

# ***Gana* or Ancient India's Republican Political System**

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## **Abstract**

The present paper is an attempt to analyze the republicanism prevalent in ancient India which was one of the foundational stones of the ancient Indian state and how it has disproved the occidental views about ancient Indian political system which mainly rested on the notion of 'oriental despotism'. Secondly, it explores how the Jain works, Greek authors' works, Panini, literature on Buddhism, coins, literary evidence, etc. bear an important testimony to the existence of republics in ancient India. Thirdly, the paper has given a glimpse about different ancient republics which were recorded in the Buddhist literature and in epics like *Mahabharata*. Fourth, it has also highlighted the key characteristics of ancient Indian *Ganas* or republics which were ingrained in Hindu politics. Finally, the paper has made assessments and delineated the causes of the decline of ancient Indian republics from Hindu India.

**Key Words:** *Gana, Sangha, Acharangasutra, Nyaya Vyavastha, Shanti Parva, Vargya, Grihya*

## **Introduction**

Less than a century ago, Western Indologists believed that India's influential contributions to literature were limited to metaphysics, philosophy, and religion and had little to do with political concepts and governmental structures. Therefore, 'Oriental despotism' was the central tenet of Western perceptions of the ancient Indian governmental structure. However, the long-

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standing misunderstanding regarding India's ancient political institutions was significantly dispelled by the translation of *Arthashastra* and Buddha's *Digha Nikaya* into European languages. According to research conducted not only by renowned Indian academicians like K. P. Jayaswal and Shobha Mukherjee, but also by Western Indologists like Rhys David and Oldenberg, India had enjoyed and experienced republicanism for almost a thousand years between the 6th century B.C. and the 4th century A.D., long before the Greeks or Romans could think or work along those lines. However, it was David, who thought that republicanism was one of the pillars of the old Indian State, and is credited with first exposing the republican nature of ancient India. Jayaswal eventually collected the disparate allusions to the republics that can be found in Indian literature into a series of articles that were then combined into his well-known book *Hindu Polity* (2021).

India had a strong foundation in the science and art of politics long before Plato and Aristotle could develop philosophical ideas about the state, create governing rules, and project a set of values. The idea of a republican polity was one of India's greatest accomplishments. The ancient Indian republican typology was based on the acceptable current definition of a republic, which is a non-monarchical, elective rulership with men united for common objectives, a moderate and constitutional spirit in administration, delegation of authority, and popular legitimacy behind power (Roy, 1993). Based on the historical records of ancient India, it seems that the monarchy and republics coexisted peacefully and cooperatively. The earliest records that are currently accessible demonstrate that during the Vedic era, monarchy was the exclusive system of government. In several regions, monarchy was only superseded by alternative kinds of government during the post-Vedic era. In theory, both the *Mahabharata* and the works of the Greek traveler, Megasthenes lend credence to the notion that republics emerged long after monarchies.

### **Understanding the Etymology of *Gana***

'Republic' has been referred to by different names in ancient Indian literature. *Gana* is one such name; it was a state ruled by several people rather than just one. *Gana* denotes a particular kind of state that is very different from monarchy. *Gana* was the name given to the Assembly or Parliament based on the number of members in attendance. The alternative name for the 'Republic'

was *Sangha*, which is interchangeable with *Gana*. While *Gana* refers to the type of government, *Sangha* denotes the state and was a single entity. Thus, the term *Gana-rajyas* was more commonly used to refer to republics in ancient India. 'Numbers' is what *Gana* implies. The 'rule of numbers' or 'the ruling by many' is what *Gana-rajya* signifies. Two Sanskrit terms have been used to refer to a polity that does not have a king. One such term that might denote a confederation of republics in a political context is *Samgha*. If the term *Samgha* is found in Buddhist literature, it refers to a monastic organization. *Gana* is another term that has been used in literature on Kingless polity. In Roy's *Foundations of Indian Polity* (1993), Indologists, Fleet and Monier Williams referred to *Gana* as a tribe, while for Buhler, it is a corporation of workers and craftsmen, and Jolly assumes that *Gana* refers to a meeting. According to Jayaswal (2021), a *Gana* represents what is known as a republic i.e a constitution without a king. After reviewing the many explanations offered by the experts, he claims that *Gana* was the assembly or parliament that got its name from the "numbering" of members in attendance. As a result, *Gana-rajya* signified assembly or parliamentary government. 'Parliament' or 'senate' became the secondary meaning of *Gana*, and as republics were run by them, *Gana* came to suggest a republic (Jayaswal, p. 25).

According to some authors, the *Gana*-States were oligarchies or aristocracies rather than republics or democracies since authority was concentrated in a tiny aristocratic class rather than the entire populace. It is accurate to state that the universal adult franchise, which is a feature of contemporary republican states, was not present in *Gana* States. The whole adult population did not have power. Nonetheless, *Gana* States can still be categorized as republics as, unlike monarchies, republics are governed by a group or college of people, usually much larger than one individual. Republics have been referred to as oligarchies, aristocracies, and democracies. The United Netherlands, Poland, Sparta, Athens, and Rome have all been characterised as republics, despite the fact that a small minority held control over the great majority in each of these cities. The ancient Indian *Gana*-States can be categorised as republics in the same way that the ancient Greek and Roman States were referred to as such. These states had a reasonably large class of people that held the sovereignty, not just one person or a select few. Therefore, it is reasonable to refer to the ancient *Gana*-States as republics in the same way that Western Political Science texts refer to

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the States of Athens, Sparta, or Venice as republics, while also keeping in mind that they were not modern democracies, where the right to vote is granted to as many citizens as possible (Altekar, 1949).

### **Information Sources Concerning Republics or *Ganas***

**Works by Jain Writers** - A Jain text called *Acharangasutra* counsels monks to journey through states with monarchies. It indicates that there were kingless states as well, most likely republics or *Ganas*.

**Greek Authors' Works** - Greek authors who accompanied Alexander to Punjab have written about the presence of numerous great republics, including the Kathaians, Adrestai, Sambhusti, Vrishnis, Vudheyas, Kshudrakas, Malavas, Agsinae, and Ambashthas. The majority of the populace were warriors and patriots, and they fiercely resisted the invaders. The majority of Punjab and Sind, which were included in the Greek writers' survey, only depict two or three monarchies, such as the kingdom of Porus and Abhiraas; otherwise, the entire nation was republican (Myneni, 2016).

**Panini** - *Gana* has been used for *Sangha* by Panini. He cites the following republics: the Brahmagupta, the Janaki, the Hadra, the Virji, the Rajanya, the Dandaki, the Jalamani, the Yaudheya, the Damani, the Kaundoparatha, the Kaushtaki, and so on. He has arranged them according to the Houses of the Legislature.

**Literature on Buddhism** - The political word *Sangha*, which was equivalent to *Gana*, was the source of the Buddhist name *Samgha*. Some republics, such as the Vrijis, Mallas, Sakyas, Koliyas, Lichchavis, Videhas, Moriyas, Bulis, Bhaggas, etc., have also been mentioned in Buddhist literature. We have learnt a lot from the Buddhist literature about different republics and their deliberative systems. It has also made references to a confederation of republics, wherein each republic was accorded sovereign equality.

**Arthashastra** - *Kautilya's Arthashastra* provided a wealth of knowledge regarding how republics function. Kautilya distinguished between two types of republics: (a) those with a head who held the title of Raja, and (b) those without. Additionally, it seems that having military prowess was a requirement in several of the republics. We conclude that several of the republics had declined by that time and had been replaced by monarchy because Kautilya did not mention any

significant republics.

***Mahabharata*** - *Mahabharata*'s Shanti Parva made reference to *Gana*, the entire political group and body. *Pradhanas* and *Gana Mukhyas* made up the ruling body. Members of republics also seem to have frequently grumbled about the lack of secrecy. Typically, these also established confederacies. It was also recognised that the threat to *Gana* came from inside rather than the outside.

**Coins-** The Yaudheyas and Malavas were significant *Ganas*, or republic states, in ancient India, as can be shown from the coins that are currently available. Both monarchy and republics coexisted and thrived in ancient India.

### **Ancient India's Republics' Names**

Buddhist texts provide us with information about the 6th century BC republics. The following were these republics (Raychaudhuri, 2022).

**Kapilavastu's Shakyas-** It was situated in the Himalayan foothills on the Nepali border. This republic was situated in what is now Gorakhpur's western region. In this state, Gautam Buddha was born. Kapilavastu served as its capital. The local population believed that they were descended from Eshvak. This was a significant learning location.

**Allakappa Bulis** - This region was situated between what are now the districts of Muzaffarpur and Shahabad. Dhammapada claimed that this region was located close to Veth Island.

**Kesputta Kalamas** - Aalar Kalam, the spiritual mentor of Buddha, was a member of this dynasty. Shatpath Brahman describes this dynasty as being linked to the Panchal Keshis.

**Susamagiri Bhaggas** - Sanyutta Nikaya claimed that this region was located in Bhargadisa. Modern-day Mirzapur is near this location.

**Ramgram's Kolis** – Found towards East of the Shakyas of Kapilavastu

**Pava's Mallas** - The Vashistha gotra's kshatriyas governed this dynasty. The Mallas made their home in what is now Padrauna, Uttar Pradesh.

**Kushinagar Mallas** - They were Mallas' second branch. Here, Buddha achieved *Parinirvana*.

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**Pippalivan Moris** - Mahavansa claims that the Shakyas were the previous name for the Moris. But because of the violence of Vidudabh, they later moved to a steep part of the Himalayas, where they founded the city of Pippalivan. This city has long been known for its peacock sounds, earning it the nickname 'Moris'.

**Mithila's Videhas** - Mithila was a well-known educational facility.

**Vaishali's Licchavis** - The Kshatriya clan was the home of the Licchavis.

**Vaishali's Naga** - The federation of Vajji was established as a result of the union of the Videhas and the Licchavis. Additionally, there was a Licchavis and Nagas federation known as Asthakul, which included Videhas, Yangyik, Licchavi, and Vajji.

Thus, the Shakyas, Licchavis, Videhas, Vajji, and Malla were among the strong republics of this era. The meaning of republic and federation, according to D. R. Bhandarkar, an expert on Indian ancient history from 650 to 325 BC, was "a group of well-decided and well-organised men" (N. Sharma, Mohanty, J.T. Sharma & Vaiphei, 2015, p. 33). Nonetheless, it appears that a republic was the common name for a federation unit. A federation was formed by many republics. As a result, numerous *grihas* created a *kul*, and a group of *kulas* established a republic.

### **Republics in Mahabharata Period**

*Mahabharata's Shanti Parva* discusses *Ganas*, or republics, and how they are run. Resolution piloting, passing, and execution were the responsibilities of the governing bodies of each republic, which were composed of *Gana Mukhya* and *Pradhana*. In addition, the executive branch was tasked with ensuring that the *Nyaya Vyavastha*, was efficient and inexpensive, and that the laws were explicit and unambiguous. According to *Mahabharata*, all state policy issues were brought before the assembly for thorough discussion, and choices were then made to put them into effect. The *Mahabharata* leads us to conclude that *Gana* was unable to keep secrets and that jealousy and greed had grown among its members. According to the *Mahabharata*, it was proof of jealousy that brought them to ruin in the sight of the populace. Even spies were used to learn the secrets of *Gana* members. It also seems that the idea of confederacy and *Ganas* banding together to accomplish shared goals was widely recognized and

popular. One of the qualities of a good republic, according to the *Mahabharata*, is that its citizens must be honest and upright. A spirit of discipline and an appreciation for other people's perspectives are also inevitable. These are bound to work in the spirit of give and take and modification.

In all cases, the republics maintained their independence and never submitted to higher powers. The *Gannas* were extremely picky about the security of their lands and the stability of their finances, and the courageous were always treated with respect. The republic always regarded the intelligent and able as a valuable resource, and every effort was made to treat them with the respect they deserved. Internal conflicts had to be reconciled as much as possible because they were inherently incompatible with national security (Myneni, 2016, p. 72).

The republics acknowledged one another's sovereignty and loved and respected one another. They constantly aimed to ensure that the people paid the least amount of taxes, but they also made sure that republics' finances were never allowed to falter. Every member of a *Gana* was supposed to be a valiant warrior who was always prepared to protect their homeland.

Each and every *Gana* member gives their all in support of the country's progress. They made sure that the administration operated in accordance with *dharma* and valued justice. However, the literature of the *Mahabharata* also suggests that the internal management of these *Ganas* was so inadequate that occasionally the enemy took full advantage of it and was able to overthrow a republic in a short period of time. "The *ganas* of *Mahabharata* period fall at once into the clutches of the enemy when driven by anger, absence of mutual confidence, military violence, tyranny, oppression and executions" (Myneni, 2016, p. 73).

### **The Republics' Administrative System**

At that time, the states had different systems of government. *Samarajya*, *Bhojya*, *Swarajya*, *Vairajya*, and *Rajya* are the five categories of administrative polities that *Atreya Brahman* has described as follows:

Under *Samarajya* politics, the head of state was referred to as Samrat, his position was hereditary, and his coronation was required. These states had greater chances to increase their territory. The area under cultivation and agricultural output rose as a result of iron utilization. Since he was the only one



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with the authority to allow the clearing of forests and his part of the produce was set, the monarch benefited the most from it. The monarch once more benefited from greater trade and commerce brought forth by increased agricultural production. All of this led to the emperor's material success, which enabled him to build up his army and effectively use it to expand his empire's lands (Sharma, 2015, p. 33).

Bhoja, the head of state in the *Bhojya* polity, was given administrative authority for a set amount of time rather than having a hereditary position. The *Satvava Yadavas* also had a system of government like this. The Samrat was the head of state in *Swarajya* politics, and a few esteemed Kulas, who were all considered equals, were in charge of running the government. The king was the head of state in *Vairajya* politics. Additionally, the representatives of the people selected many administrative officers. Tribal administration persisted in Rajya polity. This method was followed by the *Janpadas* of Kuru and Panchal in Madhyadesh.

### **Key Characteristics of Ancient Indian Republics or Ganas**

In the past, monarchy and the Republican or Gana style of government coexisted in ancient India. There were republics all around the nation. The institution of Gana was ancient and ingrained in Hindu politics. The Republic or Gana system's key characteristics are as follows:

#### **The New Republics' Formation Process**

Generally speaking, Gana, or republic, was established in the name of a person or location. Disruption of the old and existing republics and a preference for the form of government over anarchies were two factors in the establishment of new republics. States like Kurus, Panchalas, and Videhas only transitioned from monarchy to republic later on.

#### **King**

The king served as the state's supreme executive. He was chosen as a member. He lacked total authority.

#### **Council of Ministers**

The council of ministers consisted of nine members, all of whom were chosen from among the nobles. Nonetheless, we discover that the Malla republic had



four members, the Licchavi republic had nine, and the Videha republic had eighteen.

### **Executive Organisation**

The Sansthaagar was another name for the executive. The Licchavis believed that they were kings. Voting was done in cases where there were disputes over war, peace, religion, or social issues. If a consensus could not be reached for any reason, a committee known as Udayvahika was constituted.

### **The Voting Procedure**

For the purpose of voting, four methods were employed. They are as follows: The Secret System wherein voting was conducted in secret using this method, the Open System wherein voting was conducted in an open manner using this method, the Mouth-to-Ear Mechanism, in which voters whisper their preferences into their ears to cast their ballots (Sharma, 2015, p. 34) and the Evident System wherein the voter names were clearly announced using this system.

### **The Organization's Working Procedure**

The following was the working procedure:

- Organisational norms were established for the proposal. Usually, after three iterations, the idea was accepted if no objections were raised. However, special regulations were in place to put the idea to a vote if it was opposed. Voting took place in secret.

- To settle disputes and questions, committees were established.
- There were created complementary rules. (Sharma, 2015).

### **The Gana or Republic's Election System**

The aristocratic class held all the power in the ancient Indian *Gana* system, but not all of the populace. This class of people, known as the "*rajas*," typically made decisions on all significant issues, including peace and war. Although their numbers typically ranged from 3,000 to 7,500, they were rather numerous, with some *Ganas* having more than 7,500. These *Ganas* did not adhere to the adult franchise system. Some historians believe that there were no republics in ancient India since the head of state was not elected democratically. But this

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doesn't seem to be the case.

However, as Altekar has noted, a state still qualifies as a republic even if it was not democratic in the contemporary sense. "Aristocracies, democracies, and 'oligarchies' have all been referred to as republics," he admits. Therefore, it is safe to state that, in contrast to monarchs, authority was not concentrated in the hands of one person in the *Gana*, or Republics of ancient India. (Myneni, 2016, p. 68)

### **Discussions in Republics or *Ganas***

There were both large and minor states of *Gana*, or kingdoms, in ancient India. In the past, the citizens of minor states had a common residence. Social and political gatherings took place in a hall or another public space. There were privileged and non-privileged classes in the society. The members typically came from wealthy families that made nearly all of the decisions. Typically, they reached a unanimous decision. Additionally, it seems that when members disagreed, the majority vote method was used to decide the matter.

The Assembly's officer assigned seats to everyone who was eligible to enter the Assembly Hall. Although it's unclear if prior notification was always necessary, members did make motions to address certain resolutions. Occasionally, we also discover that a decision had to be approved three times before its outcome was finalized. Every meeting had a specific quorum, which was rigorously adhered to. Without a quorum, meetings were deemed unlawful and void.

The authority to hold deliberations was given to a committee that took appropriate measures to prevent such an undesirable circumstance since it seems that occasionally stupid speeches were made or that a Raja would like to make such a speech. It has always been believed that a member should be given every opportunity to voice his opinions when doing so in a proper and acceptable manner.

Once the questions were resolved, they were typically not reopened unless the *Gana* or *Samgha* pointed out and approved a procedural flaw. Every member was self-respecting and did not think of himself as being any less than the others. Allocating seats, rejecting a motion, resolving a contentious issue, or regulating and controlling the discussions were therefore an extremely challenging and intricate process. Even though he tried his best to maintain equilibrium, the

presiding officer typically failed to satisfy everyone.

The Assembly's discussions were open, honest, and free from outside influence. Members frequently differed greatly from one another, and disputes were frequent. There is evidence that the people thought that they could only be destroyed by internal forces rather than external ones. Since the *Ganas* people grumbled that there was no national secrecy and that the adversary might know about their plans and preparations far in advance, one may picture the extent of unrestricted talk.

### **The Central Assembly**

A republic's Central Assembly, which ranged in strength from 3,000 to 7,000, was its supreme body. No meaningful business could be undertaken in the Central Assembly due to its size. It was only reasonable to be crowded because everyone in the *Gana* had the right to participate.

The assemblies there also seem to be strong enough bodies, and their numbers were not diminished in the slightest. These not only appointed their battle commanders but also had authority over international policy in addition to internal governance. The executive was under its supervision and might be asked to justify its actions. There were good reasons to think that the Assembly had given its previous permission before the governors were appointed. The Assembly was also in charge of the national budget. It is obvious that the Assembly could not stand any kind of extravagant or undesired spending or misappropriation of finances. All taxes were approved, and all expenses were permitted.

### **Group or Party System**

Supporting and opposing parties or groups were a divisive mechanism used in ancient Indian republics. Every organisation or party had a leader, but they all saw themselves as equals and didn't like to be led by others. Altekar claims that the party system is so prevalent in the republic that even Grammarians mention it. The term *dvandva* was used to describe the competing parties and the term *Kyutikromana* to their rivalry. The technical words *Vargya*, *Grihya*, and *Pakshya* were used to identify members of the party. No electoral lists were available for voting, no assembly election procedure was specified, and there were no requirements for being eligible to vote. Thus, groups were formed

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according to the distribution of votes, discussions, and significant issues. An assembly that regularly used voting before reaching a conclusion was ideal. Internal harmony was preserved, and the president's job became relatively simple in such an assembly (Myneni, 2016, p. 70).

### **Record of Deliberations**

Every significant discussion and decision made in the Assembly was carefully documented. Someone with a specific role may have been in charge of keeping track of them. These documents served as the foundation for the assembly's quorum-required work and the legislative branch's accountability to the executive. The president had an extremely challenging and complex duty. Departments such as Foreign Affairs, Treasury, Justice, Police, Trade, Industry, and others were in charge of running and overseeing the republic. According to Altekar,

The different departments had their own officers of diverse grades, who must have worked under the orders of the Ministers. In small states like those of the Sankya and Loliyas, they could directly report unusual incidents to the supreme authorities, in bigger states, they must have reported through proper channels. (Altekar, 1949, p. 77)

### **Judicial Administration of the *Ganas* or Republics**

There were seven different kinds of courts. The king served as the judiciary's chief justice. Aristocrats presided over what were known as *kula* courts, which were law courts. Additionally, it seems that a jury system was in place and was employed to look into criminal cases. The *Gana* court heard appeals from the *Kula court*. Furthermore, guilds known as *Pugas* possessed some judicial authority. The head of the *Gana*, or republic, served as the last court of appeal. Jayaswal says that,

the Gana had their own laws is evident from the provision of the Hindu law books which recognize their separate existence. It is also proved by the testimony of Greek writers who praise the laws of Indian Republics. The Lichchhavis are recorded to have a book of legal precedents. (2021, p. 77)

### **Advantages of the Republican System**

The following were the main advantages of the republics system:

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- The king lacked absolute authority.
- Every citizen participated equally in the republics' administrative tasks.
- Voting protected the social norms.
- There was no hereditary influence. Even if he had a low social standing, the main attributes that were desired in a leader were honesty, responsibility, and experience.
- In times of conflict, the entire state fought together to defend its republic's idols.
- There was prosperity in terms of money. The major hubs of civilisation, art, and culture were the modern states.

**Drawbacks of the Republican System** The following were the drawbacks of the republican system:

- Security was impeded because of arguments that made it impossible to keep important issues private.
- There were delays as a result of the delayed decision-making process.
- Individual interests began to influence politics.
- The notion of equality caused administrative skill and tactfulness flaws to be overlooked.
- This system reduced significant costs.
- Political parties interfered in the day-to-day management of governmental affairs.
- Regional and economic leadership was lacking.

## Reasons for the declines of *Ganas* or Republics

Republics were destroyed for the main reasons listed below:

### A Lack of Equality

The people of ancient India were extremely familiar with *Ganas*, or republics, which coexisted with monarchy for generations. In actuality, republics had great respect, status, and glory prior to the year 500 A.D. However, these republics

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vanished as time went on. Both the Guptas and the Mauryas discovered strong republics. Republics suffered a severe blow when the imperial Guptas came to power, solidifying their dominance over other republics (Myneni, 2016, p. 72).

Hereditary System of Succession However, according to Altekar, the hereditary system of succession gained popularity over the elected one over time and thus undermined the fundamental tenets of republicanism.

### **The Monarchy's Popularity**

With the growing popularity of the Divine Origin of King thesis, the importance of an elected president started to be undervalued. A monarch, who was considered to have enjoyed God's blessings, was given all the credit and success, while an elected leader was held accountable for all the failings.

### **Inadequate Administration Secrecy**

Monarchies guaranteed confidentiality and promptness, eliminated the prospect of internal conflicts and quarrels, which were hallmarks of republican systems, and prevented the concealment of administration that existed in republics.

### **Lack of Prosperity and Security**

Monarchies eliminated the primary internal threat to republics, and its citizens were regarded as safer, more secure, and more prosperous than those of republics.

### **Insufficiently Large Army**

Due to their inability to sustain sizable armies, the republics were unable to contend with the formidable Guptas and the semi-civilized Huns, who possessed strong military forces.

### **Excessive Individual Freedom**

The *Ganas* had too much personal freedom, and at the same time, there were rifts, and the *Ganas* grew weaker and smaller.

### **Conclusion**

The preceding discussion suggest that democracies can become oligarchies, aristocracies, monarchies, or dictatorships if their citizens become lazy, sluggish, and uninterested. In such cases, powerful individuals who are vigilant

and proactive take control of the state. Republics vanished, yet their influence on ancient India's political history endured. Hindu republics, like other human institutions, had its share of positives and problems. A strong sense of "justice" and "discipline" characterized Hindu republics. There was equality in the *Gana*. Republican regimes were successful both militarily and politically. Hindu states were extremely wealthy. They always had plenty in their treasury. This polity's very flaw was its small size. Intrigues also befell the republics, and *Ganas* were broken as a result of disagreements. The longevity that the State system can guarantee is the strongest indicator of its success. As a class, the Indian republican system excelled in ensuring permanence. For over 1,000 years, Malavas lived in freedom as did the Yaudheyas and the Licchavis. In this way, the tenets that guided the Hindu republics' existence endured. Many republican states were eager to defend freedom and were passionate about it. They had good administration and were wealthy. The Hindu republics' richness and early democratic traditions are highly regarded in both domestic and international history. The *Mahabharata* also attests to the fact that the Greeks were aware of their wealth.

The term 'republic' is actually defined scientifically and precisely in the *Mahabharata* by referring to the entire political community, the entire body politic, or alternatively, the parliament, rather than just the ruling body. The idea of '*Gana-rajya*' was prevalent not just during the Buddhist era, which was preceded by the Vedic tradition and institutionalized in Sabhas and Samitis, which are the equivalent of councils and assemblies, but also in the decades that followed. The Greek framework of idealism, which saw society as an organic wholeness whose rights went beyond those of the individual, had a striking connection to Hindu thinking. Indeed, republican enthusiasm and a sense of belonging permeated all aspect of society, including trade, religion, agriculture, and the service sector. At the end, it is sufficient to say that Ancient Indian politics were significantly and permanently impacted by democratic principles.

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