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## EARLY STATES

In the history of ancient India we may come across many forms of society ranging from urban civilization of Indus Valley to the Classical Age of Gupta Dynasty. During this period we see a hierarchy of centralized and decentralized governments, some of which were highly organized in their political structure and government while others were merely weakened by internal problems and division of power.



### OBJECTIVES

After studying this lesson, you will be able to:

- explain as to how the state system developed in early India;
- distinguish between various kinds of states and
- understand how most powerful states emerged.

### 30.1 BACKGROUND

In the beginning human society had the belief that all human beings are equal and should have same rights, as it was basically a tribal society. Emergence of idea of state was a result of conflicts over control of resources and development of a differentiated economy or the society arranged itself at separate levels. Development of a class based society was an essential pre- requisite for changing the state system. Growth of population and development of sedentary life were the other factors.

### 30.2 GROWTH OF IDEA OF KINGSHIP

The archeological evidences uncovered a strong centralized authority in Harappa. In the Vedic monarchies, the clan -chief became the king and was gradually invested with a status i.e equal to being god. Buddhist and Jaina thought ignored the idea of divinity and assumed instead that, in the original state of nature, all needs were effortlessly provided but that slowly a decline set in and man became evil, developing desires, which led to the notions of private property and of family and finally to immoral behaviour. In this condition of chaos, the people gathered together and decided to elect one among them (the *mahasammata*, or “great elect”) in whom they would invest authority to maintain law and order. Thus, gradually the institution of the state came into being. Later theories retained the element of a contract between the ruler and the people. Brahmanic sources held that the gods appointed the ruler and that a



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contract of dues was concluded between the ruler and the people. Also prevalent was the theory of *matsyanyaya*, which proposes that in periods of chaos, when there is no ruler, the strong devour the weak, just as in periods of drought, big fish eat little fish. Thus, the need for a ruler was viewed as absolute. The existence of the state was primarily dependent on two factors: *danda* (authority) and *dharma* (in its sense of the social order i.e., the preservation of the caste structure). The *Artha-sastra*, moreover, refers to the seven limbs (*saptanga*) of the state as the king, administration, territory, to capital, treasury, forceful authority, and allies. However, the importance of the political notion of the state gradually began to fade, partly because of a decline of the political tradition of the republics and the proportional dominance of the monarchical system, in which loyalty was directed to the king. The emergence of the Mauryan Empire strengthened the political notion of monarchy. The second factor was that the *dharma*, in the sense of the social order, demanded a far greater loyalty than did the rather blurred idea of the state. The king's duty was to protect *dharma*, and, as long as the social order remained intact, anarchy would not prevail. Loyalty to the social order, which was a fundamental aspect of Indian civilization, largely accounts for the impressive continuity of the major social institutions over many centuries. However, it also shifted loyalty from the political notion of the state, which might otherwise have permitted more frequent empires and a greater political consciousness. After the decline of the Mauryas, the re-emergence of an empire was to take many centuries.

### 30.3 INDUS AND VEDIC POLITICAL / OR GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS: PRE-STATE TO STATE

The urban civilization of Indus Valley suggests a complex planning that undertook the region and the people lived up to the standard of the time. Despite a growing body of archaeological evidence, the social and political structures of the Indus "state" remain objects of guess work. The remarkable uniformity of weights and measures throughout the Indus lands, as well as the development of such presumably civic works as the great granaries, implies a strong degree of political and administrative control over a wide area.

The Aryans are said to have entered India through the fabled Khyber Pass, around 1500 BC and gave rise to another civilization in Indian history, the Vedic period. The Aryans were divided into tribes, which had settled in different regions of northwestern India. Tribal chieftainship gradually became hereditary, though the chief usually operated with the help of advice from either a committee or the entire tribe. Tribal chiefs bearing the title Raja or king were at first little more than war-lords, and their principal duty was protection of their tribes. The power of the king positioned with the higher authority of the priests. Vedic kingship was the natural outcome of the conditions surrounding the Aryans. A king was the leader of the people in the war of attacking action and defense. He is called the "Protector of the people". A study of the Rigveda shows that the king was no longer merely a leader of a primitive tribe, but occupied a position of preeminence among the people. The protection of the people was the sacred duty of the king. In return, he expected and received loyal obedience from his subjects in the sense of a tribute to the king.

The Aryan tribes failed to unite against non-Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation and the unstable nature due to their internal caste system. The weak character of the empire came from the rigid caste system that divided people and

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created unstable feelings among them. These were some of the reasons due to which the Vedic empire was far less organized than the Indus Valley Civilization.

To begin with, during Vedic age there existed political units like *jana* which later became *janapada* – *mahajanapada*. A *jana* was a region where lived the people of the tribe. These tribes were named after a particular chieftain. Later, with the extension of territory, there was a change in the nature of political organization.

Statecraft art of government evolved as a new system of government following the Vedic period. The solidarity of the tribal state and the political power of best warriors gave rise to a new style of kingship. It aimed at the creation of more professional armies and more dependent upon the king. The statecraft aimed at acquisition of territories rich in natural resources and tax-paying peasants rather than booty or territory for tribal expansion.

**30.4 MAHAJANPADAS**

The centuries before the establishment of the Mauryan Empire – the period which was the development of the Kosala and Magadha kingdoms – were a period of relatively rapid social and economic change. We find the breaking into small pieces of tribal polities, the development of the caste model and the move to the rice lands of the Eastern Gangetic Valley. In times of the disintegration of old social ties, during the establishment of new ways of being in social and political relationships, we find idea based on great change. The emergence of Buddhism and Jainism was a result of this upheaval. From their original settlements in the Punjab region, the Aryans gradually began to penetrate eastward, clearing dense forests and establishing “tribal” settlements along the Ganga and Yamuna (Jamuna) plains between 1500 and ca. 800 B.C. By around 500 B.C., most of northern India was inhabited and had been brought under cultivation, facilitating the increasing knowledge of the use of iron implements, including ox-drawn ploughs, and spurred by the growing population that provided voluntary and forced labor. As river based and inland trade flourished, many towns along the Ganga became centers of trade, culture, and luxurious living. Increasing population and surplus production provided the bases for the emergence of independent states with fluid territorial boundaries over which disputes frequently arose.

The basic administrative system headed by tribal chieftains was transformed by a number of regional republics or hereditary monarchies that devised ways to appropriate revenue and to conscript labor for expanding the areas of settlement and agriculture farther east and south, beyond the Narmada River. These emergent states collected revenue through officials, maintained armies, and built new cities and highways. By 600 B.C., sixteen such territorial powers stretched across the North India plains from modern-day Afghanistan to Bangladesh. The right of a king to his throne, no matter how it was gained, was usually made lawful through elaborate sacrifice rituals and genealogies i.e history of members of a family from past to present concocted by priests who ascribed to the king divine or superhuman origins. In the texts we find references to the emergence of sixteen mahajanapadas. Important among them were Magadha, Kosala, Kasi, Avanti, Vaishali, Lichhavi, etc. Mahajanapadas were of two kinds, as discussed below :

**(i) Monarchical Mahajanpadas**

First, there existed monarchical types, where the king or chieftain was the head of the territory. In this type, the Vedic ceremonies and brahmanas were given much



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importance. The kings performed vedic sacrifices in these regions. For instance, Kosala belonged to the category of monarchical mahajanapada. Prasenajit, the king of Kosala was known to have performed several sacrifices.

**(ii) Republican Mahajanpadas**

The second type among mahajanapadas was republican or oligarchic which differed from the monarchical states. In this second category, the king was selected from the group of people called rajas. There is reference to assemblies called *sabha* where the members used to have discussions regarding a particular matter, then the item was put to vote.

In one such assembly there is reference to the existence of 7707 rajas who represented the class of *rajanyas* who owned land that was cultivated by *dasa*, *karmakaras* or labourers. The rajas were known for their ability to fight. In this category, Vedic sacrifices were not given much importance and the brahmanas were given number two social status after the kshatriyas. The main source for the study of these mahajanapadas is the Buddhist texts.

**(iii) Conflict between Monarchical Mahajanpadas and Republican Mahajanpadas**

The Vriji confederacy (union of several states) near the foot of Himalayas was a powerful oligarchy, which challenged the supremacy of some monarchical states. Monarchical states like Magadha and Lichhavi were in a great state of difficult choice as they were not able to extend their territories. Among the mahajanapadas, there emerged conflict for power and supremacy. Magadha had an ambitious king called Ajatasatru, who decided to conquer the neighboring regions. Due to warfare and marriage alliances he was able to conquer Kosala and Kasi.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.1**

**Correct and rewrite the following sentences:**

1. In the beginning human society was basically not a tribal society?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. The emergence of the Ashoka the great strengthened the political nation of monarchy?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. The Aryan tribes united against non – Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. In an assembly these were 7077/7707 rajas who represented the class of rajanyas?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**30.5 RISE OF MAGADHA AND MAURYAS**

Thus among monarchical states Magadha emerged as an important power. However, he had to fight for many years against Lichhavis. Ajatasatru sent his minister to sow

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differences among the tribes of Vriji confederacy. Due to this effort, ultimately Ajatasatru obtained success against Lichhavi which became part of Magadha empire.

This region controlled the northern trade route called *uttarapatha*, while the southern route called *dakshinapatha* was under the control of Magadha. Due to these conquests, Magadha was able to manage economic resources like fertile river valleys and iron ore mines which provided the necessary supply of materials for the production of different goods. As a result it was in Magadha that we find the beginning of signs of state formation.

The Mauryan Empire, ruled by the Mauryan dynasty, was the largest and most powerful political and military empire of ancient India. Originating from the kingdom of Magadha in the Indo-Gangetic plains of modern Bihar and Bengal and with its capital city of Pataliputra (near modern Patna), the Empire was founded in 322 BC by Chandragupta Maurya, who had overthrown the Nanda Dynasty and begun expanding his power across central and western India. The Empire was expanded into India's central and southern regions by Emperor Bindusara, but it excluded a small portion of unexplored tribal and forested regions near Kalinga.

Following the conquest of Kalinga in a major war, Ashoka the Great ended the military expansion of the empire. The kingdoms of Pandya and Cheras in southern India thus preserved their independence, accepting the supremacy of the Mauryan emperor. The Mauryan Empire was perhaps the greatest empire to rule the Indian subcontinent until the arrival of the British. Its decline began fifty years after Ashoka's rule ended, and it dissolved in 185 BC with the foundation of the Sunga Dynasty in Magadha.

**30.6 THE MAURYAN STATE**

Chandragupta's minister Kautilya Chanakya wrote the *Arthashastra*, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, war, and religion ever produced in the East. Archaeologically, the period of Mauryan rule in South Asia falls into the era of Northern Black Polished Ware (NBPW). The *Arthashastra* and the Edicts of Ashoka are primary sources of written records of the Mauryan times. The *Lion Capital of Asoka* at Sarnath, is the emblem of India.

The Mauryan Empire consisted of a great variety of political formations and ecological zones: it contained forest peoples and nomads, chieftaincies and oligarchies like the *gana-sangha* confederacies of chiefs. It contained smaller kingdoms with a range of administrative structures not necessarily similar to that in Magadha. Different parts of the empire like the core, the metropolis and the peripheries were administered in different ways. Thus there did not exist a uniform method of administration in the whole of Mauryan Empire. While the core and the metropolis were directly administered by the state; the periphery region was given more autonomy as more importance was given to the collection of taxes and tributes from these regions. The administrative network consisted of an upper bureaucracy recruited from the upper castes and receiving handsome salaries. There was no central method of recruitment and local persons appear to have been appointed in areas distant from the metropolitan state.

During the rule of Ashoka the Mauryan Empire was organized formally into five parts. Magadha and some adjacent mahajanapadas were under direct administration. There is evidence from the reports of Megasthenes, a Greek ambassador, and from the *Arthashastra*, of relatively centralized administration in the centre part.



### 30.7 THE MAURYAN BUREAUCRACY

The Empire was divided into four provinces, with the royal capital at Pataliputra. From Ashokan edicts, the names of the four provincial capitals are Tosali (in the east), Ujjain (in the west), Suvarnagiri (in the south), and Taxila (in the north). The head of the provincial administration was the *Kumara* (royal prince), who governed the provinces as king's representative. The *kumara* was assisted by *mahamatyas* and council of ministers. This organizational structure was reflected at the imperial level with the Emperor and his *Mantriparishad* (Council of Ministers). The bureaucracy was not required to restructure conquered areas to conform to a uniform pattern but to ensure the flow of revenue. At the peak period of the empire, mention is made of a group of officers, basically concerned with revenue administration, who appear to have been centrally appointed and who were required to tour the areas under their jurisdiction and enquire into the well-being of the subjects. Irrigation was considerably decentralized, frequently in small-scale systems drawing water from rivers, pools, wells, springs and artificial ponds called tanks. More elaborate reservoirs and river banks were built with local resources, though the empire assisted irrigation works in newly settled lands. Evidence suggests that irrigation works were locally controlled.

The Mauryans appear to have had interest in gaining revenue from trade. They did not, here, either, however, take an active role in the regulation of trade. This is indicated by the fact that they appear not to have issued metallic money of a distinctive kind. The modest punch-marked coins which have been found may very well have been issued by guilds or other local bodies. The state attempted to maintain control over individual traders and guilds, inspecting their identity, their merchandise and their profits. The sale of goods at the place of production was not permitted, presumably because sale in markets was more accessible to revenue collectors. The state collected a series of taxes at various points in the production of goods from raw materials to commodities. Special officers were appointed to ensure standards and prevent fraud as well as to intercept trade in those items which the state had a monopoly such as, weapons, armor, metals, and gems. Commodity production was therefore an independent enterprise geared to a market and trade was a major revenue resource for the state.

Historians theorize that the organization of the empire was in line with the extensive bureaucracy described by Kautilya in the *Arthashastra*: a sophisticated civil service governed everything from municipal hygiene to international trade. The expansion and defence of the empire was made possible by what appears to have been the largest standing army of its time. According to Megasthenes, the emperor possessed wielded a military of 600,000 infantry, 30,000 cavalry, and 9,000 war elephants. A vast espionage system collected intelligence for both internal and external security purposes. Having renounced offensive warfare and expansionism, Ashoka nevertheless continued to maintain this large army, to protect the Empire and instill stability and peace across West and South Asia.

### 30.8 POST MAURYAN STATES

Post Mauryan polity was marked by the arrival of central Asian conquerors i.e. the Indo-Greeks, the Sakas, the Parthians and the Kushanas. They imposed their rule on native princes which paved the way for development of an organization based on relationship of a master and servant. The central Asians strengthened the idea of



divine origin of kingship. The Kushana kings called themselves as sons of God. The central Asians also introduced the *Satrap* system and military governorship.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.2**

Answer the following questions:

1. Who wrote Arth – Shastra?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. In the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> century what for the name Kumar stood for?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who was Megasthenes?  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Give name of four provincial capitals of the Mauryan era?  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What was the strength of the empire's military as per Megasthenes?  
\_\_\_\_\_

**30.9 EXPANSION OF THE GUPTA STATE**

The greatest empire in the fourth century AD was the Gupta Empire, which ushered in the golden age of Indian history. This empire lasted for more than two centuries. It covered a large part of the Indian subcontinent, but its administration was more decentralized than that of the Mauryas, but more centralized than Sungas. The theory of the divinity of kings became more popular during the Gupta period. Alternately waging war and entering into matrimonial alliances with the smaller kingdoms in its neighborhood, the empire's boundaries kept fluctuating with each ruler. The Gupta realm, although less extensive than that of the Mauryas, did encompass the northern half and central parts of the subcontinent. The Gupta period also has been called an Imperial Age, but the administrative centralization so characteristic of an imperial system is less apparent than during the Mauryan period. The Guptas tended to allow kings to remain as serving in a slave like manner; unlike the Mauryas, they did not consolidate every kingdom into a single administrative unit. This would be the model for later Mughal rule and British rule built off of the Mughal paradigm.

The Guptas, a comparatively unknown family, came from either Magadha or eastern Uttar Pradesh. The third king, Chandra Gupta I (Chandragupta I), took the title of *maharajadhiraja*. He married a Lichhavi princess- an event celebrated in a series of gold coins. It has been suggested that, if the Guptas ruled in Prayaga (modern Allahabad in eastern Uttar Pradesh), the marriage alliance may have added Magadha to their domain. The Gupta era began in 320 BC. Chandra Gupta appointed his son Samudra Gupta to succeed him about 330 BC, according to a long eulogy to Samudra Gupta inscribed on a pillar at Allahabad. The coins of an obscure prince, Kacha, suggest that there may have been contenders for the throne. Samudra Gupta's campaigns took him in various directions and resulted in many conquests. Among those he rendered were willing to do what others want. They belonged to the rulers of Aryavarta, various forest chiefs, the northern oligarchies, and border States in the



east, in addition to Nepal. More distant domains brought within Samudra Gupta's orbit were regarded as subordinate; these comprised the "king of kings" of the northwest, the Sakas, the Murundas, and the inhabitants of "all the islands", including Sinhala (Sri Lanka), all of which are listed in the inscription at Allahabad. The Ganges Valley and central India were the areas under direct administrative control. Samudra Gupta was succeeded about 380 BC by his son Chandra Gupta II, though there is some evidence that there may have been an intermediate ruler Ram Gupta. Chandra Gupta II's major campaign was against the Saka rulers of Ujjain, the success of which was celebrated in a series of silver coins. Gupta territory adjoining the northern Deccan was secured through a marriage alliance with the Vakataka dynasty, the successors of the Satavahanas in the area. Although Chandra Gupta II took the title of Vikramaditya (Sun of Valour), his reign is associated more with cultural and intellectual achievements than with military campaigns. His Chinese contemporary, Fa-hsien, a Buddhist monk, traveled in India and left an account of his impressions.

### 30.10 NATURE OF THE GUPTA STATE

From the reign of Chandragupta I onwards the Guptas took the title of *Maharajadhiraj* as is known from inscriptions are *Paramarajadhiraja*, *Rajadhirajashri*, *Rajarajadhiraja*. In the Allahabad pillar inscription, Samudragupta is regarded as God living on earth. In the historical accounts he is referred to as Kubera, Indra etc. Hereditary succession was established in this period though the emperor chose the heir apparent. Several powers conquered by the Guptas were allowed to function independently. They were subjugated conquered but not incorporated in the empire. These feudatories (servant like) paid tribute to the Guptas but at times some of them did not mention Guptas as their suzerain (controller of records) in their official records. The practice of land grants and also grants of villages under the Satvahanas continued under the Guptas. These grants carried with them administrative rights which led to the decentralization of administrative authority. Rights of subinfeudation (ownership) were given to the land donees (grant receivers). In central and western India, the villagers were also subjected to forced labour called *Visti* (forced labour) was applied to all classes of subjects.

### 30.11 THE GUPTA ADMINISTRATION

Administratively, the Gupta state was divided into provinces called *desa* or *bhukti*, and these in turn into smaller units, the *pradesa* or *visaya*. The provinces were governed by *kumaramatyas*, high imperial (royal) officers or members of the royal family. The shift to smaller area of power of authority is evident from the composition of the municipal board (*adhithana-adhikarana*), which consisted of the guild president (*nagara-sresthin*), the chief merchant (*sarthavaha*), and representatives of the artisans and of the scribes. During this period the term *samanta*, which originally meant neighbour, was beginning to be applied to intermediaries who had been given grants of land or to conquered feudatory rulers. There was also a noticeable tendency for some of the higher administrative offices to become hereditary. The lack of firm control over conquered areas led to their resuming independence. The repeated military action that this necessitated may have strained the kingdom's resources. The Gupta monarchs maintained a standing army. The use of cavalry and horse archery became important in the army. Special attention was paid to the safety of the border areas. Land tax and excise duties were collected. The judicial system was developed and several law books were written. For the first time Civil and Criminal Laws were differentiated.



**Notes****30.12 POST GUPTA INDIAN POLITY**

The system of governance under Harshavardhan and successive dynasties of Palas, Pratiharas, Rashtrakutas and Chalukyas was centred on the personality of the king which was hereditary post. System of vassalage was very much prevalent and frequent wars among the kings and their vassals made the political situation fluid. The states consisted of areas administered directly by the rulers and the areas ruled by the vassal chiefs who were autonomous governing themselves in their internal affairs. The vassals had a general obligation of loyalty, paying a fixed tribute and supplying a quota of troops to the overlord. The government was becoming “feudalized”.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.3**

Fill in the Blanks:

1. The greatest empire in the 4<sup>th</sup> century was the \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The third King \_\_\_\_\_ took the title of \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The successor to Samudra Gupta was \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Fa-hsien \_\_\_\_\_ contemporary was a \_\_\_\_\_ monk traveled in India and left an account of his impression.

**30.13 THE CHOLA STATE IN SOUTH INDIA**

The Cholas were by far the most important dynasty in the subcontinent at this time, although their activities mainly affected the peninsula and Southeast Asia. The nucleus of Chola power during the reign of Vijayalaya in the late ninth century was Thanjavur, from which the Cholas spread northward, annexing in the tenth century what remained of Pallava territory. To the south they came up against the Pandyas. Chola history can be reconstructed in considerable detail because of the vast number of lengthy inscriptions issued not only by the royal family but also by temple authorities, village councils, and trade guilds. Parantaka I (907–953) laid the foundation of the kingdom. He took the northern boundary up to Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), where his advance was stopped by a defeat at the hands of the Rashtrakuta king Krishna III. Parantaka was more successful in the south, where he defeated both the Pandyas and the Gangas. He also launched an abortive attack on Sri Lanka. For thirty years after his death, there was a series of overlapping reigns that did not strengthen the Chola position. There then followed two outstanding rulers who rapidly reinstated Chola power and ensured the kingdom its supremacy. These were Rajaraja I and Rajendra.

Rajaraja (985–1014) began establishing power with attacks against the Pandyas and Illamandalam (Sri Lanka). Northern Sri Lanka became a province of the Chola kingdom. A campaign against the Gangas and Calukyas extended the Chola boundary north to the Tungabhadra River. On the eastern coast the Cholas battled with the Calukyas for the possession of Vengi. A marriage alliance gave the Cholas an authoritative position, but Vengi remained a bone of contention. A naval campaign led to the conquest of the Maldivian Islands, the Malabar Coast, and northern Sri Lanka, all of which were essential to the Chola control over trade with Southeast Asia and with



Arabia and East Africa. These were the transit areas, ports of call for the Arab traders and ships to Southeast Asia and China, which were the source of the valuable spices sold at a high profit to Europe.

Rajaraja I's son Rajendra participated in his father's government from 1012, succeeded him two years later, and ruled until 1044. To the north he annexed the Raichur Doab and moved into Manyakheta in the heart of Chalukya territory. A revolt against Mahinda V of Sri Lanka gave Rajendra the excuse to conquer southern Sri Lanka as well. In 1021–22 the now-famous northern campaign was launched. The Chola army campaigned along the east coast as far as Bengal and then north to the Ganges River—almost the exact reverse of Samudra Gupta's campaign to Kanchipuram in the 4th century AD. The most spectacular campaign, however, was a naval campaign against the Srivijaya kingdom in Southeast Asia in 1025. The reason for the assault on Srivijaya and neighbouring areas appears to have been the interference with Indian shipping and mercantile interests seeking direct trading connections with South China. The Chola victory reinstated these connections, and throughout the eleventh century Chola trading missions visited China.

### 30.14 EVOLUTION OF CHOLA ADMINISTRATION

The Chola State during the imperial period (850-1200) was marked for its uniqueness and innovativeness. Cholas were the first dynasty who tried to bring the entire South India under a common rule and to a great extent succeeded in their efforts. Although the form and protocols of that government cannot be compared to a contemporary form of government, the history of the Chola Empire belongs to a happy age in our history, when in spite of much that appears to us as primitive, great things were achieved by the government and the people.

The king was the supreme commander and a benevolent dictator. His share in the administration consisted of issuing oral commands to responsible officers when representations were made to him. Such orders were recorded in great detail in the inscriptions, usually on the walls of temples. A special type of official, names *Tirumandira Olai Nayagam* who recorded the oral orders immediately on palm leaf manuscripts were responsible for the accurate.

There is no definite evidence of the existence of a council of ministers or of other officers connected to the central government, though the names of individual ministers are found in the inscriptions. A powerful bureaucracy assisted the king in the tasks of administration and in executing his orders. Due to the lack of a legislature or a legislative system in the modern sense, the fairness of king's orders dependent on the goodness of the man and in his belief in *Dharma* – sense of fairness and justice. The ancient society did not expect anything more than general security from the government. Even matters of disputes went to the officers of the court only as the last resort.

The Chola bureaucracy did not differ much from its contemporaries i.e others operating during the same tune. However, what distinguished it was its highly organized nature. A careful balance between central control and local independence was maintained and non-interference in local government was sacrosanct (very important). There was a definite hierarchy of the bureaucracy and the tenure of the officials simply dependent on the 'Crown's pleasure'. The officials held various titles such as *Marayan* and *Adigarigal*. Seniority between the same cadre was indicated by qualifying title such as *Perundanam* and *Sirutanam*. One of the important officers were the Revenue officials responsible for the receipts and expenditures of the government.

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Every village was a self governing unit. A number of such villages constituted a *Korram* or *nadu* or *Kottam* in different parts of the country. *Taniyur* was a large village big enough to be a *Kurram* by itself. A number of *Kurrams* constituted a *Valanadu*. Several Valanadus made up one *Mandalam*, a province. At the height of the Chola Empire there were eight or nine of these provinces including Sri Lanka. These divisions and names underwent constant changes throughout the Chola period. An inscription of the eighth century BC at Uttaramerur temple describes the constitution of the local council, eligibility and disqualifications for the candidates, the method selection, their duties and delimits their power. It appears that the administration of a common village *Ur* or *Oor* was different from that of a village gifted to brahmins.

The activities of the officials of the bureaucracy were under constant audit and scrutiny. We have an example of such reports in an inscription from the reign of Uththama Chola which gives us the details of the carelessness and neglect of some officials in the delay of recording a particular grant. As a result a dispute arose between contending parties as to who should benefit from the grant. The officials involved were punished. As the head of the civil administration, the king himself occasionally toured the country and carried out inquests into the local administration. An extensive resurvey was done around 1089 by the Chola king Kulottunga, recording the extents of lands and their assessment, boundaries of villages and the common rights inside the village, including the communal pastures. Revenue officials were responsible for the tax collection. The Chola government was very mindful of the need for the fair and accurate collection of tax to run the state machinery. The revenue records were not manuals of extortion (taking money unwillingly), but carefully maintained records of land rights, based on complete enquired and accurate surveys, and were kept up-to-date by regular surveys. The duties of revenue officials included many other spheres of responsibilities. They also regulated receipts and expenditures of temples. They were also seen to purchase land on behalf of village assemblies. They attested and certified important documents drawn up by local government agencies such as village councils. They were also shown to act as magistrates. Besides the tax collected by the central government, several local bodies enjoyed the privilege of collecting tolls and other imposts charges.

Justice was mostly a local matter in the Chola Empire, where minor disputes were settled at the village level. The punishments for minor crimes were in the form of fines or a direction for the offender to donate to some charitable endowment (body or institution). Even crimes such as manslaughter or murder were punished by fines. Crimes of the state such as treason were heard and decided by the king himself and the typical punishment in such cases was either execution or confiscation of property. Capital punishment was uncommon even in the cases of first-degree murder. Only one solitary instance of capital punishment is found in all the records available so far. Village assemblies exercised large powers in deciding local disputes. Small committees called *Nyayattar* heard matters that did not come under the jurisdiction of the voluntary village committees. The punishments in most cases were in the form of donations to the temples or other endowments. The convicted person would remit their fines at a place called *Darmaasana*. There is not much information available on the judicial procedures or court records. There was no distinction between civil and criminal offences. Sometimes civil disputes were allowed to drag on until time offered the solution. Crimes such as theft, adultery and forgery were considered serious offences. In most cases the punishment was in the order of the



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offender having to maintain a perpetual lamp at a temple. Even murder was punished with a fine. In one instance a man had stabbed an army commander. Rajendra Chola II ordered the culprit to endow 96 sheep for a lamp at a neighbouring temple.



**INTEXT QUESTIONS 30.4**

Tick (✓) the correct answer.

1. The nucleus of Chola power during the reign of Vijayavada in the century was Thanjavur. (8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>)  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Rajaraja I's son Rajendra participated in his father's government from \_\_\_\_\_. (1012, 1102, 2101)  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. An inscription of the \_\_\_\_\_ century B.C. at Uttaramerur temple describes the constitutions of the local council. (6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>)  
\_\_\_\_\_



**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

In the beginning human society had the belief that all humans being are equal and should have same rights, as it was basically a tribal society. Development of a class based society was an essential pre-requisite for changing the state system.

In the vedic monarchies, the clan-chief became the king and was gradually invested with a status i.e. equal to being god. The existence of the state was primarily dependent on two factors: danda (authority) and dharma. The emergence of the mauryan empire strengthened the political notion of monarchy, however, the decline of the Mauryas, the re-emergence of an empire was to take many centuries.

The Aryans are said to have entered India through the fabled Khyber Pass, about 1500 BC and gave rise to another civilization in Indian history – the vedic period. The Aryans were divided into tribes, which had settled in different regions of north-western India. Tribal chiefs bearing the title Raja or king were at first little more than war-lords and their principal duty was protection of their tribes. The king was called the obedience from his subjects in the form of a tribute to the king.

Following the conquest of kalings in a major war, Ashoka the great ended the military expansion of the empire. The Mauryan empire was perhaps the greatest empire to rule the Indian sub continent. Chandragupta's minister kautilya wrote the Arthashastra, one of the greatest treatises on economics, politics, foreign affairs, administration, military arts, war and religion ever produced in the East.

The greatest empire in the fourth century AD was the Gupta Empire which referred to as the golden age of Indian history. The empire lasted more than two centuries.

In the lesson you have also learnt about the bureaucratic systems of mauryas, administration of the gupta dynasty as well as the evolution of chola administration. The



activities of the officials of the Chola bureaucracy or administration were under constant audit and security. Revenue officials were responsible for the tax collection.

**TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. What is meant by kingship? How did the idea of kingship grow?
2. Distinguish between Mahajanpadas and Monarchical Mahajanpadas?
3. Describe the rise of Magadha and Mauryas?
4. How did the Gupta state expand?
5. Assess the evolution of Chola administration?

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****30.1**

1. In the beginning human society was basically a tribal society.
2. The emergence of the Maurya strengthened the political notion of monarchy.
3. The Aryan tribes failed to unite non – Aryans due to lack of strong political foundation.
4. In an assembly there were more 7707 Rajas who represented the class of Rajanyas.

**30.2**

1. Kautilya
2. Royal Princes
3. A greek ambassador visited India
4. a) Toysali b) Ujjain c) Suvarna giri and d) Tamila
5. 6,00,000 infantry ; 30,000 country and 9000 elephants

**30.3**

1. Gupta Empire
2. Chander gupta I, Maharaja–dhiraj
3. Chander gupta II
4. Chinese , Bhuddist

**HINTS FOR TERMINAL EXERCISES**

1. See para 30.2 and 30.3
2. See para 30.4
3. See para 30.5
4. See para 30.9
5. See para 30.14