Preface

Study of ancient Indian administrative systems has been engaging the attention of scholars since the days of the great Indologist K.P. Jayaswal but there is no gainsaying the fact that a comprehensive, systematic and connected treatment of the administrative machinery of early Indian kingdoms from the Rgvedic period onwards down to the thirteenth century A.D. has long been a desideratum. The present work, which is based on the author's prolonged study of the existing source-materials, both literary and archaeological, indigenous and foreign, partly fulfils that need.

Chapter 1 deals with the king, who was the supreme head of the executive, judicial, revenue and military departments of the government of ancient Indian kingdoms, which were, generally speaking, monarchical in character and composition. The ascendancy of royal authority was clearly visible in the Rgvedic period, while the later Vedic age witnessed its crystallisation. For our knowledge about the king in the post-Vedic period, we turn to Jātaka literature but the information it supplies is too inadequate to enable us to reconstruct a full picture. The early Dharmaśāstra-writers unanimously point out that the preservation of the caste system was the foremost duty of the king; they, likewise, provide us with a wealth of information about his sources of income. The Maurya rulers, who had no pretensions to divinity, possessed imperial grandeur and dignity and were the supreme heads of the executive, judicial and military branches of administration. The Arthaśāstra, which was probably composed during the reign of Candragupta Maurya, throws welcome light on the office of the king. The Bactrian kings at first adopted the title of Basileos but with the augmentation of power, they assumed more dignified epithets. The Scytho-Parthian rulers adopted more dignified titles as
compared to those of their Indo-Greek predecessors and popularised the system of dual monarchy. During the period of the Kuśāṇa kings, an exalted conception of monarchy was introduced, deification of kingship was claimed and the title ‘Sons of Heaven’ came to be used. The early Guptas were called Mahārāja but from the time of Candragupta I onwards, the higher title of Mahārājādhirāja came to be applied to them. They advocated the divinity of kingship and usually followed the system of primogeniture. The period following the downfall of the Imperial Guptas witnessed the emergence of the Maukharis, Later Guptas and Puṣyabhūtis, who began with the use of the modest title of Mahārāja but subsequently assumed the title of Mahārājādhirāja. The little that we know about them makes it abundantly clear that they were at the head of the civil and military administration. The royal office remained practically the same in both principle and practice in the Pratīhāra and Pāla kingdoms, the king being at the head of all the executive, judicial and military functions of the state and enjoying the sole right to dismiss any officer and appoint any person to any post he liked. On turning to South India, we find that the Śātavāhana kings, in spite of their great victories, generally called themselves Rājan and Svāmin. The Bhāratphalāyana, Śalaṅkāyana and Viṣṇukūndin kings indifferently used the titles of Rājā and Mahārāja. The king was at the head of the administration in both the Cālukya and Pallava dominions. Mahārājādhirāja, Mahārāja, Dharma-Mahārāja and Dharma-Mahārājādhirāja were some of the titles borne by the Pallava monarchs. Monarchy was hereditary in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom and usually the eldest son inherited the throne of his father. The king was the fountainhead of all power; he commanded the army, carried on the administrative functions with the help of subordinates and acted as the supreme court in legal disputes.

In Chapter II, we have made a detailed study about the queen who, though almost passed over in silence in the Rgveda, finds prominent mention in the later Vedic texts which would imply that in this period the king usually had four queens, the Mahiṣṭi, Parivrksī, Vārādā and Pālāgati. We hardly meet with a trustworthy account of queens in the Jātakas but the Classical authors record some genuine traditions about them. The edicts
of Aśoka, Buddhist legends and Arhaśāstra furnish us with valuable information about the Maurya queens. Coins would disclose that the queens wielded enormous influence in the Indo-Greek principalities in the north-western part of India. Coming to the Gupta age, we find that while Kumāradevī, whose name and effigy appear on the Candragupta I-Kumāra-devī coins along with those of her husband, held a high status in the kingdom; other queens never attained the same pinnacle of glory as she. The Harṣacarita implies that at the time of coronation, both the king and the chief queen were consecrated but it leaves us in the dark about her participation in administration. The Chinese pilgrim Hiuen Tsang refers to two strī-rājyas in the seventh century A.D. The Rājatarangini reveals that the queens of Kashmir assumed great power; they sometimes helped their husbands in administration, while others governed the kingdom either in their own name or as regents on behalf of minor rulers. The queens in the Bhañja kingdom were entrusted with the important task of maintaining the royal seal and scrutinising the genuineness of documents. Rajasthan has produced a galaxy of valiant queens who not only actively participated in administration, but also threw their phalanx behind their husbands to fight against the enemies. Turning to South India, we find that while the Śatavāhana queens were sometimes associated with administration, those in the Ikṣvāku kingdom did hardly occupy such an important status. The Vākāṭaka queens were generally known as Devis, while the chief ones among them were called Mahā-devis. The queens of the Cālukya kingdom are known to have issued records, administered divisions, made handsome gifts and installed images of gods and goddesses. We know very little about the Pallava queens, excepting, of course, their religious charities and the foundation of monuments for their favourite deities. The queens were not entitled to any special privilege in the Rāṣṭrakūṭa realm but as we approach the time of the Cālukyas of Kālyāṇi, we at once notice to our great satisfaction that most of the Cālukya queens shouldered administrative responsibilities.

Chapter III delineates the crown prince about whom some useful accounts are preserved in the Vedic and Jātaka texts. The Mauryas followed the practice of governing provinces with
the help of princes who were called both Kumāras and Arya-
putras. Puṣyamitra continued the Maurya tradition of associat-
ing the prince in administration. In the Gupta kingdom, the
heir-apparent discharged a great deal of administrative work
and often led the imperial army in the face of any foreign
aggression. The Yuvarāja was an important limb of the admi-
nistrative machinery of the state in the age of Harṣavardhana.
The Pāla and Sena records take prominent notice of the crown
prince but in regard to the duties and functions that he
discharged during this period, we are almost left in the dark. A
perusal of the Gāhaḍavāla epigraphs would show that the
Gāhaḍavāla crown prince, called Yuvarāja or Mahārajaṇapatra,
was more powerful than his counterpart in other contemporary
North Indian kingdoms. An attempt has also been made in
this chapter to ascertain, with the help of epigraphic and other
evidence, the position of the crown prince in different South
Indian kingdoms.

The antiquity of the office of the Purohita goes back to
pre-Rgvedic times, although it is with the Rgvedic period and
onwards that we possess definite material about the institution.
In those early days, the priesthood had attained a high position
and it maintained an equally important status in the succeeding
age. The Jātakas show that in the post-Vedic period the office
was generally hereditary and held by the same family for
generations. The Dharmasūtra-writers provide us with an
interesting insight into the office. The epics would create the
impression that the priestly profession was not an honourable
one. The Arthaśāstra gives us useful information about the
Purohita. The Gupta inscriptions do not take any notice of the
Purohita but mention a class of officers who might have taken
over some of the priestly functions. The royal priest in the
Pratihāra and Gāhaḍavāla kingdoms was entrusted with various
functions, including the education of princes. The Purohita
figures prominently in the inscriptions of the Kāmboja, Varman
and Sena kings of Bengal but the Pāla records hardly take any
notice of him. In the Sukraniti, the priest, called Purodhā, is
included in the council of ministers.

Chapter V deals with ministers who constituted an impor-
tant wheel of the administrative machinery of the state. The
ministers in ancient India were broadly divided into a twofold
group, comprising counsellors and executive ministers who, to deduce from the testimony of literary and archaeological materials, coming from different areas and periods, helped the king to perform the works and responsibilities of the state. But these ministers were not the representatives of the people but were actually royal servants who worked under constant threat of dismissal. Some ministers, no doubt, were destined to play a commanding role in the formulation and execution of the state's policies and programmes, but they were few and far between in number.

Chapter VI deals with the foreign minister, called Sandhi-vigrahika, who was entrusted with the important tasks of peace, war, neutrality, marching, seeking refuge and dual policy. But it is rather strange that we do not hear of any foreign minister in Indian kingdoms till we come to the age of Manu. The Sandhi-vigrahika finds prominent mention in Indian inscriptions and literature from the Gupta period onwards.

Chapter VII deals with the ambassador. The term dāta in the sense of an envoy occurs in the Rgveda but there are reasons to believe that the science of diplomacy was in its infancy in the Vedic period. Whereas, we seldom come across any detailed information about Dūtas in the early Buddhist and Jaina sources, welcome light on the position of these officers in the pre-Maurya epoch is thrown by the accounts of the Classical authors. In the section entitled Dūta-pranidhiḥ of the Arthasāstra, Kauṭilya has elaborately discussed the problem of Dūtas. Manu, whose writings appear to reflect the condition of the country during the early centuries of the Christian era, is aware of the importance of the institution of ambassadors. As we approach the seventh century A.D., we come across evidence which would testify to ambassadors being employed time and again by Indian kings to cultivate diplomatic ties with foreign powers. The Nitiśāstra-writers of early mediaeval India have made important observations on ambassadors but it is far from being known at present how far the recommendations of these authors were accepted by the governments of those days.

In Chapter VIII, we have made a thorough study of the different categories of judges in ancient India. In the Buddhist literature, mention is made of two classes of judges, called Vīnicchayānaccas and Vohārikamahāmatas. The writers of the
Dharmasūtras mention the Prādvivāka and provide us with valuable information about him. Kauṭilya refers to the Dharmasthas and Pradeśīs and brings out their respective functions. The Dharmāṣṭras constitute a mine of information regarding the qualifications and duties of a judge and the sources of law. Inscriptions of the Gupta period mention some officers like the Pramāṇīs and others, who were, in all probability, connected with the judicial department. Śukra and Jīmūtavāhana deal at great length with the constitution of the court of justice, grades of courts, different stages of judicial proceedings, role of agents, order of hearing suitors, time allowed for filing plaints, four kinds of reply and various kinds of proof.

Chapter IX deals with the chief officer of the district about whom we hardly possess any reliable information for the period preceding the advent of the Mauryas on the political chessboard. In the inscriptions of Aśoka, mention is made of the Rājūkas who have been identified with the chief officers of districts. Kauṭilya mentions some administrative divisions and it is not unlikely that his droṇamukhas correspond to districts. The Śāntiparvan of the Mahābhārata and the Manusamhita refer to a number of officers who were in charge of different kinds of administrative units like the lord of one village, lord of ten villages, lord of twenty villages, lord of one hundred villages and lord of one thousand villages. We have identified the lord of one hundred villages with the chief officer of the district. In the period of Gupta supremacy the officer, who was administering the district, was designated as Kumārāṇītya, Ayuktaka and Viṣayapati. The Viṣayapati finds mention in the inscriptions of many North Indian dynasties of the later period and we have discussed how his functions differed in different kingdoms. The districts of the Sātavāhana kingdom were called āhāras which were usually placed under officers, bearing the designation of Amacca. The district officers of the Bṛhatphalāyana kingdom were known as Vyāpras. The nāgas of the Pallava kingdom corresponded to the āhāras under the Sātavāhana kings. They were generally placed under the officers who were called Ayukta and Adhyakṣas in the early period and Nāṭuvatyavanas in later days. The districts of the Rāṣṭrakūṭa kingdom were placed under the supervision of the Viṣayapatis who sometimes enjoyed the status of feudatories.
In Chapter X, we have made a detailed study of the spy. In Vedic literature, there are some indications which would testify to the prevalence of the institution of espionage in the contemporary period. The combined testimony of the Classical authors and Kauṭilya proves beyond doubt the existence of spies in the Maurya kingdom. An elaborate account of spies is to be met with in the epics. Manu speaks of as many as five categories of spies but unfortunately does not mention them. Important notices of spies during the Gupta period may be found in some contemporary works like the Mrčchakaṭṭika, Mudrārakṣasa, Yājñavalkya-Smṛti and Raghuvamśa. For our knowledge about spies during the post-Gupta period, we may turn to the testimony of the Kādambarī and Śiśupālavadham. As we approach the early mediaeval period, we are delighted to find abundant materials on spies in the contemporary documents, literary as well as epigraphic.

In Chapter XI we have traced the growth and development of the office of the village headman from the Vedic age onwards down to the thirteenth century A.D. and have pointed out how the duties and responsibilities of this functionary varied in different kingdoms.