CHAPTER I

ORGANIZATION OF SERVICES IN THE PRE-MAURYAN PERIOD
To study any aspect of Indian political life one has always to begin from the North because of certain reasons. First of all much of the evidence regarding political organizations and institutions in ancient India is available from the literature of Northern India. Next we see that the North has witnessed more changes in the political set-up, more vicissitudes of fortune, and more contacts with foreigners than the South. Lastly, migrants of different socio-political set-ups came to the North, settled down here and were completely indigenized in the course of time. Therefore, the political institutions and organizations of ancient India have, of necessity, to be studied with particular reference to Northern India.

SOURCES:

Scholars have studied the theoretical aspects of political institutions in much detail, but the practical aspect of government viz., its administrative machinery and bureaucratic set-up, have received lesser attention, in comparison.

1. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, (Intro.); Majumdar, R.C., The Age of Imperial Unity, (Intro.).
The history of India suffers from a serious defect in that the ancients did not care to preserve and record the history of their past in a strict historical sense and writers like Alberuni and Smith have made scathing remarks in this regard.\(^1\) Our very concept of history is responsible for this defect. The ancient Indians meticulously preserved the history of their thought\(^2\) but found all human actions worthless and so had no need to record them. Myths and legends are so intimately twined with the early history of the land that a clear and coherent picture is difficult to envisage of the pre-Buddhist age.\(^3\) Even the historical accounts of the early Buddhist period suffer from controversies.\(^4\) Unfortunately we tend to accept the greater part of original texts at their face value not over-anxious to ascertain their period or their veracity. Nevertheless we have a great deal of literature, albeit religious, to help us draw a picture of the administrative set-up of the pre-Mauryan age.

When dealing with the *Rigveda* we have to keep in mind that the I and VIII-X mandalas are later day additions. It

would be better if we use the last mandala for the Later Vedic Period.

The political organisation as existing between 1000 - 500 B.C. is best studied from the Samhitas; but again we must be wary as different parts of the same Samhita have been written in different periods.

The antiquity of the Aitareya and Satapatha Brahmanas cannot be pushed back beyond 700 - 600 B.C. and these works throw interesting light on the origin of Kingship.

The Upanishads tell us about the Samiti, tribal lifestyle and political organization of the Later Vedic period and they appear to have been written not before 500 B.C.

As the Later Vedic period literature confines itself mostly to prayers, rituals and sacrifices, it becomes difficult to isolate evidence relating to political organisation. But the Dharmasutra literature written between 500-200 B.C. does not suffer from this fault. The

Gautama, Apastamba and Baudhayana Dharmasutras seem to be the most ancient. The Dharmasutra provide information on the duties of the King and the castes, taxation system and laws relating to protection of life and property. The views of the Brahmana class with regard to socio-political organisation are more idealistic than real. However, the Greek accounts and the early Pali texts compensate for this flaw, satisfactorily.

An indigenous literary source like the Ashtadhyayi of Panini reveals the presence and the working of contemporary republican governments.¹ Archaeological evidence sheds light on the practical aspects of political organizations and confirms the information imparted by literary texts.

Thus it is amply clear that there is no paucity of sources regarding the political organization of the pre-Mauryan period of Indian history but only a patient, painstaking and proper investigation will help us in utilizing it fully and beneficially.

In recent decades scholars have been attracted to the study of the organization of services in ancient India and Western scholars have done yeoman service in this

direction. These scholars were inspired to travel to India courtesy the accounts of foreign travellers but political considerations too prompted them to visit the land. Under the influence of Western methods of education, Indian scholars have also evaluated the richness of their native past under a fresh orientation. All this activity led to the bringing forth of a great deal of literature relating to the political institutions and organizations of the past. India presents a curious uniqueness to the Westerners. The vast undulating plains stretching from the hills of Assam to the foothills of the Himalayas are host to people who have been bound for milleniums by common customs, traditions, culture, civilization and a social stratification which greatly influenced the political organization of the land.¹

Despite the erudition and the diligence of scholars, both Indian and Western, all we have, is a lack of positive and pertinent information regarding the organization of services in ancient India, persuading us to believe that the civil services were inefficiently manned and ill-organized, and so we are compelled to take a closer look into this aspect of State-craft, in order to determine the exact nature of our beliefs.

NAME OF THE SCIENCE OF POLITY:

As monarchy was the normal form of the State, the science of politics and government was therefore naturally called Rajadharma. The duties of the King aimed at securing the moral and material welfare of the people, became Rajadharma. Dandaniti too was, the science of government. Danda was the power of punishment vested in the ruler; it was divine and duly sanctioned by Dharma. Thus force became the ultimate sanction behind the State. Danda secures proper progress in religion, philosophy and economic well-being so necessary for social stability. So Rajadharma and Dandaniti have the same functions aimed at a  

2. Ibid.  
3. दण्डः साप्तित्र प्रजा: सर्वा दण्ड आवृत्तिकः।  
   दण्डः पुरुषेण जागिति दण्डं भं क्षेत्रविवर्ध:।  
   Manusmriti, VIII. 14.  
5. अन्तीकृष्णद्वाराभवनां योगक्रमसाधनो दण्डः। तृत्यः  
   नीतिवर्णः नीति:। अलक्ष्यलाभथ्यः, लघु परिरक्षणी,  
   रक्षित विवर्धनी, कुम्भस्त्र तीष्ठेण प्रतिपक्षी पृ।  
   Arthasastra, I. 3.
common goal. In ancient India political science was known as Nitisastra also. As Niti means proper guidance or direction, Nitisastra became the science of ethics, wisdom and right course. Kamandaka and Sukra have preferred to call their works as books on Niti. Arthasastra is yet another term for the science of politics, Kautilya avers that it deals with the acquisition and protection or governance of territory.

To conclude, in the early stages of development of the science it was known as Rajadharma; Dandaniti became more popular a little later, and Arthasastra was suggested as an alternative to it. In course of time Rajanitisstra was abridged into Nitisastra.

The Hindus of yore had a profoundly spiritual outlook on life. Dharma to them was the spiritual, divine, inviolable and eternal principle embodied and integrated into the totality of the universe. Hence individual life,
social institutions and the political apparatus received their tenor from this spiritual approach and were all subservient to a spiritual aim. Thus Rajadharma and Dandaniti, in a narrow sense, had a prohibitive aspect whereby law and order are maintained in society; in a wider sense, they dealt with the totality, integration and organization of social, political and economic relationships. The ruler was not synonymous with the State. He was merely a part (anga) of the body-politic and needed the assistance of ministers and officers having wisdom, integrity, vision and efficiency to man the government and realize the aims of Rajadharma and Dandaniti. If the State was not a monarchical one then the importance of the afore mentioned individuals became even greater in a State established on democratic lines.

**NATURE AND ORIGIN OF THE STATE:**

The Dharmasutras view the State as an organic whole, in which the different elements, such as the King and the people, play their part according to Dharma, imposed or at least sanctioned by the Divine Will. Individuals owe allegiance to Dharma, conceived as an eternal and immutable Law or Order, which is divine in character and does not emanate from human will.  

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We have occasional speculations on the origin of the State in the Aitareya\(^1\) and Taittiriya\(^2\) Brahmanas where Kingship originates in military necessity. The theory of origin is expounded more clearly in the Dighanikaya\(^3\) where we see a socio-political mutual contract by which the ruler protects the people in lieu of taxes. The Arthasastra\(^4\) also refers to a contract with a similar aim which increases the power of the King. The Mahavastu\(^5\) echoes the view propounded in the Arthasastra. The Mahabharata follows suit but the twin references to a mutual contract theory have diametrically opposed results. By the theory in the 59th chapter of the Santi Parva,\(^6\) the Brahmanas are to function as a check on the powers of the King while in the 67th chapter\(^7\) the theory prompts an enhancement in the powers of the ruling Kshatriyas.

1. \(वेवासुद्दा वा एषु तोकेन्द्र सम्बदलत्...... तांस्ततोकुसरा महतन... \) वेवा महावन्न राजया है नो ज्यान्निव राजन्य नरोधेता हैत तथेन ।

\textit{Aitareya Brahmana, I. 14.}

2. \textit{Taittiriya Brahmana, I. 5-9.}

3. \textit{Dighanikaya, III. 89-93.}

4. \textit{A.S., I.13.}

5. \textit{Mahavastu, I. 343 ff.}

6. \textit{Mbh., S.P., 59.}

7. \textit{Ibid., 67.}
The theory of a socio-political contract evolved over a period of more than thousand years. There were different stages during which the responsibilities of both the parties kept increasing. But the contracts always aimed at enhancing the powers and privileges of the King. The State originated to secure the protection of family, property, and Varna. All accounts referring to a Golden Age, Dandasakti, conditions present in a Kingless State, principal duties of a King etc., all point to protection of life, property, and Varna as causative factors for the contractual origin of State.

Most institutions were regarded in ancient India as due to divine agency or inspiration and the State was no exception to the rule. According to the Mahabharata it originated in an apparently unfructuous earlier socio-political contract, which however failed to put an end to anarchy before a God-appointed King appeared on the scene to restore law and order. In keeping with this view, the

1. महाभारत, संपूर्ण, पृ 59.12, 14, 16. Manu., VII. 3.
2. भारतो वर्णसंस्कार धर्म संस्कार परालिक: अनीत्वर्त विनिरहारि भुक्कनीत्वलरे विरा।
3. विवाहार्थ श्रवण्य शरणाधरितार्थ धर्मान्तरार्थिक।
4. पत्तिस्थ: ऊत्पत्ति: न्यमन्तरालि रूपमें।
5. महाभारत, संपूर्ण, पृ 67.18-21, 23-24.
6. महाभारत, संपूर्ण, पृ 59.12, 14, 16.
State was regarded as a divine institution, implying thereby that it is as old as society and owed its origin to that socio-political instinct which is twin-born in man.

Ancient Indians regarded the State as essentially a beneficient institution evolved in pre-historic times for the efficient protection of human life and for the better realization of its higher ideals. The State in ancient India confined itself only to the constituent functions which are absolutely necessary for the orderly organization of society viz., defence against foreign aggression, protection of person and property, preservation of peace and order and adjudication. The State was no doubt an unwelcome institution to evil-doers and it is owing to the presence of anti-social elements that Danda or force becomes the ultimate sanction of the government.

The King was the upholder of the law and order (Dhritavrata). In the Vedic period sovereignty was probably vested jointly in the King and the Samiti; in the


2. Ibid., p. 58; Mookerji, R.K., H.C., p. 80.

3. Chhandogya Upanishad, V. 11.5; Rigveda, X.8.124; Mbh., S.P., 57. 33; Manu., IX. 254; Atharvaveda, XIX. 5-6, 15.
republican States it was vested in the Central Executive, which worked under the general superintendence of the republican Parliament. When Samitis or Parliaments disappeared, the sovereignty became vested in the King alone. Dharma constituted the very essence of Kingship. Dharma was the sovereign over the sovereign and sovereignty was vested in it.  

The State of the early Vedic period was a small one like the city-states of ancient Greece, being hardly more extensive than a modern district. In most cases it was tribal in origin; its residents were or believed themselves to be the descendants of some common, famous and traditional ancestor like Yadu, Puru or Turvasu.  

Several branches of one family (Kula) made up a village (Gramā). The head of the Kula was a Kulapa or a Kulapati. A village consisting of people claiming a common descent was known as a Janman.  

When a number of such villages joined together by a bond of

1. \textit{Saṁhitāsāstra,\textit{ I. 4.14.}}  
kinship, a Vis\textsuperscript{1} came into existence. The chief of a Vis was a Vispati. Visas were closely knit together and on the battle fields battalions were often arranged as per Vis from which they had been recruited.\textsuperscript{2} Several Visas made a tribe (Jana),\textsuperscript{3} which had its own King or Janapati. A tribal State (Rashtra)\textsuperscript{4} thus came into being. Those among the Kulapatis, who were noted for their strength and leadership, used to become Visapatis. From among the Visapatis, one would rise to the position of the Janapati for similar qualities.

A tribal State is to be expected from a society organized on patriarchal lines. State was evolved in India in pre-historic times out of the institution of the joint family. The patriarch of the family (Kula) was instinctively revered and obeyed; and social traditions and atmosphere inspired a similar respect for, and evoked a similar obedience to the head of the village and tribe who generally acquired the status of chiefs and Kings. Like the head of the joint family, Kingship was usually hereditary in the Aryan society.

\textsuperscript{1} R.V., II. 26.3.; Majumdar, R.C., \textit{The Vedic Age}, p. 359, fn. 7.
\textsuperscript{2} R.V., II. 26.3.
\textsuperscript{3} Ibid.; Majumdar, R.C., \textit{The Vedic Age}, p. 359, fn. 8.
\textsuperscript{4} \textit{The Vedic Age}, p. 359.
Gradually by the period of the later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads we observe that the State had long ceased to be a tribal one; it was now everywhere a territorial (Rashtra). The different stages, however, by which the State gradually became fully territorial by c. 1000 B.C. cannot be clearly visualised from the scanty evidence available to us at present.

The Vedic literature refers to several types of States in ancient India, monarchical, republican, oligarchical, city-states and composite and confederate states. Although other types of states existed in ancient India, monarchy was the most common form of government.

1. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 431; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 312; A.V., XX. 127. 9-10; XIX. 30. 3-4; III. 4.2; VI. 98.2; Taittiriya Samhita, II. 3. 3-4; A.Br., VII. 3.14.
3. Ibid.
5. Mbh., S.P., 107.6; Buddhist India, pp. 9-22; H.P., pp. 30-38, 233 ff; R.V., X. 97.6; T.Br., I. 7.3. A.V., III. 4.2; 5.6-7.
The State of the early Vedic period was a small one and tribal in origin. Some of the tribal Kingdoms of the Rigvedic days had probably grown in size through amalgamation and expansion and tribal leaders had become territorial monarchs with the passage of time. During the period of the later Samhitas and Brahmanas, the average Kingdom was probably the size of a modern commissioner's division. On the whole the Rigvedic literature leaves no doubt that the King was no longer merely a leader of a primitive tribe, but occupied a position of pre-eminence which was deliberately distinguished in all possible ways from the rest of the people. The State in the pre-Vedic and early Vedic times was small, and a Popular Assembly used to function at the capital; so the King's powers were not extensive. In the course of time, when the State became territorial in character and extensive in size, the powers

of the patriarchal barons like the Kulapatis and Vispatis declined, as also those of the popular Samitis, which could not meet frequently or regularly. These circumstances gradually tended to increase the powers and privileges of the King. Even in the Rigveda we have references to Ekarats (sole rulers), Adhirats (great rulers) and Samrats (emperors).\(^1\) It is no doubt true that some of these epithets are applied to gods but there can be no doubt that their counterparts existed on the earth as well. The Atharvaveda extolls the King as a Deva who surpassed mere mortals and was the lord of all beings.\(^2\)

In the Aryan society, as seen earlier, Kingship had evolved from the institution of the joint family, and like the head of the latter it was usually hereditary.\(^3\) We have definite evidence upon the point in the Rigveda. The Satapatha and the Aitareya Brahmanas also refer to hereditary Kingship.\(^4\) Kingship had come to be normally

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1. R.V., II. 28.1; VII. 37.3; X. 128-9; I. 25.10.
2. A.Br., VIII. 17; Kaushitaki Upanishad, II. 6; A.V., IV. 22.
4. S.Br., XII. 9.3.1-3; A.Br., III. 12; VIII. 12.17; VIII. 9; VIII. 17.
hereditary in the period of the Sutras. There are a few traces of Kingship being elective also; one passage in the Rigveda refers to Visas electing the King; another in the Atharvaveda speaks of a King who was elected by his friends and the Satapatha Brahmana too refers to a King who was accepted by other Kings. The Jatakas and the Dharmasutras have similar sounding evidence. These cases, however, were rather the exception than the rule. The right of primogeniture was not yet fully established though it had passed into practice, as is evidenced in the Ramayana. It is quite likely that when the heir was a child or incapable of military leadership, the choice might have fallen upon a

1. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 490; Ramayana, II. 15-16.
2. T.Br., I. 7.3; R.V., X. 124.8; A.V., III. 4.2; 5.6-7.
4. A.V., III. 3. 4-5;
5. S.Br., IX. 3.4.5.
6. Jatakas, Nos. 247; 73; 529; 378; Cf. 401.
7. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 491.
8. तवेव बंशी सगरो ज्येष्ठुपुसुपास्यत।
मद्यमस्य हृति स्याते तयाऽय गन्तुमहति।।

Ramayana, II. 36.16.
senior relation of the King or even a different person. These cases, however, must have been rare.¹

We have seen already that the ancient Indians believed that Kingship arose out of a military necessity, and that a King must be a capable general whose leadership is acknowledged by all.² The military leadership would single out a Vispáti for the leadership of the tribe³ and thus the Rigvedic King was pre-eminently the war-lord⁴ and continued to be so till the period of the later Samhitás, Brahmanas and Upanishads.⁵ The Vedic King seems to have been the hereditary head of a Council of Vispatis; in other words he was the President of the Council of peers or elders and the first among equals.⁶

2. A.Br., I. 14.
5. A.V., IV. 22; A.Br., VIII. 2; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 313.
It is interesting to note that the doctrine of the divinity of the King, which became so popular in India in the first millennium of the Christian era, was unknown to the early Vedic period. Kingship at that time was a purely secular institution. In the Rigveda, one King alone has been described as Ardhadeva or semi-divine and one solitary and late passage of the Atharvaveda describes the King as a god among men. These passages, however, do not prove the acceptance of the divinity of the King by the age. When a Popular Assembly (Samiti) could depose a King, the theory of the latter's divinity was not likely to take root in society. The growing sway of religious ideas and notions produced an atmosphere in the Brahmana period which was more favourable to the notion of the divinity of the King. The growing power of the King is illustrated by the tendency to attribute divinity to him. The Satapatha Brahmana describes

1. अद्भुताणां पितरस्यां अद्भुताणां ऋषयो वौशिके ब्रज्यानन:।
   त प्रायस्यम्यमप्यां इन्द्रे न कुशतुर मलविशः ||
   R.V., IV. 42.8.
2. A.V., XX. 127.7.
4. A.V., VI. 88.3.
the King as the visible symbol of god Prajapati himself.¹

Some of the sacrifices he performed like the Asvamedha and the Vajpeya were declared to enable him to obtain parity with gods.² The Mahabharata states that the god Vishnu himself entered into the body of the first King.³

The Vedic literature is pre-eminently religious; yet it does not suggest that Kingship was connected with or originated from the priestly office. It is interesting to note that the Vedic King discharges no priestly functions nor does he preside over any sacrifices performed for the community as a whole. The King in his official or public capacity was not required to perform any sacrifices for the promotion of the welfare of the public or the removal of a tribal or national calamity. The King is not described any where as having any magical or medical powers.

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¹ S.Br., V. 1.5.14.

Cf. Gautama Dharma Sutra, XI. 32; I.Br., XVIII. 10.10.

² S.Br., XII, 4.43.

³ Mbh., S.P., 59.128.
The Rigvedic King had the simple title Raja, more ambitious titles like Adhirat and Samrat were relatively unknown to the age. The term Rajan, King or chieftain is of frequent occurrence in the Rigveda. Later, the Aitareya Brahmana tells us about titles like Samrats, Bhojas, Virats, Rajans, Maharajas, Ekarats and Sarvabhauma. The Satapatha Brahmana states that by offering the Rajasuya sacrifice the King becomes Raja and by the Vajapeya, he becomes Samraj.

The King was pre-eminently the protector of his people (gopa janasya), both against internal disturbances and foreign invasions. The protection of the people was the sacred and supreme duty of the King.

The King, in ancient India was not the source of law or above it. He was merely made to act as its sanction.
Law making was entrusted to the sages and thinkers, who belonged mostly to the Brahmana community. From the Vedic times downwards, the King has been regarded as the supporter and upholder of the law. The Vedic age held that the ideal King was to be Dhritavrata, dedicated to law and piety like the great god Varuna. The King may be divine, but the law was still more so, and must therefore, be respected by him. The essence of rulership lies in Dharma; the King should realize that there is nothing higher than Dharma and always abide by it. But during the Later Vedic age we see that at the time of the coronation, the priest made the King adandya, above ordinary punishment. The Rigvedic kingship was a simple affair and the King lived in a residence, probably built of mud, undoubtedly surpassing in grandeur the common dwellings of the people. He wore a gorgeous, glittering dress, golden ornaments and had a respectable retinue.

2. तद्वेतसमस्य अथ शर्मस्मात्मानम् नान्यस्य।
   अयैं पृष्ठस्मात्मानवस्य सप्तहर्षत।।
   S.Br., V. 4.4.7
4. Ibid., p. 311; Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 356.
In times of war, the King used to get a lion's share of the booty as also of the land conquered from the enemy.\(^1\) The main source of the King's income in times of peace was the income of the crown-lands and \textit{Bali}\(^2\) or gifts or tributes from the common subject people, nobles, patriarchs\(^3\) and defeated foes. Originally it was voluntary and irregular but later it became obligatory and almost regular.\(^4\) He could supplement it with occasional extra sanctions too.\(^5\) It was for this reason that the King has been referred to as \textit{Visamatta} in the \textit{Aitareya Brahmana}.\(^6\) These tributes were probably received in kind from the subjects. The King was the controller and not the owner of the land but he did own extensive crown-lands and big herds of cattle.

The King's growing power during the Later Vedic age, is indicated by the description of the Vaisya and Brahmana as liable to be expelled at will.\(^7\) The King was usually, though not always, a Kshatriya, as the Brahmanas were

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2. \textit{R.V.}, I. 70.9; V. 1.10.
3. \textit{T.Br.}, II. 7.18.3.
5. \textit{Mbh.}, S.P.,88.7 - 8; 87.26 - 39; \textit{Sukra.}, IV. 218.
6. \textit{A.Br.}, VII. 29.
considered to be unsuited for Kingship. The caste system had not become rigid in the Vedic age and so we cannot, strictly speaking, talk of the caste of the Vedic King. Later on when the caste system was fully evolved the King usually belonged to the Kshatriya caste. There is evidence to show that in this period, the position of the Kshatriyas in general, and that of the King in particular had gone up in relation to the Brahmanas, in the social scales of the caste system. In one ritual the Brahma, the Kshatriya, the Vaisya and the Sudra each loses a cow to the King. During the period of the Dharmasutras we see the King being entitled to the homage of all except the Brahmanas.

The King was the first citizen and his subjects were naturally prone to follow his example. His conduct, therefore, should be always exemplary. Happiness, it was believed, depended upon virtue and piety, and these could prosper only if the King set a proper example and standard. Under a good King prosperity will prevail.

1. S.Br., V. 1.1.12; S.B.E., XLI.
2. A.Br., VII. 29.
important notion about the King was that he was the servant of the people, the tax being his wage.¹

Adjudication is nowhere referred to as the King's function in the Vedic age. It is not unlikely that popular assemblies like the Sabha and the Samiti were more concerned with the settlement of disputes than the King.² The principal of self-help had an extensive scope at this time both in civil and criminal cases. Even for murder there was the system of Wergeld/Vairadeya or blood money. But during the period of the later Samhitas, Brahmanas and Upanishads, his judicial powers seem to have increased especially with reference to criminal cases.³ In the age of the Dharma-sutras, one of the most important duties of the King was to decide legal disputes. He is seen administering civil and criminal justice, personally.⁴ It seems to have been permissible for the King to delegate his judicial authority or at least the supervision of punishments to a royal officer or Rajanya who could act as an Adhyaksha (overseer). Difficult cases were referred to the Parishad. The theory

³. Ibid., 313.
⁴. G.D.S., XII. 43; Manu., VII. 14-24.
of Danda (the rod of punishment) as the symbol of penal powers vested in the King had now fully developed.  

All round welfare of the public was clearly regarded as the chief aim of the State during the Vedic and Upanishadic ages i.e. down to c. 600 B.C. The King was to promote the material and moral well-being of his subjects. The Atharvaveda glorifies King Parikshit because people thrived merrily in his Kingdom; everyone felt safe and secure in his house and corn was plentiful.  

But the supreme duty of the King, as noted earlier, was the protection of the people, and maintenance of the rules of Caste and Order.

It must be admitted at the outset that no constitutional checks in the modern sense of the word were devised by our ancient thinkers on the authority of the King. It is likely that the Popular Assemblies viz. the Sabha and the Samiti, of the Vedic age, functioned as a constitutional check upon the King; there is evidence to show that a King could hardly maintain his position if the Assembly was not in agreement with him.  

1. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 494.

2. A.V., XX. 127.

3. सभा सम्बन्धमें पाणि ये च साध्य: सभापालयः

A.V., XIX. 55.6.
Cf. S.Br., IV. 1.4. 1-6.
was attached not only to concord between the King and the
Samiti, but also to a spirit of harmony among the members of
the Samiti itself.¹ The greatest calamity for a King
envisaged in that dim and distant past was disagreement
between him and his Popular Assembly.² We should, however,
not forget that when the States in ancient India were small,
as in the Vedic period, the Popular Assemblies did control
the King more or less like a modern representative assembly.
The powers of the Popular Assembly, however, declined as
centuries rolled on; it also disappeared from the scene by
c. 500 B.C.; and its place was not taken by any similar
body. The disappearance of the Sabha and the Samiti removed
an important check upon the royal power. The royal
authority was also materially curbed by the power and
prestige of the Purohit-a, who accompanied the King to battle
and helped him with prayers and spells.³ The King's power
was checked by not only the Popular Assemblies and the
Purohita but also by the Brahmanas, in general because they

1. वै हे के व समामुखते मे मन्त्र स्वाप्स:
   A.V., VII. 1.2.
   Cf. R.V., X. 191.2.
2. A.V., V. 19.15.
were the respository of culture and education in those days.\textsuperscript{1} The Aitareya Brahmana says, that if the King does not employ a qualified Brahmana priest, the gods will not accept his oblations at all.\textsuperscript{2} At the time of the coronation, the King bows three times before the Brahmana; he thereby accepts his subordinate position, and as long as he does so, he will prosper.\textsuperscript{3} Rituals were also devised to ensure the subordination of the Kshatriyas and the Vaisyas to the Brahmanas.\textsuperscript{4} Gautama Dharmasutra (c. 500 B.C.) claims that the royal authority does not touch the priest and reminds the King that he can prosper only if supported by the latter.\textsuperscript{5} Another check was supplied by the general body of the people (Jana, Mahajana) who used to meet in an Assembly styled Samiti or Parishad in the Upanishads.\textsuperscript{6} Our ancient thinkers do not contemplate that the subjects should take oppression lying down.\textsuperscript{7}

\begin{enumerate}
\item S.Br. \textit{Up.}, VII. 27.
\item A.Br., VII. 5.24.
\item Ibid., VIII. 1.
\item Panchavimsa Brahmana, XI. 11.1.
\item G.D.S., I. 11.
\item Raychaudhuri, H.C., \textit{P.H.A.I.}, p. 174; A.Br., VIII. 17; Cf. S.Br., V. 33.12; Jatakas, Nos. 50, 547, 73, 432; Majumdar, R.C., \textit{The Vedic Age}, p. 491.
\end{enumerate}
subjects' right to depose or kill a tyrant shows that ancient Indians regarded sovereignty as ultimately residing in the people.\(^1\) Religious and spiritual sanctions behind the Sacred Law had the greatest terror in ancient India and writers have made full use of them in order to curb the tyrannical tendency of the King. Yet another check was supplied by the ministers individually or in Council.\(^2\) All those who aided in the consecration of the King styled Ratnins or Rajakartri (King-makers) formed yet another check on the wilful ways of the King.\(^3\)

When the heir-apparent was a minor at his succession, the administration was carried on by a Council of Regency. The evidence of the Jatakas shows that usually the Dowager-Queen presided over the Council.\(^4\) The vast majority of the ancient thinkers and writers opposed the succession of women to the throne, because they felt that on account of their natural limitations, they cannot become efficient

1. S.Br., XII. 9.3.1; T.S., II. 3.1.
3. Manu., VII. 54-59; T.Br., I. 7.3.; S.Br., III. 4.1.7; XIII. 2.2.18; Jatakas, No. 302; 525; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 174; Ramayana,II. 67.2-4; II.79.1.
administrators. However, as early as the Later Vedic age we see the Mahishi (chief queen) and the Vavata (favourite queen) figuring in the list of Ratnins. This would suggest that queens in the Vedic age were not merely consorts of the Kings, but played some part in the administration.

As the problems connected with the Chief Executive Head have already been discussed, we will now consider those connected with the Central Assembly. The Vedic literature refers to democratic institutions like Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha and Gana.

**Sabha:**

The Sabha has been mentioned eight times in the Rigveda and it appears to be more ancient than the Samiti. The term has been used to denote both the "peoples conclave" and the "hall" which was the venue of their meeting. Zimmer thought that Sabha was the Village Assembly while

2. Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 166; P.Br., XIX, 1.4.
Hillebrandt\(^1\) took it to be the meeting place of the *Samiti*. But the *Atharvaveda*\(^2\) clearly refers to the *Sahha* and *Samiti* as the twin daughters of Prajapati, the Creator, thereby contradicting Hillebrandt's view. Jayaswal\(^3\) contends that *Sabha* was the standing body of the National Assembly. When the *Sahha* was convened for administrative purposes it was composed entirely of Brahmanas and Gurujanas.\(^4\) Women too found representation in the Rigvedic *Sabha*.\(^5\)

The *Sabha* appears to be a popular tribal organization.\(^6\) It functioned as a game-house or a recreation centre also.\(^7\) Prayers and sacrifices were offered here and discussions were held on the domestication of animals.\(^8\)

During the Later Vedic period it became rigidly patriarchal and began losing its tribal nature. Women were

no more members of the Sabha now. Bandopadhyaya states that it was an "Assembly of Kings" while Ludwig holds that Sabha was something like the Upper House where priests and rich men i.e. men of high social standing were represented. Literature refers to vassal chiefs attending the Sabha while Jayaswal believes that teachers and fathers attended the Sabha. The members of the Sabha were wise and influential men.

With growth in socio-economic inequality and discrimination, the King became predominant and began associating himself with men of status and wealth. Members of the Sabha, proud owners of cows, horses and chariots now became the King's advisors (Privy Council) and the King's dependence on their counsel increased. The status of the Sabha members was as high as that of the High Priest or Chamberlain.

2. *A.V.*, XIX. 57.2.
3. *R.V.*, VIII. 4.9; X. 71.10; VII. 1.4.
The King used to be present in the Sabha, functioning as its President as there is reference to a Sabhapati in the Later Vedic period literature. Heated discussions took place on the proposals presented before the Sabha and its decision was binding on all.

As cattle-rearing was an important means of livelihood, discussions centered around communal pasturelands. The Sabha performed judicial functions too while acts of magic and sorcery were also performed in this august body.

The Epics have referred to the Sabha variously as a Nyaya Sabha, a royal court, a political sabha and a social Sabha for recreational purposes. Evaluating all the evidence at hand we have to concede that the Sabha was more a political than a social gathering.

1. A.V., III. 19.1; R.V., X. 166.4.
2. Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., Hd.tr., p. 103.
8. R.V., VII. 28.6; X. 191. 2-3; X. 34.6; T.Br., I.1.10.6; S.Br., V. 3. 1.10.
SAMITI:

The Samiti has been mentioned six times in the later mandalas of the Rigveda. Ludwig holds that it was something like a Lower House where commoners had their proper place. Hillebrandt thought of it as the Assembly, Zimmer as the Central Assembly and Jayaswal as the National Assembly. Possibly, the Samiti was a huge tribal organization.

Women too attended the Samiti. The King and his family members were also present in the Later Vedic period Samiti with the status of special members. The Samiti did not confine itself to political issues but philosophical discussions loomed large in the discussions. Rituals, sacrifices and prayers were also offered in the Samiti.

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4. Ibid.
6. A.V., VIII. 10.5.
members performed military duties, elected and re-elected the King\(^1\) and sometimes took decisions independently in matters vital to the State.\(^2\) The King was honour-bound to attend the Samiti\(^3\) and it was a great source of support for the King.\(^4\) Samiti was an integral part of Kingship within the political organization.\(^5\) Prayers were offered to secure the loyalty of the Samiti to the King.\(^6\) The fact that the King could not gift any communal land without the Samiti's approval speaks volumes of the Samiti's powers.\(^7\) Prayers were made for harmony and like-mindedness between the members of the Samiti.\(^8\) As debates and discussions formed an important part of the proceedings, the ambition of a new careerist was to shine as a debator in these bodies and to win over the members to his side.\(^9\) The sovereignty of the

2. Beni Prasad, T.G.A.I., p. 17, also fn.1.
3. R.V., X. 166. 4; IX. 92.6; Cha, Up., V.3.
5. Ibid., IX. 92.6.
6. A.V., VI. 88.3.
7. S.Br., VII. 1.1.4.
8. R.V., X. 191.3; A.V., VI. 64.2; VI. 88.3. III.30.
9. Majumdar, R.C., Corporate Life in Ancient India, pp. 125-126; S.Br., IV 1.4.1-6; A.V., VII. 12; V. 19.15; VI. 88.3.
Samiti is doubted. The Samiti was a more political and popular body than the Sabha.

In the early times, the composition and duties of both the Sabha and the Samiti were the same as they were the twin daughters of Prajapati. There was no fixed venue for the meetings of the two bodies. Chadwick believes that there was no difference between the Sabha and the Samiti. In later days the tribal Sabha became the King’s royal court or Privy Council while the Samiti disappeared from the scene. The members of the Samiti went to war while those of the Sabha did not. Jayaswal believes that the Sabha was a permanent and immovable body of select persons who worked under the Samiti, as a whole. Ghoshal thinks that they were both National Assemblies. The Sabha and Samiti were not always popular bodies. In the beginning the Sabha was tribal and public but later became non-tribal while the Samiti maintained its popular status through-out the Vedic and Later Vedic periods. The people regarded these

5. Ibid..
institutions as divine, of hoary antiquity and almost coeval with the socio-political life of the community.

The Sabha and Samiti disappeared from the political scene much before the days of the Dharmasutras in monarchies but they continued to function with vigour and authority in the republics. The monarchical States had become territorial making the work of the Popular Assemblies difficult. Distances prevented members from gathering regularly and in full strength resulting in the disappearance of the Sabha and the Samiti. Jayaswal would like us to believe that they left behind the Paura-Janapadas as successors in the body-politic.

**VIDATHA:**

The Vidatha seems to be a religious or sacrificial gathering, rarely taking any part in the administration and so we need not discuss its nature any further.

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GANA:

Gana had some political importance but it will be dealt with in detail at a more appropriate place and opportune moment.

MINISTRY:

Having dealt with the Executive Head and the Central Assembly, we will now pursue the remaining components which constitute the Central government viz., the Ministers, Head of the Departments and the Central Secretariat.

In the Rigveda and the Atharvaveda, we find no mention of King's ministers, probably because there was no occasion to refer to them. The Rigveda does mention three government officers i.e. Senani, Gramani and Purohita. The Senani was the army general and the Deputy Commander of the military force and went to battle along with the King, leading the State troops. In times of peace, he discharged civil functions, probably. Gramani might have been the headman of the Village and a Captain in the army, thus

3. S.G.A.I., p. 311; The Vedic Age, pp. 359-60.
exercising both civil and military functions. The Purohita was no doubt mainly concerned with the sacrifices to be offered to the gods. His knowledge and skill were very valuable in ensuring the victory of the King. There are also references to spies (Spasa) who were apparently engaged by the King to secure information about the Kingdom and the people. We also hear of Dutas or messengers who were undoubtedly the principal means of communication between the different States. The King, during the Rigvedic period, had no doubt other officers, but we have no detailed knowledge of them.

RATNINS:

The Taittiriya, Maitrayani, Kathaka Samhitas and the Taittiriya and Satapatha Brahmanas refer to some high

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1. Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 311; Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, pp. 359-60.
2. S.G.A.I., pp. 311-12; R.V., IV. 50.7-9.
4. Ibid.
5. T.S., I. 8.9.
6. Maitrayani Samhita, II. 6.5; IV.3.
8. T.Br., I. 7.3. ff.
9. S.Br., V. 3.1.
functionaries known as *Ratnins* (jewels). In the Later Vedic period, the King went to the houses of each of these *Ratnins* to offer the *Ratninam-havinschi* honours which formed part of the *Rajasuya* sacrifice by which he became a *Raja*.

The names of ten *Ratnins* are common to the five texts mentioned above. They are as follows, *Brahmana/Purohita*, *Mahishī, Parivṛkṣa, Senani, Suta, Gramani, Kṣattra, Samgrahita, Bhagadūgha, and Akshavapa*. The *Rajanaya* is referred to in four texts, *Govikartana* finds mention in three texts while the *Taksha*, *Rathakara*, *Vavata*, *Yajaka* and *Palagala* are referred to only once.

The *Brahmana/Purohita* (Royal Chaplain) was indispensable in an age when victories on the battlefield depended largely on the favour of the gods to be secured through the

2. *T.S.*, I. 8.9; *M.S.*, IV. 3; II. 6.5; *K.S.*, XV. 4; *T.Br.*, I.7.3. ff.
3. *M.S.*, IV.3; II. 6.5; *K.S.*, XV.4; *S.Br.*, V. 3.1.
4. *M.S.*, IV. 3; II. 6.5.
5. Ibid.
8. Ibid.
oblations of the *Purohita*. The Hindu system of governance emphasized the sanctity of laws and their supremacy over the King. All laws were believed to be divine and the *Brahmana/Purohita* was ideally suited to interpret them correctly to the King for their enforcement among the people. He was the spiritual and religious guide of the King, a learned man, well-versed in the laws of the land and noted for his wisdom and sincerity towards the State and the King.

The *Brahmana/Purohita* must have wielded considerable influence during the period of the ascendancy of the Vedic sacrifices. When popular faith in them declined with the rise of the Upanishadic, Jain and Buddhist movements, his influence must have declined. But in the *Jatakas* he is still occupying an important position as the *Sabhatthaka* (minister-plenipotentiary). Till the days of Chandragupta Maurya, he held one of the most honoured offices of the State but he does not seem to command the same importance as in the early period.

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The Mahishi was the Chief Queen\(^1\) and the fact that the King had several wives is proof of the popularity of polygamy. The Mahishi was symbolic of the earth, the cow and the mother, who all have the capacity to nourish and sustain.\(^2\) Her status is proof of the importance of motherhood in the Later Vedic period.

The Parivrikti was a queen who bore no son for the King. The King went to her abode to offer sacrifices to prevent any harm coming to him.\(^3\) He did not need her support in order to rule effectively but it was widely believed that she could do grave harm to the office and person of the King.

The Senani was the Commander-in-Chief.\(^4\) He was responsible for the defences of the State and the acquisition of more territories on behalf of the King. Being generally drawn from the Kshatriya class he looked after the training and other allied affairs of army organization and was one of the most trusted officers of the King.\(^5\)

\(^{1}\) Jayaswal, K.P., H.P., p.201.

\(^{2}\) S.Br., V. 3.1.3.

\(^{3}\) Ibid., V.3.1.4.

\(^{4}\) Ibid., V. 3.1.1.; R.V., VIII 20.5; IX 96.1.

\(^{5}\) Mookerji, R.K., H.C., pp. 102-103; Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 436.
The Suta has been variously described as a Chronicler/Bard, \(^1\) Commander of the Chariot Corps, \(^2\) Chariot-Maker \(^3\) and Sthapatī. \(^4\) The Sthapatī has been interpreted as an architect, sculptor, carpenter, wheel-maker, Chief Judge, and a local chief or Governor. \(^5\) The Suta played an important part in wars and not rarely in peace. \(^6\) As he combined the duties of a charioteer and chariot-maker and his work involved physical/manual labour, in the latter phase of the Later Vedic period the prestige of his office declined. Conversely in the early years of the Later Vedic period he was an important official and along with the Gramani was sought by the King to serve as his royal supporter (Upastīn). \(^7\)

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2. S.Br., V. 3.1.5.
4. S.Br., V. 4.4. 17-18.
7. A.V., III. 5.7.
The Gramani was the Leader of the Host on the battlefield and the Village headman. Jayaswal believes that he was the head of the people living in the city too, but this view is not too tenable. As he has been mentioned twice as Vaisya Gramani he is regarded as the head of the Vīś or belonging to the Vaisya caste. It is doubtful as to whether he collected taxes for the King. It would be best to conclude that the Gramani may have been the most prominent among the Village headman of the Kingdom, who might have been selected to serve on the Council of Ratnins. He was the main channel of royal authority being entrusted with local administration, but his powers were probably more civil than military.

The Kshattri was the Royal Chamberlain and like the Suta his position was declining in the last years of the Later Vedic Period.

2. Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., Hd. tr., p.141.
The Samgranita, according to Jayaswal, was incharge of the Kosha.\(^1\) He was the fore runner of the Sannidhata of the Arthasastra.\(^2\) He has also been described as the “holder of the reins” (driver)\(^3\) and so he could have been a junior charioteer in the King’s service. As rathas were important for the performance of the Goharana ritual, chariot-makers were respected in the society.\(^4\)

The Bhagadugha was the distributor of Bhaga, like the god Pushana.\(^5\) He divided the spoils of the officials and employees of the King. It is also believed that he was the collector of the Royal Share i.e. taxes\(^6\) and was the forerunner of the Samahartrī of the Mauryan period.\(^7\)

The Akshavapa was the Keeper of the Dice, the King’s companion at the game-table\(^8\) and incharge of arranging games and recreation.\(^9\) It is also conjectured, though

\(^{2}\) Ibid.
\(^{3}\) Ibid.
\(^{4}\) S.Br., V. 4.3.
\(^{5}\) Eggeling, J., S.B.E., XLI, p.63; S.Br., I. 1.2.17.
\(^{6}\) Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 166.
\(^{7}\) Ibid.
\(^{8}\) Ibid; S.Br., V. 3.110.
\(^{9}\) Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., Hd. tr., p. 142.
incorrectly, that he was incharge of the State's Secretariat.\footnote{Jayaswal, K.P., H.P., pp. 202-203.}

The \textit{Govikartana} was the King's companion in the Chase i.e. he was the Chief Hunter.\footnote{Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 166.} Jayaswal\footnote{Jayaswal, K.P., H.P., p. 203.} believes that he was akin to the officer described by Megasthenes as being Chief of the Hunters who was responsible for ridding the land of pests, both animal and birds. His view does not seem correct.

The \textit{Taksha}\footnote{Sharma, R.S., P.I.I.A.I., H.d. tr., p. 143.} was the carpenter while the \textit{Rathakara}\footnote{Ibid.} was the Chariot Maker. They were important officials who were skilled in the working of metals\footnote{M.S., II. 6.5;III.5.6; \textit{Apastamba Srauta Sutra}, XVIII. 10.17.} at a time when social organization was in its early stages and craftsmen were indispensable.\footnote{Goldenweiser, A., \textit{Anthropology}, p. 386.}

\textit{Palagala was a Dut\textsuperscript{a}}\footnote{\textit{Ap.S.S.}, XVII. 10.26; \textit{S.Br.}, V. 3.111.} (courier) or an ambassador\footnote{\textit{Ap.S.S.}, XVII. 10.26.}
while Vavata was the favourite Queen. The offices and duties of Rajanya and Yajaka are difficult to ascertain.

The Ratnins were persons of political importance and have been mentioned as "bestowers" (Rajakrit/Rajakartri) or "takers away" of Kingdom. They were a vital limb of the State's power. The glory of the Kingdom depended on the calibre of the Ratnins. They consecrated the ruler for Kingship and strengthened his position. They formed an integral part of the administrative machinery, but their constitutional status is none too clear. Though Jayaswal has referred to them as high officers it is difficult to ascertain the hierarchy of the various Ratnins. They

2. S.Br., III. 4.1.7.; XIII. 2.2.18; T.Br., I. 7.3. रत्निन राजा कृत्: एक ग्रामीणत्ववाप है। उपर्युक्त पर्य शब्द से स्मरित कृपया जान। A.V., III. 5.7. आतिलाली येपूर्वत: एक विशिष्टि विश्वसनीय प्रति तत। स्मृति राजातिरी: समाजविश्वसनीयता। Ramayana, II. 43.2.
4. Ibid.
5. P.Br., XIX, 1.41.
7. Ibid., p. 203.
8. Ibid., p. 255.
worked collectively as a Rajaparishad advising and assisting the King as any other regular Parishad.

In the Later Vedic period the organizational machinery was much more developed than during the Rigvedic period. The tribal democratic organizations of the Rigvedic age now proved insufficient for the needs of the Aryans who had now spread widely over the land and had acquired stability too. As the peoples' needs had grown, very many new officials were required to cater to them. All Varnas and social groups found representation in the Ratninparishad, viz. the industrial, serving and agricultural. It is difficult to say whether the Ratnins were elected officials or not.

The Ratninam-havinshi samskara was the product of a developed political, social and economic organization where tribal and matriarchal elements were declining while class consciousness, territorial and patriarchal elements were rising. The presence of half-a-dozen Ratnins associated with military duties is proof that the King was still a military leader primarily.

1. P.Br., XIX. 1.4.
The curious procedure whereby the King repaired to the houses of the Ratnins for the Ratrinam-havinshi samskara proves beyond doubt that a new type of nobility that of royal service, had emerged by the side if not in place, of the old nobility by birth. It is an indirect testimony to the growth of a solid hierarchy of officials and the efficient organization of the machinery of administration. Isolated references give us some idea of the great power and influence of the official nobility.

With the gradual disappearance of Vedic sacrifices, the conception of Ratnins also faded away from society. With an increase in the size of Kingdoms there were additions in the responsibilities of the State. The Ratnins however, did not disappear without leaving a more effective body to discharge their functions, viz. the Council of Ministers, the members of which were known as Mantrins, Amatyas and Sachivas.

The Mahabharata war (c. 1000 B.C.) seems to have left

1. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, p. 436, fn. 16.
3. H.C., p. 82; Cf. Mbh., S.P., 83.48; Cf. A.S., I. 7; I.15.
4. A.S., I. 15; Mbh., S.P., 85.6; Kane, P.V., D.K.I., II, p. 623 ff; Ramayana, I. 7.3; I. 8.4; II. 1.42; Cf. Sukra., II. 94-95, 103-106.
a deep impression on the course of the future of political set-ups in India. The country had been exhausted by a waste of resources and Northern India was split up into a number of monarchical and non-monarchical States. The religious scene also witnessed upheaval and tumult. By now the people had begun to doubt the efficacy of sacrifices and the climate became congenial for the birth of two heterodox religions, Jainism and Buddhism. The fall-out on the political scene is to be noted because of certain obvious reasons. Magadha began gradually to expand its power and territory from the time of Bimbisara, c. 520 B.C. and by c. 450 B.C. Anga, Videha, Kasi and Kosala were all incorporated in the Magadhan empire. The founders of Magadhan Imperialism were contemporaries of the Buddha and Mahavira. Subsequently, a more aggressive dynasty of the Nandas rose to power and India came in close foreign contact during their reign. At the time of the invasion of Alexander the Great, the whole of the Gangetic plain was under Nanda suzerainty.

4. Rhys Davids, T.W., *Buddhist India*, Ch. II.
Ministry or a Council of Advisors has been regarded by ancient Indian political thinkers as a very vital organ of the body politic and indispensable for good government. Available evidence shows that it functioned in historic times in most of our States. In the earliest historical dynasty of Magadha, Vassakara figures as the premier of Ajatasatru; his contemporary in Kosala, King Prasenjit relied upon the advice of his ministers Mrigadharma and Siri-Vaddha in carrying out important schemes. The Jatakas too, refer to ministers frequently.

The strength of the Council of Ministers varied from time to time. The Mahabharata throws interesting light on the composition of the Council of Ministers. The Councilors were to be drawn from all sections of the society viz., four Brahmanas, eight Kshatriyas, twenty-one Vaisyas, one Suta and three Sudras. Apparently there was a majority

1. महाबलम् राजसंग्रह श्रीप्रकाश न वितरी।
कुर्विन्त सारशीत् मालाते च गृह्यायाम्यतम्।
A.S., I.6.

2. अष्टि ग्रहकर्षे कर्म तवंके कर्म दृष्टारम्।
विरोधोऽसिस्मायेन किन्नर राज्यं महोदयम्।
Manu., VII. 55.

3. Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, II. p.78.

4. Uvasanadasao, II. Appendix, p. 56.

5. Jatakas, Nos. 528, 533.
पुरो श्रीग्रहम् दैवर् गृह्यायाम्यतमावलिन।
अधिवास श्रा पाठे प प्रक्षाले सदायेव।
केवकायते संपत्तादेशेनवाद्विवतिसंयोग।
श्रीव दैवाय्येकवादेशं श्रीश्रीयायाम्यतमे पुराक।
Mbh., S.P., 85.7-8.
representation from the Vaisya community as they were the industrial backbone of national wealth and prosperity. The Suta here seems to have been a representative of the artisan community and the Sudra too, had not been neglected, as he was in subsequent ages. The above reveals the importance of various communities and ensures their active participation in the administration of the State.

PARISHAD:

We also hear of an influential body of Brahmanas forming a Parishad. The term Parishad occurs as early as the Rigveda where its nature appears militaristic. It is also seen as a religious and royal assembly. The Satapatha Brahmana refers to it as Kulasabha being presided over by the King. The Mahabharata confirms its military nature. It seems that co-fighters became members when the Senapati became King. It was large in size and at some time women

2. Ibid.
4. R.V., III. 33.7; IX. 61.13; V.2.17; VII. 9.7; A.V., XVIII. 3.22.
5. Brahmanda Purana, II. 12. 22; Samavidhata Brahmana, II. 7.5.
8. Ibid., IX. 46. 78.
too were allowed membership.\textsuperscript{1}

During the Later Vedic Period the \textit{Parishad} functioned as a conclave of scholars and a royal court, both being dominated by \textit{Purohitas}.\textsuperscript{2}

Panini says that the \textit{Parishad} performed multiple functions,\textsuperscript{3} was small in size, prestigious in nature\textsuperscript{4} and exercised great influence on the King. The Dharamasutras State that it was a \textit{Sabha} of \textit{Purohitas}.\textsuperscript{5}

The chief function of the \textit{Parishad} was to advise the King on intricate and disputed points of law; it was probably a general body of advisors on all matters, religious, political, social and judicial. Its importance is underscored in reference where the King is called \textit{Parishad-bala}\textsuperscript{6} (one whose strength lies in the \textit{Parishad}).

\textsuperscript{1} B.D.S., I. 1.16.; II. 5.12; \textit{Mbh.}, IX. 47.
\textsuperscript{2} \textit{Khadira Grihyasutra}, III. 1.25; \textit{Gobhila Grihyasutra}, III. 2.50; \textit{Paraskara Grihyasutra}, III. 13.4.5.
\textsuperscript{3} Agarwal, V.S., \textit{India as Known to Panini}, p. 399.
\textsuperscript{4} Ibid., p. 899.
\textsuperscript{6} \textit{Panini}, V. 2.112.
Jayaswal suggests that ministers were in origin part of the Samiti and 'King-makers' (Ratnins) and if this is accepted then the ministers emerge as the most important persons in the administrative set-up of the Kingdom. Interestingly the Purohita figures as a member of the Council of Ratnins and ministers. The ministers were noted for their honesty and integrity and were supposed to advise the King on all matters of the State. This much is certain that in the early days ministers must have been confidants of the King, the Sabha and the Samiti. Unfortunately there are no clear-cut references regarding the qualifications deemed essential for the appointment to the ministerial office.

The scope of the Ministry included the whole administration and so it is but natural that this work should have been divided among themselves by the ministers, each one taking one department. We have already made

1. R.V., VI. 28.6; VIII. 4.9; X. 34.6.
3. S.Br., V. 3.1.2; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 169.
5. R.V., VI. 28.6; VIII. 4.9; X. 34.6; X. 97.6.
6. Mbh., S.P., 80. 22-29; 83. 3,8,14,19,38,41; 85.28; 237. 15-19; Ramayana, II. 100.15; Manu., VII. 58, 54.
reference to the Purohita and the Treasurer (Samgrahita)\(^1\) in this context. Under normal circumstances, we may presume that the Ministry acted as a body and was jointly consulted. A unanimous decision of the Ministry arrived at after full discussion and in consonance with the dictates of the science of polity was highly valued.\(^2\) The ministers were important personages who often had a say in the appointment of the Yuvaraja too.\(^3\) We have several instances where the ministers did not approve of the King's choice and he had to bow before the wishes of the ministerial council.\(^4\)

It was only with the help of a strong and competent body of ministers and officers that Bimbisara was successful in laying the foundations of the Magadhan empire. A category of Officers of General Administration\(^5\) seems to have been created by Bimbisara, the first Magadhan emperor. It is interesting to note that he had separated the judiciary and staffed it with capable and honest officers and judges (Voharika mahamattas).\(^6\) He had made attempts to

\(^1\) S.Br., V. 3.1.2,8.
\(^2\) Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 175.
\(^3\) Ramayana, II. 1.42
\(^4\) Mbh., S.P., 64.4; Cf. Beni Prasad, S.A.I., pp. 88, 108-10.
\(^6\) A.I.U., p. 21; P.H.A.I., p. 255.
set up a crude form of the Public Works Department which was entrusted with the construction of roads, fortifications, bridges and causeways.\(^1\) We are told that Sabbatthaka was the officer in charge of general affairs and the Sena-nayaka Mahamatta was a general. Bimbisara exercised a rigid control over his High Officers (Rajabhatas)\(^2\) dismissing those who advised him badly and rewarding those whose advice he approved of.\(^3\) A body of capable ministers did exist in the Nanda Kingdom, but they proved no match for another traditional figure whose name is indissolubly linked with the fall of the Nandas.\(^4\)

**CENTRAL SECRETARIAT AND DEPARTMENTS:**

The King and his Council of Ministers constituted the brain-centre of the government organism which functioned through the instrumentality and co-operation of a Central Secretariat and the Head of a number of Departments. We have already dealt with some Heads of the Departments while reviewing the role of the Ratnins. As the art of writing was either unknown or not much in use in the Vedic period it

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1. Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 21; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 255.
2. Chullavagga, VII. 3.5.
is natural that a Secretariat should not have developed in that age. Government orders must have been orally issued by the King or the Samiti and communicated to the units concerned, by word of mouth through messengers. The States were small and the procedure was convenient. We have no data to draw a picture of the Secretariat as it might have gradually evolved in the post-Vedic period. The art of writing was coming into more extensive use, kingdoms were developing into empires; functions of government were becoming numerous; some kind of a Central Secretariat must, therefore have existed. Scattered references point to Lekhagaras where important records were maintained; it was in one such office that Mahavira, the founder of Jainism had breathed his last. The Epics refer to eighteen Departments (Tirthas) and an ambulance corps in the army.

The first Nanda King left to his sons not only a big empire but also a large army, a full exchequer and an efficient system of civil government.

Except for a few scattered references there is very little evidence of minor officers in the early stages of Kingship. First of all we must remember that there was a

3. Ramayana, II. 100.36; Mbh., S.P., 69.52; II. 5.38.
5. S.B.E., XXXVI. pp. 147-8; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 236.
lack of writing material which made it impossible for recording the actual working of the official hierarchy, for posterity. Some scholars go to the extent of contending that people did not know the very art of writing. Another reason for this lack of reference is the nature of trade and commerce; barter was the popular mode of transacting business and taxes too were collected both in cash and kind, kind being the more popular. As very little accounting was to be done there was no need to maintain an elaborate body of officers for that purpose. Yet another reason was that the King issued verbal orders which were carried out by his subordinates, without the involvement of any writing work. Adjudication was one of the duties of the King but crimes were few and only minor and petty offences were brought before the King. Usually all that he was required to do was give final sanction to the decisions of the Village-sabhas and Village-elders, doing away with the need for maintaining a large Secretariat at the capital.

2 Rigvedic Culture, p. 139; Cf. Majumdar, R.C., The Vedic Age, pp. 399-400, 530.
3 Rigvedic Culture, p. 320; Manu., VII. 75, 127-28, 130-32, 137-38.
6 Das, A.C., Rigvedic Culture, pp. 227-32.
7 Jayaswal, K.P., H.P., pp. 18-19.
PROVINCIAL, DISTRICT AND VILLAGE ADMINISTRATION

A relatively extensive territorial Kingdom during the age of the later Samhitas and Brahmanas presupposes provincial, district and local officers, but very few of them are mentioned; one of these is the Gramani and the other is the Sthapati both of which have been already dealt with as members of the Council of Ratnins. The King could probably establish contact with the villages by personal tours or by sending messengers.

In the time of Bimbisara and Ajatasatru the provinces were usually under royal Viceroys.\textsuperscript{1} The Central Government, however, used to keep direct contact with the villagers, for we hear of Bimbisara convening a meeting of 80,000 Village-headmen in his Kingdom.\textsuperscript{2} We may well presume that the Nanda empire was divided into provinces, the latter into divisions and districts, as was the case later under the Mauryas.

REPUBLICS

The ancient Brahmanical, Buddhist and Jain literature, the Arthasastra, the Greek writers, Panini, the Mahabharata, coin legends and a modern day writer like Rhys Davids

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} Raychaudhuri, H.C., \textit{P.H.A.I.}, p. 207.
\item \textsuperscript{2} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
have all proved beyond doubt the presence of non-monarchical governments during the period under review. These institutions were not confined to Northern India alone but were flourishing in the Deccan too. McCrindle’s view that the independent or autonomous States mentioned by the Greek writers refer to village communities is untenable. Nor can we accept the opinion of Fick that the autonomous States of the Greek writers were individual cities or small States that maintained their independence in the neighbourhood of great monarchies like that of Magadha.

Want of adequate and reliable data handicaps the author perhaps in no other sphere so much as in the case of non-monarchical States. We get only a dim and blurred picture of their constitutions and their working. The distinguishing feature of a State of this type is the absence of one single hereditary monarch who exercised full control over it. The term Gana had a definite

1. Rhys Davidsi T.W., Buddhist India, pp. 1,10,12; Beni Prasad, S.A.I., pp.168-169; Mc Crindle, J.W., Invasion of Alexander the Great, p.308-309, 81,252, 121; Allan, J., Coins of Ancient India, pl.xxxix,10; Mbh.,S.P., 107.6; Mookerji, R.K.,H.C., 209 ff.
4. Fick, Social Organization in North-East India, p.137.
constitutional meaning and denoted a form of government, where the power was vested not in one person, but in a Gana or group of people. Samgha was another term used precisely in the same sense because it was sharply distinguished from monarchy. Uptil now the State under discussion has been described by us negatively as non-monarchical; we must now proceed to ascertain its real form. It has been described as a tribal organization, an oligarchy, an aristocracy and a republic. Power was vested in these States not in the whole body of citizens but in a small and rich aristocratic class. In the beginning this class consisted only of the descendants of the families, who had colonized the land, brought it under cultivation and founded the new State. The descendants of the original founder families were known as Rajanyas while the rest of the heads of the families were known as Rajans. The republics fall mainly into two classes, viz., those that were constituted by the whole or a section of a single clan (Kuia), and those that comprised several clans.

1. Ayadanasatak, II. p. 103.
4. Panini, VI. 2.34; Mbh., II. 15.2.; Altekar, A.S., S.G.A.I., p. 113-114.
ORIGIN OF REPUBLICS:

Gana has been referred to several times in the Rig and Atharva Vedas and the Brahmana texts. Fleet equates it with tribe\(^1\) while Jayaswal believes it to be a Sabha or a State ruled/administered by a Sabha. Ganas had a military nature\(^2\) and all its members carried arms like the members of the Sabha, Samiti, and Vidatha.

The Vedic Gana was constituted by the entire population and its leader was known as Ganapati.\(^3\) The title of Rajan associated with Ganapati\(^4\) means that with the passage of time, the Ganapati became King. It has been strongly conjectured that the office of Ganapati was an elective one.\(^5\) The Ganapati divided the spoils of war amongst the members of the Gana. As he was the custodian of all the wealth from the battlefield, gradually his prestige and influence began to increase; later with the help of the Purohitas and chieftains his office assumed hereditary Kingship.

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1. *R.V.*, I. 64.12; V. 52. 13-14; 53.10; 56.1; 58.1-2; 16-24; X. 36.7; 77.1; III. 32.2; VII. 58.1; IX. 96.17; *A.V.*, XIII. 4.8; IV. 13.4; *S.Br.*., V. 4.3.17.
2. *R.V.*, I. 64.9; V. 44.12, 61.13; VI. 52.14; X. 103. 3; *A.V.*, XIX 13.4; IV. 13.4.
Apart from the Ganapati we hear of no other officials in the Vedic Gana. The members of the Gana offered Bali voluntarily to the Ganapati\textsuperscript{1} and there is no evidence of regular and compulsory taxes being paid to the Ganapati in exchange for his military leadership.

As the Vedic Gana members were nomadic, no discrimination on grounds of Varna is evident.\textsuperscript{2} The Ganas described in the Brahmana literature have agriculture as their primary occupation.\textsuperscript{3} The early Gana worked as a religious\textsuperscript{4} and social Sabha too.\textsuperscript{5}

It is very difficult to study the social and political functions and nature of ancient Indian institutions like Sabha, Samiti, Gana etc., because it is difficult to separate the two aforesaid areas. All we can say about the Vedic Gana is that it was a tribal military republic whose warfarer, distributive, religious and social functions were centralized.

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1. Baudhavana Grihyasutra, II. 8.9.
3. T.Br., I. 7.7.3.
5. Ibid., I. 14. 3-4; VI. 41.1; IV. 50.5; V. 60.8; IX 32.3; VI. 41.1; A.V., IV. 15.4; T.Br., III. 4.15.
Later on, the *Aitareya Brahmana* has referred to *Svarajya* and *Vairajya* States which had a republican nature. There is evidence that some post-Vedic *Ganas* became monarchies and then reconverted themselves into *Ganas* again.

The sovereignty in these republics was vested in a very large Central Assembly. Most of the republics had a clan origin and the members of the privileged aristocracy believed themselves to be members of one stock or descended from one eponymous hero. Membership of the Central Assembly seems to have been confined to them. It appears that in small States, most of the members of the Central Assembly lived in the capital where they used to meet frequently to transact business of the State. The members of the Central Assembly met in the Mote (Assembly) Hall, known as *Santhagara* located in the capital. There were, however, a

1. Law, B.C., *India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, p. 89.
3. Law, B.C., *India as Described in Early Texts of Buddhism and Jainism*, pp. 89, 93-96.
number of small towns and villages, which had their own Assemblies meeting in their Santhagaras. Jayaswal has suggested that in some of the republics, there were two houses, an Upper and a Lower House. 1 Each member of the aristocratic order was known as Raja, and his son as an Upaja exercising judicial and military functions. 2 Majumdar thinks that each Raja functioned as the head at the lower level and represented that particular administrative unit in the Central Assembly of the entire clan. 3 Curiously enough, this aspect finds corroboration from Greek accounts. 4

The Central Assemblies were very jealous of their rights and powers. They elected not only the members of the executive, but also the military leaders. 5 The executive officers were known as Mukhyas. 6 There are weighty grounds to believe that the office of the Commander-in-Chief was a valued one. the Mukhyas controlled foreign affairs, entertained ambassadors and foreign princes, considered their proposals and decided the momentous issues of peace. 7

and war. One grave occasions the latter power was entrusted
to a small body.\(^1\) Appointments to different offices were
made by common consent of the Assembly and the King or the
President had to abide by its decisions.\(^2\) There are
instances where persons were dismissed from their posts by
the President with the sanction of the Assembly.\(^3\) These
Assemblies exhibited unlimited powers; they could make new
rules, enact new legislations and even abrogate the earlier
ones.\(^4\) Though there is no specific evidence on the point,
it is almost certain that the appointments to the State
services and the governorships of the provinces must have
been made by the Central Assembly. That must have been one
of the reasons for the keen contest for power that was often
going on in that body.

Generally speaking the Executive was under the
complete control of the Central Assembly.\(^5\) We see that if
the President of the Sangha or the members of the Executive

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5. वास्तविकतापूर्वक जातीयों के करोपाध्यात्म।
भूपेत्ताराम भोगिनाओं वायुस्थलतानि व अमे।
Mbh., S.P., 81.5
Council were guilty of any offence, they could be dismissed and punished by the State tribunals.\textsuperscript{1} The Executive was thus under the complete constitutional control of the Central Assembly.

It is but natural that some rules of procedure should have been evolved as far as the debates and working of the Assembly were concerned. But unfortunately they are not anywhere described by our political writers. We can get, however, some idea in the matter if we assume, as is very probable that the rules of the procedure and the debates in the meetings of the Buddhist Sangha were modelled on those of the Assemblies of the Gana or Sangha States.\textsuperscript{2} Kettle-drums\textsuperscript{3} were used by an officer (Sabhapala) to bring the people to the Mote Hall and were seated in a specified order by the seat-betokener, an officer styled as Asanaprajnapaka.\textsuperscript{4} After the whip (Ganapuraka)\textsuperscript{5} had secured the quorum and the Gana-tithas\textsuperscript{6} presence had completed it, did the meeting of the Assembly begin.\textsuperscript{7} The Assembly was

\begin{enumerate}
\item Majumdar, R.C., \textit{A.I.U.}, pp. 333-4.
\item Chullavagga, XII. 2.8.
\item Mahavagga, III. 6.6.
\item Altekar, A.S., \textit{S.G.A.I.}, p. 131.
\item Majumdar, R.C., \textit{A.I.U.}, p. 331 ff.
\end{enumerate}
presided over by the Sanghamukhya, who had to observe strict impartiality. The resolution natti, jnapti was formally moved by the mover, a debate followed; those in favour of the proposal kept silent, while those who were against it expressed their dissent. In the case of difference of opinion, votes were taken (ubbahika) and the majority view prevailed. In certain cases voting was by secret ballot (gulahaka) and a special officer (Salaka-gahapaka) was deputed to superintend the voting. At other times voting was by the whispering (Sakarnajapakam) and or the open method (vivatakam). If there was any disputation (samvada) the matter was referred to a committee of arbitrators. It is almost certain that there must have been clerks of the House, who must have kept records of its proceedings. Matters when once properly and finally decided, were not allowed to be reopened.

Some of the clans had a police force which earned

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notoriety for extortion and violence.¹ This police force could be distinguished from ordinary persons or other officers for its peculiar dress.² There were other clans who had an elaborate system of judicial procedure with a gradation of officers. A person accused of committing a crime was first questioned by an officer known as the Vinichchaya-Mahamatra.³ He had the power to acquit the accused or refer his case to a superior officer known as Vyavaharika (judge).⁴ He too had similar powers of acquittal or committal, but he himself could not pronounce judgement and had to send him to a higher officer known as the Sutradhara. He too had powers similar to those of the officers mentioned above. He referred the case to the Ashta kulaka who then forwarded it to the Senapati, the Uparaja, and the court of the King, in that order.⁵ Thus we see that a person had the opportunity to present himself before 7 courts, any of which could acquit him and his guilt was

1. Dictionary of Pali Proper Names, I, 690; Rhys Davids, T.W., Buddhist India, pp. 5-6; Raychaudhuri, H.C., P.H.A.I., p. 195.
2. Buddhist India, pp. 10-11; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 16-17, fn. 1.
established only after all these 7 persons had tried him according to the rules laid down in the Book of Precedents.1

Many of the Assemblies of the republics, were torn by party factions, family quarrels, lure of corruption, internal dissensions and mutual recriminations among the members.2 Those who were energetic in habits, skillful in organization and noted for successful oratory, usually succeeded in gaining power in their hands.3 When two parties were more or less evenly balanced, small groups of members made or unmade the governments.4 When the Assembly was torn by factions5 (vyuta kramana) the task of its President was very difficult. In the ideal Gana State, meetings were characterized by concord and harmony and the opinions of the elders and not the vote of the majority decided the issue.6

2. Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, II. p. 80; Mbh., S.P., 107. 10 ff.
4. यद्यपि न स्वनिर्विस्तार: यद्य स्त्रो: कृत्यम् तद्।
   ब्राह्मण: निवारिती मत्यं बुधोऽयंकरं न च।।
   स्वात: युत्ता क्रमनां किं न दुर्भाष: तद्।
   यद्यापि न तौ स्यात्तां किं न दुर्भाष: तद॥
   Ibid., 81.9-10.
5. Panini, VIII, 1.15.
6. Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, II. 80.2. 
The Mahavagga speaks of five different kinds of Sanghas, viz., those who had an executive (vagga) of four, five, ten, twenty or more. We have seen already that members of the Executive Council were elected by the Central Assembly; whether the election could be made from among the members of a few leading families, or whether anybody could offer himself as a candidate, we do not know. Since the Gana States were famous for their military traditions we may take it for granted that members of their Executive must have been dauntless military leaders. The President of the Executive Council was probably the President of the Assembly too. Besides supervising the general administration, one of the chief concerns of the President was to ensure internal harmony by promoting concord and preventing quarrels. We can safely presume that foreign affairs, treasury, justice, revenue, police, trade and industry must have been some of the most important portfolios entrusted to members of the Executive Council. Mookerji believes that the ministers in the Buddhist Sangha had their counterparts in the republics too, but this does not seem too viable a conjecture.

1. Mahavagga, IX. 4.1; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., p. 23.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., S.P., 107. 17; A.S., XI.
Important records regarding the republics and their functioning were maintained in offices (Lekhagara).\footnote{Mookerji, R.K., H.C., pp. 232, 245; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 323-24.}

Mahavira, the founder of Jainism had died in the record office of the Malla chief of Pava.\footnote{H.C., p. 232; Mookerji, R.K., C.M.H.T., p. 100 cf.}

Despite possessing the finer characteristics of a democratic constitution, the republics were prone to some lethal shortcomings which ultimately spelled their doom. We have already referred to internal bickerings, lust for power, non-compliance of established rules and useages and procedural irregularities in arriving at correct decisions, as some of the failings.\footnote{Mbh., S.P., 107. 27-32. Cf. Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, ii. p. 80; Rhys Davids, T.W., Buddhist India, pp. 6-7; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 24-25.} It was natural that they failed to stem the tide of imperialism. It further appears that the political horizon and influence of the republican States could not usually extend to territories where their own clan was not in ascendancy and so they could never expand into strong and big States like the monarchical States.

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3. भेदमूलो विनाशादि गणानामपि क्षये।
मंगलस्वरूप दुर्खान्तं गृहान्वितं मेघः मनसे।
कुलस्तुति बल्ला जनता मंगलवृद्धेश्वरः।
गोवीन्दरस्वरूप गणेशस्वरूप कारकरम्।
भेदावैध प्रावधापण भियुन्ते रिपुभिय्यणः।
Mbh., S.P., 107. 27-32.
Cf. Rhys Davids, I., Dialogues of the Buddha, ii. p. 80; Rhys Davids, T.W., Buddhist India, pp. 6-7; Majumdar, R.C., A.I.U., pp. 24-25.
CONCLUDING REMARKS:

The Rigvedic political organization has to be studied against the backdrop of its contemporary socio-economic conditions. Though the Rigvedic people knew the use of the horse and chariot, the primitive tools and weapons at their disposal prevented them from setting up any sizable Kingdoms. They were semi-nomadic cattle-breeders who fought most of their wars because of cattle lifting. Because of their nomadic lifestyle all they could establish were petty tribal principalities and no stable and permanent Kingdoms. Society was organized on lines of Jana, Vis, Grama and Kulai; though it was patriarchal in nature, women did enjoy several rights and privileges. There was no rigidity in social relationships and stratification as the people were still nomads; social inequality was seen only between the victors and the vanquished.

The people had not evolved a political organization developed enough to be called a State because of the nature of their socio-economic way of life. We hear of Rajans who fought not for their territory but for their tribal principalities. But by the end of the Rigvedic period territory was becoming recognized as a constituent of State. The Prajapati in charge of the communal pasture-lands in peace and leader of the Kulapas in war was the proto-type of the later day Gramani. The Gramani was the head of a tribal
and not a territorial unit.

Kingship was also tribal as the King was Gopa/Gopati janasya i.e., the incharge of cattle herds gradually became the head of the Jana. Kings were identified by the name of their tribe.

We have examples of Kings being elected, selected and chosen, but we have a few traces of hereditary Kingship too. The theory of primogeniture remained unimportant and unpopular as it had not been clearly defined. As Kingship was not hereditary, the powers of the King were limited. Further curbs were placed by the Sabha, Samiti and Purohitas; however, continuous warfare did increase the powers of the King while the eulogies of the Purohitas enhanced royal prestige further. Archaeology does not confirm the existence of impressive palaces detailed by literature.

As the people were cattle-breeders primarily, the income from agriculture was insufficient for the maintenance of many officials and so no extensive administrative organization could develop. The King and his officials were maintained by gifts in kind (Bali); when from his fellow

1. R.V., X. 124. 8; 173 ff.
3. Ibid., p. 86.
4. R.V., I. 70. 9; V. 1.10.
tribesmen it was voluntary, and when from vanquished enemies it was forced. The rate and regularity of Bali and the presence of any official tax-collector is not known.

Similarly, we hear of an official named the Senani but have no evidence regarding his and the army's maintenance by the State revenues. All tribesmen bore arms in emergency and the Prajapati, Gramani, Kulapa and Sabha members constituted the official cadre.

Police officials safeguarded private property, Spasa functioned as spies, Ugra and Jivagribha kept the criminals in check while Madhyamasi acted as mediators/arbitrators in disputes. There was no well formulated code of law and no officials to administer justice.

We come across a handful of civil officials like the Mahishi, Purohita, Koshadyaksha, Rathi, Taksha and Dutai; the Senani too performed some civil duties. From the evidence at hand we see glimpses of political organization which was capable of catering to the basic administrative needs of people. The tribal Sabha worked efficiently and speedily leaving little work for the King to do and hence

1. R.V., VII. 38.6.2; X. 97.11. 22.
2. Ibid., V. 37.3.
4. Ibid., 371.
the need of maintaining very many officials for assistance, became superfluous.

The Sabha, Samiti, Vidatha and Gana, all popular tribal assemblies played an important role in the lives of the people and the King could not work without their support and cooperation. Amongst all the above only the Sabha and the Samiti discharged political duties. Success in warfare was the issue avidly discussed by their members as the spoils of war were their principal means of livelihood.

The State of the Rigvedic period was a tribal chiefdom, lacking the glamour of a territorial monarchy; nevertheless, it was attempting to develop a taxation system, a standing army and a stable bureaucracy, all essential constituents of any State, ancient or modern. Tribal chiefdom was dependent on the support of the Popular Assemblies and the Rigvedic State was basically militaristic in nature.

In the Later Vedic period, skilful use of iron led to a settled existence and agriculture became the predominant occupation. Kings were now tied down to fixed areas from where they received regular taxes. Stability led to social stratification on lines of Varna. Society became rigidly patriarchal and polygamous, resulting in a loss of women's rights.
State progressed from tribal to territorial\(^1\) with tribe and its habitat becoming synonymous. Territory was associated with social prestige giving rise to the concept of ownership of land.

The onus of Kingship fell on the Kshatriyas but they required the support of the Brahmanas to maintain their position and so a finely tuned balance of power was established whereby both emerged as upholders of the Varna system.\(^2\) Hereditary Kingship had become popular\(^3\) with elements of divinity being ascribed to the King.

With States becoming territorial and steady income accruing from land-tax, a host of officials emerged on the scene. Taxes were collected by the Bhagadugha, but the rate of taxes and expenses is not clear.

We hear of twelve administrative officials (Ratnins) who now performed the duties of the Rigvedic Popular Assemblies. The Senani progressed from being a minor official in the early stages of the Later Vedic period to an important one by the later stages; consequently a standing army was now regarded as an essential limb of the State.

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2. *S.Br.*, V. 4.4.5.
The Suta, Gramani and members of the royal family also served as army officials. The police force of the Rigveda was carried over and the presence of Sthapati or Governor hints at the start of provincial administration.

Large States and long distances made the functioning of the Popular Assemblies inefficient and some of their duties were now taken up by the King's officials; the Sabha and Samiti thus decreased in size and power.

State was now organized on lines of territory and caste in place of tribes but still it had not reached the ideal stage of the Saptanga theory.

On the eve of the rise of the Mauryas, cities became the centres of political organization in territorial States. Socio-economic needs prompted development in the armed forces and Taxation Department; reactionary experiments were however seen in the setting up of republics.

Kingship was still hereditary and confined to Kshatriyas though we do come across stray references of Kings being elected, deposed and exiled.

High officials were known as Mahamatras and ministers, generals, judges, Lekhakas, chamberlains etc. were drawn

1. A.Br., III. 48; S.Br., XIII. 4.4.16.
from amongst them. Usually members of the Purohita class were appointed as ministers. For the first time we hear of advisors, councillors or ministers of the King. The Village chief was Gramani, Gramabhojaka, Gramika who was in direct contact with the King.

The presence and importance of the Senani and a standing army is proof of the growing power of the State. The huge Nanda army was maintained by the State's revenue. Details of the taxation system are not known but they seem to be firmly established by now. As Brahmanas and Kshatriyas were exempted from taxes, the burden fell on the Vaisya farmers, traders and artisans. Land-tax was collected by the King's agents with assistance from the Gramani while Saulkikas and Sulakhyakshas gathered from the cities - a fall out of urban economic organization; artisans paid taxes as corvee.

Rigidity in social stratification led to disputes and the formulation of a Law Code based on Varnadharma, as tribal laws did not suffice any more. Justice was rendered through the King's agents like the Vyavaharika Mahamatras, while the police force and magistracy acted as deternants to crime.

Popular Assemblies were tribal in nature and when States became territorial, they disappeared from the scene;
the Varna system speeded the process. The process of disintegration had started in the Later Vedic period. They were replaced by the Parishads of the Dharmasutras which were composed entirely by Brahmanas. Sabhas continued to function in the republics.

It is possible that republics were remnants of Rigvedic tribal organization and that they were followed by monarchies which were again replaced by republics which craved for the equality enjoyed by tribal organizations.

Power was vested in the hands of the tribal chiefs and so they were more of an oligarchy. The Sakyas and Lichchhavis had a simple administrative structure with a Raja, Upaja, Senapati, Bhandagarika and seven hierarchical courts of law.

In a monarchy, land-tax was received by the King but in republics each member of the oligarchical ruling class enjoyed it. Monarchies had regular standing armies while the republican army was an amalgamation of the petty army units of the oligarchical heads, each led by its own Senapati. In monarchies, the Sabhas had ceased to exist but in republics they were functioning well. Monarchies were more powerful and popular than the republics. Development in the armed forces, taxation system and judiciary, in order
to meet the challenges posed by new socio-economic needs, was the reason for the importance of this particular period.

The student of ancient Indian institutions like caste, marriage, Asramas etc. has sufficiently ample material to trace their development from age to age. The same is not the case with the student of ancient Indian polity and administration. We can give a picture only in broad outlines of the government in the Vedic age. The developments that took place during the next thousand years or so are more or less concealed from our view owing to the lack of original sources. When the curtain rises with the Mauryan period, we find a fully developed administration, undertaking a vast number of ministerial functions of the State. The different stages of development by which the State in the Vedic age was performing only a few essential functions, began to undertake a number of ministerial activities, are relatively unknown. The State machinery and administration of which we get so full a picture in the Mauryan period, became stereo-typed later and we can hardly notice much development and variation in later centuries.