



# FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

COURSE: B.A.LL.B. 1st Semester

SUBJECT: HISTORY - I

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# Lecture-12



## Village administration in Ancient India

Village has been the pivot of administration in India since earliest times. The village government was usually carried under the supervision of the village headman called gramani in the Vedic literature. Even the Jatakas and Arthasastra testify the important position of the village head-man in the administration of the village.

The post of the village head-man was usually hereditary though he was frequently looked on as the king's representative,, who could displace him at his pleasure. Usually the headman was a military leader and belonged to the Kshatriya caste, but the Vaisyas also succeeded in acquiring this office.

As life was most unsettled in ancient India, the primary duty of the village headman was the defence of the village against raids of bandits and robbers. He was also responsible for the collection of government revenue and kept the necessary records for the purpose.

The headman was assisted by a village council, of which he was the ex-officio president. In the Arthasastra we find references to village elders acting as trustees, but do not hear about the village council or its sub-committees. It appears that the village councils as regular bodies were evolved only during the Gupta period.

In addition to this council there was a popular body or the Primary Assembly of the Village. All the respectable householders of the village were the members of this Primary Village Assembly. But as it was a petty large body, it transacted its business only through an executive committee or council, about which we have referred above. In certain areas the Primary Village Assembly consisted of all the village residents.

In South India the village institutions were organised on democratic lines during the Chola period which has been described as the Golden Age of the Village Assemblies. There were two types of assemblies the Ur and Sahba. While the former was the general type the latter one was peculiar to the Brahmadeya villages.

The precise rules regarding the conduct of elections and qualifications of members are mentioned in the Utteramerur Inscriptions of the Chola King Parantaka I. The Village Assemblies exercised full powers in all departments of administration.

They were absolute proprietors of village lands collected taxes, evicted cultivators for non-payment of taxes, received deposits of money and grants of land for charitable purposes. They also enjoyed certain judicial powers.

The existence of the democratic institutions at the lowest level encouraged the communal life of the people and developed among them a sense of civic duty and love for liberty. It also contributed a great deal to the efficiency and purity of administration.

### MCQ

1. Historical King who killed his father to have the throne was :  
(a) Bimbisara      (b) Prasenjit      **(c) Ajatashatru**      (d) Udayana
2. The Earliest capital of the 'Magadha' was :  
(a) Vaishalli      **(b) Rajagriha**      (c) Gaya      (d) Pataliputra
3. During the reign of King Kalasoka the second Buddhist Council was arranged at :  
(a) Rajagriha      **(b) Vaishally**      (c) Nalanda      (d) Pataliputra.
4. Who declared himself as the 'Ekarat' ?  
(a) Bimbisara      (b) Ajatashatru      **(c) Mahapadma Nanda**      (d) Sisunaga
5. In which city the first Jain Council was arranged ?  
(a) Rajagriha      (b) Vaishally      **(c) Pataliputra**      (d) None of these.

