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Mauryan Administration under Ashoka: A Study in Early Governance

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Abstract

This study explores the administrative framework of the Mauryan Empire under Emperor Ashoka, focusing on the unique fusion of political governance and moral philosophy. By examining archaeological inscriptions, ancient texts, and scholarly interpretations, the paper investigates Ashoka's transition from a militaristic ruler to a proponent of Dhamma, his ethical governance model. The analysis delves into the central and provincial structures, roles of officials, economic and judicial policies, public welfare initiatives, and Ashoka's efforts in diplomacy and cultural integration. It highlights the influence of Ashokan administration on subsequent Indian empires and draws comparative insights with contemporary civilizations such as the Persian and Hellenistic empires. Ashoka's reign stands as a seminal example of early ethical governance and continues to inform discussions on leadership and statecraft.

Keywords: Mauryan Empire, Ashoka, Early Indian Administration, Dhamma, Governance, Buddhism, Public Welfare, Edicts, Political Philosophy, Ancient Bureaucracy

Introduction

Aśoka (Dēvānampriya Priyadarśin Rājā) was the third Mauryan emperor (304–232 BCE), ruling during the dynasty's greatest expansion across the Indian subcontinent from the Hindu Kush to the upper reaches of the Ganges, and touching the modern borders of Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and Bangladesh (Voss, 1970). Our knowledge of Aśoka derives primarily from legendary Śramaṇic texts, the secondary account of Megasthenes' Indica, and the Arthaśāstra of Chanakya; although somewhat problematic, these sources provide contrasting and independent glimpses of his socio-political milieu. The Five Precepts—abstention from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, falsehood, and unrighteousness—constitute a universal moral code for both laypersons and Brahmins that corresponds with components of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Historical Context of the Mauryan Empire

According to the Aśokāvadāna entry, young Aśoka initially showed reluctance to undergo Prince Gautamīputra's assessment but was persuaded by his mother to assert his claim, suggesting early encouragement (Voss, 1970). These accounts imply that even before formally embracing Buddhism, Aśoka's attitude had evolved, possibly influenced by the new faith during the Kalinga campaign. Additionally, he appears to have remained guided by his grandfather Cāṇakya's Arthaśāstra, regarding conquest as a legitimate imperial duty. Notably, Aśoka, formerly known for his ruthless military expeditions, later commemorated the Kalinga victory as a moral one in his rock inscriptions. The annexation extended his dominions beyond his ancestral sphere, enabling him to exercise unchallenged authority consistent with Arthaśāstra statecraft.

Ashoka's Ascension to Power

When Aśoka's reign began, the Mauryan dynasty already controlled most of the Indian subcontinent except for the south. His father, Bindusāra, was the second Mauryan king. Aśoka probably grew up in Ujjayini or at Pataliputra. He appears to have been a dynamic and energetic person. The strict discipline that he imposed on his administration after the annexation of Kālinga may have been a continuation of traits developed earlier in his career. According to the Aśokāvadāna of the second century C.E., he was appointed viceroy of Ujjayini, a large city west of the Vindhya, during his father's reign.

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Its location was important, as it guarded both the western and southern parts of the empire. Aśoka's personality was multi-layered. The early Mauryans appear to have excelled in administration. The bloodshed at Kālinga and subsequent referral to the distress of the vanquished would seem to indicate either a change of heart or a more compassionate side of the leader. Aśoka is said to have appointed his elder son, Mahinda, the first Patriarch of a mission to Sri Lanka, which was transmitted to King Devanampiya Tissa, a contemporary of Aśoka (Voss, 1970).

Governance Structure of the Mauryan Empire

Mauryan Administration under Ashoka: A Study in Early Governance

The Mauryan Emperor was an absolute monarch and was divinely appointed, with the authority expressed in the Arthashastra as being unlimited in every aspect. Mahamatyas were officials appointed by the government for particular departments and acted as chief executive officers, similar to modern ministers. The Council of Ministers or Mantriparishad was a body that helped the Emperor in the duty of administration and was headed by the Mahamatya. The Prime Minister or Mantri was a spy-cum-chief adviser of the Emperor, holding a very important position within the government, and all important communications initiated from the Emperor passed through the office of the Prime Minister.

The various departments of the Mauryan Government rendered both civil and military functions. The Home Department had charge over the civil government; the army was directly responsible to the Emperor through the commander-in-chief or Samharta. Other departments were revenue, foreign affairs, and espionage. The Empire was divided for the convenience of administration into four provinces, Viceroy appointed in charge, and Viceroy-appointed governors placed over every smaller section of territory. The Provincial Governments were subordinated to the Headquarter or Central Government in every aspect. The Viceroy or Kuberin was head of the Provincial Administration, appointed by the Emperor himself and in whom supreme civil, military, and judicial power was vested, subject only to the nominal control of the Emperor, often styled as King in the Province.

1. Central Administration

Rulers who seek the extension of their kingdom and other things lawfully should acquire the friendship of other kings by sending them presents. When the friendship of the powerful kings, who dwell on the earth, has been acquired at that time, riches increase in the country of that king who also wishes to acquire other things, especially a kingdom. Administration is based on the welfare of the whole. A king should do all that will promote the happiness of his subjects with regard to their happiness, unhappiness, loss and gain, by fair counsel. Ministers should be appointed for the direction of the administration. The army is the foundation of the kingdom. The numerous subjects, the small kingdoms annexed under the protection of a great king and the districts flourishing through the favour of a minister, which have all contributed to the strength of the army, become the foundation of the kingdom.

2. Provincial Administration

Ashoka's empire may have retained the administrative framework established under Chandragupta. Bureaus addressed the needs of the treasury, accounts, trade and commerce, foreign affairs, the royal household, the maintenance of order and justice, and public works. The complete administrative system formed an elaborate strongly hierarchical bureaucracy with the emperor at the apex. His centre of imperial authority was at Pataliputra, whence he exercised control by fourfold delegation. The magnitude of the empire and imperial authority thus invested in his hands is reflected in the Ashokan inscription — the first direct statement of the concept of empire in India, and possibly in the history of mankind — that the entire territory subject to the king lay at his disposal (Schnare, 1981). A representative system invested the king's authority in provincial governments and local administrations responsible, for certain categories of affairs, to the headquarters administration or directly to the centre. The regular fourfold division of the provinces, each administered by a governor assisted by a council of ministers and a staff of secretaries and clerks, may well have been a development consequent upon the large scale of empire and continuing political unrest and insecurity.

3. Local Governance

Each province under Aśoka was subdivided into Gaṇarājas (republics), Gāṇapatis (heads of corporations), Grāmarājas (village chiefs), and Grāmapatis or Grāmikas (heads of villages) (Voss, 1970). The latter were elected by the people, and these units were headed by magistrates called Mahamatras. The venerable Dhamma, characteristic of Aśoka's rule, also exerted influence upon political administration.

Role of the Emperor in Governance

Prior to his conversion to Buddhism and subsequent adoption of the policy of dhamma, Ashoka is best characterized as an agent of the Mauryan state (Voss, 1970). The annexation of Kālinga prompted him to amend existing rules rather than abandon them outright. His assumption of absolute authority, although extraordinary, aligned with established traditions of governance. He expanded the policies of his predecessors in a manner consistent with earlier practice.

Ashoka's Edicts and Their Significance

Aśoka broadcasted to all people his vision through newly erected rock epigraphs, proclaiming, "All men are my children. Now (therefore) I desire, What? All should live here happily and be benefited." (Voss, 1970). Consequently, his concept of Dhamma transcended the king's usual obligations. It signified a moral law, independent of caste or creed, grounded in the essential nature of all religions. The Mauryan emperor Aśoka, son and successor of Piyadassi, transmitted revelations of the Dharma through inscriptions carved at verifiable locations. Mauryan authority extended throughout the Indian subcontinent barring independent borderlands, and the edicts were widely disseminated by the state apparatus. The systematic promulgation of Aśokan Dhamma

coincided with the unprecedented implementation of administrative uniformity and intervention across the empire. The corpus of dharma edicts constitutes the earliest explicit statement of political theory extant in India beyond the early Vedic hymns and Pāli literary traditions. The fundamental elements of Imperial “dharma” as articulated by the author of the edicts represent the core values of official Aśokan policy at the time investigated, extracted from the aggregate of the Rock, Pillar and Minor Rock inscriptions.

1. Dhamma and Governance

The term dhamma was neither a technical term nor a technical concept. It conveyed loose ideas of a general and liberal nature that were difficult to pin down. However, it is certain that Aśoka associated his notion of dhamma closely with governance. Public security was obviously a governmental task, but public security regarded as a reachable goal needed a steady and well-organized administration. The sole aim of this administration was evidently unhindered growth and progress of the people. By proposing an alternative rule of conduct, dhamma was expected to bring about the anticipated growth and progress. Aśoka, therefore, can be regarded as the first governor in world history who earned a reputation for outstanding and praiseworthy administration before the industrial revolution started at the close of the eighteenth century (Voss, 1970).

2. Public Welfare Initiatives

The public welfare policies initiated by Ashoka played a significant role in transforming his image from that of a ruthless conqueror to a compassionate ruler. His inscriptions delineate a myriad of organisations and initiatives designed to alleviate poverty, support vulnerable groups, and preserve the welfare of animals. At an administrative level, Ashoka ensured the removal of social inequalities and provided care for those in need. Housing schemes were introduced to accommodate the homeless, educational programmes were established for orphans and children from impoverished backgrounds, and subsidies were provided to assist widows and the elderly.

In addition to these measures, the establishment of hospitals catered to the requirements of humans as well as animals, reflecting his profound sense of charity and humanitarianism. The king was particularly concerned about the welfare of animals: numerous heroines had been saved through the issuance of orders not to kill animals. The planting of shade trees and the digging of wells along roads were implemented to accord relief to weary travellers and forest-dwellers. This amalgamation of charitable policy with power-holding metamorphosed Ashoka's image from that of a ruthless conqueror—who had decimated Kalinga—to that of a loving ruler devoted to the well-being of his subjects.

Judicial System under Ashoka

Ashoka instigated prosecutions and established a system through which the guilty could be tried and punished to avoid the breakup of the social fabric during the Mauryan period. Punishments for convicted criminals included mutilation, branding, or death, whereas the innocent were acquitted. The state also assumed the responsibility of assisting the afflicted, compensating the injured, and protecting the weak from destruction by the strong. The Edicts reveal that administrative officials often worked in pairs, with at least one member devoted to proselytizing the dharma. Modern research suggests that these pairs supervised causes related to justice. The highest judicial authority was the King. People were taught acceptance of the law, and they were taught to endure wrongdoing, ignorance of the law, and injustice because taming the mind is more difficult than taming property or an unruly elephant.

Economic Policies and Administration

Economic Policies and Administration The foundation of the Mauryan Empire's economic structure lay in the systematic collection of taxes from peasants and landlords, a revenue source directly administered by the king. Complementary contributions in the form of money, grain, and animals were obtained through established contractual agreements with state officials. These fiscal mechanisms were elaborated upon in the Arthashastra, which prescribed the designation of ministers assigned to oversee various facets of production and commerce (Voss, 1970). King Aśoka, born into this governing system, did not inaugurate new institutions but utilized the existing administrative framework to disseminate his policy of Dharma. The dissemination of his edicts serves both as a repository of his rule's record and as an exemplar of the prevailing system of governance.

1. Taxation System

The Mauryan administration collected tribute and taxes from its regions. All land was considered the king's property and liable to a share of the produce. Officials would fix the amount of tax required yearly from each region and individuals were expected to pay the sum or its equivalent in crops or other valuables. A share of the produce was also collected from artisans and traders, from whom special taxes were levied in addition to tolls on goods in transit. The Mauryan ruler also exercised monopoly control over the supply and price of many commodities. Surplus agricultural output was chiefly state property, and non-arable lands were brought under the plough. The Mauryan government had monopolies on essential goods like salt, iron, and liquor (F. Koenig & L. Taylor, 1970).

2. Trade and Commerce

Trade and Commerce

The Mauryas had a vast trade network both inside and outside. Many goods, like spices, muslin, cotton, horses, gold, jewels, metal objects etc. were exported. The Mauryas conducted trade and commerce with both the societies of the East and the West. Trade was made easy by the system of roads in the Mauryan period. The most famous route amongst these was the Grand Trunk road, surveyed by Chandragupta Maurya and constructed by his grandson Ashoka. Trade was carried on outside, such as the peninsula of Deccan, Sri Lanka, Burma, countries of the South-east and the West. Ashokan inscriptions found in Srilanka, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Myanmar and in the inscribed pillars found at Kandhar, reveals the expanse of trade and commerce in

Mauryan period. The carvings in the Sanchi stupa show the crafts of the Mauryans as well as the activities of trading. Viewed from the sphere of religion and culture also, the external contacts during the Mauryan period were extensive and many-sided. The wealth and position of the Mauryan empire in the world of that time may, indeed, be judged from the tribute paid by foreign rulers to Chandragupta Maurya, the conquests of Alexander, the inscriptions in Kandahar and the long list of conquests of Ashoka.

Military Organization and Strategy

Despite policies of peace, the fluctuating relations between the states of the empire required the maintenance of a large standing army. It consisted of infantry, cavalry, war elephants, chariots and naval forces commanded by generals from the royal family or trusted nobles. The army had strict discipline and presumably followed a war code that was intended to minimize any unnecessary suffering. For defence, the Mauryas built fortresses, notably at Taxila and Junagarh, and had a network of spies and informers which was headed by the Superintendent of the Crows. The Amatyas, a group of hereditary military and civil servants, held defense control in their respective localities. The fluctuations in external relations and influences provided a complex and vibrant background to Ashoka's reign. Although committed to non-violence, the emperor was obliged to dedicate a significant portion of the state's resources to maintain a vast standing army. The organization of the forces appears to have been very sophisticated: a complex system of fortifications was maintained, war-ships plied the waters of the Arabian Sea, and the land routes were guarded, while a network of spies and informers helped protect the country from within.

Diplomatic Relations and Foreign Policy

Ashoka's diplomatic outreach is reflected in epigraphic evidence from Kandahar, where the Greek text of his Major Pillar Edict II records exchange of envoys not only with Antiochus II Theos, the Macedonian ruler of Syria, but also with Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt, Antigonus Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene, and Alexander II of Epirus. Likewise, the Edicts of Ashoka mention frequently the dispatch of missionaries (Voss, 1970). Ashoka's own diplomatic instructions emphasize peaceful relations; his reign reflects a transition from war to peace and from illusion to reality in foreign policy. Even large-scale projects to reclaim land from the sea were pursued without confronting neighboring powers.

Cultural Policies and Promotion of Buddhism

Cultural policies under Ashoka emphasized lenient treatment of foreigners and the promotion of Buddhism, both elements featuring in the edicts. The latter is illustrated by appointing two of his sons as royal preceptors (Dharma Mahamatras). Ashoka sent missionaries abroad, facilitating Buddhist dissemination. Pilgrimage to sacred sites associated with the Buddha was attracted, and these were marked by pillars and stupas connected by roads. Temple building and pilgrimage sites had an economic dimension, advancing Buddhist dispersal alongside faith (Voss, 1970).

Role of Officials and Bureaucracy

In the Mauryan state, revenue officers had the important task of fixing up the different rates of taxes and also supervised the collection of taxes by chakladars. Baladhyaksha officials managed revenues on behalf of the king. There were several other revenue officers, including Sangrupakas, who collected revenue in kind; Lagnadhyakshas, who fixed rates for taxation; and Suchi, who prepared detailed records of cultivated land. The Koshadhyaksha maintained and made proper use of the state treasury. Besides revenue officers, the Mauryan state also had secretaries called Lekhapals, who maintained the accounts of the state treasury. The management of the army was entrusted to senapatis. Silk producers were supervised by Parthasarathi. Sales were overseen by Panyadhyaksha, and the construction of roads and highways was under the charge of the Sukarakshas. Special emphasis was laid on the management of trade and commerce.

Besides kings and commanders, there were many officials who helped the administration to run smoothly. Officers such as Yangapalika (water manager), Chhadayamaruta (director of corvée and compulsory labor), Mandapadhyaksha (manager of workshops), Bandhopyadhyaksha (superintendent of prisons), Lavanakaraka (custodian of salt stores) and Panyadhyaksha (director of trade) for trade and commerce had their specific duties. In the Mahavamsa, King Devanampiya Tissa of Sri Lanka sent envoys such as Yakkhapajja (Governor General) and Banduka Hattu (Senapati) to Ashoka's court. The administrative system was so well balanced that it unquestionably served as the foundation of the Mughal and British Empires.

1. Role of Ministers

The Emperor Aśoka kept a large council of ministers with supplementary boards organized by field. It is important to note that Aśoka continued the administrative system of the Mauryan period inherited from previous rulers. According to the edicts of Aśoka, the superintendent of a field maintained a close connection to the emperor's person through the frequent exchange of gifts. Although the power of the leading ministers was considerable during the reign of Candragupta Maurya, especially among the first three dynasties, none of them had an appearance comparable to the five prime ministers of Chiang Kai-shek. If anything, it is clear, in Aśoka's case, that no other politician rivalled the emperor, despite the need for the maintenance of an extensive network of councillors. (Voss, 1970)

2. Local Officials and Their Functions

Next in importance to the officers appointed by the king and his ministers were those responsible for administration at the town level. The settlements in the towns and villages of India were comparatively old, and the inhabitants managed their local affairs on the basis of tradition. As a consequence, Indian local officials were chiefly concerned with executing such acts in order that a citizen might enjoy the protection of the community. Landlords and traders were particularly concerned in this connection, and as the settlement of their affairs was intimately connected with government work, the local governing bodies were called into existence, and their members were elected. Land settlement records have not yet been found, but it is certain that much attention was paid to the growth of the town. Indeed it was hardly possible that the growth of towns should be ignored, for, on the one

hand, the King's work interfered with that of the towns when he appropriated the land, and, on the other, the amount of revenue obtained from the lands was immediately connected with town affairs, Public works operations also affected the towns when they were about to be built or were to be reconstructed for their promotion; and thus, for the proper management of these town-affairs, some persons were appointed to act on behalf of the Government.

Challenges to Ashokan Rule

Scholarship on Ashoka highlights his prioritization of the common good and his extended sense of responsibility to all people (Voss, 1970). Early inscriptions confirm that Ashoka was confronted by significant threats to his rule. Despite imposing two years of hard labour on the defeated Kalingans, the region posed an ongoing threat. Fatal challenges to Ashoka's reign included a failed Paul's colony and the Cyrenaic revolt. The Kalinga war was a terrifying experience for an enlightened philanthropist and a severe strain on the empire's resources. Beyond these critical events, justifiable concerns did arise that the empire could not withstand Ashoka's death or an efficient aggression at any scale. A state of near-perpetual unrest designed to guard against sudden collapse therefore encompassed the empire. Several events preceding Ashoka's accession need to be considered when understanding these difficulties. The Achaemenid Empire's granting of protection to the Chandra dynasty and the capture of Taxila demonstrate the persistence of foreign influence during this period. An internal rebellion significantly weakened the latter Mauryas, and the repulse of the Bodhi tree invaders further blotted Ashoka's political sky. Valid concerns remain about the empire's vulnerability during Ashoka's early reign.

Legacy of Ashoka's Administration

Ashoka's casuistic (*modus ponens*) edicts played an important role in providing a clear outline of the Mauryan state and its administration. They presented, in an exceptionally refined format, the leadership principles that had ensured for a long time, even when state power had vanished, a legacy that combined power, commitment and governance. His edicts and inscriptions still call attention to a refined and highly effective organisation – one whose impact on Indian history has never yet been analysed adequately. The key to their success lay in a leadership that, in a system reproducing itself largely throughout the ancient world, marked an innovative turning point, still worthy of scrutiny. Ashoka's was an unusually prominent leadership in uniting as well as developing a society that was one of the world's largest at the time, and expanding the range of the use of power. The new norms which his reign established served as the founding principle for a society based on a truly civil order. His leadership was also the mirror through which many facets of the spread of Buddhism in ancient India can be viewed, in particular its shape and eventually its decline (Voss, 1970).

1. Influence on Subsequent Indian Empires

The Mauryan administrative model continued to influence succeeding Indian rulers, shaping the governance systems of the Shunga, Kushan, and Gupta empires. Furthermore, the example of Ashoka continued to exert direct influence during the reigns of the Kushan and Gupta empires.

2. Modern Interpretations of Ashoka's Governance

The modern assessment of Aśoka as a ruler is closely tied to the contemporary understanding of the so-called Aśokan Dhamma, the politico-religious ideals prescribed by him to govern his dominion (Voss, 1970). Taken from rock edicts scattered throughout the Indian Middle Kingdom, this concept largely shapes the modern evaluation of Mauryan governance during its acclaimed highpoint. A comparative analysis of contemporaneous Hellenistic rulers further instigates the scholarly reassessment of Aśoka's tenets. Contrary to the traditional view of a benevolent constitutor of post-war social harmony on the Indian subcontinent, other ruling houses of the period embarked on extensive humanitarian reforms that arguably eclipsed the famous protagonist in scope and depth. The Ptolemies of Egypt advocated water conservation and irrigation, for instance, major concerns for a kingdom dominated by the Nile and reliant on its annual flooding for agricultural production. Meanwhile King Antigonos of Macedonia and King Ariarathes of Pontus not only prohibited the enslavement of citizens, but also mercilessly curbed the practice of slave kidnapping. Between the lines, Aśoka emerges as an exemplar of nondistributive justice, a ruler who effectively sanctioned a *translatio imperii* along Dalit lines and extended his responsibility for the common weal to all men indiscriminately.

Comparative Analysis with Other Ancient Civilizations

According to Voss, the Mauryan administration under Ashoka remains one of the rare models that can be replicated in later societies and organizations (Voss, 1970). The period exhibits striking similarities with ancient Chinese governance, as elaborated throughout this work. The mutual convergence of Mauryan and Chinese political states produced analogous administrative structures among two independent cultures. Parallel historical developments ensued, especially concerning the relationship between the state and society. For instance, both civilizations applied similar mechanisms to regulate the realm, monitor governed populations, and isolate external cultures, thereby limiting foreign influences. These regulated social environments eventually redirected the expansionist energies of the political states into pursuits intended to benefit humanity.

1. Persian Empire

Les satrapies, divisions administratives créées par Cyrus (r. ca 559-529) et Darius (r. 522-486) en Perse achéménide, bénéficiaient d'un statut privilégié, la plupart se voyant dotées d'autonomie, sauf en période de guerre, avec un État provisoirement unifié mais jamais un instrument de domination (Boucharlat, 2010). L'empire iranien étend l'horizon politique de la vallée de l'Indus à la Méditerranée. Après la politique expansionniste d'Alexandre, le monde hellénistique est divisé en royaumes courant le long des grands axes terrestres et maritimes. Si le limes hellénistique multiplie les contacts avec l'Inde, la Persistance hellénistique est moins stratifiée que l'empire perse. Une division par régions frontières y fait plutôt place à une structuration régionale et urbaine.

2. Mauryan vs. Hellenistic Governance

Mauryan and Hellenistic governance were contemporary systems of managing territories, both lasting only a century or so. A crucial difference lay in their underlying principles. Ashoka's role model of leadership was conveyed by Augustan literary sources and luminous inscriptions across the empire. The closest analogue to Ashoka's legislation is found in the Hellenistic tradition of benevolent rule, typical of the Seleucids and Attalids (Voss, 1970). Hellenistic regimes following Alexander the Great differed only slightly in political institutions from earlier kingship in the fifth century. The enlightened monarch shared the peace with his immediate social environment and extended it to his subjects and foreigners. This was expressed in the social (politeia) and religious constitution (thesmos) of cities, which Aryan kings could not have adopted. The core values of Ashoka's policy exceeded the traditional duties of rājadharmā by offering moral law independent of any caste or creed and based on the essence of all religions.

Conclusion

Ashoka's reign is regarded as the model of the perfect Buddhist king in the Theravādin tradition and a prototype for later mahāyāna Buddhism (Voss, 1970). His political thought exerted wide and lasting influence on the religions of South and Southeast Asia. Mauryan kingship suited a vast, multi-ethnic empire. The king controlled military power and maintained a balance between κόσμος (law and order), δίκη (justice), and χάρις (benevolence). The queen was unlike the constraints of tradition. Chandragupta's wife Vanī devotes herself to the Jain faith, while Bindusār's principal consort is dedicated to the cult of Nikāya-śāsanās. The key to Ashoka's conception of kingship lies in the concept of rājadharmā, the set of rules and responsibilities that administered and governed his mundane power. Ashoka's governing strategies took the shape of advices directed at the royal government and the people. Others aim at a subdividing the king's duties more explicitly into royal obligations toward the Cāṇakya-Mauryan state and its agencies and those toward the wider world of subjects and officials. Earlier kings function as generals who serve at the pleasure of the meritorious king. Bondservants tend to be chosen from the professional military class and receive generous land gifts. A ruler capable of mistresses and usurping the powers of his father should claim that he has acquired leadership because of the king's favour and the permission of all lay and religious officials, sustains the military along the Agrahāra-model and introduces the practice of pardoning his enemies only over the dead bodies of his generals.

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The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper

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