CHAPTER VI
MAGADHAN IMPERIALISM

SECTION 1

PERSIAN AND GREEK INVASIONS OF NORTH-WESTERN INDIA

POLITICAL DISUNITY IN THE NORTH-WEST

In the sixth century B.C. the Punjab no longer commanded that political and cultural influence which was its due as the first citadel of Aryan power in this country. The centre of gravity had shifted to the east. The madhyadesa had become the centre of the Aryan world, and Magadha was gradually developing into a large empire. Of the sixteen mahājanapadas mentioned in Indian literature, none is in the Punjab, and only two, Kamboja and Gandhara, may be placed in the outlying tracts of that province. Another State lying in the Punjab, but not included in the lists of mahājanapadas, was Madra. While the rest of Northern India was gradually passing under the imperial sway of Magadha, north-western India, economically prosperous but politically disunited, fell an easy prey to foreign invaders.

PERSIAN CONQUEST

During the second half of the sixth century B.C. Cyrus (or Kurush) established a large empire in Persia. In the west the authority of the great Achaemenian monarchy reached the Mediterranean sea; in the east it touched India. Cyrus is said to have led an expedition against India through Gedrosia (Makran), which ended in a disaster. But he succeeded in subjugating the region lying between the Indus and Cophen (Kabul) rivers.

Darius I (or Darayavaush), the third Achaemenian Emperor, annexed Gandhara and the Indus valley. Several Persian inscriptions refer to the people of Gandhara and the inhabitants of the Indus valley as Persian subjects. Herodotus, the famous Greek historian, tells us that Gandhara was included in
seventh satrapy or viceroyalty of the Persian Empire. "India" (the Indus valley, bounded on the east by the desert of Rajputana) constituted the twentieth and most populous satrapy. It paid a tribute of 360 talents of gold dust (£1,290,000).

Xerxes (or Kshayarsha), the son and successor of Darius I, retained his hold on the Persian provinces in north-western India. Indian troops joined his expeditionary force against Greece.

It is difficult to ascertain how long Persian rule lasted in north-western India. Indian troops figured in the army which Darius III Codomannus led against Alexander the Great. But it is very probable that on the eve of Alexander's invasion the hold of the Persian Emperors on their Indian provinces had become very weak, and the temporary unity imposed by foreign rule was destroyed by the rise of many petty States.

RESULTS OF PERSIAN RULE

The long association between India and Persia, covering a period of about two centuries, naturally left some lasting impressions on Indian history. The Persians introduced into India the Aramaic form of writing, which later on developed into the Kharoshthi alphabet. The monuments of Asoka's time, particularly the bell-shaped capital, probably owed something to Persian models, especially to the 'Persepolitan capital.' Persian influence may also be traced in the preamble of Asoka's edicts as well as in certain words used therein. Some Persian ceremonial was probably observed in the Maurya court. In the post-Maurya period the Saka rulers of north-western and western India used the Persian title of Satrap.

NORTH-WESTERN INDIA AT THE TIME OF ALEXANDER'S INVASION

At the beginning of the fourth century B.C. the valley of the Indus knew no political unity. The rest of Northern India had found unity and strength under the sceptre of the Nandas of Magadha, but the north-western provinces were parcelled out into a number of petty States, monarchies as well as clan oligarchies, engaged in internecine warfare.

The classical writers have left for us an interesting account of the political condition of the Punjab on the eve of Alexander's invasion. The Aspavian territory, lying in the rugged hill tray north of the Kabul river, was ruled by a chieftain who
lived in a city on or near the river Euaspla (probably the Kunar). The Kingdom of the Assakenos had its capital at Massaga, a formidable fortress probably situated not very far to the north of the Malakand Pass. The King of this tribe had a powerful army of 20,000 cavalry, more than 30,000 infantry, and 30 elephants. The territory of the Peukelaotis lay on the road from Kabul to the Indus. It was ruled by a King whose capital lay near Peshawar. The Kingdom of Taxila formed the eastern part of the old Kingdom of Gandhara. Taxila was a large city, and the country around was crowded with inhabitants and very fertile. The Kingdom of Arsakes, comprising the modern Hazara district, was probably an offshoot of the old Kingdom of Kamboja. The Kingdom of Abisares, another offshoot of Kamboja, corresponded to the Punch and Naoshera districts of Kashmir. The Kingdom of Poros lay between the Jhelum and the Chenab. It was an extensive and fertile territory, containing nearly 300 cities. The King had a large army consisting of more than 50,000 foot, 3,000 horse, 1,000 chariots and 130 elephants. The Kingdom of Sophytes lay to the east of the Jhelum. The Kingdom of Mousikanos included a large part of modern Sind. Its capital was at Alor in the Sukkur district.

The above list of monarchical States is by no means exhaustive, but to it must be added a list of oligarchical or republican tribes. Nysa, a small hill state lying between the Kabul river and the Indus, had a republican constitution. The Siboi lived in the Jhang district below the junction of the Jhelum and the Chenab. They had 40,000 foot soldiers in the time of Alexander. The Agalassoï lived near the Siboi and could collect 40,000 infantry and 3,000 horse. The Oxydrakai, who lived in the territory between the Ravi and the Beas, were one of the most warlike tribes of north-western India. The Malloi occupied the valley of the Ravi, north of the confluence of that river and the Chenab. The Abastanoi were settled on the Lower Chenab. They were a powerful tribe, commanding an army of 60,000 foot, 6,000 cavalry, and 500 chariots. Their constitution was democratic.

ALEXANDER'S PROGRESS THROUGH PERSIA AND AFGHANISTAN

Alexander ascended the throne of Macedon in 336 B.C. and after consolidating his authority in Greece, set forth
the conquest of Persia in 334 B.C. The Persian Empire was now weak and loosely knit, and it was governed by Darius Codomannus, an unworthy successor of Cyrus and Darius I. Within four years Alexander conquered Asia Minor, Syria, Egypt, Babylonia, and Persia. Darius was murdered by one of his Satraps. The great Achaemenian dynasty came to an inglorious end.

Bessus, the murderer of Darius, fled to Bactria and assumed the style of Great King. Alexander pursued him, and on his way annexed Drangiana without a blow. It is probable that Herat is the site of the city which Alexander founded as the capital of this new province. Next came the occupation of Seistan and Gedrosia, and the constitution of a Gedrosian Satrapy with its capital at Pura. Pushing north-eastward up the valley of the Helmand, Alexander occupied Arachosia, and founded a city probably on the site now occupied by Kandahar. Then he appeared at the foot of the Hindu Kush and in order to secure this region founded a city somewhere to the north of Kabul. As soon as he reached Bactria (modern Balkh), Bessus fled across the Oxus, and another province was added without a blow to the expanding Macedonian Empire. Alexander pursued Bessus into Sogdiana (the country lying between the streams of the Oxus and the Jaxartes) and captured him there. Determined to make the Jaxartes the northern limit of his empire, Alexander annexed Sogdiana and founded a city (modern Khodjend) on the banks of that river. In 327 B.C. he assumed the style of Great King, surrounded himself with Oriental forms and pomp, and posed as the successor of Darius.

ALEXANDER IN THE PUNJAB

From Sogdiana Alexander returned to Afghanistan and descended upon India. He had no idea of the shape or extent of this country, for the Greeks regarded India as the last country on the eastern side of the world, bounded by ocean's stream. To them it was a land of milk and honey, of strange beasts and plants. The story of Alexander's campaigns in India has been constructed solely from the accounts left by the Greek writers, whose unfamiliarity with Indian names has created many geographical puzzles not yet solved. His success, says 1, 'made so little impression on the minds of the inhabi-
tants of the country that no distinct reference to it is to be found in any branch of ancient Indian literature'.

Alexander crossed the Hindukush mountains in May, 327 B.C., and spent the remainder of the year in subjugating the wild tribes of the Swat and Bajaur valleys. After this severe winter campaign the army rested on the west bank of the Indus until spring had begun, and crossed the river by a bridge of boats built at Und above Attock in February, 326 B.C. As Alexander approached Taxila he was welcomed by the reigning Prince, Ambhi, who offered the invader rich and attractive presents. A new Satrapy, embracing the lands west of the Indus, was now established, and for its protection Macedonian garrisons were placed in Taxila and some other place east of the Indus.

Alexander then marched eastward and came to the banks of the river Hydaspes (Jhelum), where he encountered determined opposition from Poros, who was waiting on the right bank of the river with a large army protected by a multitude of elephants. The Greeks succeeded in eluding the observation of their enemy and crossed the river about 16 miles upwards from Poros' camp. The hostile armies met in the Karri plain (at present marked by the villages Sirwal and Pakral). Poros committed the fatal mistake of allowing the enemy to take the offensive. The 'battle of the Hydaspes' resulted in the destruction of his large army. He was a mediocre general but a most valiant soldier. He did not flee—but received nine wounds before he was taken prisoner. Brought before Alexander, he proudly demanded to be treated like a King. Alexander prudently conciliated him; not only was his Kingdom restored, but its boundaries were extended. The crafty Greek King knew that the mutual jealousy between Ambhi and Poros would keep both of them loyal to him. On either side of the Hydaspes, near the battlefield, he founded two cities—Bucephala and Nicaea—which were intended to serve as garrisons in the newly conquered territory.

Alexander now advanced to the Hyphasis (Beas), subjugating some small States on his way, and razing the city of Sangala to the ground as a punishment for its resolute resistance. He wished to go farther and plant his victorious standards in the fertile Gangetic valley, but his troops refused to adv
to the east. Worn out with years of hard campaigning, they were naturally anxious to return to their distant homeland. A Greek writer tells us that they ‘now began to lose heart when they saw the King raising up without end toils upon toils and dangers upon dangers’. They were very much impressed by the reckless courage and military skill of the Indians. They were no longer called upon to face the effete army of Persia; they had to deal with leaders like Poros and men like the defenders of Sangala. With reference to the military skill of the Indians of those days Arrian says, ‘In the art of war they were far superior to the other nations by which Asia was at that time inhabited’. The refusal of the Greek troops to advance beyond the Hyphasis was largely due to their experience of Indian skill in the art of war. The Gangetic valley was ruled by the Nanda King of Pataliputra, who was reported to be waiting for the invaders with an army of 80,000 horse and 200,000 foot, 8,000 war chariots, and 6,000 fighting elephants. Probably the Macedonians were not prepared to meet such an enemy.

The refusal of the troops to invade the Gangetic valley compelled Alexander to retreat to the Hydaspes. Poros was placed in charge of the territory between the Hydaspes and the Hyphasis, and Ambhi was entrusted with the Indus-Hydaspes Doab. Large garrisons were placed in cities founded by Alexander on Indian soil. Having completed these arrangements he began his voyage down the course of the Punjab rivers to the sea. (October, 326 B.C.). During the retreat he encountered serious opposition from the Siboi, the Agalassoi, the Mallloi and the Oxydrakai. These campaigns resulted in the subjugation of the lower Indus Valley. The kingdom of Mousikanos acknowledged Alexander’s suzerainty. Early in October, 325 B.C., Alexander left the neighbourhood of modern Karachi with a part of his army and marched for Persia through Gedrosia; the remaining portion of the army proceeded by sea under the command of Nearchos

EXTINCTION OF GREEK RULE IN NORTH-WESTERN INDIA

In May, 324 B.C., Alexander arrived at Susa in Persia. He at Babylon, near modern Baghdad, in June, 323 B.C., in the
thirty-third year of his age. When he was on his way to Persia he received a report that the Greek Satrap of the Upper Indus Valley had been murdered. At that time Alexander could do no more than ask Poros and Ambhi to manage the affairs of the Punjab under the general supervision of a Greek named Eudemos. After Alexander's death Chandragupta Maurya went to war with the Greek generals of the Punjab and overthrew their power. Eudemos somehow managed to hold his charge till 317 B.C., when he left India. The attempt of Seleukos to recover the Indian provinces conquered by Alexander proved unsuccessful. After the fall of the Maurya Empire the Bactrian Greeks re-established Greek rule in north-western India.

EFFECTS OF ALEXANDER'S INVASION

"Alexander's fierce campaign", says Smith, "produced no direct effects upon the ideas or the institutions of India". Religion, society and art remained unchanged, and "even in military science Indians showed no disposition to learn the lessons taught by the sharp sword of Alexander. The Kings of Hind preferred to go on in the old way, trusting to their elephants and their chariots, supported by enormous hosts of inferior infantry. They never mastered the shock tactics of Alexander's cavalry". Whatever Greek influence can be traced in ancient Indian civilisation came through the Bactrian Greeks, but the coming of the Bactrian Greeks to north-western India may be looked upon as an indirect effect of Alexander's invasion.

The establishment of a number of Greek settlements in north-western India may be regarded as the most important direct effect of Alexander's invasion. Some of the cities established by him survived for a long time. One of Asoka's edicts refers to the existence of Yavana (Greek) settlers in the north-western part of his Empire.

Alexander indirectly contributed to the growth of Indian unity and the extension of the Maurya Empire by weakening the petty States of the Punjab. North-western India had so long remained outside the orbit of Magadhan imperialism, and it might have been difficult for Chandragupta Maurya to bring that region under his authority if Alexander had not crushed the military pride of the tribal States.
ORIGIN OF THE MAURYA DYNASTY

Chandragupta Maurya, the founder of the Maurya Empire, is described in Hindu tradition as a Sudra and his mother (or grandmother) Mura is said to have been the wife of a Nanda King. According to more reliable Buddhist tradition, however, Chandragupta was a Kshatriya belonging to the Maurya or Moriya clan of Pippalivana, which probably lay somewhere between Rumminkai in the Nepalese terai and Kasia in the Gorakhpur district (U.P.). The Mauryas presumably took advantage of the general disaffection prevalent in the Nanda Empire to come to the forefront. Chandragupta was probably the leader of this clan.

EARLY CAREER OF CHANDRAGUPTA

No authentic details are known about his early life. He is said to have grown up among hunters, herdsmen and peacock-tamers. Plutarch tells us, "Androcottus who was then very young, had a sight of Alexander and he is reported to have often said afterwards that Alexander was within an ace of making himself master of all the country, with such hatred and contempt was the reigning prince looked upon on account of his profligacy of manners and meanness of birth". Chandragupta might have visited Alexander with the intention of securing his help to put an end to Nanda rule. According to Justin, another Greek writer, Alexander gave orders to kill this brave youngman for his boldness of speech, but he saved himself by a hasty flight. Here was no Ambhi soliciting favours and benefit and dependent on the conqueror’s generosity.

CHANDRAGUPTA’S CONQUESTS

After his flight from Alexander’s camp Chandragupta came into contact with (Chanakya or Kautilya, a crafty Brahmin of Taxila) who had been insulted by the Nanda King. They collected an army with the help of treasure found underground in the Vindhya forest. The Nanda King was then defeated in an engagement that ended according to tradition in great
slaughter. Thus Chandragupta made himself the ruler of Magadha, probably in 324 B.C. Afterwards he defeated the prefects of Alexander and put an end to what remained of Greek rule in the Punjab.

Gradually he extended his conquests to other parts of India. Plutarch tells us that "Androcottus... traversed India with an army of 600,000 men and conquered the whole". According to ancient Tamil evidence, the first Maurya penetrated as far as the Tinnevelly district in Madras Presidency. A later Mysore inscription refers to Chandragupta's rule in North Mysore. It is, therefore, likely that he conquered a large part of trans-Vindhyan India. In the west he pushed his conquests as far as Surashtra or Kathiawar in Western India and this is proved by the Junagadh Rock inscription of Kudradaman.

Towards the close of his reign Chandragupta came into collision with Seleukos, surnamed Nikator (the Conqueror), who was then King of Western Asia. He was one of Alexander's generals among whom that great conqueror's dominions had been divided not long after his premature death. Seleukos extended his dominions from the Mediterranean Sea to the Indus. Then he naturally tried to recover the Indian heritage of Alexander and came into collision with Chandragupta Maurya. He is said to have crossed the Indus to wage war but ultimately made friends and entered into a matrimonial alliance with Chandragupta. The territory ceded by Seleukos included Aria, Arachosia, Gedrosia and Paropanisadai, i.e., Herat, Kandahar, Baluchistan and Kabul. He got in return 500 war elephants. (A Greek envoy named Megasthenes was sent to the Maurya court.) A peace on such favourable terms warrants a natural inference that Chandragupta was victorious. After this contest, however, the two rulers became lasting allies and this policy of mutual friendship between the Seleucids and the Mauryas continued during succeeding reigns.

LAST DAYS OF CHANDRAGUPTA

According to Jain tradition, Chandragupta embraced Jainism, abdicated his throne and committed suicide by slow starvation in the approved Jain manner at Sravana Belgola in Mysore. (He died about 300 B.C. after a reign of 24 years.)
MEGASTHENES

Chandragupta has left his impress on Indian history as a successful conqueror and a great administrator. Our information about his administrative system is derived from three sources: the fragments of Megasthenes, Kautilya’s Arthasastra, and the inscriptions of Asoka.

We have already said that Seleukos sent an ambassador to reside at the Maurya court. “The time when he discharged his embassy or embassies, and how long he stayed in India, cannot be determined”. “There is less doubt as to the parts of India which he saw. He passed through Kabul and the Punjab and reached Pataliputra by travelling along the ‘royal road’. He did not see other parts of India. The lower part of the Gangetic valley was known to him only by hearsay and report. He wrote an account of India which survives in quotations by later Greek writers, though the original work has been lost.

Most of the classical writers ‘reckoned Megasthenes among those writers who were given to lying and least worthy of credit’. He recorded incredible marvels. He possessed very little critical judgment and was easily misled by wrong information. He was ignorant of Indian languages. (But he has left for us undoubtedly authentic information concerning matters which he actually saw.) His description of the city of Pataliputra, where he resided, the palace of Chandragupta, which he must have seen for himself, and the imperial court and camp, which he must have attended on many occasions, may be unhesitatingly accepted as accurate. (Moreover, in many respects his account of the system of government agrees with that of Kautilya.)

CITY OF PATALIPUTRA

According to Megasthenes, Pataliputra was the largest city in India, 9½ miles in length and 1¾ miles in breadth. It was surrounded by a broad ditch and protected by a wall with 570 towers and 64 gates. There were many other cities in the Maurya Empire. Those which were situated near the rivers or the sea were built of wood; those which were situated in ty places were built of brick and mortar.
The palace of Chandragupta excited the admiration of the Greeks, who declared that even the palaces of the Great Kings of Persia in Susa or Ecbatana could not vie with it. In the parks attached to the Maurya palace tame peacocks and pheasants were kept. There were shady groves and pasture ground planted with trees. The palace itself was built of wood. It probably stood close to the modern village of Kumrahar near Patna. Some European scholars have discovered traces of Persian influence in the construction of Chandragupta’s palace, but their theory is not generally accepted.

‘SEVEN CASTES’

Megasthenes seems to have divided the Indian population into seven castes: (1) ‘Philosophers’, who ‘in point of number were inferior to the other classes, but in point of dignity pre-eminent over all’. (2) Husbandmen, who ‘being regarded as public benefactors, were protected from all injury’. (3) Herdsmen and hunters, ‘who neither settled in towns nor in villages, but lived in tents.’ (4) Artisans, who were ‘not only exempted from paying taxes, but even received maintenance from the royal exchequer’. (5) Soldiers, who were maintained at the King’s expense. (6) ‘Overseers’, who ‘enquired into and superintended all that went on in India, and made report to the King’. (7) ‘Councillors and assessors’, who ‘deliberated on public affairs’. This enumeration of ‘castes’ cannot be reconciled with the orthodox Hindu theory regarding the four castes. Megasthenes seems to have ‘gained a superficial acquaintance with the Indian caste system in its functional and racial aspects’. Probably the caste system was growing rigid during the Maurya period, for Megasthenes says that no one was allowed to marry out of his own caste or to adopt any calling or art except his own.

CHARACTER OF INDIANS

Megasthenes testifies to the frugality and honesty of the Indians of his age: “The Indians all live frugally, especially when in camp. . . . Theft is a thing of very rare occurrence. . . . They never drink wine except at sacrifices.” We cannot accept his statement that the Indians had no written laws, being ignorant of writing, for we have definite evidence that
art of writing was well-known in the Maurya age. The following statement based on Megasthenes probably draws an idealised picture: "The simplicity of their (i.e., Indians') laws and their contracts is proved by the fact that they seldom go to law. They have no suits about pledges and deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses, but make their deposits and confide in each other. Their houses and property they generally leave unguarded". This statement is contradicted by the evidence of the Arthasāstra.

SLAVERY

According to Megasthenes, "all Indians are free, and not one of them is a slave". The existence of slavery is, however, proved beyond doubt by literary as well as epigraphic evidence. Probably Megasthenes was not aware of this fact because slavery in India was of mild character and limited extent in comparison with that prevailing among the Greeks.

CIVIL ADMINISTRATION

According to Megasthenes, there were two classes of superior civil officials—the agoranomi (who administered the rural area) and the astynomoi (who administered the capital city). The functions of the former are thus described: "Some superintend the rivers, measure the land as is done in Egypt, and inspect the sluices, by which water is let out from the main channels into their branches, so that every one may have an equal supply of it. The same persons have charge also of the huntsmen, and are entrusted with the power of rewarding or punishing them according to their deserts. They collect the taxes and superintend the occupations connected with land, as those of the wood-cutters, the carpenters, the blacksmiths, and the miners. They construct roads, and, at every ten stadia, set up a pillar to show the by-roads and distances."

The officials in charge of the capital city were divided into six bodies of five each. The members of the first looked after the industrial arts; those of the second took care of foreigners; those of the third dealt with the registration of births and deaths with a view to levying a tax; those of the fourth regulated retail trade, weights and measures; those of the fifth supervised the sale of manufactured goods; those of the sixth
collected 'the tenth of the prices of the articles sold'. In their collective capacity these six bodies had 'charge both of their special departments, and also of matters affecting the general interest, as the keeping of public buildings in proper repair, the regulation of prices, the care of markets, harbours, and temples'.

The duties ascribed by Megasthenes to the agoranomi are similar to those prescribed by the Arthasāstra for officers called Samāhartri, and the astynomī may be identified with the Nagarādhyakshas of Kautilya.

CRIMINAL LAW

Megasthenes refers to the punishment of criminals by mutilation: "A person convicted of bearing false witness suffers a mutilation of his extremities. He who maims another not only suffers in return the loss of the like limb, but his hand also is cut off. If he causes a workman to lose his hand or his eye, he is put to death". The Arthasāstra also recognises penal mutilations.

ARMY

Megasthenes also mentions a class of high officials—those who directed military affairs—who may be identified with the Balādhyakshas of the Arthasāstra. According to Megasthenes, this class also consisted of six divisions, each composed of five members. Each of these divisions was in charge of a particular department—admiralty, commissariat and transport, infantry, cavalry, war-chariots, and elephants. The army was a standing army, not an aggregate of contingents. According to Plutarch's estimate it numbered 600,000.

THE ARTHASĀSTRA

The Arthasāstra is generally attributed to Kautilya, Vishnugupta or Chanakya, who, according to Indian tradition, helped Chandragupta in overthrowing the Nanda dynasty and then became his minister. But the questions of the authorship and date of this important work are yet undecided. Although there is a persistent tradition ascribing it to Kautilya, there is much internal evidence pointing to a later date. The government contemplated by the Arthasāstra is that of a small...
but Chandragupta ruled over a vast Empire. Reference to China silk in the *Arthasastra* seems to show that it was composed in the post-Maurya period, for India had no contact with China in the Maurya age. “Equally noteworthy is the use of Sanskrit as the official language, a feature not characteristic of the Maurya epoch”. On these and other grounds it is held by many scholars that the *Arthasastra in its present form* was not composed during the Maurya period. But “whether the whole treatise or any part of it be the work of Chanakya or not, it deals with social conditions and institutions which prevailed in the Maurya period”. We may, therefore, use it as a source of information relating to the Maurya administrative system.) It generally supplements and confirms the information gleaned from the classical writers and the inscriptions of Asoka.

**CENTRAL GOVERNMENT**

The King was naturally the head of the State. He played a very important part in administration. Kautilya says that the King should be energetic and wakeful. He should post watchmen, attend to the accounts of revenue and expenditure, look to the affairs of both citizens and country people, attend to the appointment of superintendents, correspond in writs with the assembly of his ministers, receive secret information gathered by spies, superintend elephants, horses, chariots and infantry, and consider plans of military operations with the commander-in-chief. Kautilya also insists that the King should also study and spend some time in self-deliberation. He lays the greatest emphasis on the judicial duties of the King: “When in the court, he shall never cause petitioners to wait at the door”. About the legislative functions of the King we should note that Kautilya includes Rājasāsana or royal rescripts among the sources of law.¹ The edicts of Asoka illustrate this law-making activity of the monarch. That the King led a very active life is also borne out by Greek evidence: “He remains there all day thus occupied, not suffering himself to be interrupted even when the time arrives for attending to his person”.

¹ According to Kautilya the four legs of law are—*Dharma* (sacred law), *Vyavahāra* (evidence), *charitra* (history or tradition) and *isāsana* (order of Kings).
As sovereignty is possible only with assistance the King had naturally to employ ministers and listen to their opinions. Megasthenes describes them as "councillors and assessors". Kautilya mentions two classes of ministers—Mantrins and Amātyas. The Mantrins were the high ministers who are most probably described by Asoka in his edicts as Mahāmātras. There was also a Mantriparishad or Council of Ministers which played a very important part in the Maurya State. Its members were not identical with the Mantrins; they occupied a less important position. They were consulted by the King when emergency measures had to be decided upon. This council consisted of as many ministers as the needs of a growing empire required. The edicts of Asoka also prove the existence of the Mantriparishad. The Amātyas were the executive and judicial officers of the Empire.

OFFICIALS

Besides the Mantrins, the Mantriparishad and the Amātyas, there was another class of officers who played a very important part in the administrative system. They were the Adhyakshas or superintendents who are described by the Greek writers as magistrates (in charge of rural areas as also the capital city). The Arthasāstra mentions the duties of 32 superintendents in different departments (e.g., Treasury, Mines, Mint, Tolls, Shipping, Cattle, Horses, Chariots, Jails, Posts, etc.). Some of these superintendents are to be identified with magistrates in charge of military affairs mentioned by Megasthenes. Some of them were subordinate to the Samāhartri, some were subordinate to the Sannidhātri, and some were under the Senāpali, or commander-in-chief.

JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION

The highest court was that of the King himself. Besides the King's court there were other courts which are described in the Arthasāstra: "In the cities of sangrahana, dronamukha, and sthāniya, and at places where districts meet, three members acquainted with sacred law and three ministers of the King shall carry on the administration of justice." A sthāniya refers to the centre of 800 villages, a dronamukha the centre of 400, and a sangrahana the centre of ten villages. पेठ
cases in villages were decided by grāmikas, i.e., elected village officers, and also by village elders. Greek writers refer to judges who listened to cases concerning foreigners. We have already referred to the evidence of Megasthenes on the severity of the penal code.

PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATION

The Maurya Empire was divided into a number of provinces. The number of provinces in the time of Chandragupta is not definitely known. In the time of Asoka there were at least five with their headquarters at Taxila (Uttarāpatha), Ujjain (Avantirattha), Suvarnagiri (Dakshināpatha), Tosali (Kalinga) and Pataliputra (Prāchya). The outlying provinces were governed by Kumāras, i.e., Princes of the blood royal. There were also peoples who were autonomous and cities which enjoyed a democratic government. Kautilya refers to Sanghas or corporations of warriors of Kambuja and Surashtra.

ESPIONAGE

The very efficient intelligence service described in the Arthasāstra probably ensured proper control over the administrative machinery in the provinces. Kautilya describes the activities of spies divided into two groups—Samsthāḥ, i.e., Stationary Spies, and Sanchārāḥ or Wandering Spies.

REVENUE

The King's share of the produce of the soil (bhāga) generally amounted to one-sixth, but it was sometimes raised to one-fourth or reduced to one-eighth. Greek evidence seems to show that husbandmen had to pay an extra impost in addition to a fourth part of the produce of the soil, for "all India is the property of the crown and no private person is permitted to own land". In towns the King realised taxes on births and deaths, fines and tithes on sales.

SPIRIT OF MAURYA ADMINISTRATION

The Arthasāstra presents before us a political system that is "merciless in its precepts." The Emperor, his army, his bureaucracy, the excellent departmental organisation, the imperial Princes holding viceregal position in distant provinces,
the well-organised spy system—all these raise before us a picture of ruthless efficiency and thoroughness. There is a frank realism about it all that seems to cast a shade of darkness over the mighty structure created by Chandragupta. But this almost pan-Indian empire with its cynical attitude towards the political activities of man fostered at the same time the prevalent cultural harmony, and the relations between the Government and the governed were guided by the noblest ideals of toleration and benevolence. In this respect the principles of the Arthasastra do not differ much from the spirit that finds expression in an Asokan edict in the celebrated words: "All men are my children." Kautilya says about the monarch:

"In the happiness of his subjects lies his happiness, in their welfare his welfare. Whatever pleases himself he shall not consider as good, but whatever pleases his subjects he shall consider as good."

"The King shall provide the orphans, the aged, the infirm, the afflicted and the helpless with maintenance. He shall provide subsistence to helpless women when they are carrying and also to the children they give birth to."

BINDUSARA

Bindusara, son and successor of Chandragupta, ruled approximately from 300 B.C. to 273 B.C. His title Amitraghāta (slayer of foes) seems to indicate that he was a powerful ruler. Either Chandragupta or Bindusara conquered a large part of trans-Vindhyan India, for Asoka made only one conquest—that of Kalinga,—yet his dominions extended in the south as far as the Pennar river. During the reign of Bindusara there was a formidable insurrection at Taxila, but the rebels submitted promptly on the arrival of Prince Asoka.

Bindusara maintained friendly relations on a footing of equality with the Hellenistic Powers. The King of Syria dispatched to his court an ambassador named Deimachos. Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt also sent an ambassador named Dionysius who presented his credentials either to Bindusara or to Asoka. A Greek officer of the Seleukidian Empire sailed in the Indian seas to collect geographical information. Political relations probably brought about cultural contact. Bindusara is said to have requested King Antiochos I of Syria to send him a sophist.
ACCESSION OF ASOKA

Bindusara was succeeded by his son Asoka. He ascended the throne about 273 B.C., but his formal coronation took place four years later in 269 B.C. To explain this delay a theory of fratricidal struggle has been advanced on the authority of the Ceylonese chronicles. But we cannot believe wild legends in the absence of independent authentic evidence. No definite information is available regarding the first four years of Asoka’s reign. These years form “one of the dark spaces in the spectrum of Indian history”.

CONQUEST OF KALINGA

Asoka, or Devanāmpiya Piyadasi, as he is called in his edicts, pursued the imperial policy of expansion within India, which he inherited from his predecessors. Kalinga, which had formed a part of the Nanda Empire, must have asserted its independence after the fall of the Nandas, and if Greek evidence is to be believed, formed an independent Kingdom in the time of Chandragupta. Eight years after his coronation Asoka effected its conquest. The Kalinga monarch had a huge army and Asoka had considerable difficulty in overcoming him. He says in Rock Edict XIII, “One hundred and fifty thousand persons were carried away captive, one hundred thousand were slain and many times that number perished.” The newly conquered territory was constituted into a new viceroyalty with its headquarters at Tosali (in the Puri district of Orissa). With the annexation of Kalinga the era of military conquest, which had begun in the days of Bimbisara, came to an end.

EXTENT OF ASOKA’S EMPIRE

The extent of the Maurya Empire under Asoka may be almost precisely determined. In the north-west his empire stretched as far as the borders of the empire of Antiochos II of Syria and included modern Afghanistan, Baluchistan, Sind as well as the tribal territories. The Yonas, the Kambojas and the Gandharas of the north-west frontier region are mentioned as dependent tribes. The inclusion of Kashmir is proved by the evidence of Hiuen Tsang and also by Kalhana’s Rājatarangini. The inclusion of the Nepalese terai is proved
by the pillar inscription of Asoka at Rummindel. In Rock Edict XIII Asoka enumerates his outlying regions in a definite order and in this connection refers to the Nābhapamātis of Nābhaka who were residents of the Ieraī region. In the east Maurya dominion seems to have extended to the Brahmaputra. Hiuen Tsang saw stupas of Asoka near Tamralipti (in South Bengal) and Pundravardhana (in North Bengal), but in his days there were no monuments of Asoka in Kamarupa (Assam). In the south the Maurya frontier extended to the Pehnar river, and the Tamil powers of the Far South (Chera, Chola, Pandya and Pallava) are mentioned by Asoka in Rock Edict XIII as border states. There were various tributary tribes in the south, like the Andhras, the Bhojas, the Pulindas and the Rāshtrakas. In the west the Asokan Empire extended to the Arabian Sea, and Surashttra was governed by Yavanaraja Tushaspha, a vassal of Asoka.

ASOKA AS A BUDDHIST

The Kalinga War must be regarded as one of the most decisive events in the history of the world. The misery and bloodshed of this campaign made a profound impression on Asoka's mind. He speaks thus in one of his edicts: "Thus arose His Sacred Majesty's remorse for having conquered the Kalingas, because the conquest of a country previously unconquered involves the slaughter, death and carrying away captive of the people. That is a matter of profound sorrow and regret to His Sacred Majesty... of all the people who were then slain, done to death or carried away captive in the Kalingas, if the hundredth or the thousandth part were to suffer the same fate, it would now be matter of regret to His Sacred Majesty". He became a convert to Buddhism but he continued to entertain full reverence for men of all sects. He called himself Devānāmpiya (beloved of the Gods). He inculcated liberality and seemly behaviour towards the Brahmins. He also made costly gifts to the Ajivika monks. One of his edicts says, "The King does reverence to men of all sects".

Asoka attached the greatest importance to the zealous practice of Dhamma or Law of Piety. Asoka thus describes Dhamma, "Father and mother must be obeyed; similar respect for living creatures must be enforced; truth must be spoken; these are
the virtues of the Law of duty". Elsewhere he says, "A meritorious thing is the hearkening to father and mother; a meri-

[The shaded portion represents the approximate extent of Asoka's empire. The black dots indicate find-spots of Asoka's inscriptions.]

orious thing is liberality to friends, acquaintances, relations, brahmanas and ascetics; a meritorious thing is small expense
and small accumulation". Thus, instead of emphasizing dogmas and theological subtleties Asoka insists on the practice of certain simple virtues. Hence it has been claimed that the morality inculcated by him was common to all the Indian religions. Rhys Davids points out that *Dhamma* never means religion but rather, when used in that connection, what it behoves a man of right feeling to do or what a man of sense will do. It lies quite apart from all questions of religion or theology. It fell naturally into three divisions: (1) What it was right for the layman. (2) What it was right for the wanderer. (3) What it was right for those who had entered the path of Arhatship. The *Dhamma* promulgated by Asoka was only the first of these three divisions. It was the *Dhamma* for the laymen as generally held in India, but in the form and with modifications adopted by the Buddhists. So the *Dhamma* inculcated in the Asokan edicts cannot be properly understood except in the context of Buddhism.

**MISSIONARY ACTIVITIES OF ASOKA**

Asoka adopted various measures to disseminate instructions on *Dhamma* within and without the frontiers of his empire. He engraved these teachings on imperishable rocks and stone pillars. The sites were carefully chosen and the documents were composed in vernacular dialects. The style is distinctive and the edicts are alive with personal feeling. He also appointed a new class of officers called *Dharma-mahāmātrās* and included within the purview of their duties "the concerns of the Law, the establishment of the Law, and the business of alms giving." The Emperor himself also undertook royal tours of piety in the place of old tours of pleasure and royal hunts. These royal tours must have given great impetus to the spread of the *Dhamma*.

After the conquest of Kalinga Asoka gave up the traditional policy of *Digvijaya* and adopted the Buddhist ideal of *Dhammavijaya*. In Edict IV he says that "the reverberation of the war drums has become the reverberation of *Dhamma*." In accordance with this new ideal he made no attempt to annex the frontier states in and outside India. Instead of sending soldiers he sent missionaries.
As Asoka attached so much importance to his policy of Dhammavijaya we should note the outcome of his missionary activity. "In his use of Dhammavijaya the stress is all on Dhamma and the Vijaya becomes a metaphor and ceases to be a reality." In Rock Edict XIII he claims that he made conquests by Dhamma not only throughout his Empire but also in the adjoining Kingdoms of Antiochos Theos of Syria, Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus (or Corinth). It is added, "Even where the envoys of His Sacred Majesty do not penetrate, those people too, hearing His Sacred Majesty's ordinance based upon the Law of Piety and his instruction in that Law, practise and will practise the Law." There is no doubt that Buddhism made some progress in Western Asia, though we have nothing to prove that it made any headway among the Greeks.

The Ceylonese Chronicles, Mahāvamsa and Dīpavamsa, written several centuries after Asoka, name the missionaries sent by him to Ceylon and to Suvarnabhumi or Lower Burma. The mission to Ceylon, headed by Prince Mahendra, was entirely successful, and during the long reign of Tissa Buddhism won a complete victory in Ceylon.

ASOKA'S RELATIONS WITH THE BUDDHIST CHURCH

Asoka preached concord among the various sects; but he naturally took special interest in the affairs of the Buddhist Church. In one of his edicts he refers to the deadly sin of schism within the Buddhist Church. He took steps to maintain the integrity of the Church and to prevent schism. According to tradition, he summoned a Buddhist Council at Pataliputra in the seventeenth year of his reign with a view to suppress heresy and compile the true Buddhist doctrines. He is said to have entered the Samgha. I-tsing, the Chinese traveller, saw an image of Asoka in the garb of a Buddhist monk. Asoka's relations with the Samgha were friendly and cordial. He earned the title of "kinsman of the faith." But his lavish expenditure upon religious edifices has been exaggerated. "It is said that he thrice gave away and purchased back Jambudvipa. This can hardly be believed of an
emperor so conscious of the responsibilities of his unique position”.

INFLUENCE OF BUDDHISM ON FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

We have already noted how Asoka’s conversion to Buddhism led to a fundamental change in his foreign policy. Instead of trying to annex the frontier States in the Far South—Chola, Pandya, Satiyaputra and Keralaputra—he maintained friendly relations with them. With the Syrian neighbour the old policy of friendship was continued.

With regard to internal policy also a change is manifest. He condemned sacrificial slaughter of living creatures, violence to animate beings, offensive Samājas or popular carousals and unseemly behaviour. He upheld Ahimsā and Maitri. He wanted to improve the moral and material condition of his people by means of his administrative reforms and his simple instructions in Dhamma. Asoka hoped to put an end to mal-administration in the distant provinces. The administrative innovations introduced by him included the quinquennial and triennial tours of royal officers like the Yutas, Rājukas, Prādesikas and Mahāmātras. While the other officers were directed to carry on propaganda work during their tours, the Mahāmātras were to check miscarriage of justice and abuse of delegated authority in the outlying provinces. A new class of officers called Dharma-mahāmātras preached the Dhamma; but they also dealt with important administrative questions, e.g., revision of sentences, reduction of penalties, etc.

Asoka sought to promote the welfare of men and beasts. He issued certain regulations that restricted slaughter and mutilation of animals. Pillar Edict V contains a code of regulations against animal slaughter. These agree with the restrictions recognised by the Arthasastra. Asoka must have given effect to these restrictions. Hospitals were built for men and beasts. Wells were dug; banyan trees and mango groves were planted. Great importance was attached to the distribution of alms, and beneficent activity in general received a great impetus from the new tone of administration. “The importance of energetic action by the sovereign was not a new conception... nor
was the idea of royal responsibility for the virtue of the people a novelty, but Asoka gives to these principles a new force and direction by calling upon all to participate in his energy and by fixing all attention upon moral improvement as a means to happiness in the present and further in another life.”

ESTIMATE OF ASOKA

Asoka’s reign is regarded as “one of the brightest interludes in the troubled history of mankind.” With a triumphant army and an efficient bureaucracy, this supremely able ruler could easily have completed the conquest of the Far South and embarked on a policy of further conquest abroad. Alexander turned back on the Hyphasis because he was compelled to do so and he was indignant with destiny for bestowing on its favourite only limited success. Caesar turned back on the Thames, on the Rhine, on the Danube and on the Euphrates because he had to effect a regulation of the frontiers. Asoka could easily have realised the ideal of a united \textit{Jambudvipa} or thought of unbounded plans of world conquest, but where others saw and conquered, he conquered and then saw what conquest meant. The forbearance of this strong man is unique in history.

This soldier and statesman was also responsible for transforming a local sect into one of the greatest world religions. But he was neither dogmatic nor intolerant; he looked upon all questions from the broad, humane point of view. It has been said that “the missions of King Asoka are amongst the greatest civilising influences in the history of the world. His benefactions were a source of inspiration even as late as the time of Govindachandra of the Gahadavala dynasty”.

This great preacher of non-violence, whose burning words on the misery and desolation of aggressive wars still ring in our ears, could not unfortunately prevent the world from pursuing its wonted course. Instead of diverting the course of human history, we are told, his pacifism really weakened the Maurya Empire. We do not know what happened to the large and powerful army organised by Chandragupta. The sound of the war drum was hushed. Hunting was abolished. Even the wild tribesmen heard only the mild preaching of \textit{Dhamma}. 
Asoka died in or about 232 B.C. Within a quarter of a century the decline of the Maurya power became manifest. Disintegration began and the process of decline became very rapid, Yavana invasions accelerating the process.

In estimating the significance of these facts, however, it must not be forgotten that Asoka was not an unpractical visionary. Inspite of his idealism he knew how to face the facts of life. "He exhorts his successors to follow him in the path of Dhammavijaya; of winning people to the learning and practice of Dhamma; but he is not sure that they will accept this advice and adopt this course in its entirety; hence he adds a rider that if, still, in the face of his exhortation, conquest should yet have its attractions for them, they should be gentle and merciful in the pursuit of their plans and never lose sight of the ideal of true conquest. Again, the practical question of the need for and the limits to the use of force in ensuring that regard for law and order without which social life would be impossible—this question is not shirked by Asoka." He was a practical statesman and the alleged responsibility of his pacifism for the decline of the Maurya Empire is little more than a plausible surmise.

INSCRIPTIONS OF ASOKA

The inscriptions of Asoka have been divided into eight classes in chronological order. The area covered by them is nearly the whole of India. Their distribution enables us to indicate correctly the extent of the dominions of Asoka. Their language is vernacular, closely akin to literary Sanskrit and Pali. The script is generally Brahmi, but in two recensions of the fourteen Rock Edicts we have Kharosthi.

(1) The two Minor Rock Edicts. The first document is of value for the personal history of Asoka. The second contains a summary of Dhamma. Their date is probably 257 B.C. Copies of these edicts have been found at Sahasram (Shahabad district, Bihar), Rupnath (Jubbulpore district, C. P.), Bairat (Jaipur State, Rajputana), Siddapur, Jatinga-Rameswar and Brahmagiri (all in the Chitaldrug district, Mysore), Maski (Raichur district, Nizam's Dominions), Yerragudi (Karnul district, Madras Presidency) and Kopbal (in the Nizam's Dominions). The Maski version is perhaps the only record which mentions the great
Emperor's personal name (Asoka); other records give us his title (Piyadasi) only.

(2) *The Bhābru Edict.* It gives some important passages from the Buddhist scriptures and proves that Asoka had really embraced Buddhism. The date is about the same as that of the Minor Rock Edicts.

(3) *The fourteen Rock Edicts.* These explain Asoka's principles of government and ethical system. Their date is about 257 B.C. Copies of these edicts have been found at Shahbazgarhi (Peshawar district, N.W.F.P.), Manshera (Hazara district, N.W.F.P.), Kalsi (Dehradun district, U.P.), Girnar (near Junagadh in Kathiawar), Sopara (Thana district, Bombay Presidency), Dhauli (Puri district, Orissa), Jaugada (near Ganjam, Orissa) and Yerragudi (Karnul district, Madras Presidency).

(4) *The Kalinga Edicts.* These explain the principles of his new system of administration adopted after the Kalinga War. These edicts also deal with the treatment of border tribes. These two edicts take the place of Rock Edicts XII-XIII in the Dhauli and Jaugada versions of the fourteen Rock Edicts.

(5) *The Cave Inscriptions* in the Barabar Hills (Gaya district, Bihar). The dedications of three caves are to the Ajivika monks who were the forerunners of the Digambara Jains of later times and are to be dated between 257-50 B.C.

(6) *The Terai Pillar Inscriptions* are two commemorative records on columns in the Nepalese terai, one of them being at Rummindeli, the birth-place of the Buddha, and the other at Nigliva. They were erected in 249 B.C. Here Asoka also indicates his devotion to the former Buddhas.

(7) *The seven Pillar Edicts* (date between 243 and 242 B.C.). They serve as an appendix to the Rock Edicts, emphasising and repeating earlier instructions. The more important inscribed pillars of Asoka are now found at Delhi, Allahabad, Laturiya Araraj, Laturiya Nandangarh and Rampurwa (all in the Champaran district, Bihar).

(8) *The four Minor Pillar Edicts* (date between 242 and 232 B.C.). Copies of these edicts are found at Allahabad, Sanchi (in Bhopal State) and Sarnath (near Benares).
ASOKA’S SUCCESSORS

We know the names of several sons of Asoka: Kunal, Jalauka, Tivara. We also know the names of three of his grandsons: Dasaratha, Samprati, Vignasoka. It is very difficult to reconcile divergent versions regarding the succession to the Maurya throne after Asoka’s death. The last of the Imperial Mauryas was undoubtedly Brihadratha who was assassinated by his general Pushyamitra, the founder of the Sunga dynasty, in or about 187 B.C.

CAUSES OF THE FALL OF THE MAURYA EMPIRE

The Maurya Empire experienced a gradual decay. The theory that this decline was due to a Brahmanical reaction does not stand critical examination. There was nothing in the career of Asoka to bring about a militant Brahmanical reaction. The Sunga coup d’état was just a dynastic revolution.

If Greek evidence is to be believed, Subhagasena had set himself up as an independent King in the Kabul valley long before the fall of Brihadratha. There is also evidence to show that Vidarbha or Berar had also become independent. When Antiochos the Great of Syria invaded north-western India in 206 B.C., the dismemberment of the mighty Maurya Empire had already advanced very far. The weak successors of Asoka, like the weak successors of Aurangzeb, were unequal to the task that they had to face. In the outlying provinces the centrifugal tendency asserted itself and the mighty fabric of Chandra-gupta and Asoka was almost in a state of collapse when Pushyamitra effected the dynastic revolution. He usurped only a fragment of the extensive Empire.

Thus disappeared the first great Indian Empire that gave to India political unity for a century, defended her against powerful foreign enemies, established a uniform and efficient system of administration, used one official language (Prakrit) for official purposes, and emphasised that code of conduct which was common to all Indian religions. The wider peace that was established opened out fuller opportunities for cultural development. This political and administrative unity of Indian history was again lost with the collapse of the Maurya Imperial fabric.
MAURYA GENEALOGY

GENEALOGICAL TABLE OF THE MAURYA DYNASTY

Chandragupta

Bindusara | Amitrāghāta

Sushima | Asoka | Vigatasoka (Tissa?)

Priyadarśinī

Mahendra | Sanghamitra | Charumati | Kunalā | Jalauka | Tivāra

Bandhupalita (Dasaratha?) | Samprati | Vigatasoka

FOR FURTHER STUDY

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