CHAPTER III

TYPES OF STATE IN ANCIENT INDIA
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After studying the origin and nature of the state in ancient India, an attempt is now being made to throw light on various types of the state in ancient India. In order to survey the different types of state that were known to ancient India and in order to differentiate one from the other we should examine salient characteristic features of the state.

It has been generally held that monarchy was the norm of the ancient Indian state. Now first question may arises: whether any form of type of monarchy was recognised in ancient India. We find that there were paramount sovereigns and feudatory chiefs or tributary princes in ancient India. The distinction between these rulers was always generally indicated by the royal titles and their epithets that were assumed by these rulers of ancient India. They became practically stereotyped in the post-Gupta period of Indian History. The rank of the supreme ruler or sovereign was indicated by the high sounding titles such as: 'Parama-Bhattaraka, Maharajā-dhiraja, Paramesvara' and those of the feudatory chieftains by Raja, Mahāraja, Sāmanta or Mahāsamantādhipati etc.
In the earlier periods the distinction between a subordinate ruler or chief and the overlord was indicated by other royal epithets and titles, which varied from ages to ages and from dynasty to dynasty. But this was not the position in the early Vedic age and the age of Brāhmanas followed by the age of Epics and the age of Nandas and Mauryas. We have enough literary material at our disposal to look at the status of rulers of those periods. It may be noted that these royal epithets and titles had different status and meaning in different periods and it is, therefore, necessary to study them as they appear in different literary texts and epigraphical records.

There are five important hymns of great political significance in the Sukla-Yajurveda in which a deity is addressed with five different ways in which the kings were styled in those days. We find therein five different epithets or titles. They are: Rājan, Virāt, Samrāt, Adhipati and Vishvdevah. As no distinct lands or countries and tribes or peoples have been mentioned here, the specification of the directions scarcely seem to have any political significance.

But the picture emerges very clear when we find references in the Aitārāya Brāhmaṇa. They are of tremendous political significance. A passage in the Aitārāya-Brahmaṇa,  

which categorically and significantly specifies different titles of kings prevailing in different countries. This passage relates to the coronation ceremony in India.\textsuperscript{2} The Vasus consecrated India in the eastern direction for Sāmrajya. The kings of the eastern India or the Prāchyas were, therefore, consecrated to the Sāmrajya and were called Samrata. Then the Rudras consecrated Indra in the southern region and all kings of the southern region were consecrated to Bhaujya and were, therefore, called Bhojas.

Similarly, the Adityas consecrated him in the west of Svarajya and all kings of several principalities in the western direction were consecrated to Svarajya and are called Svaraja. Then the Visvedevas inaugurated him to Vairajya in the northern region and the people living in the northern region beyond the Himalayas were consecrated to Vairajya and are called Vīrajs. Then the Śādhyas and Āptyas consecrated Indra in the middle region to Rājya and the kings of the Kurus, Pāanchālas and other adjoining regions and territories together with the Vasus and Usinaras were consecrated to Rājya and are called Rājans. Then the Marutas and Angirasas consecrated him in the upper region to Parameshthya Maharajya and Aṣhipatya which are not associated with any countries or peoples in those times and these epithets were adopted by rulers in general and vague manner.

\textsuperscript{2} Aitareya Brāhmaṇa, viii. 14-15.
as referred to above, an innate natural impression is created in our minds that the terms Śāmraja, Bhoja, Svarāja, Virāj and Rājan were several different titles of the rulers flourishing in the different regions denoting different types of states in the country in those times, but denoting the same regal status. We also note that these were royal titles or epithets belonging to the specific regions or countries is also proved by the use of the term Bhoja, which is not originated with the root 'ranj' in any manner whatsoever and yet it is found, like Rashtriya, as a royal title of some early southern kings.

There is another passage in the Aitraliya Brāhmana which also bears political significance and throws light on the royal status of different kings or rulers of those times. 3

Thus we can conclude that monarchy was the most common type of state in ancient India. But there were republics also as the other type of the state. Their origin is traced to an early Vedic age and they continued their existence upto the times of Chandra Gupta II of the line of Imperial Guptas. We have enough evidence of their continued existence in the Pāṇini, Buddhist texts and contemporary Greek accounts.

On the basis of these accounts I am in a position to conclude that those Śamghas adopted the system of oligarchy. Thus these Śamghas represented an oligarchical pattern of Buddhist order and consisted of a federation of clans and

3. Ibid., viii. 15.
tribes. It appears that each clan had its independent autonomy, corresponding to the Kula-samgha and that all these autonomous clans formed themselves into a federal Samgha or confederacy for self-preservation and common welfare of the community. On the basis of literary sources I am in a position to conclude that there were several republican units spread all over India, especially North India. Kautilya mentions eight of them. Of these, two were settled in East India. They were the Lichchhavis and the Mallas.

The Lichchhavis had their sway over Videha and parts of North Kosala and had their capital at Vaisali, which has been identified with modern Basarh in the newly carved out Vaisali District of Bihar. The capital of the Mallas was Kushinagar or Kusinara or Kasia in eastern Uttar Pradesh, thirty-seven miles east of Gorakhpur. Of the remaining republican states the Kurus were settled over the areas near Indraprastha in the vicinity of Delhi, and the Panchālas were living round about Kāmpilya or Kāmpil between Budayon and Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh. The Madrakas occupied the country between the river Ravi and river Chenāb in the Punjab. Of the remaining Kukuras and Vrishnis, the former appears to be the descendants of Kukura, sons of Andhaka Maha-Bhoja, and therefore, they have been also known as Andhakas and Bhojas.4 Vrishnis are told to be descendants of Vrishni, the younger brother of Andhaka. It appears from a passage in Mahābhārata

that both these republican clans, which have been called therein as Andhaka-Vrishnis, formed one Samgha or the confederation. 5

This conclusion is also supported by a Sutra of Panini and we learn that whereas Krishna as a Samgha-mukhya or Chief of the republic represented the Vrishnis, Babhru and Ugrasena represented the Andhakas. We are further informed that these republican clans included the Yadavas, Kukuras, Bhojas and others. 6 These republican tribes continued their sway over a large part of the country and maintained their high traditions of political autonomy and independence. They occupied several regions in west, the north-west and other adjoining territories in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. Some of these republican tribes are known for their matchless valour and bravery and always stemmed the tide of foreign invasions and thus were effectively instrumental to defending the motherland.

The Greek historians, who came along with Macedonian forces and wrote accounts of Alexander’s invasion of India, make mention of several such republican Samghas and even refer to and other relevant details regarding their constitution. One such republican tribe provides information and deserves our special attention.

Curtius refers to it as Sabarcae whereas Diodorus calls it Sambastai. According to these Greek historians it inhabited an area between Lower Chenab and its adjoining territories.

5. Mahābhārata, Shāntiparva, 81-11-17.
6. JRAS, 1900, pp. 420-22.
These people, they say, were a powerful Indian republican tribe, obeying their elders and dwelling in cities where the form of government was democratic and not regal.7

This apparently indicates that the tribe was subdivided into a number of clans. Each one of these clans stayed in its own city and was governed according to their constitution of Kula democratic form. But these Greek historians do not tell us that these clans united themselves into a Gana, dwelling at one single capital town for the common interest of the federation. If this Greek account is not untrustworthy, it points, perhaps, to a state of things which prevailed before the various clans of Sambastai or Sabarca tribe formed themselves into a Gana federation.

It is worthwhile to note that some of the Ganas, as noted above, were originally monarchical in form. Such were, for instance, the Kurus and Pāncchālas in the sixth and fifth centuries B.C. The Jātakas and other Pāli Texts clearly give us to understand that they were not merely Samghas but ekarāja Kshatriya tribes. These tribes were governed by their rulers.8 Thus it appears that they were originally monarchical states, but they seem to have become oligarchic in the fourth century, B.C.

It appears that at one time in the history of three clans the sovereignty might have been shared equally amongst the members of the royal families as was the case with the sons of Kāḷāśoka of the Sisunāga dynasty and that each one of these brothers might have developed a separate independent clan in his own name. The political and regal power thus might have come to be centred in the hands of a few families who ultimately constituted the Gana.

Another instance of a monarchical tribe, becoming non-monarchical in form, is furnished by the Yaudheyas who appear to have occupied the eastern part of Punjab. It is well known that the Yaudheyas are referred to by Panini as an āyudha-jīvi samgaha, a republic subsisting on arms. But Panini makes it clear in his work that they were one of the very few āvudhya-jīvi tribes which had a political character and that, in this particular case, they had a monarchical constitution. But, in course of time, it appears that they gradually succeeded in acquiring greater political power and settled as a Gana.

Of the Yaudheyas we have not only their several coins regarding between 50 and 350 A.D., but we also have their inscription found at Bijayagam near Bayana in the Bharatpur District of Rajasthan. Though this is only a fragment but enough of it has been preserved and deciphered to show that it is a record of one who assumed the titles of Mahārāja and Mahāsenāpati and he was also a lead (puraskrita) of the Yaudheya Gana.

10. Ibid., iv. 1.178-9.
It may be pointed out that the title Mahārāja might have been ascribed to him as a mere member of the Gana. But the designation of Mahāsenāpati shows that he might have been elected their general and remained so in the year 371 A.D., the date of the inscription. And as the word puraskṛita, it might indicate that his Gana did not fully enjoy the executive powers but these powers were delegated to a body of Mukhyas. As noted above, the Yaudheyas were an ayudha-jīvin Samgha and they developed their fighting qualities so prominently and to such an extent as to adopt the epithet of vīra. It is further clear from the Junāgadh inscription of Audradāman that one who was their Senāpati, should particularly be looked upon as a leader.

Thus it can be concluded that in a sense the tribal oligarchy was generally known as gana. But the word Gana, in a real political sense, does not seem to have acquired this exclusive sense before the first century B.C. The earliest instance of the use of this term in this specific sense is furnished by the coins of the Mālavas. We find this word in real political sense in their coin legends. If we, however, go to earlier periods, we find that the terms Samgha and Gana had been used synonymously to denote a corporation in general.

The word, that seems to have been employed specifically to denote the tribal oligarchy prior to the first century A.D. was Pūga, which, for instance is referred to in Panini. In the Dharmaśūtras and the Dharmaśāstras, Puga and Gana have been

used perfectly synonymously. That Pûga was possessed of some political character is shown by the Vinayapitaka laying down that no female shall be consecrated as a nun without the permission of the Pûga if she happens to fall within its jurisdiction. \(^{13}\) Again, if we consider carefully the passage from the Anguttara-Nikāya referred to above, we shall find that the ruler of a higher order than the Chief of a Kula is therein specified to be the Pûga-gāmanika, which the commentator explains by Gana-jetthaka or the Chief of a Gana. Thus it becomes most unambiguous and one can say that there is no scope for slightest doubt that the term Pûga was generally used in earlier times to denote the tribal oligarchy. During the later period this word was gradually replaced by the word Gana.

The origin of Samgha or Gana as a type of state in ancient India, can be traced to the early Vedic times. There is a hymn in the Rgveda\(^{14}\) which says: "As the kings (rajanah) assemble together in the Samiti, the plants (oshadhi) gather together in him who is called a physician, one who heals disease and destroys demon". This hymn seems to refer to the rule of a State, not by a single king but by several kings. There are passages even in the Atharva-Veda which refer to the members of an oligarchy.\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\) Vinayapitaka, 13. vi.2.
\(^{14}\) Rgveda, x. 9.16.
\(^{15}\) Atharvaveda, xi.17.109.
That the Gana is a political system of the government which is tribal in nature and character, is quite probable that it might have come down from the Rigvedic period. And, in course of time, it grew continuously as a political system with certain code or constitution. As regards the later period, upto which the Gana form the state persisted, we may take into account the fact referred to by Varahamihira, who flourished in the sixth century A.D., He speaks in his work entitled Brihatsamhitā not only of Ganarājyas, that is, kingdoms of the tribal Ganas in Southern India, but also of Gana-Pungavas or Heads of Ganas such as the Malavas, Kālindas and Sibis.16

We also notice, through the ages, that side by side with Gana or tribal oligarchy, there were other forms of the political Samgha flourishing in ancient India. In this connection we have to take note of a two fold system of this type of democracy. Of these two systems or patterns, one was Nigama which was confined to a town and was a citizens' democracy, and the other was Janapada which normally extended over a province and was tribal in its character.

Here I am not referring to the power which the people of towns and provinces, called Paura and Janapada respectively, sometimes wielded in the administration of a country, and which are often-called to in the epics, law books and epigraphic records, but which was seldom of a political character. I am here referring to those cities and countries which enjoyed political autonomy as corroborated by the coins they issued. 16. Brihatsamhitā, IV. 24; XIV. 14.
Sir Alexander Cunningham picked up some such coins from Punjab which were nearly of the time of Alexander. Buhler was the first to decipher them and point out that they had on the obverse the word Negama and on the reverse various names, such as Dojaka, Talimata, Atkataka and so forth. Buhler rightly took Negama to denote for the Sanskrit term Naigamah, but wrongly understood it in the sense of 'a guild'. The word Naigamah and it may mean 'traders' or 'merchants', but never 'a guild', for which we have the term sreni.

It is natural to take this word in the sense of 'a body of citizens' for which we have the authority of the works on Hindu law. The Narada-Sariti specifies organizations such as the Naigamas, Srenis, Ganas and so forth; and this term Naigama has been explained as pauro or citizens. The law-giver Yajnavalkya also speaks of Naigamas side by side with Srenis, Pashandis and Ganas, and its commentator explains it by Gana-pauro-samuhah, that is, aggregations of the manifold citizens. It is, therefore, quite convincing to conclude that the coins discovered by Sir Alexander Cunningham were the coins struck by the people of the cities of Dojaka, Talimata and so on so forth.

It is, therefore, noteworthy, to record that the similar coins were struck by ancient Greek city states. It might be pointed out further that the Naigama or civic autonomy was conspicuous among the Hindus of the old Punjab as it was among the Greeks on the Western coast of Asia Minor. We, therefore.

can conclude that regional autonomy or an autonomy of Janapada, as it was called in those times, was proved on the basis of numismatic evidence.

We have coins of one type bearing the legend: rājana-jana-padasa (coins) of the Rajanya people. 18 Rājanya here does not signify a Kshatriya or the title Rājā, as is generally supposed, but rather, a people named Rājā, such as the Rājās of the Punjab hills. 19 The second type of coins contains the legend: Majhimikāya Sibijanapadasa i.e. coins they of the Sibi people of the Madhyamika country.

On the basis it appears that there were two peoples of the name of Sibi, one in the Punjab and the other in south-east Rājputānā. The latter have thus been distinguished from the former by the specification of their country Madhyamika. This province extended about Nagari in Mewar in Rajasthān. As issuing the coins was an indication of political power, this Janapada might rightly be considered as a democracy and hence one distinct form of the political Sangha.

The existence of the Janapada State in India is traceable to a still earlier period. In the Altreya Brāhmaṇa we have a passage which refers to the different forms of kingly power. There we are told that the kings of the Prāchyas, of the Satvats, and so on, are, when crowned, designated respectively Samrajjas, Bhojas, and so forth. But the Janapada called the

Uttara-Kurus and Uttara-Madras are styled Virājāh when they are consecrated to sovereignty. The Janapada is different from a kingdom and, therefore, denote a democracy. And it is quite possible that the title Virājāh as mentioned above, might taken to mean 'kingless', or 'without king'. But as Rājanyas, Sibis, Kurus and Madras are names of tribes, the Janapadas represented by them might have been tribal democracies.

On the basis of the above we are in a position to conclude that there were several types of republics in ancient India, tribal or civic or oligarchies. Unfortunately we do not have any material at our disposal at present regarding their constitutional frame work. Their system of government, law and legal institutions are not clear to us. We have some rules preserved for the Buddhist Samgha in the Vinaya Ptaka. This code of procedure might have been the same for all other Samghas, whether political, commercial or religious. It was, therefore, necessary to try and understand the rules for the Buddhist Samgha.

The first point to note is the order of precedence according to which seats were assigned to the Bhikshus. There was a special offer Asana-prajnapaka, whose duty was to see that they received seats according to their status, dignity and seniority. The deliberations were commenced by a mover who

20. Ibid., 1907, pp. 409-10.
announced to the assembled members what motion he was going to propose for consideration. This announcement was called Jnäpti. Then came the second part of the procedure which consisted in putting the question to the Sangha whether they approved of the motion. It might be put once, twice or thrice. In the former case the Karma or formal act was called Jnäpti-dvitiya, and in the latter, Jnäpti-chaturtha. It appears necessary to offer an instance in order to explain what it means, and quote it from the Mahavagga. Buddha laid down the following rule in regard to the Upadhipada ordination. "Let a learned competent Bhikkhu", said he, "proclaim the following natti before the Sambha:

"Let the Sambha, revered Sirs, hear me. This person desires to receive the upasampada ordination from the venerable. If the Sangha is ready, let the Sangha confer on the Upasampada ordination with Upajjhaya. This is the natti". Now what follows in Karmavachcha, which is placing the motion before the Sangha for discussion and execution (Karma), and is in every case accompanied by the formal repetition of the Jnäpti (natti). In the present case the Karmavachcha is repeated thrice, as follows:

"Let the Sangha, revered Sirs, bear me. This person desires to receive the upasampada ordination from the venerable. The Sangha confers on the upasampada ordination with upajjhava. Let any one of the venerable brethren who is in favour of the upasampada ordination of as upajjhava be silent, and any one who is not in favour of it speak."
"And for the second time I thus speak to you, Let the Samgha hear me ...

"and for the third time I thus speak to you: Let the Samgha, hear me ....

It will be seen that the above motion had been put thrice before the assembly, and that we have here three Karmavachas and one Jnapti. It is thus Janpti-chaturtha Karma. A Karma or official act of the Samgha to be valid, must comprise one Jnapti and one of three Karmavachas.

When a motion was placed before an assembly and all those who were present remained silent, it was considered to be carried out unanimously. But if any discussion or difference of opinion arose, the matter was decided by Yabhuuvvasika, that is, the vote of the majority. This voting was by ballot, and was done by the distribution of tickets or salākas as they were called; and the Bhikshu who collected them was designated Salākāgahapaka. If any member of the Samgha was too ill or disabled in any other way to attend a meeting, he could give an absentee vote known as Chhanda. If it was feared that enough Bhikshus might not be forthcoming or might not attend the particular meeting, they secured the necessary quorum by sending the Ganapūraka, who necessarily was the 'whip'.

These details are enough to show that the code of rules, which regulated the business of the Assembly, was of a highly methodical, specialised and developed character. It may be
observed that provisions were made for the transactions of political bodies of the modern civilised age. That the description of the procedure given in the Buddhist books shows how remarkable was the resemblance between that of the assemblies of two thousand five hundred years ago and of those of the present day. 22

At the same time it is noteworthy that practically none of the technical terms applied to Sangha debate have been anywhere explained by Buddha. Had he himself been the inventor of them, it would have been imperatively necessary for him to explain their meaning in extenso. It, therefore, appears quite probable that they were known during the life and times of Buddha and therefore, no explanation was necessary.

There can, therefore, be no doubt that the various technical terms and rules of procedure which the Buddha adopted for his religious Sangha, were those which were already in vogue with the institutions of a democratic type, whether social, political, legal or commercial, for the purpose of transaction of their business or accomplishing the smooth functioning of their institutions.

22. India : A bird's Eye View, p. 34.