compared to Siva and Narasimha is considered Vishnu in human form.

The Pallava kings are known to have conducted the ceremonies called *Hiranyagarbha*, *Tulabhara* and *Gosahasra*. These were performed to legitimise their political power. These have been termed as *mahadanas* in the *Dharmasastric* and *Puranic* traditions. The Queen of Pallava king Nripatungavarman (670-710) had conducted the *hiranyagarbha* and *tulabhara* mahadanas. *Tulabhara* ritual was marked by the bestowment of gold equivalent to the weight of the grantor. *Gosahasra* gift giving (*dana*) meant endowment of a thousand cows. *Hiranyagarbha* was the most important of these customs. The other two ceremonies were performed prior to *hiranyagarbha* (golden womb). This ritual was a means used by the ruler to ascribe *kshatriya* position to himself. The ceremony involved conducting sacraments laid down for the twice born castes.

During the coronation ceremony Nandivarman was provided the royal umbrella (*chatri*) (*karivai*), the *Samudraghosa* and *Katumukhavaditra* (flag which had the *khata* (Siva's weapon) as the insignia) and *vsrabhalanche* (bull-seal). These collectively comprised of the royal insignia. The consecration was held in the presence of *mantri mandala*, *mahasamantas*, *ganattar* and *ghatakaiyar*. The king was bestowed with new titles and the power to promulgate royal orders. Royal orders were originally written on palm leaves. The inscriptional evidence of Kailasnatha temple (at Kanchi) refers to Pallava king Rajasimha as *Sri Vrsabha darpah* (he who boasts of bull). The bull was also embossed on the clay seals.

Ministers, Officials and Service Groups

There is evidence regarding *Amatyas* in the Hirahadagalli plates as well as in the literary work titled *Periyapuranam*. The testimony of the Hirahadagalli plates tells us that the *Amatyas* were the officials who were notified of the *Brahmadeya* grant which was bestowed by the Pallava king. The *Vaikunthperumal* temple (at Kanchi) inscription refers to *Matras*, *Ghatikaiyar* and *Mulaprakrti*. The *Matras* are regarded as ministers. The Kasakkudi plates of Nandivarman refer to the prime minister as *Brahmasriraja*. The attributes of the prime minister are narrated in the following passage "Brahmasriraja who was a friend of the world, who was filled with all virtues as the ocean with a heap of gems, who was famous, modest, handsome and long lived; whose speech was never rough, who was distinguished among men, who just like Brhaspati, the chief minister of the Lord of Heavens, was the chief Minister of the Pallava king Nandivaraman, the lord of the earth and the delighter of the people's eyes and hearts; who was refined by nature and through education, who was foremost among the learned firm and brave, who possessed the full and unshakable splendour of the Brahman and *kshatriya* castes, and a loyalty to the glorious Nandipotaraja lasting as long as the moon and the stars endure, who was the mainstay of his family, who was the eldest son, who in his disposition was like Siva incarnate, who excelled in all virtues and who was the eldest priest." (C. Minakshi, *Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas*). The ministers of the Pallavas possessed several titles such as *Brahmasriraj*, *Brahmayuvaraja* *Uttamasila*, and were even compared to Brihaspati. They were probably assigned revenues as remuneration for their services. The duty of *Ajnaptis* (those who implemented the king's directives regarding the grants) was performed by them. The inscriptional evidence reveals that they carried out the task of administration and acted as advisors and loyal supporters to the king.

The wide range of administrative functions attributed to the ministers were: commander in chief of the army, *Purohit* etc. Sometimes the *Purohit* performed several functions such as priest, duties of chief minister and *Yuvaraj*. The ministers and feudatories played an important role in the coronation and election process. Hirahadagalli plates refer to *Rahasyadhikrta* who has been interpreted as private secretary of the king. This Brahman officer performed the role of *likhita* (writing a record on copper plates) and was remunerated through assignment of revenues of villages. *Vayilkelpar* were officers who implemented the royal orders and also carried out survey of lands. The Tandantottam grant refers to *Kosa-adhyaksa* who was also the *Ajnapti*. The Ulatur stone inscription mentions *Manikkappandaram-kappan* (an official who was custodian of treasury) and *Kodukkappillai* (was the official who performed the task of custodian of gifts). *Mattavilasa Prahasana* (written by Mahendravarman the Pallava ruler) tells us that the court of justice at Kanchi was called *Adhikarana*. Probably there existed lower courts also. The Kasakudi plates refer to *Adhikaranadandan* and *Karandandan* (fines) which were to be paid by those who had committed the offence. These fines were levied by the officers at the directive of the court and were given as *parihara* (privilege) to those grantees on whose lands they were imposed on the offenders. The Pallava records mention *Dharmasana* (a judicial organisation) which dealt with cases concerning village assemblies.

The Sanskrit and Prakrit records of the Pallavas mention the plough and *nivartana* or *pattika* (units in which land was measured). Land grants were made to the Brahmans (*Brahmadeya*) to the Hindu temples (*Devadana*) and to votaries of other beliefs (*Palliccandan*). It seems that under the Pallavas land was measured and various categories of land rights prevailed which can be gleaned from the records of the period. The kings made tax free endowments upon the Brahmans and temples. The royal directive regarding land grants (tax-free) was to be implemented by the village or district headman or the assembly of *nattar* (spokesmen of nadu). The Kasakudi plates mention *Nilakkalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayilkelpar*. These officers were probably associated with the work of measurement and survey (assessment) of land. It seems that there existed a department for looking after administration of land. The Pallava rulers utilised the services of goldsmiths and *kasthahari* (carpenter) for inscribing the contents on the copper plates. The *Prasastis* of the Pallava copper plates were written by several poets patronised by the Pallava rulers viz. Paramesvara Kavi (of Medhavikula) who composed the *Prasastis* of Udayendiran plates of Nandivarman II, Paramesvara (Uttarakarnika) who composed the *Prasastis* of Tandantottam plates of Nandivarman II, etc. The Kuram grant of Paramesavaravarman I mentions *Uttarakarnika-Mahasendatta* as the *Ajnapti*. It has been suggested that the term *Karnika* probably indicated an official category. It appears that the official category *Karanam* (village accountant) was derived from *Karnika*.

Army Organisation

The army organisation of the Pallavas in theory comprised of four parts: *Ratha*, *Gaja*, *Juraka*, *Patati* (chariots, elephants, horses, foot soldiers). It seems that the Pallava rulers made use of elephants extensively as is evident from the sculptures and the expertise of the Pallava rulers in knowledge regarding elephants. Rajasimha is called *Varanabhagadatta* which shows that his knowledge regarding elephants was equivalent to the expert Bhagadatta. War chariots are mentioned in the Tamil work *Nandikkalambagam* but, their use was restricted. The Kuram plates of Paramesvaravarman narrate the conflict between the Pallavas and the Chalukyas

and describe the army and the weaponry. The sculptures on cave temples and Vaikunthaperumal temple give us information about the weapons used by the soldiers. Hirahadagalli copper plates refer to *senapatis* or generals. *Periyapuranan* (Tamil work of 12th century A.D.) refers to the occupation of the Chalukya capital Vatapi by Narasimhavarman I. The *Mahavamsa* as well as the Kasakudi plates mention the incursions of the Pallavas into Sri Lanka in the 7th century A.D. The Tamil devotional hymns (*Periyatirumoli* by Alvar saint) mention several conflicts between the Pallavas and the Pandyas. *Nandikkalambagan* gives information regarding the wars won by the Pallavas. It is therefore clear that the Pallavas did possess a strong force to counter their rivals.

Provincial and Local Administration

The provincial government was headed by the Yuvamaharaja. The district officers were known as: *Desatikas*, *Bhojakas*, *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas*, *Sumikas*, *Sancharantas*, *Ayuktakas* and *Adhyaksas*. In the northern area of the Pallava territory a number of officers were responsible for administration. This is evident from the Prakrit and Sanskrit land charters which record land grants in the presence of various officers viz. *Raj Kumaras*, *Senapati* (commander), *Rastrika* (governor), *Madabikas* (custom officials), *Desadhikritas* (officers responsible for the administration of the district), *Vallabhas*, *Govallabhas* (supervised the horses, cows and cattle), *Arakhadikata* (guards), *Gumikas* (captains), *Tutikas*, *Nayikas* (commander), *Sancharantakas* (responsible for espionage) and *Badamanusa* (army officers). Dr. S. Krishnaswami Aiyangar points out that “while undoubtedly local administration is seen at its best under Chola rule we seem to find it in as fully developed a condition almost, under these later Pallavas.” The inscriptional evidence of the Pallavas regarding local assemblies such as village *Sabhas* is dated to around 8th century A.D. onwards. The administrative system at the lowest level comprised of villages. The *Sabha* was the village assembly. The *Nadu* was larger than a village and the assembly of the *Nadu* was known as *Nattar*, *Urar* and *Alvar*. The unit bigger than *Nadu* was *Kottam*. There are several epigraphical records of the Pallavas viz. the copper plate charters of Nandivarman Pallavamalla (731-96 A.D.) which mention the *Konolai* (royal order) issued to the *Nattar*. The charters generally relate to endowments of land to Brahmans. These charters also help us in gaining insight into the administrative measures of the state i.e. land grants issued by the king in the name of the *Nattar*. The function of the *Nattar* was to prepare an *Araiolai* (document) giving information regarding the measure (veils) of land given to the grantee. Thus we get information regarding land endowments made by the kings. In the Pallava records, we find mention of the *Urar* i.e. the assembly of the *Ur* (village people) which functioned without adhering rigidly to rules.

The representatives of the *Sabha* were called *Perumakkal* (great men). The epigraphical evidence of the Pallava period relates to *Sabhas* of Uttaramerur, Perungulin Kuran, Perumbuliyur etc. The *Sabha* carried out various tasks at the village level such as looking after irrigation facilities such as tanks, monitoring temple grants and providing justice. These administrative functions were delegated to committees called *Variyams*. The inscriptions of the Pallava period viz. at Ukkal, Uttaramerur, Adambakkam etc. are testimony to the existence of *Variyams* and *Ganas* who performed various administrative tasks. It appears that the gifts bestowed upon Gods were placed in the control of the *Sabha* and the committee carried out the implementation of the terms of the grant.

The evidence of the following inscriptions gives us some idea of the working of the *Gana* and the *Sabha*. “An inscription dated in the 37th year of Nandivarman II

records an agreement made by the *Gana* of Payinur (Chingleput taluk) to remove the silt from the village tank annually and 6400 *kadi* of paddy was received by them from Nagan a merchant residing at Mamallapura. Settanandi, presumably a member of the *Gana* signed the document.” (C. Minakshi, Administration and Social Life Under the Pallavas). “Dated in the 25th year of Nripatungavarman the *Sabha* Avaninarayana Caturvedimangalam undertook an agreement to supply one ulakku of oil every day to a matha to the Sattaperumakkal, presumably members of the governing body of the matha” (C. Minakshi, Administration and Social Life under the Pallavas). The term *Gana* in the inscription indicates members of *alunganattar* or committee which performed certain administrative tasks. There is mention of *Ganapperumakkal* of Sailesvara temple in a stone inscription dated to the 16th year of Pallava ruler Nripatungavarman. It seems that the *Ganapperumakkal* was responsible for supervising the cultivation of lands, temples, levying and remittance of taxes and were also custodians of offerings and gifts (*dana*). The term *Amrtaganattar* is mentioned in the stone inscription of Aparajitavarman in Tiruvorriyur. The stone inscription of Aparajita (dated to 4th and 7th year) also refers to *Amrtagana* which acted as the custodian of the gold which was bestowed upon the temple through the *Sabha*. The inference that can be drawn from the above examples is that the committees were placed under the *Sabha* which was the supreme body of the village. Land was the primary resource and its produce was taxed. Puravupon of the Pallava records was tax realised in cash and was imposed on cultivable lands.

Land System: Grants, Land Categories and Rights

There are epigraphical records (Pallava charters) of the endowments of lands made to Brahmans and temples by the king which were tax-free together with certain other perquisites. The early Pallava land grants were bestowed by the king or queen directly. In the case of later Pallava grants the *Vijnapti* acted as an intermediary in the transaction. He sought the royal approval in the case of land grants. Kasakudi, Tandantottam, Pattattalmangalam charters of Pallava king Nandivarman Pallavamalla contain mention of *Vijnaptis*. The land grants to Brahmans and temples did not entitle the grantee the right to sale. *Svadattam* and *Paradattam* terms are found in the land grants, which indicate bestowment made by self and others respectively. In case of *Paradatti* the *Vijnapti* or requester and *Ajnapti* (executing officer) are involved. It seems that the initial land grants of the Pallavas are the Mayidavolu and Hirehadagalli plates (prakrit) (3rd to 4th century A.D.) bestowed upon Brahmans. The land grants of the later (in Sanskrit) period were also issued to Brahmans. All these grants were made in the Andhra region. From the period of Simhavarman the charters were in Tamil and Sanskrit and refer to grants to Brahmans. However there is reference to a grant which was made to a Jain teacher.

By the 7th century and 8th century A.D. Brahmans were being granted land to settle in various areas and large and numerous *Brahmadeya* settlements emerged. The land bestowed upon Brahmans and temples by individuals was purchased by them after payment in gold to the village assembly. However the donees did not have the right to dispose off the lands through sale. There are instances of purchase of land by individuals from the *Sabha* to bestow and gift it to temple by offering gold to the *Sabha* to ensure it was made tax-free. Land grants to Jain temples were called *Palliccandam*. Land grants were also made for maintaining village tanks (*Eripatti* or *Erichcheruvu*). The committee of village *Sabha* namely *Erivariyaperumakkal* (comprising of greatman of tank committee) supervised these lands (endowed by individuals or village) meant for tank maintenance. Village *Sabha* had the authority

to bring uncultivated land under cultivation from its funds (tank maintenance etc.) and also to acquire the lands of those who were defaulters in payment of taxes.

The various land categories and rights were: *Payalnilam* lands: Agricultural produce was divided equally amongst landholders and tenant cultivators.

Payaleruvaram : share of agricultural produce which went to the tenant cultivators

Adai : king's portion of the produce

Adainilam : lands from which king's share of produce is obtained

Karainilam : lands reallocated amongst tenant cultivators at intervals

From an inscription we come to know that tank-duty (*erikkadi*) was imposed on villages in the form of 1 *kadi* of paddy on a patti of cultivated land (*vilainilam*). The kasakudi plates refer to land grants (*paradatti*) executed by *Nilai kalattar*, *Adhikarar* and *Vayil kelpar* (officials). The grantees of land were called *Bhojakas* (Hirahadagalli plates), *Vidyabhoga* (Bahur plates) and *Arcanabhogas* of temple lands (as mentioned in the inscriptions related to temple lands).

15.4 THE PANDYAS

The Pandyas rose to power in the valleys of River Vagai and Tambraparni. The expansion and growth of agrarian economy due to development of irrigation works provided the resources for sustenance of the state system. Brahman settlements were an important feature of this period and the role of Brahmans in legitimising state power is evident from the epigraphical records.

Nature of Kingship

Pandyas ascribe *Chandravamsa* origin to themselves. The Dalavaypuram plates of Parantaka Viranarayana describe the Pandyas as having their genesis from the Lotus in Vishnu's navel and from Brahma, Atri and the Moon. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya suggest that the Pandya ruler who laid the foundation of Pandya rule originated from the moon. The Pandya *Prasastis* (on copper plates) connect them with the Mahabharata, with the establishment of Tamil Sangam and depict them as co-occupants of Indra's throne. Thus the Pandyas tried to justify their position as rulers by tracing their lineage to local and Sankritic traditions. The copper plate records of the Pandyas contain inscriptions in Tamil and Sanskrit. Genealogy is found in both Tamil and Sanskrit inscriptions. However, the Tamil inscriptions of the Pandyas contain comprehensive genealogies which suggest that the Pandyas had local moorings. These Tamil inscriptions draw upon the Sanskrit counterparts in relation to concept and pattern. The Sivakasi plates of Vir Pandya point out that the grantee wrote a *prasasti* eulogizing the grantor. The Pandya *Prasastis* describe the king as the husband of the earth and prosperity. Arikesari Maravarman (670-710) (one who defeated enemy kings and Rajasimha (740-765) had conducted the hiranyagarbha and tulabhara ceremonies. The Pandya kings were regarded as possessing divine characteristics. The Velvikudi plates refer to Jatilavarman as the son of Siva. They also mention Manavarman and the dilemma whether he was a human, a demon, Siva, the Supreme Being (Para-Purusa-Visnu) or Indra.

Various Aspects of Administration

The records of the Pandyas do not refer to a council of ministers or a court but they refer to *mantrins* and *uttaramantrins*. The Sivakasi plates mention the Uttaramantrin as those who performed the task of *Sandhivigraha*. The *Uttaramantrin* is referred to as *Tamilpperaraiyan* in Tamil who was in charge of *Mandira-olai-nayagam* office which verified the written order regarding the grant. The *Tennavan apattudavigal* according to Mahalingam and Sastri were the king's barons who had great authority in the kingdom and are regarded by M.G.S. Narayanan as the companions of honour or the king's bodyguards. In an inscription *Samantan Ganapti* is referred to as *Mahasamanta* of the king. The reference to Ranakirti as *Ulvittusevaka* in an inscription has been interpreted as companion of honour.

During the period of Jatila Parantaka there is mention of *Uttaramantrins* and *Mahasamantas*. *Matangajadhyaksha* or the officer who supervised the elephants was an important officer of the army organisation. Tirumalai Virar and Parartaka Virar, mentioned in the inscription of the 42nd year of Maranjayan, were probably associated with military organisation. It seems that there was no clear cut division between civil and military functions. The army comprised of soldiers who served under a commander but sometimes the king himself provided the leadership to the contingents of soldiers. The Kalugumalai record refers to an *Enadi* (army commander) who established a memorial for the soldiers in his service who were killed in action. King Maranjayan erected commemorative stone for soldiers in his service who were killed during battle. Historians regard these soldiers as the king's 'companions of honour'.

The royal grants (inscriptional evidence) are mentioned in the copper plates which also contain *Prasastis*. In these inscriptions there is evidence of local administrative divisions; *Nadu*, *Kurram* and *Rastra* (mentioned in the Sinnamanur grant). The basic constituent of local administration was the *gramam*. Their names have the suffix *Mangalam*, *Kudi*, *Ur* or *Vayal*. *Nadu* was the larger unit of local administration. The land grants bestowed by the kings are regarded as *Danam* which were of religious nature. Madras Museum grant and the Sinnamanur grant indicate the area bestowed as land grant. The information regarding endowment was inscribed on the copper plates in written form and the royal directive (*anatti*) was prepared by the scribe (*Perum banaikkarans*). Land grants were given to temples and Brahmans (*Brahmadeyas*). The grants bestowed comprised of various rights such as *Karanmai* (cultivation) and *Miyatci* (administrative rights). The Pulan-Kurichi inscription (5th century A.D.) refers to creation of *Brahmadeya*. This is one of the earliest record of *Brahmadeya*. The endowments meant the surrender of rights by the grantor i.e. *Sarvapariharamaka*. Temples were also endowed with gold *kasus* by the kings for conducting prayers and other services in the temple. These were entrusted to the assembly (committee of assembly or *variyam*) but interest had to be paid on this amount at a fixed rate. Sometimes grants of gold bestowed upon temples were placed in the custody of *Nagarattar* (corporation of merchants). Inscriptions give us information about village assemblies especially the way they functioned by delegating work to the committees. Membership in these assemblies was based on property and learning criteria as is clear from the inscription from *Uttiramallur* (Chingleput) of early 10th century A.D. These assemblies were not elected bodies. It is not clear how the *Variyams* (executive bodies) of assembly were constituted. The administrative personnel of the Pandyas as the evidence from the records reveals comprised of: *evi mudal* (keeper of original orders), *vaykktetri*, *pamarappottakam* (keeper of royal register) and *adhikari*. *Puravu vari Kanattar* was probably the land revenue department.

The stone and copper plate records were probably not original evidence (since the original inscriptions were inscribed on palm leaves). Land grant records are related to the tax-free grants of land made by the king to the Brahmans and the temples. A procedure was followed in making land grants. The king verbally gave approval. This was obtained by a high official. Then the directive of the king was executed regarding the listing of the grants in the revenue records. The oral approval was termed as *Kelvi* or *Tirumugam*. *Olai* was an executive order to the officials regarding implementation of the king's order. The *Ulvai* was the title-deed which was approved by the revenue officers (*Variyilar* or *Varikkuruseyvar*). It appears that records regarding sanction of land grants and other orders were kept in the capital and the officers in the localities were directed to implement the king's orders.

The cultivated lands were subjected to taxation. Some of the taxes on the basis of the evidence of inscriptions were: *Kadamai* (on temples lands), *Antarayan*, *Viniyogam* (land tax), *Ponvari*, *Accu-vari*, *Kariyavaracci*, etc. It appears that these were mostly exacted in kind though some might have been cash payments. Taxes were also imposed on loom (of *Kaikkolar* and *Saliyar*) and shopkeepers. The testimony of the inscriptions also indicates that at times villagers had to suffer due to harassment by the officials or the incursions of the petty chiefs. There are also indications that due to high taxation sometimes the peasants fled the villages.

15.5 THE CHOLAS

The Cholas as a ruling power rose to eminence in the 9th Century A.D. when Vijayalaya seized Tanjavur from a feudatory chief of the Pallavas called Muttarayas. Henceforth the Cholas were able to establish control over Pallava territories and subdued the Pandya power. The Chola state stood on a firm footing deriving sustenance from the resource-pocket located in the fertile and rich area of the Kaveri valley. In the period of Rajaraja I and subsequent period various feudatory chiefs were subjugated and the earlier category of *Nadu* was regrouped into *Valanadu* and was placed under the subdued chiefs. The landed magnates were also incorporated into the state system and were provided prestigious titles and were assigned administrative and military duties, which included collection and assessment of land revenue.

Chola Kingship

The Cholas traced their origin to the *Suryavamsa*. Mythical traditions are mentioned in the inscriptions especially in the *prasastis* containing the genealogies (Tiruvalangad Copper plates, the larger Leiden Plates and the Anbil Plates, KanyaKumari inscription of Vira Rajendra) and these are interspersed with information about historical personages. It appears that these served the purpose of legitimisation of the rule of the Cholas. The *prasastis* of the Cholas were based on the *Itihasa-Purana* tradition. The dominance of the Sanskrit and the Brahmanical traditions is well attested. The Cholas also ascribe to the legacy of the Sangam period. The genealogies of the Cholas attribute eminent and prestigious lineage to the king to legitimise his position as king. The period from the eighth year of Rajaraja and onwards is marked by absence of genealogical record in the Tamil *Meykkirttis*. These compositions narrate the military exploits of the kings and are inscribed on stone and address the Tamil landed magnates. The Cholas ascribe Kshatriya origin to themselves as is attested by the title Kshatriyasikhamani of the king Rajaraja. The Varman suffix (sanskritic)

added to the names of the kings was also a part of the process of claiming kshatriya status e.g. Adityavarman (871-906) and Parantaka Varman (707-755). The practice of assuming names during coronation also existed under the Cholas e.g.: Prakesarivarman and Rajakesarivarman and Arumolivarman (Tamil name with a Sanskrit suffix). The charters of the Cholas consist of the *prasastis* and genealogies in Sanskrit and the details regarding the grant in Tamil. *Hiranyagarbha* and *Tilabhara* ceremonies were conducted by the Chola kings. The anointment ceremony was also a means to claim *Kshatriya* position. A grant of Vira Chola points out that the king was advised by a Brahman moral preacher (dharmopadesta) that bestowment of land to Brahmans would lead his forefathers to heaven. However actual motive for making the grants was redistribution of resources in the form of land, gold, cattle etc. The gifts were bestowed for meritorious service provided by the Brahmans and also to seek legitimacy from them in political sphere. We have proper records of land grants but the grants of gold, cattle etc. were merely stated in *prasastis*. Through the land grants the kings tried to convert unsettled areas into agrarian settlements. These grants did not simply serve a charitable purpose. Rajaraja is regarded as *Ulakalanda Perumel* (the great one who measured the earth like *Trivikrama*) and as Siva who established control over the land of Bhargava Rama.

Local Administration

Ur and Nadu

The Chola copper plate evidence refers to the following while executing the land grant:

- 1) *Nattar*
- 2) *Brahmadeyakkilavar*
- 3) a) *Devadana*
b) *Palliccanda*
c) *Kanimurruttu*
d) *Vettaperu-Urkalilar*
- 4) *Nagarattar*

Nattar were the representatives of *Nadu* (locality). The *Brahmadeyakkilavar* were the Brahman donees of *Brahmadeya* (lands given to Brahmans). *Nagarattar* comprised of the trading community and belonged to the *nagaram* or settlement of group of traders. *Devadana*, *Palliccanda*, *Kavimurruttu* and *Vettaperu* have been identified as tax free villages. Y. Subbrayalu has pointed out that *nattar* were analogous to the *Vellanvagai Urar* (peasant village) since a number of *Ur* constituted a *Nadu*. Subbrayalu considers the village or *Ur* as a small component (fractional) of the *Nadu*. As a constituent of administrative structure, the *Nadu* was important but it incorporated and represented the *Ur* (*vellanvagai* villages). Thus in the territorial sphere *Nadu* comprised of *Vellanvagai* villages. *Nattar* were the important members (land holders) of the *Nadu* (locality). There are very few inscriptions related to the *vellanvagai* villages. It seems that the *Ur* being the common populace represented the section which was not literate. However the inscriptional evidence related to *Ur* which is found in the temples is attributed to literate groups.

N. Karashima has analysed the two Tanjavur inscriptions of Rajaraja I and Gangaikkondacolapuram inscription of Vivarajendra. According to him the *vellanvagai* villages comprised of agricultural lands, lands used by pastoralists,

irrigation devices, funeral place, dwelling place, etc. The dwelling area comprised of: 1) habitation sites of landholders/cultivators (*ur-nattam/ur-irukkai*), 2) of the artisans (*kammanacceri*), 3) agricultural labour (*paraicceri*). Karashima is of the opinion that in the *Vellanvagai* villages differentiation is not noticed. Subbrayalu however refutes this argument and suggests the existence of a hierarchical structure in these villages comprising of cultivators (*kaniyudaiyar*), tenant cultivators (*ulukudi*), artisans and the agricultural labourers. The cultivators were generally referred to as *vellals*. The functions of the *Ur* included: supervision of village lands viz. activities related to sale, purchase and gift. An important prerequisite for becoming a member of the *Ur* was to be a holder of land. From the inscriptional evidence, we come to know that the members of the *Ur* also possessed the titles like *Udaiyan*, *Kilan* (*kilavan*), *Velan*, *Peraraiyan*. All these titles point to landholding. Thus the epigraphical testimony enables us to infer that *Ur* was the group/assembly of non-brahman land holders of a village.

N. Karashima has argued that the land was held in common in the *Ur* villages. Karashima in some other instances refers to sale of land by members of *Ur* as individuals. Subbrayalu also refers, to the tendency towards 'individual holdings' in this period. *Nadus* were named after a village, which formed a part of a *Nadu*. Inscriptional evidence indicates that in several *Nadus* the main village was *Brahmadeya* (land given to Brahmins). However, several *nadus* did not have *Brahmadeya*. Subbrayalu refers to increase in *Nadus* from the 9th century A.D. Initially *Nadus* emerged in fertile areas, which had more villages and later spread to periphery (less fertile areas) where the number of villages was comparatively less. Nilakanta. Sastri points out that the *Nadu* comprised of many villages which were the smallest component of administration. Mahalingam suggests that *Nadu* was an administrative unit and it was sub-divided into villages. There is no unanimity of opinion among scholars regarding whether *Nadu* comprised of only *Vellanvagai* or also consisted of *Brahmadeya*, *Devadana* etc. Y. Subbrayalu points out that *Nadu* and *Ur* represented a locality comprising of *Vellanvagai* villages and its representatives participated in the assembly of *Nadu*. It is difficult to delineate the exact area over which the *Nadus* were spread. *Nadus* differed in size and they did not have any natural divisions (eg. rivers). Therefore they could not possibly have been artificially created units or divisions. Sometimes *Nadus* covered the area beyond a river. In conventional historiography *Nattar* was regarded as a territorial assembly of a territorial unit *Nadu* which comprised of eminent members of every village. Other assemblies such as of *Brahmedeya*, *Pallicandam* were also considered subordinate to *Nadu* in the administrative machinery. Recently historians have argued that *Nadu* was not an administrative unit created by the Chola state but it was a natural collection of peasant settlements which was incorporated into the state system of the Cholas as a legacy from the previous period. This is proved by the fact that these *Nadus* were not of same size and were nucleated. The *Valanadus* which came into existence in the period of Rajaraja I were artificially created as administrative divisions. *Nadus* initially emerged in fertile areas and later spread to comparatively less fertile zones. This is how the agrarian economy expanded. *Nadus* located in the fertile tracts were more populated than those in other areas.

There are several inscriptions which give us information about *Nadus*. *Kiranur* inscription of 1310 refers to the 'urom of villages Nanjil, Peruncevur, Viraikkudi..... as qualified for the *Nadu* or Vada-chiruvayil-nadu.' (K. Veluthat, p. 184). It is clear from the evidence of the records that the *Nattar* were the *Vellals* and the functions of *Nattar* (*Nadu*) were performed by the *Vellala* who held the title of *Velan*. The main occupation of *Nattar* was agriculture since *Nadu* was a collection of agricultural

settlements. The copper plates which basically deal with land grants address the *Nattar* and the execution of the grant made by the king was entrusted to them (deciding the limits of the lands granted by the establishment of superior rights of new grantees etc.) *Nattar* was subservient to the will of the ruler. *Nattar* also supervised irrigation works. They bestowed land on temples. They also served as stockists of donation made to temples. They also supervised the grants made by individuals and exempted the lands donated thus from tax and in return took a certain sum of money as a deposit. *Nadu* also bestowed land on temples which was tax-free (*nattiraiyili*). The tax payments exempted on lands donated to the temple were now the responsibility of *Nadu* towards the state. *Nadu* seems to have levied a cess for meeting these expenses. These levies or imposts were: *Nadatci*; *Nattu-viniyogan*, or *Nattu-vyavasthai*. The temple lands were sold and leased out, a process in which the *nattar* played an important role. *Nadu* seems to have been engaged in tax collection and assessment. Sometimes the *Nattar* performed the revenue collection task on behalf of the state and sometimes king's personnel (*komarravar*) were responsible for this work. *Mudaligal* and *Dandanayakam* were functionaries deputed in *nadu* and as royal officials they were entrusted with administrative responsibility. Thus the land holders in a locality were absorbed into the state system by the Cholas. These constituted the local landed magnates and worked on behalf of the king who exercised authority over them.

Nadu was the smallest unit for revenue administration. *Nattup-puravu*, *Nattu-vari* (land revenue) and *Nattukkanakku* all refer to revenue of *Nadu*. *Nattuk-kanakku* were the personnel responsible for revenue administration of *Nadu*. The collection and fixation of the revenue of a village was carried out within the context of *Nadu* where the village was located. When *Ur* exempted taxes this got reflected in *Nadu* accounts.

The king's decision to transfer the funds of temple for a specific purpose in the temple was reflected in the *Variyilarkanakku* (revenue register of royal authority) and the *Nattuk-kanakku* (revenue register of *nadu*). This testifies to the relevance of *Nadu* as an important part of administrative system of the Cholas in spite of its locally independent character. *Nadu-vagai-ceyvar*, *Nadu-kurk-ceyvar* and *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* and *Nadu-kankatci* were the personnel who represented royal power in *Nadu*. *Nadu Kuru* is mentioned in an inscription of *Kulottunga I* (AD 1116) who managed the functioning of new *Devadana*. These personnel were given the role of maintaining the accounts of temples in localities. *Nadu vagai* is mentioned as participating in the assembly of *Brahmadeya* (sabha). In an inscription *Nadu-kankani-nayagam* is placed below *Senapati*. These posts of *Nadu* officers were transferable. Some officers were entrusted with the administrative responsibility in more than one *Nadu*. Thus they worked as part of royal administrative machinery.

Brahmadeya and Nagaram

Brahmadeyas constituted the category of Brahmans who were landholders in the agricultural tracts and who had been endowed with land (tax free) and had organised themselves into a distinct group. *Nagaram* comprised of traders who carried out trading and exchange activities in the pockets which had developed into commercial centres on account of the spurt in craft production and other activities carried out by artisans.

When the Cholas emerged as an important ruling power in the middle of 9th century A.D. in Thanjavur there already existed many *Brahmadeyas* which were densely

populated and rich tracts in the Kaveri region. The Karantai plates of Rajendra I refer to 1080 Brahmans who inhabited Tribhuvanamahadevi Caturvedimangalam. The assembly of these Brahmans which inhabited agricultural tracts was called *Sabha* or *Mahasabha*. Most of the *Brahmadeyas* or Brahman settlements were centred round the temple. Through the temple and the ideological focus based on the *Puranas* and *Itihasas*, *Bhakti* and *varnashramadharm*a the differentiated society and monarchical polity were legitimised. Therefore the kings endowed lands to Brahmans and created *Brahmadeyas* as a means to legitimize their power.

The inscriptions inform us that many of the *Brahmadeyas* in the Chola period were *Taniyur* (separate village) in a *Nadu*. They had a separate administrative system (revenue and justice). Many of the agricultural villages were clubbed together with a *Taniyur*. Sometimes a *Taniyur* was placed subordinate to a temple. Here the *Mulparusai* was the body which looked after the work of administration.

The inscriptions give the important prerequisites like age, landholding, knowledge, good behaviour for membership to an executive committee of *Sabha*. The Karantai plates (1080 Brahmans) refer to *Brahmadeyas* but do not inform us how the *Sabha* and other committees were formed. They were not established by royal authority. Their origin may be attributed to *Dharmasastric* norms. The *Sabha* and its committees supervised the temple lands, cattle and other resources. They assigned lands to tenants and levied rent. They kept a record of revenue collected and expenses incurred. They supervised the temple functionaries from priest to cleaner and organised the daily services of temples. *Sabha* acted as a group and the decisions taken were for the benefit of the organisation and not individuals.

The *Brahmadeya* settlements where the temple played a pivotal role lost importance in the later phase of the Chola period. After mid 11th century A.D. we find fewer *Brahmadeya* tracts and more temples were constructed and the older ones were improved upon. Sometimes the *Mahasabha* unable to pay the amount taken from a temple due to shortage of funds was forced to fall back upon its income from the neighbouring village.

Nagaram settlement was a tract where traders and others (including artisans) lived. "An inscription of 1036 A.D. from Chidambaram distinguishes between non-brahman inhabitants of superior status (*kudigal*) and those of inferior status (*kil kalanai*). *Kudigal* included two merchant groups *Sankarappadiyar* (lower group) and *Vyaparin* (higher group) plus three other groups – *Vellals* (cultivators), *Saliyar* (cloth merchants) and *Pattinavar* (fishermen). The subordinate workmen (*kil kalanai*) were *Taccar* (carpenters), *Kollar* (blacksmiths), *Tattar* (goldsmiths) and *Kolliyar* (weavers)" (B. Stein, *Peasant State and Society in Medieval South India*).

Nagarattar was the representative body of traders. *Nagaram* settlement was a separate area. Committee of *Nagarattar* was referred to as *Nagaravariyam*. *Nagaram* also held land in common called *Nagarakkani*. This they acquired through purchase but they also leased out land and performed the task of levying taxes and rendering services to the local groups. They maintained their records regarding income and expenditure. They also paid royal levies in the form of gold and paddy. They also allocated taxes to the local temples viz. *Kadamai* (tax on land), *Nagaraviniyogam* (a tax for sustenance of *Nagaram*) etc. In some cases *Nagaram* were independent of *Nadu* (*taniyur*).

King, Officials and Chiefs

A number of officers were responsible for administration in the Chola kingdom although there is no clear evidence of a council of minister but *Uddan-kottam* seems to have served this purpose. Upward and downward mobility is noticed in the administrative hierarchy. According to conventional historiography *Perundan* and *Sirutaram* were higher and lower category officials respectively. *Senapati*s (commander of troops) had the middle position referred to as *Sirudanattup Perundaram*. *Nyayattar* (judges) were of both category. Recently historians have pointed out that these divisions are not conclusively borne out by evidence. Officials were paid by allotting land rights. Tax on land was levied in cash and kind both. Officials were referred to as holders (*udaiyan, kilan*) of lands. They could further sub-assign land or even sell it. Communal ownership was prevalent and customary rights of villagers were recognised. The lowest unit of administration was the village. They combined to form a *Nadu*. A *Valanadu* comprised of a few *Nadus*. *Taniyur* was a separate village or settlement site. Above *Valanadu* there was *Mandalam* which was equivalent to a province. *Karumigal* and *Panimakkal* meant officers and servants. *Anbil* plates refer to a *Brahman Manya Saciva*. He was granted land by the king. The king conveyed his orders orally (*triuvaykkelvi*) especially with regard to gift to temples. The directive was conveyed through a letter (*sri-mukham*) issued by *Anatti* (executive officer) appointed by the king. The local bodies were apprised and when the process was completed a record was prepared in the presence of the local magnates called *Nattukkon, Nadukilavan, Urudaiyan*.

Officers associated with the process of bestowment and registration of land grants were many and some are also referred to as *Uttaramantri*. *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalam* was the department of land revenue. *Varipottagam* was the record of land rights and *Vari-pottagak-kanakku* was the register of revenue department. Officers associated with the task of maintaining records and registers of land rights and land revenue department were *Varipottagam* and *Variyiledu*. *Kankanis* or supervisors were the audit officers. Entry in a record was called *Variyilidu*. *Mugavetti* (wrote royal letters) and *Pattolai* were junior functionaries of land revenue department. Officers of *Nadu* (of the status of *adhikari*) were *Nadu kuru* (revenue assessment and settlement officer), *Nadu vagai* (revenue official). *Mandira olai* was the officer who wrote the *Tirumugam* (letter containing the royal order). The term *Naduvirukkai* was used for *Vijnapti* (*vaykkelvi*) or petitioner and *Anatti* (executive officer) who served as a link between monarch and the persons who wished to approach the king. The king made oral orders (*triuvaykkelvi*) regarding the issues brought to him by the officers. These requests transformed into orders were sent to local administration and central administration for implementation. The *Olai nayagam* were the officers who verified the letter written by *Mandira-olai*. The oral order of the king was put to writing (*eluttu*) and compared (*oppu*) and then entered (*pugunda*). *Vidaiyil adigari* got the order listed in the record. The document was called *Tittu* and the charity deed (*aravolai*).

Justice was carried out by the village assemblies through the committees comprising of *Nyayattar*. The central court of justice was the *Dharmasana* which conducted its affairs through *Dharmasana bhattas* (Brahmans proficient in law). It appears that civil and criminal offences were not dealt separately. The penalty for crime committed by a person affecting the king or ruling dynasty was decided by the king himself. Several methods of punishment prevailed viz. imposition of fines, capital punishment etc.

Adhikaris were the king's officers. They possessed the titles *Udaiyan, Kilan/Kilavan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan* and other chiefly nomenclature. Sometimes more than one nomenclature was adopted. At times the name of the Chola ruler or his epithet was used as a prefix by the *Adhikaris*. *Naduvirukkai* were mostly Brahman (held titles like *Bhatta, Barhmadhirajan*) officers and acted as a link between the royal authority and the bureaucracy and they are always referred to in connection with the *adhikaris*.

Personnel in charge of temples were *Srikaryam* but they did not look after the ritual related aspects like worship etc. In some cases we have the evidence of *Adhikaris* holding the *Srikaryam* office. Generally they had a distinctive position in the administrative system. The titles held by them were *Kilan/Kilavan, Velan, Muvendavelan, Brahma, Bhatta, Kon, Pallavaraiyan, Vilupparaiyan, Nadu* title, *King's title. Senapati* was in charge of military affairs. They bear the king's title/name, and other titles such as *Udaiyan, Brahma, Araiyan, Kilans*. The office of *Dandanayakam* was probably akin to the *Senapati* (military office). The title mentioned for this office is *Pallavaaraiyans*. The titles held by *Senapaties* were: *udaiyan, brahma, araiyan* etc. The office of *Tiru-mandria olai nayakam* was an important office associated with preparation of land grant documents. The titles of these officers were *Muvendavelan, Brahma* etc.

Officers deputed at *Nadu* who discharged their duties at the behest of the king were *Nadu Vagai* who were revenue assessment officers. *Kottam-vagai* were deputed in *Tondaimandalam* area and performed the same function as *Nadu vagai*. *Nadukankaninayakam* had control over more than one *Nadu* and had a higher position than *Nadu vagai*. The titles which occur with the office of *Nadu vagai* were: *Araiyan* and *Udaiyan*. *Muvendavelan* was borne by *Nadu kuru* (officer of *nadu*) who was an officer of the rank of *Adhikari*.

Rajaraja I (1001 A.D.) adopted an elaborate land revenue fixation and assessment mechanism and thus *Valanadus* were created and this practice was also adopted by other rulers. The land revenue department was called *Puravuvuri tinaikkalam*. This department was an administrative division of the king's government and had the following personnel: *Puravu vari, Vari pottagan, Mugavetti, Vari pottaga, Kanakku, Variyil idu* and *Pattolai* etc. In the time of Rajendra II the administrative personnel had more elaborate designations: *Puravu-vari-tinaikkalanakkar*, etc. The period of Kulottunga I witnesses few officers: *Puravu-vari-Srikanana, Nayagam* and *Mugavetti*. Later the term *Variyilar* refers to personnel of revenue department as a general terminology. These officers had the epithet: *Udaiyan, Muvendavelan, etc.*

The titles held by the king's personnel such as *Udaiyan, Kilan* and *Kilavan* refer to possession. Other titles were *Velan* and *Muvendavelan*. The latter is a typical Chola title and occurs from the time of Parantaka. These titles suggest that those who bore them were land holders or associated with land. The title *Muvendavelan* was bestowed by the Chola King and K. Veluthat points out ".... the strong association of those who bore this high title with offices of some importance is borne in mind, demonstrating that the major *Vellal* landed magnates were enlisted in the service of the king by which process they became an integral part of the state system." It appears that the title used by chiefs and their families viz. *Araiyan* was used by other eminent people as well. In the period of Rajaraja I the chiefly rule suffered a setback but the number of *Araiyan* title holders was on the rise. This title was more prestigious than *Muvendavelan*. It is conjectured that the chiefs were

subdued to the position of landed magnates or cultivators from the period of Rajaraja and his successors although they still held the title.

The cattle herders (*manradi*) supervised the grants for lighting lamps in the temples. Merchants held the titles of *Cetti*, *Mayilatti* and *Palan*. They even occupied the important offices like *Senapati* and accountant. *Peruntaccan* and *Perunkollan* were titles used by artisan category but at the most their important positions were confined to royal palace and the temple connected with it.

We do not get clear evidence of a council of ministers but there existed officers like: *Purohita* (*dharmopadesta*), *Rajagurus*, *Tirumandira olai*, *Adhikari*, *Vayilketpar* (officer who noted the king's directives) etc. M.G.S Narayanan points out that *Udan kuttam* was like king's companion of honour. They might have had a head because we have mention of *Adhikari* of *Udankuttam*. There are references to the court in literature (*Periyapuranam* etc.). The king's court comprised of: Brahman advisors, Priests, *Rajaguru*, *Adhikaris*, *Tirumandira olai nayagams*, *Vayilketpar*, head of the king's bodyguards and *Samantas* (feudatory chiefs). The various levies of this period were: *Antarayam*, *Eccoru*, *Kadamai* (produce-rent), *Kudimai*, *Muttaiy-al*, *Vetti* (labour-rent) and *Tattar-pattan* (cash payment). Most of the imposts were exacted in kind viz. paddy.

The Cholas undertook military expedition to Sri Lanka (during the time of Rajaraja I) and Sri Vijaya (during the time of Rajendra I). This shows the military strength of the Chola state. It seems that the cavalrymen (*kudiraiaccevagar*), *Anaiyatkal* (those who fought on elephant), *Archers* (*villigal*, *anukkar*) were name of the categories constituting the military force. *Valangai* (right hand) *Velaikkarar* were the soldiers recruited from among the peasants. Soldiers were also recruited from the artisans group (*idangai* – left hand). These were basically mercenary soldiers. Chola *Meykkirttis* refer to Kantalur *Salai* which has been interpreted as an educational institution in the Chera kingdom which imparted military education and training to the Brahmans which as mentioned in *Meykkirttis* was the place where Chera fleet was destroyed by the Chola king. This proves that Chola military prowess was insurmountable.

The chiefs held an important position in the state system. In the Pandya kingdom the only category of chiefs was *Ays*. In the Sangam literature there is reference to many chiefs viz. *Ays*, *Vels*, *Muvas*, *Kodumbalur* and *Adigamans*. The records of the Pallavas refer to chiefs such as *Gangas* and *Adigamans*. The various other chiefs who accepted the suzerainty of Pallavas were *Banas*, *Vettuva-adiaraiyan*, *Muttaraiyar* etc. The chiefs of the Chola period were: *Paluvettaraiyar*, *Vels*, *Malavas*, *Gangas*, *Banas*, etc. It appears that the chiefs were assigned land and collected dues from it in return for *padi kaval* or protection of territory. In the post-Kulottunga period there is reference to *Nilamaittittu* or diplomatic agreement between two or more chiefs. These chiefs also had their soldiers and retainers. Their services were utilised by the Chola kings.

15.6 ADMINISTRATIVE SYSTEM IN THE DECCAN

Satavahana

The earliest state formation in the Deccan was the Satavahana state. Major part of the kingdom was under the control of royal officers but some portion was controlled by feudatories. The administrative divisions comprised of *Aharas* or *Rashtras* which

contained town (*nigama*) and villages (*grama*). Amatyas were governors of *Ahara*. The king was assisted in the task of administration by *rajamatyas* (advisers). Other officers were: *Mahamatra*, *Bhandagarika* (supervisor of stores), *Heranika* (treasurer), *Mahasenapati* (commander of forces). The *Lekhaka* was in charge of preparing documents and *Nibandhakaras* were also documentation officers. *Maharathis* and *Mahbhojas* were the feudatories. They could make grants without the sanction of the king. *Gramini* was in charge of villages. *Nigama Sabha* was the assembly of citizens of the town. *Srenis* or guilds of professions also existed (potters, oil millers etc.)

Chalukyas of Badami

The titles of Chalukya kings were as follows: *Satyasraya*, *Sri-Prithvi-Vallabha Maharaja*, *Pramesvara* and *Maharajadhiraja*. It was not a centralized kingdom. We do not find reference to council of ministers but it seems that the royal family was placed in charge of official positions. Later the Eastern Chalukya kingdom and other kingdoms developed due to this policy. They emerged as offshoots of the original Chalukyas of Badami. Inscriptions give us information about the administrative system. *Rajasravitam* were the royal orders. The *Vijnaptis* (petitioners) and writers of the king's orders related to grants on stone or copper plates were important administrative personnel. They held the position of *Mahasandhivigrahika* (officer in charge of peace and war). The division mentioned in the epigraphical records are *Rashtra*, *Vishaya* and *Nadu*. The copper plate grants bestowed by the Chalukya kings refers to *Vishyapatis*, *Samantas*, *Gramabhogikas*, *Maharattaras* etc. Thus the administrative system was not centralised. However, *Vishayapatis* were royal personnel. Village was the smallest part of the administrative system. The *Gamunda* was the royal representative at the village level. He was the connecting link between king and village people. The *Karanas* were the village accountants. *Mahajans* constituted the village elders. The Lakshmesvar inscription gives us details regarding the links between the royal machinery and local administration. An *Achara vyasthe* (charter of rights and duties) was bestowed upon the *Mahajans*, *Nagara* (commercial interests) and eighteen *Prakritis* (classes). It refers to royal personnel, *Mahajans*, *Desadhipatis* (officers who collected taxes), *Sreni* (guild) of oil mongers etc. Various taxes are mentioned in the inscription which were to be paid to the king's officials: for great festivals, salt, tribute and gold. The Hyderabad grant of Pulkesin II refers to the village being granted together with the *Nidhi* (treasure), *Upanidhi*, *Klipta* and *Uparikara* (dues). Members of the royal family and trade associations also made gifts to the temples in kind (millet, betel leaves).

Rashtrakutas

Under the Rashtrakutas also the administrative system was not centralised. The kingdom was placed in charge of royal officials as well as feudatories. The feudatories had to give regular tribute to the suzerain and had to render military service whenever required. The territory which was placed under the direct control of the central government was categorised into *Rashtras* and *Vishayas*. The *Vishayas* comprised of a number of *Bhuktis* which were further divided into villages. Thus the smallest component of the administrative hierarchy was the village. The officer in charge of *Rashtra* was the *Rastrapati*. He combined both military and civil functions. He was entrusted with the task of appropriation of land revenue. The maintenance of law and order was another responsibility assigned to him. The *Vishayapatis* and *Bhogapatis* exercised control over a smaller area as compared to the *Rashtrapati*. The former were incharge of revenue administration together with the *Nalgavundas* or *Desagramakutas* (hereditary revenue officers). The officials responsible for the

administration at the village level were headman and accountant. The functions of the village headman included maintenance of the law and order as well as collection of taxes. The village council which was represented by the elders of the village (*gramamahajanas* or *gramamahattaras*) constituted subcommittees for carrying out the public welfare activities like management of tanks, temples, roads and schools. The records of the period indicate that the provincial and local administration was carried out by the assemblies which comprised of elders of the district (*Vishaya mahattaras*), province (*Rashtra mahattaras*) or villages. These representative bodies were an important feature of the administrative system at the local level.

15.7 SUMMARY

This Unit deals with the administrative and institutional structures in Peninsular India from the earliest times to the early medieval period. The earliest political formation in South India referred to as “Sangam” polity, dated to early centuries of Christian era, was characterised by chiefdoms. The period from 6th century A.D. onwards witnessed the rise of monarchical polities such as the Pallavas of Kanchi, Chalukyas of Badami, Pandyas of Madura and Cholas of Tanjavur. The political structure which emerged under the Cholas, Pallavas and Pandyas was quite similar in nature. The political formation of this period emerged in the river valleys which served as the economic resource base. The agrarian expansion of this period coincided with the establishment of *Brahmadeya* and *Devadana* settlements. The royal power sought legitimacy by several means viz. land grants to *Brahmans* and temples, claiming high descent and performance of rituals etc. The king had a bureaucratic machinery to assist him in administration but it was not a centralised system. In the above mentioned kingdoms feudatories played an important role in the administrative system. The most important feature of the polity of this period was the evolution of *Nadu* as an administrative unit which was a natural collection of agricultural settlements. The *Ur* (assembly of non-*Brahmans*) and *Sabha* (assembly of *Brahmans*) and *Nagaram* (assembly of traders) also played an important role in the administrative system.

15.8 EXERCISES

- 1) Analyse the local administration under the Cholas.
- 2) Give a brief account of the nature of Pallava kingship.