CHAPTER-III

The Political Aspect of the Rgvedasamhitā
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The concept of polity was inherent in the minds of the people since the Rgvedic period. Side by side with the social system, there was an well structured political system too prevalent in the Sapta-Sindhu region. Politics is an aspect of religion, i.e. Dharma. It is referred to as rājadharma, the duties of a king. Rājadharma is said to be the root of all dharmas. Because, the fulfilment of duties and responsibilities by the rulers was of paramount importance for the stability and development of society and for the happiness of individuals in a state. In the Śántiparvan of the Mahābhārata it is stated that all dharmas are merged in rājadharma and rājadharma are at the head of all dharmas. As rājadharma is related to the duties of the king, the king is said to be the integral part of the state. For the people who live within a certain geographical area, there must be a definite territory, a sovereign or ruler, there should be a certain system of government, the region must have a regulated economic system and a force for defence and foreign relationships. Kautilya in his Arthaśāstra also enumerates the seven elements or āngas of a state which are -svāmin, i.e. the sovereign, amatya, i.e. minister, janapada or rāstra, i.e. the territory of the state and the people of it, durga, i.e. fortified cities, kośa, i.e. accumulated wealth in the ruler's treasury, danda, i.e. army and mitra, i.e. friends or allies. The ruler or the sovereign is said to be the most important or the first of the seven elements. Because of the importance of the king, he is even considered as the state itself. It was the king whose duty was to see that the people of his kingdom acted according to the rules laid down for the varṇas and āśramas, to administer justice and to interfere whenever his pariśad or assembly sought

1 ..sarvā viḍyā rājadharmaṣu yuktāḥ sarve lokā rājadharma praviṣṭāḥ/
sarve dharmaḥ rājadharmanapariṣṭānāḥ. / Mbh.Śānti, 63.25,26,29
Also vide, Ibid., 141 9-10
2 svāmayamātayajanapadadurgakośadandaṁmitrāṇi prakṛtayaḥ / Aś., 6 1
Also vide, Manu., 9.294
3 rāja rājyaṁiti prakṛtimukṣepah/Aś., 8.2
his help. So, a king is the most desirable thing of a state and in a kingless country there is no dharma, no security of life nor of prosperity. Due to constant war in the Sapta-Sindhu, the existence of a powerful king to protect the people was considered indispensable which is clear from the Rgvedic verse noted below:

abhivṛtya sapatnānabhi yā no arātayah!
abhī pratyānyantam tiṣṭhābhi yo na irasyati //4

Concept of Rājan or King and various Epithets of King

The people of the Rgvedic society were divided into clans each of which had a king known as Rājans5: rājānam sarvasya svāminam.6 The term rājan etymologically means ‘to shine’ as is it derived from the root rāj according to Yāska’s Nirukta.7 In other places, it is derived from the root raṇj, i.e. ‘one who pleases or secures the contentment of the people by protecting them.’ Rājan or king is a brilliant person, whose chief function is to please and win the hearts of all sections of people living in his kingdom. Kālidāsa also refers to this meaning of Rājan in his Raghuvamsa in describing the king Raghu, which runs thus:

yathā praśādaṇāccandrah pratāpāttapano yathā /
tathiṣṭa so bhūdanvartho rājā prakṛtirājjanāt //8

That means Raghu was literally Rājā on account of his pleasing disposition towards subjects, as the moon on account of its power to please and the sun on account of its scorching brightness.9 The word rājan is frequently used in the Rgvedasamhitā.10 It is applied to gods like Mitra and Varuṇa11 as the lord of all12 as well as to Varuṇa.13 The term rājan appears to be used in the sense of a king too.14 The word also in several

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4 R.V, 10.174.2
5 na sa jīyate maruto na hanyate na sreḍhaṭi na vyathate na riṣyati /
nāśya rāya upa dasyantī notaya rśiṁ vā yāṁ rājāṁ vā susūdatha // Ibid., 5.54.7
6 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 3.43.5
7 rājā rājateḥ/Nir., 2.3
8 Raghu, 4.12
9 Nandargikar, G.R., The Raghuvamśa of Kālidāsa, pp. 95,96
10 R.V., 1.40.8, 1.108.7
11 ā rājāṇā mahā rāṣṭa gopā sindhuparī ksatriya yātamarvāṅk / ilāṁ no mitrāvaruṇo vrṣṭimāma diva īnvatāṁ jīrādānā // Ibid., 7.64.2
12 . rājāṇā sarvasya svāminau .. mitrāvaruṇau…/ Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
13 yamahvadgḥbhiḥāḥ so asmānṛṣa varuṇo mumaktu // Ibid., 1.24.12
Also vide, Ibid., 1.24.13, 10.173.5
14 kṛṣṇva pājāḥ prasitiṁ na prthivīṁ yāḥi rajevānava āhena /
tṛṣṭimānu prasitiṁ drūṇāno stāsi viḍhyā raḵṣasastapiṣṭhaḥ // Ibid., 4.4.1
Also vide, Ibid., 1.65.7, 3.43.5, 9.7.5, 10.174.4
verses\(^{15}\) means nobles of the ruling house or perhaps even merely a noble. Zimmer sees traces in the Rgvedic verse 10.97.6 which states that in times of peace there was no king in some states, the members of the royal family holding equal rights.\(^ {16}\) The verse perhaps may suggest the presence of more than one *rajan* in a tribe. The term *rajan*ya occurs only once in the *Rgveda\(^ {17}\)*, which was applied to designate the Ksatriya caste and meant nobles belonging to the royal clan. According to Macdonell and Keith, the term may have applied to all the nobles irrespective of kingly power.\(^ {18}\) The Ksatriyas were also called Rājans. In the *Rgvedasāmhitā*, the term *ksatriya* means both persons having power\(^ {19}\) and the Ksatriya class.\(^ {20}\) In a Rgvedic verse, the term *rājakā* is used which is interpreted by Śāyaṇācārya as - *alpā y'énye rājakā it rājāna eva...sarasvatyāstīre vartante* \(^ {21}\), i.e. the kinglings residing on the bank of Sarasvatī, are here referred to as *rājakā*.

Besides the term *rājan*, the rulers or chiefs of the Rgvedic society according to power and prestige were variously designated as *Samrāt*, *Adhirājā*, *Ekarājā*, *Svarājā* etc. To indicate a superior ruler, sovereign and expressing a greater degree of power than a king or *Rājan*, the term *samraj* is used.\(^ {22}\) Gods like Varuṇa\(^ {23}\), Vaiśvānara Agni\(^ {24}\) and Indra\(^ {25}\) are also called *Samrāt*. In one of the Rgvedic verses, the word *sāmrāfyā* occurs in relation to Varuṇa.\(^ {26}\)

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\(^{15}\) ..rājabhiḥ dhanānāmīśvaraḥ/ labhemahīti śeṣah/ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.42.10

Also vide, Ibid., 10.97.6

\(^{16}\) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*, vol.2, p. 216

\(^{17}\) brahmano 'syamukhamāt dvārakāḥ rājanyah kṛṣteḥ../ R.V., 10.90.12

\(^{18}\) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 2, p. 216

\(^{19}\) ksatriyāḥ ksatriyau balavantaḥ ksatrāṁ balam .../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.25.8

Also vide, Ibid., 4.17.1

\(^{20}\) Ibid, 4.12.3, 4.42.1, 7.64.2

ksatriyasya...ksatrāṁ balam / yadvā / ksatriyajātīasya.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 5.69.1

Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.21.18

\(^{21}\) dvimātā hotā vidatheṣu samrājanvargarī carati kṣetī budhṇaḥ../ Ibid., 3.55.7

samrāt sakalalokānām adhīpatiriva .../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.21.2

Also vide, Ibid., 3.56.5, 6.27.8, 8.19.32

\(^{22}\) abhi samrājo varuṇo grhaṇtyabhi mitrāso aryamā sajaṣṭāḥ // Ibid., 7.38.4

Also vide, Ibid., 6.68.9

\(^{23}\) Ibid., 6.7

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 8.16.1

\(^{25}\) ni śaśāda dhrīravro varuṇaḥ pastyāśvā / sāmrāfya sukṛataḥ/Ibid., 1.25.10
The term *adhirājā* or *adhirāj* in the Rgvedic verse\(^{27}\) signifies an emperor, which is interpreted by Śāyanācārya.\(^{28}\) According to Macdonell and Keith, the word indicates no more than king as opposed to prince.\(^{29}\) The word is also mentioned in the later literature.\(^{30}\)

The term *abhīrāstra* is used to indicate the lord of a *rājya*, who is the slayer of rivals or having no rivals as interpreted by Śāyanācārya: *sapatnahā sapatnānām śatrūnām hantā ata eva asapatnāḥ śatrurahito ‘hamabhūvam / abhīrāstraḥ abhigatarāstraḥ prāptarājyāh...*\(^{31}\) In the present context, the term *vīrāja* is used to denote a 'Sovran' of the people.\(^{32}\)

The epithet *ekarāj* or *ekarāt* metaphorically used in the Rgvedasamhita\(^{33}\) means sole ruler or monarch. Here Indra is said to be the sole ruler of the world.\(^{34}\)

The term *daśarājñā* is used to denote the ten kings in the Rgvedic verses,\(^{35}\) who were the enemies of Sudās.\(^{36}\) It is clearly stated that the confederacy of the ten kings could not vanquish king Sudās and in the battle of ten kings god Indra and Varuṇa helped Sudās.

The term *svarājā* is used in one of the Rgvedic verses.\(^{37}\) Griffith gives meaning of the word as the great king who is self-radiant.\(^{38}\) Similarly, the term *patih rājā* in this Veda\(^{39}\) means king, lord of all and the word *nrpati* used in praise of Indra indicates lord of men.\(^{40}\)

The terms mentioned above shows that the ideal of emperorship was greatly cherished by the Rgvedic Āryans and the king possessed large kingdom and had superiority over other kings. The terms *samrāj, ekarāj, adhirāj*, etc., as mentioned earlier, reveals the concept of territory as an element of state in the Rgvedic period. It can be said that the king

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27 Ibid., 10.128 9
28 adhirājam sarvēṣamadhitvaram.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
29 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 20
30 indro jayati na parā jayati.../ Śāyaṇa, A.V., 6.98.1
31 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 10.174.5
32 vīrājanī yathēśvāro bhavāni.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.174.5
Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., The Hymns of the Rgveda, on 10.174.5, p. 648
33 ekarāt eka eva rājā san rājasi bhārājese / Śāyaṇa on R.V., 8.37.3
34 Ibid., 8.37.3
35 Ibid., 7.83.7,8
36 daśasamkhyaḥ rājānaḥ.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.83.7
37 svarājaḥ svayameva rājamānasya īśvarasya.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.28.1
38 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 2.28.1, p. 148
39 patih pālayitā svāmī... rājā svatejasā dipyamānasāci / Śāyaṇa on R.V., 8.95.3
40 nrpatenrnam... pālayitarindra.../ Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.102.8
or the state belonged to the Kṣatriyas in the age of the Rgvedasamhitā. Such king’s domain was linked with a definite territory. There were janapada or sāmrājya and rastra ruled by the king. A territory without any inhabitants cannot become a rāja or a janapada. Several janas formed a country which is called rastra. In the Rgvedic verses there are references to very large dominion extended on both sides or in both the spheres. In the present context, the passage viśve amṛtā yathā naḥ refers to the king’s dominion over Svarga.

Moreover, in a Rgvedic verse, the seer prays to Varuṇa to be the protector of his rāstra. He is praised as the Lord of rāstras, i.e. rājā rāstrānāṁ... In another verse, Varuṇa is called the lord of kingdoms or king of kings. The Vāk Śūkta mentions the term rāstrī. But Śaṅkara makes it mean the ‘Queen’, e.g. aham rāstrī/īśvarānāmātait / sarvasya jagata īśvari.

**Concept of Divinity in Kingship.**

The office of the kingship was glorified during the Rgvedic age. At that period, kingship was given much importance and very often, gods are compared with a king, e.g. Varuṇa is called a king. Bharadvāja compares the king with Agni. In a Rgvedic verse it is said that Agni protects his worshippers, as a king favours an noble man. Agni proceeds like a king attended by his followers on his elephant. Similarly, god Indra is called a

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41 Ibid., 4.42.1
42 Ibid.
43 sāmrājya / samrājo bhāvaḥ sāmrājyaṃ / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.25.10
Also vide, Ibid., 10.173.5
44 rāstrānāṁ rāstrānāṁ / īśvarānāmapi varuṇaḥ rājā īśvaraḥ bhavati / Sayana, Ibid., 7.34.11
rāstrām rājayam... / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.109.3
Also vide, Ibid., 10.174.1
45 AŚ, 13.4
46 R.V., 7.84.2
47 kṣītisvargabhēdēna dvītvāpannam rāṣṭram / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.42.1
48 Vide, Wilson, H.H., Rgveda Samhitā, vol. 3, on 4.42.1, p. 289
49 nirmāyā u tye asurā abhūvan taṁ ca mā varuṇa kāma-yāse / tītena rājannāntam viviśīta mama rāṣṭrasvāyādhipatyamehi // R.V., 10.124.5
50 Ibid., 7.34.11
51 rāstrānāṁ rāstrānāṁ / īśvarānāmapi varuṇaḥrājā īśvaraḥ bhavati / Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.34.11
Vide, Griffith, R T.H., op.cit., on 7.34.11, p. 352
52 R.V., 10.125.3
53 Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
54 abudhne rāja varuṇaḥ vanasyordhvaṃ stūpaṁ dadate pūtadakṣaḥ / Ibid., 1.24.7
Also vide, Ibid., 1.24.8,13, 7.34.11
55 Ibid., 6.4.4
56 Ibid., l 67.1
57 Ibid., 4.4.1
58 he agne...vistāraya /...rājēva / yathā amavān / rājā saha vartate ityamaḥ amātyaḥ/ tadvān /...rājā ibhena gajena yuktaḥ san parabalam pratigacchi tatvat / Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
king.\textsuperscript{59} Indra is said to sit like a king upon the sacred grass and drink the Soma.\textsuperscript{60} The Åśvins, like two ancient monarchs old or great by sovereignty, are glorified at dawn by the song of the bard or herald, who awakens a great man at dawn. They also come to the libations of the yajamāna like two sons of king, i.e.

\begin{quote}
prātarjarethe jaraṇeva kāpayā vastorvastoryajatā gacchatho grham /
kasya dhvārā bhavataḥ kasya vā nara rājaputreva savanāva gacchathah!\textsuperscript{61}
\end{quote}

In the present context, the term jaraṇa means “two kings, old or great by sovereignty”\textsuperscript{62} as pointed out in the commentary of Sāyaṇācārya, thus: jaraṇeva / yathā jaraṇau aisvaryaṇa brddhau rājānau \textsuperscript{63} The Maruts are said to have awful aspect, like kings.\textsuperscript{64} Even king Trasadasyu has been described as Semi-Divine Being or Ardhađevas.\textsuperscript{65} In a Rgvedic hymn, there are germs of the divine right of kings. Here the king claimed to be identical with the mightiest gods of the Vedic pantheon:

\begin{quote}
mama dvītā rāṣtram kṣatriyasya viśvāyorviśve amṛtā yathā nah /
kratum sacante varunasya devā rājāmi krṣterupamasva vavreih \textsuperscript{66}
\end{quote}

In another verse, king Trasadasyu claimed to be identical with Varuṇa and Indra:

ahamindro varunaste mahitvorvi gabhire rajakī sumeke / tvasteva viśvā bhuvanāni 
vidvānsamairayam rodasī dhārayam ca \textsuperscript{67} He is the slayer of foeman like Indra who killed Vṛtra and is called ardhađevas,\textsuperscript{68} i.e. demi-god\textsuperscript{69} or dwelling near the gods.\textsuperscript{70} Thus, the kings were compared with the gods and sometimes even designated as demigods.

**Majesty of the Kings in the Rgvedic period**

The Rgveda lays down that the king used to live in a grand palace and wore a magnificent dress. From the description of king’s palace,\textsuperscript{71} it can be said that the kings

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 6.36.4, 7.273, 8.53.3
\item \textsuperscript{60} rājeva dasmā ni ṣado’dhi barhiṣyaśmintsu some’vapāṇamastu te / Ibid., 10.43.2
\item \textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 10.40.3
\item \textsuperscript{62} Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.40.3, p. 135
\item \textsuperscript{63} Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.40.3
\item \textsuperscript{64} rājānaiva tveṣasamāṛdāro narah / Ibid., 1.85.8
\item \textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 4.42.8,9
\item \textsuperscript{66} Ibid., 4.42.1
\item Also vide, Ibid., 4.42.3,4
\item \textsuperscript{67} Ibid., 4.42.3
\item \textsuperscript{68} ardhađevasi devānāmardhe samīpe vartamānam / yadvā devānāmardhabhūtam indrāṁ na
indramiva sthitam putram dattavantaḥ / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.42.8
\item \textsuperscript{69} Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., 4.42.8, p. 229
\item \textsuperscript{70} Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 3, on 4.42.8, p. 291
\item \textsuperscript{71} rājāṇavahṣbhidruhā dhruve sadasyuttame / sahasrasṛsthāṇa āśāte // R.V., 2.41.5
\item Also vide, Ibid., 7.88.5
\end{itemize}
lived in a big palace well fortified and adorned with many doors and pillars and is firmly based. Mitra and Varuna are represented as occupying a thousand pillared palace, which was and firmly based: \textit{dhruve sthire \ldots sahasrasthune sadasi sthane asate...} Varuna is mentioned as living in a lofty house with thousand doors as interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya-
\textit{saahasradvāram bahudvāram /} Elsewhere, Varuna is described as sitting in his house arrayed in golden mail, among the people to govern all and surrounded by his spies or messengers. Here the sovereignty of Varuna is distinctly specified who exercised supreme dominion over all. The picture of the splendour of a king during the Rgvedic age is also reflected here. The king attended the court or appeared before the public, well dressed and decked with ornaments. His spectators were also afraid of his looks. Sometimes even he mounted the royal elephant with his ministers, or a royal officer for some occasions. Though the king lived in a palace and had all luxuries at his command, he was advised to be liberal to others. There are references to liberality of different kings and princes to the seers or priests. The kings freely offered cattle, chariots, lumps of gold, female slaves etc. to the seers. A king named Kaśu, who is called Caidya or son of Cedi, is mentioned as giving ten kings, as bright as gold to a seer. Moreover, mention may be made of liberality of Citra, who gave thousand and ten thousand gifts to other small chiefs who lived beside Sarasvati. The Dānastutis indicate king’s prosperity or richness those who possessed slaves, cattle wealth, chariots and ornaments.

\textbf{Formation of Government}

During the Rgvedic period, monarchy was the prevailing system of government. The king usually succeeded to the throne by virtue of his hereditary right. If there was a son

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{72} Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.41.5
\item \textsuperscript{73} Also vide, Ibid., 5.62.6
\item \textsuperscript{74} Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.88.5
\item \textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 1.25.10,13
\item \textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 1.25.10
\item \textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 8.5 38
\item \textsuperscript{78} Also vide, Ibid., 10.78.1
\item \textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 1.85.8
\item \textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 4.50.8
\item \textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 5.30.12
\item \textsuperscript{82} Ibid., 6.47.23
\item \textsuperscript{83} Ibid., 8.46.33
\item \textsuperscript{84} Ibid., 8.5.38
\end{itemize}
worthy of assuming the reigns of administration as in the case of Divodāsa, Sudās, Trasadasyu etc., the kingship was hereditary. The kingship was known to have passed from father to the son. Zimmer also states that the kings Vadhryaśva, Divodāsa, Pijavana, Sudās, or Purukutsa, Trasadasyu, Mitrātithi, Kuruśravaṇa, Upamaśravas, etc., indicate the hereditary monarchy during the Vedic period. The king was normally a member of the Kṣatriya caste. Rulers were expected to possess great qualities. The actions of the kings should conform the norms of right conduct. They should be endowed with strength, self-control, uprightness, firmness, liberality etc. So, in the absence of a befitting successor in the king’s family, the people or their representatives assembled in a Sabha or Samiti and chose their king. The king was elected for his personal qualifications. Such choice of the king is indicated in the Rgvedic passages viśo na rājānam vrñāṇāḥ etc. According to Griffith, it means the election of a king by the people. Sāyaṇācārya has interpreted the relevant passage thus: viśah praṇā yathā rājānam svāminam sambhajantel..vrñāṇāḥ sambhajamāṇāḥ bhavatvah bhayena kampanānāḥ... P.V. Kane states that the only words that may lend some colour to the theory of election are ‘let all the people desire thee (as King) in Rg 10.173.1, but those words may apply as a benediction even in the case of one who is already a King.’ During the Rgvedic period, a king was coronated by a formal ceremony. Besides the king and priests, the nobles and other people also participated in the ceremony. No king was appointed without the knowledge of the Purohita, who was said to be the real king-maker, i.e. rājakrt. It is noticed that at the time of the installation of a king, some mantras were uttered by the officiating priest. At the time of his coronation ceremony the king had to undertake an oath of working in the interest of the people and thereby he subdued all his rivals. In a Rgvedic verse, it is seen that the abhīvarta

85 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B.; op.cit., vol. 2, p. 211
86 R.V., 4.42.1, 10.109.3
87 Ibid., 10.173.1
88 Ibid., 4.50.8
89 Ibid., 10.124.8
90 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.124.8, p. 631
91 Sāyaṇā on R.V., 10.124.8
92 Kane, P.V., History of Dharmasāstra, vol. 3, p. 29
93 A.V., 4.223.5, 8.7.6
94 R.V., 10.173, 10.174
95 Ibid., 10.174.2
96 abhīvartena haviṣā yenendro abhīvāvṛte / tenāsmān brahmaṇaspate ‘bhi rāstrāya varṣaya // Ibid., 10.174.1
oblation had been offered to secure success in fight and to make all beings, both Gods and men friendly towards the king. Here the king prayed that he might overcome his rivals, i.e. *sapatnah* and obtain the sovereignty.97 The seer prays to the divine rulers like Indra, Varuṇa, Brhaspati and Agni for the success of the king.98 The stability of the king on the throne was dependent on the goodwill of his subjects.99 So, the immovable position of the king is prayed in a Rgvedic verse.100 King’s power was not absolute. The duration of the sovereignty of the elected chief depended rather on his good conduct than on any military power. If the king is proved unjust and tyrannical, the people could withhold him and of their own accord freely chose the worthiest man in a group.

**Duties of the King**

The king exercised vast powers and occupied an important position in the Rgvedic society. The king was expected to perform enormous duties in keeping with the ideals of kingship and he was expected to look after the material as well as spiritual development of the people and to protect them. He had highest executive power and authority and had some role in legislature too. He was also responsible for the administration of justice.

The hymns to Varuṇa clearly mention the king’s duties towards their people.101 Moreover, the hymns to Indra also give clear indication about the king’s duties to extend their territory by winning a battle, defeating the enemies etc.102 The most sacred and most honourable duty of the kings was the protection of the life and property of his subjects against the enemies.103 From the Rgvedic account, it is clear that for protection a king was greatly in need in the society.104 He is said to be the slayer of rivals and Sovran of the folk, i.e. *jana*.105 So, he was called *gopā janasya*, i.e. guardian of the people. The term *janasya gopatim* is also applied to Soma107 which means the Guardian of the folk.108 Agni

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97 asapatnah sapatmahābhīrāṣṭro viśāsahih / yathāhamesāṁ bhūtānāṁ virājāṁ ānasya ca // Ibid., 10.174.5
98 Ibid., 10.173.5
99 Ibid., 10.173.1,2,4
100 Ibid., 10.173.1
101 Ibid., 7.87.7.89
102 Ibid., 7.83.9, 10.153.3,5
103 Cf., rāṣṭramu dhāraya / Ibid., 10.173.2
104 Ibid., 8.33.16
105 Ibid., 10.174.5
106 Ibid., 3.43.5
107 somani janasya gopatim / Ibid., 9.35.5
108 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 9.35.5, p. 483
is benevolent to jana, i.e. men, as stated in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary of a Rgvedic verse-janyāḥ janahitaḥ so ‘gnih janamjanam sarvam janam... /109 Savitṛ is called jāspati110, i.e. the Lord of life as interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya – jāspatih praṇām pālakah savitā devah... /111 It is stated that Indra delights only in protecting and preserving.112 The king had to exercise the supreme command in war. It is seen that king Sudās had to conduct the great-war called Daśarājña with the confederate host.113 A verse describes a king that goes to battle which indicates his military command, e.g. rājeva yuddhvā nayasi tvamitsicau yadāsāmagram parvataminakṣasi /114 The king boastfully claims himself to be the slayer of rivals, victorious and his leadership over the tribe.115 Indra is called victorious with the men, and hero in battle, i.e. indrah śūrah vikrāntah san nrbiḥ samgrāmanetbhirmarudbhii sahitah san prtsu samgrāmesu jetā jayaśīlah śatrūnām... /116 He is the protector of the people who helped to subdue the enemies.117 From a Rgvedic verse, it appears that a warrior who caste away his life in battle acquires the same reward like those who make gifts of a thousand cows in sacrifices.118

The king is said to be the upholder of law and order in the society for which the subjects wished for the king119, and also the firmness of the kingship.120 Law in the modern sense of the term was included in dharma, which denotes all moral principles governing social, religious and political life of the Āryans. Dharma or law was regarded as the real sovereign and the king as the executive to uphold and enforce that law. In the Rgvedasamhitā, the word used for law or custom is dharma121, which is equated to the conception of rta. Rta in the Rgveda denotes the supreme transcendental law or the cosmic order by which the whole universe and the gods are governed.122 Many of the

109 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.91 2
110 Ibid., 7.38.6
111 Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
112 kintu raksiṇa eva ramata ityarthāḥ / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.33.16
113 Ibid., 7.33.3, 5, 7.83.8
114 Ibid., 10.75.4
115 Ibid., 10 174 5
116 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.178 3
117 Ibid., 1.178.5
118 Ibid., 10.154.3
119 viśastvā sarvā vānāchantu mā tvadrāṣtramadhi bhraṣat / Ibid., 10.173.1
120 Ibid., 10.173.4
121 Ibid., 3.17.1, 7.89.5, 8.98.1, 10.56.3
122 Ibid., 1.68.2, 1.105.12, 1 136 2
gods of the Vedic pantheon, viz. Mitra and Varuṇa\textsuperscript{123}, Aditi and Bhaga\textsuperscript{124}, Agni\textsuperscript{125}, Soma\textsuperscript{126} etc., are described as the guardians, promoters and charioteers of \textit{ṛta}. Varuṇa maintained high moral level by punishing sinners, by looking into the truth and falsehood of men. For that reason, he is known as \textit{dhṛtavrata}\textsuperscript{127}, i.e. true to holy law. Mitra and Varuṇa are described as observers of the laws of religious worship who also accept the same offering.\textsuperscript{128} Elsewhere, Mitra and Varuṇa are designated as \textit{dhṛtavrata},\textsuperscript{129} i.e. whose ways are firm.\textsuperscript{130} The term \textit{dhṛtavrata} is applied to other gods like Indra and Varuṇa\textsuperscript{131}, the Ādityas\textsuperscript{132}, Agni\textsuperscript{133}, Savitṛ\textsuperscript{134} and the like. The term \textit{vratapā} occurs in case of Sūrya as the guardian of law.\textsuperscript{135} From the Rgvedic references, it is clear that the king and a learned Brāhmaṇa were both \textit{dhṛtavrata}.\textsuperscript{136} Agni is called \textit{adhyākṣaḥ dharmāṇāṃ},\textsuperscript{137} i.e. president of holy Laws\textsuperscript{138} or the superintendent of holy acts.\textsuperscript{139} The seers of the Rgvedic age were conscious of sin or guilt and pray to the gods like Varuṇa\textsuperscript{140} and the Ādityas\textsuperscript{141} for forgiveness. To administer justice and to punish those who are guilty were the prime functions of the king in a State. The king was the fountainhead of justice both of civil and criminal cases. A wide criminal jurisdiction is indicated by the frequent mention of Varuṇa's spies.\textsuperscript{142} In a Rgvedic verse it is stated - \textit{spaśo varunasya},\textsuperscript{143} i.e. Varuṇa’s spies.\textsuperscript{144} In the present context, Śaivaṇācārya interprets the term as – \textit{spaśanti sprśantītī spaśaścarā / varunasya devasya spaśaḥ}
To run the political system systematically, the king engaged the dūtas or spies to gather secret information related to his friend and foes.\(^{145}\) Spies were specially employed to watch the conduct of men, e.g. ādityā ava hi khyatādhi kūlādiva spāṣā!\(^{146}\) In the present context, the word spāṣā is interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya as spāṣāḥ spāṣṭāh, i.e. visible. According to Wilson, the term spāṣā is derived from the lost root spāṣ, ‘to see’, preserved in common Sanskrit in the words spāṣa, ‘to spy’, and spāṣta.\(^{147}\) Sāyaṇācārya in his commentary of the relevant verse explains kūle spāṣāḥ spāṣṭāḥ/ sthītā ityarthāḥ/ yathā kulaśṭhāḥ puruṣo ’dhogatamudakakam jījñāsustaratrastham manusyaṃ vā vilokayitumavākpaśyati tadvat\(^{148}\) which means ‘as a man standing on the shore looks down on the water below or on some one in it’. So, the term spāṣā may indicate the existence of spies in the Rgvedic society. The spies are like the Ādityas of whom it is stated that they are many eyed who see what is good and evil.\(^{149}\)

The criminal jurisdiction of the king is perhaps indicated by the term jīvagrībhā,\(^{150}\) i.e. the seizer of life. According to Roth in the present context, the term is used for a police official.\(^{151}\) But Sāyaṇācārya interprets the term as jīvagrībhō yathāḥ jīvanām śakunyādīnām grāhakādvādhyādhyāthā jīvā naśyanti tadvat / yadvā / jīvagrībhō mṛtyoḥ sakāsdījīvo pahi-rāyate tadvat.\(^{152}\) Thus, according to Sāyaṇācārya, jīvagrībhā or the seizer of life means as (lives are destroyed) from the seizing of lives, i.e. from the hunting of birds, etc.\(^{153}\) The king had the authority of giving punishments of all kinds. Trial by ordeal was very common. In the Rgvedic verse, Dīrghatamas, the son of Ucatha, prays to the Āswins that the fire may not consume or bum him and the rivers wherein the Dāsas cast him may not engulf him.\(^{154}\) According to Griffith, it is the reference to Dīrghatama’s, having been subjected to the fire and water ordeals.\(^{155}\) In this context, P.V. Kane remarks

\(^{145}\) R.V., 10.14.12  
\(^{146}\) Ibid., 8.47.11  
\(^{147}\) Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 5, on 8.47.11, p. 231  
\(^{148}\) Sāyaṇa on R V., 8.47 11  
\(^{149}\) te ādityāsāh... bhūryaśaḥ bhuṛaṇi bahūni aksuṇi ca ākṣuṇi yesāni te tathoktaḥ.../  
\(^{150}\) évembhūta ādityāḥ antaḥ madhye prājnām hṛdi prarakatayā vartamānah santaḥ...  
\(^{151}\) pāptānī uta api ca sādhu sādhūni punyāni ca prāṇibhiḥ kṛtāni paśyanti jñānti /  
\(^{152}\) Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 2.27.3  
\(^{153}\) Ibid., 10.97.11  
\(^{154}\) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 288  
\(^{155}\) Sāyaṇa on R.V., 10.97.11  
\(^{156}\) Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol, 6, on 10.97.11, p. 346  
\(^{157}\) R.V., 1.158.4,5  
\(^{158}\) Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.158.4, p. 105
that in those verses there is probably no reference to ordeals, but to the cruel treatment of Dīrghatamas by dāsas... Moreover, in another verse of the Rgveda it is said—'As the tree is cut down by the axe so may the enemy be cut down' which is held by Geldner, as an ordeal with a glowing axe. But according to P.V. Kane, it does not contain a clear or certain reference to the ordeal of holding the heated axe. In the Rgvedic verses, there are frequent reference to thieves variously known as taskara and tāya. A Rgvedic verse refers to Saramā, the bitch who is asked to run after or bark at the stena and the taskara. As interpreted by Śaṭānācārya, stena is probably a thief who secretly carries away property and taskara means a robber who carries it away openly, i.e. stenam/ pracchannadhanāpahārī stenah itam taskaram / pratyaṅgadhanāpahārī taskarah...

There seems to be no trace of death penalty for theft.

In the Rgvedic society, system of weregild or vairadeya was in vogue which is proved by the words śatadāya and vairadeya. Vairadeya, which have the technical sense of weregild or punishment is the system under which the money is to be paid for killing a man as a compensation for his relatives. According to Griffith in the present context, vairadeya is only as regards the fine to be paid for manslaughter, either by him or for him... Panis are also mentioned in connection with weregild. From a Rgvedic verse it is clear that man's weregild was a hundred cows which is clear from the epithet śatadāya, i.e. one whose weregild is hundred: rākāmamaham suhavām susūtī huve sṛṇotu nah subhagā bodhata tmanā /śvyavatvapah sūcyācchidyanānayā dadātu viram śatadāyamukhyam // Such fixing of the price indicates the authority of the king over

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156 Vide, Kane, P.V., op.cit., vol. 3, p. 361
157 paraśuṁ cidvi tapati śimbalaṁ cidvi vrścati // ukhā cidindra yeṣantī prayāṣṭi phenalasyati // R.V., 3.53.22
158 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 364
159 Vide, Kane, P.V., op. cit., vol.3, p. 361
160 R.V., 8.29.6, 10.4.6
161 Ibid., 6.28.7
162 Ibid., 1.50.2, 4.38.5, 6.12.5
163 stenam rāya sārameya taskaraṁ va punahsara / Ibid., 7.55.3
164 Śaṭāna, Ibid.
165 śatadāyam bahudhanāṁ bahupradaṁ vā / Śaṭāna, Ibid., 2.32.4
166 vairadeya / virā dhanānam prarayitaro dānālīh / Śaṭāna, Ibid., 5.61.8
167 Ibid., 5.61.8
168 Griffith, R.T H., op.cit, on 5.61.8, p. 271
169 R.V., 5.61.8
170 Vide, Kane, P.V., op.cit., vol. 3, p. 361
the criminals. All civil matters sometimes the criminal matters also were settled by *madhyamaśi* or the king.\textsuperscript{171} Griffith gives meaning of the term as an arbiter.\textsuperscript{172} In civil cases, the king played a less prominent part.

**Sources of Income of the State**

No State can function without stable sources of income necessary to defray the expenses of administration. Taxes, fines, booty in battles were the main sources of income to the State in ancient India. All undertakings of a State depend upon the financial position of the king. The *Rgvedasamhitā* supplies a little information about the revenues of the State. The *Rgveda* lays down certain principles of taxation. The term *kara* appears to mean a tax or tribute in general according to Sāyañācārya’s commentary – *balihṛtah karampradāh cakre* /\textsuperscript{173} The word *sulka* is mentioned in the Ṛgvedic verses\textsuperscript{174}, which clearly means ‘price’: *śulkāya mulyāya*...\textsuperscript{175} There are two types of taxes, viz. voluntary and involuntary that existed during the Ṛgvedic period. The king receives a kind of tax as loyal obedience from the people. In time of war also, he used to get a large share. The term *balihṛt* as interpreted by Sāyañācārya as *balihṛtah karasyapraddhr̥tih...*\textsuperscript{176} means paying or bringing tribute or tax to the king and also shows that the king periodically received gifts from his subjects. The *bali* was also made to gods for securing their favour.\textsuperscript{177} In this context, the term *bali* means oblation as interpreted by Sāyañācārya – *bālim pūjāṃ havirlakṣaṇām...*\textsuperscript{178} It is stated that the subjects willingly pay homage to the king who revered the Brāhmaṇa.\textsuperscript{179} Such types of contributions were voluntary. Even Indra is invoked to compel the subjects to pay their taxes to the king:

\[
dhruvam dhruneṣa haviśābhi somam mṛṣāmasi / \]
\[
atho ta indraḥ kevalirviśo balihṛtaskarat //\textsuperscript{180}
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\textsuperscript{171} *madhyamaśi* *madhyamasthāne vartamāno rājā... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.97.12
\textsuperscript{172} Griffith, R.T.H., *op.cit.*, on 10.97.12, p. 611
\textsuperscript{173} Sāyaṇa on R.V., 7.6.5
\textsuperscript{174} *mahe śulkāya varuṇasya nu tvīṣa ojo mināte dhruvamasya yatsvam / Ibid., 7.82.6
\textsuperscript{175} Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 8.1.5
\textsuperscript{176} Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.173.6
\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 5.1.10
\textsuperscript{178} Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
\textsuperscript{179} sa rūṣeṣi sūdhīta okasi sve tasmā iḻā pinvate viśvadānīm /
\hspace{1cm} tasmā viśaḥ svayamevā namante yasminbrahmā rājani pūrva eti // Ibid., 4.50.8
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 10.173.6
The people contributed a definite portion of their produce to the king. Sometimes the king supports his state by levying contributions from the wealthy.\(^{181}\) So, the king used to possess a huge granary and large herds of cattle which were sufficient to maintain the royalty. But it is seen that sometimes the unwilling subjects were forced to make their contribution which is proved by the situation happened in case of the subjects of king Nahuṣa.\(^{182}\) By subduing the tribes of Nahuṣa, Agni with his conquering strength made them bring their tribute. Such types of forces were probably used in case of hostile tribes.\(^{183}\) It may be the tribute from the tribes which were subjugated. In this context, mention may be made of the instance of the battle of ten kings, in which the Ajas, the Śigrus and the Yakṣus brought in to Indra the heads of the horses which had been killed in battle as tribute.\(^{184}\)

The income of the State was spent mainly on State administration, maintenance of the army and for royal establishment. A certain amount of income of the State was spent on charitable endowments too. For instance, it is laid down by the *Rgvedasamhitā* that the king who renders financial assistance to the Brāhmaṇa becomes the master of riches of his own subjects and of the enemies or the hostile people.\(^{185}\) As the Aryan society was not free from the distinction between the rich and the poor, liberality on the part of the wealthy is recommended.\(^{186}\) It is said that to the donor belongs a dwelling, adorned like a lake full of lotus flowers, delightful as a dwelling of the gods.\(^{187}\)

**Officials of the King**

During the Rgvedic period, political responsibilities rested upon several official bodies, which had great influence on the machinery of the government. With their help, the king carried on administration, who assisted the king in the smooth functioning of the administration. In a political system, one of the important elements is *amāṭya* or the minister,
who is known as *amavān* etc., in the *Rgvedasamhitā*. Śāyanaścārya interprets the term *amavān* as — *amavān / rājā saha vartate ityamaḥ amātyaḥ / tadvān* Yāśka in his *Nirukta* also etymologises the term *amavān* as *amātyavān*. Among the royal officials, the *Purohita*, the *Grāmaṇi* and the *Senāṇi* held important positions in the organs of the administration. In addition to such officials, the king had certain other officials, viz. *Vrājapati*, *Kulapati* or *Kulāpā*, *Viśpati*, *Pūrpati*, *Kṣattr*, *Dīta* etc. A detailed discussion of such officials is given below —

**Purohita**

From the very early times, the *purohita* or the royal priest is an important personage of the king in matters of administration. In the Rāgvedic society, the priests became an indispensable factor who had great influence over all the leaders from the Grāmaṇi to the King. According to Macdonell and Keith, the primary function of the Purohita was that of ‘domestic priest’ of a king. The office or task performed by the *Purohita* is called *Purohiti*, i.e. *purohitih puraskriyā pājā stutilaksanā...* His office seems hereditary. There are frequent occurrence of the Purohitas, viz. Viśvāmitra, the family priest of King Sudās and Devāpi, of Šantani, who had great influence over their kings. A *sūkta* of the tenth *manḍala* is remarkable as representing one of two brothers, both of the Kṣatriya caste, becoming the *Purohita*, or family priest, and Hotr or sacrificing priest, of the other who is the Rājā. According to Oldenberg, Purohita was originally the Hotr priest. Devāpi seems clearly to have been a Hotr. Agni is both *Purohita* and Hotr priest. In the *Āprī* hymns also, the two divine Hotrs are called two Purohitas. Such Purohitas

188 Ibid., 4.4.1
189 Śāyana, Ibid.
190 rājeva / amātyavān / abhyamanavān / Nir., 6.12
191 R.V., 1.1.1, 1.44, 10.12, 2.24.9, 3.2.8, 6.70.4
Also vide, A.V., 8.5.5
193 Śāyana on R.V., 7.60.12
Also vide, Ibid., 7.83.4
194 Ibid., 3.33
195 Ibid., 10 98
196 Ibid.
197 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol 6, on 10.98, p. 349
199 R.V., 10.98.5, 7
200 Ibid., 1.1.1, 3.2.1, 3.3.2, 3.5.11, 8.27.1, 10.1.6
201 dāivyā hotārā prarthamā purohita ṛtasya panthāmanvemi sādhyāḥ.../ Ibid., 10.66.13
Also vide, Ibid., 10 70.7
acted as the spiritual preceptor, guide and philosopher of the king. He offered spiritual help by his rituals and sacrifices. *Purohita* is said to be the religious instructor of the king who takes part not only in sacrifices and other religious practices but also in political activities and wars. The Purohitas accompanied the king in battle and prepared them to fight. He accompanied the king to the battlefield in order to ensure his safety and victory. For example, a Rgvedic hymn can be mentioned where there is a story of Viśvāmitra and Vasiṣṭha in relation to the king Sudās, in the battle of ten kings. Here it is mentioned that the success of Sudās was possible only for the help of his *purohita* Viśvāmitra. Viśvāmitra protected the Bharata clan by his spiritual power and prayers offered to Indra. Indra also through the devotion of Vasiṣṭha helped the Trṣus in their extension. In the Rgvedic verses, it is seen that a king, who honoured his chaplain properly, could secure an easy mastery over his subjects and a smashing defeat over his rivals. Here it is stated that the king who liberally cherishes Brhaspati and honours him as the first sharer (of the offering), overcomes by his strength and prowess all hostile people. Brhaspati is regarded here as the deity and *purohita*: *brhaspatim brhatam mahatam palyitaram devamuktalaksanam purohitam vā* Elsewhere, it is stated that the king places the Brāhmaṇa or Brhaspati first with due respect, i.e. *rajani brahma puvrah prathamam pujyah san eti gacchati* Such Purohitas expected gifts from the kings and nobles. The kings also appreciated the works performed by such seers and voluntarily gave them gifts for their service. In the later Rgvedic period, the Brāhmaṇa *Purohita* was given a prominent position in the list of ratnins during the *ratnahavînśīyāga* in the Rājasūya sacrifice.

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202 Ibid., 1.129.4, 1.152.7, 1.157.2, 3.53.13, 6.75.17, 7.83.4, 10.38
203 ibid., 7.18.13
204 ibid., 7.33
205 ya ṣm rodasī ubhe ahamindramatusavam / viśvāmitrasya raksati brahmaṇam bhārataṇjanam // Ibid., 3.53.12
206 Ibid., 7.33.3
207 Ibid., 4.50.7, 8, 9
208 Ibid., 4.50.7
209 Also vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 3, on 4.50.7, p. 304
210 Sayana on R.V, 4.50.7
211 Ibid., 10.107
212 S.B., 5.3.1.2
In the Rgvedasamhitā, there is a little information about the villages and their administration. In the Sapta-Sindhu region, village or grāma was the pivot of administration which contributed a lot in running the political system at that period. At the dawn of civilization, when the Āryans were in the nomadic stage, they formed themselves into groups and recognized a strong person to be their leader to lead in all internal and external matters, and to maintain peace and order among them. Such person was known as Grāmanī, i.e. the hamlet’s chief, or the leader of the group, on whom the responsibility of political system of grāma rested. Grāmanī was the king’s chief officer to look after the administration of the villages. He was the head of the village both for civil purposes and for military operations. According to Macdonell and Keith, ‘The Grāmanī’s connection with the royal person seems to point to his having been a nominee of the king rather than a popularly elected officer. But the post may have been sometimes hereditary, and sometimes nominated or elective...” In the Rgveda, Manu is designated as Grāmanī, the most liberal and bestower of a thousand cows for which he is known as sahasradā. In a Rgvedic verse, it is mentioned that the Grāmanī, endowed with wealth, walks in front of the village people.

Senā was another important body. According to Macdonell and Keith, Senā denotes a missile. It also indicates a ‘host’ and army. The Sena or the army which was in early times the Nation-in arms was regarded as a body by itself and evidently as a

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213 R.V., 1.114.1
214 sahasradā grāmanīṛmā riṣāṁmānuḥ sūryenāsya yatamānāitu dakṣinā / Ibid., 10.62.11
grāmanīḥ grāmānāṁ netā dhanavatvena teśām kartā .../ Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.107.5
215 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 10.62.11, p. 576
216 dakṣināvān prathamo hūta eti dakṣināvān grāmanīṛagrametī /
tameva manye nrpatim janānāṁ yah prathamo dakṣināmāvivāya // R.V., 10.107.5
217 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 247
218 Vide, Ibid
219 R.V., 10.62.11
220 sahasradā gavādīnāṁ sahasrasasya dātā grāmanīḥ grāmānāṁ netā ... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
dakṣināvān prathamo hūta eti dakṣināvān grāmanīṛagrametī / Ibid., 10.107.5
221 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 2, p. 472
222 R.V., 9.96.1
Also vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 9.96.1, p. 515
223 R.V., 1.33.6, 7.25.1, 10 103.1,4,7, 10.142.4
constitutional unit. In most of the cases, the term *sena* is used to indicate the armies of Indra, Soma, Agni etc. In a battlefield, *sena* or the armies probably rush together for fighting. There is mention of a hundred armies subdued by Indra. Senānī or the commander in charge of military affairs, or the chief officer of the state, assisted the king in times of war. He was said to be the royal general at the head of the army, responsible for its disciple and was appointed by the king to lead expeditions.

**Vṛājapati**

*Vṛājapati* means the chieftain of the tribe. According to Whitney, it means the chieftain surrounded by the leading men, the family heads, not necessarily merely a village headman. The term *vṛājapati* is interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya as – *vṛājapatim / vṛājā gantavyā grhāḥ/ teṣām patim carantam...* In the present context, it is stated that the friends (i.e. the seers) sit around Indra with their offerings as the protectors of a family, i.e. Kulapās (attend upon) the migrating lord of the mansion, i.e. *Vṛājapati.*

**Kulapati or Kulapā**

The smallest unit in the social and political system during the Rgvedic period is *kula,* which is another name of family. Family was the ultimate basis of the Vedic state. Every member of a family or *kula* lives under the guidance of *kulapati or kulapā,* who helps other members to follow the rules relating to polity and family life. It seems that *kulapā* was less powerful than *vṛājapati,* who was inferior to and attendant on the *vṛājapati* in war. The family heads rendered service in war and peace under the service of village headmen or the chieftain.

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225 Vide, Chakraborti, H.P., *Vedic India-Political and Legal Institutions in Vedic Literature,* p.165
226 R.V., 1 33.6
227 Ibid., 9.96.1
228 Ibid., 10.156.2
229 ते महा इन्द्रोयुग्रो समान्यावो यतसमारांतः सेनाः / Ibid., 7.25.1
230 अभिप्रयासाः व्रजसिद्धो नाभिको मनोग्रासांतः / सङ्ग्रामांनेविमये दक्षिणां सतो सेनाः अयायात्साकांमिन्द्रः / Ibid., 10.103.1
231 सेनांस्य सेनापतिः सेनाः / Sāyaṇā, Ibid., 7.20.5
232 सेनांस्य सेनामाग्रा उपानेतस्य सुरः... / Sāyaṇā, Ibid., 9.96.1
233 Also vide, Ibid., 10.84.2
235 Sāyaṇā on R.V., 10.179.2
236 See, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.179.2, p. 508
237 स्रात्तमिः हविरो स्विन्ध्रा प्रायो याज्ञवल्क्यन्यो हविनयाम / pari tvāसते निद्धिखिः सक्षायां कुलपा ना vṛājapatim carantam // R.V., 10.179.2
238 Ibid
Vispati

In the Rgvedasamhitā, the term viś denotes the people, the subjects of the king, as well as the commoner, who lived in a grama or pura.\(^\text{237}\) It means subject when the term viśah stand in relation to a prince.\(^\text{238}\) There is reference to Tṛṇaskanda's folk, i.e. tṛṇaskandasya nu viśah pari vṛkta sudānavaḥ.\(^\text{239}\) Sāyāṇācārya in his commentary of the present context says- tṛṇaskandasya trṇavat calanasvabhāvasya śuṣyamānasasya vā mama viśah putrabhṛtyādirūpāḥ prajāh / Tṛṇaskanda appears to be the name of some chief.\(^\text{240}\) The Rgvedasamhitā also refers to Trtsu’s folk; e.g. trtsūnāṁ viśo aprathayanta /\(^\text{241}\) There are mention of the terms manuśō viśah,\(^\text{242}\) mānuśīḥ viśa\(^\text{243}\) etc., which indicate the general sense of people. Sometimes it denotes the sense of a ‘whole people’ which is clear from the term āryāviś\(^\text{244}\), dāśī viś\(^\text{245}\) and daivinām viṣam or divine people.\(^\text{246}\) According to Rāhul Sāṅkṛtyāyana, viś indicates the general people who in course of time become powerful people\(^\text{247}\), who even had power to elect or dethrone the king.\(^\text{248}\) A. S. Altekar also says that a number of villages joined together by a bond of kingship, seems to have constituted a viś. They were closely knit together, and on the battlefields battalions were often arranged as per viś from which they had been recruited (R.V., 10.84.4).\(^\text{249}\) Agni is called the friend to the tribes of men who dwells in every tribe, i.e. viś as stated in the Sāyāṇācārya’s commentary- viṣyāḥ viḍbhyo hitaḥ so ‘gnih viṣo manusyaḥ a kṣetī abhigacchati / kim ca viṣamviṣam sarvā viṣah prajā adhitisthāti... /\(^\text{250}\) In a verse of the Rgvedasamhitā\(^\text{251}\), viś appears as a subdivision of the

\(^\text{237}\) Ibid., 6.8.4
\(^\text{238}\) Also vide, Ibid., 4.50.8, 10.124.8.
\(^\text{239}\) Ibid., 4.50.8, 6.8.4, 10.124.8, 10.173.6.
\(^\text{240}\) Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.172.3, p. 118
\(^\text{241}\) R.V., 7.33.6
\(^\text{242}\) Rgvedic Arya, p. 135
\(^\text{243}\) Ibid., 10.80.6
\(^\text{244}\) Ibid., 10.11.4
\(^\text{245}\) Ibid., 4.28.4, 6.25.2.
\(^\text{246}\) Ibid., 3.34.2
\(^\text{247}\) Sāṅkṛtyāyana, R., Rgvedic ArYA, p. 135
\(^\text{248}\) Ibid
\(^\text{249}\) Altekar, A.S., State and Government in Ancient India, p. 35
\(^\text{250}\) Sāyāna on R.V., 10.91.2
\(^\text{251}\) Sa ijjanena sa viśā sa janmanā sa putraivājanī bharate dhanā nṛbhīḥ/
devānāṁ yah pitaramāvīvāsatī śraddhāmanāḥ haviṣa brahmaṇaspatim // Ibid., 2.26.3
Jana. From the present context, Zimmer holds that a people, i.e. jana was divided into cantons (vis), cantons into joint families or clans, or village communities (Grāma, Vṛjana), and these again into single families. Among these divisions, according to Macdonell and Keith, the division of the Jana into several Vis may be regarded as probable, for it is supported by the evidence of a passage of the Rgveda, which mentions the Vis as a unit of the fighting men, and thus shows that...relationship was deemed a good principle of military arrangement. A Rgvedic verse as mentioned by Macdonell and Keith refers to Manu, who possessed over-powering strength is asked to grant strength to the visās in battles. Another verse also indicates the separate characters of jana and viś. But in Śāyanācārya’s commentary of a Rgvedic verse, both the terms indicate the meaning—viśām janānāṁ pālako... A village personality as referred to with viś is vrā, i.e. great kinsmen. The main person of viś is vispati. He is referred to as the lord of men, i.e. yesāmajmesu prthivī jujurvā iva vispatiḥ. Śāyanācārya in the present context explains the term as—viśām patirvispatiḥ! The relevant verse refers to vispati’s authority of a king like the Maruts, at whose approach the earth trembles like an enfeebled monarch through dread of his enemies. In another verse, vispati is used in the sense of a king: rkvaṇo agrinindhate hotāram viśpatim viṣām. In the present context, Śāyanācārya interprets the term vispati as—viśām vispatim prajānāmatiṣayena pālayitāram, i.e. the Lord of tribes of men. Elsewhere, the term is interpreted as—viśām rtvigajamānalakṣaṇānāṁ vispatim svāminam... which means the Sage of mankind, all peoples’ Lord and Master. In a Rgvedic verse, Yama was called vispati.

252 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 269
253 R.V., 10.84.4
254 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 269
255 R.V., 10.84.4
256 Ibid., 10.91.2
257 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 7.55.5
258 visāḥ prajāḥ / tatra bhavāḥ viśāḥ / vriyanta iti vrāḥ vrātāḥ / viśāṁ vrātā yathā parasparamanurāgavantaḥ tatha / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.126.5
259 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.126.5, p. 87
260 R.V., 1.37.8
261 Ibid.
262 Ibid., 3.13.5
263 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 3.13.5, p. 168
264 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 6.1.8
265 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.1.8, p. 284
266 R.V., 10.135.1
Pūrpati

Pūrpati according to J. Muir, might have been a ruler or governor or lord of a city or fortified place in the Rgvedic verse.267 He was a regular officer like the grāmanī, ruler of a village, or tribe. In the Rgvedic verse, the term pūrpati is explained as- pūrpatim purah svāminami, i.e. the city’s lord.268 According to Wilson, he was the lord of a city who ruled with good government.270 The Rgvedasamhitā frequently referred to pur occupied by the Āryans as well as Dāsas. According to Wilson, it means ‘city’ and Griffith explains the term as the ‘castles’.272 In the words of Macdonell and Keith, the purs were merely places of refuge against attack, ramparts of hundred earth with palisades and a ditch.274 There are references to iron forts (pūrbhirāyasibhih).275 In the present context, Agni is asked to preserve the worshipper who praises him, from sin, with guards of iron.276 The Rgvedasamhitā mentions that the forts were sometimes seized.277 The passage puro yadagne darayannadideh in the present context means-Agni did lit up and rend the castles.278 Sāyanācārya also explains- pūrave rājīnśośucānāhdīpyamānah purahṣasya śatrūnām purah darayān dārayan adīdeh ajvalah.279 So, it is clear that fires were used in siege operations. It is stated that in the Rgvedic period, when forts were prey to sudden attacks and sometimes regular raids, the need was felt for appointing ‘pūrpati’ as the custodian of the defence of the fort, who was the commander of a permanent garrison.280 After quoting the references to forts in the Vedic literature, H.P. Chakravorti remarks that the Āryans were no less interested in them and as an administrative measure the ‘pūrpati’ was appointed as a governor in charge of the defence of a fort.281

267 Muir, J., Original Sanskrit Texts, vol.5, part.5, p. 456 Also vide, R.V., 1.173.10
268 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 1.173.10
269 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.173.10, p. 119
270 Vide, Ibid.
271 R.V., 1.53.7, 1.58.8, 1.166.8, 2.20.8, 3.15.4, 4.27.1, 4.30.20
272 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol.1, on 1.53.7, p. 176
273 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.53.7, p. 36
274 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 539
275 R.V., 1.58.8
276 Vide, Ibid. Also vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol.1, on 1.58.8, p. 189
277 R.V., 7.5.3
278 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 7.5.3, p. 336
279 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 7.5.3
280 Vide, Chakraborti, H.P., op.cit., p. 216
281 Ibid., p. 218
**Kṣatr**

Among the minor officers, mention may be made to Kṣatr. In a Rgvedic verse, Sāyanācārya explains the term as ksattā asi kṣadatiratra dānakarmā dātābhavasi... Griffith translates the term as ‘the Controller’. It also probably means the royal store-keeper.

**Dūta**

*Dūta* or the messenger or envoy was the communication, engaged by the king to gather information about the whole kingdom. Agni is said to be the dūta or messenger of the gods, who brings them to the sacrifices. The term dūta which indicates the meaning of espionage, is noted in the description of Saramā, the bitch of the gods appointed as a messenger by Indra to find out the treasure of the Panīs.

Moreover, different institutions are found during the Rgvedic period that exercised great impact upon the system of administration. These are –

**Vidatha**

One of the popular assemblies and institutions of the Vedic period is the Vidatha. The term vidatha is mentioned several times in the Rgvedasamhitā. It was associated with the civil, military and religious activities and sacrifices. According to A.S. Altekar, Vidatha seems to be derived from the root vid to know and probably indicated a religious or sacrificial gathering, rituals at which required the highest knowledge. He also states that it was a big assembly, probably representing the entire tribe, because there are references to people being arranged there by groups, and singing and dancing. According to Geldner, the word primarily means ‘knowledge’, ‘wisdom’, ‘priestly lore’, then ‘sacrifice’ and ‘spiritual authority’. P.V. Kane also observes that in the Rgveda Soma is said to confer a son who is sādanya, vidathyā and sabheya, from which it follows that sabhā is in some

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282 Sayana on R.V., 6.13.2
284 R.V., 3.3.2, 6.8.4, 7.3.3, 10.14.12
285 Ibid., 1.12.1
286 Ibid., 10.108.2,4
287 Ibid., 1.117.25, 1.166.2, 1.167.6, 2.1.4, 2.4.8, 2.27.12,17,2.39.1, 3.1.1, 3.38.5,6, 3.56.8, 4.38.4, 5.63.2, 6.8.1, 8.39.1, 10.12.7, 10.85.26, 10.92.2
288 Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 141
290 R.V., 1.91.20
respects different from ‘vidatha’. In some verses of the Ṛgveda, vidatha means the house, e.g. *vidatham patigrham* or *vidatham grham*. According to Bloomfield also, it refers to house and then to sacrifice connected with the house. A Ṛgvedic verse which describes the people assembled in the vidathas as praising Agni’s splendour and the Marut’s might in gaṇas, suggests no doubt that people assembled there in groups, i.e. *vrātamvrātam ganamganam suśastibhiragnerbhāmam marutāmoja īmahel prṣadaśvāso anavabhrādhaso gantāro yajñam vidathēsu dhārāh*! Ludwig thinks it to be assembly specially of the Maghavans and the Brāhmins. The kings used to attend *Vidatha*. Here the term *vidathya* is applied to the king (samrāṭ) which means universal sovereign entitled to veneration, i.e. *vidathyo na samrāṭ/ vidathārḥah yajhāḥ samrāṭ sakalalokānām adhipatiriva tadvat* A.S. Altekar states that though in some rare passages kings are represented as attending the *vidatha*, the latter body is rarely seen taking any active part in the administration. According to Roth, Vidatha means order or assembly for secular or religious ends or for war. The purohitas or war-chiefs acted as priests in the *vidatha* or sacrifices. For instance, mention may be made to Viśvāmitra who acted as the priest of Sudās etc.

The *vidatha* had religious character too which is revealed by the interpretation of the term by Śāyaṇācārya as sacrifice, i.e. *vidathāni yajñagṛhāṇyāgacchati tadvattvatamapi yajñagṛhāṇyāgaccha*. Here *vidatha* means *yajñagṛha*. In the present context, Griffith translates the term as gatherings and home. In the Ṛgvedasamhitā, both the terms *vidatha* and *yajñā* are mentioned. In another verse, where both the terms are used, *vidatha* means a sacrificial house, i.e. *kṛtam no yajñam vidathēsu*.

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291 Kane, P.V., op.cit., vol. 3, p. 92
292 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 10.85.26
293 Śāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.85.27
295 R.V., 3.26.6
297 R.V., 4.21.2
298 Śāyaṇa, Ibid.
300 Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 141
301 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol.2, p. 296
302 Śāyaṇa on R.V., 1.130.1
303 Vide, vidathēsu yajñēsu / vidatha iti yajñānāmaitat // Ibid., 4.21.4
304 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.130.1, p. 90
305 R.V., 1.159.1
306 Ibid., 7.84.3
Sāyanācārya in his commentary of the present context explains the term as- *vidathēṣu grheṣu kriyamāṇam yajñam* /305 The passage *vahnim yaśasam vidathasya ketum* indicates Fire or the celebrated *vahni* which is called the illuminator of *vidatha*, i.e. the sacrifices. Griffith translates it as the Banner of sacrifice and Wilson renders it as the illuminator of sacrifices. Elsewhere, the term *vidathyā* is used, which is interpreted as—*vidathyam / vidantyeṣu devāniti vidathāh yajñāh / tadārham / darśapūrṇa-māsādiyāgānusthānaparamityarthah* which means ‘assiduous in worship’. There is reference to the synods of the wise in heaven.

The Sabhā and the Samiti constituted the most popular institutions in the Rgvedic polity. In the words of R.K. Mookerji, The Sabhā and Samiti are ‘the original and earliest institutions of Indian polity.’ Such assemblies indicate the existence of democratic elements in the age of the Rgveda. These two enjoyed a high prestige during that age. The Sabhā and Samiti wielded great powers and authority in administration and worked as great checks to the exercise of arbitrary power by the king.

**Sabhā**

The word *sabhā* means both the assembly of the people and the hall, i.e. the place of the meeting of persons. The word is seen mentioned frequently in the *Rgvedasamhitā*. According to M. Monier-Williams, it denotes an assembly, congregation, meeting, council, public audience, a place for public meeting, large assembly room or hall, gambling house etc. Moreover, various scholars have given different meaning of Sabhā. According to Rāhul Sāṅkrṭāyana, in the *Rgveda*, the term is used in a wider sense not only political assembly of village, nation and people but also gambling halls and other gatherings. According to L. Renou, Sabhā seems to designate an assembly of restricted size, partly

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305 Sayana, Ibid., 7.84.3
306 Ibid., 1.60.1
307 vahnim havishāṃ vrodhaṃ yaśasam yaśasvinam vidathasya ketum yajñasya prakāśayītāram
Sāyana, Ibid.
308 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.60.1, p. 40
309 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.60.1, p. 193
310 Sāyana on R.V., 1.91.20
311 Vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.91.20, p. 284
312 R.V., 3.1.2
313 Vide, Chakraborti, H.P., op.cit., p. 129
314 R.V., 6.28.6, 8.4.9, 10.34.6
316 Sāṅkrṭāyana, R., op.cit., p. 139
judicial in nature. He also states that the samiti disappears after the Vedic epoch, while the sabhā, retaining its role as a court of royal justice. Hillebrandt thought that Sabhā and Samiti were much the same, Samiti being the assembly and Sabhā its meeting place. P.V. Kane states that sabhā was an assembly of people to which the king, learned men and others went. According to him, it is extreme doubtful whether it was an elective body. He further states that it was an ad hoc assembly of such people as cared to be present. So, the Sabhās can be said as local and permanent institutions. It was a body of a few selected people to help the king in administration. Sabhā was extensive in nature where people gathered, and the status of the members of the Sabhā was almost as high as that of the king. The high social status of the members of the Sabhā is indicated in the Rgvedic verses. So, it can be said that Sabhā was originally an assembly for the rich, respectable and cultural men. According to Ludwig, the Sabhā was an assembly not of all the people, but of the Brāhmins and Maghavans which is clear from the epithets sabheya, i.e. worthy of the assembly, rayiḥ sabhāvān, i.e. wealth fitting for the assembly etc. The word sabheya was applied to a Brāhmin, or it means civilized or well behaved according to M. Monier-Williams. In the Rgvedic age, to be a member of sabhā, was regarded a coveted honour. Those who were fit to attend an assembly and took part in its deliberations, were known as sabheya. In the Rgvedic society, the birth of a sabheya son was earnestly desired, for which Soma is invoked to give a son eminent in the sabhā. In a Rgvedic verse, a wise vipra i.e. the priest adhvaryu and hotā are said to be sabheya, as interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya. Moreover, the word sabhāsaha is mentioned which describes a friend.
who came back successfully from the sabhā.\textsuperscript{329} It indicates that people tries to gain eminence and fame from it. M. Monier-Williams gives its meaning as one, who is superior in an assembly or eminent.\textsuperscript{330} In a Rgvedic verse\textsuperscript{331}, the word sabhāvatī is found which is applied to speech or perhaps to women.

The Sabhā was less popular and political in character than the Samiti. The king used to attend the sabhā\textsuperscript{332}, where both political and non-political matters are discussed. A.S. Altekar states that the sabhā was primarily the village social club, but the few items of the simple village government of the age were also transacted there by its members, when it was necessary to dispose of them.\textsuperscript{333} The assembly hall was used as a club for social intercourse and general conversation and also for dice playing. In this hall, people like elders and respectable persons regularly met to talk important topics.\textsuperscript{334} It is seen that the gamblers assembled at the sabhā hall and played the game of dice, often talking the freedom of themselves and their wives.\textsuperscript{335} Even a dicer is called sabhāsthāmu.\textsuperscript{336} M. Monier-Williams gives the meaning of the term as ‘either a gambling table’ or ‘a man who sits like a post at a gambling table’ or a persistent gambler.\textsuperscript{337} There in the Sabhā hall, wine was also indulged in by the members,\textsuperscript{338} which made them noisy.\textsuperscript{339} So, it is seen that sabhā was primarily the village social club.

**Samiti**

The term samiti mentioned in several hymns of the Rgvedasamhitā\textsuperscript{340} and later literature\textsuperscript{341}, generally means assembly\textsuperscript{342} or council or meeting and coming together.\textsuperscript{343}

\textsuperscript{329} sabhāsahena sabhām sodhum śaknuvatā .. / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.71.10
\textsuperscript{330} Vide, Monier-Williams, M., op.cit., p. 1151
\textsuperscript{331} minyakṣa yeva sudhitā gṛtṛcī hiranyanirmigupaś na rṣṭī / guhā caraṇī manuṣo na yoṣā sabhāvatī vidathyeva samā vāk // R.V., 1.167.3
\textsuperscript{332} Ibid., 8.4.9
\textsuperscript{333} Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 142
\textsuperscript{334} R.V., 6.28.6
\textsuperscript{335} Ibid., 10.34.6
\textsuperscript{336} V.S., 30.18
\textsuperscript{337} Vide, Monier-Williams, M., op.cit., p. 1151
\textsuperscript{338} na sa svo daśa varuṇa dhrutih sā surā manyuvibhīdako acittih / asti jāyānkanīyasa upāre svapnaścandanārtasya prayotā // R.V., 7.86.6
\textsuperscript{339} hrutsu pītāso yudhyante durmadāso na surāyām / uḍharna nagnā jaranē // Ibid., 8.2.12
Also vide, Ibid., 8.21.14
\textsuperscript{340} Ibid., 1.95.8, 9.92.6, 10.97.6, 10.166.4, 10.191.3
\textsuperscript{341} A.V., 5.19.15, 6.88.3, 1.2.1
\textsuperscript{342} Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 2, p. 430
\textsuperscript{343} Vide, Monier-Williams, M., op.cit., p. 1164
Such assembly was all powerful and all the classes of people had an equal status in the assembly. According to Rāhul Sāmkṛtyāyana, it is the national assembly or parliament in the Rgvedic age.\(^ {344} \) Samitis were attended by all the people and their representatives. It was the assembly of the viśah attended by the king.\(^ {345} \) Ludwig considers that the samiti included all the people, primarily the viśah, ‘subjects’, but also the Maghavans and Brāhmīns if they desired, though the sabbā was the special assembly.\(^ {346} \) In the Rgvedic verses\(^ {347} \), samiti seems to be a social or learned gathering. There is reference to divine assembly.\(^ {348} \) Sāyanācārya in the present context, interprets the term samiti as – samitih asmatkartrka stutisamhatih yajatā yajatesu yaṣṭavyeṣu devesu madhye devi dyotamāṇaḥ bhavati /

According to Wilson, it refers to the united praise which is resplendent amongst the adorable gods.\(^ {349} \) The king also attended the samiti\(^ {350} \) as well as the nobles. The presence of the king was essential in the samiti. The Rgvedasamhitā refers to several kings meeting together in one samiti similarly as the medicinal herbs come together in the hands of a physician.\(^ {351} \) The Rgvedic verses\(^ {352} \) show the presence of a king in the midst of an assembly which means either the presence of a noble in the midst of an assembly, or the presence of the king in festive assemblies, or assemblage, or battles which is explained by Sāyanācārya.\(^ {353} \) The word samiti also refers to union in the Rgvedic verse.\(^ {354} \) In another place, it denotes the sense of prowess in war.\(^ {355} \) It is uncertain that a king was elected by Samiti. But it is indicated that concord between king and assembly was essential for his prosperity. The Rgvedasamhitā lays emphasis on the spirit of co-operation in such assemblies.\(^ {356} \) The harmonious activity of the different members of the assembly is beautifully reflected in the concluding hymn of the Rgvedasamhitā, where the seer prays that the deliberations of the

\(^ {344} \) Sāmkṛtyāyana, R., op.cit., p. 140
\(^ {345} \) A.V., 6.87.1
\(^ {346} \) Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 2, p. 430
\(^ {347} \) R.V. 10.191.2,3
\(^ {348} \) yadagnā esā samitirbhavātī devī devesu yajatā yajatra / Ibid., 10.11.8
\(^ {349} \) Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.11.8, p. 33
\(^ {350} \) pari sadmeva paśūmānti hotā rājā na satyaḥ samitiriyanaḥ / R.V., 9.92.6
\(^ {351} \) Ibid., 10.97.6
\(^ {352} \) Ibid., 9.92.6, 10.97.6
\(^ {353} \) ... yathā rājā satyaḥ satyakarmā sat samithiḥ / saṃgrāmanāmaitat samayak prāpyate yodhrbhīratretī/ tān saṃgrāmān iṣānāḥ gacchan bhavati ... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 9.92.6
\(^ {354} \) rājānaḥ samitāviva saṃgrāme yathā saṃgata bhavanti / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.97.6
\(^ {355} \) samithiḥ prāptirāpi samāni ekarūpāstu .. / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 10.191.3
\(^ {356} \) Ibid., 10.166.4
\(^ {357} \) Ibid., 10.191
samiti should be cordial and the minds of its members well disposed towards one another and its conclusions unanimous.357

A Samiti had its role in effecting the well-being of the state in the Rgvedic period. Samiti exercised much influence over the king and administration in those days. Samiti shared executive powers with the king. In the words of A.S. Altekar too, the samiti exercised considerable control over the military and executive affairs of the Central Government.358 According to Macdonell and Keith, it discharged Legislative and Judicial functions too.359 A Rgvedic verse refers to the plans of an aspirant for political power, which includes the domination of the Samiti.360 Thus, Samiti played an important role in the Vedic political life. From the above discussion, it can be said that such assemblies indicate the presence of discipline, freedom of expression of the people of the Rgvedic India.

Pariṣad

Pariṣad means an assembly, because, it is derived from the pari-sad, i.e. sitting around.361 From the references as quoted in the Vedas, it can be said that Pariṣad was originally a tribal assembly, military in character.362 In a Rgvedic verse, Indra is celebrated for destroying with his thunderbolt the Pariṣad, i.e. the surrounding obstructors of the rain-the Asura.363 The military character of Pariṣad perhaps is revealed by such references. From a Rgvedic verse, the meaning of Pariṣad is known as ‘sitting around.’ The Angirasas are described as being seated round for worshipping Agni and Indra and obtained the vast hidden herd of cattle: agnim śucantah havirbhirddipayantah indram vavrdhantah somëna stutyā vā vardhayanto ‘ngirasah parisadantah paritah śidantaḥ sантah śurvaṃ mahāntam gavyaṃ gosamgham asman prāpnuvan.364 In another Rgvedic verse, the term parisad means enough wealth.365 In the present context, Sāyānācārya interprets the term as – dhanam parisadyam paryāptam bhavati. The term is also explained as –

357 saṁ gaçchadhyam savadhyam saṁ vo manānśi jānatam / devā bhāgām yathā pūrve saṁjānānā upāsate // Ibid., 10.191.2
358 Altekar, A.S., op.cit., p. 143
360 abhibhūramagamam viivakarmena dhāmnā / ā vaścitāmāt vṛtāmāt vohari samiti dade // R.V., 10.166.4
361 Vide, Chakraborti, H P., op.cit., p. 161
362 Vide, Ibid., p.163
363 sa indrah parisadah paritah śidata āstnān pratibhandhakārino’surān vajreṇa vi jaghāna / Sāyāna on R.V., 3.33.7
364 Sāyāna, Ibid., 4.2.17
365 Ibid., 7.4.7
pariṣadyaṁ pariḥartavyaṁ. In the present context, H.P. Chakraborti remarks that the pariṣad as a body or group ‘owned kine and spoils of war in common. From such references, it can be surmised that the pariṣad had some role in the Rgvedic warfare and military system.

Warfare in the Rgvedasamhitā

The Rgvedasamhitā is acquainted with the science of war. The system of war was not complex one during the Rgvedic age. Warlike spirit enthused among all the classes from the seers to the common men. Over the possession of land, cattle, women and children there were frequent fights between the people, which resulting in bloodshed. During the Rgvedic age, the people as a whole had to fight for offensive and defensive purposes. In a Rgvedic verse, it is mentioned that the folk, i.e. vis at need put forth their vigour in the battle. The vis or the tribes gather on the field of battle. The War hymn and many other verses of the Rgvedasamhitā give the vivid picture of the battlefield. The Áryan territories were not at peace with one another for a long time. The Vedic hymns are replete with accounts of warfare among the Áryans and between the Áryans and the non-Áryans. The Áryans had to fight with the Dāsas and the Dasyus for several times. As war played a large part in the Vedic Áryan’s life, the warrior class, i.e. the Kṣatriyas arose at that period. Even the seers as well as the parents prayed for the birth of brave sons who would be the slayer of the enemies and the destroyer of cities. In the Rgvedic period, it is seen that whenever the people went on war, they usually evoked the blessings of gods like Indra, and Agni etc. The Rgvedic hymns contain prayers to Indra for victory and protection. In a Rgvedic verse, prayer for victory over hostile combatants and for their destruction is
seen, which reads:

\[
yadindrāgni janā ime vihavyānte tanā girāl asmākebhirnbhirvayam sāsahyāma prītyaṇyato vanuyāma vanuyyato nabhaftāmanyakake samel/377
\]

The three hymns of the eight *maṇḍala* of the *Rgvedasamhitā* (each verse except the last of the hymn forty) ends with the words *nabhantām anyake same* / which means — ‘May all the others die away’379 The god Indra is considered as an eminent warrior and a great leader of tribes380 or the leader of the troops.381 Without his help, no one can win in a battlefield and as such, a warrior is seen calling Indra for help.382 It is stated that Indra, the victorious, the unconquerable, daring and the hurler of arrows383, overthrew at once a hundred armies.384 It is mentioned that Indra protects the Āryavarna by killing the Dasyus.385 Indra defeated the Dasyus through wondrous arts386, which is hinted through his epithet *dasyorhantā* or the killer of Dasyu.387 In a Rgvedic verse, it is mentioned that in the battle fought between the king Dabhīti and Asura Cumuri, Indra killed both Cumuri and other 60,000 Dāsas.388 Here many people were made slaves. There is mention of slaves389, which were possessed by the kings and nobles in a large number. Such slaves must have been the prisoners of war. In the Rgvedic period, women also fought against their enemies whenever needed. In this context, mention may be made of the name of Mudgalānī and Vispalā.390 During the Rgvedic period, the purs played an important role in the warfare. The purs where the royal personages lived, protects the state from the Dasyus.391

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377 Ibid., 8.40.7
378 Ibid., 8.39,40,41
379 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 8.39.1, p. 426
380 R.V., 1.32
381 Ibid., 10.103.8
382 yasāmāna r̥te vijayante janāso yāṁ yudhyāmnā avase havante / yo viśvasya pratimānāni babhūva yo acyutacyutsa janāsa indraḥ // Ibid., 2.12.9
Also vide, Ibid., 10.103.7
383 Ibid., 10.103.2
Also vide, Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 6, on 10.103.2, p. 366
384 R.V., 10.103.1
385 Ibid., 3.34.9
386 maho mahāni panayantyasyendraṣya karma sukṛti purūṇi / vṛjanena vṛjīṁnatsmīṁipesa māyābhirdasyūrabhibhūtyojāḥ // Ibid., 3.34.6
387 Ibid., 2.12.10
388 tvam śradhābhirmandasānāḥ somairdbhītaye cumurimindra sīśvap / tvam rajini piśāchādaśasyaṇaśaṭiṁ sahasrā śacyā sacaḥan // Ibid., 6.26.6
389 aram dāsi na mīḷuṣe karāyahanāi devāya bhūrṇaye'nāgāḥ // Ibid., 7.86.7
Ibid., 8.56.3
390 Ibid., 1.116.15, 1.102.2,11
391 Ibid., 1.174.2,8,2.19.6,3.12.6,3.15.4,3.34.1,3.51.2,4.16.13,5.19.2,5.41.12,6.18.5,6.20.7,10.38.4
The owner of such *pur* is called *pūrpatī*[^392] and *paura*.[^393] Dāsa or Dasyus possessed more number of purs than the Āryan.[^394] One of the remarkable events in the Rgvedic military history was the Battle of the ten kings[^395] or *Daśarājha*, which describes the events of Sudās's victorious expedition. The Rgvedic hymn[^396] states how Indra enabled king Sudās to overcome his enemies in this fight. The fight took place on the Parusṇi between Sudās, the king or chief of the Tṛṣṇi tribe with the ten kings of Alina, Paktha, Bhalānas, Śiva and the Viśāṇins[^397] and Anu, Druhyu, Yadu and Pūru etc. Sudās got favour only from the Krvis and the Śrīṇajas. Vasiṣṭha was with the king Sudās[^398] throughout the campaign against the ten kings. It was at the power of his prayer that the Vipās and the Sutudru rivers agreed to reduce the depth in order to facilitate the movements of the king's armies. God Indra also helped Sudās to win the battle.[^399] By defeating the enemies, he destroyed the strong palaces and seven castles of the enemies.[^400] The king of the Ajas, the Śigrus and the Yakṣus were also defeated by him.[^401] After defeating the battle, king Sudās distributed everything gained from the battle among the seers.[^402] Such descriptions indicate the power and strength of the king Sudās, who won many territories in the Sapta-Sindhu region and extended his territory over there.

Varaśikha was the leader of the dāsas, and according to Śāyaṇācārya's commentary was a certain *Asura* or demon: *varaśikho nāma kaścidasurah*[^403] Griffith states that he seems to have been the leader of the Vṛciṇas.[^404] There is a hymn in the sixth *mandala* of the *Rgvedasamhitā*, where the scene of the defeat of the Vṛciṇas by Abhyāvartin Cāyamāna is depicted.[^405] The battle took place near Hariyūpiyā and Yavyāvati. Abhyāvartin Cāyamāna was the son of king Cayamāna who himself, was a king as referred to in the Śāyaṇācārya's commentary - *cāyamāṇāya cāyamānasya rājāh putrāya abhyāvatine*

[^392]: mātrāyuvam na pūrpatim susīṣtau madhyāyuva upa śiṣṣanti yajñaiḥ/ *Ibid.*, 1.173.10
[^393]: paurām ciddhyudaprutam paurāya jinvaṭaḥ/ *Ibid.*, 5.74.4
[^395]: *Ibid.*, 7.18, 7.83
[^396]: *Ibid.*, 7.18
[^397]: *Ibid.*, 7.18.7,8
[^398]: *Ibid.*, 7.18.4
[^399]: *Ibid.*, 7.18.16
[^400]: *Ibid.*, 7.18.13
[^401]: *Ibid.*, 7.18.19
[^403]: Śāyaṇa. *Ibid.*, 6 27.4
[^404]: Griffith, R.T.H., *op.cit.*, on 6.27.4, p. 301
[^405]: *R.V.*, 6.27
etannāmakāya rājñe.../406 He was apparently the leader of the Pārthavas, the enemies of Varaśikha and the Vṛcīvans.407 In aid of the king Abhyāvartin Cāyamāna, Indra destroyed the sons of Varaśikha and at Hariyūpīyā he smote the vanguard of the Vṛcīvans.408 Vṛcīvan is said to have been the eldest son of Varaśikha, and to have given his name to the family or tribe, i.e. vṛcīvān nāma varaśikhasya kuloṭpavanah pūrvaḥ tadgotrājān varaśikhasya putrān.../409 On the bank of Yavyāvatī, the three thousand sons of Vṛcīvan went together to their destruction before Indra.410 Indra also gave Turvaśa, a tribe apparently settled in the north-west of India, to their neighbours and enemies called the Srījayas.411 He also gave Vṛcīvans up to Daivavāta, i.e. Abhyāvartin Cāyamāna, born in the family of Devavāta.412 It is to be noted that the Āryans made the war of conquest on the Yavyāvatī, driving before them the Dāsas. Yavyāvatī is the name of a river and according to Śāyānācārya, is identical with the Hariyūpīyā413, the name of a town or river, i.e. hariyūpīyā nāma kācinnadi kācinnagarī vā /414 A.C. Das remarks that Hariyūpīyā and Yavyāvatī are the names of rivers or towns which may have been situated towards the west outside the limits of Sapta-Sindhu.415

The Paṇis

The Paṇis played an important role in the political life of the Rgvedic age. Along with Dāsas and Dasyus, Paṇis were also mentioned as the enemies of the Āryans.416 The word paṇi comes from the root pan. So, it is clear that they were engaged in trade and commerce.417 According to Macdonell and Keith, the word Paṇi denotes a person who is rich but who does not give offering to the gods, or bestow Dakṣiṇās on the priests and

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406 Śāyānā, Ibid., 6.27.5
407 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.27.5, p. 302
408 vadhādindro varaśikhasya seso'bhūyavartine cāyamānāya śikṣan / vṛcīvato yaddhariyūpīyāṁ hanpurve ardhe biyāsāparo dart // R.V., 6.27.5
409 Śāyānā, Ibid.
410 trīmaṭacchati varmina indra śaṅkarī yavyāvatyāṁ puruhūta śravasyā / vṛcīvantah śārave patyamanāḥ pātra bhindāna nyarthānyāyan // Ibid., 6.27.6
411 Ibid., 6.27.7
412 See, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.27.7, p. 302
413 R.V., 6.27.7
414 yavyāvatyāṁ pūrvoktāyāṁ hariyūpīyāyāṁ.../ Śāyānā, Ibid.
415 Śāyānā, Ibid., 6.27.5
416 Das, A.C., Rgvedic Culture, p. 156
417 panim vanijam.../ Śāyānā, Ibid., 6.51.14
Also vide, Ibid., 6.53.3,5
become the object of dislike. M. Monier-Williams gives the meaning of it as a bargainer, miser, one who is sparing of sacrificial oblations, a class of envious demons watching over treasures (R.V., 10.108) etc. J. Gonda also gives his opinion that ‘The Panis are the mythical prototypes of the reprehensible and detestable wealthy niggards who do not give offering to the gods or daśinā to the priest’. In a Rgvedic verse, they are called Dasyus and of mṛdhraṇa, i.e. of hostile speech. The Panis appear as Dāsas, who were described as bereft of Āryan culture. So, there is prayer to destroy the Panis. They also appear as mythological figures and envious demons who withheld the cows or waters of heaven. Vala is their patron god, the fiend who keeps the cows imprisoned. Indra cleft Vala, the defender of the cattle and with the Maruts, destroyed Pani and liberated the cows. Bṛbu, according to Śaṅkara’s commentary of a Rgvedic verse, was the carpenter or artificer of the Panis: bṛburnāma panināṁ takṣā The Panis probably lived on the banks of the Gaṅgā with their chief Bṛbu. Such Panis had political and cultural impact upon the civilization of the Sapta-Sindhu region.

From such references, it can be said that the Rgvedic hymns are replete with references to war. So, the Rgvedic people were acquainted with many of the modes of warfare. These are discussed herewith –

**Composition of Army**

The Rgvedic Āryans developed a very high code of warfare. The major expeditions were led by the king who played an important role in war in the Rgvedic period. The *Purohita* in the Vedic period was the forerunner of the Brāhmaṇa minister. When the king

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418 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op. cit., vol. 1, p. 471
419 Vide, Monier-Williams, M., op. cit., p. 580
420 Vide, Chakravarty, Uma, *The Social and Familial Relationships from the Rgveda to the Vedāṅgas*, p. 106
421 nyakratinagathino mṛdhraṇavacḥ panitrasrddhā avrdhā ayajñān / R.V., 7.6.3
422 Ibid., 5.34.5,6,7
423 Ibid., 7.6.3
424 grāvaṇaḥ soma no hi kāṃ sakhitvanāyā vāvaśuḥ / jali nyatiṇaḥ panin śrku hi sāḥ// Ibid., 6.51.14
Also vide, Ibid., 1.83.4, 1.184.2, 3.58.2, 5.34.7
425 Ibid., 1.32.11, 2.24.6, 4.58 4
426 Ibid., 10.67.6,7
Also vide, Ibid., 1.62.4
427 Śaṅkara, Ibid., 6.45.31
428 Ibid.
429 Ibid., 10.75.4
went to battle, or in search of a new territory, the Purohita took a leading part in his efforts. The army was headed by a Commander in-chief called Senāni or the leader of the host430, for small expeditions. The Army of the Āryans consisted of infantry or foot soldiers and the rathins or the warriors who fought from chariots. Since horse-riding was known, it is possible that cavalry also was used in war. The warriors or foot soldiers were indispensable in the Āryan warfare. A Rgvedic verse mentions the importance of both infantry and chariotsry: sa grāmeḥhiḥ sanītā sa ratheḥhirvīde viśvāḥhiḥ krṣṭibhirnvadya / sa paunṣyeḥhirabhiḥhiḥrāśiṁṛmarutvānno bhavatvindra uṭṭ //431 It is said that Indra with hosts on foot soldiers and chariots won treasures in war. He is quickly recognised by all men through his chariots and is the victor over unruly adversaries by his manly energies.432 Foot soldiers are mentioned in the Atharvaveda too.433 The kings and the nobles or Kṣatriyas fought from chariots and the common people on foot. Chariots were indispensable in warfare.434 A Rgvedic hymn in the sixth mandala addresses war chariots.435 In a verse it is mentioned that Indra with his all outstripping chariot-wheel overthrown the twenty kings of men, who had come against king Susravas and their sixty thousand and ninety-nine followers.436 Mention is made of the chariot of golden axle and the wheels made of gold.437 The term rathavahānam is used in a Rgvedic verse438, which according to Griffith, means a platform, stand, or truck on which the chariot is placed when not in use. He also states that in the present context, the word seems to mean also the oblation offered by the warrior to the ideal war-chariot personified, or to a tutelary deity of chariots.439 Sayānacārya also interprets the term as - rathavahānam śatrūn jītvā ratenohyamānam dhanam havīḥ bhavati / agnerhaviriva vardhakam bhavatīyarthah.440 Another verse mentions that the Rgvedic chariot had two charioteers which is clear from the passage- samānam

430 pra senāṇih śaḍo agre ratānām gavyaneti hariṣate asya senā / bhadrāṅkapāṇindrahavāntsakhibhyā a somo vastrā rabhasāni datte // Ibid., 9.96.1
431 Ibid., 1.100.10
432 Ibid.
433 A.V, 7.62.1
434 R.V, 6.47.26
435 Ibid, 6.47
436 tva metāṇjanarājīḥo dvirdaśabandhunā suśravasopājagmuṣah / śaṣṭiṁ sahasrasahvatim nava śruta ni cakreṇa rathāya duspādāyṛnak // Ibid., 1.53.9
437 Ibid., 8.5.29
438 Ibid., 6.75.8
439 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.75.8, p. 331
440 Sayānacārya on R.V, 6.75.8
In the present context, Sāyaṇācārya interprets the passage as:

samāṇam indrarathasadṛṣam ratham ātasthivāmsā āśthitau dvau rathinau...

In the Rgvedasamhitā, Vāyu is invoked to come with Indra seated in the car or as charioteer. It is stated that seated on the car, a skillful charioteer guides his steeds in front of him, to whatever place he likes. The term pitarah in a Rgvedic verse means the guard of a chariot, i.e. pitarah rathasyapādlayitarah. According to Griffith, the term pitarah, fathers, is explained by the commentator as pālayītaraḥ, guards, defenders, that is, apparently, those who attend the chariot of the chief. Wilson too following Sāyaṇa, translates: "The guards (of the chariot), revelling in the savoury (spoil), distributors of food, protectors in calamity, armed with spear, resolute, beautifully arranged, strong in arrows, invincible, of heroic valour, robust, and conquerors of numerous hosts." There are references to war chariots drawn by horses, and made of hard wood like Śīṣu or Khadira. It is stated that the chariot helps the rider to win all spoils of battle made of the wood called vanaspati, i.e. the lord of forest. The chariots were generally drawn by two horses. But sometimes the use of three or four horses is also mentioned. For instance, king Kurusravaṇa had three horses of his chariots. The lashing rod called aśvājanī impels sagacious horses in battles. Yāska in his Nirukta also states: aśvājanīṁ kaśetyāhuh \[aśvājanī (pracetasaḥ) pravṛddhacetoṣo śvānantamatsu samaranesu samgrāmesu codaya\] The chariots of the Aśvins are described as having three wheels, as interpreted by Sāyaṇācārya: aśvinoḥ rathaḥ... tricakraḥ cakratrāyayuktah... That the chariot was an important instrument of war in the Vedic period is indicated by...
large number of references to chariots in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. Though there are references to horses and war chariots drawn by horses in the Rgvedic verses, it appears that cavalry was not a disciplined force during the Rgvedic period. Horse-riding was known to the Rgvedic period. A Rgvedic verse refers to Indra who has been described as the first of all to mount the horse, yoked to the chariot by Vāyu and given by Yama. The sons of Rudra are described as riding on svāsavā, i.e. noble steeds. The Maruts are described as the fighting people and riding on the horse back. Moreover, a Rgvedic verse refers to the encounter of hand to hand, or on horse back: ni yena muṣṭihatayā ni vṛtā runadhāmahai / tvotāso nyārvata //464

In the present context, the term muṣṭihatayā literally means striking with the fist. The term is explained by Sāyaṇācārya as – muṣṭihatayā nitarāṁ muṣṭipraḥāreṇa.../ and also padāyuddhenāsvayuddhena ca /465 By such references, according to Wilson, the commentator intends to mean the existence of infantry and cavalry in that period. In the present context, Griffith also holds that the term arvata, literally means, with a horse, is explained by Sāyaṇa to mean fighting on horse back. But horses seem to have been used in war as drawers of chariots only, and arvata here stand, for rathena, with a car or chariot. The Atharvaveda refers to dust raising horsemen. One of the important aspects of the Rgvedic warfare is that horses were used in cow-raids. According to Wilson, the passage krandaśva gaviśṭisu in the present context means- like a horse making a noise in wishes for cattle. He states that the commentator adds samgrāmesu, in battles, having for their object the wish to win cattle, goviṣayecchāyukteṣu. Sāyaṇācārya also interprets the passage as- gaviśṭisu goviṣayecchāyukteṣu samgrāmesu āśvaḥ

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457 A.B., 2.37, 5.21, 7.19, 10.5
458 R.V., 1.22, 6.7, 6.46
459 Ibid., 1.163.9, 2.27.16, 5.61.2
460 Ibid., 1 163.2
461 Ibid., 7.56.1
462 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 7.56.1, p. 361
463 kva vośvāḥ kvābhīśavāḥ kathāṁ śeka kathā yaya / pṛṣṭhe sado nasoryamāḥ // R.V., 5.61.2
464 Ibid., 1.8.2
465 Sāyaṇa, Ibid.
466 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.8.2, p. 23
467 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 1.8.2, p. 5
468 A.V., 4.21.4
469 ghnanto vrtramataraṇa-rodaś ape uru kṣayāya cakrire / bhuvatkaṇve vṛṣṭā dyumnyāhutaḥ krandaśva gaviśṭisu // R.V., 1.36.8
470 Wilson, H.H., op.cit., vol. 1, on 1.36.8, p.121
The mad elephants were used to smite down the foes in the warfare. Elephants were kept by the kings and the nobles for riding. A mighty king is mentioned as going on his elephant along with his attendants. There were also camel crops for employment in wars in the desert country, where warriors rode on camels to pursue the enemy.

The size of the army during the Rigvedic age was very large. The Vedic seers mention the number or size of the armies brought into the battlefield during the Āryan-Dāsa struggle as 30,000, 50,000 and 60,990 etc.

**Principles or Strategies of War**

The Vedic literature is not wholly innocent of war tactics. Vedic people were proficient in the art of employing spells. The Purohitas played important role in the Vedic warfare. The *Apratiratha Sūkta* is said to be a prayer for aid and victory in battle. From this sūkta, it is known that the priests perform sacrifice before battle and get *daksinā* or reward. Moreover, to subdue the enemies, the female deity Apvā is invoked thus: *amīśāṁ cittam pratiobhayantī ṣṛṛṇāṁ sāngāṇyapve parehi / abhi prehi nirdaha ṭṛṣṭu ṣokairandhenāṁitrāstamāṁ sacantāṁ //* It is stated that Apvā was a sort of colic, or dysentery, likely to attack soldiers in the field. The *Atharvaaveda* is also replete with the references to the use of charms and amulets for the overthrow of the rival.

In the Vedic period, there are references to land warfare, naval warfare and aerial warfare. The *Daśarājñayuddha* or the battle of ten kings mentioned in the *Rgvedasamhitā* refers to the existence of land warfare. It indicates the diplomacy of the rulers during that period. River banks were often the spots chosen for battle. In the battle of ten kings, the
selection of river bank as the place of battle and device of driving the enemies into the river appear to be one mode of Āryan warfare. The growth of well-guarded cities and utilizations of fortifications is noticed. Such forts and arsenals were used for defensive measures. The non-Āryans or Dasyus were proficient in the art of war. They had well fortified castles as abodes. They possessed forts and strongholds in large numbers which are described as broad and wide,484 made of stone, of metal, etc., for their protection from the enemies.485 There were references to autumnal forts486 and forts with hundred walls487 etc., which were discussed earlier. There is no clear reference to ships being used in the Rgvedic warfare. The Rgvedasamhitā describes the Āśvins as rescuing and conveying Bhujyu safely using swift ships.488 It is mentioned that the Āśvins brought Bhujyu in a hundred-oared ship, to his father’s house.489 The passage śatārirāmānāvam means a ship with a hundred, i.e. with many oars.490 Elsewhere, it is stated that the Āśvins rescued Tugra’s son with animated ship with wings.491 So, it is clear that the art of navigation was known to them.

One method of warfare consisted in setting fire to surrounding walls of wood.492 There is reference to the use of poisoned arrow in war. It is stated that the Āśvins slew the son of Viśvāca, an Asura with a poisoned arrow.493

**War Weapons and Armours**

The Rgvedasamhitā is replete with numerous references to arms and weapons. Among the different types of weapons, the bows and arrows were considered as principal weapons in the Rgvedic age.494 Throughout the ancient period, bow was the weapon par excellence of the Hindus. It gave its name to the military science, i.e. dhanurveda.

Considering bow as the chief weapon of the Vedic Āryans, Macdonell and Keith suggest
that practically no other weapon plays any substantial part in Vedic warfare. The word *āyudha* is used to denote bow and arrow. In the commentary of a Rgvedic verse, Sāyaṇācārya explains the term *āyudha* as *āyudham dhamah śarādikam*... Moreover, the terms *dhamu* and *dhanvan* etc., are also used. *Jyā* is the word used for bow-string. There is reference to bow-string consisted of a thong of ox-hide. It was composed of a stout staff bent into a curved shape and of a bow string made of a strip of cow-hide. To mean an arrow, various terms like *isu*, *bānc*, *saru*, *saryā* or *saryā*, etc., were used in the Rgvedasamhitā. In a Rgvedic verse, two kinds of arrows are mentioned, viz. one of which is poisoned (*ālāktā*) with a head of horn (*ruru śirṣṇi*) and the other is of metal, i.e. copper, bronze or iron headed (*ayomukham*). It is stated that the point of the arrow is made of a piece of deer’s horn attached to the shaft with leather strings and the butt of the arrow is feathered. It is pointed out in the Sāyaṇācārya’s commentary as – *suparna śobhanam vājam vaste / iyam śurdhārayati / isoh mrgah mrgāvayavah śringam dantah bhavati* The quiver or arrow holder was called *isuḍhi*, carried by a Bowman. It was also called *nisaṅga*. About the term *isuḍhi*, Sāyaṇācārya

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495 Vide, Macdonell, A.A., & Keith, A.B., op.cit., vol. 1, p. 388
496 sthirā vah santvāyudhā parānude vilu uta pratiśkābhe / R.V., 1.39.2
497 Also vide, Ibid., 1.61.13, 2.30.9
498 Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 6.75.8
499 a haryatāya dhṛṣṇave dhanustantvanti paumśyam / Ibid., 9.99.1
500 Also vide, Ibid., 10.18.9, 10.125.6
501 rtajyena kṣipreṇa brahmaṇaśpatiryatra vāṣṭi pra tadaśoti dhanvanā / Ibid., 2.24.8
502 Also vide, Ibid., 2.33.10, 6.59.7, 6.75.2, 9.69.1
503 jyām dhanusāḥ koṭau maurvī kṣipat ha ... / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 4.27.3
504 Also vide, Ibid., 6.75.3, 10.51.6
505 Ibid., 6.75.3
506 A.V., 4.6.4
507 R.V., 6.67.11
508 Also vide, Ibid., 1.2.3
509 tasya sādhvāriśavo yābbhiprayati nṛcakāṣaso dṛśaye karṇayonayah // Ibid., 2.24.8
510 yatra bānḥ saṁpatanti kumāra viśīkhāvā // Ibid., 6.75.17
511 dasyūfchiyūśca pruḥuṭa evairhatvā pṛthivyāṁ śarvā ni barhīt / Ibid., 1.100.18
512 Also vide, Ibid., 2.12.10, 4.3.7
513 Ibid., 1.119.10, 1.148.4, 10.178.3
514 śīlaśīla vṛttrāja bhūrapatih yasyāḥ ayo mukham /
515 idam parjanyaretasā īṣvai devayā brahmannāḥ // Ibid., 6.75.15
516 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.75.11, p. 331
517 Sāyaṇa on R.V., 6.75.11
518 Also vide, Nir., 9.19
519 ni sarvasena isudhirasaktā samaryogyā ajati yasya vāṣṭi / R.V., 1.133.3
520 Also vide, Ibid., 6.75.5, 10.95.3, Nir., 9.13
521 R.V., 6.75.5
522 nisaṅgīnāḥ / nisaṅgaśabdana isudhirabhidhiyate / Sāyaṇa, Ibid., 3.30.15
523 Also vide, Ibid., 5.57.2, 10.103.3
It means that quiver is the receptacle of arrows. Yāska in his *Nirukta* also states *iṣudhiriṣṇāṁ nidiḥānam*. Apart from such weapons, mention may be made of *vajra* or thunderbolt. *Indra’s vajra* is made of stone, bone, iron etc. Indra killed Vṛtra with his steeds who possessed the thunderbolt of iron, i.e., *jaghaṇvā u haribhiḥ sambhṛtakratavindra vrtraṁ maṇuṣe gātuyannapah ayacchathā bāhvorvajramāyasamadhārayo divyaṁ sūryam dṛṣe ।* In the present context, the term *vajramāyasam* usually means ‘iron thunderbolt’. Mention is made of many-edged iron thunderbolt of Indra also. The *Rgvedasamhitā* mentions the term *pavīra* or spear, or having a spear, i.e. *pavīravān*. The term *pavi* means a metal tire with sharp edge. Sāyānācārya explains the term as – *pavayaḥ vajrasamānā drḍhāscakraviśeṣāḥ ...* So, it might be like a javelin to be hurled against an enemy which is supported by Yāska. According to *Nirukta*, *pavi* means a javelin, because it tears the body open and *pavīram* means a pointed weapon, i.e. furnished with javelins.

In a Rgvedic verse, the term *pavīrava* seems to mean thunderbolt. Besides these weapons, mention may be made of *kārpāṇa* or sword, *aśi* or knife, *vāśi* in the...
sense of a hachet or knife, cakra or discuss, lance called srka, sakti probably the shaft, an wondrous weapon, rṣṭi, the name of another weapon, svadhi
ti or axe, aṅkuśa, or grasping hook.

During the Rgvedic period, the warriors were endowed with coat of mail or varman, helmet or šiprā, hastaghna or hand guard to protect themselves from the friction of the bow-string. In a Rgvedic verse, Varuṇa is described as wearing a golden mail, i.e. hiranyayam suvarnamayam drāpin kavacan... They also wore varman, i.e. body armour. Griffith states that the varman or coat of mail, protected the shoulders, back, chest and lower parts of the body. If not made of metal, it was strengthened and adorned with metal of some kind. The warriors specially the rich and noble ones put on šiprā or helmet to cover and protect their heads in war. Sayanācārya interprets the term šiprā as - śṛṣasu śiraḥ su hiranyayāḥ hiranyamayyāḥ šiprā uṣṇāsamayyāḥ vitatāḥ which means visors wrought of gold that are laid upon the head. There is mention of the term ayaḥśiprā, i.e. jaws of iron. Sayanācārya interprets the term as- ayah śiprāḥ / śipre hanū nāsike vā / ayovatsārabhūtasiprāḥ... Moreover, the term hiriśipra is also mentioned which means raging with jaws of gold. Sayanācārya in the present

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531 áśvyo vāro abhavastadindra srke yatvā prayahandeva ekaḥ... / Ibid., 1.32.12
532 Saṅkhāyudhaviśeṣah... / Śāyana, Ibid., 6.75.9
533 aṁśesvaśaṁ ni mīṁśaśuṛṣṭayaḥ sākām jaṭhīre svadhaya đivo naraḥ // Ibid., 1.64.4
534 Also vide, Ibid., 1.64.8, 5.54.1, 5.57.2
535 svadhitāḥ vajraḥ vanavati udakavati mārge pāthaḥ annasādhanaṁ sūmekeṁ... / Śāyana, Ibid., 10.92.15
536 śīruṣu śṛṣiḥ... / Śāyana, Ibid.
537 Saṅkhāyudhaviśeṣah... / Sāyana, Ibid., 1.31.15
538 varmeva yathā kavacan... / Sāyana, Ibid., 1.31.15
539 Also vide, Ibid., 1.40.10, 6.75.1, 8.18, 8.47.8, 10.107.7
540 Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.75.18, p. 332
541 śīpuṁ śīrastraṇam suvaṇṇaṁayaśaśrastraṇāḥ... / Śāyana on R.V., 2.34.3
542 Śāyana, Ibid., 5.54.11
543 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 5.54.11, p. 267
544 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 4.37.4, p. 226
545 Also vide, Ibid., 4.37.4, p. 275
546 Vide, Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 2.2.5, p. 131
context interprets the term as — *hirisipraḥ haranaśilahanurdīptosūso vā* / The archer used an armguard or bracer to protect his arm and hand from the blow of the string when the arrow was loosed. The term used for the bracer is *hastaghna*\(^{548}\), i.e. handguard. The archer is seen using a leathern handguard on his left hand.\(^{549}\) Griffith also states that *Hastaghna* or brace or guard worn on the archer’s left arm was fastened on with leather straps.\(^{550}\) According to Yāska, *hastaghna* or handguard is so called because it is held firmly on the hand.\(^{551}\) The *Lāṭyāyana Śrāvastī Śūtra* mentions *hastatra* as the equivalent of the term *hastaghna*.\(^{552}\)

Banners are alluded to as borne in battle by the warriors during the Rgvedic period.\(^{553}\) These are known by the terms *dhvaja*\(^{554}\), *ketu*\(^{555}\), *brhatketu*\(^{556}\) and *sahasraketu*\(^{557}\). So long it was held high, no defeat was indicated.

Warfare music was one of the important features of the Rgvedic warfare. Some instruments are found to be used at the time of sacrificial and festive occasions and others are both in war and peace. For instance, mention is made to *dundubhi* or kettle drum, the principal war instrument.\(^{558}\) This instrument is used both in war and peace. Some other instruments were used only at the time of wars. The *Taittirīya Samhitā* refers to it as the bhūmi *dundubhi*.\(^{559}\) Another war instrument mentioned in the *Rgvedasamhitā* was *bakura*\(^{560}\) or trumpet.

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\(^{548}\) R.V., 6.75.14
\(^{549}\) Also vide, Nir., 9.14
\(^{550}\) R.V., 6.75.14
\(^{551}\) Griffith, R.T.H., op.cit., on 6.75.14, p. 332
\(^{552}\) hastaghno haste hanyate / Nir., 9.14
\(^{553}\) L.Śr., 3.10.7
\(^{554}\) R.V., 7.83.2, 7.85.2, 10.103.11
\(^{555}\) ... dhvaajeṣu patākāsu ... / Śaṭya, Ibid., 7.85.2
\(^{556}\) sa revāvā visпатirdaiyāḥ ketuḥ śnostu nāḥ / ukthairagnirbhaddhānāḥ// Ibid., 1.27.12
\(^{557}\) tvāṁagnē attiḥiṁ pūryāṁ viśāḥ sōciśkeśam gṛhapatinā ni śedire /
\(^{558}\) bhṛhatketum pururūpam dhanasprṭam suśārmānām svavasaṁ járadviśam //
\(^{559}\) Ibid., 5.8.2
\(^{560}\) sahasraketum anekadhvajam ... / Śaṭya, Ibid., 1.119.1
\(^{561}\) yacicchdiṁ tvaṁ grheṛgra ulākhalaka yujyase /
\(^{562}\) iha dyumattamaṁ vada jayatāmiva dundubhiṁ// Ibid., 1.28.5
\(^{563}\) Also vide, Ibid., 6.47.29,31
\(^{564}\) T.S., 7.5.9.3
\(^{565}\) yavani vrkenāvinā vapanteṣam duhanā manuṣaṁyā dasrā /
\(^{566}\) abhi dasyunī bakurenā dhamantoru jyotisćakrathuṣyāya // R.V., 1.117.21
So, from the above discussion it can be said that warlike spirit prevailed among the masses during the Rgvedic period. One of the important aspects of the Rgvedic polity is the fight between the Āryans and the others. The hymns of the *Rgvedasamhitā* are replete with vivid information of the political system of the then Indian society which remained an important feature of Indian system of polity throughout the ages.