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## **VARIOUS FORMS OF MUNICIPAL ADMINISTRATION IN ANCIENT INDIA**

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The ancient Indian city governance system was managed by officials and communities appointed by the state. Kautilya has addressed the main officials of the city by the name 'Nagarak'. Its function was to supervise the works happening in the city. Lakes, highways, secret paths, tunnels etc. had to be inspected daily. To protect the lost or forgotten or abandoned things of others and he did not show any carelessness in fulfilling his responsibilities. Nagarak of Kautilya period can be identified with 'Nagalak' of Kalinga inscription of Ashoka period. In the Jataka literature, the head of the city has been called 'Nagarguttik'. There is a description in one Jataka that once Vudhisattva was born in an untouchable clan of Kashi, the emperor there was impressed by his ability and placed a garland around his neck and called him 'Nagarguttik'. In the inscriptions of Una, the head of the city has been called Drangik. In Rajput records, he has been called 'PatnadhikarPurush'.

In Manusmriti, the chief officer of the city has been called 'Nagarsarvarthchintak' i.e. the one who oversees every incident happening in the city. In the Junagadh inscription, he has been addressed by the name 'Chakrapalit', who was the chief officer of SaurashtrapurGirinagar during the Skanda Gupta period. In this way its two main responsibilities are mentioned. Firstly, protection of the city, secondly, suppression of evildoers. It was expected from this officer that his behavior towards the natives would be full of sympathy and self-confidence. Chakrapalit, the chief officer of Girinagar, treated the citizens like sons and tried to correct their faults. Public works were expected from this officer. Chakrapalit had renovated Sudarshan Beach for the benefit of the citizens. Qualified people were often appointed to this post. In this way, Chakrapalita was present with worthy and desirable qualities in every way. He was full of virtues like forgiveness, dominance, wisdom, bravery, charity and devotion etc.

In Kautilya's Arthashastra, names of some princes related to city governance are found. Panyadhyaksha, Suradhyaksha, Sunadhyaksha, Ganikadhyaksha and Naovadhyaksha, the main duty of the Panyadhyaksha was to determine the price of the goods sold in the city. He used to see whether the traders of the city were committing fraud to get more profit unfairly. He



made every possible effort to ensure that whatever item was sold was pure and there was no adulteration in it. The main duty of the 'Suradhyaksha' was to especially look after the buying, selling and use of liquor etc. as per the government rules and there should not be any kind of 'quarrel' and dishonesty in the Suralay. The main job of the Sunadhyaksha was to supervise the meat sellers, whether the meat sellers remove the bones and sell clean meat or not. If a person sold meat with bones, he was punished. The butcher was also kept in mind that he should not slaughter the calf, bull, cow etc.

The main duty of 'Ganikadhyaksha' was to determine the income of courtesans and impose tax on it. Punishment of the courtesan and the person having relations with her if found inappropriate or guilty in her behaviour. The head of the courtesan used to give severe punishment to the sensual person who wanted to have sex with the courtesan against her will. The main job of the boat captain was to look after the ports, his main job was to collect fees from foreign travelers. They used to pay traveling salary to the captains who disembarked from government ships. Foreign traders were allowed entry into the city only after presenting certificates. This officer used to punish those passengers disembarking from the ship who violated trade and port rules. Passengers with suspicious conduct were detained by it.

There was a provision to secure details related to population in cities. Megasthenes has mentioned the officials who presented the details of life and death of the people in Patliputra. He was always careful that no account of birth and death should be left out in the government accounts.

Kautilya has also mentioned the population office, where two royal men used to do the census, the first Gop and the second Gop, known as Spathi, counted the members of ten, twenty or forty clans of the city. He used to record the details of caste, clan, name and occupation of every man and woman in his jurisdiction in his account. There was a senior official than the local gop, in his account the names of the residents of all four parts of the city were mentioned. It also had to preserve the names and addresses of people coming from outside the city. The operators of Dharamshalas had to send the names and population of the travelers staying to the authorities. Citizens also had to inform him about their guests. Through this system, complete details were available about the number of outsiders in the city and their relationships.

Information is available regarding the holding of additional meetings of various officials for city governance. Which has been called 'Paur' in ancient texts. Description of 'Paur' is found



in Kharavela's writings Divyavadana, Ramayana etc. This assembly mainly made arrangements for collective benefit. According to Brihaspati, it used to arrange peaceful activities i.e. peace in the city. Apart from this, it was considered its duty to do wholesome work i.e. to work in the interest of the citizen. Other public works of Nagar Sabha include construction of auditorium, Lake Temple and rest house and helping orphans and the poor. Megasthenes has also mentioned the Municipal Assembly, according to him there was an assembly for the governance of Patliputra which had six departments and each department had five members. Apart from separate responsibilities, these departments also had many collective responsibilities, such works as renovation of public houses for the benefit of the population, price control in the markets, supervision of ports and maintenance of temples etc. There used to be an office of the Municipal Assembly where its meetings were held, ruins of such an office have been found in a place called Bhita near Prayag. A currency has been found from Nalanda, on which the word 'Purika' is engraved. From this it is concluded that the Municipal Assembly also had a seal, from which specific articles of this assembly were printed.

In the cities, the work of justice administration was mainly done by the state courts. In 'Mrichchakatika', the city court has been called 'Adhikaranamandap' and the judge has been called 'Adhikarananik'. In the Dhauli inscription of the Ashoka period, the city judge has been described as Nagalvihal's (city administrator). It can be compared with the 'practical' part of economics. A qualified person was appointed to the post of city judge. In Mrichchakatika, it is mentioned about the qualification of Adhikaranika (city judge) that he should be a scholar, skilled in knowing deceit, eloquent, free from anger, able to answer without seeing the same character for both enemy and friend, protector of the weak, free from cunning people. For this, the punisher should be religious, selfless, the publisher of real secrets, skilled in knowing the heart of others, and an averter of the king's anger. There is a very good description of the functioning of the city courts in Mrichchakatika. It is known from this book that a Dauvarik was appointed in front of the main gate of Vyavar-Bhandap. On receiving the permission of Dandanayak, he used to announce which people wanted to file 'Karyathi' i.e. case. After this declaration, the plaintiff used to give his statement in the court, on receiving the information from the court, the defendant (respondent) used to appear on the fixed date, evidence was taken in the courts and the decision without proof was not considered correct. Testimony was taken for evidence, the testimony of all types of people was not considered valid, only the



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testimony of ascetic, charitable, noble, truthful, son-in-law, religious and rich people was considered valid. Gegasthenes has written that if the person giving evidence was caught in a false statement, he was punished by amputation.

The cases were scrutinized a lot before giving verdict in the city court. So that no injustice is done to the person. In this regard, there was a very special feature in Vaishali, the capital of the Republic of Lichchavi, where the same case was heard by seven courts of cities one bigger than the other, if all the accused were found guilty, then only he was punished. But if even one of them considered him innocent then he was declared free from crime. Although the judge was completely independent in his field, yet due to coming under government influence, it sometimes became difficult for him to give an unbiased decision. Death penalty was often given to the accused in the cities only, because arrangements were made there for this. There is a description in Mrichchakatika regarding death penalty.

Various duties of local committees are mentioned. Small cases were often decided by local committees and communities, three in particular are mentioned here. These committees had the right from the state to give decisions in their respective areas. The committee used to settle the disputes of its members according to the category religion. The committees of different castes living in the city were called 'Kul'. A group of members of the same family was called 'Kul'. Like the category, there were certain rules for the 'Poog' and 'Kul' also. Were. If the members of the caste did not follow their religion, the state punished them.

To protect the health of the citizens, arrangements were made for cleanliness within the city; polluting the main highways and leaving feces and urine were considered crimes. Anyone who threw the body of a dead human or animal on the road had to face severe punishment. For greater cleanliness, the dead bodies were taken to the city through the route designated for this purpose. The dead body was burnt at the crematorium only and punishment was given for burning it anywhere else to protect the health of the public. Dispensaries were built and medicines were distributed free of cost. To obtain medicines, famous herbs were planted at various places by the state. Ashoka has said in his writings that "Wherever there were no medicines beneficial for animals and humans, I got them planted there." Efforts were always made to maintain public health better, the government always took care that impure substances were not sold in the markets, those who were caught in such faults were given severe punishment. Thus, due to this system the citizens felt extremely safe.



The city also had the right to collect various types of taxes for smoothly running the appropriate resources, firstly commercial tax, secondly industry tax, under commercial tax, octroi, tax on weights and measures and sales tax are notable. Was called fee, fee was taken as part of the kingdom. The toll collecting officer was called the tax collector, his office was located at the entrance of the city, a high flag was placed on the office, the weights and measures used in practice were thoroughly checked and the state seal was put on them and thus They were certified, for this the foresters had to pay 'tax', in Arthashastra it is called Prativedha tax. According to this text, this tax was only Charmasa. The merchant who did not get his measurements or weights stamped was fined 27 and a half panas. Industry tax was taken from the artisans, it has been called Karukar in the records. This tax was taken in two forms, first in the form of Vishti i.e. forced labour, second in the form of cash. Vishti was a tax collected from small artisans, such as potters, carpenters and blacksmiths. It is mentioned in the Smritis that the king could take permission from small artisans once in a month for public works. Money was taken from big artisans, including goldsmiths, weavers and wine makers. According to Kautilya, five percent tax was taken from the liquor maker.

Various works were done by the state for city security, guards were appointed to prevent theft, the city guards were called 'nagarrakshin'. They used to work hard and keep guard at night. If they proved unable to trace the thief, these people were given very severe punishment. In view of greater safety of the citizens, sometimes walking on the highways was prohibited at night. It is said in the Arthashastra that Bherivadan was performed at the beginning of the second quarter of the night, after which citizens could not go out of the house till the end of the third quarter. Were. Citizens were given the right to step out of their homes only when necessary and in case of emergency. The state took upon itself the responsibility of security of city traders. It is mentioned in the Jataka that the king used to arrange for the security of the traders for their welfare. A department was appointed to extinguish the fires in the cities. The person working in this department had to live in a certain part of the colony. As a precaution, there is mention of people already keeping pitchers filled with water in bungalows on the main highways and intersections of the city. Ordinary citizens also helped in extinguishing the fire. When divine objections arose, the state provided maximum assistance to the citizens. On the occasion of famine, donations were distributed among the citizens.



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Regarding the protection of public health, we also get information from foreign accounts that the Greek traveler Megasthenes describes that the second committee of the municipality of Patliputra looked after the health of the foreigners, if they fell ill, they made arrangements for the last rites and their funerals. The work of handing over the property to their relatives was done by the committee itself.

Market control was a major part of city governance. Megasthenes has written that the work of the fourth committee of the assembly of Pataliputra was to supervise the markets. Its members used to inspect the weights and measures used in the markets from time to time and they allowed a trader to sell only one type of goods. Thus, Kautilya has also mentioned an officer named Panadhyaksha, who exercised strict control over the market. That is, it is known from the Maurya period that state control over markets was strictly enforced.

Cities were the focal points of various businesses. State control over industries was essential so that the government could be run in a systematic manner. According to Megasthenes, the first committee of Patliputra used to inspect the various businesses of the city. According to Kautilya, there is mention of the person who controls the business, in relation to whom the description of Suradhyaksha is found. The state was always striving for industrial development. Megasthenes has mentioned that if a person caused harm or physical harm to an artisan, he was given death penalty. In this way the state was always ready to provide security to businessmen.

Deep trenches and high quality material were used to protect the city limits. There is mention of the fact that the moat of Pataliputra was 600 feet wide and 55 feet deep. Weapons for the city defense were collected on the peak. During the attack on the fort, the city guards used to throw weapons at the enemy army from the peak. After some night had passed, the gates of the city were closed, the travelers who reached late at night were stopped at the gate and at sunrise the next day they were allowed to enter the city. Information is received from the people regarding this type of arrangement in the city of Varanasi. There is also a description of Antapala in this regard in the Arthashastra. The Chinese traveler FaHien has mentioned Dharamshalas in the cities of Northern India. Travelers staying there did not have to pay any kind of rest fee. Dharamshalas were built by wealthy Vaishyas. Some important information regarding Dharamshalas is found in Shukraneeti. According to this, the Dharamshala operators used to get information about the name, clan, caste and address etc. of the travelers staying there, and after collecting the complete information, they used to mention the details





in the magazine. The doors of the Dharamshala were closed at night and guards were always deployed for security all around, the administrators had to give information about the travelers to the city office, in this way the newcomers coming to the city could not cheat the government in any way.

Spies used to provide important information to the city officials. According to Kautilya, spies should roam around the city in disguise, with their heads bowed, hair tied and wearing the form of an ascetic, to obtain important information about the city. Exactly similar information is available in Nitisar also regarding collecting information. In Nitisar, the spy has been called 'Nripatichakshu'. In this way the emperor used to observe all the events through them. To facilitate the citizens in getting water, there was a provision of a lake in every city. According to Mahabharata, there is mention of a lake in Indraprastha city which was adorned with birds like swan, KarandavaChakravak etc. Thus, it is clear from the description referred to that the governance system of ancient Indian cities was very important and the effort to keep this system highly secure and impenetrable under the supervision of important officials can be seen as a commendable effort.

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