

In India, the legends of the Aryans speak of the evolution of the administrative apparatus. The gods, at war with the demons, were on the verge of defeat. In desperation, they got together and elected a king to lead them. The origins of the early Aryan administrative system may perhaps be traced to these legends.

Kautilya's Arthasastra stipulates seven basic elements of the administrative apparatus. These elements are embodied in the doctrine of the Prakrits. They are: Swamin (the ruler), Amatya (the bureaucracy), Janapada (territory), Durga (the fortified capital), Kosa (the treasury), Danda (the army), and Mitra (the ally). According to Arthasastra, the higher bureaucracy consisted of the mantrins and the amatyas. While the mantrins were the highest advisors to the King, the amatyas were the civil servants. There were three kinds of amatyas: the highest, the intermediate and the lowest, based on the qualifications possessed by the civil servants. The key civil servant was the samahartr, who prepared the annual budget, kept accounts and fixed the revenue to be collected. The other key civil servant was the samnidhatr who kept records of the body of taxes realised and was in charge of the stores.

A new stage in the evolution of the administrative order came at the time of Delhi Sultanate. The Sultanate was initially a classical conquest state and it was necessary for the rulers to establish and consolidate their authority and control over the newly conquered territories. This was done by assigning land on a temporary basis to the followers, who became the civil servants, while, at the same time, by transferring the holders of these assignments as frequently as possible to establish control over them. Such a system – the system of simultaneously appropriating a sizeable part of the social surplus and distributing it to the members of the ruling elite – so successfully introduced by the Delhi Sultanate – was adopted by contemporary states outside the Sultanate such as in Orissa and Vijayanagara.

This system was responsible for bringing about a new conception of civil service which, through radically different from the Mauryan practice defined, in general, the structure and role of public bureaucracies in later years. The Mughal bureaucracy, for example, was based on the mansabdari system. Every mansabdar was invested with a mansab (a rank or a command) which determined his position in the Mughal bureaucracy. The mansabdari system was essentially a pool of civil servants available for civil or military deployment. The mansabdari system, as it finally evolved, became a combination of the higher civil service, the peerage and the army, all rolled into an omnibus civil service organisation.

The civil service system in India during the British times was based essentially on the Mughal system, albeit with certain refinements. But the big changes came with the implementation of Macaulay's Report. The Macaulay Report recommended that only the best and brightest would do for the Indian Civil Service. The Report said, 'It is undoubtedly desirable that the civil servants of the Company should have received the best, the most