

Q Discuss the democratic elements in the political system of Early Vedic period.

The main source of information to know about the Vedic period, both Early & Later, are the 'Vedas'. There are four Vedas - Rigveda, Samveda, Yajurveda & Atharvaveda. Rigveda gives information about the Early Vedic period. It throws light on different aspects of Early Vedic period, be it political, economical, social or cultural.

As far as political system of Early Vedic period is concerned, it is important to note that word 'Rajan' has occurred many times in Rigveda. Since a full-fledged monarchical state had not yet emerged, this word is best translated as 'chieftain' or 'noble'. His main duty was to protect his people & to lead them to victory in wars. This shows that politically 'people' played an important role. Their collective protection <sup>was</sup> the main task of the 'rajan'. This indicates towards the democratic element present during that period. This is supported by the fact that the term 'jana' occurred many times in Rigveda.

Moreover, many historians believe that very likely the king owed his office to the choice of the people because available evidence does not indicate the continuance of royal succession for more than three generations. This suggests that the principle of hereditary succession was not yet established. Apart from



this many hymns in Rigveda also suggest that the 'rajan' was perhaps chosen by the people, the 'jana'. For instance, Rigveda (X.173) addressing the king specifically tells him that 'for firmness, the assembly here creates (appoints) you'. This also makes the Early Vedic political system to look somewhat democratic in nature.

But the main democratic element present in the political system of Early Vedic period was the presence of various assemblies like the Sabha, Samiti & Vidatha. The king's authority was substantially limited by these 'assemblies'. They discharged both judicial & political functions. The Sabha was a council of the elder members of the tribe or clan. Women also attended the Sabha. The Samiti was a general assembly & less exclusive than Sabha. The Vidatha has been understood as a tribal assembly with diverse functions. These assemblies also may have played an important role in the redistribution of resources.

Thus, these features indicate towards the democratic element present in the political system of the Early Vedic Period.