CHAPTER I

THE REPUBLICAN BACKGROUND

INTRODUCTION

Democracy or Republic in the current meaning is a modern political conception. As a form of government and social organism, and as an order of life which seeks to realise with varying success the universal ideals of liberty, equality and fraternity, it can be traced no farther back than to the American and the French revolutions of the last quarter of the 18th Century. Hence, at first sight, it would appear to be ludicrous and anachronistic to talk of the existence of democracy or republic in ancient India. However, we may note here that the political usage has not infrequently applied the terms 'Democracy' or 'Republic' to the order of society and politics differing in many ways from the modern Western conceptions of democracy and republic. And it is in this sense that we may use the word Republic to describe the non-monarchical states which existed in a pretty large number in ancient India by the side of numerous monarchies. It may be also noted here that socially their organisation was not very different from the monarchical states, but politically they made

1. See Federalist, No.10, pp.52 ff.
closer approach to democracies proper by their elected
chief and magistracy, periodical meetings of their popular
assemblies in the Mota-Malla, the democratic rules of
procedure at the meetings of the assemblies and their
sovereign character etc.

TERMINOLOGIES

The ancient Indian republics were described by the
terms 'Gana' or 'Samgha'. The word Gana is found at several
places throughout the wide range of the Vedic
Gana Literature right from the Rgveda. This word
is found in the later works like the stādhvyayī
of Panini, the Mahābhārata, the Jātakas, the Pāli canonical

2. K.A.N. Sastri: Aspect of Indian Heritage (Democratic
   traditions), The Illustrated Weekly of India (August 3,

3. Numerous references are collected by K.S. Sharma: op. cit.,
   p.81.

4. Panini, III.3.86. (संवर्धनोन्नाम् गणसास्ति:) |
   V.2.52. ( वाकवाकमन्नास्ति विद्रह) |

5. Śanti-Parva, Ch. 107 and Ch. 81; Sabhā-Parva, Ch. 27, vrs.16.

6. Jat. IV.149. (कैलासं हिमालयं कैलोहरणे यज्ञः पोषणं)
   Jat. I.422. (कृष्णि तीर्थविद्या धर्मविद्या नापि)
   कृष्णि योगिकान्येन, कृष्णि योगिकान्येन योगस्थि तर्कवत् |
   Jat. II.45. ( गणवंनेन वह शकां हुत्वा )
works, the Jaina text, the Hindu Law, Amarkosha etc. Gana has been given various interpretations by scholars in regard to its political and social meanings. The word is derived from the root 'Gan' which means 'to count' or 'to collect into one series,' 'to sum up,' or 'to add up' etc. Hence, Gana means a flock, a troop, a multitude, a tribe, a class of beings, a company or any assemblage or association.

7. Mahāvagga, II. 18 (गणमणि गणेषु) : ŚBh., I, 269; MN., I. 4.5.35 (वे समापि ति मृ गीताम् संयासिन् गणानम् श्रेयस्यान्व विधिषयम् तत्ततानुस्)।

Avadānasataka, II, p.105 (देव केशिन्नेता गणायोना: केशिन्नेता शीना:)।

8. Āchārīya Sūtra, II. 3. 1. 10 (वे विन्यः वा, वाण्यागाम्य दुहियमना वैपरंवरायणम् वा गणायणम् वा वृजप्रवः वा वै रजप्रवः वा वियसरायणम् वा — )।

ŚE., XXII, p.138.

Here Ganaśāyani (ruled by Gana or people) is interpreted by Jayaswal (HP., p.19) is used in contrast with other forms of political constitutions of the time.


10. Amarkosha, II. 8. XII. 3-4 (यथ राजकुम राजन्यां च नृपतिताप्रियायाणां गणे सुब्धात् !)
of man formed for the attainment of the same aim. It cannot be derived from the root 'jan' which means 'to beget' as S.A. Dange asserts. In most cases, this word has been interpreted to mean an 'assembly' or a 'troop'.

For some years after 1910, there was a great controversy about the meaning of this term. It started with the interpretation of the phrase 'Mālava Gana-Sthi' occurring in the Mandsor Inscription of "the year 589 expired in A.D. 473; Northern list No.3". Dr. Fleet translated this phrase as the "tribal constitution of the Mālava." He obviously based his interpretation on the basis of the meaning of the word (a tribe) given in the Monier-Williams' Sanskrit-English Dictionary. The view of Dr. Fleet and other earlier scholars holding Gana to mean a tribe was ably controverted by K.P. Jayaswal and F.W. Thomas. Jayaswal interpreted it to mean an 'assembly' or a 'parliament' or 'government by assembly', and taking the clue from the phrase 'Ganapūraka' (Mahāvagga, III, 6.6.), he finally asserted that it meant a republic itself. Jayaswal was

13. Other similar coin-legends are मालवान और (Victory of the Mālava), मालवानम (of the Mālava Gana) - CCIM., pp. 170-74.
14. JRAS., 1913, p.996.
supported in his view by F.W. Thomas who joined the issue on this topic with Dr. Fleet and wrote a series of articles in which he rejected Dr. Fleet's view and held that tan meant a political constitution either oligarchical or republican. Avoiding the extreme views, I think it is more judicious to hold both the interpretations as correct, if considered in the chronological order and ceased evolutionary development of political organism. In order to explain the point, I may be excused for quoting below Mr. Morgan in extenso "...... all forms of government are reducible to two general plans, using the word plan in its scientific sense. In their bases the two are fundamentally distinct. The first, in the order of time, is founded upon person, and upon relations purely personal, and may be distinguished as a society (societas). Gens is the unit of the organisation: giving as the successive stages of integration, in the archaic period, the gens, the phratry, the tribe, and the confederacy of tribes which constituted a people or nation (populous) ...... at a later period of coalescence of tribes in the same area into a nation took the place of a confederacy of tribes occupying independent areas. Such, through prolonged ages, after the gens appeared, was the substantially universal organisation of ancient society; and it remained among the Greeks and the Romans after civilization supervened. The second is founded upon territory and upon property, and may be

17. JRAS., 1914, pp. 413 ff.
distinguished as a state (civitas). The township or ward circumscribed by metes and bounds, with the property it contains, is the basis or unit of the latter, and political society is the result . . . In ancient society this territorial plan was unknown. When it came in it fixed the boundary line between ancient and modern society . . . “

I think that this plan of Socio-political development may be applied to the study of ancient Indian history with great benefits. To me the statement of Prof. R.S. Sharma that “the tribal character of the Vedic Gana is evident from what we know about the Maruts,” appears to be a sweeping generalisation and an instance of making a universal statement on the basis of a few facts. It will be more correct to hold that some of the Vedic Ganas like the Maruts and others were the survivals of the early tribal organisations in the Vedic period, just like the centuries old tribal organisations still survive in numerous hill tribes of India at present. At the same time, we have an instance of a republic in the Vaishnavas who belonged to almost the beginning of the Vedic period and who were also anti-Brahmanical like the republican peoples of the Buddhist period. Further, the Gana mentioned by Pāṇini in his . . .

19. op.cit., p.82.
20. quoted by R.S. Sharma: op.cit., p.82, f.n. 3-4.
21. ibid., f.n.5.
autze wbioh apeaka of political samgha technically known as Gana, clearly shows that Gana represented a republic. The Great Grammarian had to make a special sūtra to describe a political samgha or a republic. The description in the Mahābhārata of the Gana fully brings out its republican character. Further, the Gana of the Buddhist and the Jaina sacred texts clearly shows that it represented a republic. And finally the numismatic evidences available in the legends on the coins issued in the names of their respective peoples and not in the names of any kings by the Mālavas, the Vrisaśis, the

23. Sūtra, III.3.86.

24. Quoted by R.C.Majumdar in Corporate . . . . . . 281-282.

25. Sānti-Parva, Ch. 107; Refer also to Jayaswal; op.cit. pp.102 ff. and R.C.Majumdar : op.cit. , pp.259 ff. Both the writers discuss the republican character of the Gana in the Mahābhārata and cite extensively the relevant portions of the original text. Cf. ibid., Ch. 81 (a long discourse on Andhaka-Vrishni-Samgha).


28. Cunningham : CIL., p.70, Plate IV; Vrshni-rajnynyan-ganasya trātasya.
Yaudheyas, the Arjunayana etc. also reveal that Gana meant a republic.

The other term used to describe ancient Indian republic was 'Samgha'. The word is derived from the root 'Samhan' which means 'to join or unite closely,' or 'to put together or bring together.' Hence 'Samgha' means only collection, assemblage, any number of people living together for a certain purpose, a society, an association etc.

According to Dr. D.R. Bhandarkar, the regular derivation from 'Samhan' is Samghata which means mere collection or assemblage. Panini equates Samgha with Gana and differentiates it from monarchy. This distinction was maintained by Patañjali, Katyayana and Kaśikī. The non-mention

29. 'Yaudheya ganasya Jaya', Cunningham : op.cit., p.77.
30. Cunningham : op.cit., p.90 "Arjunayenam Jaya."
31. For more such instances and also details, see Jayaswal : op.cit., Ch.XVIII.
33. Cl., p.141.
34. Aṣṭādhyāyī, III. 3.86. (यथा गणप्रजायां) "
35. ibid., IV.1.168. (कन्यकशास्य सांस्य्याद न) "
37. ibid., IV.1.168.1. (सांस्यादेशकारात्मकप्रजातिस्यायणः) "
of religious Samgha by Pāṇini would naturally suggest that
Samgha mentioned by him was a purely political organisa-
tion, and that the religious Samgha of the Buddhist age
was derived from the political Samgha. The Pāli canonical
texts give illustrations of Samgha and Gāna in the organi-
sation of the Vajjis and the Mallas. In the Mahābhārata
the use of the word Samgha is made to represent a political
constitution. In the Arthasastra also Samgha is used to
represent a republic.

From the preceding discussion of Samgha and Gāna,
we may conclude that the ancient Indian writers used them
as technical terms to describe a non-monarchical political
organism, and that it would be nearer the truth to inter-
pret them as representing a 'self-governing community' or
a republic than simply a tribe or a clan as done by a
number of early writers on this topic mentioned above.

38. Kaśika, pp. 455-56; Cf. HP., p.29, n.4.
40. MN., I.4.5.35. (इने यह रि हि भो गरियम संधान्नुः गणानम्
कैशिकम् विधिमुष मल्लानम्)
41. For example, see Shānti-Parwa, Ch.81, vrs. 25.
    यथा वर्णो प्राच्यनोत्तीयव लघस्त्वां हुषु
42. As for example: इन्द्री रि श्रीलत्तापूर्णः परिचयः ; XI.1.2;
    इति ला रविहितान्त्यानामः ; XI.1.1.
The whole Book XI is a discussion on republic.
The writers on ancient Indian history and polity have generally opined that monarchy was the only form of government prevailing in the Vedie Age and implicitly they deny the existence of a non-monarchical or republican form of government during this period. A noted western scholar writing very recently on ancient Indian polity has remarked that "there is no definite indication of republican constitutions before the Eighth Century B.C."

Jayaswal, who did the pioneer work in bringing the ancient Indian republics to a prominent notice in the framework of Indian history writing, has remarked that the ancient Indian republics are post-Vedic phenomena. Jayaswal's proposition may be well put forth in his own words as follows:

"Hindu Republics are another illustration of the
Communal self-governing habits of the post-Vedic age . . . . The early Vedas know only monarchy. Departure from the normal constitution was made in post-Vedic times, and, as Megasthenes also records the tradition, 'sovereignty (kingship) was dissolved, and democratic government set up in various places.' The Mahâbhârata, similarly, . . . . considers monarchy alone as the Vedic form of government."

45. Charles Drekmeir : Kingship and Community in Ancient India, 1962, p.278.
The hymns of the Rik and Atharvan, the view of the Mahābhārata and the tradition which Megasthenes heard in India in the Fourth Century B.C., all point to the fact that republican form of government in India came long after monarchy, and after the early Vedic age."

Jayaswal's points of contention in favour of his proposition are:

(a) The non-mention of republics in the early Vedic Literature.
(b) The views expressed in the Mahābhārata.
(c) The record of Indian tradition by Megasthenes.

It will be indeed highly rewarding in the pursuit of the topic under discussion to critically examine the above three points of Jayaswal's contention.

A. Vedic Data:

Jayaswal fails to find any evidence in the hymns of the Rig and the Atharva Vedas for the existence of any non-monarchical or republican form of government. This view of Jayaswal finds endorsement from Macdonell and Keith. The latter state that "King (Rāja) is a term repeatedly occurring in the Rig Veda and the later literature. It is quite clear that the normal, though not universal, form of government in early India was

by the kings . . . ." We may very easily see here that Jayaswal and Maconell and Keith are not very sure and assertive in their conclusion from the Vedic evidences on the form of government in this period. Jayaswal's statement that "the early Vedas know only monarchy, and departure from the normal constitution was made in the post-Vedic time" is quite inconclusive. His statement does not rule out categorically the fact that there could be some other forms of government, besides the normal order of monarchy, having no king at the same time. The statement of Keith and Maconell suffers from the same vital drawback. They themselves admit that the form of government by kings in early India was normal though not universal. Further, in contrast to Jayaswal's inconclusive statement, the Vedic origin of the Hindu Republics is vouchsafed by some positive evidences which are thoroughly discussed below under a separate head 'Republic in the Vedic Time.'

B. Epic Data:

The second point of Jayaswal's contention is that the Mahâbhârata considers monarchy alone as the Vedic form of government. In the Sânti-Parva of the Mahâbhârata there is a Vedic saying to the effect that no one should live in a non-monarchical state. The key-word in this

46. MBh. XII. 65.5 (Kumb.) नाराजके राष्ट्रवस्तवविमिति वेदिक्षु। According to the Vedic rule, no one should live in a non-monarchical state.
text in our discussion is "Arūjaka". Jayaswal has explained this term to mean a 'non-monarchical' state.

He says that "the Arūjaka" or 'non-ruler' was an idealistic constitution which came to be the object of derision of political writers of Hindu India," and the technical Arūjaka does not mean anarchy; for anarchy, Hindu politics uses a special term Matsya-Nyāya. And thus Jayaswal has built up a highly ingenious theory of an idealic political constitution round the single phrase 'Arūjaka'. This theory has been very ably examined with great critical acumen and finally rejected by B.A. Sale.

As pointed out by Prof. Aiyangar, Jayaswal's ingenious theory totally ignores the traditional connotation of the term Arūjaka as given in the Rāmāyana (Ayodhyākanda, Ch. 67) wherein it is (Arūjaka) described as a kingless and lawless state and is viewed with a great apprehension of the worst sufferings. It is quite apparent that Jayaswal in his great patriotic fervour to find a counterpart of the comparatively modern Western theory of extreme individualism, as enunciated by Herbert Spencer, in ancient India, has over-stretched the meaning of the term 'Arūjaka' to serve his own

47. HP., p.32; Cf. ibid., pp.83 ff.
48. ibid., p.82, f.n. 33.
49. Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions, 1963, p.114.
Further, the fact that the Mahābhārata considers monarchy alone as the Vedic form of government, does not rule out the possibility of the existence of other forms of government in the Vedic time which might be non-monarchical or republican, Vedic or non-Vedic. Here, it is not unlikely that this statement of the Mahābhārata is an expression of a sectional political bias against non-monarchical form of government in this period.

C. Greek Data:

Jayaswal's third argument is the ancient Indian tradition recorded by Megasthenes. Megasthenes's record may be very briefly stated as follows:

"The men of the greatest learning among the Indians tell certain legends, of which it may be proper to give a brief summary. They relate that in the most primitive times, when the people of the country were 51. Cf. Prof. U. N. Ghoshal: The Beginning of Indian Historiography, pp. 107-108. Criticising Jayaswal's theory, Prof. Ghoshal writes that "It is a brilliant example of the author's ingenuity in discovering the hidden meaning of familiar facts," that it is a novel interpretation. We may also note here that Dr. P. V. Kane interprets 'Arākṣaka' to mean not a state of chaos and the negation of any constitution, but just a condition where there was no king or ruler (History of Dharmaśāstra Vol. III, pp. 30-31). The view of Dr. Kane is equally ambiguous and unacceptable in face of the traditional
still living in (villages) Dionysos made his appearance coming from the region lying to the west and at the head of a considerable army. He over-ran the whole country, as there was no great city capable of resisting his arms. . . . After reigning over the whole of India for two and fifty years he died of old age, while his sons, succeeding to the government, transmitted the sceptre in unbroken succession to their posterity. At last, after many generations had come and gone, the sovereignty, it is said, was dissolved and democratic governments were set up in the cities."

And also in the context of narrating the exploits of Herakles, Megasthenes writes:

". . . . after his removal from among men, Herakles obtained immortal honour; and his descendants, having reigned for many generations and signalised themselves by great achievements, neither made any expeditions beyond the confines of India, nor sent out any colony abroad. At least, however, after many years had gone, most of the cities adopted the democratic form of government, though some retained the kingly until the invasion of the country by Alexander."

(Contd.)

meaning of the word under reference as revealed in the Rāmāyana. (op. cit.)

52. McGrindle : Ancient India as described by Megasthenes and Arrian, pp.34-36.

We may note here that the records of the Greek writers are not very reliable, for the facts therein are mixed up with fictions and sometimes they are distorted beyond recognition. Megasthenes is certainly no exception. Much of the things he recorded are sheer imaginary and taken from heresay. A famous historian like Strabo expresses his doubt about the veracity of Megasthenes's writings in the following words. "Generally speaking, the men who have hitherto written on the affairs of India were a set of liars - Deimachos holds the first place in the list, Megasthenes comes next. No faith whatever can be placed in Deimachos and Megasthenes. They coined the fables concerning men with ears large enough to sleep in, men without any mouths, without noses, with only one eye, with spider-legs etc. — It is not, however, worthwhile to study their accounts with care, so conflicting are they, and incredible."

Thus in the light of very serious doubt expressed by a great historian like Strabo about the truthfulness of Megasthenes's writings, it is really difficult to take his statements as a basis for any serious and important conclusion as Jayaswal has done. Further, we do not find in the recorded tradition of India even a faint hint of such events as recorded by Megasthenes. This clearly shows that this Greek ambassador simply concocted these

54. ibid., pp.18-20.
stories on the basis of his imaginary flights. It appears that in writing such fables and fictions in the name of history, Megasthenes was inspired by the history of his own country where, a few centuries earlier, monarchy had given way to republics, though he seems to forget that republics again were absorbed by monarchy hardly a generation earlier than his own time. Finally, even if we give credence to Megasthenes's statement that the invaders established monarchy in ancient India, it implicitly indicates the existence of non-monarchical governments or republics in the rural areas which were replaced by monarchies.

To the above three-fold argument of Jayaswal, Dr. Raj Bali Pandey adds two more in his support viz., the evidences offered by the Indian historical tradition 55 and the Anglo-Saxon Polity.

1. INDIAN TRADITION

The ancient Indian historical tradition is full of evidences and examples of the process of monarchies changing into republics. For instance, in the period of the Vedas and the Epics, the Videhas of Mithilā had a monarchical constitution which changed into a republic in the Buddhist period. The Kuras and Pāñchālas, at an early period, had monarchy which they gave up for a

56. R.L.Mehta : Pre-Buddhist India, p.61.
republic in the later period. The Yaudheyas, the Ambasthas, the Śālśis and the Madras were monarchies in the beginning which changed into republics in the later period. Many more such instances may be offered from the pages of ancient Indian historical tradition. All these would lend additional support to Jayaswal's theory that, at the beginning, there was a monarchy and the republic emerged next. But this point of contention is also difficult to accept in face of the origin of monarchy in ancient India as given by the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. The Brāhmaṇa text runs as follows:

"The Devas and the Asuras were fighting ...... the Asuras defeated the Devas ...... The Devas said 'it is on account of our having no king that the Asuras defeated us. Let us elect a king: All 59 consented."

The obvious conclusion that may be drawn from the above Brāhmaṇa text is that in the early time the Aryans had no king. It was consequent upon their defeat in a war

57. The Arthaśāstra mentions the Kurus and the Pāñcālas along with other republics like the Līśkavas, the Vṛjjikas, the Mallakas, the Madrakas etc;
Samāśastry, Tr. Bk. XI, Ch. I, p. 408.
58. R. B. Pandey: op. cit.
with the Asuras, that they realised the greater effectiveness of monarchy vis-a-vis small republics and adopted a monarchical form of government. The tradition recorded in the Epic and the Buddhist Literature gives confirmation to this fact by stating that monarchy was preceded by non-monarchical political organisation in ancient India.

2. GRECO-ROMAN PARALLELISM

In the history of Greece and Rome we find at certain period a number of monarchical states which, on being weak and degenerate, are overthrown by the nobles who establish either an aristocracy or an oligarchy. In the same manner, the rule of the nobles is overthrown by the people who thus come to wield supreme authority in the state. We find that in the 6th Century B.C. throughout the large part of Greece, monarchies were giving way to republics. In Rome also in the beginning there were Latin kings who later gave way to the Etruscan rulers. The latter having established a tyranny were expelled by popular action and Rome became a Latin speaking Republic.

60. Mahābhārata, Śānti-Parva, Ch.67.
Thus in both the cases of Greece and Rome, we find that at the beginning there were monarchies which later gave way to republics. This fact of the Greco-Roman history may be adduced as an evidence in support of Jayaswal's thesis. But it should be noted here that the above pattern of progress of the Greco-Roman history belongs to the later period of the history of these two countries. Before the appearance of regal rule in Greece and Rome, there was a non-monarchical form of government. Morgan, writing on the early institution of the Greco-Roman society, observes as follows: "... in the lower status of barbarism the government was of one power, the council of the chiefs; that in the middle status it was of two powers, the council of the chiefs and the military commander, and in the upper status it was of three powers, the council of the chiefs, the assembly of the people and the military commander."

And about the early political organisation of the Romans, the same well known writer adds:

"Prior to the time of Romulus each tribe elected a chief officer whose duties were magisterial, military and religious. He was probably elected by the Curiae collected in a general assembly. It was undoubtedly an ancient office in each Latin tribe, peculiar in character and held by an elective tenure. It was the germ of the still higher office of Rex."

64. Morgan: Ancient Society, p. 284.

65. ibid., p. 316.
He further adds: "Our knowledge of the previous constitution of the Latin Society is mainly derived from the legislation ascribed to Romulus, since it brings into view the anterior organisation of the Latin tribes, with such improvements and modifications as the wisdom of the age was able to suggest. It is seen in the Senate as a Council of chiefs, in the Comitia Curia as an assembly of the people, in the office of the general military commander, and in the ascending series of organisation."

Thus from the preceding discussion, it is quite clear that all the contentions made in support of the theory that ancient Indian republic was a post-Vedic institution stand rebutted. This theory as shown above completely ignores the early phase of the development of Indo-Aryan Polity, and also the most early Indian tradition, referred to above, regarding the origin of kingship in ancient India. All the available data, which have been adduced and thoroughly discussed in the above text, leads us to conclude that ancient Indian republics were Vedic institutions, and certainly not post-Vedic as asserted by Jayaswal. And this conclusion finds support from the evidence offered by the history of the early polity of the Indo-Germanic peoples. Caesar, who gives the earliest account of the primitive German people, does not mention kingship among them. "In peace, he tells us, there is no common magistracy: the chieftains of the Distuch, into which the tribe is divided,

66. ibid., p. 321.
administer justice among the people: a common magistracy is only formed when the tribe is at war. It may be noted that even in the time of Tacitus kingship (Germania), though it had made its appearance, was not general.

**REPUBLIC IN VEDIC TIME**

A. Berriedale Keith considers kingship as the only form of government prevalent in the Rig-Vedic time. He observes: "The Tribes of the Rig-Veda were certainly under kingly rule; there is no passage in the Rig-Veda which suggests any other form of government, while the king under the style "Rājan" is a frequent figure. This is only what might be expected in a community which was not only pātriarchal - a fact whence the king drew his occasional style of Viśpati (Head of the Viś) - but also engaged in constant warfare against both Aryans and aboriginal foes. Moreover, the kingship was normally hereditary; even in the scanty notices of the Rig-Veda we can trace the lines of succession such as that of Vadhrényāva, Divodāsa, Pījāvāna, Sudāsa, or Durgaha, Giriṣhita, Purukutsa, Trasadāsya, Mitrāṁthi, Kuruśravaṇa, and Upamaśārva. In some cases it has been argued that election by the Cantons was possible; but the interpretation resting on the improbable view that Viśah denotes not 'subjects' but 'cantons'; and the idea has no support

67. Sidgwick: Development of European Politics, p.32.  
68. Ibid.
in later literature: "We have already seen above in this text that any contentions in favour of the fact that ancient Indian republics were post-Vedic institutions are quite untenable. In fact, as Dr. Altekar remarks "Side by side with monarchical and oligarchical states, there also existed republican governments in ancient India as early as the Vedic age." The above statement


70. SQAI., p.39. See also R.C.Majumdar: Corporate... p.216. "Regarding the antiquity of the non-monarchical form of government, there are some grounds for the belief that it was not unknown in the Vedic period." See also R.S.Sharma: Aspects... p.60.

"This view (of Dr. Jayaswal that republican form of government came in India long after monarchy and after the early Vedic age. EP., p.25) may be true of the class divided post-Vedic republics, but so far as the tribal republics of the Vedic times are concerned, such a generalisation does not seem to accord with the evidence of either early or later literature." within brackets mine. - See also V.M.Apte: A History and Culture of the Indian People, Vol.I, p.352.

"But in the Rig-Veda we come across terms which in later times were undoubtedly applied to non-monarchical constitution: ... it is not impossible that there were even in this early period, the germ of the republican states of the type we meet within the early Buddhist times."
of Keith represents a partial and not the whole picture of the early Vedic polity, and this will be quite evident from the following discussion.

We have discussed above that 'Gana' was used as the technical term to describe a republic in ancient India. The word Gana is found at several places in the entire range of the Vedic Literature - at forty-six places in the Rig-Veda, at nine in the Atharva-Veda, and at numerous places in the Brähmanas. The Vedic texts at several places speak of the Maruts as a Gana. We have numerous references to the Gana of the Devas. The Purānas and the Epics which record our most ancient tradition make profuse references to the Ganas of the gods and the demons. It is quite apparent that these Ganas were not imaginary as one would tend to think, but the reflections of the Gana organisations existing in the contemporary human society. Further, the following verse from the Rig-Veda, as pointed out by Zimmer, suggests the existence of an oligarchical form of government.

72. RV., 1.64.12; V.52.13-14; 55.10; 56.1; 59.1-2; VI.16.24; IX.96.17; X.36.7; 77-1; III.32.2; VII.56.2; IX.97.17; AV., XIII.4.8; IV.13.4; SB. V.4; 3.17.
73. RV., IV.35.5; TB., II.8.6.4; SB., XIII.2.6.4.
74. RV., I.97.6 यद्यन्ते राज्यमुनि राज्यमुन्वन्यन्ते स राजा भवति न स ग्ययने।
Cf. यद्यन्ते राज्यमुनि राज्यमुन्वन्यन्ते स राजा भवति न स ग्ययने।
SB., IX.5.4.5.
"As the kings (rājānāh) assemble together in the Samiti, the (Oshadhi) gather together in him who is called a physician, one who heals diseases and destroys demons."

Zimmer opines that this text indicates a system of government in which the state is ruled not by a single ruler but by several members of the royal family jointly together. Here the use of the word Rājāno, the plural form of Rājan, clearly shows the inaccuracy of Keith's remark that the tribes of the Rig-Veda were certainly under kingly rule and that there is no passage in the Rig-Veda which suggests any other form of government. From this it is quite clear that the equation of the term 'Rājan' with 'king' by the learned scholar is not always correct. We possess additional evidence in the Vedic texts which show that 'Rājan' does not invariably mean a king but its plural form Rājānāh meant nobles who were members of the Vedic assemblies which together constituted the sovereign governing body of the Vedic State. Thus Rājan was not always a hereditary king as averred by Keith, but sometime he was the elected head of the state.

75. op. cit.

76. For examples, यदृ राजानो विभवत्तैह द्वियात्मानित्य सर्ववृद्धि यमस्यामेव सप्तास्यः। AV., III.29.1. (Here the members of Yama's assembly are mentioned as Rājānāh).

77. Jayaswal has thoroughly discussed the sovereign...
Further, a well known passage in the later Vedic literature remarks that the kings of the Easterners were known as Samrāṭs or emperors, those of the Satvatas as Bhojas, those of the Niśhyas and Āpāchyas as Svarāṭas, while the countries to the North of the Himalayas like the Uttara-Madras and the Uttara-Kurus had a Vairājya state and their peoples were called Virāṭs. The interpretation of the word “Vairājya” has evoked difference of opinions among the scholars regarding the political constitution of the Uttara-Kurus and the Uttara-Madras. Jayaswal, who was the first to refer to this passage in support of his thesis on the existence of non-monarchical states in ancient India, interprets the term ‘Vairājya’ to mean a ‘kingless state’. He also adds that ‘according to the Brāhmaṇa the whole country or nation (Janapada) took the consecration of rulership. There is no doubt that this was a real democratic constitution.” Dr. Altekar endorses the view of Jayaswal and observes, “there can be no doubt that the ‘Vairājya’ states of the Uttara-Kurus and Uttaramadras were kingless states, where people, that

(Contd.)

character of the Vedic Assemblies in Hindu Polity,
Chs. II and III, pp. 12 ff.; Cf. R.C. Majumdar:
Corporate..., pp. 216 ff.
79. AB., VII. 3. 14. ये के व प्राक्तान् राजान्: सामाज्यायैव नेंद्रिण्याच् -
 ज्याने। ये के व परेण रहिवर्न्द जनपदा उच्छुधु उत्साहार हति वैराज्यायैव वैमिषिष्याच्या विराहित्येवानिष्ठितानाच्या नाच्या।
80 np. pp. 77-78 and 78 fn. 13.
is the heads of the founder families, were consecrated for rulership. It is worth noting that the Panjab, which was near the homeland of the Uttarakurus and the Uttaramadras, continued to have republican states down to the Fourth Century A.D. Jayaswal's interpretation was rejected by Macdonell and Keith who opine that 'Vairājya' meant some sort of a regal authority. R.C. Majumdar has very ably refuted the view of the writers of the Vedic Index. It is quite obvious that the mention of 'Vairājya' as a kind of political constitution in the context of the monarchical forms of government existing in other quarters described in the same text, and also the substitution of the term 'Janapada' for 'Rajan' in the last sentence, indicate a non-monarchical government among these two peoples. Recently B.A. Saletore has advanced a number of arguments against the above views of Jayaswal and Altekar in his effort to establish the proposition that Republic as a form of government did not exist in the Vedic age. Firstly, he remarks that the text of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa locates these two peoples beyond the Himalayas (पर्वत [हिमालय] ) and therefore their institutions cannot be counted as types of ancient Indian political institutions. We may note here that the learned scholar has completely ignored the rejection of this point by Zimmer.

81. SGAI., p.117-18 and 117, f.n.4.
83. Corporate ..., p.219.
84. Ancient Indian Political Thought and Institutions, pp.100 ff.; Cf. V.P. Varma: Studies in Hindu Political
Zimmer has very convincingly argued that both these tribes are to be located in India proper in Kashmir and its neighbourhood, and here he makes a very remarkable observation that to the people living in the Madhyadesa Kashmir might very well appear as 'Parena Hima\textvam\textt'.

In fact the word 'Parena' here has not the sense of extra-territoriality but of incalculable long distance. Secondly, his contention that the Uttarakurus and the Uttaramadras lived in a mythological or semi-mythological land, is quite untenable in face of the fact that the historical realities of these two peoples are very clearly borne out by later evidences which are quite irrefutable. We may note here that the Kuru continued to exist in the time of the Great Epic wherein they constituted a great political force. The same was the case with the Madras whom we find as a very powerful powerful Republic in the time of P\texti\textnini. Moreover, his refusal to consider, as being beside the point, Dr.\texti\textl\textt\textekar's highly valuable

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85. Cf. D.D.Kosambi : An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, p.118. Referring to the Utopian character of these peoples, he remarks, "The distance from legend of myth to reality, never very great in India, was small at the period and for the sources."

86. Mbh. Sabhā-Parva, Ch.27, vrs.19.

87. IV.2.108 (मद्रेणोत्सर्गः) 
suggestion that the continued existence of republics in the Panjab, which was near the homeland of these two peoples, down to the Fourth Century A.D. may indicate the republican constitution of the Uttarakurus and Uttaramadras, is obviously lacking in historical perspective. Historical developments being connected, in many cases the later phenomena help to enlighten on the previous state or condition of things which may appear to be ambiguous and uncertain. Thus Jayaśwal's view that we have here in this text of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa a reference to a democratic form of government appears to be quite near the truth.

Finally, a passage in the Atharva-Veda appears to offer a most conclusive proof of the existence of a republican form of government in the Vedic period. It occurs in the course of a long incantation for the killing of a Brāhmaṇa's cow. The passage runs as follows:

"They that ruled, a thousand, and were ten hundreds, those Vaitahavyas, having devoured the cow of the Brāhmaṇa, perished."

(Whitney's Tr. Ath. Veda, p. 251)

"The descendants of Vaitahavyas, who ruled over a thousand men, and, were ten hundred in number, were overwhelmed.
after they had eaten a Brahmāna's cow."

(Muir : O.S.T.I., p.235)

In spite of the differences in the translations of this passage, the essential broad fact remains that the Vaitahavyas, who were a thousand in number, ruled over a territory. Here we have the most clear and positive evidence for the republican form of government of the Vaitahavyas. It is interesting to note that the Vaitahavyas were also anti-Brahmanical like the later republics of the Mallas, the Lichchhavis and others of the Buddha's time. We may further note that the descendants of the Vaitahavyas, the seion of the Haihayas, famous in the Epic and Puranic history, who were a branch of the Yādavas, many of whom were republicans till the time of Mahābhārata War and after; and as per Puranic calculation, the Vaitahavyas and their early descendants of Yadu belonged to almost the beginning of the Vedic period.

REPUBLICAN STATES IN VEDAS AND EPICS

The ancient Indian republics in the periods of the Vedas and the Epics were known by a number of different nomenclatures which have been thoroughly discussed by

89. R.C.Majumdar : Corporate ..., p.220.
90. Cf. ibid., pp.220 ff.
K.P. Jayaswal. In these periods a number of republics existed, of which only the important ones are briefly noted in the following text.

The Maruts were a very important Gana or republic of the early Vedic time. They are mentioned at several places in the Vedic Literature. They are described as sons of Rudra numbering either forty-nine or sixty-three divided into seven groups, each consisting of nine. They are repeatedly described as peasants, whose Gana consisted of troops of seven each. They were the typical example of the Vedic Gana society, and are described as the Vîshā or the people.

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa describes the Satvats as one of the peoples who lived under the Bhaujya constitution.

Jayaswal has very ably shown that the Bhaujya polity was a republic. He may note here that the Satvat was the ancient name of the Yādavas who were an important republic in the time of the Mahābhārata under

92. H.P., Ch.X, p.75 ff.
93. Vedic Index, I, 382, 449; 11.155.
94. Tândya Mahâ Brâhmaṇa, XIX.14.2.
95. S.B., II.5.1.12; RV., VIII.96.8; Th., I.6.2.3.
96. S.B., V.4.3.17.
97. ibid., II.5.1.12.
98. AB., VII.3.14. दक्षिणयायेव दिशि ये के व सत्त्वता राजानो भौषण्येव सेवय सिरिस्यायन समस्येनानिर्दिष्टमानाजाति -- --
the leadership of Krishna.

According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the Niohyas and the Apāchyas had 'Svarājya constitution', which has been successfully interpreted to be a republic by Jayaswal. The same scholar locates the Niohyas inhabiting the low lands bordering near the mouths of the Indus, and the Apāchyas occupying the regions immediately above.

The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa refers to these peoples as living under the 'Vairājya constitution,' which have been interpreted by Jayaswal to mean a democratic or republican government. Both these peoples are described to be living in the vicinity of the Himalayas. The Madras were

100. Mbh., XII.81.29.
101. AB., VII. 3.14. तत्र्वेदी प्रतीत विदिते ते के व नौक्षानाराजानां वेदप्राप्ताः स्वराज्यायेऽत्तेन तत्तेन स्वाधिक्षेत्रानाधिक्षेत्रानाधिक्ष्यत।
102. HPR., pp.76-77.
103. ibid.
104. AB., VII.3.14.
105. HPR., pp. 77-78.
106. AB., VII.3.14. ते के व प्राप्तानां राजानं साधारणायेऽत्तेन तत्तेन स्वाधिक्षेत्रानाधिक्ष्यत।
republican in the time of Pāṇini and they appear to have continued to be so up to the time when the Guptas encountered them in the year 300 A.D. Jayaswal opines that Sākala, identified with modern Sialkot, must have been originally the seat of the Uttaramadras. The Uttarakurus passed into the realm of fables and mythology in the later literature as the land of prosperity and enjoyment. Their historical existence is referred to in the Mahābhārata and the Jātakas.

The Atharva-Veda describes these people as ruling over a thousand and being ten hundreds in number and also as having perished after devouring the Vaitahavyas cow of a Brāhmaṇa. This description has been rightly interpreted to indicate that these people lived under a republican constitution. It is interesting to note here that, like the

107. Pāṇini, IV.2.108. मण्डयादे -- - -

Cf. Mbh. Vana-Parva, Ch. 253, vrs. 80. महाभारत राजकियों स्त्रेष्ठ -- -
Cf. Arthasastra, XI.1.6, p.376. चित्रकुकिल-विलक-मलक-पकु कुटाकुल-या न्यासाधियो राजज्ञोपकर्षित।


111. Mbh. XII.81.29. यात्रा : कुटुरा : मोहा : तर्क बायक्ष्याण ग।
Cf. Arthasastra, op.cit.

112. AV., V.18.10. ये शब्दमु राज्यज्ञ शासन दस्तिकालावत।

later non-monarchical peoples as the Mallas and the Lishchhavis etc., the Vaithahavyas were also anti-Brahmanical.

B. In Epics:

The Rāmāyana and the Mahābhārata constitute our two great Epics. We have no definite evidence about the existence of republics in the period represented by the Rāmāyana, although the words Gana and Ganaballabha are to be found in it. But these phrases do not have any political connotations in the term of a state or rule. On the other hand, we have definite and ample evidences about the existence of republics in the period of the Mahābhārata when a large number of republican states flourished. The important republics mentioned in the Mahābhārata are as follows:

Seven Dasyu Gaṇarājya:

They were situated in the vicinity of the hills, and Arjuna, after defeating king Vishvagava, advanced


115. Ibid., 81.12.
towards these republics to conquer them. The use of the term Dasyu may indicate that these republics were of the non-Aryans. It is very likely that they might have been situated near the Panjab or Kashmir.

After the conquest of the Seven Dasyu Ganas, Arjuna conquered the brave Kṣatriyas of Kashmir. The Mahābhārata, while mentioning the names of the rulers of non-monarchical states, do not mention any ruler of Kashmir but simply speaks of the brave Kṣatriyas of the place. This clearly indicates that in this period Kashmir was ruled not by a king, but was a republic.

Next, Arjuna made the conquest of ten Gaṇa-rājya. They had formed a confederation under the leadership of Lohita. It may be noted that Lohita is not addressed by any regal title, but as an ordinary citizen. This suggests that he might have been the elected chief of the confederation of the ten republics.

116. Mbh. Sabhā-Parva, Ch.27, vrs.16.
117. ibid., Ch.27, vrs.17.
118. ibid., Ch.27, vrs.17.
After the conquest of the confederation of the ten Gana-rāja, Arjuna conquered the Kṣatriyas of the Trigarta, Dārva and Kokanada. It is significant to note that the Mahābhārata texts speak of the Kṣatriyas of these states and not of any regal authority as making wars with Arjuna and accepting their defeat to him. This indicates that these states were republics.

Next, Arjuna conquered the Abhisāri, the Uragā and Simghapur and two cities. They appear to have been independent city-states, for the texts nowhere mention them as being a part of any states or kingdoms. Further, it is noteworthy that the texts refer to Chitrāyudha and Ročamāna, who were the heads of Simghapur and Uragā respectively, as ordinary citizens and not as kings. This would indicate that these city-states were republics.

119. Mbh., Ch.27, vrs. 18.
120. Ibid., Ch.27, vrs. 19.
121. Ibid., Ch.27, vrs. 20.
Minor Republics:

Next, Arjuna conquered a number of small republican communities which are known to us as Suhya, Chola, Balhika, Kāmbōja, Darada, Loha, and Parama Kāmbōja and Rishika.

Ganarājya Conquered by Nakula:

The Mahābhārata credits Arjuna’s younger brother Nakula with the conquest of a large number of republics which have been described as Daśārma, Śibi, Trisārta, Ambastha, Mālava, Paṇḍakarpata, Madhyamakeya, and Bāṭadhāna of which the last two were brahmin republics.

122. ibid., Ch. 27, vrs. 21.
123. ibid.
124. ibid., vrs. 22.
125. ibid., vrs. 23.
126. ibid.
127. ibid., vrs. 25.
128. ibid.
129. ibid., vrs. 26. śrīvatsavātātā sūgāmātātā tātī tātātā tātī.
130. ibid., Ch. 38, vrs. 7 and 8.
He is said to have conquered other republics like Gramaniya, Abhira, Sudra, and Matsya which were probably situated in the Punjab.

Republics Conquered by Karna:

The Mahabharata speaks of a number of other republics which were conquered by Karna viz. Mlechshma, Atavi, Madra, Rohitaka, Agneya, Malava, Sasaka, Yavana etc., and several others of which the most important one was under a person named Magnajita. These republics were situated in the North-Western India.

Republics Described in Santi-Parva:

The Santi-Parva of the Mahabharata enumerates a number of Gana states or republics, among whom the important ones are described as: Andhaka, Vrisi, Yadava, Bhoja and Kukura, all of which had formed a confederation. It appears that the Andhaka and Vrisi

131. Mbh., Ch.35, vrs. 9 and 10.
132. Mbh., Vana-Parva, Ch.254, vrs.19 and 20.
133. Ibid., vrs.21.
134. Ibid., Santi-Parva, Ch.81, vrs.30.
had formed a separate confederation under the leadership of Krishna.

Imaginary Ideal Republics:

The Bhisma-Parva of the Mahabharata mentions Memya, Maśaka, and Mānasa and Madamga as lands of all around prosperity, and that they were inhabited by Brāhmanas, Kṣatriyas, Vaishyas and Śūdras respectively. It further adds that in these lands there were no kings to punish, that the conduct of the people was guided by Dharma, and that every one respected and protected the rights of the other. These states were obviously imaginary and may be taken to represent the conception of an ideal republican polity of the time.

Thus, the general definition of republic as a state where the sovereign power vests, not in a single person as in a monarchy, but in a group of persons, the communities described above were certainly republican. Moreover, although the above list is not made complete, it will suffice to show how republic as a political institution was not only well-known but firmly established in certain parts and among certain peoples of India at the early periods of the Vedas and the Epics.

135. Mbh., Bhisma-Parva, Ch. 59, vrs. 98. — भीम, भृगुनाथ । 136. ibid., Ch. XI, 35-39. 

135. Mbh., Bhisma-Parva, Ch. 59, vrs. 98. — भीम, भृगुनाथ । 136. ibid., Ch. XI, 35-39.
DEMOCRATIC ELEMENT:

Having seen the existence of republics in the early periods of the Vedas and the Epics, we now proceed to examine the presence of democratic element in the Vedic polity. According to Aristotle, the polity is democracy when the supreme power is in the hands of the free citizens. In a plain language, it is a government by the largest number of people. Do we find any trace of democratic ideas, institutions and method of transacting governmental businesses in the Vedic State.

Sovereignty of the people, which constitutes the sine qua non of democracy, was present in the Vedic Janas or Republics. This is fully borne out by the consecration of the whole people for rulership of the state. For examples the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa states very clearly that in the Uttarākurus and Uttaramadras the whole people (Janapada) were anointed for rulership. We have another instance in the constitution of the Vaitahavyas. They are described as ten hundred in number and as ruling over a thousand people, clearly suggesting that among them the

139. AB., VII,3.14 ये केवल परेण विद्वान्त जनपदा उदरकुत्र उदराम्य
इति वेलाज्ञासेवा तेऽभिविंशाने विद्वानं विभिन्नानात्मानि।
140. AV., V.18.10. ये सत्यम् कराजनास्तु कस्ततात
ते राजस्य गो जनपा वेतस्यम् प्राप्तस्त।
Cf. R.C. Majumdar : Corporate..., p.280.
rule was vested in the whole people. The democratic feature of the Vedic republic is further revealed by its elective head of the state, who was usually known as Gāṇapati. The Aitareya Brahmana mentions Svaraśyapoli in which, as pointed out by Jayaswal, the head of the state or president was elected. Further, the Purāṇas, which preserve our ancient tradition, enlighten us on the deliberative aspect of the Gana constitution. For example, the Vāyu Purāṇa tells us that on one occasion the sages assembled on the Meru Mountain in which a resolution was passed, consequent on which all the sages with their Gana assembled for transaction of some business. This very clearly indicates that the democratic method of debate and discussion leading to a common decision for action was adopted in the Gana state. Besides political equality, we find evidence of social and economic equality in the Vedic Gana. For example, a Rig-Vedic text suggests that the Gana was the custodian of the wealth of the state which was distributed equally among its members, and obviously the individual right to own property did not exist. The Vedic Gana was also free from class or Varṇa divisions. For instance, the Marut Gana is mentioned

141. RV., II.25-1; TB., III.11.4.2; AB., I.21.
142. For detailed discussion on this, see Jayaswal : op. cit. p.77 ff.
144. RV., X.34.12; Cf. AV., III.30.5-6.
as Visāh or people, suggesting the absence of class distinctions in it. Thus the presence of the above factors in the Vedic Gaṇas or republics rendered them really democratic. As for the democratic elements in the Gaṇas in the Mahābhārata are concerned, they have been fully brought forth by Jayaswal, R.C.Majumdar and some very recent research works on this topic, and therefore, any detailed discussion on it is unnecessary.

Next, we also find democratic element in the Vedic monarchy as well. The Vedic kingship was not hereditary. We have plentiful evidence pointing to the king being elected by the people (Visāh). The contention of some scholars that he was elected by a council of nobles is contradicted by a text of the Atharva-Veda which refers to a king accepting his royal authority from the

145. SB., II.5.1.12; Cf. R.S.Sharma : Aspects..., pp.88-90.
147. Hindu Polity, Ch.XIV and Appendix A.
148. Corporate..., Ch.III.
149. For example, see Ramayana and Mahābhārata Kālina Janataaṇṭavāda by Shyamalal Pandey (Lucknow, SV.2007, Vikram.)
150. RV., I.124.8. त ई बिसो न राजाय वसाना भोप्तस्वो वपु त्रापरिष्करम्
   AV.iii.4.2. त्वाद बिसो वसाना राज्याय त्वापिन्योः पुनिषाः
   पं देनोः
   AV., VI.97-98; Cf. RV., X.173 (Contains a slightly modified version of this song).
151. For example, see Altekar : op.cit., p.30.
whole people including equally the king-makers and the artisans. The ancient tradition regarding the origin of kingship also says that the first king was elected. Besides the Vedic king was not an autocrat. The Vedic principle of state regarded Dharma or Law as the true sovereign, and the king was only the supreme executive or Danda, whose duty was to uphold and enforce Dharma. In the Coronation Ritual the king-elect on ascending the throne was touched upon the back with a rod which was the symbolic sceptre of justice, indicating that the king was not above but under the Law. The phrase Dharma, which has been fundamental to the Indian thoughts, has been equated with everything from Aristotle's efficient Cause to Godwin's political Justice, and, above all, it meant the sacred common Law. The Dharma stood above the king.

152. AV., III, 5.6-7.

वे दैवतानां राजारा : क्षाराः : वे मधुरिणा : ||
उपस्तानुः पुष्यं मद्यं तथेश्वरं वृजविनाः सर्वान् ||
वे राजतानां राजकृत्यु हृदा ग्रामविनाः वे ||
उपस्तानुः पुष्यं मद्यं तथेश्वरं वृजविनाः सर्वान् ||

153. AB., I.14. वेशामुखवि न रूपोष नोद्रवति ||- सांस्कृतथा हुरानि कषणनि ||- वेश बन्धुमन्नारकायं वे नो क्षणिति राजानं श्रवामहा विनि तथेति ||

Cf. DM., III.84; Arthasastra, I.15.6; Eng. Tr., p.22.

154. AB., V.4.4.4.7. वेषेन प्रस्तुतसूक्ष्मिन्येन वधेणहिन्निति || न दाहेन्त्यंतो वण्डश्वसिन्यन्ति तस्मादाराजा-वधूयो वेषेन वण्डश्वसिन्यन्ति ||

Cf. Manu., VI.

155. AB., I.4.14. तत् (शेष) केत्रीयमपवतश्चुक्ष भर्माः || तदेत्तरस्त्रात्त्रय सांस्कृत ग्रहणे: || शक्तादशनाश्च नाहिति ||
and his failure to preserve it must have been visited with disastrous consequences. This is most impressively demonstrated by the Coronation Oath in which the king pledges that he may be deprived of everything including his own life if he becomes oppressive. Moreover, the authority of the Vedic king was very greatly limited by the popular assemblies called as Vidatha, Samiti and Sabha. Sharply conflicting views have been expressed by eminent scholars about their exact nature, constitution and power. The Vidatha was most probably the earliest popular assembly of the Indo-Aryans which exercised supreme administrative power, and which was the prototype of the Samiti and Sabha. The Sabha and Samiti have generally been considered to be the assembly of the Elders and the commons respectively, resembling the two chambers of the modern Parliament. The supreme importance

156. A.B., VIII.15 या मात्र राजीवायें यान्त्र प्रेमास्ति तदुपगायोऽऽ- पुरा ने सूक्ष्मा यान्त्रा यामे से सूक्ष्मायिनि।

"Between the night I am born and the night I die, whatever good I might have done, my heaven, my life, my progeny may I be deprived of, if I oppress (injure) you."

157. J.P. Sharma has advanced a new theory on this topic which deserves careful consideration. (Republic in Ancient India, pp.17 ff.)


159. For detailed discussion on the Sabha and Samiti, see Jayaswal : op.cit., pp.12 ff; Altekar : op.cit., pp.139 ff.
of the Sabha and Samiti in the Vedic polity is demonstrated by ascription of divine origin to them. The Samiti had the power to elect, dethrone and re-elect a king. As pointed out by R.C. Majumdar, a king without the Samiti was unthinkable implying that his existence was dependent upon it. The equal importance of the Sabha is indicated by the fact that its resolutions were considered binding on all, and inviolable.

Further, we have evidence of the existence of Parliamentary method in transacting state businesses in the Vedic monarchy. The matters of state ('mantra')

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160. AV., VII.12.1. शाब्दि व नाम समितिश्रावदा पुणापूर्विः श्लोका द्वारा समेत नारिष्टा नाम वा श्रीसि।
161. AV., VI.88.3 श्रावदृष्टे समितिः केत्त्वतामिह।

See also AV., X.173.1; AV., VI.87-1; III.345;
Cf. Jayaswal: op.cit., pp. 12 ff. and Ch.XXIII.

162. AV., III.4.3 त्यो विषो शुणाता राज्याय स्थापिता: प्रभिः: पंच वेत्सी। वर्णनो हो स्वार्थ्य कुशलिः स प्राणे न उग्रे वि भ्रष्टं श्रृणि।

Jayaswal interprets this passage as referring to the re-election of a king who was apparently driven out (Hindu Polity, p.187).

163. Corporate..., pp.216 ff.

164. AV., VII.12.2. विषम ते सबे नाम नरिष्टा नाम वा श्रीसि।
On the evidence of Sayana's explanation of Narista as a resolution of the many that could not be violated (Quoted by Jayaswal in Hindu Polity, p.18).
were fully discussed in the assemblies and an effort was made to reach a consensus or unanimity, and once a resolution was adopted it was binding on all. Naturally debates loomed very large in their proceedings, and the members tried their best to influence the assemblies by agreeable speeches and to defeat their rivals by consummate skill in debate. It is really surprising to note how the Vedic Aryans adopted the most democratic methods to influence the assemblies, which offers a commendable contrast to the use/undemocratic methods like power of wealth and position, force, intimidation and political assassination of leaders in our modern democracies.

And finally, the villages constituted the 'grass-roots' of democracy. They have been the eternal units of the Indian society and polity. In the Vedic period they were more important than the towns, which is indicated by the Rig-Vedic hymns often praying for the prosperity of the villages and rarely for that of the towns. Each village had an elected head-man (Grāmanī). His importance is indicated by frequent mentions of him in the Vedic literature, being a member of the Samiti.

165. AV., I.191.3. समानो मन्त्र: समिति: समानी
Cf. AV., VI.64. समान तुल सह विष्णुग्रामम् ॥
166. AV., VII.13.2; Cf. Ante. f.n.164.
167. AV., VII.12.1; XII.1.56. ये संग्रामय: समित्यस्यत्र सा नात्र व्रेम तेन ।
169. RV., I.144.1; 44.10.
172. The villages transacted their own business, and though the initiative was usually left with the head-man, but, if he acted wrongly or against the established customs, the village elders could set the matter right by pointing out mistakes to the headman. Thus every village was a tiny democracy.

MONARCHICAL TENDENCY

176. We have seen above in this text that during the Vedic and the Epic Age, the greater portion of the Aryan India, namely the North and the West and the South, was studded with states having republican constitution. Except the Doab and the Magadha, the whole country was republican. But the working of these republican constitutions showed a swing towards a monarchy. A striking illustration of this fact may be noticed in the case of the trans-Himalayan Peoples, namely the Uttarakurus and the Uttaramadras.

172. SB., III.4.1.7.
176. Supra, PP. 30 f.
177. HP., p.113.
According to the Aitareya Brahmana, these peoples lived under a republican constitution. But in the subsequent period when they migrated to the Indian plains, they began to live under a monarchy. This tendency of the early Indian republics or the self-governing communities to change over to a monarchical form of government had lived down in memory to the time of Megasthenes who records that "from the time of Dionysos to Sandrokottus the Indians counted 153 kings and a period of 6048 years. Republican form of government was thrice established and thrice changed into monarchy." This very tendency is noticeable in the ancient Indian republics of the later period. For example, some of the coins of the Yaudheyas bear the legend of the Yaudheya Gana, while the others unmistakably contain the names of the rulers like Harṣumārā, or merely the name Mahārājās or the legend Śrīgavato Svāmina Brāhmaṇa Yaudheya, which indicates that, although the Yaudheyas reckoned themselves, on the whole, as a Gana or a republic, they had sections amongst them which had kings or chieftains. In another word, it appears as if we are to understand from the history of the Yaudheyas themselves that the republican form of

180. McCrindle : Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, p.208.
182. ibid., p.78.
government gradually gave place to monarchy amongst them. The Vedic theory of the origin of kingship may be considered to offer us a clue to the cause of this tendency. According to the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, the kingship was founded under the duress of war necessity to ensure victory against enemies who were having superior strength because of living under a monarchy. This very text indirectly suggests that during the later Vedic period there prevailed a condition of frequent wars and the consequent political instability, in which monarchy offered greater unity and inner stability and also superior military strength vis-à-vis the non-monarchical states or republics. And this hard reality must have caused the general tendency among the self-governing communities or republics of the Vedic age to degenerate into monarchies.

SURVIVAL AND CONTINUITY

We have seen above that the republics of the Vedic and the Epic Age showed a marked trend towards monarchy. But the operation of this tendency did not cause a total disappearance of these republics and thereby brought to a close, once for all, the republican tradition of the early time. On the other hand, to our utter astonishment, we find that some of these republics survived and continued in the subsequent period. For example, the Puranic tradition refers to the existence of a Gana of a thousand

183. AB., I.14.
Kṣatriyas headed by Mābhāga who may be identified with Sage Nabhāka of the Rig-Veda. But the descendants of Mābhāga are not mentioned by the Purāṇa. The silence of the writers of the Purāṇas on this point may be explained by the fact that, since they record Brahmanic tradition which did not approve of the non-monarchical form of government and considered it as an anathema, they did not care to preserve the genealogy of the Mābhāgas, because they had republican polity. However, if the Mābhaka of Asoka’s Inscription could be taken to refer to the Mābhāgas, then we would find that the Mābhāgas continued to function as a republican people for a pretty long time in the post-Vedic period. Next we find the same thing about the Satvats. According to the Altarṣya Brahmana these people had a Bhaujya (republican) constitution and their rulers were called Bhojas. The Yādavas, which is the later name for the Satvats, appear as a very important republican people in the post-Vedic period. The Yādavas and their sub-divisions like the Andhaka, Vrisnis and the Bhojas, formed a Federal Republic under the leadership Sri Kṛṣṇa. The Andhaka-Vrisnis are

187. Aśoka’s Rock Edict, XIII.
188. HP., p.119.
189. AB., VII.3.14.
190. Refer to HP., p.34.
also described by Pāṇini as republics. The Arthasastra of Kautiya mentions the Vṛṣṇis as a Corporation (Samāna) or a republic. Their still later existence is vouchsafed by the legend, "Vṛṣṇi Rājaḥya-Gaṇasya" on a coin issued by these peoples and which is dated about 100 B.C.

Thus, I think, these few examples will suffice to demonstrate that, in spite of the operation of the tendency among the early Indian republics to degenerate into monarchies, a few of them survived and continued to live in the subsequent period over a pretty long time. And this bears an eloquent testimony to the fact that democracy or republic was ingrained in the very character of the ancient Indian people, and it was not alien to their genius as wrongly opined by Smith.

192. Pāṇini. 6.3.34.
193. Arthasastra (Tr. by Shamasstry), p.11.
194. Cunningham: CAI., p. 70; Cf. HP., p.141; Cf. Corporate ; ..., pp.279 ff.
196. The Oxford History of India (3rd Ed.), Introduction, p.8f.