

Chandra Gupta Maurya's Policies – Relevance in the Indian Society

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Abstract: The policies and programs implemented by Emperor Chandra Gupta Maurya are relevant in the current scenario as well. The main motive behind this research project is analyze the modus operandi and the structure of Chandra Gupta Maurya's kingdom. It depicts the positive changes his kingdom brought in the Indian society in terms of public welfare, warfare, unification of fragmented territories, annexation, judiciary, laws, political setting, etc. Major features of the society at that period of time due to the emperor's kingship is highlighted in the given research project. The study implies the prosperity and glory brought into the Indian society by this competent ruler. Even today we can relate to the major policies, government settings, judicial aspects, the role of state head in a sovereign state, administrative policies, management, prewar preparations, etc. because history repeats itself. The futuristic vision of Chandra Gupta Maurya is the foundation stone of his successful empire. He efficiently divided the administration into subdivisions allotting different tasks to each administrator handling a division. The concept that labor division is the prerequisite to build a massive kingdom is evident here. Chandra Gupta Maurya's promising personality along with Kautilya's diplomacy and guidance has paved a path to bright kingship leading to one of the organized civilization. The stress over 'Dharma' i.e. duty during the Mauryan reign is an important aspects showcasing that obligations are the part and parcel of a ruler's life to bring positive changes in the entire society. Hence the idea behind studying the features of his kingdom is to comprehend that what made his kingship change the major aspects of Indian society as it is relevant even in today's world.

Keywords: Dharma, Arthashastra, Kautilya, Sama, Dama, Danda, Bheda, Diplomacy, Policy

1. Introduction

The reign of Maurya dynasty [1] changed the whole Indian scenario from darkness to brightness. It changed the Indian scenario making it organized, efficient and systematic. Chandra Gupta Maurya who is the founder of this dynasty unified the landmass which was divided into fragments. [2] He defeated and overthrew the Nanda dynasty and made Magadha a politically and economically developed region. [3] Various religious and spiritual movements emerged during his reign. The main information of the emperor's kingship is collected via three main sources: the writings of various scholars like Megasthenes Indica, Kautilya's Arthashastra [4] and epigraphy. [5] These writings suggest that he was an able administrator, shrewd militant, efficient ruler and a great conqueror who brought substantial changes in the Indian society. In his rule, between the period 324 BC – 300 BC he

spread his kingdom extending almost entire Indian subcontinent along with the north west area. [6] The Mauryan dynasty is known for its sound administrative policies and its successful welfare schemes. The rule of Chandra Gupta Maurya is the paragon of excellence because the history speaks for itself. Since a very few administrative changes have occurred after his throne was passed on to his successors. The fundamental principles always remained constant throughout the reign of the dynasty. Chanakya who was a teacher in Taxila university came across Chandra Gupta Maurya and trained him for 8 years to defeat the Greek by war of liberation and overthrow the rule of Dhana Nanda. The shrewd militancy of Chandra Gupta Maurya, sharp-witted ideas of Chanakya, incompetency of Dhana Nanda, effective tactics and astute diplomacy, bravery and skillful tactics made him conquer the rule. During the reign of Dhana Nanda there was a lot of mismanagement in the

administration of the kingdom. It was politically, socially and economically unorganized. However, Mauryan dynasty filled the loopholes of ineffective administration bringing the era into a golden era with glory and prosperity as whole. According to many political thinkers there are two aspects of a welfare state: One aspect is a democratic government. However, the Mauryan rule was perfectly monarchical in nature because Chanakya was against the formation and working of a republican state. [7] Other aspect is public welfare and the well-being of the citizens. The rule of Chandra Gupta Maurya certainly fulfilled the latter condition. Arthashastra being the main source, [8] Historians should continue to use Arthashastra to support or dispute the theories about Maurya's is illustrated of a curious inertia among his historians.

2. Aim of the Project

The project aims to review and analyze the changes brought about by Chandra Gupta Maurya's policies and programs. It aims to learn how he set up the foundation of the Mauryan empire so effectively with systematic ensuring personal development of citizens as well as overall i.e. civil, political, economic and social development. It also studies about Chandra Gupta Maurya's tactics assisted by Kautilya's diplomacy leading to emergence of prosperous kingdom.

3. Objectives of Project

1. To study the structure and organization of the Mauryan society and comprehend how he brought about changes in the legislative, militancy, executive, judicial, political, religious outlook of the society.
2. To analyze and compare the systematized administration involving division of administrative workload amongst the capable officials leading to efficient, organized and well-regulated state.
3. To evaluate the working of the center and the cities during Chandra Gupta Maurya's reign and the emphasis on 'Dharma' and the efficiency of the ruler for the proper working of a kingdom.
4. To identify that how and why was the primary concern of Chandra Gupta Maurya to work for public welfare with the help of certain illustrations like network of roads, sanitation facilities, healthcare centers, irrigations, etc. and if these public welfare programs were the causal elements to change the Indian society.
5. To understand the militancy and diplomatic acts of Chandra Gupta Maurya leading to prosperity in trade, commerce and industry and how the financial divisions led to economic upliftment of the society as whole.

4. Research Methodology

I have used secondary sources to seek information regarding Chandra Gupta Maurya and his empire. The information is derived from sources like books, journal

articles, editorials, etc. Some genuine pieces of offline databases and research papers appreciating and criticizing the empire is also alluded from internet sources.

5. Changes Brought in the Indian Society by Chandra Gupta Maurya - Content

Chandra Gupta Maurya was the guiding light who changed the entire scenario of the India society making it organized, developed and systematic through his prudent financial management, judicial administration, systematic polity, glorious trade, etc. Before the rule of Chandra Gupta Maurya the whole country was divided into small kingdoms which were unorganized and mismanaged. [9]

5.1. Polity

The government was monarchical in nature and structure. And the crown was hereditary in nature. The King was given supreme and divine power to rule over his subjects. Though the position of the king was supreme, yet it had its own limitations for the sake of state welfare. The main motto of politics consisted that the king should abide by 'Dharma' which is Duty. [10] Dharma was sovereign in nature. The state containing the King and law, or Dharma was entirely separated which implies that the King cannot enjoy absolute powers. Reasonable restrictions are there to adhere to the rule of Dharma. The kingdom emphasized that the King should be strong with powers, but Dharma was considered equally important. The main motive was to elevate the standards of the life of its citizens and the state functioned accordingly. There was no separation of personal life and civil life of the citizens. The King had a control over all moral, social, political and spiritual law of the state. The state had the right to make laws and policies on family life, religious practices and policies were also controlled by the state, the preaching of spiritual values to the citizens, the intellectual entities and economic enterprises and even personal laws. The king had a lot of powers in his subjects but at the same time the duties of the king were large. Even while choosing the next successor the kingdom was prudent while making the decisions. It was a general principle that incompetent and wicked son of the king will not ascend to the throne. The people of the kingdom had full power to agitate or protest or even rebel if the successor is incapable of handling the kingdom. The future successor was sincerely trained with sound education and moral training. He was thought about the social, political, diplomatic, military and other aspects of the state. If the incumbent failed in adequate training, then he was forfeited from ascending to the throne. Chandra Gupta Maurya established the idea that the ruler should increase the financial treasury and power of the state without any legal or moral consideration. The whole rule was based on 4 principles like 'Sama' (conciliation), 'Dama' (gift), 'Danda' (punishment to the wrongdoers), 'Bheda' (sowing differences among different states). The polity was primarily handed by the King along with his Council of Minister.

5.1.1. King

King had the most prominent position in the Mauryan era. The crown was generally hereditary in nature but there were provisions for the king to be elected. There were certain provisions in which female could become the state head. However, it was quite rare and practically impossible at that period of time. All the military, judicial, legislative, executive and financial powers were vested in his hands. That is why the maintenance and well-being was dependent on kingship. According to Arthashastra, the main motive of any king should be the protection of people. [11] The king was a busy person involved in the affairs or polity. The whole of 24 hours of a king's routine was divided into 8 parts and different tasks were allotted at these parts. And he was supposed to function accordingly for the welfare of the kingdom. In some sources it is mentioned that the sleep schedule of Chandra Gupta Maurya was only 6 hours. Even when he dressed and combed his hair he listened to the spies and allotted, them various duties. The taxes were the main source for the king to which he returned in the form of protection and service to the people. According to Megasthenes, there is a description of the large palace i.e. residence of the king. There was strict watch against treachery and poisoning of king's food and lady bodyguards were there to prevent the same. [12]

5.1.2. The Council of Ministers and State Council During the Reign

According to the Mauryan rule sovereignty is possible only with proper aid and assistance. [13] It is a necessary element for the efficient administrators to assist the ruler for proper effective administration. There were of about 3-5 Council of Ministers. The rule was so systematic that each minister was allotted one or few departments for the state welfare. One of the minister from the council was made as the Prime minister. They were all appointed on the basis of merit and the king had the power of their dismissal. The major administrative policies and measures were taken by the council of ministers. The ministers were free to access the king whenever deemed necessary. In fact, it was the council who aided and advised the king on various policies and issues. The state ministers ranged from 12 to 16 and were nominated as per as the demand or necessity is. The king had the power to refuse the ministerial decisions or suggestion but practically it was rarely implemented.

5.2. Bureaucracy & Administration

The kingdom of Chandra Gupta Maurya was so well divided and organized that bureaucratic center existed for proper management. [14] According to the Arthashastra, there were eighteen officials. [15] The Sannidhata who headed the treasury, Nayadhisha who the chief justice handling judiciary, Senapati who was commander in chief, Purohita handling the religious wing, Samaharta handling the collected revenue and its allotment, Pratihara who protected the palace by gate keeping, Prasasta who was head of police forces were some of the officials for effective maintenance. Various

departments had different heads like management, agriculture, revenue, trade, industry, commerce, mint, etc. This capacity to resolve issues, dedication and the loyalty toward the king constituted to efficient administration of the whole kingdom giving India society a new shape ensuring glory and prosperity.

5.2.1. The Cities

The administration of city was a prominent and minutely taken care of. [16] The city was divided into two parts and these parts were headed by Gopas and Sthaniks. (Gopa is the head of 5-10 village & Stanik is the Judicial officer.) There was also a city superintendent vested with the powers to maintain the municipal corporation to facilitate people with basic civic amenities. According to writings of Megasthenes there was a committee of 30 members who were appointed for the management of the capital city i.e. Pataliputra. [17] These members were divided into 6 equal parts where each part of 5 members were assigned certain work for city issues. The 1st board managed the industries and its outcome, the 2nd board looked after trade and commerce, the 3rd board looked after the manufacturing unit, the 4th one focused on the foreigners coming in the city, 5th one maintained the state records of birth and deaths occurred, and the last board looked after the collection of tax. These facilitated the basic civic amenities for public welfare. Religious areas, gardens, proper sanitation facilities, drainage system, wells, safe drinking water, temples, safety measures to prevent fire conflagration, entertainment facilities, etc. are the prominent aspects of a Mauryan society.

5.2.2. Espionage

There was a spy system prevalent in the Mauryan society. The emperor sent the spies within the territory as well as in foreign lands. There were some female spies as well. Not only the king but also the state ministers deputed the spies in order to be aware of the affairs and the implemented policies in the territory. Chanakya and Chandra Gupta Maurya both supported the system of spies for regulating the conduct of the state. [18] With this system it became easy to understand the foreign state and its policies and tackle the enemy aliens.

5.3. Judiciary

The punishments to the crimes was severe in order to maintain law and order. For minute offences fines were imposed but for severe crimes the punishments extended to death penalty and cutting of limbs as well. These measures gave a new direction to the society for maintaining law and harmony. The court was divided into local and center. The judgements were given by three to four judge bench. The king also gave judgements whenever deemed necessary. Business courts, village assemblies and dispute resolving courts were there during the reign. The systematic division of criminal (Kanatsodhana) and civil courts (Dharmasthiya) led to fast justice rendering mechanism. [19]

5.4. Finance

Since agriculture was the primary occupation land revenue occupied lions share in state revenue. The land revenue was collected differently with no uniformity in percentage of tax because it differed according to the quality of soil. The state spent huge exchequer to encourage farming activities and swell up the production. Other sources of revenue were the flourishing trade and commerce. This is evident from the fact that the currency was widely used and circulated. The cattle breeders and livestock breeders also were a source of income. Besides this irrigation tax and license fees were some other sources. The state had full control over industries, mines, waterways, forestry, etc. for developing them. The militancy, salaries of the bureaucrats, social welfare were the sources of expenditure. Hence the finances of the state were well managed which brought glory and prosperity into the Indian society. The Maurya were against donation. D. D. Kosambi once expressed his views that it has been clearly said in Arthashastra that in no case the state shall pay or donate land, forest, etc. [20]

5.5. Network of Road and Irrigation

The state-initiated irrigation and water management project. The extensive network of road was prevalent in the kingdom. According to Megasthenes the main road was 1840 km long and plantation of trees was a significant aspect on either side of the road. Direction boards and distance boards were erected on the roads. The roads were properly maintained for smooth functioning. Canal irrigation was focused on by the Mauryan rulers. Many canals were irrigated for better water management. Large irrigation projects were implemented by the rulers. Dams were built by Chandra Gupta Maurya. One of the prominent one was in the western India in Girnar. This increased the supply of water in the region resulting in surplus agricultural production. However, the state taxed one-fifth of the overall production for initiating and proper implementation of these projects. [21]

5.6. Health Facilities and Sanitation Facilities

After Chandra Gupta Maurya ascended to the throne health care was the primary concern of the state. Rules and regulations were framed for efficient sanitation and drainage facilities. Cleanliness and hygiene were strictly imposed. Hospitals were maintained for both human beings as well as animals and birds. There were separate departments for maintenance of records like births and deaths. This showcases how well organized the whole kingdom was.

5.7. Militancy and Diplomacy

Military was an important pillar in the Mauryan era. Chandra Gupta Maurya stressed on efficient army which is powerful and strong. [22] He laid the foundation for such organized militancy to conquer new territories safeguarding the older ones from the enemy aliens. The military consisted

of both army as well as the navy. There were many war elephants, chariot horses, infantries and Cavalry to assist them during the war. A 30-member committee was established to look after the army and its administration. This committee was further divided 6 parts to look into the military administration for its efficient working. The departments included war-elephants, transportation facilities during war, infantries, cavalry, navy and war chariots. They looked for its maintenance and working. The success of Chandra Gupta Maurya against Seleucus and the conquest of Kalinga by Ashoka are sufficient proofs of strength of Maurya army.

6. Literature Review

In the article (Prakash, 1956) called 'CHANDRA GUPTA MAURYA IN THE SHĀH-NĀMĀ OF FIRDAUSI' [23] written by Buddha Prakash, the author has elaborated how dedicated and wise Chandra Gupta was towards his duties as a king. The author has explained about the reasons why Chandra Gupta Maurya was powerful by giving illustrations like Alexander the great wanted to ally with him asking him to surrender. This proves the powerful position occupied by the emperor. The author has supported the futuristic foresight of Chandra Gupta Maurya by citing how he tried to bring his colleagues together in Taxila under the guidance of Kautilya for waging a war against the Greeks. The author has cited different illustration of his diplomatic ties and internal work for the kingdom by thorough analysis.

7. Limitations

Though Chandra Gupta Maurya was a greatest king of all times yet his policies are criticized and rejected by many historian and scholars. Some of them are elaborated below:

1. Many thinker have argued that the Mauryan empire imposed heavy taxes on the citizens. Taxes were not only charged on agricultural production but also on irrigations schemes implemented by the state.
2. Some scholars have disregarded the expenditure of the state by Maurya because too much money was spent on the army. Moreover, the officials and bureaucratic expenditure was too high according to the sources.

8. Conclusion

The reign of Chandra Gupta Maurya fostered development in the Indian society. The unification of fragmented kingdoms is a significant factor of Mauryan era. According to me the efficient militancy and its selection process and division along with the diplomacy and ideas of Kautilya has led to massive achievement fostering growth and development. Second of all according to my perspective the reason for well-organized society is the motto of the emperor. The main goal of Chandra Gupta Maurya was public interest. They strived towards public good. This aspect made them to implement policies accordingly which resulted in individual

development as well as public welfare. However, I criticize the policy of the state that there was no separation of civil and personal rights of the citizens. This might ensure overall state rights reducing the overall crime rates and bringing order and harmony in the society, but this might restrict the personal development of each individual which is essential for emotional well-being of that individual. Though the state here will ensure civil harmony, but the personal fundamental rights stand violated. According to me the reason for state organization and well-being is the separation of state from its laws. 'Dharma' being the ultimate goal of Chandra Gupta Maurya made the state more efficient in nature. Moreover, the collection of income via taxes and disposal of expenditure through planning brought economic and financial prosperity in the kingdom. All the administrative departments including military, executive, city council were allotted with group of members who were assigned with certain tasks. The presence of loyal and capable officials were the other reasons due to which useful information was not leaked into other enemy aliens. The spy management as written in Arthashastra is another aspect for overall development. The overall management and foundation of effective mechanisms by Chandra Gupta Maurya which assisted the administration is responsible for glory and prosperity of the whole Indian society.

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