

The Mauryan Empire: Overview

Rise of Magadha and the Nanda Dynasty (343 BC – 321 BC)

- During the Nanda dynasty, Magadha was a formidable power in India.
- Alexander's invasion in 326 BC coincided with Nanda rule, highlighting Magadha's strength.

Mauryan Empire (321 BC – 184 BC)

- The Mauryan Empire was founded by Chandragupta Maurya in 321 BC, marking the first time a large part of the Indian subcontinent was unified under a single paramount power.



Key Mauryan Rulers

Chandragupta Maurya (321 BC – 298 BC)

- ◆ Overthrew the last Nanda king, Dhanananda, with the guidance of Kautilya (Chanakya).
- ◆ He was also called Sandrocottus by the Greek scholars.
- ◆ Expanded the empire westward by defeating Seleucus Nicator, gaining control of territories in Afghanistan and Baluchistan.
- ◆ Established a strong centralized administration.
- ◆ Abdicated the throne, embraced Jainism, and spent his last years in Sravanabelagola, Karnataka, under the guidance of Jain monk Bhadrabahu.



Bindusara (298 BC – 273 BC)

- ◆ Known as Amitrochates (Sanskrit: Amitraghata, meaning "slayer of foes") by Greek historians.
- ◆ Faced revolts in the western provinces and appointed Ashoka as governor of Taxila and later Ujjain.
- ◆ Expanded the Mauryan Empire in the south.
- ◆ Patronized the Ajivika sect, an ascetic order.



Ashoka (268 BC – 232 BC)

- ◆ Ascended the throne after a four-year civil war (268 BC – 269 BC).
- ◆ Conquered Kalinga in 260 BC, a turning point that led to his conversion to Buddhism.
- ◆ Promoted the policy of Dhammaghosa (spread of dharma) over Berighosa (war).
- ◆ Sent Buddhist missionaries to spread the teachings of Buddhism across India, Sri Lanka, and Central Asia.
- ◆ Focused on public welfare and cultural unity through his inscriptions, emphasizing justice, non-violence, and moral governance.



Successors of Ashoka (232 BC – 184 BC)

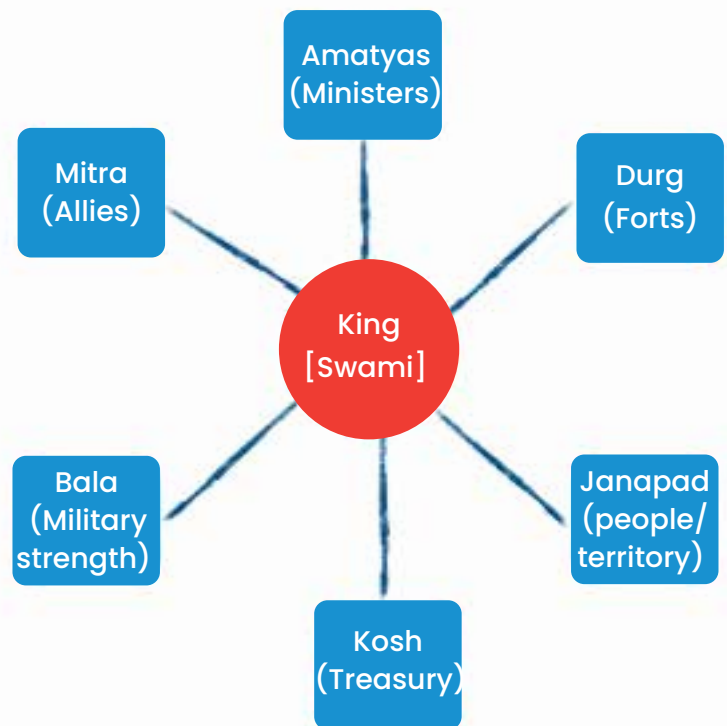
- After Ashoka's death, the Mauryan Empire declined and fragmented:
 - Western part:** Ruled by **Kunal (Ashoka's son)** and later by his son **Samprati**.
 - Eastern part:** Ruled by **Dasaratha (Ashoka's grandson)**.
- The last Mauryan ruler, **Brihadratha**, was assassinated by **Pushyamitra Sunga** in 184 BC, marking the end of the Mauryan dynasty.

Mauryan Administration Overview

Key sources such as the Arthashastra, Greek accounts, and Ashokan inscriptions provide insights into its structure and functions.

- The Mauryan administration was highly centralized, with the **king as the fountainhead of power**.
- The king ruled based on **parental despotism** and was referred to as '**Dharamapravartaka**' (**Promulgator of Social Order**) by Kautilya.

Saptanga Theory of State: The Arthashastra outlines the Saptanga theory, which organizes the State into seven essential elements:



Element	Description
Swami	The king or ruler, the central authority.
Amatya	The ministers or officials who assist in governance.
Janapada	The territory and its people (subjects).
Durga	A fortified capital ensuring security and control.
Kosha	The treasury, essential for economic stability.
Danda	Justice or force used to maintain law and order.
Mitra	Allies who provide external support and stability.

Centralized Bureaucratic Administration

♦ **The King:** Supreme authority, assisted by the council of ministers. The highest functionaries at the center were called **Tirthas**, numbering 18, with the following key members:

- **Mantri** (Chief Minister)
- **Purohita** (Chief Priest)
- **Senapati** (Commander-in-Chief)
- **Yuvaraja** (Crown Prince)



- ♦ **Mantriparishad (Council of Ministers):** It was a key advisory body assisting the king in daily administration.
- ♦ According to **Kautilya's Arthashastra**, the administration included **27 superintendents (Adhyakshas)** who primarily regulated economic activities.

Superintendent (Adhyaksha)	Responsibilities
Panyadhyaksha	Oversaw commerce and trade regulations.
Samsthadhyaksha	Managed markets and prevented fraudulent practices.
Pautavadhyaksha	Regulated weights and measures to ensure fairness.
Navadhyaksha	Supervised state-owned boats and water transport.
Sulkadhyaksha	Collected tolls and managed revenue from transportation.
Sitadhyaksha	Administered crown lands and ensured agricultural output.
Akshapataladhyaksha	Handled state accounts and financial management.
Pattanadhyaksha	Supervised ports and maritime trade activities.
Devatadhyaksha	Oversaw religious institutions and ceremonies.
Lakshanadhyaksha	Managed the mint and production of currency.

♦ **Army:** Large standing army with divisions for infantry, cavalry, chariots, and elephants.

- Commanding officers: **Patyadhyaksha** (Infantry), **Ashvadyaksha** (Cavalry), **Rathadyaksha** (Chariots), **Hastyadyaksha** (Elephants).

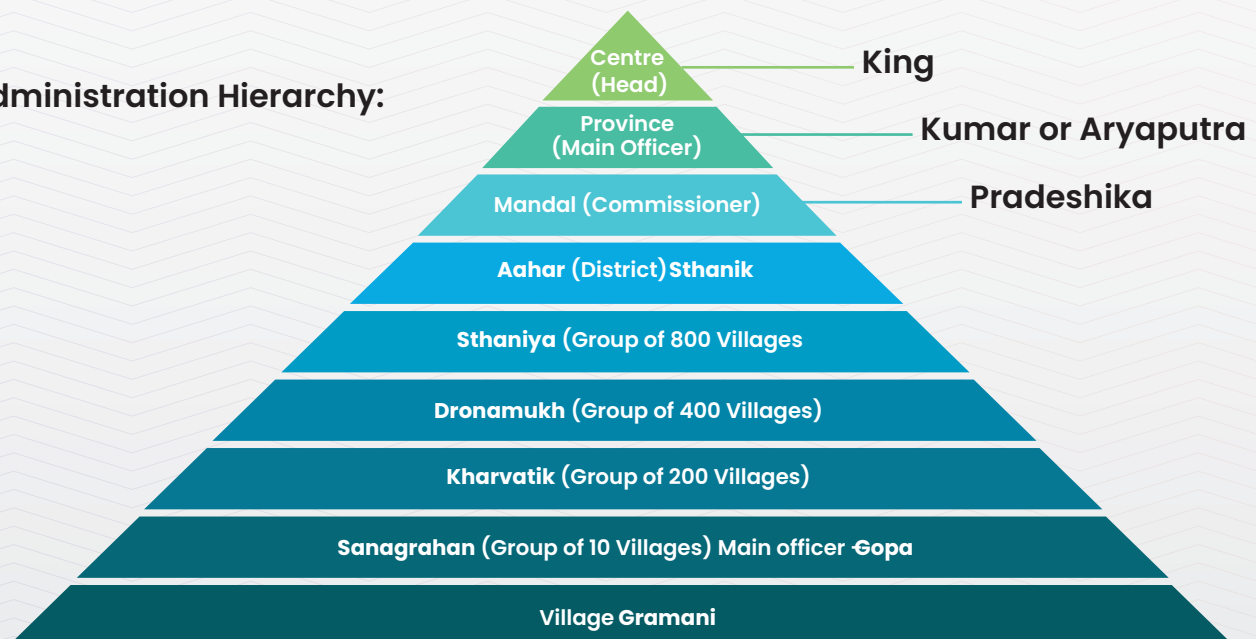


♦ **Espionage Network:** The Arthashastra describes a sophisticated espionage system. Spies operated in disguise (sanyasis, wanderers, beggars) and were divided into:

- **Sanstha:** Stationary secret agents.
- **Sanchari:** Touring secret agents.
 - ▶ Students, householders, and poisonous girls (Vishkanya) were also employed as agents.
- **Key Officials:**
 - ▶ **Mahamatya-pasarpa:** Head of the espionage department.
 - ▶ **Gudhapurushas:** Secret agents.
 - ▶ **Pulisani:** Public relations officer who gathered public opinion and reported to the king.
 - ▶ **Prativedaka:** Special reporter with direct access to the king.
- ♦ **Law and Justice:** Civil (Dharmasthiyas) and criminal courts (Kantakasodhanas), with the king as the supreme judge.

Provincial Administration

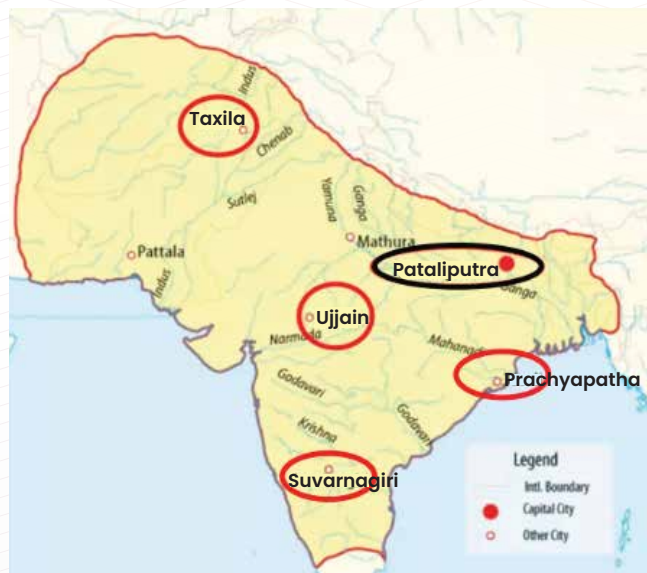
Administration Hierarchy:



Structure: The Mauryan Empire was divided into five provinces, each governed by a prince (Kumara) or royal family member. The princes, when appointed as viceroys were called **Kumar Mahamatras** while the rest of the viceroys were simply designated as **Mahamatras**.

Provincial Administration

Province	Capital	Details
Uttarapatha	Taxila	Northern province.
Avantipatha	Ujjayini	Western province and a trade hub.
Dakshinapatha	Suvarnagiri	Southern province.
Magadha	Pataliputra	Central province and imperial capital.
Prachyapatha/ Kalinga	Tosali/Dhauri	Eastern province, annexed by Ashoka.



District and Village Level Administration

♦ **Village:** The smallest unit of administration.

♦ **District Officials:**

- **Pradeshika:** In charge of the district, responsible for land measurement, tax collection, and law and order.
- **Rajukas:** Equivalent to modern District Magistrates with judicial and revenue functions. **Ashoka's 4th Pillar Edict granted them authority for public welfare.**
- **Yukatas:** Junior officers providing secretarial assistance.
- **Gopa and Sthanika:** Intermediaries maintaining land records, tax collection, and administrative duties.
- **Gramika:** Local village heads appointed as officials.
- **Gramvridhdhas:** Village elders assisting the Gramika.
- Villages had their own **Panchayats** to settle disputes.

City Administration

♦ **Urban Administration:**

- **Nagarika:** Head of city administration, assisted by Gopa and Sthanika.
- **Bandhanagaradhyaksha:** Overseer of jails.
- **Rakshi (Police):** Maintained public security.
- **Lohadhyaksha and Sauvarnika:** Managed manufacturing centers.

Capital Administration: Pataliputra

The administration of **Pataliputra**, the Mauryan capital, was managed by **six committees**, each consisting of five members: Trade (**headed by Panyadhyaksha**), Industry, Taxation (headed by Sulkadhyaksha), Foreign visitors and Registration of birth and deaths (**headed by Gopa**).



Mauryan Tax Administration

- ◆ The **Mauryan taxation system** was advanced and efficient, focusing on assessment and collection:
 - **Samaharta**: Chief officer in charge of assessment.
 - **Sannidhata**: Custodian of the treasury.

Bhaga: Land revenue (1/4 to 1/6 of produce).

Bali: Extra tax paid by peasants.

Shulka: Customs duty.

Pravesya: Import tax.

Vartani: Road cess.

Parsvam: Surcharges.

Parigha: Monopoly tax.

Prakriya: Royalty.

Pranaya: Gift tax.

- ◆ Taxes paid in cash (**Hiranya**), kind (**Pratikara**), or labor (**Vishti-free labour**)-**Forced labour** paid by slaves and Shudras.
- ◆ Civil servants **were responsible for the sale of state-owned goods (Rajapanya)**, which were either collected as taxes or produced by the State.
- ◆ Villages were classified based on their specific duties and exemptions:
 - **Pariharaka Villages**: Exempt from taxation.
 - **Ayudhiya Villages**: Tasked with providing soldiers to the royal army, known as **Senabhakta**.
 - **Kupya Villages**: Required to pay taxes in the form of grain, cattle, gold, or raw metal, referred to as Pindikara.



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