

## INDO-ARYAN POLITY

# INDO-ARYAN POLITY

BEING A STUDY OF THE ECONOMIC AND  
POLITICAL CONDITION OF INDIA  
AS DEPICTED IN THE RIG VEDA

BY

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TO  
HIS HIGHNESS MAHARAJADHIRAJ RAJ RAJESHWARA  
SAWAI SHREE TUKOJI RAO HOLKAR BAHADUR,  
G C I.E., OF INDORE,  
AS AN HUMBLE TOKEN OF  
LOYALTY AND DEVOTION.



## PREFACE

THE present volume is an enlargement of my book, *Indo-Aryan Polity*, published in 1919. As will be seen from Introduction, a good portion of my original plan of writing an account of the economic and political condition of ancient India has now been realized.

I should here remember with gratefulness the memory of the late Sir Asutosh Mookerjee of Calcutta, under whose encouragement I began the work about eight years ago. Circumstances prevented me from carrying on the work as speedily as I desired.

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## INTRODUCTION

My object is to attempt to construct the economic history of India. First, I propose to deal only with the Vedic period, as that in itself covers a long history of the Indo-Aryans. The Vedic hymns were composed during several hundred years. They not only reflect the social life of the early Aryans in India, the environment and the consequent adjustment to it, but at the same time contain many of the leading ideas that were moulding the society of the time. They also retain some of the institutions which were becoming obsolete. All these aspects may be studied with profit from the texts of the Vedas. The development of a race can very well be studied from its ideas as found in its literature. Social progress is due to the interaction of man and his environment. By this conflict and the necessary attempt at harmony ideas grow, the mind is led to think. The primitive mind would hardly begin to think about anything unless some event, that is, change, compelled it to do so. The objective world is predominant as the cause of all ideas. Thus environmental change is the main stimulus to the progress of primitive man. The fact is very clearly seen in the changes in religious beliefs of the different branches of the Aryan stock. The Indo-Aryans and the Græco-Romans started with the same ideas about religion. Religion, as Caird says, is the continuous attempt of the mind, the self, the ego, to rehabilitate itself with its environment. The primitive mind seeks to propitiate every force in the universe which is superior to the individual. Thus according to Pfeleiderer the first religion was based on fear. This fear of the forces in the universe may be said to be due to superior environmental forces. These again may be divided into two, viz., the social forces

and the physical forces. The primitive Aryan saw in the head of the family a force which was superior to any that an individual might attain to. The undisputed and ready obedience that the *pater* commanded must have had its origin in his superior physical force. Even after the organization of society had advanced it secured for the *pater* as such the supreme power over life and death. So, when the mind began to think, howsoever crudely, it saw in the *pater* the embodiment of the highest social authority. He was the wielder of supreme power in life, and how could it be thought that he was powerless after death? Though invisible and buried under the ground he was supposed to wield the same power. The separation of the man from his power was too advanced a conception for the primitive mind to realize. The successor of the original *pater* was merely carrying on the same *imperium* with the help of his dead predecessors. Thus one of the first conceptions about religion was the worship of the dead ancestor who was supposed to exercise the same powers of protection against alien aggression.

At the same time the primitive man saw in the physical environment certain forces which were beyond his control and which could handle him in any way they liked. He saw in his daily life that there was no event or change without a personality as the cause of it. So, he attributed individual personality to each of the various forces of physical nature. Thus originated worship of the gods of physical nature as isolated individual beings who exercise a power and therefore require propitiation.

The elements of these two forms of worship grew up in the Aryan mind before the migrations began. In Greece and Rome physical nature, being beautiful, did not rouse the sense of fear, and hence of worship. There the other element of ancestor worship was carried to its logical extreme and moulded all the institutions of the Greeks and the Romans.<sup>1</sup> In India, on the other hand, nature, being sublime, inspired awe. Thus Indra, Agni, the Maruts,

<sup>1</sup> Coulanges: *The Ancient City*. Warde Fowler: *Religious Experience of the Ancient Romans*.

etc., gained a predominance in the Vedas. The Aryan intellect, being essentially speculative, developed the other side later on, e.g., Jupiter, Zeus, etc., in the West, and all the detailed working out of the religion of Vedic *pitr̥is* during the later Pauranic period in India.

Religion is the most important element in a primitive society, especially among the early Aryans. Therefore, it has been possible to study its development more fully than any other aspect of their life. But early man is very material too, and his religion is always expressed in terms essentially pertaining to his material interests. Thus the religious hymns of the Vedas can profitably be studied from the economic point of view as well. And it is our purpose to study the earliest literature of the Indo-Aryans with a view to the building up of their economic and political structure so far as that is possible from the materials that have come down to us.

The pertinent question is raised here as to what should come under economic history. We may at once point out that its aim is to trace the working out of ideas so far as these were reflected in acts. That is, we should not only study economic facts but also economic concepts. Facts of economic life, again, may be influenced by non-economic forces in society; and these come within our purview so far as they affect economic activities. Thus the organization of the family leading to the village community would have to be studied. The social relationships would reveal the extent of social association; and we have to reckon with the latter in determining the economic unit. Social morality would have to be studied so far as it gave direction to ideas affecting the economic evolution of the race. On the continent of Europe slavery, usury, as economic concepts, were directly influenced by moral ideas about them. In India the position of the *vanij* or merchant in society must have led to the discouragement of trade as a profession. Political organization is responsible for economic activity to such a great extent that its study is an essential preliminary to a proper understanding of economic growth. Religion no less affects the economic

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ideas than polity. Wars of defence and aggression lead to the development in the art of production of war materials. The chariot, the bow and arrow, the coat of mail, etc., all testify to this. The improvement of submarines, aeroplanes, and machine guns during the recent war proves the validity of our proposition even in modern days.

We can say, therefore, with Cunningham, that the economic history of a nation must be a study of all the facts of its past life, but only from a special point of view, viz., the economic.

We have, therefore, divided our subject into various subdivisions, each of which must be studied for the proper understanding of the economic life of the Vedic Aryans.

The subdivisions are as follows :—

- I. Family.
- II. Morality.
- III. Castes and classes.
- IV. Village community affecting the family.
- V. Polity—under which would come—
  - (1) The division into political groups.
  - (2) Political institutions.
  - (3) Judicial organization.
- VI. Agriculture :
  - (1) Monsoon.
  - (2) Methods and implements of agriculture.
  - (3) Irrigation and manure.
  - (4) Agricultural products.
  - (5) Cattle.
- VII. Arts and Crafts :
  - (1) Use of metals and the art of smelting.
  - (2) Implements used in the Soma sacrifice.
  - (3) Domestic utensils.
  - (4) House and its building.
  - (5) Wells.
  - (6) Use of leather.
  - (7) Clothing and weaving.
  - (8) Navigation and shipbuilding.
  - (9) Hunting—the bow and arrow.

- VIII. Units of measurement.
- IX. Trade and commerce.
- X. Economic concepts :
  - (1) Wealth.
  - (2) Property.
- XI. War and the implements of war.
- XII. Professions and callings.
- XIII. Culture—material civilization :
  - (1) Food and its preparation.
  - (2) Knowledge and arts.
  - (3) Custom and fashion.
  - (4) Urban and rural life.
- XIV. Conclusion.

Family does not directly come within the scope of our study; but as it indirectly affects the material welfare and gives direction to the system of economy, it must be studied only so far as that is necessary. The Vedic family has already been studied by almost all the Western scholars of Vedic literature. We have, therefore, made no complete sketch of it, for in a work like this the conclusions of others should not be included merely for the purpose of completing the story. Our study has been confined to a few institutions of family life, which help in tracing the changes in the economic life during the period of the later Samhitas. The section on Family is, therefore, incomplete and the topics dealt with disjointed.

War and the implements of war have been delegated to a separate treatment because of their great importance in the economic life of a race that is settling down in an alien land hedged in on all sides by powerful foreign people. In the early Vedic literature these form a subject which is big enough to be treated separately.

In this book all the above topics have been treated except (1) War and the implements of war, (2) Professions and callings, and (3) Culture. These are left out for treatment in a separate volume.

The division of the period followed here is entirely different from that of all authorities on Vedic literature.

The usual practice is to treat the whole of the Vedic period, including that of the Commentaries, as if it was one dominated by any single idea. In fact, the period is vast enough to be divided into smaller ones for the purpose of studying each with reference to the peculiar ideas and activities of each. In the Atharva Veda there is the distinct stamp of newer ideas and newer activities for which we vainly seek in the Rig Veda. The Brahmanas or the Commentaries always profess to be the proper interpretations and the logical development of ideas found in the Samhitas. But they invariably read the current ideas into the more ancient texts. From our point of view it is absolutely necessary to separate each period from the others. It is only by such division that we can trace the development of ideas and activities in the sphere of economic life.

We have, therefore, limited our inquiry to the strictly Vedic period, that is, the period during which the four Vedas were composed. This period again has been subdivided into three, viz., the period of the Rig Veda, the period of the Saman and Yajur Vedas and the contemporary Brahmanas, and finally the period of the Atharva Veda. Of course, there is not much difference between the period of the Rig Veda and that of the Saman and Yajur Vedas. Some of the texts of the latter are bodily taken into the Saman Veda. But others are at the same time excluded. From this discrimination we shall discover the change of opinion in the meantime. This will give us a workable clue to the unfolding of the later economic life. The period of Atharva Veda as a separate one needs no justification, as it undoubtedly is a period of change and development.

In dealing with the period of the Rig Veda as a separate and distinct stage, another difficulty arises. Here we can study economic facts and economic concepts, as also the social and political institutions of the time. But the difficulty is with regard to the co-ordination of facts and ideas to institutions and social life. This must be done by means of some workable theory. But a theory is always



justified by its capacity to explain the past facts and relate them to the future development. By confining ourselves, in this book, to the period of the Rig Veda only, we are apt to be misconstrued as to the reasonableness of our theories. We cannot go beyond the Rig Veda and therefore cannot justify our theories by showing their natural development in the actual working system of the later age. In such circumstances we have been compelled to withhold our exposition of the theory underlying the connection of ideas and activities and institutions till we come to the next period. In such a work, which must necessarily be divided into parts, we cannot hold out any theory based on the past facts only without correlating it with subsequent growth. This would lay us open to the charge of dogmatism and hasty generalization. That is the reason why we have not connected the special institutions of family life with any of the economic activities of the period, nor have we brought in political institutions as an influencing factor on the development of arts and crafts, and trade and commerce. We have, therefore, left these topics for the second period of our division, where we shall first of all correlate all these ideas, activities, and institutions of the Rig Veda period, and build up our theory which we shall have opportunity to uphold in the subsequent growth of the same elements during the next period. This will give to the whole structure a logical firmness which it is worth while to pursue even if at the apparent sacrifice of coherence in dealing with the first period.

We have also attempted to compare, so far as is practicable, the development of the same ideas and institutions in the other branches of the Aryan family. The best method of study is the Historico-Comparative method, that is, to study the historical stages of the past of any one nation and to compare each stage with the similar stage in the history of other nations. Therefore, in tracing the development of the economic life of the Indo-Aryans, we have freely compared with the development of the Greeks, the Romans, and the Teutons, particularly the latter, because economic activity was more fully

and more freely developed among the early Teutons.

We may say here that we have excluded from our study those passages which are subjects of great dispute as to their real interpretation. Their inclusion would have made our results less certain and more open to doubts. For example, the word *pani* occurs in the Rig Veda in several passages. It has been variously interpreted as the aborigines, the demons, and the merchants. In such circumstances we have thought it proper, for the certainty of our conclusions, not to accept it as merchant, although, if taken for merchant, the passages would substantially add to our knowledge of the conditions of trade. Philological experts must discuss and substantially agree before we can use such doubtful passages as evidences of the economic life of the time.

Even in sifting the evidence which is certain as to its meaning, we must use considerable discretion in selecting passages for our purposes. We must remember that the current practice and ideas tend to be reflected in the language. Such study from the language itself is of importance in understanding the economic progress attained, inasmuch as the Vedas were written for religious purposes, disregarding or at least not realizing the economic aspects. Therefore, economic matters are alluded to in so far as they are required for comparisons and metaphors, and in so far as they are directly the objects prayed for. Even when we do not get direct materials to prove the development of any art or the practical effect of any institution, we can deduce, in general terms, the progress that was made along any line by the mere mention of details about it. For example, chariot was, in the period of the Rig Veda, one of the most useful objects for purposes of war. The complex parts of the chariot as mentioned in many passages show that chariot-building as an art was very highly developed. The mere mention of wheels, spokes, felly, axlehole, rim, fore part of the pole (*pranga*), nave of the wheel, etc., shows that the chariot must have been an ancient counterpart of the modern wheeled carriage. Under such circumstances, although the actual process of

construction is unknown, the description sufficiently warrants the assumption of good progress made in a particular art. Indeed, argument along this line must be frequent in the building up of the economic history of the Vedic period. We have, therefore, even at the risk of being uninteresting, collated such descriptions to prove the prevalence of a particular industry or to prove the existence of any social institution.

• In this task of investigating into the economic life of the time, we have, not received much assistance from the existing authorities on the Vedas. Economic history as such of the Vedic period has not as yet been especially studied by anyone. There have been commentaries and translations, both Indian and European ; there have been some very brilliant studies of the family life and of the religion of the Vedas, which throw considerable light on the proper understanding of our subject so far as these indirectly affect the economic unit. But, as already mentioned, all these deal with the whole of the Vedic period and, as a consequence, not infrequently fall into the error of general assertions about the earliest period from what they find only in the later Samhitas or Brahmanas. So far as these can be separated and utilized for the earlier period we have attempted to do so ; on doubtful points we have, for the sake of safety, left them out, and, in rare cases, discussed the differences of opinion among the authorities. Where it has been possible to develop a theory and justify it fully from the growth of events in the past and support it by subsequent facts of the period of the Rig Veda, we have done so. The theory about the origin of private property among the Vedic Indians is one which can be proved by the materials in the Rig Veda without going to the later Samhitas. So also is the theory of navigation.

Of all authorities Macdonell and Keith have been most useful. Their Vedic Index is, of course, for the whole of the Vedic period, including that of the Commentaries. This has naturally diminished its utility for our immediate purposes. But still the collation of facts, and particularly

the discussion of conflicting opinions, although very brief, have been of great use.

With regard to interpretations many authorities have been followed and the most natural ones which have the concurrence of authoritative commentators have been accepted. Sayana's authority must stand very high because he worked practically with the help of many leading pundits assembled for the purpose. Without obvious incongruity or twists of the meaning, he has not been abandoned. Mahidhara and Yaska have also been freely consulted. Of the European scholars Max Müller and Wilson stand out prominently among the English writers. Macdonell and Keith's book has been practically useful in supplying the opinions of the German authorities, Zimmer, Roth, Oldenburg, Pischel, Weber, Geldner, etc. It is a matter for regret that want of sufficient knowledge of the language did not permit a closer contact with the German authorities on the Vedas.

The literature of the Rig Veda has been classified in two ways, viz., according to Ashtakas which are eight and according to Mandalas which are ten. I have followed the latter division. Convenience in reference has been attained by ignoring the Adhyayas and Anuvakas. So that any reference would be with regard to the Mandala, the Sukta, and the verse. All references are given thus and they are from the Rig Veda, except where the name of any other book has been explicitly mentioned.

I have purposely refrained from using the system of diacritical marks because this book is not meant to be a technical study of any Sanskrit literature, but an economic history of India, and because, to the readers of such a book, the diacritical marks, instead of being a help, are a source of confusion. The main purpose of the book is not to study the Sanskrit names and words, but their significance in comprehending the economic condition of the people of the period of the Rig Veda.

## CHAPTER I.

### FAMILY.

THE Aryan family in its earliest stages has been the same everywhere, in Greece, in Rome as well as in India. It is not our intention to go through all the details of family life, because that would not be for our immediate purpose, which is to study the political and the economic aspects of Vedic life. Moreover, the Vedic family has been already studied by many authorities. But we must at the same time recognize that the family unit affects, in a large measure, the political unit, and determines, to some extent, the economic organization of a nation. Therefore, we need know something about the family itself. That it was of the patriarchal type is certain. The father and the *griha-pati* are separately mentioned, showing that the father was not necessarily the head of the family. His father or his elder brother would naturally be so. The joint family, therefore, must have been pretty big, and, from the different relationships that were recognized within the family folds, it is clear that the constituents of the family were mostly agnates, except in the case of the sonless father of the only daughter. The diverse relations must have made the family a big one. Moreover, considering that in the earliest stages of the history of a nation, family is the only form of social association when the State has not grown, the disintegration of the family is less probable, if the race wants to preserve its military skill and communal organization. Both these are found, in an advanced state, in the Rig Veda itself, so that from this side also the family can be proved to have been a big one.<sup>1</sup> To avoid traversing

<sup>1</sup> For similar condition of the Græco-Roman society see Coulanges' *The Ancient City*.

the same path which has been done by others, we shall here study only some of the institutions of the Aryan family which will help us to understand the polity.

### Gotra.

The word *gotra* as it occurs in the Rig Veda,<sup>1</sup> has indeed been interpreted variously and, in view of the later use of the word to mean that family organization corresponding to the Greek phratry and Roman cury, the attempt has not infrequently been made to project the later idea into the passages occurring in the Rig Veda. The later meaning may have been a natural development, but the original meaning was probably "herd"—herd of cattle in particular. Wilson, however, translates it by clouds, which seems to be erroneous, the only relevant point being that Indra, in connection with whose name the word *gotra* is always used in the Rig Veda, was associated with the clouds; but so was he associated with the release of the cattle of the Angirasas from Pani. (The fact, however, is quite clear that in the Rig Veda we cannot associate *gotra* with the special family organization of a later age, and this is so in spite of the striking similarity of such a conception of the family among the ancient Greeks and Romans. Evidence thus from Indian sources is wanting for Fustel de Coulanges' theory<sup>2</sup> as to the development of ideas about the phratry and the cury as institutions existing in their inception at least at a time when the Aryans were still undispersed. Or, the counter-theory must be put forth that the Indo-Aryans started from the original Asiatic home, wherever that might have been, at a time when these institutions had not developed sufficiently to leave any permanent traces upon the social institutions of the Aryan families. But we must be as cautious in accepting this theory of the phratry and cury as in rejecting it, since we argue from the negative point of view only, viz., want of evidence in ancient Indian literature, which, we know, has not come down to us in any complete form. The denial involves the further difficulty of explaining the origin and growth

of the *gotra* as a clan organization during the Brahmana period, and the Brahmanas always assume that they are merely explaining the Samhitas.

But though we must reject the *gotra* as a clan institution, that is, as a bond of relationship, we find ample evidence in the Rig Veda of two facts, viz. kinship and the patriarchal type of family organization. The latter is a peculiar type found universally in all the Aryan branches of the human race. Angirasa, as the original ancestor who established the worship of fire (Agni), is referred to very frequently, and is also deified in the later portions of the Rig Veda.

### Kinship.

Similar forms of kinship may be explained as the result of the growth of similar institutions under similar conditions of life, the stage of civilization being substantially the same among the earliest Greeks, Romans, and Hindus. The backward condition in this respect of the other Aryan branch, the Teutons, is of course easily explained by their too long contact with and too much assimilation of barbarians.

This kinship has been variously expressed in the Rig Veda with very divergent meanings of the same words. *Jnati* is found in the earlier portion of the Rig Veda as meaning only the members of a joint family sleeping in the same paternal house. Rishi Samyu, while singing the praise of Indra, the great deity of the Rig Veda period, calls him the slayer of Vritra the Asura, and the protector of all of "us," the members of the family at worship, and he uses the word *jnati* to signify this.<sup>1</sup> But this word has been more widely used to include all relations, not necessarily of the same paternal family, by Rishi Vasukarna, while singing for the Viswadevas, the latter being asked to be as affectionate to the worshippers as their relations are to them.<sup>2</sup> Rishi Surya, the daughter of Savitri, sang in praise of marriage, and there she confined the word *jnati* to the kinsmen of the bride only.<sup>3</sup> From this conflict one fact is patent enough and that is that

<sup>1</sup> vi, 45, 5.

<sup>2</sup> x, 46, 14.

<sup>3</sup> x, 85, 28.

*jñati* signified relationship which was not necessarily confined to the original by narrow bounds of the paternal family, thus recognizing relations, if not as a corporate body or institution, at least as members for whom the people of the time felt and whom they remembered even when worshipping their deities for the narrow ends of material welfare of the family. The word *jñati* is more universal in its later interpretation, but other words equally significant occur in the Rig Veda. Rishi Hiranyastupa, in propitiating Agni, another favourite of the Rig Veda period, goes much further and tells the deity: "We are thy kinsmen," the actual word used being *jami*.<sup>1</sup> Rishi Gotama, with greater deference to divinity, uses the same word when, in a prayerful mood, he asks the god Agni as to who are his kinsmen.<sup>2</sup> Again, Raja Vishagir's sons, the five Rishis,<sup>3</sup> in invoking Indra as their protector, say that Indra went to war with his kinsmen.<sup>4</sup> In i, 124, 6, Wilson interprets *ajamim na parivrinakti jamim* as "neglects not to give the joy of sight of her own or of a different nature." Its special meaning of sister is not unusual. Rishi Kutsa, in addressing Indra and Agni jointly, considers them as kinsmen and relations using *sajata*, a rare word in the Rig Veda.<sup>5</sup> Rishi Viswamitra again uses the word *sabandhu* in establishing kinship between Agni on the one hand and sun, heaven, and earth on the other.<sup>6</sup> Rishi Sobhari, however, in addressing the Maruts, uses the same word to mean relations by common origin,<sup>7</sup> thus practically corresponding to the use of *jñati* by Rishi Samyu.

### Husband and Wife.

Thus establishing the truth that kinship as such, even external to the paternal house, was recognized by the people of the time, let us see, in outline, the organization of the family in its other special relationships. The most important was of course that of husband and wife. The

<sup>1</sup> i, 31, 10.

<sup>2</sup> i, 75, 3.

<sup>3</sup> Rikraswa, Ambarisha, Sahadeva, Bhayamana, and Suradhas, i, 100, 17.

<sup>4</sup> i, 100, 11.

<sup>5</sup> i, 109, 1.

<sup>6</sup> iii, 1, 10.

<sup>7</sup> viii, 20, 21.



position of the husband was undoubtedly the same as that in the sister families of Greece and Rome. This is abundantly clear from the Rishis themselves who were rulers of families. The position of the wife is not so clear nor so widely known. The word *dampati* is used in many senses. One use of it is by Rishi Paruehchhepa in his hymn to Agni.<sup>1</sup> He means evidently preserver of the house, since it applies to Agni. But it has been used as householder<sup>2</sup> and as husband and wife.<sup>3</sup> In all cases where it means husband and wife the importance has been uniformly given to their unity of mind and the real happiness that they derive from marriage. (The position of wife as part of the husband, even when invoking the gods and offering sacrifices, clearly demonstrates her high rank in the ancient family. This fact will be made patent if we follow the rights and duties of the wife as depicted in the Rig Veda. The desolate condition of the wife<sup>4</sup> on the demise of her husband is significant. We shall have occasion to discuss this in connection with the widow. The sentiment, strong and abiding, that is the perennial bond between man and wife was as strongly felt and as fully recognized. Rishi Kavasha (more properly Rishi Aksha), in picturing the gamester and dicer, makes him repent so sincerely that we at once see the natural man behind the sinner, the sinner who has abused his rights as husband and neglected his duties, while the patient and faithful soul of his wife has not swerved an inch and has persevered to the last in order to see her husband repent for his excesses. The husband recognizes the abyss into which he has fallen and wonders that his wife was never angry with him nor overcome with shame, but was ever kind and compassionate to him and his friends, the latter perhaps the cause of his fall. And the husband is remorseful that he has abandoned her for his inordinate passion for gambling.<sup>5</sup> The penitence of the sinner is all the more pathetic because now he is tired even of gambling. If this picture of the

<sup>1</sup> i, 127, 8.<sup>2</sup> viii, 69, 16; viii, 84, 7.<sup>3</sup> v, 3, 2, viii, 31, 5; x, 10, 5; x, 68, 2; x, 85, 32; x, 95, 12.<sup>4</sup> x, 18, 8.<sup>5</sup> x, 34/2, 3, 13.

poet is mere imagination without any bearing on the facts of life, it is an incredibly precise record of the psychology of the repentant sinner and an unusually accurate delineation of cultured human life. It would in fact be an anachronism. And if the picture be representative of the facts of actual life, as it most probably is, it only shows the depth of feeling of the man, his intellectual and moral perception, as also the inspiration, the discipline, and the abounding love of the woman, to whom and for whom afterwards he relents.

The affection of the husband for his wife must have been universally recognized, for we find Rishi Archan asking Savitri to hasten to her worshippers even as a husband hastens to his wife.<sup>1</sup> The lighter aspects of marital life were not unknown. The wife used to adorn herself for the attraction of the husband, even as she does in the twentieth century, though with a different taste. Rishi Vamadeva, in his hymn to Agni in an earlier sukta, calls upon the deity to come to the altar which has been well decorated for the purpose, just as a devoted wife puts on elegant garments to gratify her husband.<sup>2</sup> The word *patni* also occurs very frequently in the sense of wife.

### Mother.

Another word *nari* also meaning wife,<sup>3</sup> woman,<sup>4</sup> and mother<sup>5</sup> comes up again and again. Indrani, in addressing Indra, especially speaks of the mother as one who institutes all ceremony and who is the mother of male offspring. This shows her high position by virtue of religion and as progenitor of the species.<sup>6</sup> Sisu sings in *pankti* metre about the acts and occupations of domestic life.<sup>7</sup> Mother (*nana*) is here not very gloriously described as throwing corn upon the grinding stone. But this gives a very good workable hint as to the nature of her occupation generally, which must have been management of the household and performance of the homely duties of a primarily agricultural life.

<sup>1</sup> x, 149, 4.

<sup>2</sup> vi, 3, 2.

<sup>3</sup> viii, 77, 8.

<sup>4</sup> vii, 60, 8; x, 18, 7; x, 86, 11. <sup>5</sup> vii, 20, 5; x, 86, 10.

<sup>6</sup> x, 86, 10.

<sup>7</sup> ix, 112, 3.

**Father.**

*Pitri* is a common name for father. Some authorities derive it from the onomatopoetic syllable, *pa*. If this theory is correct, then the formation of the word must have been reached in the original home of the Aryans, since we find *pater* among the Romans as well. But if the word be derived from Sanskrit root, "*pa*," to protect, then its meaning becomes more consistent. Because, whatever might have been the origin of the word, the fact remains that *pitri* meant primarily protector in Sanskrit as well as in Latin and Greek, whereas fatherhood was conveyed by an entirely different word, *janitri* in Sanskrit, *genitor* in Latin, and *gennetae* in Greek. So we see that the derivation of *pitri*, *pater*, from root *pa* is very likely, but it is now hopeless to attempt to be positive for want of any materials bearing on the point.

The control of the father of the family (*grihapati*)<sup>1</sup> over the members was carried in Greece and Rome to its logical extremes; and it required a series of revolutions before the bondage, for such it became, could be removed for giving free scope to the civic ideas that grew up with the later and wider conceptions connected with the gods of physical nature as they developed in the West.<sup>2</sup> In India we find no such revolution. The causes of this seem to be mainly three. The omnipotence of the father was never carried to any excesses which might naturally, as in the West, recoil on itself. Secondly, the gods of physical nature were assimilated at an early date to the religious beliefs; or more properly, their predominance in the Vedic religion existed without shaking the foundations of ancestor worship. Finally, civic ideas as distinguished from those relating to family did not grow consistently in India, and the earliest development of castes and classes smoothed the whole machinery by removing any possible ground for friction.

So, we see the son in the family subordinate to the father in all respects; but the proper functions of each already

<sup>1</sup> vi, 53, 2.

<sup>2</sup> Coulanges: *The Ancient City*.

assigned and neither attempting to extend his own jurisdiction at the cost of the other. During the period of the Rig Veda, it was harmony on the whole, and we do not come across any passage which deliberately attempts to disillusion us on the point. The limited scope of our inquiry does not permit us to go later than the Vedic period, or it would have been possible to prove that the early development of castes and classes mainly influenced the social structure of the Indo-Aryans. The later polity was particularly fortunate in being able to assimilate the organization of the caste into the body politic—the village community of the Aryan race.) The strength thus attained can be easily imagined from the post-Norman English polity when it was able, under William, the Henries and Edwards, to assimilate the clan organization of the shires and hundreds as integral parts of the monarchical hegemony.<sup>1</sup> Thus only could England escape decrepitude and inanition from which the mediæval European polity suffered so much, by assimilating strength, and without dissipating energy in combating the clan institutions. (Thus, also it seems probable, was the ancient Hindu polity saved and strengthened by assimilating the class organization into the later village community. Of the latter, however, traces there are even in the Vedic age, though not much in the Rig Veda Samhita.)

### Marriage.

It seems from various passages in the Rig Veda that marriage usually took place between grown-up persons of their own independent choice. At least this is certain that it was not obligatory to get the girl married in any case, as was the prevalent custom in a later age. Rishi Somahuti, in addressing Indra, claims wealth from the deity just as a virtuous maiden growing old under the paternal roof claims to be supported by her parents.<sup>2</sup> The very context shows that it was not unusual to grow old as a maiden, and her right, moral at least, to be supported

<sup>1</sup> Jenks: *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages*, Chapter III.

<sup>2</sup> II, 17, 7.

as an integral part of the family naturally suggests its frequency. This right too must have been considered to be a social force, otherwise the strength of the claim on Indra for wealth is proportionately reduced. The story of Ghosha, daughter of Kakshivat, the Brahnavadini, is pathetic to a fault. The girl was most probably suffering from leprosy,<sup>1</sup> for the removal of which and for a husband she prayed to the Aswins, the physicians of the gods. We hear in an earlier hymn that Ghosha succeeded in her endeavours, and that the Aswins bestowed on her a husband<sup>2</sup> and restored her to youth and beauty. If we turn to the hymns of Ghosha herself to the Aswins we find her addressing the deities as if they were the good fortune of a maiden growing old in her father's house, and in them we find a touch of her own sad experiences. She is grateful to them who are the preservers of the famishing, protectors of the fallen, the blind, and the feeble.<sup>3</sup> "They call you the physicians of the Sacrifice."<sup>4</sup>

There is one significant hint of love amongst youths in a passage of the Rig Veda. Rishi Kutsa, in addressing Surya, says that he follows the dawn just as a man follows a young and elegant woman.<sup>5</sup> This picture is quite by the way, but it impresses one with the idea that the simile had its counterpart in actual life. This belief is further confirmed by the references which we find in the Rig Veda to the mutual affection of lovers. One passage<sup>6</sup> is a bit obscure, and there have been interpretations according to which she has been ranked as the wife of a man. But another reference<sup>7</sup> is clearly indicative of such free love which was, it seems, as freely professed. Soma is praised as a woman praises her lover. Rishi Kavasha, addressing the gamester and dicer, even in repentance says that the rattling of the dice draws him away to the gambling place even as a harlot hastens to the place of assignation.<sup>8</sup> There is at least one reference to the presents of a youthful gallant to a maiden, which are described as lavish.<sup>9</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> i, 122, 5.<sup>4</sup> x, 39, 3; x, 40, 5.<sup>7</sup> ix, 32, 5.<sup>2</sup> i, 117, 7.<sup>5</sup> i, 115, 2.<sup>8</sup> x, 34, 5.<sup>3</sup> i, 112, 8.<sup>6</sup> i, 167, 3.<sup>9</sup> i, 117, 18.

prevalent belief in magic and spells naturally led to another curious custom with regard to the meeting of lovers. The girl, in her anxiety to secure secrecy for her lover's meetings, invoked Indra,† to put to sleep all the members of the house. Even the dog must be put to sleep! In another passage reference is made to the awakening of the sleeping mistress by the gallant lover.‡ In the latest Rig Veda period we find our final confirmation of the theory that marriage was between grown-up men and women. Savitri's invocation, as embodied in x, 85, 29 and the subsequent slokas, gives a full description of things just after the marriage, which are only possible in the case of a woman who has, previous to marriage, attained the age of puberty.

From all this it seems abundantly clear that the women used to marry after they had passed the age of minority and when they could discriminate. The very fact that before marriage there existed the custom of wooing proves its truth. Rishi Sankusuka, son of Yama, clearly refers to the dead husband as one who wooed and won the woman as his wife.‡ Rishi Ghosha, in addressing the Aswins, also expresses this idea when she asks them as to who brings them to the sacrifice like unto a woman bringing her husband to herself.⁴

### Other Relations.

If we glance at the other recognized relationships, we are equally struck by the early and complete organization of the family. The newly married wife, on going to her husband's home, is advised to behave properly towards the members of this new family; and in this enumeration, besides the father-in-law and the mother-in-law, the husband's brothers (the word is *devri*) are mentioned.⁵ Similarly we find recognition of the wife's brother (*syala*),⁶ though not as a member of the husband's family, since he must be naturally the member of the family of the wife's father. In x, 85, 46, above we find that the advice is given that the wife should behave like a queen to the

† vii, 65, 8.

⁴ x, 40, 2.

‡ i, 134, 3.

⁵ x, 85, 46.

⁶ x, 18, 8.

⁷ i, 109, 2.

sister of the husband (*nanadar*) who is evidently recognized as a member of the husband's family. This was of course so till her marriage and entrance into her husband's family. Grandson and grand-daughter (*napat* and *napatri*) were evidently members of the family.<sup>1</sup> The position of the father-in-law (*svasura*) and mother-in-law (*svasru*) naturally follows from that of the husband and wife in the family. They are frequently mentioned in the Rig Veda,<sup>2</sup> but all these occur only towards the end of the Rig Veda. This fact may be interpreted in two ways:—(i) That these relationships were not recognized as of sufficient nearness to be vital parts of the inter-family relationships, or that in the pastoral stage preceding the settled agricultural life of the Vedic Aryans, the wife once married followed the family of the husband in its wanderings, having not much to do with her father's family except by happy surprise meetings in the course of migration. (ii) That the marriage itself was not a religious or social bond, but merely the living together of the man and woman, so that the woman left her father's home perhaps by stealth or by force, and severed for ever her connection with her father's family. But in view of the scanty evidence we cannot be positive in favour of either. The later explanations in post-Rich Samhitas and the Brahmanas are not reliable as such, since they are, at least with regard to these matters, merely the reading of prevalent ideas into the more ancient texts. With the recognition of *svasura* and *svasru* also comes that of the daughter-in-law, *snusa*.<sup>3</sup>

### Polygamy.

Polygamy is admittedly a feature of the age. The word *sapatni* (co-wife) is used in connection with the sun in an early passage of the Rig Veda.<sup>4</sup> But more direct references to polygamy as a recognized and usual system are abundant throughout the Rig Veda. Rishi Nodhas, in his hymn to Indra, compared the devotion of the worship-

<sup>1</sup> vi, 20, 11.

<sup>2</sup> x, 28, 1; x, 34, 3. x, 85, 46; x, 95, 12.

<sup>3</sup> x, 86, 13.

<sup>4</sup> iii, 6, 4.

pers of the deity to that of affectionate wives to a loving husband.<sup>1</sup> The singular use of husband with the plural of wife is to be noticed particularly, otherwise this reference might be taken as of doubtful authority. The same idea is intended in another passage,<sup>2</sup> and although here husband also is used in the plural, the sense conveyed is of polygamy, the contiguous fingers (plural) loving Agni (singular). Rishi Kutsa mentions<sup>3</sup> the two wives of Kuyava, but the passage may be interpreted as expressing the custom of the non-Aryans, Kuyava being an Asura. Even then we should expect some surprise expressed, if the custom were a novel one to the Aryan eyes. And in view of the earlier passages cited, it seems conclusive that polygamy as a social institution was well established among both the Aryans and the non-Aryans long before the former settled down in India. The passage in the next sukta<sup>4</sup> gives perhaps a dim picture of the real affection that could still subsist between the husband and the co-wives at the same time. But this picture of harmony in the early portion of the Rig Veda changed considerably later on.<sup>5</sup> Another passage<sup>6</sup> referring to polygamy has been variously interpreted, some, particularly Wilson, reading wife as singular. The same idea of polygamy is conveyed by Rishi Agastya,<sup>7</sup> comparing the praises of the worshippers as generating the most fragrant fruit with the bearing of children by wives to their husband. In another passage<sup>8</sup> Indra is compared to a raja dwelling with his wives, from which we can fairly gather some ideas as to the royal harem which was so overwhelmingly full in later periods. In another passage of the same Mandala,<sup>9</sup> Indra is proclaimed as capable of possessing all the cities of the Asuras as a husband possesses his wives. The term possession used in this connection is significant, perhaps as a description of the status of the wives in general. In later days we find that the *dharma stri*, or the first wife, is given a very respectable position, but the others are neglected,

<sup>1</sup> i, 62, 11.<sup>4</sup> i, 106, 8.<sup>7</sup> i, 186, 7.<sup>2</sup> i, 71, 1.<sup>5</sup> x, 145.<sup>8</sup> vii, 18, 2.<sup>3</sup> i, 104, 3.<sup>6</sup> i, 112, 19.<sup>9</sup> 26, 3.



the fourth wife, the *palagali*, for instance, is the least respected.<sup>1</sup> In fact, it seems not very unnatural that each successive wife was less respected than her predecessor. The continuity of polygamy throughout the Rig Veda period is very well proved by various references in the text. Rishi Krisṇa<sup>2</sup> says that his praises embrace Maghavat (i.e., Indra) as wives embrace a husband. The contrast in numbers is a patent proof of the institution. The last unambiguous reference to polygamy is by Rishi Budha,<sup>3</sup> where, addressing the Viswadevas, he goes on delineating upon the preparation of soma juice. The last passage<sup>4</sup> is interpreted by some as "a wife," the exact word being *parivṛikta*.

We have already referred to the fact that the harmony of domestic life as foreshadowed in i, 105, 8, relaxed considerably. In fact, in the last Mandala we find that the co-wives are so jealous of one another for the affection of the husband that each compasses the death of all the others. Indrani<sup>5</sup> chants a hymn which is enjoined on a co-wife to sing for the purpose of securing the husband to herself. It does not lead to any effort of the imagination to reconstruct mentally the actual state of things which were substantially the same down to the beginning of the nineteenth century.

### Polyandry.

It has been a moot point whether polyandry ever existed among the Aryans. The more general theory of Morgan<sup>6</sup> that *mutterrecht* preceded the patriarchal stage of society is, so far as the Aryans are concerned, based on analogy only. It is supposed that *mutterrecht* existed before the paternal family. Therefore, we ought to expect to hear of polyandry, the basis of *mutterrecht*, in the earlier portion of the Rig Veda. But we find no such reference. On the contrary, in one of the latest suktas of the last Mandala<sup>7</sup> of the Rig Veda there are a few slokas which

<sup>1</sup> Satapatha Brahmana, xiii, 4, 1, 8; 5, 2, 8.

<sup>2</sup> x, 43, 1.

<sup>3</sup> x, 101, 11.

<sup>4</sup> x, 102, 11.

<sup>5</sup> x, 145.

<sup>6</sup> *Ancient Society*

<sup>7</sup> x, 85, 37-43.

apparently refer to polyandry. In sloka 37, for example, the bride is certainly one in number whereas Pushan is asked to inspire *her* in whom *men* may sow seed, who may be devoted to us, and in whom animated by desire we may get progeny. The next sloka again requests Agni to give husbands back to their wives with male off-springs; slokas 39-40 may be interpreted to oppose this theory, but their force, in this direction, goes only so far as to attenuate the modern repulsion for polyandry by making the woman reside with one husband after another—first Soma, then the gandharva, next Agni, and finally the worshipper. The difficulty in establishing polyandry as an institution in the ancient Vedic family is the fact that it occurs in this one passage only, and that too is modified by the subsequent slokas. It cannot at the same time be authoritatively denied even if we connect this particular passage with the not infrequent amours.<sup>1</sup>

### Widow.

*Vidhava* or widow occurs only in the later portions of the Rig Veda. In x, 40, 80, she is mentioned as requiring the protection of the deities. A woman bereft of her husband (for the word *vidhava* does not occur here) goes to her male relatives, perhaps for support.<sup>2</sup> But she does not, as in later days, immolate herself on the funeral pyre of the husband. In a later passage Rishi Sankusuka<sup>3</sup> in his hymn intends it to be repeated by the brother of the husband, on the latter's death, to the widow, asking her to rise and leave the lifeless corpse of her deceased husband. Suttee, therefore, did not exist as a social institution among the early Aryans. Further proof is furnished by two very clear references to the re-marriage of widows. The above sloka in reality suggests that the husband's brother was inviting the widow to his household as his wife, and the Rishi must have approved of such a conduct as the prevalent custom of the time. The second passage is beyond all doubt and is very explicit. Ghosha in her hymn to the Aswins asks the deities as to who brings them to the sacri-

<sup>1</sup> *Vide* Chapter II.

<sup>2</sup> i. 124. 7.

<sup>3</sup> x. 18. 8.

fice as on her couch a widow brings her husband's brother.<sup>1</sup> Another passage in the Rig Veda<sup>2</sup> is interpreted by some, Pischel for example, as referring to the re-marriage of a woman whose husband has not been heard of for a long time. This is the ring of the later authority providing a second husband in the event of any of the five misfortunes.<sup>3</sup> But this meaning of the sloka in the Rig Veda seems to be forced and in any case it is not borne out by the edition of Sayanacharya, whose authority in this respect seems to be rightly unassailable.

### The Daughter's Son.

The funeral oblations of a sonless man have formed the subject of many discussions in a later age. What has been latterly called the *putrika putra* is advocated by all the textual authorities of modern Hindu law. Rishi Kakshivat's<sup>4</sup> description of the widow has been interpreted by Sayanacharya as conferring upon her the right to offer the funeral cakes to her progenitors. If this interpretation is correct, then this passage in the Rig Veda refers to *putrika*. It is not our present function to enter into the discussion of the probability of such an interpretation in the light of the then accepted religious beliefs of the time. But Sayana's authority is so great that one is tempted to accept it in the absence of any material incongruity. Rishi Viswamitra in another passage<sup>5</sup> says that *shasadvahni*, the sonless father, regulating the contract, refers to his grandson, the son of his daughter, and, relying on the efficiency of the rite, honours the son-in-law with valuable gifts. So the *putrika putra* is practically adopted in the place of the son. He stipulates that his daughter's son, *duhitur napatyam*, shall be his son. This mode of affiliation is even now recognized by Hindu Law, the Dayabhaga School considering such an adoption as highly meritorious. But another passage,<sup>6</sup> though obscure, seems to distrust all

<sup>1</sup> x, 40, 2.

<sup>2</sup> vi, 49, 8.

<sup>3</sup> *Nashle mrite prabrajite klive cha patile palau,  
Panchasvapitsu narinam patiranyo bidhiyate.*

—*Manu Samhita.*

<sup>4</sup> i, 124, 7.

<sup>5</sup> iii, 31, 1.

<sup>6</sup> vii, 4, 7-8.

adventitious members of the family being admitted as adopted sons, these being not *anrina* (free from debt) to their progenitors and gods. They should not be considered as fit for acceptance, for verily they return to their own house. The prayer then goes on: Therefore, let there come to us a son new-born, possessed of food, victorious<sup>2</sup> over foes. This looks like prohibition of adoption as is suggested by some authorities, confining inheritance either to direct descent through a son, or to collateral descent through the son of a daughter. This interpretation is found in Nirukta,<sup>1</sup> which is of a later date. We are tempted to distrust its validity in view of the fact that with regard to the offerings of funeral cakes to progenitors, the daughter's son, *putrika putra*, is as much a foreigner as any other man. But then natural affection, it must be recognized, could have tended to the fiction of considering the daughter's son to be a near relation, especially when the father, being sonless, was tied, by domestic affection, to the daughter only, and perhaps kept the daughter in his house even after her marriage.

### Family Ownership.

Family ownership of land has been the subject of great discussion, but whatever may be the later development, there is no trace of it in the Rig Veda. Baden Powell<sup>3</sup> thinks that it is of later growth and that even then there was no community of ownership in the village, but only ownership of the head of the family with merely moral obligations to the other members. This, he explains, by the growth of *patriu potestas* in post-Vedic India. The word *daya* in Hindu Law clearly means inheritance and it occurs even in the Rig Veda,<sup>4</sup> but here it means only reward. But that there was property in some form is certain; for example, we find mention of the father's property being divided among the sons in his old age.<sup>5</sup> But these most probably refer to movables. There is no trace of the family as a land-owning corporation,<sup>5</sup> so that its later

<sup>1</sup> iii, 3.

<sup>4</sup> i, 70, 10.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Village Community*.

<sup>3</sup> x, 114, 10.

<sup>5</sup> Baden Powell, B. H.: *Indian Village Community*.

growth must have been post-Vedic. In fact the general impression from the Rig Veda is that property did not belong to the family, but to its head. As to the exact nature of such property, we shall have occasion to deal with that later on.<sup>1</sup>

It is equally uncertain whether women could hold any property for themselves. There is one obscure passage in iii, 31, 5-7. The other passage<sup>2</sup> in the Rig Veda may be interpreted to refer to the property of men rather than that of their wives.

As to child life during the period of gestation there is an illuminating passage in the Rig Veda<sup>3</sup> which is called by Sayanacharya as the *garbhashravinyupanishad* or the liturgy of child-birth. Its general description need not imply any special knowledge beyond ordinary intelligent observation, but in sloka 8, the uterine membranes are specifically stated, which carries the impression that the intricate anatomy involved in such a distinct nomenclature was well-known. Another reference of perhaps less importance is in the hymns of Rishi Twashtri,<sup>4</sup> which, however, is in general terms only. An earlier text of Rishi Partardana (Raja)<sup>5</sup> details the functions at birth, cleansing, decorating, etc., but this is in connection with the preparation of soma juice figuratively described as its birth.

### Triumphs.

Festivals in commemoration of triumphs occur very rarely in the Rig Veda. In this respect we are at once impressed by the contrast with the triumphal festivals of ancient Greece and Rome. Rishi Somahuti,<sup>6</sup> in singing of the ever-youthful Indra, praises the deity as the victorious in battle. Later on, Rishi Bharadwaja,<sup>7</sup> addressing Indra and Agni, offers them thanksgiving for the recovery of the cows, etc., carried away by the Asuras. Rishi Kutsa,<sup>8</sup> son of Angirasa, in propitiating Soma Pavamana, enumerates the exhilarating effects of soma juice on Indra and his protecting feats while under its influence.

<sup>1</sup> *Vids* Chapter VI.

<sup>2</sup> ix, 96, 17.

<sup>3</sup> x, 34, 11.

<sup>4</sup> ii, 16, 7.

<sup>5</sup> v, 78, 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> vi, 60, 2.

<sup>7</sup> x, 184.

<sup>8</sup> ix, 97, 47.

## CHAPTER II.

### MORALITY.

THE morality of the people of the Rig Veda period is a strange mixture of customs not unnatural to a race that is emerging out of an unsettled life to a settled one and realizing the influence of ideas on social life. A brotherless woman, *abhratarah*, seems clearly to be taking to prostitution either for want of proper control or for purposes of livelihood.<sup>1</sup> It must have been a matter of great pity if she were compelled to do so for the latter cause. But the first passage referred to above may be interpreted to mean going over to her deceased husband's brother to be married to him as we have already hinted in connection with the re-marriage of a widow, especially in view of the fact that such marriages were permitted and perhaps, for the sake of her protection and support, even enjoined. The second passage referring to an *abhratarah* refers distinctly to women, adverse to their lords and going astray. So, it seems that, in the absence of the father, the brother was the great and perhaps the only protector if the woman went astray from the husband. The very fact goes to support the view that family organization at that age was not powerful enough to prevent this nor could social opinion effectually restrain people. But the reference<sup>2</sup> to secrecy with regard to the bearing of illegitimate children tends to prove that social opinion was against it, and it must remain a matter for conjecture whether such opinion restrained the woman effectively, because we cannot discover the extent of such practice in the ancient days. The above passage refers to the bearing of child in secret and of course includes directly those cases where the woman was still the recognized wife in a family

<sup>1</sup> i, 124, 7; iv, 5, 5.

<sup>2</sup> ii, 29, 1.

and had gone astray without leaving its shelter. This will not seem unusual if we remember that polygamy was extensively practised, and human passions could not be less strong than they are to-day.

The word *sadharani*<sup>1</sup> in the Rig Veda means a common or public woman. The etymological meaning, "belonging to or open to all," strongly suggests the existence of prostitution as an institution. But more positive proof in the form of corroboration or denial does not occur in any other part of the Rig Veda, and the later Samhitas rather confirm the view suggested. Another word *hasra*, meaning courtesan, occurs in the Rig Veda,<sup>2</sup> but it has been sometimes (though perhaps erroneously) translated as wife. Another word *jara* occurs frequently in the Rig Veda.<sup>3</sup> Its meaning is lover, but it is very clear from all the texts that the later meaning of illegitimacy did not yet attach itself to the word in the Rig Veda. In the first sloka cited, Agni is the lover of maidens and the husband of wives, because Agni was the determining element in the nuptial ceremony, terminating maidenhood, and the wife bore an important part in the sacrificial ceremony before the sacred fire. In another passage<sup>4</sup> the sun is called the lover of the maiden dawn because he always follows the latter. The word *jara*, though innocently used, expresses in one passage<sup>5</sup> the lover of a woman, but here also the woman is supposed not to be ashamed of her amour, but praises her lover openly. The word<sup>6</sup> has also been, in one case, used metaphorically, *jara ushasam*, lover of the dawn, i.e., Agni.

It is evident from the conversation between Yama and his sister Yami<sup>7</sup> that certain limitations were put on marriageable persons. A brother could not marry a sister, but at this stage at least it was not universally recognized as such, since the argument of Yami shows clearly that she wanted to marry Yama,<sup>8</sup> her brother, in good faith and was not cognizant of such prohibition. Yama<sup>9</sup> also argues that in subsequent ages sisters would choose as a husband one

<sup>1</sup> i, 167, 4.<sup>2</sup> i, 124, 7.<sup>3</sup> i, 66, 4; i, 117, 18; i, 134, 3.<sup>4</sup> i, 152, 4.<sup>5</sup> ix, 32, 5.<sup>6</sup> vii, 9, 6; x, 1.<sup>7</sup> x, 10.<sup>8</sup> x, 10, 10.

who was not a brother. This proves that such marriages were not yet widely known to be prohibited. But the union of father and daughter was clearly condemned as it was in the case of Rudra.<sup>1</sup> The practice has been condemned in another passage,<sup>2</sup> though the meaning is obscure here. Finally, perhaps through the growth of ideas, the union of brother and sister has been actually condemned,<sup>3</sup> as the work of an evil spirit to exterminate whom the prayer is instituted. But here the uncertainty is whether it condemns the union in marriage, or, as it is more probable, their illegitimate connection.

Thieves and robbers are variously referred to in the Rig Veda as *taskara* <sup>4</sup> who move in the dusk of the evening <sup>5</sup> and who are bold, lurking in the forest to seize upon a traveller.<sup>6</sup> *Taskara*, it seems, approached more to a robber than to a thief, he being supposed to carry away things openly. *Stena* <sup>7</sup> properly represents a thief though once used in the sense of a robber.<sup>8</sup> In the Rig Veda we find frequent mention of another word conveying the idea of a thief. That is *tayu* <sup>9</sup> stealing an animal,<sup>10</sup> carrying off a garment,<sup>11</sup> keeping concealed the article that he has stolen,<sup>12</sup> being invisible himself,<sup>13</sup> falsifying,<sup>14</sup> committing penance for stealing by nourishing the animal that he has stolen.<sup>15</sup> *Steya* also occurs in one passage <sup>16</sup> to mean a thief. Robber (*vamragu*) is mentioned also in the Rig Veda.<sup>17</sup>

From the above enumeration of offences recognized by the earliest texts it is evident that the social life was based on the family system, and that, though that organization was pretty nearly complete in itself, social opinion and social morality were only passing through the formative stage. The early text does not condemn incest as a recognized offence, whereas the later one perhaps does so. Murder is treated as an offence in the later Samhitas, as are also patricide (*pitrihan*) and matricide (*matrīhan*). But no trace of this is to be

<sup>1</sup> x, 61, 5-7.<sup>4</sup> vii, 65, 3<sup>7</sup> ii, 28, 10, 42, 3.<sup>10</sup> i, 65, 1.<sup>8</sup> x, 109.<sup>11</sup> i, 191, 5.<sup>12</sup> ii, 23, 16.<sup>13</sup> iv, 38, 5.<sup>5</sup> x, 162, 5.<sup>6</sup> x, 4, 6.<sup>9</sup> i, 50, 2.<sup>16</sup> v, 15, 5.



found in the Rig Veda. And although we find one reference to the exposure of the son of Agru,<sup>1</sup> not necessarily illegitimate, to be eaten up by ants, yet we cannot say that it was a general practice. Nor in this period do we find any reference to *bhrunahatya* or deliberate killing of the child during the period of gestation. What would come under the modern crime existed only in the form of theft and robbery, and considering the sparse population and unwonted ways this was bound to exist. On the whole, life seems to be simple, religious, and truthful. Certain economic difficulties were experienced,<sup>2</sup> particularly in the case of women, leading to the profession of the courtesan, but the strength of human passions is not less responsible for the existence of *sadharani*.

<sup>1</sup> iv, 19, 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide* Chapter X.

## CHAPTER III.

### CASTES AND CLASSES.

THE caste system in India is clearly recognized in the period of the Atharva Veda. Its origin is hopelessly lost, or it grew so slowly that it was unnoticed in its inception. The Rîg Veda, of course, recognizes the Aryans as distinguished from the Dasyus, the non-Aryans, but further than this it is not possible to assert with regard to the caste system in the Rîg Veda. A later passage of the Rîg Veda<sup>1</sup> speaks of the Brahmana, the Rajanya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra, as issuing respectively out of the mouth, arms, thighs, and feet of Purusha. The distinction made here is curiously striking. It is practically the same as in the later Samhitas and the Brahmanas. But the inexplicable fact remains that it is the only passage in the Rîg Veda, and that too is so short that it is not possible to attribute to it all the connotation that it involved later on. If the perception of Rîshi Narayana was correct, he must have seen the future of the different classes very correctly, and his classification of the order of importance of each class has been only too correct. In any case, unless this passage be regarded as an interpolation, this proves that the caste as it developed later on must have grown very slowly, almost imperceptibly, and the observant Rîshi of the Purushasukta was only recording the trend of events that were moulding the social structure. As the passage occurs late in the literature under notice, it cannot be said to be representative of the earlier period, so that it would be erroneous to say that the division into castes, as distinguished from classes, except into Arya and

<sup>1</sup> x, 90, 12.

Dasyu, formed any part of the social polity of the Rig Veda period of the Aryans.<sup>1</sup> >

### Kshatriya.

The word Kshatriya, however, occurs in many passages of the Rig Veda, its usual meaning being royal or of divine authority. As a class the Kshatriyas are recognized as warriors. In one passage<sup>2</sup> Agni is said to possess the Kshatriya quality of strength. Another use of the word<sup>3</sup> clearly recognizes the military order, Trasadasyu having a two-fold empire. The word Kshatriya is most probably intended to convey the idea of a military class in v, 69, 1, or, as Wilson says, it means possessed of strength, thus referring to Indra. Again, Mitra and Varuna are invoked<sup>4</sup> as Kshatriyas, meaning perhaps sovereigns. These deities are elsewhere<sup>5</sup> described as sitting down for the office of sovereignty, as in another passage<sup>6</sup> Varuna is said to exercise supreme dominion, *kshatra* signifying rule or dominion. The good government of a Kshatriya is spoken of in a later passage.<sup>7</sup>

In all the above passages the Kshatriyas are spoken of as the rulers, they being powerful and, as warriors, wielding *kshatra* or dominion. But there are certain other passages<sup>8</sup> in which the people (*vis*) also are said to fight, the last passage calling them godless. Most of these mean perhaps the vulgar folk rebelling against the higher and ruling classes, since protection of the deities against them is sought. The reference to non-Aryans is not warranted, as in that case the fact would most probably have been specifically mentioned. The doubt that is cast upon the fighting habits of the people arises from the invocation<sup>9</sup> to Indra for protection against the people and protection in combats, thus distinguishing clearly the people from wars. A remarkable sukta<sup>10</sup> comes towards the end of the Rig

<sup>1</sup> The arguments of Zimmer and Muir are too well known to be discussed here.

<sup>2</sup> iv, 12, 3.

<sup>3</sup> iv, 42, 1.

<sup>4</sup> vii, 64, 2.

<sup>5</sup> viii, 25, 8.

<sup>6</sup> i, 25, 10.

<sup>7</sup> x, 109, 3.

<sup>8</sup> i, 69, 3; iv, 24, 4; vi, 26, 1; vii, 79, 2; viii, 96, 15.

<sup>9</sup> vi, 41, 5.

<sup>10</sup> x, 98.

Veda, 'proving clearly the right of instituting sacrifices on the part of a Kshatriya. But experts consider the case of Devapi as exceptional. In any case this exception is curious, as by the time of the Rig Veda the priesthood as a class had already been consolidated. An earlier exception is Viswamitra.<sup>1</sup>

¶ Purohita was the domestic priest in a later age. In the Rig Veda two passages<sup>2</sup> occur, the first not necessarily meaning domestic priest, since it refers to the chief deity-priests, Agni and Aditya. The second one explicitly refers to the most learned priests who take the foremost place (in religious ceremonies). This evidently has its source in the institution of domestic priesthood which by this time must have been increasingly manifest.

The professional priesthood is seen practically from the very beginning of the Rig Veda period. Its position is entirely separate from that of monarchy. The fact is somewhat puzzling in conception. A study of the earliest organization of the other branches of the Aryan family reveals the fact that the original leader was the king, the priest, and the head of the fighting host; and there is nothing to suppose that the particular branch that came to India began with a special polity or stepped lightly over some of the stages while retaining fully the wisdom derived from the experience of each. The latter fact is clear from the subsequent history of the race during which, in spite of the predominant influence of the priests (the Brahmanas), there was no attempt on their part to become king *de jure*, although they wielded, through their influence on the ruler, all the powers of the king. Any explanation, however, of this early separation of priesthood from kingship in India must be conjectural; there is no record previous to the Rig Veda, and in the Rig Veda it is recognized as an established institution. Nor can it even be safely conjectured whether such a change took place in India or before the Aryan advent into India. But it seems only rational to say that the greatest probability should be attached to the change having been effected from the co-ordination of power in one

<sup>1</sup> iii, 33, 8.

<sup>2</sup> x, 66, 13; x, 70, 7.

man to its separation into priestly, military, and monarchical. The denial of it would bring on the burden of proving that this one branch of the Aryan family, alone out of all others, began with a different system and yet ended with the same separation of powers. On the other hand, we cannot assert in favour of it, inasmuch as it is advisable to recognize the full value of the historical fact that the social polity begins earlier than the political organization and that the extent of development in the former was much greater in the original home of the Aryans than the latter.

### **Brahmana.**

Whatever may have been the exact course of development in the pre-Vedic age, the professional class receiving *dakshina*<sup>1</sup> for the services performed, existed in the Rig Veda period; and it will be interesting to learn from the various passages in the Rig Veda what was the position, qualification, and function of the Brahmana, as the priest was called. It is necessary in this connection to emphasize that the position of the Brahmana was very high, next, if next at all, to the Kshatriya only. In the post-Vedic age he was undoubtedly the superior, standing above all others. But in the Rig Veda his position seems to be equalled at least by the Kshatriya; and this is quite natural in the state of society when it was fighting its way to the south and the east among a powerful alien population. But his position could not have been ignored even then, since he invoked the deities who were supposed to fight for the Aryans against the Asuras.

One passage<sup>2</sup> in which the word Brahmana occurs seems literally to convey its etymological meaning. The four definite grades of speech (which have been variously interpreted) are known to the Brahmanas only, who are described as wise. Three of these are deposited in secret and indicate no meaning (i.e., to the non-initiated or ordinary person). The fourth is spoken by men. The Brahmanas<sup>3</sup> again are called the progenitors and presenters of Soma, which gives a

<sup>1</sup> i, 168, 7; vi, 27, 8; viii, 24, 29; viii, 39, 5; x, 62, 1; x, 107.

<sup>2</sup> i, 164, 45.

<sup>3</sup> vi, 75, 10.

glimpse of their function at the sacrifice. Perhaps they are also called observers of truth (second half of the same sloka) and they are invoked for protection. So that this class of men are looked upon as a superior order of beings capable of some of the godly functions, perhaps supposed to have acquired them by their professional contact with the deity. The Brahmanas, in their performance of sacrificial rites, had to chant *mantras*, sometimes throughout the night, as in the case of the *atiratra* rite,<sup>1</sup> or throughout the year, perennial as it has been interpreted by some, perhaps during the sacrificial session, *gavam ayanam*.<sup>2</sup> They also practised penance throughout the year, being observant of their vows.<sup>3</sup> Rishi Vashistha's hymn on frogs is very illuminating, as is shown above. They are described as worshippers who effuse Soma<sup>4</sup> and Soma is supposed to pervade the Brahmanas.<sup>5</sup> The Brahmanas are the friends of the Vedas<sup>6</sup> "wandering at will in the meanings of the Veda." They are called learned because they possess the investigated Brahma consisting of knowledge, *Sruti* or divine lore, and thought and wisdom. There is, it seems, a good deal of contempt for the ordinary people, the ploughmen who pursued agriculture. The contact of the Brahmanas in this lower world as of gods in the upper is a necessity to become a Brahmana or an offerer of libations,<sup>7</sup> which function seems to be obligatory on all respectable householders. The Brahmanas are inferior to gods, sitting down to perform the work of the *hotri*.<sup>8</sup> In the Purusha-sukta<sup>9</sup> whose Rishi is Narayana, the mouth of Purusha became the Brahmana, which means that the latter was derived or born out of the former. This sloka, as has been discussed previously, is important in connection with the caste organization. This tradition of separate original birth is the foundation of the hereditary character of the Indian caste. The Brahmanas, it seems from a later passage,<sup>10</sup> were in the habit of administering plants as medicines.

<sup>1</sup> vii, 103, 7.<sup>4</sup> ix, 71, 1.<sup>7</sup> x, 71, 9.<sup>2</sup> vii, 103, 8.<sup>5</sup> x, 26, 6<sup>8</sup> x, 88, 19.<sup>3</sup> vii, 103, 1.<sup>6</sup> x, 71, 8.<sup>9</sup> x, 90, 12.<sup>10</sup> x, 97, 22.

**Other Castes.**

The Rajanya, the Vaisya, and the Sudra as different castes appear, as has been pointed out, in the last Mandala <sup>1</sup> of the Rig Veda.

In later Samhitas and particularly in the Brahmanas, we find reference to some classes, called the outcastes, who could not be touched or with whom it would be derogatory to eat together. But *chandala* and *paulkasa* do not even occur anywhere in the Rig Veda. *Vrishala* occurs indeed in the Rig Veda <sup>2</sup> and most probably means an outcaste. But the *vrishala* here is not a class name but a general term conveying the idea of degradation attached to the irresponsible and wicked gamester of the hymn.

It is very uncertain whether the tenants as a class existed in the time of the Rig Veda. The word *vesa* occurs in two passages,<sup>3</sup> but its meaning is obscure, and for want of further evidence it is impossible to posit their existence as a class, although their existence is probable.

**Physicians.**

Physicians are widely recognized in the Rig Veda, though it is not clear whether there was any such class as in later days. They must have been held in very high respect, since many gods, the Aswins,<sup>4</sup> Varuna,<sup>5</sup> and Rudra,<sup>6</sup> are frequently called physicians. In a later passage <sup>7</sup> the Brahmanas are also said to administer plants with healing effects.

<sup>1</sup> x, 90, 12.

<sup>2</sup> x, 34, 11

<sup>3</sup> ii, 13, 8; x, 49, 5.

<sup>4</sup> i, 116, 16; i, 157, 6; viii, 18, 8; viii, 86, 1, x, 39, 3-5.

<sup>5</sup> i, 24, 9.

<sup>6</sup> ii, 33, 4-7; vi, 50, 7; ix, 112, 1.

x, 97, 22.

## CHAPTER IV.

### VILLAGE COMMUNITY.

TURNING to the settlement of the families on land, we find that the Vedic Aryans lived in villages (*grama*). Whether these villages were close to one another or were scattered far and wide, and, if so, whether there were roads to connect them, cannot be ascertained from the Rig Veda. But the universal practice of certain religious rites and the substantial unity in the development of Vedic life point to the probability that they used to be either close to one another or had means to go from one place to another. The universal habit of early migrations along the course of a river as in the case of the ancient Teutons along the Elbe and in the case of the modern Swiss people may be accepted in the case of the Indo-Aryans. They might have gone along the five rivers of the Punjab, and there is evidence to support that they reached Sind and knew the ocean<sup>1</sup>; we also meet with references to the treasures of the sea.<sup>2</sup> The story of Bhujyu, son of Tugra, is repeatedly mentioned in the Rig Veda. This colonization along the rivers facilitated communication from village to village, and, from analogy in colonization, we can easily imagine that for fear of being lost to the brother families the Vedic Aryans used to settle by the side of the river, just as the early settlers in Australia colonized along the coast only, those of North Canada along the rivers only. There is additional ground to suppose in the case of the Vedic Aryans that they did not go to the interior. The non-Aryans were a powerful race, and the frequent hymns of victories and prayers for protection from the Asuras and Dasyus clearly prove that they were harassed by the latter.

<sup>1</sup> vii, 95, 2.

<sup>2</sup> i, 47, 6; vii, 6, 7; ix, 97, 44.



In such a case there was the least likelihood of their going in the interior to settle, and breaking off all connection with the main settling places along the rivers.

There was easy communication <sup>1</sup> between the settlements on the different rivers of the Punjab. Later on, of course, with the pressure of population, they had to move to the east and south-east, but then they did not start in scattered groups but formed continuous or at least connecting villages. Where these were impossible owing to geographical features, they would construct roads to connect one village with another. All this expansion must have been towards the end of the Rig Veda period. And we actually find reference to roads in the Chhandogya Upanishad <sup>2</sup>

The existence of villages is seen beyond all doubt even in the Rig Veda period. The resplendent Agni is invoked as the protector of the people in villages.<sup>3</sup> The mighty Rudra is propitiated in another sloka <sup>4</sup> in order that all things in the village may be well nourished and exempt from disease. Village is also referred to in various other passages in the Rig Veda.<sup>5</sup> The domestic animals also lived in the village. Of this the proof is clear. Cattle are spoken of as hastening to the village.<sup>6</sup> Vayu <sup>7</sup> or instinct<sup>8</sup> is said to preside over certain animals, and the rest are recognized to be divided into those that are wild and those that are tame.<sup>9</sup>

The organization of the village is very little known. But there was a village headman of whose functions there is scanty reference. He is called *gramani* or leader of the *grama*. He is said to be the donor of a thousand cows, and the prayer is that he, called the Manu, may never suffer wrong and may his liberality go on spreading in glory with the sun.<sup>10</sup> In this hymn of Rishi Nabhanedhishtha the liberality of Raja Savarni is the subject; thus the leader seems to be identical, in this case at least, with the headman of the village. In another passage<sup>11</sup> the head of the village

<sup>1</sup> iii, 33.

<sup>2</sup> i, 114, 1.

<sup>3</sup> x, 149, 4.

<sup>4</sup> According to Colebrooke.

<sup>5</sup> x, 62, 11.

<sup>6</sup> viii, 6, 2.

<sup>7</sup> i, 44, 10.

<sup>8</sup> x, 146, 1; x, 149, 4.

<sup>9</sup> According to Wilson.

<sup>10</sup> x, 90, 8.

<sup>11</sup> x, 107, 5.

goes in the front (at the sacrifice) bearing the *dakshina* of the priest. From this the communal character of some at least of the religious institutions is suggested, and in these the headman represented the village. Moreover, this passage nullifies Zimmer's attempt to confine the functions of the *gramani* to military ones only.\* In the days of the Brahmanas he seems to have occupied the same position in the village as the sheriff in the shire before Henry II., discharging both civil and military functions. The actual working out of this system of village life and its relation to the broader life of the kingdom, so far as these can be discovered from the Rig Veda, will more properly come under the next chapter.

One other aspect of the family life in the village remains to be studied. The question can pertinently be raised in this connection whether the Aryans at this stage lived a pastoral or an agricultural life. The answer to this can, it seems, be given more or less definitely. They were settling down to a life of agriculture and indeed agriculture developed very highly. But at the same time pasturage was undertaken universally. The fact is that the pastoral habits were as much in evidence as the agricultural ones. Agriculture, as also their arts and crafts, will be dealt with in their proper places. Here let us see the pastoral aspect of their life.

Though the use of many animals were known in the Rig Veda, we do not actually find their classification into the five sacrificial animals or the seven-fold division of later days. *Pasu*<sup>1</sup> or animal is divided in the Rig Veda into *dvipad* (biped) and *chatuspad* (quadruped). This classification evidently includes all living animals including even man. All animals are supposed to possess *vach*<sup>2</sup> or speech, articulate or inarticulate. The whole species of animals has been further classified, as stated before, into three,<sup>3</sup> viz., (a) *vayavya*—those over whom *Vayu* presides, or, according to Dr. Colebrooke, those possessing instinct (evidently of a higher type including perhaps apes, etc.); (b) *aranya*—those that are wild, and (c) *gramya*—those that

<sup>1</sup> iii. 62, 14.<sup>2</sup> viii, 100, 11.<sup>3</sup> x, 90, 8.

are tame. Rishi Narayana speaks of them as being made by Purusha.

Of all the animals the cow<sup>1</sup> was undoubtedly the most important, as we would naturally expect from a people who are yet primarily pastoral. *Go*, denoting cow, is repeatedly mentioned in the Rig Veda as requiring the special protection of the gods; this shows the important functions performed by this animal in the economy of the primitive life. *Gavo dhenavah* are seen doing honour to Indra.<sup>2</sup> The milch kine, with all the instinct of a mother, hasten to their calves.<sup>3</sup> These must have been held in high respect, being, of course, very useful, for otherwise it would have been blasphemous to institute such a comparison. In another passage some evidently of the minor godly personages are found praying, just as the milch kine low for protection.<sup>4</sup> The proverbial motherly instincts are perceived and recognized in another hymn<sup>5</sup> where cows in their stalls long for their calves. The Maruts shower abundant food upon the worshippers as a milch cow gives milk to her calf.<sup>6</sup> The inarticulate speech may have been referred to or at least caressing the animal is suggested in one passage<sup>7</sup> where cows are said to low to their calves in the stalls. Cattle are referred to again<sup>8</sup> as being driven by staves. Another prayer<sup>9</sup> to the Aswins gives cows the position next to the worshippers, thus showing the great solicitude for cattle. They are recognized as such because cows are a means of nourishment. So, they pray that these may not stray from the house of the worshippers nor may they be separated from their calves. Rishi Bharadwaja's hymn<sup>10</sup> to Pushan is in the same strain. Pushan is invoked so that the usual mishaps may not occur to cattle, which are: they may perish, they may be injured, and they may be hurt by falling into a well.<sup>11</sup> This latter peril of the cattle also indicates, by the way, another art of the Aryans which is

<sup>1</sup> i, 43, 2; i, 162, 22; vii, 103, 9; viii, 5, 37.

<sup>2</sup> i, 173, 1.

<sup>3</sup> vi, 45, 28.

<sup>4</sup> x, 95, 6.

<sup>5</sup> ii, 2, 2.

<sup>6</sup> ii, 34, 8.

<sup>7</sup> viii, 88, 1; viii, 95, 1; ix, 12, 2.

<sup>8</sup> vii, 33, 6.

<sup>9</sup> i, 120, 8.

<sup>10</sup> vi, 54, 5-6.

<sup>11</sup> vi, 54, 7.

still the same. The pastoral character of life is further evidenced from another hymn <sup>1</sup> where it is said that the first duty of a person who has got the protection of Indra and who is secure in a house is to go to the cows. The ladle filled with the delicious and exhilarating soma juice offered to Indra is very happily compared to the udders of the cows before milking, *adugdha iva dhenava*.<sup>2</sup> Rishi Nodhas, in propitiating Indra, says that the deity provides the mature (i.e., ready for consumption, or nourishing) and glossy milk within the yet immature cow, whether black or red.<sup>3</sup> Finally, we come across a whole hymn of which the subject is cow by Rishi Bharadwaja <sup>4</sup> where cows are said to bring good fortune, showing that wealth primarily consisted of cattle—a condition natural enough for pastoral life. They lie down in the stalls and are pleased with the treatment of men, i.e., they are very well cared for. They are also spoken of as prolific. Protection is asked against their loss, and against any hostile weapon falling upon them, so that the master of cattle may be long possessed of them because he performs sacrifices with them and presents them to the gods. Protection is also sought for them against the dust-spurning war horse coming in their midst. Thus protected, the cows of a sacrificer, pleasing the deity, wander about at large without fear. The cows bring affluence (*bhaga*), and they yield the food of the first libation (milk and butter). The cows are addressed for the gift of nourishment, for the growth of the emaciated, unlovely body, for making the house prosperous, great abundance being attributed to them in religious assemblies, *brihad vo vaya uchyaate sabhāsu* <sup>5</sup> (interpreted differently, however, by Sayanacharya as *sarvair diyate ityārtha*). The cows <sup>6</sup> are blessed in having many calves, grazing upon good pasture and drinking pure water at accessible ponds. May no thief be their master, no beast assail them, and may the fatal weapon (death, perhaps) of Rudra avoid them. Finally, Indra is asked to look after the nourishment of the cows and the vigour of the bull, since the invigoration of the deity (with milk

<sup>1</sup> i, 83, 1.<sup>2</sup> vii, 32, 22.<sup>3</sup> i, 62, 9.<sup>4</sup> vi, 28.<sup>5</sup> vi, 28, 6.<sup>6</sup> vi, 28, 7.

and butter) depends upon them, milk and butter being dependent upon the cows bearing calves.<sup>1</sup>

The word *gostha* <sup>2</sup> is used in the Rig Veda. The later meaning of the word is clearly cowstall, and most probably that is also the meaning in the Rig Veda, but there is a conflict of opinion among very high authorities, some interpreting it as grazing-ground. So also is obscurity attached to the word *svasara*,<sup>3</sup> meaning either cowstall or the morning grazing of the cattle. But here it must be remembered that in the Rig Veda we do not find any mention of the three milking and grazing times of the later Samhitas. This meaning was attached to the word at a later period, when there was another word for cowshed, *samgavini*.<sup>4</sup> The Rig Veda Aryans recognized the value of, and possessed, good pastures. *Suyavasa* is the word for it occurring in the Rig Veda.<sup>5</sup> The word is also interpreted by some as cowstall in another passage,<sup>6</sup> but this seems to be less probable.

Before finishing our study of the Rig Veda life, we should look at one other feature of early society. Population in an expanding society needs to grow. This is more so in a society that is beset with environmental difficulties such as crossing, or managing a journey in, fast-flowing rivers (the Punjab rivers were so in the time even of Alexander <sup>7</sup>), or in clearing vast jungles grown wild into fertile soil, or occupying the whole of a territory naturally forming a sort of protection, e.g., the whole tract between the two branches of a river. In addition, if there is the other difficulty of fighting a race well organized for a primitive time and securely settled on the land, the additional loss due to warfare and the greater need for the growth of population are evident. With all the above conditions operating, the early Aryans in India must be expected to hail the birth of male children as a bliss. Naturally we find, in the praises of women, references to this quality of increasing the population emphasized. In a later hymn <sup>8</sup> of the Rig

<sup>1</sup> vi, 28, 8.

<sup>2</sup> i, 191, 4; vi, 28, 1; viii, 43, 7.

<sup>3</sup> ii, 2, 2; viii, 88, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Aitareya Brahmana, iii, 18, 14.

<sup>5</sup> i, 42, 8; vii, 18, 4.

<sup>6</sup> vi, 28, 1.

<sup>7</sup> Vincent Smith: *Alexander*.

<sup>8</sup> x, 86.

Veda, we find that the mother, Indrani in this case, is honoured, because, among other qualities, she is the mother of male offspring.<sup>1</sup> It is said again in a subsequent sloka<sup>2</sup> that Parshu, daughter of Manu, bore twenty children at once, and the deity is propitiated so that good fortune may befall her who is so prolific.

<sup>1</sup> x, 86, 10; x, 86, 13.

<sup>2</sup> x, 86, 23.

## CHAPTER V.

### POLITY.

THE polity of the Indo-Aryans, like their family, is not a new thing to the modern world. The nature of the ancient Greek, Roman, and Teutonic organizations has been so strikingly similar that the science of comparative politics has been able to establish the growth of the elements in the original home of the Aryans. We have already seen that the Kshatriya or the fighting class had grown in the period of the Rig Veda. Its position was very high indeed, and as we shall presently see its occupation was pretty hard. The Brahmanas, as a priestly class, also came to be differentiated. There may have been exceptions, but that does not vitiate the main theory. Purohitas were mainly recruited from this class, so that, national or domestic, the Aryan had already confided his spiritual progress in the keeping of the Brahmanas. In other words, mediation was the first, as mediation is the last, word of Hindu spiritual growth so far as that is to be attained through the formal rites enjoined by the *Shastras*. The position cannot indeed be properly contemplated from the modern viewpoint of philosophical abstraction. The Brahmanas, as their name implies, were in reality the depository of the knowledge of Brahma. It would be contradictory to historical science to say, as has been suggested by some very high authorities, that the whole institution originated in, or was based upon, an attempt on the part of the Brahmana oligarchy to capture the highest posts of authority in social life by enslaving, and appealing to, the spiritual aspect—the most easily moved one—of a nation's life.

The third class was the agricultural people, practically the whole population being included under this. Of course,

there are passages in the Rig Veda<sup>1</sup> where it is doubtful what exactly is the idea conveyed by the word *vis*. The most consistent meaning can be gathered only by interpreting it as settlement or dwelling. This also would be the etymological meaning. It may have been an after-growth or it may have been a simultaneous use of the term, but it has been used<sup>2</sup> for the subjects of a king. In another passage,<sup>3</sup> the subjects willingly pay homage to the prince. Mention is made of the subjects choosing a king and yet they are spoken of as smitten with fear.<sup>4</sup> Indra is propitiated in another passage<sup>5</sup> to render the subject people payer of taxes. Elsewhere the same word has been used as people in general.<sup>6</sup> In all these cases, it may be noted, *vis* signifies the people, either general or as subjects, and not a settlement. The word has again been used in connection with the Arya people.<sup>7</sup> In an obscure passage<sup>8</sup> it seems to mean people in conjunction with the divine. With *dasa* the word is similarly used.<sup>9</sup> A significant use of the word is found in the Rig Veda,<sup>10</sup> where it means people and is clearly differentiated from all men (*jana*), as well as sons, kinsmen, and descendants. The opponents of the clan theory have discovered in this the demolition of the theory inasmuch as in that case *vis* would have included descendants. The adherents of the theory equally urge that the distinction between *jana*, the common people, and *vis*, one's own people, contains the germ of the theory, *vis* being all of the same *gotra* or clan. Sometimes it seems, among those obsessed with a theory, that the less the materials to be drawn upon the greater is the vigour with which their cause is urged. Even the brilliant Fustel de Coulanges<sup>11</sup> has not been able to escape from this defect. The fact in connection with our point is that from this single passage it is not at all possible to argue either for or against the theory of clan. The above passage read with another<sup>12</sup> as meagre as itself has

<sup>1</sup> iv, 4, 3; iv, 37, 1; v, 3, 5; vi, 21, 4; vi, 48, 8; vii, 56, 22; vii, 61, 3; vii, 70, 3; vii, 104, 18; x, 91, 2.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. in vi, 8, 4

<sup>3</sup> iv, 50, 8

<sup>4</sup> x, 124, 8.

<sup>5</sup> x, 173, 6.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. vi, 1, 8; vi, 26, 1; viii, 71, 11.

<sup>7</sup> x, 11, 4.

<sup>8</sup> iii, 34, 2.

<sup>9</sup> iv, 28, 4; vi, 25, 2.

<sup>10</sup> ii, 26, 3.

<sup>11</sup> *The Ancient City; The Origin of Property in Land.*

<sup>12</sup> x, 84, 4.



furnished a second series of arguments in favour of the theory. A battle-cry is mentioned here as *visam-visam*. This is interpreted to signify that the army was divided into hosts after the different clans. It is not at all improbable, but we are bound to say that, when we say so, we traverse by imagination and not by proved historical fact. Additional colour is lent to this theory by another reference <sup>1</sup> to battle as *visoyudhmah*. It is evident that the whole argument, either in favour of the theory or against it, hangs upon the exact meaning of *vis*, which has so many significations that it seems hopeless to attempt to bring it out with any degree of certainty. Finally, there is another use of *vis* <sup>2</sup> where it is contrasted with both *griha* (house) and *jana* (all men). The only point that stands out clearly in the midst of all these divergent meanings of the word is that there was the bulk of the people, mostly agricultural, who were never confused with, and were therefore distinct from, the Kshatriya and the Brahmana.

### Slaves.

There was, moreover, another class of people, the slaves, whose position, as gathered from the later Samhitas, was similar to that of the serfs in England just after the Norman Conquest. *Dasa* is used for the non-Aryans, as also *dasyu*. But *dasa* equally refers to slaves who were under the control of the Aryans. The fact perhaps is that some of the conquered people were slain, others not exactly conquered were allowed to live independently, while the prisoners of war who escaped death were converted into slaves. In one passage <sup>3</sup> the deity is asked to give, among other things, troops of *dasas*. This would not be a boon but a curse if it is interpreted to mean free non-Aryans, hostile to the Aryans. The worshipper in another passage <sup>4</sup> alludes to diligent service like a slave. *Dasa* as slave is referred to again in the eighth Mandala.<sup>5</sup> The possession of slaves is compared to that of numerous cattle, they being liable to be given away for the enjoyment of the donee.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> iv, 24, 4.  
<sup>2</sup> vii, 86, 7.

<sup>3</sup> x, 91, 2.  
<sup>4</sup> 56, 3.

<sup>5</sup> i, 92, 8.  
<sup>6</sup> x, 62, 10.

These, then, are the different classes who were recognized within the pale of Aryan polity. The king and the royal household will be treated separately. But before that we should know something about the non-Aryans who are called *dasa* or *dasyu*. A series of questions naturally arises as to their historic position, the principal points of their difference from the Aryans, their organization and mode of life, their wealth, and their civilization.

### Non-Aryans.

These aborigines have been repeatedly referred to in the Rig Veda either as *dasyu* or as *dasa*. There are other meanings of these two words, but we shall take only those passages where the words mean non-Aryans or aborigines. One reference in the Rig Veda alludes to the *dasyus* as contrasted with the Aryas.<sup>1</sup> Indra again attacks and slays with his thunderbolt the *dasyus* and the *simyus*.<sup>2</sup> That the *dasyus* and the *simyus* were not Aryans is certain, but the doubt remains whether *dasyus* and *simyus* refer to different classes among the aborigines. This cannot, at this distant date, be ascertained. The next passage<sup>3</sup> on the point speaks of the thunderbolt armed with which Indra goes on destroying the cities of the *dasyus*, *dasi purah*. This reference to their cities is significant. This shows that the *dasyus* were not uncivilized altogether, and lived in organized bands settling on territories, perhaps of their own clearing. Even if *purah* be used for villages or hamlets, this proves the *dasyu*'s civilized life. He was not living in caves, as is suggested by some from meagre references, which most probably describe his condition after his defeat at the hands of the Aryan.<sup>4</sup> In the same book<sup>5</sup> the Aswins are said to be destroying the *dasyu*. Again, Indra let open the light to the Arya by crushing Vritra, the spider-like son of Danu. The hymn<sup>6</sup> goes on: the *dasyu* has been set aside. The next sloka<sup>7</sup> honours those men who surpass all their rivals as the Aryas surpass the *dasyus*. From this

<sup>1</sup> i, 51, 8.

<sup>2</sup> i, 103<sup>†</sup> 3.

<sup>3</sup> i, 117, 21.

<sup>4</sup> i, 100, 18.

<sup>5</sup> See later, Civilization of the Aborigines.

<sup>6</sup> ii, 11, 18.

<sup>7</sup> ii, 11, 19.

it is evident that the Aryans were in earnest competition with the *dasyus* in the struggle and were winning almost everywhere. The hymn is born of confidence when Indra is again praised for having destroyed the *dasyus*, thus protecting *aryam varnam*.<sup>1</sup> In a mood of sceptical distrust Rishi Bharadwaja questions the attributes and power of Indra, but only after reciting Indra's feat of having quickly humbled the *dasyus*.<sup>2</sup> Agni is called on to expel the *dasyus* from the dwelling.<sup>3</sup> This may be a reference to an inroad by the non-Aryans into an Aryan settlement. The deity later on, in self-praise, recounts his exploits and says that he has not given the *nama* of the Aryas to the *dasyu*.<sup>4</sup>

The main difference between the *dasyu* and the Aryan must have been one of religion. In the early stage of a nation's growth, particularly of the Aryans, the religious notions pervade their whole being. Gods being thrust into every successful act as its cause, and the belief being universal that the performance of religious rites according to certain fixed unalterable rules only, would please the gods, the natural consequence is that the race continually fights against aliens even when there may not be any necessity for it. Caution is required that the rites, etc., are not contaminated by even an unconscious admixture of barbarian customs. The history of the Greeks<sup>5</sup> and Romans<sup>6</sup> abundantly proves this and there is no reason to suppose that things were otherwise in the case of the Indo-Aryans. In the Rig Veda the non-Aryans are repeatedly spoken of in derogation as to their religious rites, which differed from the Aryans. Thus the *dasyus* are called *a-vrata*, i.e., without ordinances (or religious rites), and the prayer is to compel them to submit to the performer of sacrifices (the Aryan).<sup>7</sup> The *a-vrata dasyu* is in another passage<sup>8</sup> wanted to be consumed by the deity, as a wooden vessel is burnt by fire. The triumphant worshipper of the

<sup>1</sup> lli, 34, 9.<sup>2</sup> vi, 18, 3.<sup>3</sup> vii, 5, 6.<sup>4</sup> x, 49, 3.<sup>5</sup> Wachsmuth: *Historical Antiquities of the Greeks*.<sup>6</sup> Warde Fowler: *Religious Experience of the Roman People*.<sup>7</sup> i, 51, 8.<sup>8</sup> i, 175, 3.

deity seeks again to shame the *a-vrata*, having no observances.<sup>1</sup> The same note of triumph forms the strain of another verse.<sup>2</sup> The *dasyu* has been described elsewhere<sup>3</sup> as impious, perhaps meaning without devotion, *a-brahmana*. A severe verse occurs in the Rig-Veda<sup>4</sup> in which the *dasyu* is called *a-yajyu* (without sacrifice), *mridhra-vach*, and other uncharitable names, and the main cause of offence on the part of the *dasyu* seems to be that he does not perform sacrifices after the Aryan method. *Parvata* is asked to hurl the *dasyu* down to the stern smiter,<sup>5</sup> viz., death, the *dasyu* who follows other and strange rites, *anya vrata*, who is not a human being, or, it may mean, who is the enemy of man, *amanusham*, who does not offer sacrifices to the gods, *a-yajvan*, and finally who is not solicitous about the gods, *a-devayū*. The *dasyu* is also spoken of as a *karmun*, i.e., without religious rites.<sup>6</sup>

Some have cast doubts as to the historicity of the *dasyus*, they being only a mythological race. Although many of the above passages are liable to this interpretation, others admittedly are not so. They are described in one passage<sup>7</sup> as *anas*, *anaso dasyun amrinah*. Sayanacharya explains *anasa* as *asya rahitam*, and *asya*, he says, stands for *sabdham*, so that the meaning would be voiceless, i.e., speaking a tongue not understood by the Aryans. The later use of the word *mlechchha* (root *mlechchh*, to speak rudely) with reference to barbarians would support this view. Sayana is a great authority but his meaning here seems to be somewhat far-fetched. The more natural meaning of Max Muller is noseless (*a-non*, *nasa-nose*), in contrast to the prominent nose of the Aryas. In any case, this verse read with the others cited above goes to prove that the *dasyu* is not merely a superhuman being of myth but a person having physical features, coming directly in contact with the Aryans as rivals and enemies, and capable of being destroyed by them.

Another word that has also been used in the same sense occurs more frequently in the Rig Veda. But this word has<sup>8</sup> also been used to mean so many other things that the

vi, 14, 3.      <sup>1</sup> ix, 41, 2.      <sup>2</sup> iv, 16, 9.      <sup>3</sup> vii, 6, 3.  
<sup>4</sup> viii, 70, 11.      <sup>5</sup> x, 22, 8.      <sup>6</sup> v, 29, 10.

unwary is apt to be confounded. We are not here concerned with the various uses of the term and so shall take up directly only those passages where *dasa* certainly means human beings. Indra, the subduer of all the formidable, the lord, conducts the *dasa* at his pleasure.<sup>1</sup> Indra again is said to have rendered human enemies, whether *dasa* or Arya, easy to be overcome.<sup>2</sup> This passage shows that the Aryas used to fight even among themselves, so that by this time they must have been well settled in the land to afford to have mutual warfare. The same idea is conveyed when Indra, the hero, is praised as having destroyed both classes of enemies, *dasa* and Arya.<sup>3</sup> Again, the expression, *hato vritranyarya hato dasani*, must mean, in spite of the neuter gender used, Aryas and *dasas*, the interpretation being *aryaih* and *dasaih kritani*, i.e., things done by them severally.<sup>4</sup> Indra and Varuna are jointly invoked to destroy the gods' enemies, whether *dasas* or Aryas.<sup>5</sup> The worshippers hope further that, with the aid of Indra, they may overcome and destroy in battle, all those who propose to assail them, whether they be *dasas*, Aryas, or enemies of the gods.<sup>6</sup> Agni is praised for having defeated the strong men, *dasas* and Vritras, like a resolute warrior overcoming those who are desirous of battle.<sup>7</sup> With Manyu as an ally the worshippers express their confidence of overcoming the *dasa* and the Arya.<sup>8</sup>

The non-Aryans possessed cities or forts (*purah* may be interpreted either way). Indra is said to have gone on destroying the *dasi purah*.<sup>9</sup> The word *purah* may have meant fort, for in one passage<sup>10</sup> we find it described as *ayasih*, made of iron or, at least, of metal (*ayas* meaning metal). The combined effort of Indra and Agni is the subject of another verse<sup>11</sup> which goes to overthrow ninety strongholds (*purah*) ruled over by the *dasas*, *dasapatnih purah*. Indra's prowess is proclaimed again,<sup>12</sup> where, exhilarated by the soma juice, he demolishes the cities of the *dasas*. In one passage<sup>13</sup> the expression *dasir visah* has

<sup>1</sup> v, 34, 6.<sup>2</sup> vi, 22, 10.<sup>3</sup> vi, 33, 3.<sup>4</sup> vi, 60, 6.<sup>5</sup> vii, 83, 1.<sup>6</sup> x, 38, 3.<sup>7</sup> x, 69, 6.<sup>8</sup> x, 83, 1.<sup>9</sup> i, 103, 4.<sup>10</sup> ii, 20, 8.<sup>11</sup> iii, 12, 6.<sup>12</sup> iv, 32, 10.<sup>13</sup> ii, 11, 4.

led to the supposition that the non-Aryans also had their clan organization. We have already discussed it and have only to say that this and the succeeding references prove conclusively that whatever may be the meaning of *vis* in these passages, whether clan or people unrelated, the organization on this point was the same among the Aryas and the Anaryas, since the same word is used in the case of both. The expression, *viso dasirakrinoraprashastah*,<sup>1</sup> is also similarly interpreted as meaning clan. *Visah* here has been usually translated by *prajah*, people or subjects. *Akrino* means *karmahinah*, i.e., without religious rites or functions. *Aprashastah* means *garhita*, i.e., vile. The expression is interpreted by earlier foreign authorities as referring to servile classes, slaves, rather than free non-Aryans. But as the slaves were only those non-Aryans who had been reduced in war, the expression should also be equally applicable to the social organization of the non-slave *dasas*, even if in this particular passage the slaves only are meant. Here also the word *vis* has been interpreted as standing for clan. In a third passage<sup>2</sup> *viswa abhiyujo vishuchir aryaya visho ava tarirdasih*, explained by Sayanacharya as *vishuchir sarvatra vartamanah*, would show that the Aryas were surrounded on all hands by the non-Aryans. Thus here *dasa* cannot be rendered as the servile classes, as is done by Wilson and Colebrooke. The usual fight over *vis* is found here as well.

Another distinguishing feature of the non-Aryans seems to be their black skin, *krishna tvach*. Indra punishes the aggressors by tearing off the black skin.<sup>3</sup> This seems to refer to flaying alive. The theory of black skin as a distinguishing feature is not vitiated by connecting with this passage, as has been done by some, the legendary Asura named Krishna, the black, advancing with ten thousand followers to the banks of the Ansumati river, where he is said to have committed fearful devastation until Indra, with the Maruts, was sent against him by Brihaspati, when he was defeated by Indra, and his skin stripped. The black skin is also referred to in another passage of the Rig Veda.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> iv, 28, 4.<sup>2</sup> vi, 25, 2.<sup>3</sup> i, 130, 8.<sup>4</sup> ix, 41, 1.

From the above description of the aborigines we can fairly expect that a people with such organizations, with cities or forts, knowing the use of iron or metal (*ayas*), should be prosperous materially. There are in fact some references to their wealth, and these, though few in number, are scattered throughout the whole of the Rig Veda. Mention <sup>1</sup> of their wealth is made when the deity is asked to slay every one of them and bestow upon the worshippers the wealth belonging to them, so that here the amount of wealth, whatever it might consist of, is coveted by the Aryas. If, as we have reason to believe, the condition of the Aryans at this time was one of material prosperity (see later, Agriculture, Arts and Crafts), we are bound to say that the wealth of the non-Aryans also must have been very great, otherwise the worshippers could have asked for the destruction of the troublesome foes but would not have coveted their wealth. In another passage <sup>2</sup> the deity is said to have carried off the wealth of one of the aboriginal chiefs, after demolishing his cities. Again, Indra is asked to cut off the foe as an old pruner cuts off the protruding branch of a creeper and humble the *dasa* so that the worshippers may divide his accumulated treasure.<sup>3</sup> The passage is significant as a proof of the *dasa's* wealth. The prayer is not for the destruction of the *dasa*, but for his humiliation, so that palpably the object is his wealth, which is said to be accumulated. All this strongly suggests that the wealth of the *dasa* was very great.

(So, we see that the aborigines of the Vedic age were also a progressive race or a combination of many races, that the contest with the Aryas was a severe one, and that they possessed wealth and had cities or forts, in one case spoken of as made of *ayas*. But there are certain other passages which prove that the non-Aryans were dwellers of mountain caves, etc., so that their civilization cannot be said to have advanced much. Here clearly there is a conflict between two sets of evidences. Two explanations seem justified, both of which may be true in different localities. There might have been different races among the non-Aryans themselves, some

<sup>1</sup> i, 176, 4.<sup>2</sup> iv, 30, 13.<sup>3</sup> viii, 40, 6.

very advanced, others less so. The former might have been conquerors themselves and the rulers of the soil, as the Aryans were after supplanting them. The second explanation is that the dwellers in the caves were the civilized non-Aryans seeking refuge in natural fastnesses after their cities or habitats had been destroyed or occupied by the advancing Aryans. Both these seem to have been going on, otherwise the references to the wealth, power, and civilization of the non-Aryans discussed previously become inexplicable. The few passages, moreover, that occur in the Rig Veda in connection with the cave dwelling of *dasa*, all refer to one Sambara, a non-Aryan chief, and can be easily interpreted as a dislodged chief or son of a previously dislodged chief. In such a case, dwelling in a mountain would be natural. E.g., Indra discovered Sambara dwelling in the mountain for forty years.<sup>1</sup> ✓

### Kingship.

We now pass on to the study of kingship in the period of the Rig Veda (*Rajan*). Prajapati prays to Indra to make him a king, *kuvid mam gopam karase janasya kuvid rajanam*.<sup>2</sup> It seems on the whole to be a historical fact that kingship was the normal polity of the early Aryans in India. The consolidation of the power of the king during the period of settlement is quite natural, as is shown in the history of the early Teutons, the post-Conquest English. The Bretwaldas, the so-called Heptarchy, also point to the same fact. The history of the Basileus in the earliest Greek settlements also substantially supports this view. The theoretical argument in favour of the growth of kingship, in supersession of the clan organizations, is very ably presented by Jenks.<sup>3</sup> In India also we find that the same circumstances prevailed. The Aryans, in their march of conquest, had to meet, at every turn,<sup>4</sup> powerful bands of non-Aryans equally versed in many of the arts of civilization known to the Aryans themselves. Continuous war followed, which must have led, as in the case of the early Teutons, to the

<sup>1</sup> ii, 12, 11; iv, 30, 14; vi, 26, 5.

<sup>2</sup> iii, 43, 5.



growth of the royal power. In Continental Europe the king had to overcome, in England to assimilate, the clan organization with jarring interests and based on conjunction by birth rather than military efficiency. In India this obstacle did not exist, at any rate to the extent that it did in Europe, for we hear so little of clans, and of these many allusions are, on the whole, not certain. Although there are references to Aryans fighting Aryans,<sup>1</sup> yet we are not certain whether one clan of Aryans fought with another, or merely the people of one place fought against those of another. Nor can we even suggest, without launching ourselves into conjectural absurdities, that these wars were fought for the king either to consolidate or to disrupt his powers as conflicting with those of the clan units. Of clan also we have only the variedly interpreted *vis*, the war-cry *visam-visam*, and the word *gotra* which has hopelessly lost its original meaning. Be that what it may, we come across the word *Rajan*, which means the king or the person who rules. Whether the king was elected or hereditary is another moot point. In the later Samhita days hereditary kingship seems to have been the prevalent institution, reference being made to some lines of kings reigning for forty generations. Perhaps there was some sort of election as well, which might have been confined to the election of the king from the members of the royal family. The legend in the Nirukta<sup>2</sup> of Devapi and Shantanu, which forms the subject of one of the later hymns of the Rig Veda,<sup>3</sup> refers to the practical deposition of the elder brother by the younger. But in this case the hereditary line was not disturbed, and in fact the two brothers were reconciled by the subsequent ill-luck of Shantanu, and Devapi's assumption of Brahmanic functions forms only an exception to the position of the Brahmana in religious ceremonies. But one passage in the Rig Veda<sup>4</sup> is strongly suggestive. Varuna (who is merely the divine aspect of the king<sup>5</sup>) is said to be sustained by the waters of his creation. The hymn goes on : like subjects choosing a

<sup>1</sup> vi, 22, 2 ; vi, 33, 3 ; vi, 60, 6 ; vii, 83, 1 ; x, 38, 3.

<sup>2</sup> ii, 10.

<sup>3</sup> x, 98

<sup>4</sup> x, 124, 8. e

<sup>5</sup> Macdonell : *Vedic Mythology*.

king, they, smitten with fear, fled from Vritra. The choice of a king by the people is clearly suggested. But the condition of free choice of the president of the United States of America or of the French Republic could not have existed. Otherwise why should they be smitten with fear? In any way, that choice of the king was known is certain; the uncertainty hangs about the means and the method of this election.

If we turn to the duty of the king, we find that this may be divided into two, viz., his duty in war and his duty in times of peace. In connection with the non-Aryans we have seen that frequent wars ensued between the Aryans and the non-Aryans.<sup>1</sup> The growth of an early king out of the people or out of the priest or out of the patriarch is undoubtedly due to war. Therefore, efficiency in war, in leading, fighting, organizing, or in propitiating the gods (in the case of the priest, of which there is very little probability), required that it must be shown and, in the beginning, maintained by personal prowess in the field. So that it is reasonable to assume that the chief function of the king in war was to lead the army. Specially is this probable in view of the fact that there was already the threefold differentiation of society into the Brahmanas, the Kshatriyas, and the Vis. In times of war the only possible function of the king could have been the leading of the military party. Besides these offensive wars against the non-Aryans and hostile Aryans, the king also undertook the defence against aggression. The prayer for being made the protector or rather a monarch of men is found in one passage in the Rig Veda, *kuvid mam gopam karase janasya kuvid rajanam*.<sup>2</sup>

In peace the king used to command the obedience of the people. He distributed his favours to the able men<sup>3</sup> in his territory. An important verse in the Rig Veda<sup>4</sup> implies that the king abides prosperous in his own abode; the earth bears fruit for him at all seasons; his subjects willingly pay homage to him. Sometimes this obedience or payment was forced<sup>5</sup> (see later under Tribute). In the later Sutras we

<sup>1</sup> ii, 12, 11; iv, 26, 3; vi, 26, 5; vi, 33, 4; vii, 18; vii, 33; vii, 83, etc.

<sup>2</sup> iii, 43, 5.

<sup>3</sup> i, 67, 1.

<sup>4</sup> iv, 50, 8.

<sup>5</sup> vii, 6, 5; ix, 7, 5.

find reference to the function of the king as civil judge, but in the Rig Veda there is no such mention. But his function as a criminal judge is hinted in some passages. Varuna, the personified god representing king, has spies for the determination of what is true and what is false.<sup>1</sup> Those who perform good deeds are favoured, thus receiving recompense for their acts.<sup>2</sup> The passage is obscure, but considering the state of society we may well imagine that certain criminal jurisdiction must have attached itself to the king. The spies of Varuna are specifically enjoined to praise to their master the acts of the worshippers.<sup>3</sup> Yama also speaks of the spies of gods who wander upon earth and never close their eyes.<sup>4</sup> All these passages refer to the gods, either Varuna specially or to gods in general, but the analogy seems to be applicable to the government of the king. Later on, we shall have occasion to refer to the laws and their administration. The king's function also seems partly to supervise criminal administration.

The king seems to have lived in a well-built palace which must have had many elaborate arrangements. In one passage<sup>5</sup> it is said that sovereigns sit down in this substantial and elegant hall built with a thousand columns. Varuna again is said to have a vast comprehensive dwelling with a thousand doors.<sup>6</sup> Frequent reference is made to the brilliant dress, perhaps of the king. A passage in the Rig Veda<sup>7</sup> speaks of the *gomatarah* (i.e., having for their mother cow, whence earth; meaning perhaps king) embellishing themselves with ornaments, shining resplendent with brilliant decorations. All those around the son of Chedi are spoken of as wearing cuirasses of leather.<sup>8</sup> The Maruts when bedecked with various ornaments look handsome and are compared with kings.<sup>9</sup> Lastly, the king is supposed to be the landowner, but of this there is no proof whatsoever in the Rig Veda, though ample evidence of it is found in later literature.

\* Another word, *svaraj*,<sup>10</sup> also occurs in the Rig Veda, which

<sup>1</sup> iv, 4, 3; vi, 67, 5.    <sup>2</sup> vii, 61, 3.    <sup>3</sup> vii, 87, 3.    <sup>4</sup> x, 10, 8.

<sup>5</sup> ii, 42, 5.    <sup>6</sup> vii, 88, 5.    <sup>7</sup> i, 45, 3.

<sup>8</sup> vii, 5, 38.    <sup>9</sup> x, 78, 1.    <sup>10</sup> i, 36, 7; i, 51, 15; i, 61, 9.

may be interpreted as self-ruler or king. But it has in all cases been used in connection with the gods and does not seem to require more than this passing notice. *Viraja* seems to signify a title of royalty, but its metaphorical use throughout the Rig Veda<sup>1</sup> does not allow us to derive from it much useful knowledge about the king. The idea of monarch or sole ruler seems to be known in that age when the smaller kings among the Aryans were perhaps fighting among themselves. The fact that, even in idea, *ekaraja* could be conceived suggests the movement of political events towards a unity under the supervision of the king. In the Rig Veda,<sup>2</sup> in connection with the god Indra, the word is used only once. But we may profitably remember that even in the days of the so-called Heptarchy the English were without a name for the holder of kingship. Bretwalda did not convey that nor could cynning serve the purpose. This view of the importance of the word will be manifest when we understand that in the Rig Veda there has already been conceived the superior ruler, the sovereign, having power greater than that of the king. Rishi Prajapati refers in a hymn to the universal sovereign, *samrat*.<sup>3</sup> The Sun again is called *samrat*, since he measures the three worlds.<sup>4</sup> Indra is also said to hold this position in another hymn.<sup>5</sup> Rishi Bharadwaja tells Indra that Abhyavartin, the son of Dhayamana, is the opulent supreme sovereign, *samrat*, and has made presents to the Rishi.<sup>6</sup> This reference is clearly to a king who, at least for the time, was the most powerful one and thus was entitled to the high name. The same use of it is also found in another verse of Sobhari<sup>7</sup> where he and his people seek the alliance of Trasadasyu for his protection.

The king was indeed a prominent person with regal paraphernalia and not merely the first among men. It is not certain whether there was any body of men like the Teutonic *comitalus*, the personal followers, who were attached to him in war, plunder, and in any new settlement. Considering the meagre references that we can expect from

<sup>1</sup> i, 188, 5; ix, 96, 18; x, 166, 1.

<sup>2</sup> vii, 37, 3.

<sup>3</sup> iv, 21, 1.

<sup>4</sup> iii, 55, 7.

<sup>5</sup> vi, 27, 8.

<sup>6</sup> iii, 56, 5.

<sup>7</sup> viii, 19, 32.

the hymns of the Rig Veda about all such matters, we are bound to turn to the later period, and have our confirmation of any hint in the Rig Veda as to some institution, in the prevailing practice in the later Samhitas. Thus only can we form any idea as to the household organization of the king. Of course, after the king, his son must have been the most prominent man there, since either he was recognized as a future king or, if the system of election was prevalent, he was one of the best candidates for kingship. He was called *raja-putra*.<sup>1</sup> To the people as also to the other members of the royal household, he was an object of veneration; and going about like a prince was different from going about like an ordinary man. It is uncertain whether he used to be surrounded by a body of retainers like his royal father, but in dress and personal bearing it is only reasonable to presume that he followed the king.

### Nobility.

Among the people who formed the personal attendants of the king, men of high qualities and probably of high birth formed the majority. Though not exactly like the *comitatus*, still these formed a sort of united body following the king, as leaders perhaps in times of war. Most probably they were the associates of the king in peace as well. They must all have been of the Kshatriya caste, most probably of the royal family, and at all times must have formed a distinct body of men and described by the word *rajan*, which otherwise means the king in the Rig Veda. Indeed, this must have been the class which was in the mind of Rishi Narayana when in his famous Purushasukta he spoke of *Rajanya* as a class coming out of the arms of Purusha.<sup>2</sup> The deity *Brahmanaspati* is again asked in an earlier verse to concentrate his strength and slay foes, being associated with the regal attendants.<sup>3</sup> The high position of the *rajan* is evident from Rishi Kutsa's hymn,<sup>4</sup> where the adorable Indra and Agni are said to delight either in his own house or in that of a Brahmana or in that of a *rajan*, *yad*

<sup>1</sup> x, 40, 3.

<sup>2</sup> x, 90, 12.

<sup>3</sup> i, 40, 8.

<sup>4</sup> i, 108, 7.

*Brahmani Rajani va.* Later on, in the Rig Veda the descendant of the great patriarch Angirasa, in his invocation to Indra, says that the worshippers, i.e., the chiefs, may acquire riches.<sup>1</sup> Then again the medicinal plants or herbs are said to congregate for the extirpation of diseases, etc., as the princes of the ruling house assemble in the field of battle.<sup>2</sup> Here the word is used in the plural and, from the comparison made with the plants, seems to indicate the equality of their position. From this the attempt has been made to prove that in some cases, instead of the king, all the members of the royal family used to rule together and the comparison is made with the Teutonic settlement described by Tacitus<sup>3</sup> where there is reference to such a case. Without denying the probability of such a fact, we consider it reasonable to state that the passing reference in one passage only does not warrant the presumption of such an institution. Zimmer seems to have projected his idea about the Teutonic polity into this verse and reads things in advance.

"

### Retainers and Dependants.

Apart from these nobles attending the king there was a body of retainers and dependants who were of much lower position and perhaps of lower birth. The word *ibha* occurs several times in the Rig Veda.<sup>4</sup> But the meaning of this word has been so widely interpreted that it would be unsafe to put much reliance on this alone. Sayana, for example, interprets it to mean 'elephant,' and he has been followed by some others. Yet proofs, besides this, of the king's retinue are not wanting in the Rig Veda. The word *vira* literally means strong and heroic man. This word means most probably in some passages<sup>5</sup> the sturdy attendants of a king or a chief. Elsewhere<sup>6</sup> also this interpretation may be put on it. Finally, the word is used in connection with Taranta,<sup>7</sup> who is called a *vira*. But all these may mean merely a heroic person or persons, and the only thing in

<sup>1</sup> x, 42, 10<sup>2</sup> x, 97, 6.<sup>3</sup> *Annals*, II, 88.<sup>4</sup> i, 84, 17, iv, 4, 1; ix, 57, 3<sup>5</sup> i, 18, 4; i, 114, 8.<sup>6</sup> iv, 29, 2; v, 20, 4.<sup>7</sup> v, 61, 5.

favour of the interpretation is the later (post-Rig Veda) practice of having such attendants of the king.

Besides his retinue, the king assuredly had about him a body of dependants who are mentioned repeatedly in the Rig Veda. *Upasti*<sup>1</sup> means a servant who depends upon his master, but who is not exactly a slave. According to both the interpretations<sup>2</sup> of this passage *upasti* is a servant, but it is not exactly clear from the context whether the servant belonged usually to the king or to every man of importance. But even if he was so in the case of the latter, we can safely assert his existence in the case of the king, who must have possessed, in these matters of position and authority, what an ordinary non-royal man of importance did. The meaning of another word, *sti*, is very obscure, and it is said that it signifies dependants whose position is lower than that of the *vis*, *prajah* or the subjects, but better than that of the slaves. It occurs frequently in the Rig Veda,<sup>3</sup> but its meaning in this connection seems to be at least indefinite. *Stipa* similarly has been interpreted to mean the attendant on the king's person, i.e., the guard of his body. But its use in connection with the gods<sup>4</sup> seems to be incompatible with its dependent position.

### Tribute.

We have seen previously that there was frequent warfare between the Aryans and the non-Aryans as well as among the Aryans themselves. We do not know anything about the treaties or other international relations, as we hear even in the early days of Egypt (e.g., in the reign of Thotmes III.), Babylonia, Assyria, etc.<sup>5</sup> In most cases war continued till one party was totally crushed and became either slaves or subjects, or fled away to the hills or other places of natural protection, living like King Sambara.<sup>6</sup> In most cases the terms of settlement were fixed on the cessation of hostilities. But there were other cases too when the humbled or the

<sup>1</sup> x, 97, 23.

<sup>2</sup> By Sayana and by Mahidhara.

<sup>3</sup> vii, 19, 11; x, 34; x, 148, 4.

<sup>4</sup> vii, 66, 3; x, 69, 4.

<sup>5</sup> For ready reference, see Hall's *History of the Ancient East*. More authoritative ones are the books of Maspero, Breasted, etc.

<sup>6</sup> ii, 12, 11; iv, 30, 14; vi, 26, 5.

weak party used to pay tribute to the strong or the victor. This might have been paid either for protection or for non-molestation on the part of the strong. The word *bali* has indeed been frequently used to signify offerings to gods.<sup>1</sup> But *balihrit* cannot but mean payment of tribute to the king. The mighty Agni first baffled the Asuras who were humbled and then made them tributaries (i.e., paying tributes) to Nahusha.<sup>2</sup> Most unequivocally, again, the dwellers of Yamuna and Tritsus got tribute of the heads of the horses from the Ajas, the Sighrus, and the Yakshas after Indra had killed Bheda in battle.<sup>3</sup> All these are cases of payment of tribute from hostile tribes who by reduction in war were compelled to do so. But there seems to have been the practice of such payment from a friendly people or from one's own subjects even. There is one passage only in the Rig Veda,<sup>4</sup> but it is very cogent proof of the fact. Indra is propitiated here to render the people payers of *bali*, *balihrit*.

### Vispati.

Passing now to the other institutions of the Vedic polity, we meet first of all with *vispati*, a word of very various interpretation. Zimmer interprets it in one passage<sup>5</sup> as the lord of the canton, in which case the kingdom must have been divided into well-organized units of smaller dimensions, having a sort of independence resembling perhaps the self-governing units of a modern state. But Zimmer's theory based on the mere mention of *vispati* seems to be at least indecisive. In another and less ambiguous use<sup>6</sup> of the word, it is supposed either to mean the lord of the dwelling, in which case he must be taken as a subordinate of the king, if he had any political function, or to mean the king himself, if *vis* is translated by *prajah* or subjects. It seems that the proper interpretation of *vispati* in this connection cannot be ascertained unless it is clear whether the kingdom of a ruler was big or small. If it was very big, then these *vispatis* must

<sup>1</sup> v, 1, 10; viii, 100, 9.

<sup>2</sup> vii, 6, 5.

<sup>3</sup> vii, 18, 19.

<sup>4</sup> x, 173, 6.

<sup>5</sup> i, 37, 8.

<sup>6</sup> i, 12, 2; i, 26, 7; i, 164, 1; ii, 1, 8; iii, 2, 10; iii, 40, 3; vii, 39, 2; ix, 108, 10; x, 4, 4; x, 135, 1.



have had political functions, and as such their position may be taken to have been more independent than mere governors of a province, with probably the same functions. This assumption should be reasonable in view of the fact that in later days <sup>1</sup> we come across *satapati*, the lord of a hundred villages, who must have had primarily political functions as an officer.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, without such local units even in the Rig Veda period, there could not have been any unity within the realm of the king. But this may be negated by the suppositions (a) that the kingdoms were small, so that the king and the nobles were sufficient to carry on the government with perhaps the help of the *spashah* or the spy; or (b) that the government was not organized enough in those early days. But the condition of the people, as evidenced from their system of agriculture, arts and crafts, does not warrant the second supposition.

### Vrajabati.

Even if such an organization was not necessary for carrying on the administration in times of peace, it was certainly necessary in times of war. And its prevalence in war shows that the army was not so small as to be led directly by the king and the nobles. This again would naturally presuppose a big state, which necessitated local governors or *vispatis*. However, in war or even perhaps in migration the *vrajabati* used to be attended by the *kulapas*.<sup>3</sup> The *kulapas* were undoubtedly the heads of families, so that the heads of families used to go to war under the leadership of the *vrajabati*. The interpretation has been put by some according to which the *vrajabati* is identified with the *gramani*, so that the headman of the village was attended in war by the heads of families of the same village. Thus it would be the same as the division of the host according to the division of the curies in the Roman army of the early days. This interpretation seems to be very probable, as it is impossible to deny the significance of the connection between

<sup>1</sup> Mahtayani Samhita, iv, 14, 12; Taittiriya Brahmana, ii, 8, 4, 2.

<sup>2</sup> He had judicial functions as well.

<sup>3</sup> X, 179, 2.

the *vrajapati* and the *kulapas*. And who else could be their leader, except the *gramani* whom we find mentioned in the Rig Veda? <sup>1</sup> The other interpretation, that it means merely a chieftain surrounded by the heads of families, is literally more correct. But the question arises, who could be their chieftain? The proper explanation of this seems to be the identification of the *gramani* with the *vrajapati* in times of war. It may be remembered, by the way, that the word *vrajapati* also establishes its connection (in its etymological meaning) with the house, so that he was the headman somewhere, and the fact of his leading the *kulapas*, or the heads of families, offers the irresistible temptation to identify him with the leader of the clan consisting of families of the same stock. In such a case the *gramani* was, in ordinary times, the representative head of the clan. But we have already referred to this discussion among experts.

### The Assembly.

The most important and typically Aryan institution was the Assembly. In all the three European branches of the Aryan race, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Teutons, the original political elements were the King, the Council, and the Assembly.<sup>2</sup> Out of these have grown the various complex institutions of the present day by the process of, what Herbert Spencer would call, differentiation and integration.<sup>3</sup> The same three elements were prevalent among the Indo-Aryans. We have seen the king and we have also had occasion to know the Council whose members the *rajan*, nobles, must have been. But in this latter case there is no recorded evidence to prove that there used to be actual deliberations of these nobles with the king. Still it would not be unreasonable to presume that the king was influenced by the opinions of those who, by virtue of their birth and military skill, surrounded him in times of peace and war. In connection with the Assembly also we shall have occasion to notice the probability of such an oligarchic

<sup>1</sup> x, 62, 11; x, 107, 5

<sup>2</sup> Freeman. *Comparative Politics*; Sidgwick: *Development of European Polity*.

<sup>3</sup> Herbert Spencer: *Principles of Sociology*, Vol. II. Pt. V. chs. 3-4.

body, which eventually superseded the assembly of the people.

Throughout the whole of the Rig Veda, from the earliest Mandala down to the latest, we find very frequent references to words meaning Assembly. We shall take each of these words separately and try to discover the exact institution that was meant by its use. *Vidatha* is an important word, as it occurs so many times in the Rig Veda.<sup>1</sup> In all these passages the word seems to signify order, not actual assemblies. These help us only so far as we attempt to argue by analogy by referring to the etymological meaning ; and we must not be unconscious about its uncertainty as a word positively standing for an assembly. But besides these, the word *vidatha* has been used for Assembly in three different senses, viz., (i) Assembly for secular ends, (ii) Assembly for religious ends, and (iii) Assembly for war. Unfortunately no record of the procedure or the transactions of the Assembly is found in the Rig Veda, but the scant references in quite a large number of verses<sup>2</sup> scattered throughout the Rig Veda confirm the existence of such institutions for secular purposes. The business of administration in those days was not an elaborate affair, and we cannot expect that the king, with such limited duties, would be performing many public acts requiring the sanction of the people. Perhaps those matters only were brought before the Assembly which required the sanction or approval of the people, because these were not already sanctioned by custom. Such departure could not have been very many in number. But the frequent occurrence of the word for secular purposes suggests that these assemblies met even when there was no such departure. In such cases the function of the Assembly can be a matter of guess-work. Mere formal meetings would presuppose a superior organization and superior ideas of rules and methods to what we are justified to assert from a study of the Vedic civilization. Nor can it be confidently asserted that the

<sup>1</sup> i, 31, 6 ; i, 117, 25 ; iii, 1, 18 ; iii, 27, 7 ; iv, 38, 4 ; vi, 8, 1 ; x, 85, 26 ; x, 94, 2.

<sup>2</sup> ii, 1, 4 ; ii, 27, 12 ; ii, 27, 17 ; iii, 38, 5-6 ; v, 63, 2 ; vii, 66, 10 ; viii, 30, 1. x, 12, 7.

general body of the subjects was yet conversant, or was at all interested in being conversant, with the affairs of the State, beyond the protection of their hearth and fields.

The Assembly for religious purposes <sup>1</sup> was evidently for worshipping the deity, and in this respect it is possible to say that it used to meet very regularly.<sup>2</sup>

There are a few references to the *vidatha* for purposes of war.<sup>3</sup> The Maruts, for example, are said to sport in the Assembly <sup>4</sup> which evidently met for the demolition of the intruders or invaders. Again, the Maruts are found propitiated in a *vidatha* evidently assembled to make preparations for war.<sup>5</sup>

In one passage in the Rig Veda <sup>6</sup> we find the word *samgati* used for an Assembly where Indra, Vayu, and Brihaspati are invoked to join and thus be favourable.

*Sabha* is another important word, signifying Assembly, with which we often meet in the Rig Veda.<sup>7</sup> But sometimes it is difficult to ascertain whether it means the Assembly or the hall of Assembly. The tendency is to interpret it as Assembly, since we find *sabha-saha*,<sup>8</sup> i.e., eminent in the Assembly. In one passage *sabha* has been used as the hall of dicing.<sup>9</sup> But the general use of the word is to denote an Assembly for more serious matters. The actual deliberations must for ever remain unknown. Only glimpses here and there come to us from passing references. Sometimes they Assembled for general conversation about the welfare or use of cows,<sup>10</sup> which were of course an important part of their wealth. Then, again, there was an Assembly for social intercourse, as when it is said <sup>11</sup> that the well-born sacrificers met in assembly before the radiant fires (the fires here do not refer to the actual sacrifices). This passage has been further interpreted to limit the meaning of *sabha* to an assembly of the well-born or the oligarchs of ancient days, so that *sabha*, according to these authorities, meant more properly the Council of the Aryans as noticed in the European branches. This view of the meaning of *sabha* is perhaps supported by

<sup>1</sup> i, 60, 1, ii, 39, 1, iii, 1, 1

<sup>2</sup> ii, 4, 8, iii, 56, 8.

<sup>3</sup> v, 59, 2

<sup>4</sup> i, 166, 2

<sup>5</sup> i, 167, 6

<sup>6</sup> x, 141, 4.

<sup>7</sup> vi, 28, 6,

vii, 4, 9, viii, 34, 6

<sup>8</sup> x, 71, 10.

<sup>9</sup> x, 34, 6.

<sup>10</sup> vi, 28, 6.

<sup>11</sup> vii, 1, 4.

the hymn<sup>1</sup> of Devatithi of the Kanwa family, where it is said that the devotees of Indra, being, by his grace, possessed of horses, of cars, of cattle, and of goodly form, ever supplied with high-class food and riches, entered an assembly. Further on, the Assembly of priests is called *sabha*.<sup>2</sup> Thus in these cases the constituents of the Assembly (*sabha*), so far as they have been explicitly mentioned, were all Brahmanas and Maghavans or rich patrons. So that the practically missing link of the Western Council is thus furnished from the Rig Veda. The word, of course, cannot be limited in all cases to such an oligarchic association, but in these passages it seems to be fair to assume that *sabha* was an assembly of the aristocratic elements, the priests and the nobles, with striking similarity to the earliest sitting in England of Lords, spiritual and temporal. Besides social intercourse and discussion about cows, etc., a third function is attributed to *sabha* from an obscure use of the word.<sup>3</sup> It is said that the purpose was debate and verbal contest. Of these we have, of course, many, rather too many, in later ages, but their evidence in the Rig Veda is at least doubtful. It seems probable that sometimes the word used to mean the fire in the place or the hall of Assembly.<sup>4</sup> The sons of Bharata sing of Agni as *sabhya*, and places it on the most frequented (i.e., where people assembled) banks of the Drishadvati, Apaya, and Sarswati rivers.<sup>5</sup> Agni in this connection is also referred to as being placed in the midst (of the house, perhaps) where all could worship him.<sup>6</sup>

*Samiti* is another important word which occurs frequently in the Rig Veda. It is interpreted as the *Assembly of the Vedic tribe*. As such it would be of utmost importance. But unfortunately the social organization as depicted in the Rig Veda is not definite enough to warrant us to accept that meaning. In the Rig Veda it would be difficult to attempt to be positive in the assertion of this meaning. We would not at the same time deny the validity of such an interpretation; we are simply without sufficient materials about either the clan or the large co-ordination of clans, the

<sup>1</sup> viii, 4, 9.<sup>2</sup> v, 3, 11.<sup>3</sup> x, 71, 10.<sup>4</sup> iii, 23, 4.<sup>5</sup> ii, 24, 33.<sup>6</sup> vii, 7, 5.

tribe. Some authorities, particularly Ludwig,<sup>1</sup> consider that the distinction between *sabha* and *samiti* was that the former was the Assembly of the Brahmanas and Maghavans,<sup>2</sup> whereas in the *samiti* the *vis*, *prajah* or people, assembled, and the Brahmanas and Maghavans were not excluded, but could sit at their option. According to this view, therefore, the threefold organization of the Aryans into the King, the Council, and the Assembly was the same in the East as it was in the West. But the passages are of much less information with regard to these nice distinctions than we would desire. The probability is that there was such a distinction as in the West, but we cannot definitely say that it actually existed in the period of the Rig Veda. It is of interest to note that in later ages such distinctions could be seen.

It seems that the king used to be present in the *samiti*, as this fact is alluded to in more than one passage in the Rig Veda.<sup>3</sup> But it is not certain whether he used to deliberate there or what was the significance of his presence. His position must have commanded very great respect, and perhaps his explanation or request fell upon the assembly like command. No mention of dispute is anywhere found; and although we find it mentioned in the Rig Veda (not in connection with the *samiti*) that the king could be deposed,<sup>4</sup> we cannot attribute that function to this Assembly.

On a previous occasion we have discussed whether the king was hereditary or whether he was elected. Here we may mention that some authorities, for example, Zimmer, attribute to the *samiti* the function of electing the king. They base their arguments on Rishi Dhruva's hymn, of which the deity is any inaugurated raja.<sup>5</sup> The king is consecrated here and is asked to come amongst "us" and be steady and unvacillating. May all his subjects desire him for their king and may the kingdom never fall from him. The whole theory seems to be based upon the use of the first person plural, so that it is the *samiti*, or it is on behalf of the *samiti*, that the Rishi calls on the raja to be installed in

<sup>1</sup> Translation of the Rig Veda, 3, 253.

<sup>2</sup> viii, 1, 4; vii, 4, 9; x, 71, 10. <sup>3</sup> ix, 92, 6; x, 97, 6.

<sup>4</sup> x, 173, 2.

<sup>5</sup> x, 173; also see x, 174.

office. This point of view is, however, vitiated by the use of the first person singular in the first half of the verse where the Rishi consecrates him. The consecration was undoubtedly the work of the Purohita. Then, is it fair or reasonable to assume that the next words of welcome were uttered by or on behalf of the Assembly? Or, should these be taken as the utterances of the same person, using the plural in honour of the high position of the priest? Both are anomalies. If the fact is that the Purohita used the word in self-glory, why did he not do it with regard to the consecration? But it may be said in answer that the consecration was in fact a personal act in which he could not speak in the plural, whereas the king was the ruler of all persons and as such might be addressed by him in the plural. This is the only possible explanation, and this explanation goes in support of the opposite theory that the priest was speaking, consciously or unconsciously, on behalf of the Assembly. But even then it is very doubtful whether we are entitled to say, from this one sukta, that the king was elected by the *samiti*. After all, it is made to depend upon the peculiar idiom in the verse. But, considering the ceremony of consecration which evidently was public, and the set method in imitation of divine propitiation according to which the Purohita speaks, may we not be justified in holding that the assembled people, although they did not choose actually, yet, by that ceremony and recital of welcome, practically approved the succession of the king? This would accord well with the Teutonic system of approval in Assembly by shouts and beating of the spears against the shield.<sup>1</sup> But Zimmer's further attempt to see in the *samiti* the rule of oligarchy<sup>2</sup> seems to be unwarranted. Perhaps the choice of the king by the *comitatus* or by the *princeps* is what he intends to read in the Vedic polity.

It was recognized that mutual understanding and concord were necessary for the king's successes in battles. The *samiti* and the king should act harmoniously. The triumphant king says<sup>3</sup>: I seize upon your minds, your

<sup>1</sup> Referred to by both Cæsar and Tacitus.

<sup>2</sup> From ix, 92, 6; x, 97, 6

<sup>3</sup> x, 166, 4.

pious observances, your prowess in war. The hymn of Rishi Samvana, addressing the Assembly, says: Meet together, talk together, let your minds apprehend alike.<sup>1</sup> Again, we find: Common be the prayer of this Assembly, common the acquirement, common the purpose, associated be the desire. I repeat for you a common prayer, I offer for you with a common libation.<sup>2</sup> Common be your intention, common be your hearts; common be your thoughts, so that there may be a thorough union among you.<sup>3</sup> These are the last three slokas of the last sukta of the Rig Veda. Their vigour, earnestness, and directness must have appealed to the audience when this hymn was chanted in later days.

### Police.

Turning now to the other parts of ancient state-craft we find very meagre and obscure references to the police system. The word *ugra* as it is used in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad <sup>4</sup> means technically the man in authority, from which Max Muller rendered it into policeman. It occurs in the Rig Veda <sup>5</sup> only once where perhaps it does not mean anything beyond the mighty or powerful man. Similarly the word *jivagribha*, literally seizing alive, is interpreted as the policeman.<sup>6</sup> This meaning of the word in this passage would have been acceptable only as a confirmation of other evidence. But it does not, it seems, prove the existence of policeman by itself even if all allowance be made for the word *madhyamasi*, mediator or arbiter, used in the next verse.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, considering the state of society where there was no law,<sup>8</sup> and also considering the prevalence of the wergeld,<sup>9</sup> such doubtful interpretations should be rejected.

### Judicial Organization.

The judicial organization was very elaborate in the period of the Atharva Veda. In the Rig Veda we find only the

<sup>1</sup> x, 191, 2

<sup>4</sup> iv, 3, 37-38.

<sup>7</sup> x, 97, 12.

<sup>2</sup> x, 191, 3.

<sup>5</sup> vii, 38, 6

<sup>8</sup> See later under Vairadaya.

<sup>3</sup> x, 191, 4.

<sup>6</sup> x, 97, 11.

<sup>9</sup> See later under Law.



*madhyamasi*,<sup>1</sup> who was perhaps a man of influence, to whom the disputing parties voluntarily, it seems, submitted their case for settlement. He was not an officer of the State, and most probably the parties were under no obligation to submit to him. According to some authorities the *sabha* used to perform some judicial functions, but the proceedings of this body are hopelessly beyond human knowledge. If it did perform that work it would very closely resemble the Greek *apella*.

*Sapatha*, in later Samhitas, means oath, from which it is clear that the practice of trial by oath existed in those days. The word, however, occurs in the Rig Veda only once, and there it means "curse."<sup>2</sup> It may have developed this meaning later on, but in the Rig Veda it does not mean anything else. On the other hand, there is one passage in the Rig Veda<sup>3</sup> where, though the word *sapatha* is not used, yet a practice is described which, taken roundly, is the same thing as an oath. It runs thus: May I this day die if I am a spirit of ill, or if I have ever injured the life of any man. Therefore, as a part of the judicial organization of the time we cannot say that oath was systematically practised. But its use in the later days and its mention in the above passage make it probable that the system had its genesis in the Rig Veda period. This view will be in conformity with what we find later in connection with the administration of justice. The later society had the *gramyavadin* (village judge), the *abhiprasnin* (defendant), the *gnatri* (witness), as also *prasna* (pleading), *divya* (ordeal), and *sapatha* (oath) in judicial proceedings. We hear also of *vaira* in the Rig Veda,<sup>4</sup> where *vairadaya* should literally mean that which should be paid in compensation. But its use as wergeld, as it was in later days, cannot be deduced from this one reference. In another passage<sup>5</sup> the expression *satadaya* is used in connection with Raka. It cannot possibly mean anything but one whose wergeld is one hundred (cows). The word *daya*, in later Sanskrit, as perhaps in the Rig Veda, means "liability," and its technical use in *dharma sutras* or legal

<sup>1</sup> x, 97, 12.  
<sup>2</sup> v, 61, 8.

<sup>3</sup> x, 87, 15.

<sup>4</sup> vii, 104, 15.  
<sup>5</sup> ii, 32, 4.

texts has made it "legal liability." From this it appears that wergeld was in practice in those early days. This view is corroborated by the organization of society without sufficient criminal jurisdiction either of the king or of any central authority. From the analogy of the Teutonic system<sup>1</sup> we know that wergeld prevailed as the successor of direct personal revenge, an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth. In Europe this wergeld was part of private revenge, brought about and thus limited by the interference of the king as the military leader, because such revenge always tended to weaken the strength of the clans joined together under the common leader. In later days it was one of the most important judicial functions of the king to assure the people that his might would compel the injured to accept the wer and the wrongdoer to pay it.<sup>2</sup> In fact, this uncertainty of the realization or acceptance of the wer was one of the greatest hindrances to social progress. At first the king was not powerful enough to take up the administration of justice except perhaps with regard to bootless crimes. He had necessarily to depend on the clan institutions. So we may say that wergeld as part of private revenge preceded the authority of the king at a time when he was powerful enough as a military leader to stop indiscriminate revenge and also substitute the wer or commutation for even blood revenge, but when he was not strong or developed enough to enforce or direct its actual currency. It was a period of transition when the king was only emerging into importance, and the host in arms was only appreciating, by actual concrete results on the battlefield, the disastrous effects of indiscriminate or blood revenge among themselves. The same conditions prevailed in the Indo-Aryan society during the period of the Rig Veda. From a study of the king and his household organization, the family and the Assemblies, we may be certain that he was growing in power. Military necessities during the course of the settlement in India required that the hands of the king should be strengthened as much as possible by eliminating the causes of internal

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs: *Constitutional History of England*, Vol. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Jenks: *Law and Politics in the Middle Ages*, ch. iv.

exhaustion through direct private revenge, if the race was to fight its way through an equally civilized non-Aryan settlement. But yet we do not find in the Rig Veda much trace of the criminal or civil jurisdiction of the king. The fact can only be explained by accepting that the king was not powerful enough or free enough to undertake all this, but yet could enforce, by way of military discipline, the abrogation of direct revenge, so that wergeld was still under private revenge. This explanation seems to be irresistible if we look to the later Samhita period when the wer was enforced by the king's courts. This is the natural result of the extension of the power and authority of the king. If our explanation is correct, we may see, even from only these two references,<sup>1</sup> that wer, as private revenge, limiting indiscriminate and blood revenge, did exist in the period of the Rig Veda, and that this wer came under the jurisdiction of the king, and was assimilated by the royal courts in later days even as was the case in Europe.<sup>2</sup>

Another practice, of later days which is supposed to have been prevalent during the period of the Rig Veda is the ordeal, *divya*. But it seems that we cannot discover it in the Rig Veda, although the attempt has been made to interpret two passages<sup>3</sup> as referring to this practice. Dirghatamas in the earlier text can hardly be construed in this light without doing violence to the language.

### Law.

From the above it will be abundantly clear that the judicial organization had not grown much in the period of the Rig Veda. If we remember at the same time that theft and robbery were the only crimes mentioned and *mad-hyamasi* the only settlor of disputes, we shall not expect that *dharma*, i.e., law, developed to any great extent. Yet law or custom was recognized, as is evident from the various references that are found in the Rig Veda. We find *dharma* or law being upheld by Vishnu, the preserver.<sup>4</sup> There were substantive duties enjoined by law. For example, the

<sup>1</sup> li. 32, 4; v. 61, 8.

<sup>2</sup> i. 148, 4; iii. 53, 22.

<sup>3</sup> Jenks, as cited above.

<sup>4</sup> i. 22, 18.

priests were to dress Soma ox, *ukshanam prisnim apachanta* <sup>1</sup>; the minor gods, Sadhyas, were to perform sacrifices in certain ways.<sup>2</sup> Intelligent people are asked in one hymn<sup>3</sup> to offer to the powerful Vaiswanara precious things at holy rites, and it ends by saying: let no one violate the eternal law. In addressing Agni Rishi Kata speaks of its being first kindled according to law, *prathamadharma*.<sup>4</sup> The self revolving (days), the ceremonies addressed to the gods, and the laws of man are mentioned as devoted to Indra.<sup>5</sup> Again Agni, the divine purifier, is invoked as favouring the law of the worshippers.<sup>6</sup> Mitra and Varuna are also mentioned as protecting *dharma* by their office.<sup>7</sup> They are, on another occasion, called steady in the performance of their functions according to law.<sup>8</sup> The word is perhaps used in the sense of civil law in connection with *madhyamasi*, the mediator.<sup>9</sup>

The exact nature of law at this time is obscure. That it meant some set rules or recognized customs, more or less widely known, is certain. Sir Henry Maine's admirable division of law in its earliest period of unconscious and spontaneous development is into (a) judgments, (b) customary law, and (c) code, i.e., authorized version of the law as embodied in some declaration by the State.<sup>10</sup> Of isolated judgments based on the peculiar circumstances of each case, forming ultimately into parts of the law, we do not at all hear in the early ages. The recognition of *dharma* as set rules or practices, which were supposed to be protected by Vishnu and which bound even the gods and the priests, is a clear proof that the period of isolated themistes or even of Maine's dike was long outgrown by the Aryan society as it is found in the Rîg Veda. This fact is important inasmuch as the conception of such order, method, and harmony as is involved in that of law is the heritage of a nation at a very late stage of its early history. Religion was, as it was bound to be, the predominant element, and that is why the term *dharma* is used so often in the sense of rules or practices

<sup>1</sup> i, 164, 43<sup>2</sup> i, 164, 50.<sup>3</sup> iii, 3, 1.<sup>4</sup> iii, 17, 1.<sup>5</sup> iii, 60, 6.<sup>6</sup> v, 26, 7.<sup>7</sup> v, 63, 7.<sup>8</sup> v, 72, 2.<sup>9</sup> x, 97, 12.<sup>10</sup> *Ancient Law*, ch. 1. See also *Early Law and Custom*