The present work is entitled 'Republics in North-Eastern India' (c. 600 B.C. - 300 B.C.). The existence of republics or democracy in ancient India has been studied by a number of nationalist scholars who sought to disprove the obviously prejudiced view that 'Oriental rule is autocratic in character,' which had become a stock-in-trade with imperialist historians to provide an ideological and moral rationale to the British imperial rule in India. Ever since the subject has continued to attract the attention of the historians of India's past. Consequently, we have a good deal of writing on the subject in the form of articles, separate chapters in books on ancient Indian history and polity, and also a few independent monographs.

Professor Rhys Davids enjoys the credit of being the first to have made a scholarly and dispassionate study of the subject in his Buddhist India, first published in 1903. But his almost sole reliance on the Buddhist sources has naturally rendered his work sketchy and incomplete. Subsequently the late Dr. K.P. Jayaswal most assiduously pursued the subject, giving a detailed treatment in the
In his celebrated Hindu Polity (Chaps. IV - XXI). Although his studies marked a definite improvement on Rhys Davids' work in matters of details and the utilisation of a wide range of sources, they suffered from being highly tendentious leading to exaggerations and romanticising on some vital aspects of the subject. Thereafter the subject received scholarly treatment at the hands of a number of historians like D.R. Bhandarkar in 'Carmichael Lectures' (1918, pp.140 ff); R.G. Majumdar in 'Corporate Life in Ancient India', A.S. Altekar in 'State and Government in Ancient India,' B.G. Law in 'Kṣatriya Clans in Buddhist India' and 'Some Kṣatriya Tribes of Ancient India,' U.N. Ghoshal in 'Studies in Indian History and Culture,' Radha Kumud Mookerji in 'Hindu Civilisation,' Part II, Raj Bali Pandey in 'Gorekhpur Janapad kā Itihāsa,' R.S. Sharma in 'Aspects of Political Ideas and Institutions in Ancient India,' Gokuldas De in 'Democracy in the Early Buddhist Sangha,' Yogendra Mishra in 'An Early History of Vaiśāli,' Charles Freke in 'Kingship and Community in Early India,' B.A. Saletore in 'Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions,' J.W. Spellman in 'Political Theory in Ancient India', K.P. Mookerji in 'Ancient Political Experiences,' A.L. Basham in 'The Wonder that was India,' etc. All these works, however, do not make any real advance on the pioneer works of Rhys Davids and Jayaswal. Besides, most of them are of
a tendentious nature. The latest work on the subject is J.P. Sharma's 'Republics in Ancient India' (1968), in which he undoubtedly shed fresh light on the Vedic republican institutions, especially the Samiti, the Sabha and the Vidatha. But his conclusions on certain vital aspects of the subject like Origin of the post-Vedic republics, the complicated judiciary of the Lichashhavis, political connotations of the Vedic terms 'Gaṇa' and 'Vidatha' etc., are largely hypothetical and tentative. Further, his treatment of the post-Vedic republics is sketchy, unanalytical and partial, and as such it does not add much to our knowledge of the subject. Moreover, all the above mentioned works, except those of Jayaswal and B.C. Law, deal only with the political history of these republics, excluding totally their cultural life. Even Jayaswal and Law dealt with it in bare outlines. History to be of any worth and interest must reflect life in all its rich shades and colours, i.e., social and economic organisation, religion and philosophy, learning and art, etc., which constitute the fundamental elements of civilisation and form the vital tissues of human history. Thus, in spite of a number of works written on the subject, a monograph presenting, as far as possible, a synthetic, comprehensive and complete picture of our North-Eastern Republics, still remains a desideratum. The present work is specially designed to fulfil this need. I have studied the subject of our past republican experiences with
detachment, steering clear of the extreme views held by historians.

The work is based upon original literary and other sources. The main evidence for our North-Eastern Republics is supplied by the early Pāli canonical texts, the Sanskrit Buddhist texts, the sacred texts of the Jainas, the Great Epic, the Mahābhārata, and the secular treatises like the Arthasastra of Kauṭilya, the Aṣṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, etc. I have also drawn upon the evidence offered by ancient books on history and accounts of foreign travellers and historians. The Brāhmaṇical literature provides the bulk of evidence for the treatment of the first two chapters, viz., 'The Republican Background' and 'Genesis of the Republics.' The texts which deserve special mention are the Ṛgveda, the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and a few Upaniṣads and Purāṇas. Some Sūtras, Saṃhitā and Dharmaśāstra literature also throws light on certain aspects of the republican civilisation by way of either supporting or supplementing the evidence available in the Buddhist and the Jaina literature. Valuable materials, though scanty, supplied by some archaeological reports, seals, and inscriptions, have also been utilised. Besides, I have made careful use of the important works on the subject.

The work consists of twelve chapters. Chapter I deals with the controversial topic of the existence of republican institutions in the Vedic age. I have examined
the views of the previous scholars and I have shown that the balance of available evidence tends in favour of their existence since the Rigvedic times. In support of this view I have produced not only some fresh evidence but also used the comparative method of historical study and the results of sociological researches. This chapter is primarily intended to serve as a background to the study of the North-Eastern Republics. Chapter II is devoted to the discussion of the origin of the republics. I have critically evaluated the various theories of previous scholars on this topic and tried to show that not one factor but a complex of many divergent factors was responsible for the genesis of these republics. As far as I know, such a thorough and elaborate treatment of this topic has not been attempted by any scholar so far. Herein I have also discussed the controversial question of the race-origin of these republics. In Chapter III, I have attempted to give, as far as possible, a comprehensive account of the political history of the principal republican states. Chapter IV deals with the constitutional system of these republics. An elaborate, analytical and critical discussion of this topic, highlighted by new suggestions on various obscure constitutional points, will be found for the first time here. Chapter V seeks to present a full picture of the republican parliamentary procedure. In Chapter VI, I have given a systematic and detailed account of the administrative organisation of these republics. The treatment of this topic by previous
scholars has been rather sketchy. Chapters VIII - X successively deal with important aspects of the republican culture, i.e., society, religion and thoughts, intellectual and aesthetic life, and economic life. Such a synthetic and comprehensive account of the republican civilisation as attempted here, marked with frequent comparisons and contrasts with the contemporary civilisation in the surrounding monarchies and also with the succeeding and preceding cultural phases, constitutes an important feature of this work. In Chapter XI, I have attempted a dispassionate and thorough assessment of our republican experiences during the period of the present study, with necessary comparisons and contrasts with the republican experiences of some other peoples of the ancient world, specially the Greeks and the Romans. The last chapter deals with the decline and fall of these republics. I have made an attempt to trace the successive stages in their decline, and also to give a detailed account of their ultimate fall. The various causes of their disappearance have also been analysed and discussed with relevant comparisons and contrasts with the causes of the fall of the republican states of the ancient world. In Conclusion, I have summed up the significant features of the present study.

In the preparation of this thesis, I am deeply indebted to my revered teacher, Dr. Raj Bali Pandey, M.A., D.Litt., Vice-Chancellor of the Jabalpur University, who
suggested the subject and offered me numerous valuable suggestions. Without his ungrudging help and constant encouragement this work would not have been completed.

My thanks are due to the authorities and staff of the Sanskrit University Library, Varanasi, the Sarnath Buddhist Library, the Banaras Hindu University Library, the Library of the Department of Ancient Indian History and Culture, Banaras Hindu University, and the Gauhati University Library for offering research facilities.

(KALESHWAR PRASAD)