CHAPTER XII

DECLINE AND FALL

Circumstances in North-Eastern India were not favourable for the prosperity of republicanism after the time of Buddha. "In the Buddha's days the free tribes (republics) were standing up with difficulty to the internal pressure of changing social and economic conditions, and the external pressure of the rising kingdoms of Eastern India. We have seen that both the Śākyas and the Vṛijis were conquered at about the time of the Buddha's death, the former never to rise again." From this remark of an outstanding oriental scholar, it is clear that these republics, like their counterparts in the Western world in Greece and some of more or less the same period, were on the road to decline and ultimate fall, due to internal changes and degeneration and foreign invasions. These republics were in a highly flourishing condition in the later part of the Sixth Century B.C. But in the next century, they were already on wane. We experience a lack of ample date connected with the decline and fall of these republics, and whatever scanty informations that can be gleaned from
the Buddhist and the Jaina sources, are mainly about the Śākyas and the Lichchhavas. Thus with a great limitation imposed by the dearth of data, I have undertaken to give below a systematic treatment of the decay of these republics.

The history of the Lichchhavis is bound up with that of the Vajjis which was a United States of the Videhas and the Lichchhavis. The early years of the Buddha's ministration may be taken to mark the Golden Age of the Lichchhavi Republic. It must have enjoyed great power in the political world of the time and also immense prosperity which led the Buddha to declare with absolute confidence that they were invincible so long as they continued to retain their seven-fold virtue.

If traditional account is to be believed, the Lichchhavis, in the time of the king Bimbisāra, were audacious enough to attack their neighbours frequently across the Ganges. The marriage of Bimbisāra with a Vaiśāli princess has been considered to suggest the defeat of the Lichchhavis at the hand of the Magadhan king in a long drawn-out war suggested by the Buddhist sources. But this does not appear to have adversely affected their strength, and

3. Si-Yu-Ki, Bk. IX.
they continued to be a great power to be reckoned with by his son and successor king Ajātaśatru. They continued to invade the kingdom of Magadha in the time of this king. They used to oust the Pātaligāma people from their homes and occupy these for a month or a half. And it was for the sake of protection against such frequent inroads of the Lichchhavis that Ajātaśatru commissioned his two ministers Sunītha and Vassakāra to build a fort at Pātaligāma, which later became famous as Pātaliputra. And when he finally attacked the Lichchhavis, they tried to face the invasion with the combined strength of a League which consisted of the nine Lichchhavis, the nine Mallakas and the eighteen Gaṇa-rājās of Kāśi-Kosala. The Vañjan war was not an isolated event, but it was a part of a common movement directed against the establishment of Magadhan hegemony in the political world of the time. And thus the flames fused together into one big conflagration and gave rise to a wide-spread League of the tribal peoples (republics) north of the Ganges, and no doubt uneasy at the growing Imperialistic ambition of the Magadhan ruler and 'determined to preserve their own constitution and way of life, which they saw were seriously threatened.'

9. ibid., p.40.
Despite great divergence in the Buddhist and the Jain versions of the relative strength displayed by the combatting parties in the war, the republican League led by the Lichchhavis, instead of bending, broke down after a long and heroic fight as indicated by the Jain texts.

Thus the long and sanguinary war finally wrought the destruction of the independent Vajjian Republic which never again rose to its pristine greatness and glory. The fall of this republic is dated Circa 484 B.C., three years after the last visit of the Buddha to this city, on the authority of Buddhaghosa. And on the ruins of the destruction of the Vajjia the great Magadhan Empire was later consolidated and extended.

The subsequent history of the Lichchhavis is shrouded in darkness and our scanty data throw simply a flicker of light on it.

SUBSEQUENT HISTORY: However, it appears that after his victory in the war against the Lichchhavis, Ajatasatru did not annex their territory, but granted them a feudal status. Unlike the small republican states which were totally exterminated, the Lichchhavis continued as a republic in the

10. Ante, Ch.III. P. P. 113 ff.
Post-War period, of course with modified independence, enjoying freedom only in matters of internal administration. Two centuries later they find mention among the saṅghas or republics of the Mauryan Age. It is highly significant to note that Kautilya advises his king Chandragupta Maurya to seek the friendship and help of these Saṅghas or republics which he describes as invincible on account of their unity and concord. This quite clearly shows that the Līṭhadvīḥīs retained a good deal of independence under the Mauryan Emperors and that there was not much alteration in their republican constitution. Mr. Upendra Thakur suggests the insubordination of the Līṭhadvīḥīs to the Mauryan Empire on the evidence offered by the discovery of seals bearing the inscription "Vesāli anusamyāṇakaṭakāre" (seal of the Vesāli police at Tākāra), the terracottas, the Punch-marked coins and the fragments of stone with Mauryan polish. I think these evidences would better suggest their full autonomous

15. Arthaśāstra, Bk. XI, Ch. I.
16. Ibid.
status within the Mauryan Empire than their 'insubordination.' Later, we find them mentioned in the code of Manu, whose date ranged between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. After the decline of the Śūngas and the Kāṇavas, they again emerge as a great power. The Guptas could rise to imperial status only by their matrimonial alliances with the Līchhāhvis. Samudragupta struck a gold coin in the name of his grand-father with the legend 'Līchhāhaviya,' and also bore with a great pride the title 'Līchhāhavī-Dauhtira' (the son of a daughter of the Līchhāhvis). The Līchhāhvis had thus outlived their ancient contemporaries in power and glory and remained the single and sole representative of ancient republicanism. The Līchhāhavi state was soon amalgamated with the Gupta Empire and functioned as a sort of dual monarchy. The break down of the Imperial line of the Gupta kings appear to have carried with it the desertation and ruin of Vaiśāli which did not rise again as it did after the dissolution of the Śūngas and the Kāṇva kingdoms.

23. HP.,p.157 f.n.1; Cf. V.A. Smith : An Early History of India (4th Ed.), p.296.
Vaisali was in utter ruins at the time of Yuan-Chwang's
visit in 635 A.D.

According to Dr. Bhandarkar, the independence of
the Mallas as an oligarchical republic appears to have
been destroyed by the ambitious king

MALLAS: Ajatasatru of Magadha, and their dominions
were annexed to the Magadhan Empire which
was gradually growing up. The Mallas do not appear to
have lived long as a republic. The Arthashastra speaks
of them as Rajasabdopajivin (Ch. XI, pp. 376-79). They
appear to have disappeared in the time of the Mauryas or
a little later. This fact is indicated from their non-
mention by Katyayana and Patanjali who speak of other
states and also republics of their time. The modern
representatives of the Mallas are to be found in the
Malla community of the Gorakhpur and Ajamgarh districts,
and also in the Sainthavār community.

Despite their policy of friendly relation with
the neighbouring powers, the Sakyas were not on good terms
with the kingdom of Kosala. Neighbourly

SĀKYAS: jealousies and clash of interests appear
to have been at the root of frequent
clashes between them. The Buddhist texts indicate that

28. Carmichael Lectures, 1919, p. 79; Cf. V. A. Smith:
op. cit., p. 37.
29. Buddhacharyā, p. 155, f.n. 5.
Sākyas had lost their independence to Kosala in the time of Prasenañjīt. This loss of independence of the Sākyas to king Prasenañjīt may be doubted from the fact that his son and successor king Vidyādha had to make tremendous efforts to crush the Sākyas later on. But, even when we accept this proposition on the evidence of the Pāli text, it is quite clear that in a feudatory status too, the Sakyan Republic continued to be very powerful. The Sākyas were finally destroyed by king Vidyādha who declared a pre-meditated and unprovoked war of extermination on them. That this war was noted for horror and carnage perpetrated by the king, is borne out by all evidences. It is stated that a large number of the Sākyas (7700) were killed in this war indiscriminately without regard to sex or age, and a large number of Sākyas girls (5000 to 10000) were taken away by the king for his harem, who were later mutilated and killed for

31. Dialogues of Buddha, Pt.III, p.80. It speaks of the Sākyas paying homage to king Prasenañjīt of Kosala and treating him in the same way in which the king treated the Buddha; Book of kindred Savings, I, n.176, speaks of Prasenañjīt as the head of a group of Five Rājā, of which the Sākya Rājā was one of them. See also Suttanipāta, SBE., X, Pt.II, pp.68-69; Introd. Bhaddasāla Jātaka.

32. For details, See Ante, Ch.III. pp.12/13

33. ibid.
offending him. Thus the Śākyas were conquered and finally annexed to the Kosalan kingdom, and in this way their republic vanished once for all.

A later Buddhist text speaks of the founding of a new beautiful city called Moriyanagara or Mauryanagara by a section of the Śākyas who had fled away from their original place under the oppression of the Kosalan king Vīśudabha. This city was founded in the lifetime of the Buddha, and it was so named because this place abounded with peacocks. The Buddhists hold that the Emperor Aśoka was of the Buddha's family as he was born of the Mauryan king Bindusāra.

We have no knowledge of the process of decline and disappearance of the other republics. It is highly probable that like the Licchhavīs and the Śākyas, the remaining republics of the Buddha's time were also destroyed by the ruthless and unscrupulous imperialism of the Kosalan and the Magadhan monarchies.

(b) 11th Pallava: Avadān Kalpalatā (Bibliotheca Indica Series); Cf. Br., p.6 and Buddhacaryā, pp.443-44 f.n.
35. Mahāvamsa Tikā, p.108.
Most of these republics must have been destroyed by the
victorious arms of king Ajātaśatru, and the surviving
ones, if any, must have found/submerged in the surging
tide of the Mauryan imperialism.

And thus the republicanism of North-Eastern India
made its final exist form the stage of History.

Why did the Indian experiment in republicanism
or democracy in North-Eastern India fail? This poses
before us a difficult problem which
CAUSES: still awaits satisfactory solution.
Is it, as Mr. Vincent Smith suggests,
that republicanism or democracy is unsuited to the
38
genius of Aryanised India. Although it is really diffi-
cult to reckon up all the various factors to which the

37. Vide V.A. Smith, who observes: "It may be presumed
that the invader (Ajātaśatru) carried his victorious
arms to their natural limit, the foot of the mountains
and from this time the whole region between the
Ganges and the Himalayas became subject, more or less
directly, to the suzerainty of Magadha." (op.cit.,
p.37). Cf. Dr. R.S. Tripathi who similarly remarks:
"Perhaps after the conquest of Vaiśāli, he (Ajātaśatru)
carried his arms further northward, and the wide
region up to the mountains accepted submission to him."
op.cit., p.96.

decay and disappearance of these republics could be
ascribed, I have tried, as far as possible, to analyse
them under two heads: Internal, i.e., organic or those
arising directly from the inner life or the true nature
of the free Gana state; and External, i.e., those
influences acting from without upon the inner being of
the Gana state, modifying, distorting and destroying it.

A. INTERNAL

These republics were of oligarchical nature in
which power was concentrated in the hands of aristocracy
of birth and wealth which then mainly consisted in land.

And this must have caused

Political Inequality:

heart burnings in a large

section of the people of
these republics, as was the case with the Athenian
Republic before the Cleisthenes's reform, and the Roman
Republic before the Plebeians captured power.

40. Altekar: Homage to Vaiśālī, p. 69; and SGAI,
p. 125; Cf. Mbh. Śānti-Parva, Ch. 107, vrs. 30

which speaks of equality in Gana by birth and
descent; Cf. Jayaswal who gives a slightly
different interpretation, HP., p. 108, f.n. 7.
These republics lacked social cohesion and compactness. They were divided into major four classes or castes which continued from the Vedic time, each one of them having increasing restrictive and exclusive ramifications in matters of social relation and economic pursuits. This is unmistakably indicated by Buddha's unceasing crusade against the caste systems. Further, the traditional norm that the rulership and defence were the sole responsibility of the Ksatriyas, must have made the majority of the people indifferent to their political responsibility, especially in the events of war of defence. It is an indubitable fact that the inhabitants of these republics were not political animals to the same extent as the Athenians were during their republican career.

These republics were noted for their great richness and prosperity. But there was concentration of wealth in the hands of a few which must have left the large number of people poor. And this economic inequality must have further bred jealousy and indifference among the people to the republican system or polity which did not accord them a fair deal.

41. Refer to Mahāvagga, VIII.1.1.1. in Vinaya Pitaka; SBE., XVII, p.171; Gt. Hindu Polity, p.163; Mbh., op.cit., vrs.21.
42. Vide Lalitavistara, Ch.III, p.23, which suggests
A shift in the economic and social condition in these republics was noticeable in the lifetime of Buddha, which exercised a great strain on the working of the republican system. These republics were primarily an agricultural community, but in the course of time the progress of industry and consequent trade and commerce brought in a new middle class with plenty of wealth in its possession. This fact is clearly born out by the existence of the Setthi or Sreshthi in every town and city in quite a good number. (Contd.)

Concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a fraction of the Lichchhavis who constituted the privileged class. A similar condition must have prevailed in the other republics.

44. B.I., p. 10; G.B., p. 182.
45. Cf. D.D. Kosambi who remarks: "The existence of new classes in the Gangetic basin of the Sixth Century in undeniable. Traders had become so wealthy that the most important persons in an eastern town was generally the Sreshthi. The term not known earlier, is derived from the word for 'superior' or 'pre-eminent.' The Sreshthi was actually a financier or banker, sometimes the head of a trade-guild. Even absolute and despotic kings treated these Sreshthi with respect, though they had no direct voice in politics." (op. cit., p. 100). See also G.B., p. 185.
It may be noted that we do not have any knowledge of any constitutional reforms in these republics to extend the base of political privileges and power to satisfy this newly emerged greatly influential and rich class, like the Cleisthenian reforms in the Athenian Republic, and also like a number of reformatory measures by which the Plebeians captured power in the Roman Republic between 367 and 287 B.C. Thus the inner inflexibility of these Indian republics, unlike their compatriots in the Western World in Greece and Rome, to change themselves in order to adjust to a new condition must have cut short their natural span of life.

The democratic spirit appears to have been already on wane in the very life time of the Buddha. This is quite evident from the fact that the leadership in these republics was gradually slipping into the hands of hereditary Democratic ruling families. For example, among the Licchhavis, after Senāpati Khanda, his son Simha or Siha became the Senāpati, who, according to Dr. U.N. Ghoshal, was the president of the Licchhavi Republic. And in the later period we find that Kumāradevi was an heiress to the Licchhavi dominion. Further, it appears to be quite probable that after Suddhodana his younger brother

47. Studies in ... p.388 ff.
Bhaddiya became his successor to the presidency of the republic of the Sākyas. And thus, when the leadership in these republics began to pass into the hands of hereditary presidents, who were military leaders usually and who claimed royal title, they could no longer be distinguished from the monarchies. Further, the growing tendency to regard monarchy as divine might have induced these republics to accept the leadership of the hereditary presidents who styled themselves as Rāja or Maharāja. And also the feeling that unitary leadership, which was facilitated by the kingship, was a better protection against all external threats and danger than that offered by the group leadership, must have also equally contributed to the emergence of this important phenomenon of passing away of the leadership in these republics in the hands of hereditary chiefs. Mr. Gokul De points to the same when he observes: "Even to a community of enlightened monks such as the Bhikkhu Samgha of the earliest days, the approval of their acts coming from their ideal man was essential. Hence it was that every rule or an ordinance had to be sanctioned by the Buddha before it became a law. Such notions which certainly arose out of the beliefs of sage-worship of the time as 'Nā hi Tathāgatā Vitatham bhananti' - 'The Buddhas never tell an untruth;' 'Anatthasāmim setughāto Tathāgatānam' - 'The Buddhas never do anything that might lead to mischief and misfortune,' were at the root of people's desire for soliciting the

49. BI., p.10.
approval of these religious men for good government — therefore, it was that any great man of saintly character became easily the dictator of any administration which brought in peace and prosperity in the country, causing democracy to give way to autocracy and in the realm of religion to hierarchy or the rule of the chief "there."

The weakening of the democratic spirit, as seen above in the preceding text, appears to have bred in these republics the tendency to change over to a monarchical form of government. We have also seen in the same text how the office of the republican chief in the republics of the Śākyas and the Liochhavisi had, in course of time, virtually become hereditary, although the formality of election was maintained. And soon even this democratic semblance must have been cast off as worn out garments. This is most clearly indicated by the fact that in later time Kumārdevi is styled as an heiress to the Liochhavisi dominion, showing the transformation of the Liochhavisi republic into a monarchy. This very tendency was an important cause of the decay of the other ancient Indian republics which existed before and after the Buddha's age. And except the city-states of Greece, their counterparts in the Western World in Rome also died of the same disease.

50. Democracy in Early Buddhist Sangha, pp. 113-16.
52. Ante, Ch. I. pp. 47 f.
These republics were small in size and population, which greatly limited their natural and human resources in matter of warfare. As a result, military weakness: although these republicans were invariably martial peoples, they always proved militarily weak vis-à-vis monarchies which were usually far bigger in size and population. This fact very impressively stands out from how the Śakyaś and the Licchhāvīś were practically overwhelmed and destroyed by the big armies of the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha respectively. Human history, by and large, confirms the popular adage 'That God is on the side of big battalions.'

High morality in public and personal life was one of the main factors of strength of these republics, like the republican Greeks who had degeneration: made complete identification of themselves with the polis, the city of God, and the Romans who never questioned that the claim of personal interest must be subjected to that of civil loyalty. This fact is borne out by the seven-fold

54. Cf. Mahābhārata which recommends the system of confederacy for the Gaṇas, for individually they fall an easy prey to the foe (monarchy) -

चेते गणाविन्यस्युपिन्नावस्युज्ञः परः ।
सत्यातु संपातयंगेन प्रभुतित्तु गणा: हता ॥
(op.cit., vrs.14)

56. Ibid., p. 227.
condition of prosperity of the Vajjians as laid down by the Buddha. As in the case of the Greek and Roman republic, a degeneration in public life was an important cause of the decay of the Buddhist Republics. A Pāli text tells us how the Licchhavīs were of austere habits as they slept with logs of woods as their pillows, strenuous and diligent and zealous and active in military art, so that the enemies had no chance against them. They also had high standard of piety and morality which was so much extolled by the Buddha. But later a great degeneration appears to have set in their character. The later Buddhist texts speak of the Vajjians as falling to evil ways of sensual pleasures, sloth, long sleep and torpor, fondness for soft pillows and quarrelling over a woman. Similar was the case with the Roman Republic whose fall was brought about by the degeneration of the Romans from their old austere and hardy character to addiction to luxury, indolence and pleasure loving. A great historian has very rightly observed: "When civilizations fail, it is almost always man who has failed not in his body, not in his fundamental equipments and capacities, but in his will, spirit and mental habits." In the words of Kosambi:

57. Dialogues, II (Mahāparinibbāna Sutta), pp.79-80.
58. SN.,II, pp.267-68. The relevant passage is quoted by B.C.Law in Keatriya Olane, p.64.
59. op.cit., f.n.55.
60. Psalms of the Brethren, p.348.
"Such 'boring from within' (destruction of Vajjian unity by Vassakāra) would not have been possible unless inner decay of the tribe had advanced far, under the influence of wealth collected as tributes and taxes, but retained as private property of the oligarchs. The internal disruption had preceded Ajātasatru's emissary is proved by the rise of an outstanding teacher like Mahāvira among the Lichchhavis (and the Buddha among the Sākyas); and by the Malla Bandhula and Gārayana taking service outside the tribe. Life even among the best of the free tribes no longer offered full satisfaction to the ablest of the tribesmen. Eventually the rot progressed so far that the Lichchhavis would not meet regularly for tribal council and tribal affairs."

And finally, lack of unity, which was a general weakness of the ancient Indian republics, was the most powerful cause of their decay and disappearance. We may note here how the Buddha, Mahābhārata and Kautilya all warn against disunity as the greatest danger to the republics. These Indian republics flourished so

63. Ralph, Lee Phillips: The Story of our Civilization, p.36.
64. D.D.Kosambi: op.cit., p.130, Within bracasts mine.
65. Ante, Ch.XI, pp. 471 f.
long as there were harmony and concord among the members of their assemblies. But we notice a marked tendency among them to quarrel. In some of these republics, as for example, the Lichshhavish, every member of the assembly was granted the regal title of Rājā, and often no one was inclined to accept the leadership of a fellow member because it implied his own inferiority. Thus these republics were torn by personal, group, family and party rivalries and also cliques for power and position, which had the effect of paralysing them from inside. The same fell disease was an import cause of the decay of the Greek and Roman Republics. And this vital deficiency had rendered these Indian republics highly vulnerable to intrigues and inner subversions by the neighbouring kings and emperors who most successfully sowed the seeds of dissension and disunity through spies or agents before striking them down with the use of force. It was in this way that many of the ancient Indian republics met their doom. The most classical illustration of this fact could be found in the great success achieved by Vassakāra, the

66. Lalitavistara, Ch.III, p.23; Cf.Mbh. which, therefore, stresses Ganas to pay due honour to their able officers and obey their leaders through the President for their prosperity and survival (op.cit., vrs.20 and 23): See also Mahāparinibbāna Sutta (Dialogues, II, pp.79-80) wherein Buddha also emphasises the virtue of obedience and honour to the Elders as essential for the prosperity of the Vajjians.

67. Altekar : SAAI., pp.129-29, 137, 379; Saletore:op.cit., p.129
the Magadhan statesman, in his attempt to sow disunity among the Licchhavis. As the result of his Machiavellian tactics the unity of the Vajjians was so thoroughly destroyed that when the tocsin was sounded in the first instance calling them to gather together to prevent the Magadhan army from crossing the Ganges, and in the second instance calling them to resist their entrance into the City of Vaisāli, none of the Vaisālians came out, and consequently, the city fell. This reminds us of the similar Machiavellian tactics adopted by Alexander the Great who very successfully managed to set one Indian republic against another and thereby made a short work of all of them.

As Aristotle observes: "The citizen should be moulded to suit the form of government under which he lives. For each government Absence of Political Education: which originally formed and which continues to preserve it. The character of democracy creates democracy —

69. Legacy of the Ancient World, p.266.
71. ibid.
72. Cf. B.A.Salteore : India's Diplomatic Relation with West, pp.82 ff.
always better the character, the better the government.

He further says that to preserve each state, you must keep up the institutions which have grown with it and which are most natural to it. Education, then, must be subordinated to the character of the state; the citizen must be brought up, not by code absolutely good for human nature, but by one which is based on tradition and feeling of his forefathers. He defines education not so much as a process which makes virtuous and sensible men, but as one which creates in the oligarch or democrat the true spirit of the best oligarchy or democracy of which his city is capable; as one which should produce rhythm and order in the state, by tending to subordinate all citizens to the same and in life-fulfilment of the good life of the state. These republics had failed to

73. 'Politics,' 1337 a; Eng.Tr. by B.Jowett, p.390;

Gh. Mahābhārata which similarly stresses proper training of the younger generation as essential for the prosperity of the Ganas (Mbh. op.cit., vrs.18)

74. Buddha similarly emphasises acting in accordance with the ancient norms and institutions as essential for the prosperity of the Vajjians-Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, op.cit.

75. 'Politics,' op.cit.
impart such an education with the necessary political bias to their citizens. Of course, this is not to deny the prevalence of general education directed to the cultivation of human virtues. And no wonder, in its absence, without mental, moral and physical training and without knowledge of discipline, the principle of adult franchise or democracy failed in India.

B. EXTERNAL

According to Mr. Vincent Smith, the reason for the extinction of the tribal constitution (republics) appears to be that they were a Mongolian institution, the term Mongolian being used to mean tribes racially allied to the Tibetans, Gurkhas and other Himalayan nations. The Mongolian element in the population of Northern India before and after the Christian Era was larger than is usually admitted. When the Mongolian people and ideas were overborne in course of time by strangers who followed the Indo-Aryan or Brahmanical cult and customs, the tribal constitutions disappeared along with many other non-Aryan institutions. The Brahmanical people always were

content with autocracy. This explanation of the learned historian is quite erroneous. For, it has been proved by competent scholars that these republicans were not Mongolians but Indo-Aryans, and also that even in the Vedic age republican constitutions and institutions were in vogue among some Indo-Aryan peoples. In fact, the causes of the disappearance of these republics are to be sought, not in racial imbalance or a shift in the ethnic complex of the early Indian population as averred by Mr. Smith, but in the operation of certain political, social economic and other factors which have been analysed in this text.

We may note here that the true nature of the Gana state was its being an independent and self-sufficing organism wherein there was a perfect identification of the individual with the state.

Appearance of Imperial and Federal States: And hence by its nature and necessity, a true Gana state was of limited territorial size and population. But the rise of imperial and federative states in the Gana polity caused a basic alteration in their true and natural character by

77. The Oxford History of India (3rd Ed.), Introd., pp. 3-9.
78. For example, see Jayaswal, op. cit., pp. 170-79.
79. Supra, Ch. I.
enlarging the size of its territory and population, and thus infecting it with a fatal disease which enfeebled and gradually destroyed it. We have already discussed how the Vajjian Republic was a federation of eight states, resembling the present United States of America or the Swiss Federation. It is not unlikely that this powerful federation must have been initially built up by war and conquest by the Lischhhavis who were the most predominant member and also the leader of the federation. Besides the Federation of the Vajjia, we have references to the existence of loose federations among the other republics like that of the Nine Lischhhavis and the Nine Mallas, and the League of thirty-six republican states. It is quite obvious that a political union of this kind, sufficiently centralised to be called a state in itself as distinct from its component parts, must have been out of harmony with the instincts of the free and self-sufficing Gana state. We may note here that both force and a leading state are unnatural to federation and the ultimate result is the subjection of the weaker members by the most powerful and the leading state.

Foreign invasions from outside, both directly and indirectly, contributed to the decay of the early Indian

80. Ante, Ch.IV. pp. 149 4.
81. ibid.
republics. During the period of our present study, the Persians under their emperors

Foreign Invasions

Cyrus (559-530 B.C.) and Darius (522-486 B.C.) conquered the

North-West of India and established the Achaemenian Rule in this country which extended unto some territory to the east of the Sindhu. And then came the Greek invasion of India under Alexander the Great who also conquered the North-West of India between 327 B.C. and 326 B.C. Both these foreign invasions destroyed the small self-governing states or republics with which this part of the country was virtually studded. Further, the fact of their easy destructions and their utter inability to put up a strong resistance to the foreign invaders due to lack of sufficient resources and disunity amongst them, discredited republicanism as an institution vis-a-vis monarchy in the public eyes. And by contrast it was obvious that a big monarchy under a powerful king could only secure unity and strength to guarantee the independence and integrity of the country and also provide safeguard to its peoples against the horrors of foreign invasions. And thus the foreign invasions from outside inspired and facilitated the rise of powerful monarchies in the Northern India whose imperialist policy, as we shall see soon hereafter, destroyed these republics.

82. R.C. Majumdar: Ancient India, p.97.
83. ibid., pp.98-100.
84. ibid., pp.97-98 f.
We have just seen above how the Persian and the Greek invasions of India helped the rise of powerful monarchies in this country.

Rise of Imperialism in India:

In the time of the Buddha such monarchies were the kingdoms of Kosala and Magadha. The rapid rise of Kosala and its soon inevitable struggle with the kingdom of Magadha was 'the leading point in the politics of the Buddha's time.' It was in this struggle for paramountcy in the whole of India in which the kingdom of Magadha was victorious, and it was in the course of these Imperialistic struggles that these small self-governing states were destroyed. The independence or autonomy of these republics naturally clashed with the Imperialistic aspirations and designs of the kings of Kosala and Magadha, just as the autonomy of the Greek City States clashed with the Imperialistic aspiration of the Persian and Macedonian emperors. And just as the Greek City States were destroyed by the Macedonian adventurer Alexander the Great who was out to build up a world Empire, similarly the republics of North-Eastern India met their doom at the hands of the imperialist kings Vidūdabha of Kosala and Ajātaśatru of Magadha. And later on Chandragupta Maurya conquered whatever was left over of them and annexed them to the kingdom of

Magadha which he soon transformed into the First Indian Empire by the policy of 'Blood and Iron.' We may note here that the later Indian republics like the Yaudheyas, the Mālavas and the Ārjunāyanas etc. were similarly destroyed by the Gupta Imperialism, especially by Samudragupta. It is an obvious fact of the Ancient Indian History that right from the days of Ajātaśatru, the empire builders tried their best to extricate the small self-governing states or republics. The political theories of the time espousing the cause of Imperialism advocated their destructions and suggested means, both fair and foul, for the same.

86. Cf. R.C. Majumdar who observes: "It was by these and similar means (wily) that Kautilya sought to achieve his grand ideal viz., 'that his master should live as the only monarch of all the corporations.' This ideal was possibly realised to a great extent, for we have no positive evidence of the existence of these mighty corporations (Samgha) during the period of the Mauryas." (Corporate . . ., p. 255).

"It is a remarkable fact that the republican states in the neighbourhood of Magadha vanished forever. The theories of Kautilya thus seem to have been carried into practice with a completeness that is truly surprising." (ibid., p. 256).

Thus the conjunction of the above manifold Internal and External factors explains to a very large extent, if not fully, the decline and fall of the Gandhā States or republics of North-Eastern India and also their final exit from the stage of history.