

The Aśvamedha was performed by great princes like Bharata, Durmukha and Atyarāti. Many repeatedly performed it, Bharata being credited with the performance of 133. horse-sacrifices.

A study of the above details clearly shows how sacerdotalism was making a bid for the establishment of an orderly sovereign authority, closely modelled on that which prevailed in the universal system. As the *Devas* were the universal rulers, and as the king was (transformed into) their mundane counterpart with similar rights and responsibilities vested in him, the co-operation of these powers was sure to bring all-sided prosperity to men. Sacrifice brought such a desired harmony, between the divine and human elements with the result that not only peace and order was maintained, but the forces and resources of nature came to the assistance of men. A faith in the ideal of happiness resulting from this co-operation is apparent from the king's prayers in the Rājasūya and the Aśvamedha. We quote one hymn connected with the latter (Vāj. Sam. XXII. 22).

"Oh! Brāhman! let there be born in the kingdom the Brāhmaṇa illustrious for religious knowledge; let there be born the Rājanya heroic skilled archer, piercing with shafts mighty warrior; the cow giving abundant milk; the ox good at carrying; the swift courser; the industrious woman. May Parjanya send rain according to our desire. May our fruit bearing plants ripen. May acquisition and preservation of property be secured to us."

आ ब्रह्मन् ब्राह्मणो ब्रह्मवर्चसी जायतामाराद्रे राजन्यः शूर इषव्योतिव्याधौ
सहारथो जायताम् दोग्ध्री धेनुर्वोदानङ्गानाशः सप्तः पुरन्ध्रैर्योषाजिष्णूरघेष्ठाः
समेयो युवांस्य यजमानस्य वीरो जायताम् निकामि निकामि नः पर्जन्यो वर्षतु
फलवत्यो न ओषधयः पश्वन्ता योगक्षेमो नः कल्पताम् ।

III

Political Evolution Constitutionalism

WHILE ritualism masked the social outlook, momentous changes influenced politics. Monarchy came to be established on a firm footing and the king came to enjoy a constitutional position, by virtue of well-defined functions and duties formally vested in him, rather than subsisting on the mere personal relation between him and his subjects, which was liable to disruption with the rise of strong rivals near him. Various causes and circumstances helped the elimination of the claims of rivals and kinsmen and it is easy to find a decided tendency towards the acceptance of the sole authority of the king together with the establishment of rules of hereditary succession. The religious literature gives us instances of such. For, in the *Pañca Br.* in connection with *Dvirātra* ceremony, we are told that with the performance of this ritual by the *Kāpeyas*, the king of the *Caitrarathi* family became the sole ruler to the exclusion of his kinsmen (*Pañca Br.* XX. 12. 5. e.g. एतेन वै चित्ररथं कापेया अयाजयंस्तमेकाकिनमन्नाद्यस्याध्यक्षमकुर्वन् । तस्माच्चैत्ररथीनामेकः क्षत्रपतिर्जायते तुलम्ब इव द्वितीयः). Lack of evidence stands in the way of our multiplying such instances, but the tendency is clear and unmistakable and we find ample confirmation from the ritual connected with royal inauguration which conferred sole ruling authority to the king.

The strengthening of royal authority was due to various other causes and circumstances. First of all, an aristocracy of blood and service grew up and supported the king's interest. All authority came to centre in the royal person and the old king-electors themselves, became dependents on royal will. Instead of Rājakṛts or Rājakartārah, they came to be termed Ratninaḥ or jewels round the throne. Some of them came to be distinguished by the name of Rajavīras (king's fighters or supporters) and figure prominently in the ritualistic performances associated with the Rājasūya or the Rād-yagña. We have described these in detail in connection with the Coronation ceremonial, but here we may repeat that the *Ratninaḥ* included some of the early officials in the royal entourage, while the Rājavīras comprised the king's brother, his sons, the Purohita, and the Queen, in addition to the Sūta, the Grāmanī. Kṣattr, and the Samgrahīṭ. (see Pañca Br. XIX. 1. 4. अष्टौ वै वीरा राष्ट्रं समुद्यच्छन्ति, राजभ्राता च राजपुत्रश्च पुरोहितश्च महिषी च सूतश्च ग्रामणीश्च क्षत्रा च संग्रहीता चैते वीरा राष्ट्रं समुद्यच्छन्ति ।) Not to mention the Rājavīras, there also grew up an influential nobility who came to be known as the Rāja-mātras. They are mentioned in the Kauṣītaki Br. (XXII. 6) and in the Sāṅkhāyana Śrauta Sūtra (XVII. 5. 3. 4.), but no details are known. We find also repeated mention of the Rājanya-vandhus or those to whom villages were granted.

Secondly, the king's position was strengthened by the alliance with the priestly bodies, whose importance we shall discuss later on. As there was a preponderance of ritual, (which characterises a period of transition from tribalism to a higher type of regal authority) kings came to lean on the support of the priest-hood, since belief in the aid of the gods exercised an influence on the minds of men.

This introduced fundamental changes in political ideals and also modified the angle of vision so far as it related to political concepts. The chief ideal both in society and in politics was a regulated social existence, with well-defined duties and functions on the model of the universal system. Through the agency of ritual, the favour of the gods was assured to the king and as such, an amount of sanctity attached to his duties and functions. In lieu of this divine aid, the king was compelled to keep his pretensions within bound and to acknowledge subservience to the ministers of religion. The result of this mutual *rapprochement* was that, while the promise of divine aid ensured the loyalty of the people by clothing the royal person with a vestment of sanctity, the king in his turn was compelled to depend on the principles inculcated by the priest-hood and his irresponsibility was checked.

Monarchy came to be glorified. It was clothed with a higher moral sanction and became not only regal but sacerdotal. In the eyes of his subjects, the king's functions and duties partook of the nature of those vested in the divine rulers. As such, not only did he protect life and property, but performed sacrifices to win divine favour for his people. The Rāṣṭrabhṛt oblations clearly point to this spiritual function of the king and some passages speak of the king's protection of the Rāṣṭra by means of *Brahmacarya* and *Tapas*. (ब्रह्मचर्येण तपसा राजा राष्ट्रं वे रक्षति, A. V., XI. V. 17).*

* According to the Brāhmanical theory, *Satya* and *Rta* as well as *Tapas* on the part of the Creator, caused the evolution of the universal system. Indra won his position and the gods their immortality by *Tapas* (R. V., X. 173; Taitt. Br. III. 12. 3. 1; Śat. Br. XI. 5. 8. 1; XII. 3. 4. 1.).

Furthermore, the king came to be regarded as the protector of Dharma and of the Brāhmanas as would appear from the formula uttered by the Rajākartārah in proclaiming a newly consecrated king (*e.g.* “राजकर्त्तारो ब्रुवुः.....क्षत्रियोऽजनि विश्वस्यभूत-
स्त्राधिपतिरजनि...विशामत्ताजनि अमित्राणां हन्ताऽजनि ब्राह्मणानां गोप्ताऽजनि
धर्मस्य गोप्ताऽजनि etc. Ait. Br. VIII. 17).

THE PRIEST-HOOD.—While royalty was thus glorified and regal authority deified through priestly support, this brought the latter to the fore-front. The representative of the sacerdotal order, the Purohita came to the front rank of state-functionaries and Brāhmanas as a class came to be regarded with veneration and styled as mundane gods. (See Śatapatha II. 2. 2. 6, इया वे देवा देवाः अहैव देवा अथ ये ब्राह्मणाः....मनुष्यदेवास्तेषां हेधा...मनुष्यदेवानां ब्राह्मणानां etc.). This was due to their close connection with the ceremonial which brought moral sanction to royal authority and gave the anointed prince a sacred character. We have already alluded to the fiction of the king's becoming the son of the sacrificial priest and this shows the importance of the priest-hood.

THE PUROHITA.—The Purohita stood out fore-most and was regarded as the *alter ego* of the king. If the king was the counter-part of Indra and Varuṇa, he was the incarnation of Brhaspati and performed the Brhaspati-sava (Taitt. Br. II. 7. 1 स एष बृहस्पतिसवो बृहस्पतिरकामयत देवानां पुरोधामगच्छेयमिति । स एतेनाजयत स देवानां पुरोधामगच्छत् ॥). He was regarded as half of the king and his blessings brought victory in war. He appeased the gods and without him they did not accept food offered by a king (न ह वा अपुरोहितस्य राज्ञो देवा अन्नमदन्ति तन्नाद्यच्छमानो राजा ब्राह्मणं पुरोदधीत ॥). At the intercession of the Purohita, the gods protected the kingdom (Ait. Br. VIII. 26 [तस्मै विश...तदाह ब्रह्मणे राजा तमवन्ति देवा etc.).

So a king was to consecrate a Purohita and this man was to be looked upon as the protector of the the kingdom (Rāṣṭragopa) who conferred energy, granted success and made the people loyal and prosperous. (यस्यैव विद्वान् ब्राह्मणो राष्ट्रगोपः पुरोहितः क्षत्रं क्षत्रं जयति वलेन वलमश्रुते यस्यैव विद्वान् ब्राह्मणो राष्ट्रगोपः पुरोहितस्तस्मै विश्वः संजानते संमुखा एकमनसो यस्यैव ब्राह्मणो विद्वान् राष्ट्रगोपः पुरोहितः । Ait. Br. VIII. 25).

The Purohita was thus not a mere priest. He represented moral authority and was an adviser on important affairs of state. He seems to have accompanied the king in battle on his chariot and it was he who on behalf of the common people adminstred the oath, both in the ordinary Coronation and in the Aindra-Mahābhiṣeka. As such, he was honoured by the king who accepted him as a superior and washed his feet in submission to his authority.

Privileges were conferred on him as well as on the Brāhmanas. His life was sacred, like the Tribunes in Rome. Transgression meant death or deposition to kings. As champion of the moral principle, he exercised co-ordinate authority with the king and he together with the Brāhmanas claimed abso- lution from regal authority which embraced everything else in this world. This would appear from the formula uttered by the Brāhmanas at the end of royal consecration that the king was lord of everything but in the ease of the Brāhmanas their king was the divine Soma (...सोमोऽस्माकं ब्राह्मणानां राजा ॥)

It was in the central region—the land of the Kurus and the Pañcālas, that this type of monarchy was gradually evolved. It was there that authority was regarded as being divine or moral rather than merely political. The tendency to irresponsibility was fully checked first, by the priests who exercised great influence.

Then, there remained the popular bodies who always asserted their rights carefully safe-guarded in the coronation ritual in which the priest exacted the oath. The king thus became a constitutional monarch only exercising authority limited by the law.

We have ample evidence pointing to the limited character of monarchy of this region. Thus, according to the evidence of the Brāhmaṇas, the great Parīkṣita suffered owing to his high-handedness towards the Brāhmaṇas and if we believe in the Epic tradition, this cost him his throne and probably his life. The Brāhmaṇas contain the tradition of the deposition of another prince—the Śrūjaya Duṣtarītu Paumsāyana who was expelled from his ancestral (daśa-puruṣika) domains along with his adviser Revottaras Pāṭava Cākrasthapati. Instances of such depositions are multiplied in the Epics. The Mahābhārata speaks of the deposition of a king of Kośala by his subjects while in the case of the Kurus, we hear of the constant interference of the people not only in matters of succession, but in all important affairs of state. Any violation of the king's duties to his subjects, made him fear popular risings ending in expulsion from the kingdom. In the next section, instances from the Epic will be multiplied with a view to show the popular character of the Kuru monarchy. Probably owing to this, the Kuru country was regarded as the home of constitutional rule and *Kuru-dharma* had a halo of sanctity round it.

In spite of this universal tendency towards the consolidation of constitutional authority, the evolution of the political life in other regions was not the same. In the East, a greater amount of authority was vested in monarchs, with whom were developed the ideals of Paternal monarchy and of Imperial rule. The kings of Mithilā came to regard themselves as the fathers of their subjects

and took the significant title of Janaka (from *Jana* to give birth to ; *Janaka*—a father). The Brāhmaṇas speak of the Samrāṭs or Emperors of the East.

The diversities of political evolution in the different regions of India find echo in one section of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa (VIII. 14). In that section we have an account of the elevation of Indra to the position of the highest Over-lord by the gods and incidentally a mention of the various styles and dignities which were conferred on the king of the Devas as well as on all human performers of the Aindra-Mahābhiseka. We are told that :—

“एतस्यां प्राच्यां दिशि ये केच प्राच्यानां राजानः साभ्राज्यायैव तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते
स्वराड् इत्येनानभिषिक्तानाचक्षते ।दक्षिणस्यां दिशि ये के च सत्वतां राजानः
भोज्यायैव तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते—भोजेत्येनानभिषिक्तानाचक्षते ।.....प्रतौच्यां दिशि ये
के च नौच्यानां राजानो येऽपाच्यानां स्वाराज्यायैव तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते....स्वराडित्येनान
भिषिक्तानाचक्षते.....उदीच्यां दिशि ये के च परेण हिमवन्तं जनपदा उत्तर
कुरव उत्तरमद्रा इति वैराज्याय तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते...अस्यां ध्रुवायां मध्यमायां प्रतिष्ठायां
दिशि ये के च कुरुपञ्चालानां राजानः सवशोशीनरानां राज्यायैव तेऽभिषिच्यन्ते ” ॥

The meaning of this passage is clear though in regard to the technical terms denoting various types of sovereign authority, we find hardly any explanation excepting those furnished by the commentators who flourished at least two thousand years later. Its evidence may be summed up as follows :—

That in those days, (limited) king-ship flourished in the Central region *i.e.* the land of the Kurus, Pañcālas, Vāsas and Uśīnaras. In the Eastern region, Princes arrogated to themselves the dignity of Samrāṭ or a superior ruler. In the South, the rulers of the Satvatas called themselves *Bhojas* or Enjoyer-Protectors, while in the West, the chiefs and rulers styled themselves *Svarāṭ*. Lastly, in the extreme Northern regions

beyond the mountains, the people (Janapadāḥ) consecrated themselves into *Vairājya* sovereignty.

In regard to the last passage, the significance of the substitution of Janapada for Rājānaḥ attracted the attention of the late Dr. Martin Haug who found in it a clear reference to a kingless form of government. In regard to *Vairājya*, he pointed out that "two meanings can be given *e.g.* (1) without king (2) a very distinguished king. In this passage we must take it in the first meaning, for, here are *Janapadāḥ* *i.e.* the people in opposition to the king mentioned as *abhiṣikta*, *i.e.* inaugurated, while in all other passages of this chapter we find instead of them the *rājānaḥ* or kings."^{*}

This interpretation of *Vairājya* is significant in as much as it shows that republican states existed in the extreme northern fringe. We have however no clear details until we come to Pāṇini or literature subsequent to him. From the evidence of the *Aitareya* passage as well as that of similar ones in the Brāhmaṇic ritualistic literature, we hear of the following types of sovereign authority.

Svārājya—It probably meant the dignity of a *Svarāt*. A prince was a *Svarāt*, when he depended on nobody else. He was self-continent or an autocrat, so far as his governing authority was concerned. (स्वेनैव राजते—*sole-ruler*). This form of government prevailed among the *Apāchyas* and *Nicyas* where

* The meaning of *Virāj* will remain doubtful, the use of the prefix *vi* may be due to two senses. It may mean an absence of regal authority or it may connote a higher type of sovereign authority. Indeed, in many later works *Virāt* appears as the term of honour applied to great kings. *Śrīkṛṣṇa* is called a *Virāt*, *Samrāt* and *Svarāt*. It may not be impossible that *Virāt* was originally the title of elected chiefs, but later on, the meaning underwent a change. Like the words *Cæsar* or *Imperator* (which titles were assumed by later kings) it also came to designate a powerful king.

oligarchic principles long survived. A Svarāt ruler was the first among equals and the evidence of the Taitt. Br., confirms it. (य एव विद्वान् वाजपेयिन यजते । गच्छति स्वाराज्यं । अथ समानानां पर्यन्ति । तिष्ठन्तेऽस्मै जैष्ठ्याय. Tait. Br. 1. 3. 2. 2.)

Sāmrajya—Sāmrajya was a higher type of ruling authority. A prince became Samrāt if he was fully obeyed by all princes and people within his territorial jurisdiction. Sāmrajya later on came to signify an imperial overlordship especially in the East and the Mahābhārata evidence points to the highest sovereign authority being vested in such Lord Suzerains.

Bhaujya—It signified the dignity of a Bhoja or a ruler (enjoyer,—from an ancient root *Bhuj* originally meaning enjoyment, but later on coming to signify ruling authority) or Protector. Probably the Bhojas of early times were the baronial aristocracy of the South who had established themselves over a subject population from whom they collected taxes and tributes. This interpretation receives confirmation from later evidence. The Yādava princes assumed this title and one of the branches of the Yādavas was known as the Bhojas. Later evidence shows the existence of the Bhojas in the locality of Kathiwar-Guzerat in the third cen. B.C.

II. SOVEREIGNTY.—Next to the consolidation of royal power, ideas about the nature of the sovereign authority became more definite. From the primary war-lord and collector of *vali* or tribute, the king came to be regarded as a sovereign ruling over his people, the lord of the territory in which the people lived, of the material resources of the locality, the sole judge wielding the rod of punishment and the protector of Dharma.

(a) The idea of territorial sovereignty became prominent. It was the result of the final settling down of the tribes, and

the giving up of their nomadic habits, of which we find traces in the earlier literature. Tribal names gave rise to place-names and almost all the kingdoms came to have fixed boundaries. In the case of the Kuru country, we have a clear account of its territorial limits. Territorial epithets came to be applied to princes. We have innumerable instances of this in the Brāhmanic literature. A king Prātipīya of the Kuru family is described as Bālhika (Sat. Br. XII. 9. 3. 3.); a second prince Bhīma is described Vaidarbha or ruler of the Vidarbha region; two other princes Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Ajātaśatru are designated Kāśya or ruler of the Kāśi kingdom; two princes of Kośala are described as Kauśalya *i.e.* Para Āṭnāra and Hairaṇyanābha. Such local epithets are very common and we find them applied even to ordinary people, to distinguish them from others of the same name. Thus Proti is called Kauśāmveya, Citra is called Gāṅgāyani, Āśvalāyana is called Kauśalya, while one more is called Naimiṣya. The importance of this conception of territorial sovereignty is also felt in the Coronation ritual. The king as we have seen, is made to ascend the quarters *i.e.*, the North, South, East and West, symbolic of his supremacy over these regions. Furthermore, as will be pointed out, the suzerain overlord's ideal of conquest embraced the whole region of the country then known extending from the hills to the sea.

(b). In regard to the newer ideas as to the nature of sovereignty, some further light is thrown by the Rājasūya ritual. As we have seen already, in the Abhisecaniya, the king was made to make offerings to Savitr Satyaprasava, Agni Gr̥hapati, Soma Vanaspati, Br̥haspati Vākpati, Rudra Paśupati, Mitra Satya, and Varuṇa Dharmapati, with a view to his investment with their

authority and functions. We need not stretch our imagination, but the text as well as the interpretation is so clear that it gives a full import of the ceremonies and their constitutional significance. The priest himself, thus addressed the king and prayed :—

“May Savitṛ quicken thee for ruling, Agni for householders, Soma for trees, Brhaspati for speech, Indra for lordship, Rudra for cattle, Mitra for truth and Varuṇa for the lord of the law.”

The meaning is apparent; the prince was vested with supreme ruling authority and this comprised the general over-lordship of the people, full governing authority, general superintendence over the plants and animals (*i.e.* agriculture and cattle) and the power of administering the laws as the Vicegerent of Lord Varuṇa, the divine Judge *par-excellence*. The consummation of investiture was attained by the king-elect's stepping over the tiger-skin (symbolic of his greatness and conquest of enemies; cf. the epithet *Vyāghrapratīka* p. 98), his investment with the wooden sacrificial sword symbolising regal and legal authority, his identification with Indra and Varuṇa, and the proclamation of his immunity from punishment (*Adanḍya*) which in those days made him free from the jealousy or intrigue of rivals and factions.

IMPERIALISM AND CONQUEST. — While Sovereign authority was thus consolidated, the princes of those ages directed their attention to conquest. Security at home freed their energies and these were devoted to exploits outside their own territorial limits. The desire for universal over-lordship floated before their eyes. This conquest, again, was not merely an act of military success, but came to be associated with religious ceremonies and sacrifices which gave it the stamp of

moral recognition. The conqueror who performed the Vājapeya or the Aśvamedha was not an ordinary mortal relying on brute force, but was one pre-eminent among men whose dignity approached that of Indra or the other divine rulers of this universe and as in the case of the latter, universal dominion over the whole of Aryan-dom "from the hills to the sea" was the aim of the victor. The types of imperial authority varied, though at the present moment we have little means of deciding the nature and character of the Suzerain's authority vested by the performance of the different rites. The only information is that supplied by the details of the religious literature which mention the different inaugural ceremonies for conferring varied types of authority. There was the ordinary Abhiṣeka or coronation of a king and over and above there were the Vājapeya, the Aśvamedha, the Puṇarābhiṣeka and the Aindra-Mahābhiṣeka all of which conferred higher sovereign power.

LIST OF CONQUERORS.—The Brāhmaṇas and the Śrauta Sūtras give us lists of such kings as aspired to universal dominion and attained it with the performance of the various rites and sacrifices.

According to the Aitareya Br., the following kings attained supreme headship by the performance of the Rājasūya and the Aindra-Mahābhiṣeka.

Name of kings :	country.	consecrating priest.
Janamejaya son of Parikṣit	Kuru	... Tura Kāvaṣeya
Śāryāta Mānava	... ..	... Cyavana Bhārgava
Śatānika Sātrājita	... Kuru	... Somaśuṣman
		Vājaratnāyana
Amvaṣṭhya	... ..	... Parvata and Nārada

Name of kings :	country.	consecrating priest.
Yadhāmsrauṣṭhi of the race of Ugrasena	... Kuru	... Parvata and Narada
Viśvakarman of the race of Bhuvana	... ..	... Kaśyapa
Sudās Son of Pijavana	... Pañcāla (?)	Vasiṣṭha
Marutta, of the race of Avikṣit	... ..	... Samvarta Āṅgīrasa
Vairocana	... Aṅga	... Udamaya Ātreya
Bharata, son of Duṣṣanta	... Kuru	... Dīrghatamas Māmateya
Durmukha	... Pañcāla	... Bṛhaduktha
Atyarāti son of Janantapa...	... ..	... Sātyahavya Vasiṣṭha

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, we have another list which is of Aśvamedhin kings. The kings who became universal monarchs were—

1. Janamejaya Pārikṣita whose priest was Indrota Daivāpi Śaunaka
2. Bhimasena Pārikṣita
3. Ugrasena „
4. Śrutasena „
5. Para Ātṇāra the Kośala king
6. Purukutsa the Ikṣāku king
7. Marutta Avikṣita the Āyogava king
8. Kraivya the Pañcāla king
9. Dhvasan Dvaitavana king of the Matsyas
10. Bharata Duṣṣanti king of the Kurus
11. Ṛṣabha Yāgnātura
12. Sātrāsāha the Pañcāla king
13. Sātānika Sātrājita the Kuru king.

The list in the Sāṅkhāyana Śrauta is a little different. It mentions (XVI, 9) Janamejaya, Ugrasena, Bhīmasena, Śrutasena, Ṛṣabha Yāgñatura, Vaideha Albhāra and Marutta Avikṣita.

We have details about such conquerors in the Epic and the Purāṇas. The Epic Mahābhārata (Dṛoṇa. par.) gives us a list of sixteen kings *viz.* Marutta Avikṣita, Subotra son of Atithi Bṛhadratha Aṅga, Sivi Auśīnara, Bharata, Rāma Son of Daśaratha, Bhagīratha, Dilīpa, Māndhātṛ, Yajāti, Ambarīṣa, Śaśavindu, Gaya, Rantideva, Sagara and Pṛthu.

The character of this imperialism was however different from that which later on ended in the unification of the whole country under one sceptre. These early conquerors, as a rule, remained satisfied with the acknowledgement of their sovereign authority and demanded of the conquered only tribute and service. Consequently, their imperialism was a compromise between universal monarchy to the exclusion of sub-ordinate princes and of full tribal independence. The annihilation of conquered princes was reserved for a later age and the newer Imperialism arose in the East.

RETROSPECT AND SUMMARY OF POLITICAL EVOLUTION.—Before we pass on to the next chapter, we must attempt to summarise the character of political evolution. The leading events in the political life of the later Vedic age were thus—

(1) The establishment of a consolidated royal authority strengthened by a military aristocracy and a priesthood.

(2) Political integration through ritual and religion and the regulation of the functions of the various elements in the body-politic.

(3) Definition of the functions of sovereign authority.

(4) Desire for the establishment of universal overlordship.

All these have been described in detail, but something requires to be said about the influence of the priest-hood and the compromise it brought about.

The priestly families who gained a recognized position in politics, presumably cast their influence on the side of the *de facto* ruler. That was something the importance of which could not be minimised. In our own days Clericalism is a force in Europe and the authority and voice of the priests and bishops still predominates in many countries. In the Middle ages or the Dark ages, it was greater. It was they who ruled the minds of men. They made and unmade princes and humbled their proudest opponents to the dust. They introduced order in life. They advised the princes, they spurred the people on to the cause of rational movements, humanism and progress. Science and democracy have knelled the death-knell of priest-craft but in spite of it, they are yet a potent force in civilised Europe, which nobody can neglect.

In India the art or the ideal of the priestly class had a deeper influence. It instilled in the minds of the common people a veneration for royalty and a faith in social self-realisation through the ruling sovereign. The anointed of Indra and Varuna wielding their functions was one who could not be dis-obeyed, since disobedience without cause was sure to bring the vengeance

Need of ritual;
power and conti-
nuance of allegiance
guaranteed.

of the angry rulers of the universe. Sacerdotalism thus inculcated obedience and led to the permanence of allegiance so long as the king injured neither in life nor limb and so long as he preserved the prosperity of the community.

Again, while regal authority was glorified and defined, the ruler of the people was put within checks. His Oath reminded him of his pledge to govern according to accepted rules of conduct and constantly inculcated upon him the duty of carrying out his part of the compact entered into with the solemn approval of the divine rulers. While this relation between the governor and the governed was thus laid down, the social and political outlook widened. The conflict of classes or the war of sections passed into the back-ground and a social consciousness came into being characterised by a subjective veneration for the interest of the whole. Last of all, there emerged that longing for the establishment of universal rule which was but the manifestation of the desire to realise organic unity so far as it related to political life.

Sacerdotalism thus, introduced new ideas and principles and masked the real character of the impending change. It hid from the popular attention the fact that active popular control was decaying. In spite of this, it got approval from the people since it eliminated to a large extent the elements of violence and disturbance. Probably, the mass of the peaceful *Vis* welcomed its influence. Chances of war or disputes for the throne became less common and the ordinary people profiting by it thought it their duty more to obey than to question.

While the priest-hood became the exponents of a regulated social ideal which they promulgated and the safety of which they safe-guarded from regal violence, their position in the political machinery was defined and limitations were put on them. The *concordat* which was thus established between the two ruling principles, neutralised the grave consequences of the superiority of the other. The priestly ideal put a check to tyranny. At the

same time the evils of a theocracy were averted. The priests themselves became excluded from the chance of gaining political power. On this head, the discussion in the Aitareya Br. is interesting and shows how the relation of Brahma and Kṣatras were conceived in those days. The two were regarded as the complements of each other. Their conflict was fatal to the king and the Rāṣṭra. To the priest-hood was assigned a position of moral superiority, though in the body-politic royalty was vested with the highest powers and privileges. The priest in the Coronation sacrifice sat below the king. The latter in his turn was made to take the oath from the priest.

The compromise thus arrived at was significant and remarkable in the history of the political evolution of India. It brought to a close the conflict of two opposite principles as well as the jarring interests and ideals of two sets of people, viz. the Brāhmaṇas and the Kṣatriyas, who by their conflicts and co-operation have done much to evolve the various aspects of Indian culture. The race of hardy warriors, who yearned after uncontrolled dominion, deified power and sovereign authority and sought the welfare of the community through its agency. Opposed to them were the sacerdotal caste the Brāhmaṇas who felt more for the individual and looked for his emancipation through his own activity. They idolised law and order and opposed violent changes. The two thus closely connected, represented conflicting principles. The one stood for dominion and expansion, the other for systematisation and order. The one thought for the community as a whole, the other felt for the individual. The one stood for collectivism the other for individual effort; the one for obedience, the other for self-realisation, the one for the will, the other for reason. The Kṣatriya ruler yearned for his

sovereignty "indivisible and absolute" while the priest contended for the total emancipation of society from politics. As a result of this conflict of the two peoples and the subsequent compromise, a regulated constitutional life came into being.

The evolution of this *regime*, marked the end of that primitive stage of political life characterised by lawlessness and indiscriminate popular interference in everything. The decay of this popular domination is easily proved by the absence of the mention of the *Samitis* or the *Samgrāmas* and the corresponding importance of the *Sabhā* or the *Parīṣat*. The authority of kings legalised by the sanction of the gods through sacrifice, was consolidated by the alliance of the priesthood. Conquest beyond the limits of his state also strengthened the position of an ambitious king.

Yet in spite of this, kings never became irresponsible. For if ritual safe-guarded their position, it did not confer thereby irresponsibility or government according to will. The king never became superior to law and in the small states of those days, public opinion expressed itself freely. Tyranny or arbitrary conduct made the king lose their sympathy and ultimately their allegiance. We have given one or two instances of the expulsion of kings. This right of expelling kings on the part of the people is also apparent from the ritual for the restoration of deposed monarchs.

Furthermore, in spite of the consolidation of regal authority, real sovereignty seems to have remained vested ultimately in the people and their acceptance retained its old importance. Owing to the influence of the new ideas or the preponderance of ritualism, popular election and acceptance took a new form. They became part and parcel of the ceremony of inauguration.

The formal proclamation and acceptance by the people through the sprinkling ceremony remained as important as ever. More-over, the constant presence of popular representatives in all inaugurations shows the importance of the people. In the Rājsūya, we find not only the Grāmaṇī, but also the representatives of the various orders. In the Aśvamedha, too, the class representatives remained present during the consecration of the horse and its guardians were also selected out of them. This clearly shows the importance of public opinion. In truth, the change was more of form than of principle. The people retained their right which they exercised once to its very letter. But as complexities had arisen and as it was impossible to consult the opinion of all individuals, their participation in election and choice tended to take a ritualistic form. They were to remain present and at the same time they were to signify their approval by sprinkling water on the head of the new-elected instead of the practice of sounding "yes" or "no" or by clash of arms, as in the case of other nations of antiquity. How arose this practice of sprinkling will ever remain a mystery. The water with which the sprinkling was done, had also its significance since it comprised the water of rivers and seas sacred to the people and a mixture of these symbolised the sovereignty of the king over those regions.

(Sprinkling.

Similar significance attached to the other ceremonies e.g. the Chariot-race, the Cow raid and the Dice-play. They show the retention of older tests for recognising the king's superiority in valour and physical prowess. His excellence in the Cow-raid, showed in him those qualifications which distinguished the early chiefs in the cattle forays. The Chariot-race too was important

since it served as a means of testing the military qualities of the king. In India it seems to have been often resorted to for the settlement of disputes. Even the gods, if we are to believe in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa resorted to it to settle disputes and the victor was declared the winner. Similarly, the victor in the fictitious chariot-race was regarded as the fittest man for kingship. The Dice-play showed the sagacity of the new king.

NOTE —It would be difficult to find out exact parallels of the ideas and rituals found in the Brāhmaṇa literature, but instances may be cited to show similar developments in the history of other communities. The influence of cosmic beliefs on political organisation is found everywhere in the ancient world. In Egypt, the king was the embodiment of *Ra* and his mundane counter-part, and politics was intimately connected with religious beliefs and ceremonial. In the ancient Sumerian cities, the *Patesis* combined the functions of royalty and priesthood. Similar was the case in Ancient Greece where monarchy in the Heroic period was more divine than regal or political. Though changes were gradually introduced through the uprising of the popular element, much of the older ceremonial survived. Among the Molossians, there survived the custom of consolidating the relation between the king and his people by a sacrifice to Zeus, after which the king and the people swore to respect each other's rights. (Greenidge G. C. H., p. 151). The Romans too, regarded *Imperium* as something flowing from the gods and its exercise required divine sanction. Even after the fall of monarchy, this idea survived. Among the Hebrews, the king was supposed to exercise the authority which was vested in him by God and there existed the idea of a double covenant between the Almighty and the king and between the king and the people. Remnants of these ideas survived during the Middle Ages. Modern progress had put an end to many of these ideas in the nineteenth century, but we often find echoes of it in the utterances of some princes. The accession to office whether of Kings or of Presidents is often associated with Divine service and a complicated ritual. The king's oath even now retains its importance in many countries, especially in England. The oath remained of vital importance in the Spartan constitution where it was interchanged every month between the kings and the Ephors.

The Mahābhārata Evidence

THE history of the later vedic age can well be gathered from the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyana, for, as we have said already, the Epics ought to be regarded as the traditional history of that remote period. We take the Mahābhārata first.

General political condition of India.—The original historical kernel of the great Epic gives us a detailed account of the Kuru rulers of that time and incidentally furnishes us with a contemporary general account of Indian states and clans. It is with this only that we are concerned but before attempting to show the amount of popular authority and control over their princes or their government, we may survey the political condition of India about the time of the Great War. From an analysis of the Epic evidence we know that :—

(1). The whole of Northern India was divided into a number of states more or less independent as far as internal government was concerned, but acknowledging the suzerainty of the paramount power of the day.

(2). That the Madhyadeśa or the region round the Kuru country was regarded as the intellectual and cultural centre of the Aryans. The manners and customs of people of the western border i.e. those of the Madras and the Vāhikas, were looked down upon by the people of the

Central region. On the other hand, Eastern India was regarded as the land of the Śūdras *par excellence*, and this is apparent from the denunciation of Aṅga by the king of Madra. Aṅga, Vaṅga and the coastal regions are described in more than one place as being ruled by *mleccha* princes. In addition to these, some of the ruling Kṣatriya families of the border region were regarded as Vrātyas. Prominent among them were the Yādavas, the ruling race in the extreme south who had a sort of oligarchic ruling confederation.

(3). The form of government varied. In the west, the old Aryan tribal principle was supreme and there were numerous petty states either ruled by local princes guided in all matters by popular opinion or were democratic republics. In the central region *e.g.* in the land of the Kurus and the Matsyas the rulers were princes in name only. In the Kuru country, this popular sovereignty was so great that it is difficult to form easily an impression as to whether the government can be described as a monarchy at all. It is only in the east that the princes had a greater chance of ruling irresponsibly. The large number of wild tribes differing from each other in language, religion, race and temperament, the large number

of elephants (a potent instrument in ancient warfare) found there in abundance, the cheapness of other materials required for a fighting force all made it easy for the eastern princes to raise large armies with which to rule absolutely without even consulting the opinion of their subjects. The Aryan settlers were few and these consisted mainly of the ruling families and their hereditary officials, and hence there was no opposition from them. This made not only absolutism possible but fostered a lust for dominion

Eastern Imperialism.

outside the tribal territory which was the limit of domination in the west and centre of India. To these, again, must be attributed the fact that the East was the land where the later type of imperialism took its rise—an imperialism which meant something more than mere suzerainty and was nothing less than universal rule to the exclusion of local princes and absolutism to its utmost limit.

In such a state of affairs, Jarāsandha, the Magadha king thought of pursuing a policy of “blood and iron.” He had many allies, the most prominent of whom were Vāsudeva, the king of Puṇḍra and Vāṅga, Bhagadatta of Kāmarūpa, and a number of central Indian rulers including the Cedi Śiśupāla and some of the Bhojas.

Having thus given a survey of political development, we proceed to cite evidence from the great Epic to show the extent of popular sovereignty in those days. As regards the central region, we take the Kuru country and describe its history in detail, because the *Mahābhārata* records mainly the traditional history of that country. As to other states, we have only some passing reference or some occasional details only when we are on the eve of the great war. Under the circumstances, lack of information prevents us from giving details as to most of these except the Kurus.

For the South, we must confine ourselves to the detailed description of the Yādava constitution and narrate some instances from Yādava history as recorded in the Epic to prove our point.

Lastly, we must conclude by giving some details as to the tribal republics which retained their democratic constitution in the various parts of the country. These, as a rule flourished

in the frontier regions to the west and north or in the secluded areas. In the Mahābhārata, these states are described as *Gaṇas*. Of these, we shall only give a list, and this will be supplemented later on by short historical notices on each of them. But, before we pass on to the other subjects, we must make some attempt to describe the general characteristics of these republics e.g.

(a) They were outside the influence of the political forces, which operated in the Madhyadeśa.

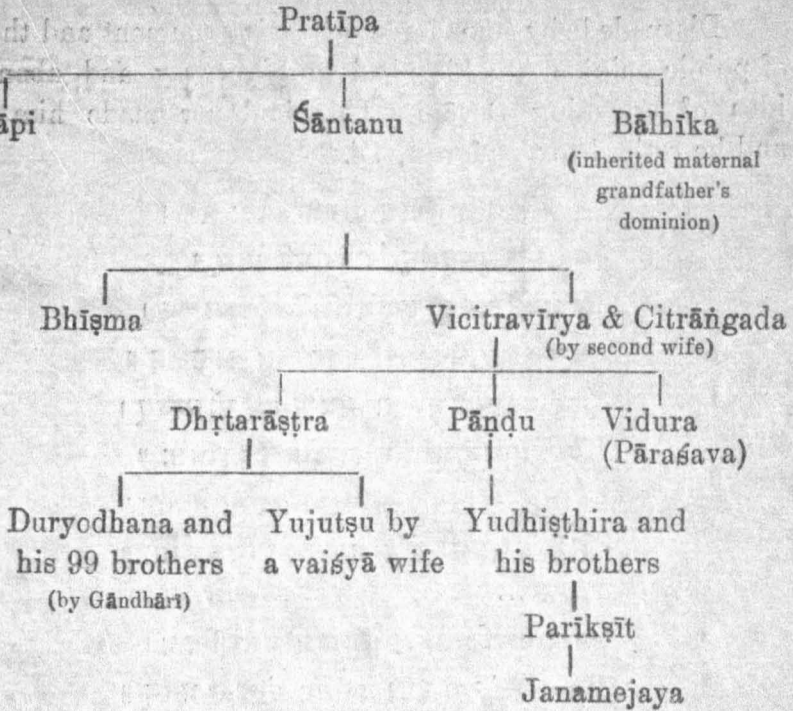
(b) They were dominated by some particular tribe or by members of one caste.

The Mālavas, Yaudheyas, Trigartas and some other Gaṇas were mainly Kṣatriyas. The Vāṭadhāṇas and the Mādhyamakeyas were Brāhmaṇa gaṇas, while the Grāmaṇīyas of the Indus region and the Ābhīras on the bank of the Sarasvatī were Śūdras by caste.

The Kuru Country.

To all readers of the Mahābhārata it would be apparent that the epic is primarily the history of the Kuru country. From the historical kernel which now forms only a small fraction of the vast encyclopædia, we have the following traditional account of the reign of five generations of the royal family.*

* A complete history of the Kuru line of kings as well as the relation of the Kurus to the earlier Vedic tribes has already been attempted. We hold that the Mahābhārata is nothing but the traditional history of the Vedic period and we have tried to establish our point already. In a paper entitled "Early Indian Chronology" an attempt will be made to identify the rulers of the Kuru line as given in the Mahābhārata (Adiparva, Chs. 94 & 95) with the princes, who are found in the Rgveda and the other Samhitās.



Now, from the account recorded in the great Epic, we find that in the reign of each of these kings we have some constitutional events of importance to record and from these we can form an idea as to the extent of popular sovereignty. The earliest of these Pratīpa had three sons *e.g.* Devāpi, Bāhlika, and Śāntanu. Devāpi suffered from some skin disease. When old, the king thought of installing Devāpi on the throne and made preparations for his investiture. Thereupon, the Brahmins, the elders, the rural people, and the citizens prevented him. They approached him and said that though the eldest prince was worthy and otherwise agreeable, he suffered from skin disease and hence he was not acceptable to the gods.

Dissuaded by the force of their argument and the weight of public opinion, the king had to give way and abandon the idea of crowning Devāpi. This however made him unhappy and he retired to the forest, Cf.

तं ब्राह्मणाश्च वृद्धाश्च पौरजानपदैः सह ।
 सर्वे निवारयामासुर्देवापेरभिषेचनम् ॥
 स तच्छ्रुत्वा तु नृपतिरभिषेकनिवारणम् ।
 अश्रुकण्ठोऽभवद्राजा पर्यशोचत चात्मजम् ॥
 एवं वदान्यो धर्मज्ञः सत्यसन्धश्च सोऽभवत् ।
 प्रियः प्रजानामपि स त्वग्दोषेण प्रदूषितः ॥
 ह्येनाङ्गं पृथिवीपालं नाभिनन्दन्ति देवताः ।
 इति कृत्वा नृपश्चेष्टं प्रत्यषेधन् द्विजर्षभाः ॥

.....
 ततः प्रव्यथिताङ्गोऽसौ पुत्रशोकसमन्वितः ।
 निवारितं नृपं दृष्ट्वा देवापिः संश्रितो वनम् ॥
 बाह्वीको मातुलकूलं तज्ज्ञा राज्यं समाश्रितः ।
 पितृण् भ्रातॄन् परित्यज्य प्राप्तवान् परमृद्धिमत् ॥
 बाह्वीकेन त्वनुज्ञातः शान्तनुर्लोकविश्रुतः ।
 पितॄं परते राजन् राजाऽराज्यमकारयत् ॥

Udyoga ch. 149.

On his withdrawal, the second son Bālīka became king for a time, but he too abdicated in favour of his younger brother Śāntanu who was crowned king by the people and the magnates.

Śāntanu's reign otherwise uneventful was marked towards its end by an event of constitutional importance. It was the

voluntary abdication of his only legitimate son and heir to the throne, the celebrated Bhīṣma. The king being smitten with love for the daughter of a fisherman, and yet not daring to accept her on account of the hard terms proposed by the father of the girl, who insisted on the stipulation that the son of his daughter by the king would be the heir to the throne to the exclusion of the virtuous Bhīṣma, was in a difficult position. The dutiful son, to fulfil his father's wishes, boldly went to the fisherman and asked him to bestow his daughter on the king and to remove all objections on his part, he voluntarily renounced his claim to the throne in a Sabhā in the presence of the members. The story is given in the Ādi-parva, *ch.* Cl. The whole transaction, we are told took place in the presence of the members of the Sabhā.

Śāntanu by this marriage had two sons Citrāṅgada and Vicitravīrya. The elder succeeded as king but soon he was killed in a war with the Gandharvas. The faithful Bhīṣma acted as the regent of the state, serving the cause of his minor young brother and administered the state according to the counsel of his jealous step-mother Satyawatī. Bhīṣma signalised his devotion by acquiring three brides for his step-brother Vicitravīrya (see Ādi, *ch.* 96). One of these brides, Ambā, was however sent back to her own kinsmen on account of her entreaties that she had chosen the king of the Saubhas as her lord. This however proved a great misfortune for her. The king of the Saubhas rejected her since she was the victory prize of another, according to the custom of those days. Rejected by both the parties, she in revenge implored the assistance of Rāma Jāmadagnya—the great champion of militant brahminism, to come and persuade Bhīṣma to take her for one of

his brothers. This being refused the two decided to appeal to the supreme arbitration of force and fought for several days.

The combat ended in a draw. The rest of the events is narrated in the Ādi-parva. But here again we meet with another event of constitutional importance which though not mentioned in the Ādi parva is incidentally narrated in the Udyoga-parva which seems to have preserved the true historical account. In the 147th chapter of that Parva, we have an account of the history of the Kuru country recorded by Bhīṣma himself. From that we know that Vicitravīrya who succeeded Śāntanu was too fond of women and consequently fell a victim to Yakṣmā (Phthisis) consumption and at the same time the Kuru country being invaded by the terrible Brahmin warrior, Paraśurāma the king was banished by the citizens. (रामभयादेव नागरैर्विप्रवासितः.)

Next, a pestilence broke out and carried away a large number of inhabitants and only a small portion of the population survived. There was no king, the government fell into disorder and the misery of the people knew no bounds. Thereupon the people headed by the elders approached Bhīṣma the rightful heir to the throne. They together with Kālī, the wife of Śāntanu (step mother of Bhīṣma) besought the worthy prince to take up the reins of government and to save the country from destruction.

This however Bhīṣma refused. He reminded them of his vow (which he had taken before the assembly) of celibacy and of renunciation and persuaded the queen-mother to allow the widowed queens of the late sovereign to raise issue by the practice of *Niyoga*.

Of these three sons, the eldest Dhṛtarāṣṭra was not eligible for kingship as he was blind (Udyoga, ch. 147, v. 38.). Vidura too, was excluded being born of a slave-girl. Pāṇḍu thus became king though for a time Bhīṣma acted as the real ruler of the country. He however soon forsook the world and with his wives spent his time in the forest, making over his kingdom to his blind elder brother though this point is not clear in the account of the *Adi-parva* (ch. 119). The story of the handing over of the kingdom to his brother by Pāṇḍu is again put in the 148th chapter of the *Udyoga-parva* in the mouth of Bhīradvāja. There Droṇa, the speaker, makes the statement that the people had accepted Dhṛtarāṣṭra as king.

The blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra thus became the next king. His claims rested partly on his brother's abdication and gift and on popular sanction. Probably, this popular support enabled him to rule, for there existed a section of elders, who never recognised him as king (Udyoga, ch. 147).

It would appear from the following *śloka*s that Dhṛtarāṣṭra held the throne by virtue of his brother's abdication, and acceptance by the people. Some of the Kuru elders like Droṇa regarded Dhṛtarāṣṭra as a rightful king though they never thought of this as constituting a bar to the succession of the Pāṇḍavas. But others like Bhīṣma regarded Dhṛtarāṣṭra as a mere figure-head representing royalty and sought to further the cause of the young prince Yudhiṣṭhira the son of Pāṇḍu to the exclusion of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons. The views of Droṇa are found in the following verses :—cf.

तथा पाण्डुर्नरपतिः सत्यसन्धो जितेन्द्रियः ।

राजा कुरुणां धर्मात्मा सुव्रतः सुसमाहितः । ३

जीम्लाय राज्यमददत् धृतराष्ट्राय धीमते ।

यवीयसे तथा चक्षे कुरुवंशविवर्तनः ॥

ततः सर्वाः प्रजास्तात धृतराष्ट्रं जनेश्वरम् ।

अन्वपद्यन्त विधिवद् यथा पाण्डुं जनाधिपम् ॥

Udyoga ch. 148.

Bhīṣma's opinion regarding Duryodhana's claim is found in his admonition to that prince in the midst of the assembly of Bhārata elders and allies summoned to settle the dispute about the succession to the Kuru kingdom.

अन्धः करणहीनत्वान्न वै राजा पिता तव ।

राजा तु पाण्डुरभवत् महात्मा लोकविश्रुतः ॥

स राजा तस्य ते पुत्राः पितुर्दायाद्यहारिणः ।

मा तात कलहं कार्षी राज्यस्यार्धं प्रदीयताम् ॥

Udyo. ch. 147.

ज्येष्ठः प्रभञ्जितो राज्याद्वीनाङ्ग इति भारत ॥

पाण्डुस्तु राज्यं सम्प्राप्तः कनौयानपिसन्नपः ॥

विनाशे तस्य पुत्राणामिदं राज्यमरिन्दम ॥

अराजपुत्रो ह्यस्वामी परस्वं हर्तुमिच्छसि ॥ Udyo. ch. 149.

Elsewhere, the Mahābhārata (Udyoga, ch. 147) gives us another account of the Kuru state and this throws a flood of light on the events and their importance. In it, Bhīṣma narrates before the assembly the whole story from his own abdication and determination to serve his step-brother. Incidentally, we are further told that Vicitravīrya was excluded from the kingdom by his people, and on his exile the people approached Bhīṣma (tadābhya-

dhāvanmāmeva prajāḥ kṣudhbhayapīḍitāḥ—Udyo., ch. 147-25) and requested him to ascend the throne which but for his voluntary renunciation was his and told him that it was the will of the people; that he should become king for the benefit of the people : cf.

ततो रामेन समरे द्वन्द्वयुद्धसुपागमम् ।
 स हि रामभयादेभिर्नागरैर्विप्रवासितः ॥
 द्दारेष्वप्यतिपत्तय यद्भाणं समपद्यत ।
 यदा त्वराजके राष्ट्रे न ववर्ष सुरेश्वरः ॥
 तदाभ्यधावन्मामिव प्रजाः क्षुद्रयपौडिताः ॥

प्रजा ऊचुः—उपक्षीणाः प्रजाः सर्वा राजा भव भवाय नः ।

ईतोः प्रनुद भद्रं ते शान्तनोः कुलवर्धनः ॥
 पीड्यन्ते ते प्रजाः सर्वा व्याधिभिर्भृशदारुणैः ।
 अल्पावशिष्टा गाङ्गेय ताः परित्वा तुमर्हसि ॥
 आधीन् प्रणुद वीर त्वं प्रजा धर्मेन पालय ।
 त्वयि जीवति मा राष्ट्रं विनाशमुपगच्छतु ॥

ततः पौरा महाराज माता काली च मे शुभा ॥

मृत्वाः पुरोहिताचार्याः ब्राह्मणाश्च बहुश्रुताः ।

मामुचुर्भृशसन्तप्ता भव राजेति सन्ततम् ॥

The people who approached Bhīṣma included the Pauras or the townsmen (or burghers), the office-bearers of the state the priests and the Brāhmaṇas. Their appeal fell on deaf ears and Bhīṣma true to his principles, refused to violate his oath. The story shows clearly how the people took upon themselves the task of filling the throne, and the language too is free from ambiguity.

However, matters soon came to a head. The sons of Pāṇḍu grew up to manhood ; their virtues attracted the people to their side and they began to speak openly for the accession of the Pāṇḍava prince to the throne. This was galling to Duryodhana the eldest of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons and he related to his father the story of the great popularity of the Pāṇḍavas (Ādi, 141, 32-38). As the people wanted the Pāṇḍavas to be their rulers in place of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Duryodhana asked his father to banish the five brothers to the city of Vāraṇāsvata, thus removing them from the eyes of the citizens.

This however was a step which the old king did not disapprove. But he feared the consequences of the step, which might lead to a revolution, in which the people were sure to take the side of the virtuous Yudhiṣṭhira. The king feared for his own life and the lives of his sons, who were sure to fall victims to popular fury, and he expressed his apprehension clearly in the following words :—

भृता हि पाण्डुनामात्या वलं च सततं भृतम् ।

भृताः पुत्राश्च पौत्राश्च तेषामपि विशिषतः ॥

ते पुरा सत्कृतास्तात ! पाण्डुना नागरा जनाः ।

कथं युधिष्ठिरस्यार्थं न नो हन्युः सवान्धवान् ॥ Ādi. ch. 142.

This popular clamour for the young Pāṇḍava princes made the old king dread the consequences of ousting the Pāṇḍava princes from the state and consequently Duryodhana had recourse to the stratagem of sending them away to Vāraṇāsvata to be burnt down along with the inflammable house prepared by the royal conspirators. Their miraculous escape, their success at the *Scayāmrara* of Draupadī, and their marriage are

well-known to all Indian readers of the Epic. At length, when the news of their success reached the ears of the old king, he along with his old ministers had the princes restored to their royal position, which was sanctioned by the legal right of inheritance and the force of popular choice (प्रकृतौनामनुमते पदे स्थास्यन्ति पाण्डवाः। Ādi., 204—11). Here too the language is significant. The Pāṇḍavas are described as being established by virtue of popular choice. Their restoration however was short-lived.

Events did not pass smoothly. The sons of Dhṛtarāṣṭra, who seemed to have based their claims upon the regency of their blind father, sanctioned by the handing over of authority to him by Pāṇḍu on the eve of his abdication, did not relish the prospect of the Pāṇḍavas' succession to the throne and remained constantly on the alert to dispossess them through force or fraud. They invited them to a dice-play, in which the Pāṇḍavas lost everything.* Restored once more, they again yielded to the temptation of a re-play, lost every thing and departed, consenting to live as hermits for twelve years with another year's life *incognito*. When at the end of that period, they returned and claimed their inheritance. This was refused by their opponents and thereupon the parties had recourse to the supreme arbitration of might. Both allied themselves with friendly kings and India was divided into two great camps. All this together with the history of the war is too well-known to be

* This dice-play was of great significance. As we all know, it was customary for princes during their coronation to prove their worth by success in a dice-play. Probably, this has been utilised by the Epic poet. Again, this dice-play does not show that the rulers could transfer everything at their will but that they merely staked their own rights which did not affect the liberties of the people.

narrated here, particularly because the subsequent history is of no use to us.

Soon the great war was over. The Pāṇḍavas alone survived and the eldest of them became *de facto* ruler of the state by right of conquest. The old blind Dhṛtarāṣṭra retired to the forest, but not before he had given an account of his rule to the Kuru community, both as a regent and a *de facto* ruler who had remained the titular head of the state for so long a period. Weak, weary, and worn out in body and mind, he craved pardon from his people for the sins of his sons; recounted the past history of the Kuru monarchy, explained the circumstances in which the crown had been forced upon him, expressed his present inability to govern, and sorrowfully sought their permission to leave for the forest. At the same time, *he handed over the reins of lawful authority to Yudhiṣṭhira, in whose hands were placed the fortunes of his subjects.* The whole account is given in the eighth and ninth chapters of the Aśrama-vāsika Parva which preserves the farewell utterances of the blind king at a meeting of the Pauras and Jānapadas of all castes not excluding the Śūdras (Aś., VIII, & IX). The whole account of this parting speech of the old king deserves our best attention. The king's speech is uttered in a spirit of conciliation : cf.

उवाच मतिमान् राजा धृतराष्ट्रो विशाम्यते ।

भवन्तः कुरुवञ्चैव चिरकालं सहोषिताः ॥

परस्परस्य सुहृदः परस्परहिते रताः ॥

.....

अस्माकं भवतां चैव येयं प्रीतिर्हि शास्वती ।

न च सान्धेषु देशेषु राज्ञामिति मतिर्मम ॥

श्रान्तोऽस्मि वयसानेन तथा पुत्रविनाहतः ।
उपवासकृशश्चास्मि गान्धारी सहितोज्ज्वलाः ॥

.....
शान्तनुः पालयामास यथाबहसुधामिमाम् ।
तथा विचित्रवीर्यश्च भौषणेन परिपालितः ॥
पालयामास वस्तात विदितार्थो न संशयः ।
यथा च पाण्डुर्भ्राता मे दयितो भवतामभूत् ॥
(21-22) स चापि पालयामास यथावत्तच्च वेत्य ह ।

मया च भवतां सम्यक् शुश्रूषा या कृतानघाः ॥
असम्यग्वा'महाभागस्तत् क्षन्तव्यमतन्द्रितै ।

.....
तन्मया साधु वापौदं यदि वासाधु वै कृतम् ।
तद्वो हृदि न कर्त्तव्यं मया वदोऽयमञ्जलिः ॥
वृद्धोऽयं हतपुत्रोऽयं दुःखितोऽयं नराधिपः ।
पूर्वराज्ञां च पुत्रोऽयं इति कृत्वानुजानय ॥

These are not the words of a tyrant haughtily dictating terms to his subjects cowed with fear of despotic authority. They are on the other hand, the words of a popular monarch who had ever leaned on popular support and who on the approaching close of his career was rendering an account of himself to the people in tones of affection and regret. Many of the words uttered by him are significant. Repeated apologies are offered; the next successor Yudhisṭhira is placed in the hands of the and is referred to as a *nāyasa* or deposit, while the

the kingdom is described as a trust (*nyāsa*) in the hands of Yudhiṣṭhira.

युधिष्ठिरो महातेजा भवतः पालयिष्यति ॥
 अवश्यमेव वक्तव्यमिति कृत्वा ब्रवीमि वः ।
 एष न्यासो मया दत्तः सर्वेषां वो युधिष्ठिरः ॥
 भवन्तोऽस्य च वीरस्य न्यासभुताः कृता मया ॥

Lastly, after saying that he never offended them, (Śl. 15—18.) he seeks permission to retire to the forest.

On the retirement of the old king, Yudhiṣṭhira the head of the Pāṇḍava brothers, was accepted as king and he governed well. After his retirement along with his brothers, Parikṣit, the grandson of Arjuna, was raised to the throne with the consent of the people and on his death his son Janamejaya was crowned king by the citizens, the ministers, and the Rājapurohita cf.

ततो नृपे तच्चक्रे जसा हते प्रयुज्य सर्वाः परलोकासत्क्रियाः ।
 शुचिर्द्विजो राजपुरोहितस्तदा तथैव ते तस्य नृपस्य मन्त्रिणः ।
 नृपं शिशुं तस्य सुतं प्रचक्रिरे समेत्य सर्वे पुरवासिनो जना ॥

(Ādi ch. 44. 5.)

From the evidences summarised above, we may come to the conclusion that in the Kuru country popular elective royalty was the established form of Government. These kings, though they could claim the right of succession by virtue of their being heirs of past rulers, were at the same time entirely dependent on the people. The latter exercised their right of

choice and election and without their support, the king could not think of carrying on government irresponsibly.

The popular bodies—The people thus remained supreme. In the Mahābhārata and the Rāmāyaṇa, we repeatedly hear of organised popular bodies like the *Pauras* and the *Jānapadas*. But, beyond this we do not know any details about them *i.e.* their constitution, franchise, or mode of exercise of their powers. Everything concerning them has been lost. But it is not impossible to recognize that the *Pauras* were the burghers, who derived their importance from their residence in the capital and also from their guilds and other organisations, which were common in India from the close of the Vedic age proper. It is significant to note that they are everywhere collectively designated as *Pura-vāsinaḥ*, *Paurāḥ*, or *Nāgarāḥ*. The *Jānapadas* also seem to have been organised bodies. In later times, such organisations of Śrenis, Pūgas or Samavāyas for various purposes developed into self-governing institutions,* which are described in the Smṛtis. Details are lacking, not because they had neither organisation nor legal rights, but because their existence and influence were so well-known that none of the law-givers took care to explain them.

The King as custodian of popular rights—The king thus ruled not by virtue of divine privileges, but by popular consent. The tributes he got from his subjects, were not spent for his own luxury but for doing good to his subjects. Such was the

* The first to draw attention to these self-governing bodies was my father the late Pandit Rai R. C. Sastri Bahadur, whose article on the Municipal Institutions in Ancient India was published in 1898 in the Journal of the Buddhist Text Society. Recently, the political aspect of same subject has been discussed in detail by Mr. K. P. Jayaswal in his "Hindu Polity."

duty attached to the royal office from the days of the Vedas downwards. The king was merely a custodian of his people's money and the Epic thinkers are almost unanimous in holding this opinion. Thus, when the sage Gālava offered to a king the girl Mādhavī in consideration of the payment of a heavy *śulka*, the king expressed his inability and said— "Whatever accrues to me from my people is not for my enjoyment, but belongs to the people (*paura-jānapadārtham*). A king who spends this money for his own pleasure, is neither able to achieve dharma or fame, nor gets any benefit after death." Later on, in the Jātakas, we find an echo of the same idea. Thus, in the Tailapātra Jātaka, the king tempted by the Yakṣiṇī formally reminded the latter that he had no control over his subjects; he was simply empowered to chastise the wicked.

In lieu of his services to the people, the king received taxes which were regarded as his *wages*. Such an idea was a heritage from the old Vedic times and was fostered by the influence of the Social Contract theory, which arose towards the close of the that period and was elaborated by the Epic thinkers. The rights of kings were thus far from being absolute and in more than one place, taxes are designated as mere *wages* (*vetana*).

Tyrannicide or deposition of wicked kings :—Thrones of despotic princes were insecure. Irresponsible rule or high-handedness often made subjects rise in revolt and they put an end to despotism. Tyrannicide was common, and the political thinkers of the Mahābhārata prescribed the death of the despot as the only remedy for tyranny. In more than one place, we have passages which call upon the people to put their vicious rulers to death. Nay, in some passages it is regarded as a duty (Śānti, ch. 67 असत्यापिष्ठसचिवो वध्यो लोकस्य धर्महा ।). In one such

passage, which is preserved in the midst of verses lauding the various kinds of gifts, we are told "that a king who failed to protect his subjects from oppression by robbers or enemies, or under whose rule people starved or women were dishonoured, deserved death in the hands of the people, as if he were a mad dog." cf.

धिक् तस्य जौवितं राज्ञो राष्ट्रे यस्यावसीदति ।

द्विजोऽन्यो वा मनुष्योऽपि शिविराह वचो यथा ॥

यस्य स्म विषये राज्ञः स्नातकः सीदति क्षुधा ।

अवृद्धिमिति तद्वाङ्मं विन्दते सह राजकम् ॥ ३०

क्रोशन्त्यो यस्य वै राष्ट्रादृष्टियन्ते तरसा स्त्रियः ।

क्रोशतां पतिपुत्रानां मृतोऽसौ न च जीवति ॥ ३१

अरक्षितारं हर्तारं विस्रोतारमनायकम् ।

तं वै राजकलिं हन्त्युः प्रजाः सन्नह्य निर्घृणम् ॥ ३२

अहं वो रक्षितेत्युक्ता यो न रक्षति भूमिपः ।

स संहत्य निहन्तव्यः श्वेव सोमनाद आतुरः ॥ ३३

Anu. ch. 61.

As to instances of deposition of kings, we have in the *Aśva-medha parva*, the account of the deposition of king Khanīetra of Oudh (*Aśva*, ch. 4). Elsewhere we have accounts of the downfall of the Daṇḍakas (Daṇḍakānām mahadrājyaṃ Aurveṇaikaṇa nipātitaṃ), the deposition of Arjuna Kārtavīrya, of Aila, and of king Dambhodbhava, who despised and maltreated the brahmins. Some more scattered accounts of deposed tyrants are found, and most of these names of such ill-fated tyrants occur in later literature. But, by far the most important is a traditional list of ill-fated kings as brought destruction on their race

by their sins and in this list we find the names of most of the princes mentioned by Kauṭilya in his chapter on 'Indriya-jaya,' (who were not identified by Dr. Shamasastri). In course of the debate before the Bhārata war, Bhīma mentions them (Ud., 74, 13-17) ch.:—

उद्योग ch. 74. अष्टादशमे राजानः etc.

हैहयानामुदावर्त्ती नीपानां जनमेजयः ।
 बहुलस्तालजङ्घानां कम्भीणामुद्धतो वसुः ॥
 अजविन्दुः सुवीरानां सुराष्ट्रानां रुषर्द्धिकः ।
 अकंजश्च वलीहानां चीनानां धीतमूलकः ॥
 ह्ययीवो विदेहानां वरयुश्च महीजसाम् ।
 बाहुः सुन्दरवेगानां दीप्ताक्षणां पुरुरवाः ॥
 सहजश्चेदिमत्स्यानां प्रवीरानां वृषध्वजः ।
 धारणश्चन्द्रवत्सानां मुकुटानां विगाहनः ॥
 शमश्च नन्दिवेगानामित्येते कुलपांसनाः ।

Only Karāla Vaideha's name mentioned in the Kauṭīliya and in Pali tradition, is not in the list. In a chapter of the Mahā-bhārata, he is described as a pious king discussing the Sāṃkhya doctrine with Pañcaśikha, one of the earliest expounders of the system. His name however occurs in the Buddhacarita.*

Other forms of government:—But while we have nothing more about Northern India, we have interesting side-lights on the Yādavas, which enable us to know something of another type of government which existed in the south where that tribe of sturdy fighters ruled. In the days of the great war,

* कर्णविरुद्धश्चैव ह्यहो ब्राह्मणकन्यकाम् ।

अथपि अंगसर्व्यं च ननु तस्याज सन्धयम् ॥ *Buddhacarita*, iv, 80.

the Yādavas were not regarded as Kṣatriyas of pure Aryan blood but as Vrātyas. So said Bhūriśravas to Arjuna who following the advice of Kṛṣṇa had cut off his hands, while he was about to smite his rival Sātyaki.* He reproached Arjuna for following the advice of Kṛṣṇa, and attributed his misdeeds to his connection with the Yādavas, whom he described as not only wicked and perverted by nature but also Vrātyas. Moreover, it is well-known to all students of the Mahābhārata that there prevailed among them not only marriage with first cousins, but also other customs which did not find place among the true Aryans.

From the Epic, we learn that the Yādavas had a peculiar republican constitution. They were a Confederation of several independent clans and comprised among others the Bhojas, Andhakas, Vṛṣṇis, and Kukuras among them. Each clan was ruled by its hereditary chief, but the government of the whole confederation was vested in an assembly of the chiefs who exercised independent local jurisdiction. This assembly was under an officer called Sabhāpati, who in times of emergency summoned the Yādava princes and Elders to assemble in the Sabhā. (Sabhā-parva ch. 220, 10-13). It was the Sabhāpati who summoned the Yādavas to arms by beat of drums and communicated to them the tidings of Subhadrā's abduction by Arjuna :

The Confederation as a whole, had no king in the ordinary sense of the word but had an elected chief who acted as the President. The affairs of the state were managed by the body of Elders whose voice was supreme. Vāsudeva or Śrīkṛṣṇa, regarded later on as the incarnation of God himself, was one of

* Droṇa P., cxli, 15,

the elders. In ch. 81, śloka 25 of the Śānti Parva, he is described as one of the Saṅgha-mukhyas of the Yādava Saṅgha and is warned by Nārada to guard against dissensions in the Saṅgha as this was sure to destroy the Confederation. These chiefs, however, seem to have retained autonomous jurisdiction over their own subjects and tribesmen. Their independence is to be inferred from the following passage which describes the chiefs of the Yādavas, Kukuras, and Bhojas as *lokeśvaras* or "rulers of men themselves." cf.

यादवाः कुकुरा भोजा सर्वे चान्धकवृषण्यः ।

तय्यासक्ता महाबाहो लोका लोकेश्वराश्च ये ॥

But, while they retained local jurisdiction and ruling authority, they were not crowned kings in the strict sense of the word. This would appear from śl. 29, ch. XXXVII, of the Sabhā-parva, where, in course of the dispute regarding the *arghya*, the Cedi Śisupāla takes exception to the selection of Śrīkṛṣṇa on the ground that he was not worthy of that high honour as he neither came of a royal family (a-rāja), nor had ever been crowned king. cf.

क्षीवे दारक्रिया यादव् अन्ये च रूपदर्शनम् ।

अराज्ञो राजवत् पूजा तथा तेऽह्वरिसदन ॥

Republicanism and Śrī Kṛṣṇa.—Before we conclude our account of the Yādavas, we must say something of Śrīkṛṣṇa undoubtedly the central figure in the present version of the Epic narrative. Great as a religious teacher and equally prominent in war and politics, Śrīkṛṣṇa today is regarded as an incarnation of the Deity. His political career and teachings as described

in the Epic, show him to be worthy of that reverence, with which India invokes his name and no account of the Mahābhārata politics will be complete, unless we attempt to set forth the main outlines of his policy or the part he played in the political life of contemporary India. Here we summarize his activities during the three important phases of his career :—

(1). By birth, Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva was a Vṛṣṇi prince and a scion of the ruling Yādava Kṣātriyas. The efforts of his earlier life were devoted to the destruction of the power of Kāṃsa who had usurped the headship of the Yādavas and was trying to perpetuate absolute power, in league with a number of eastern princes *i.e.* Jarāsandha and his allies *viz.* Bhagadatta of Kāmarupa, Vakra of Karuṣa and Puṇḍra Vāsudeva, lord of Vaṅga, Puṇḍra and the Kirātas. This league was joined by some Kṣātriya princes like the Cedi Śiśupāla and Bhīṣmaka and this compelled some of Kṣātriya princes to move westward. The Yādavas like the princes of the Śurasenas, Śalvas, Pāṭaccaras, South Pañcāla and East Kośala, had to move and they retired to the fortified city of Kuśasthalī, and to Dvārāvātī.

(2). After his success against Kāṃsa whom he killed, he set up Kāṃsa's father Ugrasena as the elected President of the confederacy and tried to re-organise the Yādavas. He directed his energies against Jarāsandha (whose daughter Kāṃsa had married) and tried to free India from the consequences of his policy of 'blood and iron.' It was the practice of the latter to uproot all local monarchs and to imprison or slaughter them. He and his allies had thus become a menace to the Kṣātriyas of the west and so Kṛṣṇa revived the "Kṣātriya League" composed of the Ailas and the Ikṣākus and called upon Yudhiṣṭhira to

perform a Rājasūya, a preliminary step to which would be the overthrow of Jarāsandha. The latter was despatched more by stratagem than force and his son Sahadeva was put on the throne of Magadha.

(3). The last phase of Kṛṣṇa's life was devoted to the settlement of the dispute between the Kauravas and the Pāṇḍavas. He tried his best to win over or persuade Duryodhana to a policy of conciliation but failed. Duryodhana did not only not listen to his counsels of moderation but went so far as to attempt the imprisonment of Kṛṣṇa.

In the Assembly which met on the eve of the Bhārata war, when all efforts at mediation or compromise failed, Kṛṣṇa delivered a number of speeches in which he called upon the Kuru elders to avoid a fratricidal war. His arguments won over most of them to his views, but even then Duryodhana proved obdurate. Thereupon Kṛṣṇa delivered his final address and called upon the Kurus to act on the principle of sacrificing the disturbing elements in the royal family for the general good. He asked them to follow the example of the Yādavas by arresting Duryodhana and his counsellors and thus to restore peace. Udyo. ch. 128.

cf. प्रत्यक्षमेतद्भवतां यद्वक्ष्यामि हितं वचः ।

भवतामानुकूल्येन यदि रोचेत भारताः ॥

भोजराजस्य वृद्धस्य दुराचारोद्धनात्मवान् ।

जौवतः पितुरैश्वर्यं हत्वा मृत्युवशं गतः ॥

उग्रसेनसुतः कंसः परित्यक्तः स वान्धवै ।

ज्ञातीणां हितकामेन मया शस्त्रो महामृधे ॥

आहुकः पुनरस्माभिर्ज्ञातिभिश्चापि सत्कृतः ।

उग्रसेनः कृतो राजा भोजराज्यस्य वर्धनः ॥

कंसमेकं परित्यज्य कुलार्थं सर्वयादवाः ।
 सम्भूय सुखमेधन्ते भारतान्धकवृणयः ॥
 तथा दुर्योधनं कर्णे शकुनिं चापि सीवलं ।
 वहा दुःशासनञ्चापि पाण्डवेभ्यः प्रयच्छत ॥
 त्यजेत् कुलार्थं पुरुषं ग्रामस्यार्थं कुलं त्यजेत् ।
 ग्रामं जनपदस्यार्थं आत्मार्यं पृथिवीं त्यजेत् ॥
 राजन् दुर्योधनं वहा ततः संशम्य पाण्डवैः ।
 तत्कृते न विनश्येयुः क्षत्रियाः क्षत्रियर्षभ ॥

The Democratic Gaṇas—Next to these limited monarchies, oligarchical confederations and despotic states, we have a large number of Gaṇas the administrative machinery of which is so well described in ch. CVII of the Śāntiparva and which has been so ably explained and interpreted by Mr. Jayaswal. We find mention of a large number of these Gaṇas in chapters describing wars or conquests and incidentally we have some real geographical and political data throwing light on the political life of the country.

The more important of these Gaṇas were :—

- | | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 1. The Yaudheyas. | 4. The Audumvaras. |
| 2. The Mālavas. | 5. The Vṛṣṇis & Andhakas. |
| 3. The Śivis. They are mentioned along with the | 6. The Vāṭadhānas |
| Trigartas, Ambaṣṭhas | 7. The Mādhyamakeyas. |
| and Mālavas. | 8. The Trigartas. |
| | 9. The Ambaṣṭhas. |

For a detailed discussion of Gaṇa government, our readers are referred to the Mahābhārata or the pages of Mr. Jayaswal's book. Here we may simply summarise their

leading features, *e.g.* (a) These Gaṇas were aggregates of kulas and gotras and were dominated by men of the same caste or family (कुलेन सदृशाः सर्वे जाता च सदृशा स्तथा ॥). They seem moreover to have been democratic bodies.

(b) Sovereignty was vested in the people. All had equal rights and burdens, participated in public matters and bore arms in war.

(c) There was a body of Mukhyas or Gaṇottamāḥ who ruled these Corporations. All measures required popular approval though on certain matters requiring secrecy, the leaders deliberated in secret and then took public sanction.

Summary of the evidences furnished by the Mahābhārata kernel.—When we summarise the above evidence of the Mahābhārata kernel, we further find that—

(i) In the Yādava country and in the land of the Vāhikas a non-monarchical form of government existed. The Yādavas formed a republican Confederacy of small clans, each clan having its hereditary chief, but the affairs of the corporation were entrusted not to one particular hereditary monarch, but to a body of elected Elders or Saṅgha-mukhyas.

(ii) In the secluded nooks and corners or in fastnesses, Gaṇa states existed and in these there were democratic popular constitutions.

(iii) The East, especially the land of Magadha had become the centre of an Imperialistic movement, the nature and character of which was entirely different.

(iv) In the land of the Kurus, Pañcālas, Matsyas and most other regions of Madhyadeśa, monarchy of the type described in the Brāhmaṇa literature, was the accepted form of government.

(v) In these states of the Madhyadeśa, the Sabhā voiced public opinion. The *Pauras* and *Jānapadas* were all-powerful bodies which could not be barred even from talking of the deposition of a *de facto* ruler.

(vi) Ministers though royal servants, relied on public support also. Indeed, *Paura-jānapada-priya* is an almost permanent epithet throughout the Mahābhārata. One Epic passage is more significant and speaks of a king proclaiming the chosen minister in his Sabhā (instance of Kaṅka *i.e.* Yudhiṣṭhira in disguise, in the country of Virāt.)

Political Tendencies.—Moreover, the Mahābhārata tradition gives us hints as to the main political tendencies of the day. Of these, the two following are worth mention :—

(I) *The Māgadha Imperialistic movement* :—This was a new thing in politics. The attempt of Jarāsandha to uproot all monarchs, to put them to death and to unify the whole country was a new departure from old politics. The mention of Magadha is indeed significant. For, as we shall see later on, this was the region where all subsequent empires *i.e.* those of the Śaisunāgas, Nandas, Mauryas, Guptas, and lastly the Pālas originated.

(II) *The counter-movement of Republicanism* :—Of this the greatest champion was Srikrṣṇa, the Yādava elder. His views and aims have already been given.

Real popular control.—The most important point, which no historian of this Epic fails to observe is that though monarchy was gradually making its advance in the central region, yet the ruler was not as yet irresponsible or free from real popular control. Interferences in matters of succession are significant in themselves and we find such interferences on the part of the people in most cases. In the case of Śāntanu, his father was made

to bow before popular opposition. In the case of his son Bhīṣma, the young prince made his renunciation before the Sabhā. In the case of the next generation, Vicitra-vīrya was indeed allowed to become king, but he was exiled on account of his addiction to women, and Bhīṣma was called upon to ascend the throne. Next, Pāṇḍu became the ruler and on abdication handed over power to Dhṛtarāṣṭra. The latter accepted this office and his acceptance being ratified by the people became a real king. The question as to who would be successor gave rise to a difference in the public opinion and two parties were formed, *i.e.*

(a) One of these regarded Dhṛtarāṣṭra as a true king, on account of his (i) brother's gift (ii) and the subsequent ratification by the people. (b) The other party clearly regarded him as a usurper, and the sentiments of that party were voiced by Bhīṣma.

Though for a time the creation of two different seats postponed a civil war, yet the popularity of the Paṇḍavas, made Dhṛtarāṣṭra always alive to the dangers of a popular rising.

This peculiar nature of the Kuru constitution is worth noticing. There is monarchy indeed, but the "anointed" was more of a mandatory of the people than an irresponsible tyrant. Indeed, the last words of the old Dhṛtarāṣṭra addressed to the Kuru multitudes reveal to us the real character of the monarchy, when the old king speaks of leaving Yudhiṣṭhira as a "nyāsa" or deposit in the hands of the people and of entrusting Yudhiṣṭhira with the noble duty of protecting the people. Such being the prevailing idea, in all cases of succession to the throne, the people assembled and selected their kings. This has been proved in the case of Śāntanu, Vichitravīrya, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, Parīkṣita, Janamejaya and his successors.

Checks on regal authority.—Furthermore, in the Mahābbārata, we find evidences which confirm some leading features of the political life described in the Brāhmanic literature. The limited authority of kings of the Kuru line, the deposition of unrighteous rulers and the constant vigilance on the part of the Pauras and Jānapadas against kingly high-handedness have already been narrated. Next, we pass on to point out some more facts, to show not only this parallelism, but also the existence of some constitutional checks on regal authority. Of these we may mention the following :—

- (1) The constitutional limitations imposed on regal authority, by the king's Coronation Oath.
- (2) Checks on ministers and their moral liability to look to popular interests.
- (3) Existence of the popular element in the Royal Council.
- (4) Prevailing political ideas, which inspite of the influence of sacerdotalism or of paternalism recognized the ultimate sovereignty of the people and regarded the king as the custodian of popular interests who received tribute and allegiance in lieu of righteous rule. The moral right of revolution was also supposed to reside in the people.

The royal oath, at the time of coronation was the most important of the constitutional limitations. In (ch. LIX. of) the Śāntiparvan, we have the traditional account of Veṇa's deposition by the Ṛsis and the birth and inauguration of Prthu and incidentally we have mention of the oath taken by him at the instance of the *Devas* :—*cf.*

स्वमुचुस्तत्र देवास्ते ते चैव परमर्षयः ।

नियतो यत्र धर्मो वै तमशङ्कः समाचर । १०३

.....
प्रतिज्ञाश्चाधिरोहस्य मनसा कर्मणा गिरा ।

पालयिष्याम्यहं भौमं ब्रह्म इत्येव चासक्तः ॥ १०६

यश्चात्र धर्मो नित्योक्तो दण्डनोतिव्यपाश्रयः ।

तमशङ्कः करिष्यामि स्ववशो न कदाचन ॥ १०७

अदण्ड्या मे द्विजाश्चेति प्रतिजानौहि हे विभो ।

लोकञ्च सङ्हरात् कृत्स्नं तातास्मीति परन्तप ॥ १०८

This oath limited the scope of regal activity to the protection of the people, maintenance of law and order, respect for social privileges and the punishment of wrong-doers only. The importance of this coronation oath imposing obligations on the king is echoed by many parables of the Mahābhārata. To quote one of many such, we find in the story of Nṛga (Anuśāsana ch. LXX.), that Yama reminded the king that his punishment was due to his non performance of his Oath of protection (रक्षितास्मोति चोक्तं ते प्रतिज्ञां चानृता तव । ब्राह्मणस्यैवादानाद्विविधस्तु व्यतिक्रमः ॥२३)

Other limitations existed, viz., the king's subservience to the laws equally with his subjects, his inability to impose extra taxes at will and his obligation to carry out the duties entrusted to him. As the Śānti-parva expressly says (ch. LXXXVII—26-33) extra taxes could be imposed only with popular sanction.

Ministers.—Next to the oath, there was the activity of the ministers and the weight of public opinion expressed in the Sabhā, which on important occasions the elders and prominent men of all castes attended. We find even women of position like Kuntī and Gāndhārī giving their advice. Ministers though royal servants were morally responsible to the people. Pre-eminent among the minister-advisers was the Purohita, who

according to the Śāntiparva shared with the king his functions and merits (तस्य धर्मस्य सर्वस्य भागी राजपुरोहितः । LXXII. 18.). Then came the Brāhmaṇa advisers, whose opinion had a great weight in as much as their position and life was safe-guarded by their immunities. The position of the Purohita would appear from the pre-eminence of Vasiṣṭha in the administration of Ayodhyā after Daśaratha's death and even of Dhaumya (a man of less repute and wanting in strong personality) who is entrusted with the regency and the safety of the capital along with Yuyutsu in the Āśramavāśika parvan.* (युयुत्सुस्य महातेजा धौम्यश्चैव पुरोहितः । युधिष्ठिरस्य वचनात् पुरयुतिं प्रचक्रतुः ॥ XXIII. 15 Duryodhana also consulted his priests whenever he wanted to raise money.

Caste representation in the Council.—Not to speak of the influence of the Brāhmaṇas, the weight of the ministerial council was augmented by the presence of ministers of other castes who represented the opinion of their respective social groups. The chapters of the Rājadharmas speak of eight mantriṇah (not specified by name, but including, the Śuklāmātya, Senāpati, Pratīhāra, Śīrorakṣa, Dūta and Sāndhivigrahika. See Śānti Ch. LXXXV.) and specifically mentions in addition, the Council of Amātyas comprising four Brahmins, eight Kṣatriyas, twenty-one Vaiśyas, three Śūdras and one Sūta. cf.

वक्ष्यामि तु यथामातृगान् यादृशांश्च करिष्यसि । ६
चतुरो ब्राह्मणान् वैद्यान् प्रगल्भान् क्षातकान् शुचीन् ।
क्षत्रियांश्च तथा चाष्टौ वलिनः शस्त्रपाणिनः ॥७
वैश्यान् वित्तेन सम्पन्नानेकविंशतिसंख्यया ।
त्रींश्च शूद्रान् विनीतांश्च शुचीन् कर्मणि पूर्वके ॥८
अष्टाभिश्च गुणैर्युक्तं सतं पौराणिकं तथा ॥

* See N. Law. Hindu Polity pp. 27. Ch. on the State Council.

The relation between the two bodies is rather meagre, but evidently, the consultation was made with the eight *mantriṇaḥ* and then the proposed measures were given out to the Council for opinion (चष्टानां मन्त्रिणां मध्ये मन्त्रं राजोपधारयेत् । ततः सम्येष्वेद्राङ्गे राष्ट्रीयाय च दर्शयेत् ॥). The reference to Śūdra ministers should not be regarded merely as an instance of idealism but it was a fact since we find caste representatives already in the Brāhmaṇas in connection with all the inaugural ceremonies. The *Mahābhārata* gives us instances of ministers of lower caste like Vidura, and Yuyutsu. Not to speak of ministers of lower caste, any one maintaining order and protecting life and property was allowed due reverence. (शूद्रो वा यदि वाऽप्यन्यः सर्वथा मानमर्हति । 38—LXXVIII. Śānti.)

They were morally liable for giving right advice to the king (if we are to believe in the Epic evidence). Various causes and circumstances stood in the way of the growth of a legal responsibility in such an early period but in spite of this, the prevailing political ideas fastened moral responsibility on the ministers and this appears from passages the meaning of which is very clear. In one place, we are told that unrighteous ministers go to hell and in another, it is laid down that they deserve death in the hands of the people (कार्येऽधिकृताः सम्मगकुर्वन्तो नृपानुगाः । आत्मानं पुरतः कृत्वा यान्वधः सङ्घपार्थिवाः ॥ 17—cf. LXXXV, Śānti; and असत्यापिष्ठसचिवो बध्यो लोकस्य धर्मज्ञा ॥). There are evidences to prove that ministers who were appointed by the kings were some times proclaimed to the people (cf. the account of Virāṭa's proclamation of Yudhiṣṭhira in his *Sabbhā*).

This simpler state of political life and the popular character of monarchy thus receives ample confirmation from the tradition of the Epic kernel. We have seen how limited the

authority of kings was in those days ; how they always feared the anger of their subjects and how government though vested in the king depended mainly on the opinion of the people. The states were small and the various popular bodies were efficient in checking royal high-handed-ness. The Assemblies of the city or of the country remained active and always imposed their will on their rulers. This state of affairs will receive some more confirmation if we analyse the prevailing political ideas of those days. The idea of a contract subsisting between the ruler and the ruled, the conception of kings as guardians of the public interest, the belief that the tax paid to the king was but his wages, all go to prove the existence of popular sovereignty and of limited monarchy. For the present, however, we refrain from any detailed discussion of these, since, the ideas found in the Rāja-dharma chapters are mingled with some others which belong to a later age. The super-position of varied strata of thought and speculation stand in the way of utilising this material with reference to this period. We reserve a fuller discussion of these for the next chapter, in which we shall enter into an analysis of the political condition which preceded the gradual decay of popular sovereignty and the rise of pure monarchy.

Rāmāyanic Evidence

THE picture of political conditions furnished by the Rāmāyaṇa is absolutely the same as we get in the Epic kernel, the former depicting rather a more primitive political life. Ayodhyā was like the Kuru kingdom, a monarchy ruled by the Aikṣāka princes with whom the royal office was hereditary. But in spite of this, the rulers were far from being irresponsible. They depended on the advice and counsel of their Purohitas and Amātyas, and on all important occasions, the popular bodies exercised their rights. The Pauras, the Jānapadas, and the leaders of castes and guilds were potent factors in the administrative system. Their voice was supreme and the king was bound to take their advice on all important affairs of state. The Rājākṛts or king-makers who are repeatedly mentioned in the Atharva Veda and the Brāhmaṇas figure prominently in the Rāmāyaṇa. We have innumerable instances to prove the truth of the above statements. Thus, we find Daśaratha consulting his subjects *i.e.* the Brāhmaṇas, Bala-mukhyas, Pauras and Jānapadas (Ayo. II. 19-20 ब्राह्मणा बलमुख्याश्च पौरजानपदेः सह ।) before coming to a decision about the Yauvarājya of Rāma (Ayo. ch. IV.). We find them all eagerly awaiting the Yauvarājya of Rāma (Ayo. ch. XIV XV) and on the death of the king, they gathered with a view to the restoration of order in the kingdom, at the instance of the sage Vaśiṣṭha (Ayo. ch. LXXXI). Again, the Naigamāḥ and Nāgarikāḥ accompanied Bharata in his mission to find Rāma