

# THE RIGVEDA

A Historical Analysis

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## Acknowledgements

So far as the first section of this book is concerned, I have little to acknowledge to anyone (except, of course, the Vedic RSis themselves, and the modern scholars responsible for fundamental books on the Rigveda, such as Ralph T.H. Griffith and ViSvabandhu, whose translation and word concordance, respectively, have been of fundamental help to me), since this section is almost entirely a product of my study.

However, in respect of the second and third sections of my book, I must first and foremost acknowledge my deep gratitude to the eminent Belgian scholar, Koenraad Elst, not only for his constant interest and encouragement, but, more practically, for the various papers and books sent to me by him (including Erdosy-Witzel-Skjærvø, Winn, Nichols, Bryant etc.) which were of invaluable help in these two sections of the book.

This, of course, is apart from the debt owed by me, as by all true Indians, to this great friend, sympathiser and benefactor of India, whose brilliant writings have contributed to, or aided, the Indian cause.

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(These volumes are indispensable in any Vedic research).

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## PREFACE

In our earlier book, we had taken up the subject of the Aryan invasion theory in all its aspects, and conclusively established that India was the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages.

However, this second book has become imperative for various reasons:

1. The literary evidence for our conclusion in our earlier book was based primarily on Puranic sources. According to many critics, the PurANas, whose extant versions are very much posterior to the extant Rigveda, are *not* valid sources for evidence pertaining to the Vedic period: the Rigveda is the only valid source for the period.

The above criticism is not wholly invalid. The Rigveda is certainly the source of last resort: i.e. information in other texts (like the PurANas, or even the other Vedic texts) can be rejected if it distinctly contradicts information in the Rigveda. As we shall see, some of the data (such as the names, relations, and even the chronological order within the dynasty, of kings or groups of kings) assumed by us in our earlier book on the basis of the PurANas, or on the basis of second-hand information (culled, for example, from P.L. Bhargava's book) undergoes a thorough revision in this book when we examine in detail the actual data within the Rigveda. The vast canvas covered by the PurANas is of course to be replaced by the smaller one covered by the Rigveda.

But, far from contradicting or disproving the theory put forward by us in our earlier book, this detailed analysis of the Rigveda emphatically confirms our theory.

In fact, while confirming our theory that India was the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages, our analysis takes us even further ahead in respect of two basic points: the habitat

of the Vedic Aryans, and their historical identity.

As per our theory, the Vedic Aryans had migrated from east to west. In our earlier book, we had assumed (based on second-hand information) that the Vedic Aryans, during the period of the Rigveda, were inhabitants of the Punjab area identified by scholars as the Saptasindhu. However, the actual data in the Rigveda shows that they were in fact inhabitants of the area to the east of the Punjab, traditionally known as Aryavarta. The Punjab was only the western peripheral area of their activity.

Again, as per our theory, the Vedic Aryans were the PUs of traditional history. While confirming this, the actual data in the Rigveda narrows down the identity of the particular Vedic Aryans of the Rigvedic period to a section from among the PUs - the Bharatas.

This book is, therefore, an answer to criticism: it shows that a detailed analysis of the Rigveda, far from weakening our theory, only makes it invincible.

**2.** The Rigveda is the oldest and most important source-material for Indian, Indo-Aryan, and even Indo-European history.

This source-material has, however, been totally and hopelessly misinterpreted by the scholars.

The Rigveda is not a text newly discovered lying on an uninhabited island. It is a text which has been part of a hoary and widespread living tradition thousands of years old. The entire text was kept alive over this long period, almost without a change of a tone or a syllable, in oral form recited and memorised from generation to generation. A text which has remained alive in this manner, as part of a living tradition, cannot be analysed without reference to what that tradition has to say about it.

However, modern scholars have chosen to interpret the Rigveda in its historical context solely on the basis of an extraneous linguistic theory, bolstered by stray words hunted out of the Rigveda and interpreted out of context, and totally without reference to certain indispensable and unassailable traditional information contained in certain basic texts.

Most fundamental among such texts are the AnukramaNIs or Indices, which provide us with details such as the names and family affiliations of the composers of the hymns. Other texts, such as the PurANas, provide us with general information about the different families of RSis and the dynasties of kings who lived and ruled in ancient India.

This book is, therefore, an attempt to take Rigvedic study, in its historical context, back onto the tracks by basing its analysis on the basic materials: i.e. on the hymns and their authors.

**3.** The Rigveda is not only a historical source-material. It is also the oldest and hoariest religious text of the oldest living religion in the world today: Hinduism.

The politics surrounding the whole question of the Aryan invasion theory in India has been discussed in our earlier book (Voice of India edition).

This politics has been taken to the international level by vested political interests, with the backing of powerful international church lobbies, which are trying to get the United Nations to declare the tribal population of India (who, within India, are already labelled with a politically loaded word, *AdivAsI*) as the “Original Inhabitants of India” on par with the Native Americans, the Maoris and the Australian Aborigines in their respective countries.<sup>1</sup>

This is on the basis of the Aryan invasion theory

according to which “Aryans” invaded India in the early second millennium BC, and conquered it from the “natives”. This theory is based purely on an eighteenth century linguistic proposition, and has no basis either in archaeology, or in literature, or in the racial-ethnic composition of India.

What concerns us more, so far as this present volume is concerned, is the attempt to brand Hindu religious texts, on the basis of this theory, as “invader” texts: a UNESCO publication characterises the Rigveda as “the epic of the destruction of one of the great cultures of the ancient world.”<sup>2</sup>

The purpose of this present volume is to present a detailed historical analysis of the Rigveda. But before turning to the Rigveda, it will be instructive to throw a glance at another religious text, the Bible - a text which very definitely and emphatically is the epic of the destruction of one of the great cultures of the ancient world.

The Bible, in its earlier parts, narrates the historical saga of the ancient Jews who marched from Egypt to Palestine, and, on the strength of “God” having “promised” them this land-in a dream to an ancestor, completely destroyed the local civilizations, wiped out or enslaved the local populations, and established their own nation on the conquered land.

The Bible gives details of the specific instructions given by “God” to the Jews in respect of both lands “promised” to them as well as lands *not* “promised” to them. It also notes his warning that Jews failing to comply with his instructions would face the brunt of his divine wrath.

As detailed in this Epic of Destruction, the Jews conquered and destroyed Palestine. On the basis of this same Epic, or Manual of Destruction, latter-day Christianity and Islam (whose “Gods” promised them not just Palestine but the whole world) conquered and destroyed ancient cultures all over the world.

A glance at some of the relevant quotations from this Epic of Destruction proves instructive:

“And the Lord said to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan at Jericho: ‘Say to the people of Israel, when you pass over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their molten images, and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and settle in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it’.....” (Numbers 33.50-53).

“But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those of them whom you let remain shall be as pricks in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall trouble you in the land where you dwell. And I will do to you as I thought to do to them’...” (Numbers 34.55-56).

“And when the Lord your God brings you into the land which he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and cisterns hewn out which you did not hew, and vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and when you eat and are full...” (Deuteronomy 6.10-11).

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land which you are entering to take possession of it, and clear away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than yourselves, and when the Lord gives them over to you, and you defeat them, then you must utterly destroy them, you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them.” (Deuteronomy 7.1-2).

“When you draw near to a city to fight against it, offer terms of peace to it. And if its answer to you

is peace, and it opens to you then all the people who are found in it shall do forced labour for you and shall serve you. But if it makes no peace with you but makes war against you, then you shall besiege it; and when the Lord your God gives it into your hand you shall put all its males to the sword, but the women and the little ones, the cattle and everything else in the city, all its spoil, you shall take as booty for yourselves; and you shall enjoy the spoil of your enemies, which the Lord your God has given you. *Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not cities of the nations here.* But in the cities of these peoples that the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance, you shall save alive nothing that breathes but shall utterly destroy them, the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, as your Lord the God has commanded” (Deuteronomy 20.10-17).

“And the Lord our God gave him over to us, and we defeated him and his sons and all his people. And we captured all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed every city, men, women and children; we left none remaining; only the cattle we took as spoil for ourselves, with the booty of the cities which we captured” (Deuteronomy 2.33-35).

“And we took all his cities at that time - there was not a city which we did not take from them - sixty cities, the whole region of Argob, the kingdom of Og in Bachan. All these were cities fortified with high walls, gates and bars, besides very many unwallled villages. And we utterly destroyed them, as we did to Sihon the king of Heshbon, destroying every city, men, women and children. But all the cattle and the spoil of the cities we took as our booty” (Deuteronomy 3.4-7).

The invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda is clearly an attempt to foist this ethos of the Bible onto the Rigveda.

This book is, therefore, an attempt to counter the

false picture of the Rigveda which has been given currency all over the world.

All said and done, this book is an expedition into the mists of time. According to Swami Vivekananda: "It is out of the past that the future has to be moulded; it is the past that becomes the future. Therefore the more the Indians study their past, the more glorious will be their future, and whoever tries to bring the past to the door of everyone is a benefactor of the nation."

This book is also a tribute to all those scholars who have served, and are still serving, as benefactors of the nation, foremost among them being the Voice of India family of scholars who will ever remain the intellectual focal point for exercises in rejuvenation of the innermost spirit of India.

### **The System of Rigvedic References**

**A.** The method of referring to hymns and verses in the Rigveda, adopted in this book, is as follows:

**1.** The full stop (.) separates the MaNDala number (in Roman) from the hymn number and the verse number.

**2(a).** The semi-colon (;) separates the MaNDala from each other when *only MaNDala and hymns are being referred to*.

(b). It also separates sections of hymns within a MaNDala from each other *when verses are also being referred to*.

**3(a).** The comma (,) separates the hymns from each other *when only MaNDala and hymns are being referred to*.

(b). It also separates sections of verses from each other *when verses are also being referred to*.

Thus:

I.2 = MaNDala I, hymn 2.

I.2, 4 = MaNDala I, hymns 2 and 4.

I.2-4 = MaNDala I, hymns 2 to 4.

I.2.1 = MaNDala I, hymn 2, verse 1.

I.2.1,3 = MaNDala I, hymn 2, verses 1 and 3.

I.2.1-3 = MaNDala I, hymn 2, verses 1 to 3.

I.2, 4-6; II.3-5,7 = MaNDala I, hymns 2, and 4 to 6; MaNDala II hymns 3 to 5, and 7.

I.2.1-3; 4.1,5; 5.6 = MaNDala I, hymn 2, verses 1 to 3; hymn 4, verses 1 and 5; hymn 5, verse 6.

I.2.1-3, 5-7 = MaNDala 1, hymn 2, verses 1 to 3 and 5 to 7.

I.2.1-3; 5-7 = MaNDala 1, hymn 2, verses 1 to 3; hymns 5 to 7.

**B.** Translations quoted in this book will be as per Griffith, *except where specifically stated otherwise*.

However, readers cross-checking with Griffith's book will run into certain difficulties in respect of Man ala VIII.

MaNDala VIII contains 103 hymns. Of these, *eleven hymns*, known as the VAlakhilya hymns, are known to be late additions into the MaNDala. However, they are placed in the middle of the MaNDala in any traditional text (and in most Western translations including that of Max Müller). But Griffith places them at the end of the MaNDala, and *he also changes the traditional numbering of the hymns that follow*.

We will be following the traditional numbering, even while we quote Griffith's translation. Thus, when we quote Griffith's translation of VIII.62.3,



this will appear in Griffith's book as VIII.51.3.

The following ready-reckoner will help in locating the hymns in Griffith's translation of MaNDala VIII:

<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Griffith</i>	<i>Traditinal</i>	<i>Griffith</i>	<i>Traditional</i>	<i>Griffith</i>
1-48	1-48	68	57	88	77
49	VAlakhilya 1	69	58	89	78
50	VAlakhilya 2	70	59	90	79
51	VAlakhilya 3	71	60	91	80
52	VAlakhilya 4	72	61	92	81
53	VAlakhilya 5	73	62	93	82
54	VAlakhilya 6	74	63	94	83
55	VAlakhilya 7	75	64	95	84
56	VAlakhilya 8	76	65	96	85
57	VAlakhilya 9	77	66	97	86
58	VAlakhilya 10	78	67	98	87
59	VAlakhilya 11	79	68	99	88
60	49	80	69	100	89
61	50	81	70	101	90
62	51	82	71	102	91
63	52	83	72	103	92
64	53	84	73		<i>key</i>
65	54	85	74	1-48	1-48
66	55	86	75	49-59	VAlakhilya 1- 11
67	56	87	76	60-103	49-92 (i.e. Minus 11)

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>II, pp. 164-261.

<sup>2</sup>HM, p.389.

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## Chapter 1

### The AnukramaNIs

The AnukramaNIs or Indices of the Rigveda provide us with the most basic information about each of the 1028 hymns of the Rigveda:

- a. The RSi or composer of each hymn or verse.
- b. The DevatA or deity of each hymn or verse.
- c. The Chhanda or metre of each hymn or verse.

For the purpose of our historical analysis of the Rigveda, we will be concerned only with the index which deals with the most undeniably historical aspect of the Rigveda: the index of RSis which provides us with details about the living and breathing historical personalities who composed the hymns.

The Rigveda consists of 10 MaNDala or Books, which contain 1028 sUktas or hymns, consisting of 10552 mantras or verses as follows:

<b>MaNDala N</b>	<b>No. of Hymns</b>	<b>No. of verses</b>
I	191	2006
II	43	429
III	62	617
IV	58	589
V	87	727
VI	75	765
VII	104	841
VIII	103	1716
IX	114	1108
X	191	1754
Total	1028	10552

The AnukramaNIs give us details, regarding these hymns, which are *so basic and indispensable* that it is *inconceivable* that any serious scholar could consider it possible to analyse the hymns *without* taking the AnukramaNIs as the very basis for his analysis.

But, ironically, not only are the AnukramaNIs generally ignored by the scholars, but this ignorance of, and indifference to, the details contained in the AnukramaNIs is even flaunted by them.

Consider the following statements by eminent scholars who consider themselves qualified to make pronouncements on Rigvedic history:

B.K. Ghosh: “The first MaNDala falls naturally into two parts: the first fifty hymns have the KaNvas as authors like the eighth MaNDala...”.<sup>1</sup>

Actual fact: I.1-11, 24-30 (eighteen hymns) are by ViSvAmitras.

I.31-35 (five hymns) are by ANgirasas

I.12-23, 36-50 (twenty-seven hymns) are by KaNvas

DD Kosambi: “The principal Vedic god is Agni, the god of fire; more hymns are dedicated to him than to any other. Next in importance comes Indra.”<sup>2</sup>

Actual fact: The ratio between the number of hymns and verses to the two gods, by any count, is Indra: Agni = 3:2.

The flippant attitude of these scholars towards factual details, when it comes to Rigvedic studies, is underlined by the nature of Kosambi’s error: he misinterprets the fact that hymns to Agni are generally *placed before* hymns to Indra, to mean that there are more hymns to Agni than to Indra!

Maurice Bloomfield, in his invaluable work on Rigvedic Repetitions (i.e. verses, verse-sections or phrases, which occur more than once in the Rigveda) claims that these repetitions prove the falsity or dubiousness of the information contained in the AnukramaNIs:

Under the title “Untrustworthiness of AnukramaNI-statements Shown by the Repetitions”, Bloomfield remarks that “the statements of the SarvAnukramaNI .... betray the dubiousness of their authority in no particular more than in relation to the repetitions .... the AnukramaNI finds it in its heart to assign, with unruffled insouciance, one and the same verse to two or more authors, or to ascribe it to two or more divinities, according as it occurs in one book or another, in one connexion or another. The April stanzas 3.4.8-11 = 7.2.8-11 are ascribed in the third book to ViSvAmitra GAthina, in the seventh book to VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI.”<sup>3</sup>

However:

1. The repetitions do *not* disprove the authenticity of the AnukramaNIs:

a. The repetitions in the Rigveda are representative of a regular phenomenon in Classical and liturgical literature throughout the world. Consider for example what Gilbert Murray says about similar repetitions in Greek literature: “descriptive phrases..... are caught up ready made from a store of such things: perpetual epithets, front halves of lines, back halves of lines, whole lines, if need be, and long formulae. The stores of the poets were full and brimming. A bard need only put in his hand and choose out a well-sounding phrase. Even the similes are ready-made.”<sup>4</sup> Quoting this, B.K. Ghosh notes: “All this may be maintained,

*mutatis mutandis*, also of Rigvedic poetry.”<sup>5</sup>

In the case of the Rigveda it is significant that *every single* repetition pertains to a literary or liturgical phrase. In fact, the more literary or liturgical the reference, the more the likelihood of repetitions: the longest repetition of three consecutive verses is in the liturgical Aprl-sUktas of the ViSvAmitras and VasiSThas: III.4.8-11 = VII.2.8-11.

*Not a single* repetition pertains to any historical reference: even when the same historical reference is found in four different verses, the phrasing is different: I.53.10; II.14.7; VI.18.13; VIII. 53.2.

Therefore, regardless of the number of verses or verse-sections common to any two hymns ascribed to two different RSis, the hymns in question have to be regarded as compositions of the two RSis to whom they are ascribed: that one RSi has borrowed from the composition of the other is no criterion in judging the correctness of the AnukramaNIs.

**b.** The Aprl-sUktas of the ViSvAmitras and VasiSThas contain the longest repetitions, of three verses, in common: III.4.8-11 = VII. 2.8-11. Bloomfield points to these particular repetitions as evidence in support of his contention that the repetitions disprove the correctness of the AnukramaNIs. But, ironically, it is these very repetitions which disprove the correctness of his *contention*.

The composers of the Rigveda were members of ten priestly families, and each family had its own Aprl-sUkta composed by a member of the family. In later times, during the performance of any sacrifice, at the point where an Aprl-sUkta was to

be recited, the conducting RSi was required to recite the Aprl-sUkta of his own family.

The Aprl-sUkta of the ViSvAmitras was therefore undoubtedly composed by a ViSvAmitra, and that of the VasiSThas by a VasiSTha. If these two hymns contain repetitions in common, it constitutes the ultimate proof that repetitions in common are no evidence of two hymns *not* having been composed by two different RSis.

**2.** There is no logical reason to doubt the authenticity of the authorship ascriptions in the AnukramaNIs, which are corroborated by:

**a.** The very existence of the AnukramaNIs as a part and parcel of the Rigvedic text from the most ancient times.

**b.** The very division of the Rigveda into MaNDala, many of which are family MaNDala.

**c.** The uniformity of style in hymns ascribed to single RSis or families (eg. Parucchepa).

**d.** The common refrains occurring in the concluding verses of hymns ascribed to certain RSis or families (eg. Kutsa).

**e.** The common contexts in hymns ascribed to certain RSis or families (eg. the repeated references to SudAs in hymns by VasiSThas).

**f.** Specific statements within the hymns, where the composers refer to themselves by name.

**g.** Most important of all, the perfectly logical way in which an analysis of the historical references in the hymns, as we shall demonstrate in this book, produces a pattern of historical correspondences and inter-relationships which fits in perfectly with the ascriptions in the AnukramaNIs.

With this, we may now turn to the actual details

given in the AnukramaNIs regarding the names of the composers of the different hymns in the Rigveda:

### **MaNDala I (191 hymns)**

1-10	Madhucchandas VaiSvAmitra
11	JetA MAdhucchandas
12-23	MedhAtithi KANva
24-30	SunahSepa Ajlgarti later DevarAta
31-35	VaiSvAmitra
36-43	HiraNyastUpa ANgiras
44-50	KaNva Ghaura
51-57	PraskaNva KANva
58-64	Savya ANgiras
65-73	NodhAs Gautama
74-93	ParASara sAktya
94-98	Gotama RAhUgaNa
99	Kutsa ANgiras
100	KaSyapa MArlca
101-115	RjrASva VArSAgira
116-126	Kutsa ANgiras
127-139	KakSlvAn Dairghatamas
140-164	ParucchePa DaivodAsI
165-191	Dlrghatamas Aucathya
	Agastya MaitrAvaruNI

### **MaNDala II (43 hymns)**

	GRtsamada Saunahotra, <i>later</i> GRtsamada
1-3	Saunaka
4-7	SomAhuti BhArgava
8-26	GRtsamada Saunahotra, <i>later</i> GRtsamada
27-29	Saunaka
30-43	KURma GARtsamada
	GRtsamada Saunahotra, <i>later</i> GRtsamada
	Saunaka

### **MaNDala III (62 hymns)**



- 1-12 ViSvAmitra GAthina
- 13-14 RSabha VaiSvAmitra
- 15-16 Utklla KAtya
- 17-18 Kata VaiSvAmitra
- 19-22 GAthina KauSika.
- 23-35 VaiSvAmitra GAthina
- 36 VaiSvAmitra GAthina, Ghora ANgiras
- 37 VaiSvAmitra GAthina
- 38 VaiSvAmitra GAthina, Prajapati
- 39-53 VaiSvAmitra/VAcya
- 54-56 VaiSvAmitra GAthina
- 57-61 Prajapati VaiSvAmitra /VAcya
- 62 VaiSvAmitra GAthina
- VaiSvAmitra GAthina, Jamadagni BhArgava

#### **MaNDala IV (58 hymns)**

- 1-42 VAmadeva Gautama
- 43-44 PurumILha Sauhotra, AjamILha Sauhotra
- 45-58 VAmadeva Gautama

#### **MaNDala V (87 hymns)**

- 1
- 2 Budha/ GaviSThira Atreya
- 3-6 KumAra/VRSa JAna Atreya
- 7-8 VasuSruta Atreya
- 9-10 ISa Atreya
- 11-14 Gaya Atreya
- 15 Sutambhara Atreya
- 16-17 DharuNa ANgiras
- 18 PUru Atreya
- 19 Dvita Atreya
- 20 Vavri Atreya
- 21 Prayasvanta Atreya
- 22 Sasa Atreya
- 23 ViSvasAman Atreya
- 24 Dyumna ViSvacarSaNI Atreya
- Bandhu, Subandhu, Srutabandhu,
- 25-26 Viprabandhu (GaupAyanas)
- 27 VasUyava Atreya
- 28 Atri Bhauma
- 29 ViSvavArA Atreya
- 30 Gaurivlti SAKtya
- Babhru Atreya

- 31 Avasyu Atreya  
 32 GAtu Atreya  
 33-34 SamvaraNa PrAjApatya  
 35-36 PrabhUvasu ANgiras  
 37-43 Atri Bhauma  
 44 AvatsAra KASyapa, various Atreyas  
 45 SadApRNa Atreya  
 46 PratikSatra Atreya  
 47 Pratiratha Atreya  
 48 PratibhAnu Atreya  
 49 Pratiprabha Atreya  
 50-51 Svasti Atreya  
 52-61 SyAvASva Atreya  
 62 Srutavida Atreya  
 63-64 ArcanAnas Atreya  
 65-66 RAtahavya Atreya  
 67-68 Yajata Atreya  
 69-70 Urucakri Atreya  
 71-72 BAhuvRkta Atreya  
 73-74 Paura Atreya  
 75 Avasyu Atreya  
 76-77 Atri Bhauma  
 78 Saptavadhri Atreya  
 79-80 SatyaSravas Atreya  
 81-82 SyAvASva Atreya  
 83-86 Atri Bhauma  
 87 EvayAmarut Atreya

### **MaNDala VI (75 hymns)**

- 1-30 BharadvAja BArhaspatya  
 31-32 Suhotra BharadvAja  
 33-34 Sunahotra BharadvAja  
 35-36 Nara BharadvAja  
 37-43 BharadvAja BArhaspatya  
 44-46 Samyu BArhaspatya  
 47 Garga BharadvAja  
 48 Samyu BArhaspatya  
 49-52 RjiSvan BhAradvAja  
 53-74 BharadvAja BArhaspatya  
 75 PAyu BharadvAja

### **MaNDala VII (104 hymns)**

- 1-31 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI  
32 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI Sakti VAsiSTha  
33-100 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI  
101-102 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI, Kumara Agneya  
103-104 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI

### **MaNDala VIII (103 hymns)**

- 1 PragAtha KANva, MedhAtithi KANva,  
2 MedhyAtithi KANva  
3 MedhAtithi KANva, Priyamedha ANgiras  
4 MedhyAtithi KANva  
5 DevAtithi KANva  
6 BrahmAtithi KANva  
7 Vatsa KANva  
8 Punarvatsa KANva  
9 Sadhvamsa KANva  
10 SaSakarNa KANva  
11 PragAtha KANva  
12 Vatsa KANva  
13 Parvata KANva  
14-15 NARada KANva  
16-18 GoSUktin KANva, ASvasUktin KANva  
19-22 IrimbiTha KANva  
23-25 Sobhari KANva  
26 ViSvamanas VaiyaSva  
27-31 ViSvamanas VaiyaSva, VyaSva ANgiras  
32 Manu Vaivasvata or KaSyapa MARlca  
33 MedhAtithi KANva  
34 MedhyAtithi KANva  
35-38 NIpAtithi KANva  
39-41 SyAvASva Atreya  
42 NAbhAka KANva  
43-44 NAbhAka KANva, ArcanAnas Atreya  
45 VirUpa ANgiras  
46 TriSoka KANva  
47 VaSa ASvya  
48 Trita Aptya  
49 PragAtha KANva  
50 PraskaNva KANva  
51 PuSTigu KANva  
52 SruSTigu KANva  
53 Ayu KANva

- 54 Medhya KANva  
55 MAtariSvan KANva  
56 KRSa KANva  
57-58 PRSadhra KANva  
59 Medhya KANva  
60-61 SuparNa KANva  
62-65 Bharga PrAgAtha  
66 PrAgAtha KANva  
67 Kali PrAgAtha  
68-69 Matsya SAMmada or MAnyA MaitrAvaruNI  
70 riyamedha ANgiras  
71 Puruhanman ANgiras  
72 Sudlti PurumILha  
73-74 Haryata PrAgAtha  
75 Gopavana Atreya  
76-78 VirUpa ANgiras  
79 Kurusuti KANva  
80 KRtnu BhArgava  
81-83 Ekadyu NaudhAsa  
84 usIdin KANva  
85 USanA KAvya,  
86 KRSna ANgiras  
87 KRSna ANgiras, ViSvaka KARsNI  
KRSna ANgiras, DyumnIka VAsiSTha,  
88 Priyamedha ANgiras  
89-90 NodhAs Gautama  
91 NRmedha ANgiras, Purumedha ANgiras  
92-93 ApAIA Atreyl  
94 SukakSa ANgiras  
95-96 Vindu ANgiras, PUtadakSa ANgiras  
97 TiraScl ANgiras  
98-99 Rebha KASyapa  
100 NRmedha ANgiras  
101 Nema BhArgava  
102 Jamadagni BhArgava  
103 Prayoga BhArgava, Agni BArhaspatya  
Sobhari KANva

**MaNDala IX (114 hymns)**

Madhucchandas VaiSvAmitra  
1 MedhAtithi KANva  
2 SunahSepa Ajlgarti  
3 HiraNyastUpa ANgiras  
4 Asita KASyapa, Devala KASyapa  
5-24 DRLhacyuta Agastya  
25 IdhmavAha DArLhacyuta  
26 NRmedha ANgiras  
27 Priyamedha ANgiras  
28 NRmedha ANgiras  
29 Bindu ANgiras  
30 Gotama RAhUgaNa  
31 SyAvASva Atreya  
32 Trita Aptya  
33-34 PrabhUvasu ANgiras  
35-36 RahUgaNa ANgiras  
37-38 BRhanmati ANgiras  
39-40 MedhAtithi KANva  
41-43 AyAsya ANgiras  
44-46 Kavi BhArgava  
47-49 Ucathya ANgiras  
50-52 AvatsAra KASyapa  
53-60 Amahlyu ANgiras  
61 Jamadagni BhArgava  
62 Nidhruvi KASyapa  
63 KaSyapa MARlca  
64 Jamadagni BhArgava  
65 Sata VaikhAnasa  
66 SaptaRSis, Pavitra ANgiras  
67 Vatsapri BhAlandana  
68 HiraNyastUpa ANgiras  
69 ReNu VaiSvAmitra  
70 RSabha VaiSvAmitra  
71 Harimanta ANgiras  
72 Pavitra ANgiras  
73 KakSlvAn Dairghatamas  
74 avi BhArgava  
75-79 asu BhAradvAja  
80-82 Pavitra ANgiras  
83 PrajApati VAcya  
84 Vena BhArgava  
85 Atri Bhauma, GRtsamada Saunaka,  
86 AkRSTa MASA, Sikata NivAvarl, PRSni  
Aja

- 87-89 USanA KAvya  
 90 VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI  
 91-92 KaSyapa MArlca  
 93 NodhAs Gautama  
 94 KaNva Ghaura  
 95 PraskaNva KANva  
 96 Pratardana DaivodAsI  
 97 VasiSTha MaitrAvarunI, Indrapramati  
 VAsiSTha, VRSagaNa VAsiSTha, Manyu  
 VAsiSTha, Upamanyu VAsiSTha,  
 VyAghrapAda VAsiSTha, Sakti VAsiSTha,  
 KarNaSrut VAsiSTha, MRLIka VAsiSTha,  
 Vsukra VAsiSTha, ParASara SAKtya,  
 Kutsa ANgiras.  
 98 AmbarISa VArSAGira, RjiSvan ANgiras  
 RebhAsUnu KASyapas  
 99-100 AndhIgu SyAvASvI, YayAtl NAhuSa,  
 101 NahuSa  
 MANava, Manu SamvaraNa, PrajApati  
 VaiSvAmitra.  
 102 Trita Aptya  
 103 Dvita Aptya  
 104-105 Parvata KANva, NArada KANva  
 106 Agni CakSuSa, CakSu MANava, Manu  
 107 Apsava  
 108 SaptaRSis  
 GaurIvlti SAKtya, Sakti VAsiSTha, Uru  
 109 ANgiras,  
 110 RjiSvan BhAradvAja  
 111 Agni DhISNya AiSvaraya  
 112 TryaruNa TraivRSNa, Trasadasyu  
 113-114 Paurukutsa  
 AnAnata PARucchePi  
 SiSu ANgiras  
 KaSyapa MArlca

### **MaNDala X (191 hymns)**

- 1-7
- 8 Trita Aptya
- 9 TriSirAs TvASTra
- 10 TriSirAs TvASTra, SindhudvIpa AmbarISa
- 11-12 Yama Vaivasvata, YamI VaivasvatI
- 13 HavirdhAna ANgi
- 14 VivasvAn Aditya
- 15 Yama Vaivasvata
- 16 Sankha YAmAyana
- 17 Damana YAmAyana
- 18 DevaSravas YAmAyana
- 19 Sankusuka YAmAyana  
Matitha YAmAyana, or BhRgu, or Cyavana
- 20-26 BhArgava
- 27-29 Vimada Aindra, VasukRt VAsukra
- 30-34 Vasukra Aindra
- 35-36 KavaSa AilUSa
- 37 LuSa DhAnaka
- 38 AbhitApa Saurya
- 39-40 Indra MuSkavAn
- 41 GhoSA KAKSlvatI
- 42-44 Suhastya GhauSeya
- 45-46 KRSNa Angiras
- 47 Vatsapri BhAlandana
- 48-50 Saptagu ANgiras
- 51-53 Indra VaikuNTha
- 54-56 Agni Saucika
- 57-60 BRhaduktha VAmadevya  
Bandhu, Subandhu, Srutabandhu,
- 61-62 Viprabandhu (GaupAyanas)
- 63-64 NAbhAnediSTha MAnava
- 65-66 Gaya PIAta
- 67-68 VasukarNa VAsukra
- 69-70 AyAsya ANgiras
- 71-72 Sumitra VAdhryaSva
- 73-74 BRhaspati ANgiras
- 75 Gaurivlti SAKtya
- 76 SindhukSit Praiyamedha
- 77-78 JaratkarNa Sarpa AirAvata
- 79-80 SyUmaraSmi BhArgava
- 81-82 Agni SaucIka or Sapti VAjambhara
- 83-84 ViSvakarmA Bhauvana
- 85 Manyu TApasa
- 86 SUryA SAVitri

- 87 VRSAkapi Aindra, Indra, IndrANI
- 88 PAyu BhAradvAja
- 89 MURdhanvAn VAmadevya
- 90 ReNu VaiSvAmitra
- 91 NArAyaNa
- 92 AruNa Vaitahavya
- 93 SAryAta MAnava
- 94 TAnva PArthya
- 95 Arbuda KAdraveya Sarpa
- 96 PurUravas AiLa, UrvaSI
- 97 Baru ANgiras, Sarvahari Aindra
- 98 BhiSag AtharvaNa
- 99 DevApi ArSTiSeNa
- 100 Vamra VaikhAnasa
- 101 Duvasyu VAndana
- 102 Budha Saumya
- 103 Mudgala BhArmyaSva
- 104 Apratiratha Aindra
- 105 ASTaka VaiSvAmitra
- 106 Sumitra Kautsa, Durmitra Kautsa
- 107 BhUtAMSa KASyapa
- 108 Divya ANgiras, DakSiNA PrAjApatya
- 109 SaramA, PaNis
- 110 JuhU BrahmajAyA
- 111 RAma JAmadagnya, Jamadagni BhArgava
- 112 ASTAdaMSTra VairUpa
- 113 Nabhahprabhedana VairUpa
- 114 Sataprabhedana VairUpa
- 115 Sadhri VairUpa
- 116 Upastuta VArSTihavya
- 117 Agniyuta Sthaura
- 118 BhikSu ANgiras
- 119 UrukSaya ANgiras
- 120 Laba Aindra
- 121 BRhaddiva AtharvaNa
- 122 HiraNyagarbha PrAjApatya
- 123 CitramahA VAsiSTha
- 124 Vena BhArgava
- 125 Agni, VaruNa, Soma
- 126 VAK AmbhRNI
- 127 AMhomuk VAmadevya
- 128 KuSika Saubhara, RAtrI BhAradvAjI
- 129 Vihavya ANgiras
- 130 PrajApati ParameSThin



- 131 Yajña PrAjApatya
- 132 SukIrta KAKSIvata
- 133 SakapUta NARmedha
- 134 SudAs Paijavana
- 135 MAndhAtA YauvanASva
- 136 KumAra YAmAyana  
JUti, VAtajUti, ViprajUti, VRSAkana,
- 137 Karikrata, EtaSa, RSyaSRnga
- 138 (VAtaraSanas)
- 139 SaptaRSis
- 140 ANga Aurava
- 141 ViSvavAsu Devagandharva
- 142 Agni, PAvaka  
Agni TRpasa
- 143 SARnga, JaritR, DroNa, SARisRkva,
- 144 Stambhamitra
- 145 Atri SANKhya
- 146 Urdhvasadman YAmAyana
- 147 IndrANI
- 148 DevamunI Airammada
- 149 Suvedas SairISI
- 150 PRthu Vainya
- 151 Arcan HairaNyastUpa
- 152 MRLIka VAsiSTha
- 153 SraddhA KAmAyanI
- 154 SAsa BhAradvAja
- 155 IndramAtara DevajAmaya
- 156 YamI VaivasvatI
- 157 SirimbiTha BhAradvAja
- 158 Ketu Agneya
- 159 Bhuvana Aptya, SAdhana Aptya
- 160 CakSu Saurya
- 161 Sacl PaulomI
- 162 PUraNa VaiSvAmitra
- 163 YakSmanASana PrAjApatya
- 164 RakSohA BrAhma
- 165 VivRhA KASyapa
- 166 Pracetas ANgiras
- 167 Kapota NairRta
- 168 RSabha VairAja SAKvara
- 169 ViSvAmitra, Jamadagni
- 170 Anila VAtAyana
- 171 Sabara KAKSIvata
- 172 VibhrAt Saurya

- 173 ITa BhArgava  
 174 SaMvarta ANgiras  
 175 Dhruva ANgiras  
 176 Abhlvarta ANgiras  
 177 UrdhvagrAvA Arbuda  
 178 SUnu Arbhava  
 179 PataNga PrAjApatya  
 AriSTanemi TArkSya  
 180 Sibi AuSInara, Prataardana KASirAja,  
 181 Vasumanas RauhidaSva  
 Jaya Aindra  
 182 Pratha VAsiSTha, Sapratha BhAradvAja,  
 183 Gharma Saurya  
 184 TapurmUrdhan BARhaspatya  
 185 PrajAvAn PrAjApatya  
 186 ViSNu PrAjApatya  
 187 SatyadhRti VARuNi  
 188 Ula VAtAyana  
 189 Vatsa Agneya  
 190 Syena Agneya  
 191 SARparAjñi  
 AghamarSaNa MAdhucchandasa  
 SaMvanana ANgiras

There are obviously corruptions in the AnukramaNIs in the form of ascriptions to fictitious composers. This is particularly the case in MaNDala X, where a large number of hymns are ascribed to composers whose names, or patronyms/epithets, or both, are fictitious.

However, in the first eight MaNDala, except in the case of one single hymn (VIII.47), it is very easy to identify the actual composer (by which we mean the RSi who actually composed the hymn, or his eponymous ancestor to whose name the hymn is to be credited as per the system followed in the particular MaNDala) of a hymn ascribed to a fictitious composer.

Hence, in our listing of the composers of the first eight MaNDalas, we have replaced the fictitious names in the AnukramaNIs with the names of the actual composers, whose identity is clear from those same AnukramaNIs.

In all these cases, the actual composer is the RSi of the hymn or the RSi of the MaNDala. The hymns in question are:

(1) Hymns where the entire hymn, or verses therein, are ascribed solely (in III.23 and IV.42) or alternatively (in the others) to RSis or kings who are referred to within the hymns by the actual composer:

<b>Hymn</b>	<b>Fictitious Composers</b>	<b>Actual Composer</b>
I.100	AmbarISa, Sahadeva, BhayamAna, SurAdhas	RjrASva
I.105	Trita Aptya	Kutsa
I.126	BhAvayavya, RomaSA	KakSIvAn
III.23	DevaSravas, DevavAta	ViSvAmitra
IV.42	Trasadasyu Paurukutsa	VAmadeva
V.27	Trasadasyu, TryaruNa, ASvamedha	Atri
VI.15	VItahavya	BharadvAja
VIII.1	AsaNga, SaSvatI	MedhAtithi
VIII.34	Vasurocis	NlpAtithi

(2) Dialogue hymns, in some of which verses are ascribed to Gods and even rivers:

<b>Hymn</b>	<b>Fictitious Composers</b>	<b>Actual Composer</b>
I.165	Indra, Maruts, (epon.) Agastya	Agastya
I.170	Indra, (epon.) Agastya	Agastya
I.179	(epon.) Agastya, LopAmudrA, a pupil	Agastya
III.33	(epon.) ViSvAmitra, Rivers	ViSvAmitra
IV.18	(epon.) VAmadeva, Indra, Aditi	ViSvAmitra

(3) Hymns which are ascribed alternatively to the actual composers and to their remote ancestors:

<b>Hymn</b>	<b>Fictitious Composers</b>	<b>Actual Composer</b>
III.31	KuSika AiSIrathI	ViSvAmitra GAthina

VIII.27-31

Manu Vaivasvata

KaSyapa  
MArIca

VIII.71

PurumILha ANgiras

Sudlti  
PurumILha

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>HCIP, p.232.

<sup>2</sup>CCAIHO, p.78.

<sup>3</sup>RR, Volume. II, p.634.

<sup>4</sup>RGE, p.258.

<sup>5</sup>HCIP, p.353.

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## Chapter 2

### The Composers of the Rigveda

The composers of the Rigveda are divided into ten families. These ten families are identified on the basis of the fact that each family has its own AprI-sUkta.

An AprI-sUkta is a particular type of ritual hymn “consisting of invocations to a series of deified objects, and said to be introductory to the animal sacrifice”.<sup>1</sup>

The ten AprI-sUktas, and the ten families of composers to whom they belong, are:

1. I.13 KaNvas (Kevala-ANgirasas)
2. I.142 ANgirasas
3. I.188 Agastyas
4. II.3 GRtsamadas (Kevala-BhRgus)
5. III.4 ViSvAmitras
6. V.5 Atris
7. VII.2 VasiSThas
8. IX.5 KaSyapas
9. X.70 Bharatas
10. X.110 BhRgus

In addition to hymns and verses composed by members of these ten families, we also have the two following categories of hymns and verses:

11. Those composed *jointly* by members of different families.
12. Those composed by RSis whose family identity is *unknown* or unidentifiable.

The family-wise distribution of the hymns in each MaNDala is as follows:

**MaNDala I** (191 hymns, 2006 verses)

1. *KANVAS* (27 hymns, 321 verses): 12-23, 36-50
2. *ANGIRASES* (96 hymns, 1047 verses): 31-35, 51-64, 74-98, 100-126, 140-164
3. *AGASTYAS* (27 hymns, 239 verses): 165-191
5. *VISVAMITRAS* (18 hymns, 207 verses): 1-11, 24-30
7. *VASISTHAS* (9 hymns, 91 verses): 65-73
8. *KASYAPAS* (1 hymn, 1 verse): 99
9. *BHARATAS* (13 hymns, 100 verses): 127-139

**MaNDala II** (43 hymns, 429 verses)

4. *GRTSAMADAS* (39 hymns, 398 verses): 1-3, 8-43
10. *BHRGUS* (4 hymns, 31 verses): 4-7

**MaNDala III** (62 hymns, 617 verses)

5. *VISVAMITRAS* (60 hymns, 588 verses): 1-35, 37-61
11. *JOINT* (2 hymns, 29 verses): 36, 62
  2. *ANgiras* (1 verse): 36.10
  5. *ViSvAmitras* (25 verses): 36.1-9, 11; 62.1-15
  11. *Joint ViSvAmitras and BhRgus* (3 verses): 62.16-18

**MaNDala IV** (58 hymns, 589 verses)

2. *ANGIRASES* (58 hymns, 589 verses): 1-58

**MaNDala V** (87 hymns, 727 verses)

2. *ANGIRASES* (3 hymns, 19 verses): 15, 35-36
3. *AGASTYAS* (1 hymn, 4 verses): 24
5. *VISVAMITRAS* (2 hymns, 19 verses): 33-34
6. *ATRIS* (79 hymns, 655 verses): 1-14, 16-23, 25-28, 30-32, 37-43, 45-87
7. *VASISTHAS* (1 hymn, 15 verses): 29
11. *JOINT* (1 hymn, 15 verses): 44
  6. *Atris* (1 verse) 44.13

8. *KaSyapas* (11 verses): 44.1-9, 14-15
11. *Joint Atris and KaSyapas* (3 verses):  
44.10-12

**MaNDala VI** (75 hymns, 765 verses)

2. *ANGIRASES* (75 hymns, 765 verses): 1-75

**MaNDala VII** (104 hymns, 841 verses)

7. *VASISTHAS* (102 hymns, 832 verses): 1-100,  
103-104
11. *JOINT* (2 hymns, 9 verses): 101-102
11. *Joint ANgirases and VasiSThas*  
(2 hymns, 9 verses): 101-102

**MaNDala VIII** (103 hymns, 1716 verses)

1. *KANVAS* (55 hymns, 933 verses): 1, 3-22, 32-  
34, 39-41,  
45, 48-66, 72, 76-78, 81-83, 103
2. *ANGIRASES* (25 hymns, 460 verses): 23-26,  
43-44, 46,  
68-71, 75, 80, 85-86, 88-90, 92-96, 98-99
- 3 *AGASTYAS* (1 hymn, 21 verses): 67
6. *ATRIS* (7 hymns, 88 verses): 35-38, 73-74, 91
8. *KASYAPAS* (6 hymns, 74 verses): 27-31, 97
10. *BHRGUS* (4 hymns, 46 verses): 79, 84, 100-  
101
11. *JOINT* (4 hymns, 76 verses): 2, 42, 87, 102
1. *KaNvas* (2 verses): 2.41-42
11. *Joint KaNvas and Angirases* (40 verses):  
2.1-40
- Joint KaNvas and Atris* (1 hymn, 6 verses):  
42
- Joint ANgirases and VasiSThas*  
(1 hymn, 6 verses): 87
- Joint ANgirases and BhRgus*  
(1 hymn, 22 verses): 102

**MaNDala IX** (114 hymns, 1108 verses)

1. *KANVAS* (8 hymns, 50 verses): 2, 41-43, 94-  
95,

- 104-105
2. *ANGIRASES* (30 hymns, 217 verses): 4,27-31, 35-40, 44-46, 50-52, 61, 69, 72-74, 80-83, 93, 98, 112
  3. *AGASTYAS* (2 hymns, 12 verses): 25-26
  5. *VISVAMITRAS* (5 hymns, 44 verses): 1, 3, 70-71, 84
  6. *ATRIS* (2 hymns, 16 verses): 32, 68
  7. *VASISTHAS* (1 hymn, 6 verses): 90
  8. *KASYAPAS* (36 hymns, 300 verses): 5-24, 53-60, 63-64, 91-92, 99-100, 113-114
  9. *BHARATAS* (2 hymns, 27 verses): 96, 111
  10. *BHRGUS* (14 hymns, 136 verses): 47-49, 62, 65, 75-79, 85, 87-89
  11. *JOINT* (6 hymns, 196 verses): 67, 86, 97, 101, 107-108
    2. *ANgiras*es (32 verses): 67.1-3, 7-9; 97. 45-48; 107.1, 3; 108.4-13
    4. *GRtsamadas* (3 verses): 86.46-48
    5. *ViSvAmitras* (8 verses): 67.13-15; 101.13-16; 107.5
    6. *Atris* (12 verses): 67.10-12; 86.41-45; 101.1-3; 107.4
    7. *VasiSThas* (54 verses): 67. 19-21; 97.1-44; 107.7; 108.1-3, 14-16
    8. *KaSyapas* (4 verses): 67.4-6; 107.2
    10. *BhRgus* (4 verses): 67.16-18; 107.6
    11. *Joint ANgiras*es and *VasiSThas* (11 verses): 67.22-32  
*Joint SaptaRSis* (19 verses): 107.8-26
  12. *UNKNOWN* (8 hymns, 104 verses): 33-34, 66, 102-103, 106, 109-110

**MaNDala X** (191 hymns, 1754 verses)

1. *KANVAS* (1 hymn, 9 verses): 115
2. *ANGIRASES* (58 hymns, 485 verses); 11-12, 37,



- 39-44, 47-56, 67-68, 71-72, 75, 79-80, 87-88,  
100,  
105, 111-114, 117-118, 126, 128, 131-132,  
134,  
138, 149, 152, 155-156, 158, 164, 169-170,  
172-174, 178, 182, 187-188, 191.
3. *AGASTYAS* (4 hymns, 40 verses): 57-60
5. *VISVAMITRAS* (12 hymns, 91 verses): 89-90,  
104,  
121, 129-130, 160-161, 177, 183-184, 190
6. *ATRIS* (8 hymns, 112 verses): 45-46, 61-64,  
101, 143
7. *VASISTHAS* (26 hymns, 276 verses): 20-29,  
38, 65-66,  
73-74, 83-84, 86, 95, 99, 103, 119, 122, 147,  
150, 180
8. *KASYAPAS* (3 hymns, 24 verses): 106, 136,  
163
9. *BHARATAS* (4 hymns, 42 verses): 69-70,  
102, 133
10. *BHRGUS* (24 hymns, 255 verses): 10, 13-19,  
77-78,  
91-93, 97-98, 110, 120, 123, 135, 144, 148,  
154,  
165, 171
11. *JOINT* (7 hymns, 49 verses): 96, 107, 127,  
137, 167,  
179, 181
2. *ANgirasas* (4 verses): 137.1,3; 181. 2-3
5. *ViSvAmitras* (1 verse): 137.5
6. *Atris* (1 verse): 137.4
7. *VasiSThas* (2 verses): 137.7; 181.1
8. *KaSyapas* (1 verse): 137.2
9. *Bharatas* (1 verse): 179.2
10. *BhRgus* (1 verse): 137.6
11. *Joint KaNvas and ANgirasas*  
(1 hymn, 8 verses): 127  
*Joint ANgirasas and ViSvAmitras*  
(1 hymn, 11 verses): 107  
*Joint ANgirasas and VasiSThas*  
(1 hymn, 13 verses): 96  
*Joint ViSvAmitras and BhRgus*  
(1 hymn, 4 verses): 167
12. *Unknown* (2 verses): 179.1,3
12. *UNKNOWN* (44 hymns, 371 verses): 1-9, 30-

36,  
76, 81-82, 85, 94, 108-109, 116, 124-125,  
139-142,  
145-146, 151, 153, 157, 159, 162, 166, 168,  
175-176,  
185-186, 189

### **Clarifications regarding MaNDala X**

MaNDala X is a very late MaNDala, and stands out from the other nine MaNDalas in many respects. One of these is the general ambiguity in the ascriptions of the hymns to their composers. In respect of 44 hymns, and 2 other verses, it is virtually impossible even to identify the family of the composer.

In respect of many other hymns and verses, where we have identified the family affiliations of the composers, the following clarifications are in order:

#### **Family 1: KANVAS (1 hymn)**

##### 1. *Upastuta VArSTihavya* (1 hymn): X.115

a. This RSi practically identifies himself as a KANva  
in verse 5 of the hymn.

b. Outside this hymn, three out of four references to  
Upastuta are by KaNvas (I.36.10, 17;  
VIII.5.25; 103. 8),  
and in the fourth reference, Upastuta is  
named  
along-with Kali (another KANva RSi,  
composer  
of VIII.66).

#### **Family 2: ANGIRASES (19 hymns)**

##### 1. *Indra VaikuNTha* (3 hymns): X.48-50

Saptagu ANgiras, the composer of X.47, is clearly the composer of these three hymns, which constitute a continuation of the theme in hymn 47. Hymn 47 is addressed to Indra as Indra VaikuNTha, and these three hymns, in the manner of a dialogue-hymn, constitute Indra's "reply" to Saptagu.

2. *AGNEYAS* (8 hymns): X.51-53, 79-80, 156, 187-188

*Agni Saucika/Sapti VAjambhara*: X.51-53, 79,-80

*Ketu Agneya*: X.156

*Vatsa Agneya*: X.187

*Syena Agneya*: X.188

a. Agni Saucika is identifiable with the BharadvAja

RSi Agni BArhaspatya (joint composer of VIII. 102).

b. SUcl is a BharadvAja gotra.

c. The word VAjambhara is found in only two verses

outside this hymn, both by ANgiras:

I. 60. 6; IV.1.4.

d. VAja-m-bhara is clearly an inverted form of Bhara-d-VAja.

e. The only gotras with Agni are BharadvAja and

KaSyapa gotras.

3. *SAURYAS* (4 hymns): X.37, 158, 170, 181 (joint)

*AbhitApa Saurya*: X.37

*CakSu Saurya*: X.158

*VibhrAT Saurya*: X.170

*Gharma Saurya*: X.181 (joint)

a. The only gotras with *SUrya* are BharadvAja and ViSvAmitra gotras.

b. The only other hymns to *SUrya* are by g BharadvAja

(I.115) and a KaNva (I. 50).

c. The joint hymn by Gharma Saurya is with a BharadvAja and a VasiSTha.

d. A word meaning asura-slayer, *asurahan*/

*asuraghna*,  
 occurring in X.170. 2, is found elsewhere only  
 in  
 hymns by a BharadvAja (VI. 22. 4) and a  
 VasiSTha  
 (VII.13.1).  
 e. The three above hymns by Saurya RSis  
 have  
 repetitions in common only with hymns by  
 ANgiras and by GRtsamada (a  
 descendant  
 of BharadvAja):  
 X.37.4: X.127.2 (RAtrI BhdradvAjl)  
 JyotiSA bAdhase tamo.  
 X.37.10: II.23.15 (GRtsamada  
 Saunahotra)  
 DraviNam dhehi citram.  
 X.158.5: I.82.3 (Gotama RAhUgaNa)  
 SusandRSam tvA vayam.  
 X.170.4: VIII.98.3 (NRmedha ANgiras)  
 VibhrAjanjyotiSA svaragaccho rocanam  
 divah.

4. *AURAVAS* (3 hymns): X.11-12, 138  
*ANga Aurava*: X.138  
*HavirdhAna ANgi*: X.11-12

The patronymics of these RSis show them to be  
 descendants of Uru ANgiras (joint composer of  
 IX.108).

5. *AriStanemi TArkSya* (1 hymn): X.178.  
 a. The only other hymns to horses are by  
 ANgiras  
 (I.162-163; IV. 38-40) and a VasiSTha (VII.  
 44).  
 b. The word TArkSya, outside this hymn, is  
 found only  
 in one verse by an ANgiras, Gotama  
 RAhUgaNa  
 (1.89.6).  
 c. The only hymns which have repetitions in  
 common  
 with X.178 are by VAmadeva Gautama:  
 X.178.2: IV.23.10

PRthvl bahule gabhlre  
X.178.3: IV.38.10  
SavasA pañca kRSTIh sUrya iva  
jyotiSApastatAna.

**Family 5: VISVAMITRAS** (9 hymns)

1. *PRAJAPATYAS* (9 hymns): 90, 107 (joint),  
121,

129-130, 161, 177, 183-184

*NArAyaNa*: X.90

*DakSiNA PrAjApatya*: X.107 (joint)

*HiraNyagarbha PrAjApatya*: X.121

*PrajApati ParameSThin*: X.129

*Yajña PrAjApatya*: X.130

*YakSmanASana PrAjApatya*: X.161

*PataNga PrAjApatya*: X.177

*PrajAvAn PrAjApatya*: X.183

*ViSNu PrAjApatya*: X.184

a. *PrajApati ParameSThin*, clearly the patriarch  
of

this group of RSis, is identifiable with *PrajApati  
VaiSvAmitra* (composer of III.54-56).

b. The only hymn which has a repetition in  
common

with X.129 (by *PrajApati ParameSThin*) is  
III.54

(by *PrajApati VaiSvAmitra*):

X. 129.6: III.54.5

Ko addhA veda ka iha pra vocat.

c. All the above hymns deal with the subject of  
creation. The only other hymn dealing with  
this

subject is X.190, composed by *AghamarSaNa  
VaiSvAmitra*; and the only other verse to which

the

*AnukramaNIs* assign the same subject is

I.24.1,

composed by *SunahSepa Ajlgarti*

(*VaiSvAmitra*).

d. *ViSvAmitra* is traditionally associated with  
creation.

The epics relate the story of *TriSanku*, in which  
*ViSvAmitra* sets out to teach the Gods a lesson

by

creating a parallel universe. He finally desists only when the Gods plead with him and accede to his demand. But, even today, “duplicate” objects in nature are called *ViSvAmitra-sRSTi* or *ViSvAmitra’s* creations.

e. *NArAyaNa* is a *ViSvAmitra* gotra; and the hymn by *NArAyaNa*, who is not given any patronymic, is placed immediately after a hymn by a *ViSvAmitra*:  
*Renu VaiSvAmitra* (X.89).

### **Family 7: VASISTHAS** (23 hymns)

1. *Suvedas SairISI* (1 hymn): X. 147  
*SairISI* is a *VasiSTha* gotra.
2. *Vamra VaikhAnasa* (1 hymn): X.99
  - a. The word *SiSnadeva* (X.99.3) is found only once outside this hymn in VII.21.5, composed by *VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI*. The word *SiSnA* by itself occurs only thrice in the *Rigveda*, once in a hymn by a *VasiSTha*, *Vasukra Aindra* (X.27.19), and once in a hymn by a *VasiSTha* associate, *Kutsa ANgiras* (1.105.8). The third occurrence, in X.33.3, is in a hymn by a *RSi* whose family cannot be identified.
  - b. The only hymn which has a repetition in common with this hymn is X.20, composed by a *VasiSTha*, *Vimada Aindra*:  
 X.99.12: X.20.10  
*ISamUrjam sukSitim viSvamAbhAh*.

3. *Manyu TApasa* (2 hymns): X.83-84  
a. Manyu TApasa is identifiable with Manyu VAsiSTha (joint composer of IX.97).  
b. TApasa, an epithet signifying heat or passion, has an added symbolic significance in this case: Tapa is a VasiSTha gotra.  
c. The word Manyu is translated, by Griffith, as a name in only one other hymn, X.73.10, composed by Gaurivlti SAKtya, a VasiSTha.

4. *PurUravas AiLa and UrvaSI* (1 hymn): X.95.  
a. Verse 17 of the hymn clearly declares: "I, VasiSTha, call UrvaSI to meet me." The name VasiSTha is translated by Griffith as "her best love".  
b. Outside this hymn, the word UrvaSI occurs only twice throughout the Rigveda: once in a hymn by an Atri (V.41.19), where it is an epithet for a deified river; and once in a hymn by a VasiSTha (VII.33.11) where UrvaSI is referred to as the mother of VasiSTha.

5. *AINDRAS* (18 hymns): X.20-29, 38, 65-66, 86, 96  
(joint), 103, 119, 180  
*Vimada Aindra and VasukRta VAsukra*: X.20-26  
*Vasukra Aindra*: X.27-29  
*Indra MuSkavAn*: X.38  
*VasukarNa VAsukra*: X.65-66  
*VRSAkapi Aindra*: X.86  
*Sarvahari Aindra*: X.96 (joint)  
*Apratiratha Aindra*: X.103  
*Laba Aindra*: X. 119

*Jaya Aindra: X.180*

- a. The only hymns, other than X.38, in which Indra is named as composer, are hymns in which the God Indra is depicted as speaking in the first person. But X.38 does not depict Indra speaking in the first person, and it is clear that Indra here is the name of the composer, who is the patriarch of the Aindra group of RSis in MaNDala X.
- b. Indra is a VasiSTha gotra.
- c. Indra MuSkavAn is identifiable with Indrapramati VAsiSTha (joint composer of IX.97).
- d. The word *muSka* (X.38.5), which gives the RSi his epithet MuSkavAn, is found only once outside this hymn, in X. 102.4, composed by a Bharata. The Bharatas are very closely associated with the ANgirases and VasiSThas.
- e. X.38.5 refers to the RSi Kutsa. The Kutsas are very close associates of the VasiSThas: the only reference to Kutsas by non-Kutsas are in hymns by VasiSTha (VII.25.5; X.29.2); the only references to VasiSTha by a non-VasiSTha is in a hymn by a Kutsa (I.112.9); and the only hymn in which a Kutsa figures as a joint composer is IX.97, which is jointly attributed to eleven VasiSTha RSis (including Indrapramati) and a Kutsa.
- f. Vasukra Aindra is identifiable with Vasukri VasiSTha (joint composer of IX.97).
- g. VasukarNa VAsukra calls himself a



VasiSTha

(in X.65.15), and, in verse 12 of the same hymn,

he refers to Vimada (Aindra).

h. Jaya is a VasiSTha gotra

i. All the four other hymns (including the joint hymn)

have repetitions in common with VasiSThas

or

their associates:

X.86.5: VII.104.7 (VasiSTha

MaitrAvaruNI)

X.103.4: VII.32.11 (VasiSTha

MaitrAvaruNI)

X. 119.13: X. 150.1 (MRLIka

VAsiSTha): III.9.6.

(ViSvAmitra GATHina).

X.96.13: I.104.9 (Kutsa ANgiras)

X.96.2: I.9.10 (Madhucchandas

VaiSvAmitra):

X.133.1 (SudAs Paijavana).

Apart from these, the four hymns have only two other repetitions (one of which is in common with a ViSvAmitra).

## **Family 10: BHRGUS (11 hymns)**

1. YAMAYANAS (11 hymns): X.10, 13-19, 135, 144, 154

*Yama Vaivasvata and YamI VaivasvatI*: X.10

*VivasvAn Aditya*: X.13

*Yama Vaivasvata*: X.14

*Sankha YAmAyana*: X.15

*Damana YAmAyana*: X.16

*DevaSravas YAmAyana*: X. 17

*Sankhasuka YAmAyana*: X.18

*Mathita YAmAyana*: X.19

*KumAra YAmAyana*: X.135

*UrdhvakRSana YAmAyana*: X.144

*YamI VaivasvatI*: X.154

a. YAmAyana or YAmyAyaNa is a BhRgu gotra.

b. Mathita is also a BhRgu gotra.

c. The alternative names given in the

AnukramaNIs

for the composer of X.19, Mathita

YAmAyana,

are BhRgu or Cyavana BhArgava.

d. Yama is mentioned alongwith ancient, mythical

BhRgu RSis, AtharvaNa and USanA KAva in I.83.5.

e. Hymn X.14.5 states: "Our fathers are ANgirasas,

Navagvas, AtharvaNas, BhRgus." BhRgu hymns

in MaNDalas IX and X often identify with both

ANgirasas and BhRgus (see, for example, IX. 62.9, and the comment on it in Griffith's footnotes).

f. All the above hymns deal with the topics of funerals and death. Tradition ascribes the initiation of funeral rites and ceremonies to Jamadagni BhArgava.

The family identities of the other composers of MaNDala X are either obvious from their patronymics, or known from the gotra lists, or else unidentifiable.

All this information is summarized in the two following tables:

**TABLE A. FAMILY-WISE NUMBER OF HYMNS AND VERSES**

**TABLE B. FAMILY-WISE HYMNS AND VERSES**

**Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>HOR, fn. I.13.

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## Chapter 3

### The Chronology of the Rigveda

The first step in any historical analysis of the Rigveda is the establishment of the *internal* chronology of the text.

The Rigveda consists of ten MaNDalas or Books. And, excepting likely interpolations, these MaNDalas represent different epochs of history. The arrangement of these MaNDalas in their chronological order is the first step towards an understanding of Rigvedic history. Regarding the chronology of these MaNDalas, only two facts are generally recognised:

1. The six Family MaNDalas II-VII form the oldest core of the Rigveda.
2. The two serially last MaNDalas of the Rigveda, IX and X, are also the chronologically last MaNDalas in that order.

In this chapter, we will establish a more precise chronological arrangement of the MaNDalas based on a detailed analysis of evidence within the text.

However, the precise position of the last two MaNDalas does not require much analysis:

1. MaNDala X is undoubtedly the chronologically last MaNDala of the Rigveda.

As B.K. Ghosh puts it: “On the whole ... the language of the first nine MaNDalas must be regarded as homogeneous, inspite of traces of previous dialectal differences... With the tenth MaNDala it is a different story. The language here has definitely changed.”<sup>1</sup>

He proceeds to elaborate on this point: “The

language of the tenth MaNDala represents a distinctly later stage of the Rigvedic language. Hiatus, which is frequent in the earlier Rigveda, is already in process of elimination here. Stressed *i* *u* cannot in sandhi be changed into *y* *w* in the earlier parts, but in the tenth MaNDala they can. The ending *-Asas* in nominative plural is half as frequent as *-As* in the *Rgveda* taken as a whole, but its number of occurrences is disproportionately small in the tenth MaNDala. Absolutives in *-tvAya* occur only here. The stem *rai-* is inflected in one way in the first nine MaNDalas, and in another in the tenth; and in the inflexion of *dyau-*, too, the distribution of strong and weak forms is much more regular in the earlier MaNDalas. The Prakritic verbal *kuru-* appears only in the tenth MaNDala for the earlier *kRiNu-*. Many words appear for the first time in the tenth MaNDala... The old locative form *pRitsu*, adjectives like *girvaNas* and *vicarSaNi*, and the substantive *vlti* do not occur at all in the tenth MaNDala, though in the earlier MaNDalas they are quite common. The particle *slm* which is unknown in the Atharvaveda, occurs fifty times in the first nine MaNDalas, but only once in the tenth. Words like *ajya*, *kAla*, *lohita*, *vijaya*, etc. occur for the first time in the tenth MaNDala, as also the root *labh-*.”<sup>2</sup>

In fact, strikingly different as the language of the tenth MaNDala is from that of the other nine, it would in the natural course of events have been even more so: “The difference in language between the earlier MaNDalas and the tenth would have appeared in its true proportions if the texts concerned had been written down at the time they were composed and handed down to us in that written form. The fact, however, is that the text tradition of the *Rigveda* was stabilized at a comparatively late date, and fixed in writing at a much later epoch. The result has been not unlike what would have happened if the works of Chaucer and Shakespeare were put in writing and printed for the first time in the twentieth century... (this) to some extent also screens the differences that mark off the languages of the earlier MaNDalas from that of the tenth.”<sup>3</sup>

So much for the tenth MaNDala.

2. The chronological position of MaNDala IX is equally beyond doubt: it is definitely much earlier than MaNDala X, but equally definitely later than the other eight MaNDalas.

MaNDala IX was meant to be a kind of appendix in which hymns to Soma, ascribed to RSis belonging to all the ten families, were brought together.

An examination of the MaNDala shows that it was compiled at a point, of time when a Rigveda of eight MaNDalas was already in existence as one unit with the eight MaNDalas arranged in their present order: it is significant that the first four RSis of both MaNDala I as well as MaNDala IX are, in the same order, Madhucchandas (with his son JetA in MaNDala I), MedhAtithi, SunahSepa and HiraNyastUpa.

Hence, while we will touch occasionally upon MaNDalas IX and X, our analysis will concentrate mainly on MaNDalas I-VIII.

The main criteria which will help us in establishing the chronological order of the MaNDalas are:

1. The interrelationships among the composers of the hymns.
2. The internal references to composers in other MaNDalas.
3. The internal references to kings and RSis in the hymns. We will examine the whole subject under the following heads:

- I. Interrelationships among Composers.
- II. Family Structure and the System of Ascriptions.
- III. References to Composers.
- IV. References to Kings and RSis
- V. The Structure and Formation of the Rigveda.

## I INTERRELATIONSHIPS AMONG COMPOSERS

The interrelationships among the composers of the hymns provide us with a very clear and precise picture.

We will examine the subject as follows:

- A. The Family MaNDalas II-VII.
- B. MaNDala I.
- C. MaNDala VIII.
- D. MaNDala I Detail.
- E. MaNDala IX.
- F. MaNDala X.

I.A. The Family MaNDalas II-VII.

We get the following direct relationships among the composers of the Family MaNDalas:

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*Prime facie*, we get the following equations:

1. The family MaNDalas can be divided into Early Family MaNDalas (VI, III, VII) and Later Family MaNDalas (IV, II, V)

The Later Family MaNDalas have full hymns composed by direct descendants of RSis from the Early Family MaNDalas.

2. MaNDala VI is the *oldest* of the Early Family MaNDalas, since descendants of its RSis are composers in *two* of the Later Family MaNDalas: IV and II.

3. MaNDala V is the *latest* of the Later Family

MaNDalas, since it has hymns by descendants of RSis from two of the Early Family MaNDalas: III and VII.

4. MaNDala VII is the latest of the Early Family MaNDalas since (unlike MaNDalas VI and III which do not have a *single* hymn composed by any descendant of any RSi from any other MaNDala) there are two joint hymns (VII.101-102) which are jointly composed by VasiSTha and KumAra Agneya (a member of the Agneya group of BharadvAja RSis), a descendant of BharadvAja of MaNDala VI.

5. MaNDala IV is older than MaNDala II because:

a. It has only two hymns composed by descendants of RSis from MaNDala VI, *while the whole of MaNDala II except for four hymns* is composed by descendants of RSis from MaNDala VI.

b. MaNDala II goes one generation further down than MaNDala IV.

6. MaNDala V, as we saw, has hymns by descendants of RSis from *two* of the Early Family MaNDalas: III and VII.

In addition, it also has a hymn by descendants of a RSi who (although not himself a composer) is contemporaneous with MaNDala VII: hymn V.24 is composed by the GaupAyanas who are descendants of Agastya, the brother of VasiSTha of MaNDala VII.

*Conclusion:* We get the following chronological order:

[Click Here](#)

**I.B. MaNDala I.**



We get the following relationships between the composers of MaNDala I and the Family MaNDalas:

1. MaNDala I has full hymns composed by direct descendants of RSis from the Early Family MaNDalas. 54 of the hymns in MaNDala I fall into this category:

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2. In addition, it also has full hymns composed by descendants of RSis who (although not themselves composers) are contemporaneous with the Early Family MaNDalas. 61 of the hymns in MaNDala I fall into this category:

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3. MaNDala I does not have a *single hymn*, full or joint, composed by any *ancestor* of any RSi from the Early Family MaNDalas.

4. On the other hand, MaNDala I has full hymns composed by *ancestors* of RSis from the Later Family MaNDalas. 21 of the hymns in MaNDala I fall into this category:

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5. The above hymns, it must be noted, include full hymns by *contemporaries* of RSis from the Later Family MaNDalas, who are also, at the same time, *descendants* of RSis from the Early Family MaNDalas or from MaNDala I itself:

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6. MaNDala I does not have a *single hymn*, full or joint, composed by any *descendant* of any RSi from the Later Family MaNDalas.

*Conclusion:* MaNDala I is *later* than the Early Family MaNDalas, but both *earlier* than as well as *contemporary* to the Later Family MaNDalas:  
Hence, we get the following chronological order:

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### **I.C. MaNDala VIII**

We get the following relationships between the composers of MaNDala VIII and those of the other seven MaNDalas:

1. There are only two direct relationships between the composers of MaNDala VIII, and the composers of the Early Family MaNDalas (VI, III, VII) and the two older of the Later Family MaNDalas (IV, II):

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All other relationships, if any, are through composers from MaNDalas I and V.

2. On the other hand, not only are there close relationships between the composers of MaNDala VIII, and the composers from MaNDalas I and V, but there are also many composers in common:

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*Conclusion:* we get the following chronological order:

[Click Here](#)

*Note:* The BhRgu hymns in MaNDala VIII constitute a SPECIAL CATEGORY of hymns which stand out from the rest. These five hymns (VIII.79,84,100-102) are ascribed to ancient BhRgu RSis of the oldest period. Unlike in the case of MaNDala X, ascriptions in MaNDala VIII have to be taken seriously; and therefore the ascription of the above hymns to ancient BhRgu RSis is to be treated, in general, as valid (*in general*, in the sense that while hymns ascribed to, say, USanA KArya, who is already a mythical figure even in the oldest MaNDalas, may not have been composed by him, they must at least have been composed by some *ancient* BhRgu RSi).

The historical reasons for the non-inclusion of these hymns in the Family MaNDalas, or even in MaNDala I, and for their late introduction into the Rigveda in MaNDala VIII, will be discussed in our chapter on the Indo-Iranian Homeland.

#### **I.D. MaNDala I Detail.**

MaNDala I consists of fifteen upa-maNDalas. On the basis of the interrelationships between the composers, we can classify these upa-maNDalas into four groups:

##### *1. Early upa-maNDalas:*

The upa-maNDalas which can be definitely designated as early upa-maNDalas are those which are ascribed to direct descendants of composers from the Early Family MaNDalas:

Madhucchandas upa-maNDala: I.1-11.

SunahSepa      upa-maNDala: I.24-30.  
ParASara        upa-maNDala: I.65-73.

## 2. *Middle upa-maNDalas:*

The upa-maNDalas which can be designated as middle upa-maNDalas are those ascribed to ancestors or contemporaries of composers from the earliest of the Later Family MaNDalas:

NodhAs    upa-maNDala: I.58-64.  
Gotama    upa-maNDala: I.74-93.

## 3. *Late upa-maNDalas:*

The upa-maNDalas which can be designated as late upa-maNDalas are those ascribed to ancestors or contemporaries of composers from MaNDala VIII:

MedhAtithi    upa-maNDala: I.12-23.  
KaNva        upa-maNDala: I.36-43.  
PraskaNva    upa-maNDala: I.44-50.

## 4. *General upa-maNDalas:*

Those upa-maNDalas which cannot be definitely designated as either early or late upa-maNDalas on the basis of inter-relationships must be designated as general upa-maNDalas. These include:

a. Those ascribed to independent RSis not directly connected with specific groups of composers in other MaNDalas:

HiraNyastUpa    upa-maNDala: I.31-35.  
Savya            upa-maNDala: I.51-57.  
KakSlvAn        upa-maNDala: I.116-126.  
DIrghatamas    upa-maNDala: I.140-164.

b. Those ascribed to descendants of persons (kings or RSis) contemporaneous with the composers of the Early Family MaNDalas, but not

themselves composers of hymns either in the Early Family MaNDalas or in MaNDala I:

Kutsa            upa-maNDala: I.94-115.  
Parucchepa    upa-maNDala: I.127-139.  
Agastya        upa-maNDala: I.165-191.

The Kutsa and Agastya upa-maNDalas are ascribed to the eponymous RSis Kutsa and Agastya themselves, but they are obviously late upa-maNDalas composed by their remote descendants. Among other things, the *only* references to these eponymous RSis within the hymns prove this:

The composers in the Kutsa upa-maNDala refer to the RSi Kutsa as a mythical figure from the past: I.106.6;112.9.

The composers in the Agastya upa-maNDala repeatedly describe themselves as descendants of MA<sub>na</sub> (Agastya): I. 165.14,15; 166.15; 167.11; 169.10; 169.8; 177.5; 182.8; 184.4, 5; 189.8.

## **I.E. MaNDala IX**

As we saw, the chronological position of MaNDala IX *after* the eight earlier MaNDalas is beyond doubt.

But MaNDala IX ascribes many hymns to RSis from the earlier MaNDalas. According to some scholars, this indicates that while MaNDala IX came into existence as a separate MaNDala after the first eight MaNDalas, many of the individual hymns to Soma were already in existence, and were originally included in the other MaNDalas. Later they were “combed out of the other MaNDalas”<sup>4</sup> and compiled into a separate MaNDala dedicated solely to Soma hymns.

This would appear to imply that the period of MaNDala IX (like that of MaNDala I) should be stretched out alongside the Periods of all the other MaNDalas.

However, the contention that the hymns in MaNDala IX could be “combed out of” the other MaNDalas is not quite correct. Any “combing out” would be relevant only in the case of the five older MaNDalas (VI, III, VII, IV, II); since the other three MaNDalas (I, V and VIII) were finalised just before MaNDala IX, and Soma hymns which should have been included in these MaNDalas could just as well have been left out of the MaNDalas even before their finalisation, as the idea of a separate Soma MaNDala may already have fructified by then.

And an examination of MaNDala IX shows that it is a late MaNDala. MaNDala IX has 114 hymns. If we exclude the fourteen BhRgu hymns, which we will refer to again in our chapter on the Geography of the Rigveda, the following is the chronological distribution of the hymns:

1. Forty-nine of the hymns are ascribed to RSis belonging to the period of MaNDala IX (i.e. new RSis not found in earlier MaNDalas) or the period of MaNDala X (i.e. R is with strange names and of unknown family identity):

*MaNDala IX*: IX.5-26, 39-40, 44-46, 61, 63, 68, 70, 72-73, 80-83, 99-100, 111-112.  
*MaNDala X*: IX.33-34, 66, 102-103, 106, 109-110.

2. Forty hymns are ascribed to RSis belonging to the last layer of MaNDalas to be finalised before MaNDala IX (i.e. MaNDalas V, VIII and I):

*MaNDala V*: IX.32, 35-36, 53-60.  
*MaNDala VIII*: IX.27-30. 41-43, 95, 104-105.  
*MaNDala I*: IX.1-4, 31, 37-38, 50-52, 64, 69, 74, 91-94, 113-114.

3. Only *eleven* hymns can even be alleged to

have been composed by RSis belonging to the five earlier Family MaNDalas (VI, III, VII, IV and II), *if one takes the ascriptions at face value*.

But, in the case of at least nine of these hymns, it is clear, *on the basis of evidence within the AnukramaNs themselves*, that these ascriptions are fictitious, and that the hymns are not composed by the early RSis belonging to these five Family MaNDalas, but by late RSis belonging to the period of MaNDalas IX and X.

These nine hymns are: IX. 67, 84, 86, 96-98, 101, 107-108.

An examination of the ascriptions in these nine hymns establishes their lateness:

**a.** IX.67 and IX.107 are artificial hymns ascribed to the SaptaRsi or Seven RSis: BharadvAja, ViSvAmitra, Jamadagni, VasiSTha, Gotama, KaSyapa and Atri. (Incidentally, no other hymn is ascribed to BharadvAja or ViSvAmitra, and of the two other hymns ascribed to VasiSTha, one ascription is clearly fictitious.)

It is clear that these RSis belonged to different periods and could not have been joint composers in any hymn. The hymns are clearly composed by their descendants, or perhaps even by some single RSis in their many names. In the case of IX.67, Pavitra ANgiras (a RSi who clearly belongs to the period of MaNDala IX itself, being a new RSi and also the composer of IX. 73 and 83) is named as a joint composer with the SaptaRSi, and he is probably the composer even of the entire hymn.

**b.** IX.84 and IX.101 are ascribed to

PrajApati VAcyA (VaiSvAmitra), but this is clearly not the PrajApati VAcyA (VaiSvAmitra) of MaNDala III. He is clearly a RSi belonging to the late period, identifiable as one of the PrAjApatya group of RSis whose hymns appear only in the late MaNDalas (V.33-34, X.90, 107, 121, 129-130, 161, 177, 183-184).

In IX.101, this PrajApati is a joint composer with AndhIgu SyAvASvI (who is clearly a late RSi belonging to the period of MaNDala IX, itself, being a descendant of SyAvASvI Atreya of MaNDalas V and VIII) and with various RSis of unknown family identity (a circumstance which places them in the late period of MaNDalas IX-X).

**c.** IX.86. is ascribed jointly to Atri and GRtsamada, and not only do these RSis belong to different periods, but they are joint composers with various RSis with strange names and of unknown family identity, which places the provenance of this hymn in the late period of MaNDalas ix-x.

**d.** IX.96 is ascribed to Pratardana DaivodAsI, but this RSi is clearly the same late Bharata RSi (descendant of the actual Pratardana) who is also a composer in the late MaNDala X (i. e. X. 179.2).

**e.** IX.97 is ascribed jointly to VasiSTha, Kutsa, and various descendants of VasiSTha. This hymn clearly belongs to the late period, since three of its composers are also composers in MaNDala X: MRLIka (X. 150), Manyu (X.83-84)



and Vasukra . ( . X.27-29).

f. IX.98 and IX.108 are ascribed to RjiSvan ANgiras or BhAradvAja. But this is clearly not the RjiSvan of MaNDala VI:

In the case of IX.98, the name RjiSvan is clearly a confusion for the name RjrASva VArSAgira, since the hymn is jointly ascribed to RjiSvan and AmbarISa VArSAgira (of 1.100).

In the case of IX. 108, this RjiSvan is joint composer with Gaurivlti SAktya (composer of V.29), RNAñcaya (patron of the composer of V.30), and various RSis of unknown family identity (whose provenance is clearly in the late period of MaNDalas IX-X).

In short, these nine hymns are clearly composed by RSis belonging to the late period of MaNDalas I-V-VIII-IX-X, and not the period of the five earlier Family MaNDalas.

4. Ultimately, the only two hymns which can be ascribed to RSis belonging to the five earlier Family MaNDalas, *and only for want of clear contrary evidence, are:*

IX.71 (ascribed to RSabha VaiSvAmitra of MaNDala III)

IX.90 (ascribed to VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI of MaNDala VII)

It is therefore clear that MaNDala IX is a late MaNDala, and that there was not much of “combing out” of hymns to Soma from earlier MaNDalas in the process of its compilation.

The chronological position of MaNDala IX after

the eight earlier MaNDalas is therefore certain.

### **I.F. MaNDala X**

MaNDala X, as we saw, was composed after the other nine MaNDalas, and compiled *so long* after them that its *language alone*, in spite of attempts at standardisation, is sufficient to establish its late position.

The ascription of hymns in this MaNDala is so chaotic that in most of the hymns the names, or the patronymics/epithets, or both, of the composers, are fictitious; to the extent that, in 44 hymns out of 191, and in parts of one more, the family identity of the composers is a total mystery.

In many other hymns, the family identity, but *not* the actual identity of the composers, is clear or can be deduced: the hymns are ascribed to remote ancestors, or even to mythical ancestors not known to have composed any hymns in earlier MaNDalas.

Chronologically, the hymns in MaNDala X fall in three categories:

a. Hymns composed in the final period of the Rigveda, long after the period of the other nine MaNDalas.

b. Hymns composed in the period of MaNDala IX, *after* the eight earlier MaNDalas were finalised, by composers whose Soma hymns find a place in MaNDala IX.

c. Hymns composed in the late period of MaNDala VIII, which somehow missed inclusion in that MaNDala.

The hymns of the second and third category were kept aside, and later included, *in changed linguistic form*, in MaNDala X.

To round off our examination of the

interrelationships among the composers, we may note the following instances of composers in MaNDala X who are descendants of RSis from the latest MaNDala VIII and IX:

[Click Here](#)

In conclusion, we can classify the periods of the MaNDalas into the following major periods:

1. *The Early Period:* The period of MaNDalas VI, III, VII and the early upa-maNDalas of MaNDala 1.
2. *The Middle Period:* The period of MaNDalas IV and II and the middle upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I; as also the earlier part of the general upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I.
3. *The Late Period:*
  - a. The period of MaNDalas V and VIII and the late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I; as also the later part of the general upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I.
  - b. The period of MaNDala IX.
4. *The Final Period:* The period of MaNDala X.

## II

### **FAMILY STRUCTURE AND THE SYSTEM OF ASCRIPTIONS**

The MaNDalas of the Rigveda, as we have seen, can be arranged in a definite chronological order on the basis of the interrelationships among the composers of the hymns. This chronological order is confirmed by a consideration of

- A. The Family Structure of the MaNDalas.
- B. The System of Ascriptions.

## II. A. The Family Structure of the MaNDalas

If the MaNDalas of the Rigveda are arranged in order of gradation in family structure (i.e. from the purest family structure to the least pure one), the arrangement tallies perfectly with our chronological order:

Firstly, the Family MaNDalas:

1. The BharadvAja MaNDala (VI) has BharadvAjas as composers in every single hymn and verse. Non-BharadvAjas are *totally* absent in this MaNDala.
2. The ViSvAmitra MaNDala (III) has ViSvAmitras as composers in every single hymn; but non-ViSvAmitras are present as *junior partners* with the ViSvAmitras in two hymns (1 out of 11 verses in hymn 36; and 3 out of 18 verses in hymn 62).
3. The VasiSTha MaNDala (VII) has VasiSThas as composers in every single hymn; but non-VasiSThas are present as *equal partners* with the VasiSThas in two hymns (101-102)
4. The VAmadeva MaNDala (IV) has non-VAmadevas as *sole composers* in two hymns (43-44).

These non-VAmadevas, however, belong to the *same* ANgiras family as the VAmadevas, and share the same AprI-sUkta.

5. The GRtsamada MaNDala (II) has non-GRtsamadas as *sole composers* in four hymns (4-7).

These non-GRtsamadas belong to a family *related* to the GRtsamadas (being BhRgus while the GRtsamadas are Kevala-BhRgus) *but having*

*different Aprl-sUktas.*

6. The Atri MaNDala (V) has non-Atris as *sole composers* in seven hymns (15, 24, 29, 33-36).

These non-Atris belong to four different families *not related* to the Atris, and having different Aprl-sUktas.

Then, the non-family MaNDalas:

1. MaNDala I is a collection of small family upa-maNDalas.

2. MaNDala VIII is not a Family MaNDala; but one family, the KaNvas, still dominate the MaNDala by a slight edge, with 55 hymns out of 103.

There is, for the first time, a hymn (47) by a RSi of unknown family identity.

3. MaNDala IX is definitely not a family MaNDala, having hymns or verses composed by every single one of the ten families. The dominant family, the KaSyapas, are the composers of only 36 hymns out of 114.

There are now eight full hymns (33-34, 66, 102-103, 106, 109-110) and parts of two others (86.1-40; 101.4-12) by RSis of unknown family identity.

4. MaNDala X, the latest MaNDala by any standard, is not associated with any particular family.

There are 44 hymns by RSis of unknown family identity.

Clearly, the older the MaNDala, the purer its family structure.

## **II.B The System of Ascriptions**

There are basically two systems of ascription of

compositions of the hymns, followed in the ten MaNDalas of the Rigveda:

1. In the older system, the hymns composed by an eponymous RSi as well as those composed by his descendants, are ascribed solely to the eponymous RSi himself

It is only when a particular descendant is important enough, or independent enough, that hymns composed by him (and, consequently, by *his* descendants) are ascribed to him.

This system is followed in the first five Family MaNDalas (VI, III, VII, IV, II) and also in MaNDala I.

2. In the newer system, the ascription of hymns is more individualistic, and hymns are generally ascribed to the names of individual composers, except in cases where the composer himself chooses to have hymns composed by him ascribed to an ancestor.

This system is followed in MaNDalas V, VIII, IX and X.

The dichotomy between the two systems will be clear from the following table:

[Click Here](#)

What is significant is that MaNDala V *alone*, among the Family MaNDalas, falls in the same class as the non-family MaNDalas, thereby confirming that it is a late MaNDala and the last of the Family MaNDalas.

Likewise, MaNDala I falls in the same class as the other (than MaNDala V) Family MaNDalas, thereby confirming that it is, for the most part, earlier than MaNDala V.

### III REFERENCES TO COMPOSERS

On the basis of one fundamental criterion (the inter-relationships among the composers) we have obtained a very clear and unambiguous picture of the chronological order of the MaNDalas.

Now we will examine this chronological order of the MaNDalas on the basis of a second fundamental criterion: the references to composers within the hymns.

The logic is simple: if a hymn in MaNDala B refers to a composer from MaNDala A as a figure from the past, this indicates that MaNDala A is older than MaNDala B.

This naturally does not include the following references, which are of zero-value for this purpose:

1. References to a RSi by his descendants.
2. References to ancient ANgiras and BhRgu RSis (eg. BRhaspati, Atharvana, USanA) who are mythical figures in the whole of the Rigveda, but to whom hymns are ascribed in MaNDalas X or IX, or even VIII.
3. References to Kings from the ancient period (eg. Pratardana, SudAs) to whom hymns are ascribed in MaNDala X or IX.

We will examine the references as follows:

- A. The Early MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas.
- B. The Middle MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas.
- C. The Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas.
- D. MaNDala IX.

### III. A. The Early MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas

The following is the situation in the MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas which we have classified as belonging to the Early Period:

1. The two oldest MaNDalas VI and III *do not refer to a single composer from any other MaNDala*.

2. The third oldest MaNDala VII refers to one composer from the older MaNDala III: Jamadagni (VII.96.3)

MaNDala VII is also unique in its reference to three *contemporary* RSis to whom upa-maNDalas are ascribed in MaNDala I:

Agastya (VII.33.10,13)

Kutsa (VII.25.5)

ParASara (VII.18.21)

However, all these references make it very clear that these RSis are *contemporaries* of VasiSTha and not figures from the past:

- a. Agastya is VasiSTha's brother.
- b. The Kutsas are junior associates of the VasiSThas.
- c. ParASara is VasiSTha's grandson.

The upa-maNDalas ascribed to Agastya and Kutsa, as we have already seen, consist of hymns composed by their descendants, while ParASara is himself a descendant of VasiSTha.

Therefore, the references to these RSis in MaNDala VII not only do not show that MaNDala I is older than MaNDala VII, they in fact confirm that MaNDala VII is older than MaNDala I.

3. The early upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I (i.e. the Madhucchandas, SunahSepa and ParASara upa-maNDalas) do not refer to any composer from



any other MaNDala.

Thus the three oldest MaNDalas and the three early upa-maNDalas are completely devoid of references to composers from the periods of any of the other MaNDalas, thereby firmly establishing their early position and their chronological isolation from the other MaNDalas.

### **III. B. The Middle MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas**

The Middle MaNDalas, and upa-maNDalas, as per our chronology, follow the Early MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas, and are contemporaneous with the early parts of the general upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I.

The following is the situation in these MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas belonging to the Middle Period:

1.MaNDala IV refers to one composer from the older MaNDala VI: RjiSvan (IV.16.13).

It also refers to two composers from the early part of the general upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I:

MAmateya (DIrghatamas) (IV.4.13)

KakSlyAn (IV.26.1)

This is matched by a cross-reference in the DIrghatamas upa-maNDala by way of a reference to a composer from MaNDala IV: PurumILha (I.151.2)

There is no reference in MaNDala IV to any composer from any MaNDala which follows it as per our chronology.

2.MaNDala II does not refer to any composer from any other MaNDala, earlier or later. And, for that matter, no other composer from any other

MaNDala refers to the GRtsamadas of MaNDala II.

3. The middle upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I (i.e. the Gotama and NodhAs upa-maNDalas) refer to one composer from the older MaNDala VI: BharadvAja (I.59.7).

There is no reference in any of these MaNDalas or upa-maNDalas to any composer from the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas.

### **III. C. The Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas**

In sharp contrast to the meagre references in earlier MaNDalas to composers from other MaNDalas, we find an abundance of such references in the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas (i.e. MaNDalas V and VIII, and the general and the late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I):

1. These MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas refer to the following composers from earlier MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas:

BharadvAja (I.116.8) from MaNDala VI.  
RjiSvan (I.51.5; 53.8;101.1;V.29.11;VIII. 49.10; 50.10)  
from MaNDala VI.  
VasiSTha (I.112.9) from MaNDala VII.  
Agastya (I.117.11; VIII.5.26) from the period of MaNDala VII.  
SunahSepa (V.2.7) from the early upa-maNDalas.  
PurumILha (I.151.2;183.5;VIII.71.14) from MaNDala IV.

2. MaNDala V refers to one composer from the late upa-maNDalas: KaNva (V. 41. 4).

This is matched by cross-references in the general and late upa-maNDalas to a composer from MaNDala V: Atri (I.45.3; 51.3; 139.9; 183.5).

3. MaNDala VIII refers to the following composers from MaNDala V:

Babhru (VIII.22.10)  
Paura (VIII.3.12)  
Saptavadhri (VIII.73.9)

4. MaNDala VIII refers to the following composers from the general upa-maNDalas:

Dirghatamas (VIII.9.10)  
KakSlvAn (VIII.9.10)

This is matched by a number of cross-references in MaNDala I to composers from MaNDala VIII:

Priyamedha (I.45.3; 139.9)  
VyaSva (I.112.15)  
TriSoka (I.112.12)  
Kali (I.112.15)  
Rebha (I.112.5; 116.24; 117.4; 118.6; 119.6)  
ViSvaka (I.116.23; 117.7)  
KRSNa (I.116.23; 117.7)  
VaSa (I.112.10; 116.21)

5. The general and late upa-maNDalas refer to composers from other upa-maNDalas:

- a. The Savya upa-maNDala refers to KakSlvAn (I.51.13)
- b. The Agastya upa-maNDala refers to Gotama (I.183.5)
- c. The MedhAtithi upa-maNDala refers to KakSlvAn (I.18.1)
- d. The Parucchepa upa-maNDala refers to KaNva (I.139.9)
- e. The Kutsa upa-maNDala refers to KakSlvAn (I.112.11) and KaNva (I.112.5).
- f. The KakSlvAn upa-maNDala refers to RjrASva (I.116.16; 117.17, 18), Gotama (I.116.9) and KaNva (I.117.8; 118.7).

6. Finally, the late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas even refer to the following composers from MaNDala X:

BRhaduktha (V.19.5)

SyUmarASml (I.112.16; VIII.52.2)

Vamra (I.51.9; 112.15)

Vandana (I.112.5; 116.11; 117.5; 118.6; 119.6)

Vimada (I.51.3; 112.19; 116.1; 117.20;  
VIII.9.15)

Upastuta (I.36.17; 112.15; VIII.5.25)

GhoSA (I.117.7; 120.5; 122.5)

It appears incredible, on the face of it, that composers from the very Late MaNDala X should be named in earlier MaNDalas. However, it fits in with our chronology: as we have seen, the hymns in MaNDala X include hymns composed in the Late Period of MaNDala VIII which somehow missed inclusion in that MaNDala. They could not be include in the next MaNDala IX since that MaNDala contained only hymns to Soma. These hymns were therefore kept aside, and, not being canonised by inclusion in the text, they suffered linguistic changes, and were subsequently included in MaNDala X in a language common to that MaNDala.

However, these RSis, belonging as they did to the period of MaNDala VIII, happened to be named in incidental references in late hymns in the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas.

Incidentally, BRhaduktha, named in V.19.5, has the patronymic VAmadevya, indicating that he is a descendant of VAmadeva of MaNDala IV, thus again confirming our chronology.

### **III. D. MaNDala IX**

MaNDala IX is a ritual MaNDala devoted to Soma hymns, and references to RSis, strictly speaking, have no place in it.

Nevertheless, we do find references to the following composers:

Jamadagni (IX.97.51) from the period of the Early

MaNDala III.

KakSIvAn (IX.74.8) from the general MaNDala I.

VyaSva (IX.65.7) from the Late MaNDala VIII.

These references clearly prove the late provenance of MaNDala IX.

The final picture that emerges from our analysis of the references to composers is exactly the same as the chronological picture obtained from our analysis of the interrelationships among the composers.

In respect of MaNDala I, it is now clear that the early upa-maNDalas are definitely very early; and the late parts of the general and late upa-maNDalas coincide with the closing period of MaNDala VIII:

[Click Here](#)

#### **IV REFERENCES TO KINGS AND RSIS**

It is not only composers who are referred to within the hymns: there are also references to Kings and RSis (other than composers); and an examination of these references can help in throwing more light on the chronology of the MaNDalas.

We will examine these references as follows:

- A. The Bharata Dynasty.
- B. Minor Kings and RSis.
- C. The TRkSi Dynasty-

## IV.A. The Bharata Dynasty

The Bharata Dynasty is the predominant dynasty in the Rigveda. Eleven Kings of this dynasty are referred to in the Rigveda:

1. Bharata: VI.16.4;
2. DevavAta: III.23.2, 3;  
IV.15.4;  
VI.27.7;  
VII. 18.22.
3. SRnjaya: IV.15.4;  
VI.27.7; 47.25.
4. VadhryaSva: VI. 61.1;  
X. 69.1, 2, 4, 5, 9-12;
5. DivodAsa: I. 112.14; 116.18; 119. 4; 130.7, 10;  
II. 19.6.  
IV. 26.3; 30.20;  
VI. 16. 5, 19; 26.5; 31.4; 43.1; 47.22, 23; 61.1;  
VII. 18.25;  
VIII. 103.2;  
IX. 61.2.
6. Pratardana: VI.26.8;  
VII.33.14.
7. Pijavana: VII.18.22-23, 25.
8. a. DevaSravas: III.23.2, 3.  
b. SudAs: I.47.6; 63.7; 112.19;  
III.53.9, 11;  
V.53.2;  
VII. 18.5, 9, 15, 17, 22, 23, 25; 19.3, 6; 20.2;  
25.3; 32.10; 33.3; 53.3; 60.8, 9; 64.3; 83.1,  
4, 6-8.
9. Sahadeva: I. 100.17;  
IV. 15.7-10.
10. Somaka: IV. 15.9.

The names of these Kings are given above in order of their relative positions in the dynastic list (not necessarily in succeeding generations, since it is possible that there are many intervening generations of Kings who are not named in the Rigveda).

Their relative positions are based on information

within the hymns:

1. Bharata is the eponymous ancestor of this dynasty.
2. DevavAta is referred to as an ancestor of SRnjaya (IV. 15.4; VI.27.7), DevaSravas (III.23.2, 3) and SudAs (VII.18.22).
3. SRnjaya is referred to as a descendant of DevavAta (IV. 15.4; VI.27.7), and ancestor of DivodAsa (VI.47.25).
4. VadhryaSva is referred to as the father of DivodAsa (VI.61.1).
5. DivodAsa is referred to as a descendant of SRnjaya (VI.47.25), a son of VadhryaSva (VI.61.1) and an ancestor of SudAs (VII.18.25).
6. Pratardana is referred to as a descendant of DivodAsa (AnukramaNIs of IX.96), the father of an unnamed King (VI.26.8), and ancestor of SudAs (VII.33.14).
7. Pijavana is referred to as an ancestor of SudAs (VII.18.22, 23, 25).
- 8 a. DevaSravas is referred to as a descendant of  
DevavAta (III.23.2, 3).  
b. SudAs is referred to as a descendant of  
DivodAsa  
(VII.18.25), Pratardana (VII.33.14) and  
Pijavana  
(VII.18.22, 23, 25).
9. Sahadeva is referred to as the father of Somaka (IV.15.7-10).
10. Somaka is referred to as the son of Sahadeva (IV.15.7-10). (SRnjaya and DevavAta are referred to in verse 4 of the hymn.)

As we can see, the relative positions of all these Kings are clear from the references. It is only in the case of DevaSravas (about whom the only information we have is that he is a descendant of DevavAta) that a word of clarification becomes necessary:

Hymn 23 refers to two Kings, DevavAta and DevaSravas; and (as in the case of IV.42; V.27; VI.15) these Kings, who are *referred* to in the hymn are named as the composers of the hymn in the AnukramaNIs. Most scholars, ancient and modern, assume from this that while DevavAta and DevaSravas may or may not be composers of the hymn, they are at least contemporaries and possibly brothers.

It is, however, very clear from the hymn that they are neither composers nor contemporaries: the composer is ViSvAmitra, while DevaSravas is the King who is being addressed by the composer, and DevavAta is a King from the remote past, an ancestor of DevaSravas, who is being invoked and whom DevaSravas is being asked to remember and emulate.

While this makes it clear that DevaSravas is a descendant of DevavAta, his exact position in the dynastic list is not immediately clear. However, the fact that MaNDala III is contemporaneous with the period of SudAs gives us the following options:

- a. DevaSravas is a contemporary clansman (brother/cousin/ uncle) of SudAs.
- b. DevaSravas is another name for SudAs himself.

The two main heroes of the dynasty are DivodAsa and SudAs:

DivodAsa is referred to as a contemporary only in MaNDala VI (VI.16.5; 31.4; 47.22, 23). In all other references to him, he is a figure from the past.



SudAs is referred to as a contemporary only in MaNDalas III and VII (III.53.9, 11; VII. 18.22, 23; 25.3; 53.3; 60.8, 9; 64.3). In all other references to him, he is a figure from the past.

Between them, DivodAsa and SudAs are referred to in every single MaNDala of the Rigveda except in MaNDala X.

From this, we get a clear chronological picture:

MaNDala VI	- DivodAsa
MaNDala III	- SudAs
MaNDala VII	- SudAs
All other MaNDalas	- post-SudAs

(MaNDala III is placed before MaNDala VII because the hymns make it clear, and almost every single authority, ancient and modern, is unanimous, that ViSvAmitra was the earlier priest of SudAs and VasiSTha the later one.)

Further: Sahadeva, a descendant of SudAs (as per all traditional information) is referred to as a contemporary in hymn I.100; while his son Somaka is referred to as a contemporary in IV.15.

Hymn I.100 is ascribed to RjrASva and the VArSAgiras; but the hymn is clearly composed by a Kutsa RSi, as it is included in the Kutsa upa-maNDalas. In general, the hymns in this upa-maNDalas are late ones, and include, in its ASvin-hymns, some of the latest hymns in MaNDala I. But this particular hymn, I.100, appears to be the oldest hymn in this upa-maNDala, and perhaps constituted the nucleus around which Kutsas of a later period formed their upa-maNDalas.

The chronological picture we get for the Bharatas, consequently, is as follows:

[Click Here](#)

*The above order tallies exactly with the order of the earliest MaNDalas in our chronology.*

Incidentally, the earliest historically relevant King of this dynasty in the Rigveda, DevavAta, is referred to only in the four MaNDalas (VI, III, VII, IV), which clearly represent the heyday of the Bharata dynasty.

#### **IV.B. Minor Kings and RSis**

A great number of minor Kings and RSis are named in references throughout the Rigveda.

However, most of them are irrelevant to our chronological analysis, since they do not provide any information which could be useful in arranging the MaNDalas in their chronological order.

Such include:

- a. Those who are mythical or ancestral figures in all the MaNDalas which refer to them.
- b. Those who are *not* referred to in more than one MaNDala- (unless they can be logically and chronologically connected with other Kings or RSis in other MaNDalas).
- c. Those who are referred to only in two MaNDalas, and one of these two is MaNDala X.

References which *are* relevant to our analysis are references to Kings and RSis who are contemporary in one or more MaNDalas, and figures from the past in others.

Unfortunately, unlike the Bharata Kings, none of the minor Kings and RSis fulfil this criterion.

Hence, rather than using these references to clarify our already established chronological picture, we can, in effect, use our already established chronological picture to clarify the

chronological position of these Kings and RSis.  
Thus:

a. In one case, we can conclude that, of the two following Kings (each of whom is referred to as a contemporary in the respective reference) the first is probably an ancestor of the second:  
AbhyAvartin CAyamAna: VI.27.5, 8.  
Kavi CAyamAna: VII.18.8

b. We can conclude that the following Kings or RSis (none of whom is referred to as a contemporary in any reference) probably belong

to the early period:

Dabhlti: I. 112.23;  
II. 13.9; 15.4, 9;  
IV. 30.21;  
VI. 20.13; 26.6;  
VII. 19.4;  
X. 113.9.

SaryAtA/SARYAta: I. 51.12; 112.17;  
III. 51.7.

DaSadyu: I. 33.14;  
VI. 26.4.

TUrvayANa: I. 53.10; 174.3;  
VI. 18.13;  
X. 61.2.

c. We can, likewise, conclude that the following kings (who are also not referred to as contemporaries) probably belong to the middle period:

Vayya: I. 54.6; 112.6;  
II. 3.6; 13.12;  
IV. 19.6;  
V. 79.1-3;  
IX. 68.8.

Turvliti: I. 36.18; 54.6; 61.11; 112.23;  
II. 13.12;  
IV. 19.6.

However, the references to some minor Kings do help to confirm our chronological order in respect of our classification of certain MaNDalas (V, VIII and the general and late upa-maNDalas of

MaNDala I) as late ones:

- a. These Kings are referred to as contemporaries (being, in fact, patrons of the composers) in most of the references.
- b. They are not referred to in any of the earlier MaNDalas.
- c. They are referred to in more than one of these Late MaNDalas.

These Kings are:

- a. ASvamedha: V. 27.4-6 (patron).  
VIII. 68.15-17 (patron).
- b. Narya/NArya: I. 54.6; 112.9;  
VIII. 24.29 (patron).
- c. Dhvasra/Dhvasanti and PuruSanti: I. 112.23;  
IX. 58.3 (patron).

(The composer of IX.58 is AvatsAra KASyapa, who is also the composer of V.44.1-9, 14-15.)

- d. RuSama: V. 30.12-15 (patron).  
VIII. 3.12; 4.2; 51.9.
- e. Srutaratha: I. 122.7;  
V.36.6.
- f. PRthuSravas: I. 116.21;  
VIII. 46.24 (patron).
- g. Svitrya: I. 33.14-15;  
V. 19.3 (patron).
- h. Adhrigu: I. 112.20;  
VIII. 12.2; 22.10.

#### **IV. C. The TRkSi Dynasty**

Three Kings of the TRkSi dynasty (apparently corresponding to the IkSvAku dynasty of the PurANas) are referred to in the Rigveda.

We are taking up the references to these Kings last of all because these references *alone* among all the references to Kings and RSis in the Rigveda, *appear* to fail to fit into our chronology of the Rigveda.

These Kings are:

- a. MandhAtA: I. 112.13;  
VIII. 39.8; 40.12.
- b. Purukutsa: I. 63.7; 112.7; 174.2;  
VI. 20.10.
- c. Trasadasyu: I.112.14;  
IV. 38.1; 42.8;  
V. 27.3;  
VIII. 8.21; 19.32; 36.7; 37.7; 49.10;  
X. 33.4; 150.5.  
Trasadasyu Paurukutsa: IV. 42.9;  
V. 33.8;  
VII. 19.3;  
VIII. 19.36.
- d. TrAsadasyava: VIII. 22.7.

Trasadasyu is clearly the most important of these Kings, and he and Purukutsa belong to the same period (since the reference in IV.42.8-9 makes it clear that Purukutsa is the actual father, and not some remote ancestor, of Trasadasyu).

And equally clearly, this period is the *late* period:

- a. Trasadasyu's name occurs the greatest number of times in MaNDala VIII (as DivodAsa's name does in MaNDala VI, and SudAs' in MaNDala VII).
- b. Trasadasyu's son (referred to only as TrAsadasyava) also clearly belongs to the period of MaNDala VIII.
- c. Trasadasyu is referred to as a patron, and therefore a contemporary, only in MaNDalas V and VIII (V.27.3; 33.8; VIII.19.32, 36).

And yet, we find four references to Purukutsa and Trasadasyu in the *older* MaNDalas (VI.20.10; VII.19.3; IV.38.1; 42.8-9), and one in the middle upa-maNDalas (I.63.7).

This raises a piquant question: is there something wrong with our chronology of the Rigveda, or is there something incongruous about these five

references in the older MaNDalas?

There is clearly nothing wrong with our chronology of the Rigveda:

1. Our chronology is based on detailed analyses of totally independent factors, each of which gives us exactly the *same* clear and integrated picture of the chronological order of the MaNDalas. This picture cannot be invalidated or questioned on the basis of five references to one pair of kings.

2. And, in fact, an examination of the contemporary references to Trasadasyu confirms rather than contradicts our chronology:

Trasadasyu is referred to as a patron and contemporary by only three RSis:

Atri Bhauma (V.27.3)

SamvaraNa PrAjApatya (V.33.8)

Sobhari KANva (VIII.19.32)

Using ViSvAmitra and MaNDala III as a base, we get the following chronological equations:

a. SudAs is many generations prior to Trasadasyu, since SudAs is contemporaneous with ViSvAmitra, while Trasadasyu is contemporaneous with ViSvAmitra's remote descendent SamvaraNa.

b. SudAs is many generations prior to Trasadasyu, since SudAs is contemporaneous with ViSvAmitra, whose junior associate is Ghora ANgiras, while Trasadasyu is contemporaneous with Ghora's remote descendant Sobhari.

c. MaNDala III is much older than MaNDala V, since ViSvAmitra is the RSi of MaNDala III, while his remote descendant SamvaraNa is a RSi in MaNDala V.

d. MaNDala III is much older than MaNDala VIII, since Ghora is a junior associate of ViSvAmitra (the RSi of MaNDala III), while his remote

descendants are RSis in MaNDala VIII.

e. MaNDala VII, which is also contemporaneous with SudAs, is also therefore much older than MaNDalas V and VIII.

Thus, the very fact that SamvaraNa PrAjApatya is one of the RSis contemporaneous with Trasadasyu is proof of the validity of our chronology.

But this brings us to the second part of the question: is there something incongruous about the five references to Purukutsa and Trasadasyu in the older MaNDalas?

And the only answer can be: these five references must be, *have to be*, interpolations or late additions into the older MaNDalas.

If so, this is a unique and special circumstance in the Rigveda. There are other actual or alleged cases of interpolations in the Rigveda (all interpolations made during different stages of compilation of the Rigveda before the ten-MaNDala Rigveda was finalized), but *all* of them are incidental ones pertaining to ritual hymns or verses. But these, if they are interpolations, are deliberate interpolations of a political nature, since only one father-and-son pair of Kings forms the subject of the interpolated references. And only some unique circumstance could have been responsible for this.

The nature of this unique circumstance can only be elucidated by an examination of the nature of the references themselves.

And, on examination, we get the following picture: the five references in the older MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas are laudatory and even adulatory references to Purukutsa and Trasadasyu. Purukutsa and Trasadasyu, *although they were not even Vedic Aryans* (as we shall see in our chapter on the identity of the Vedic Aryans) are

accorded the highest praise in the Rigveda; and this high praise is on account of the fact that they were responsible for the victory, perhaps the very survival as a nation, of the P<sup>U</sup>rus (*who were the Vedic Aryans*) in a vital struggle between the P<sup>U</sup>rus. and their enemies which must have taken place during the period of the Late MaNDalas.

As a result, the extremely grateful RSis belonging to the families intimately connected with the Bharatas (namely, the ANgirasas of both the BharadvAja and Gotama groups, and the VasiSThas) recorded their tribute to Purukutsa and Trasadasyu in the form of verses.

The case of Purukutsa and Trasadasyu was clearly such a special one in the eyes of these RSis that in their case, *and only in their case in the whole of the Rigveda*, they made a point of breaking with orthodox tradition and interpolating these verses in their praise into the older MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas connected with their families.

The praise is equally special: in IV.42.8-9, Trasadasyu is twice referred to as a “demi-god”, *ardhadeva*, a phrase which is not found again in the Rigveda; and. even the circumstance of his birth is glorified. The seven RSis are described as performing sacrifices, and Purukutsa’s wife as giving oblations to Indra and VaruNa, before the Gods are pleased to reward them with the birth of Trasadasyu, “the demi-god, the slayer of the foeman”.

IV.38.1, likewise, thanks Mitra and VaruNa for the services which Trasadasyu, “the winner of our fields and plough-lands, and the strong smiter who subdued the Dasyus”, rendered to the P<sup>U</sup>rus.

VI.20.10 refers to the P<sup>U</sup>rus lauding Indra for the help rendered by him to Purukutsa (read: the help rendered by Purukutsa to the P<sup>U</sup>rus) in a war against the DA<sup>A</sup>s tribes.



1.63.7 refers to Indra rendering military aid to the PUrus, by way of Purukutsa and by way of SudAs.

VII.19.3 refers to Indra helping the PUrus “in winning land and slaying foemen”, once by way of Trasadasyu Paurukutsa and once by way of SudAs.

These five interpolated references in the older MaNDalas stand out sharply from the other references in eleven hymns in the later MaNDalas: those references do not *even once* refer to the PUrus in connection with Purukutsa and Trasadasyu; and the only praise of these kings is found in the *dAnastutis* (V.33; VIII.19).

That the five references to Purukutsa and Trasadasyu in the older MaNDalas and upamaNDalas are interpolations is, therefore, proved by:

1. Their violation of our chronology; and even of their own implied chronology.
2. Their special nature which makes them stand out sharply from the other references to these kings in later MaNDalas.
3. The fact that in the case of at least two of these five references, even the Western scholars have noted that they are interpolations or late additions (which is a very high ratio, considering that such interpolations are not necessarily detectable):

In respect of IV.42.8-9, Griffith tells us that “Grassmann banishes stanzas 8, 9 and 10 to the appendix as late additions to the hymn”.

In respect of VII.19, the entire hymn appears to be a late addition into MaNDala VII. This Manala is contemporaneous with the period of SudAs; and in his footnote to VII. 19.8, Griffith notes that the King referred to in the verse is “probably a descendant of SudAs, who must have lived long

before the composition of this hymn, as the favour bestowed on him is referred to as old in stanza 6”.

So much for these references, which, *alone* in the whole of the Rigveda, *appear* to stand out against our chronology of the MaNDalas.

But, before concluding this section, we must also take note of the references to MandhAtA: the only references to him in the Rigveda are in late MaNDalas.

On the face of it, this would appear to fit in with the general picture: Purukutsa, Trasadasyu and TrAsadasyava belong to the period of the late MaNDalas, and their ancestor MandhAtA also belongs to the same period.

However, this runs in the face of the traditional picture of MandhAtA: all tradition outside the Rigveda is unanimous in identifying him as a very early historical king.

Of course, when information outside the Rigveda is in contradiction to information in the Rigveda, the former is to be rejected. But is it really in contradiction in this case?

An examination shows that although the three references in the Rigveda occur in late MaNDalas, they are unanimous (with each other and with traditional information outside the Rigveda) in identifying MandhAtA as a King from the remote past:

a. Not one of the three references treats MandhAtA as a contemporary person.

b. In fact, VIII.39.8 refers to him as one of the earliest performers of the sacrifice, *yajñeSu pUrvyam*.

Likewise, VIII.40.12 refers to MandhAtA together with the ancient ANgirasas as “our ancestors”.

c. The general period of MandhAtA also appears to be indicated in two of the references:

VIII.40.12, as we saw, classifies MandhAtA with the ancient ANgirasas.

I.112.13 is more specific: it names MandhAtA in the same verse as BharadvAja. (The other reference to BharadvAja in this particular set of ASvin hymns, in I.116.18, likewise refers to BharadvAja and DivodAsa in the same verse.)

The inference is clear: MandhAtA belongs to the earliest period of MaNDala VI and beyond.

The whole situation reeks of irony: the TRkSi Kings Purukutsa and Trasadasyu belong to the period of the late MaNDalas, but references (albeit interpolations) to them are found in the oldest MaNDalas; whereas their ancestor MandhAtA, who belongs to the oldest period, even preceding MaNDala VI, is referred to only in the latest MaNDalas.

As there is logic behind the first circumstance, there is logic behind the second one as well:

1. MandhAtA is not referred to in the oldest MaNDalas because his period preceded the period of these MaNDalas; and he was a non-PUru King while these MaNDalas are specifically Bharata (PUru) MaNDalas.

2. He is referred to in the later MaNDalas because:

a. The composer who refers to him in VIII.39.8 and VIII.40.12 is NAbhAka KANva. According to tradition, NAbhAka is a King from the IkSvAku (TRkSi) dynasty who joined the KaNva family of RSis. He is, therefore, a descendant of MandhAtA, whom, indeed, he refers to as his ancestor.

b. Hymn I.112 (like I.116) is a historiographical

hymn, which refers to many historical characters. These historiographical hymns, incidentally and inadvertently, provide us with many historical clues. The reference to MandhAtA is an example of this.

In conclusion, the references to Kings and RSis in the Rigveda fully confirm and corroborate our chronology.

## **V THE STRUCTURE AND FORMATION OF THE RIGVEDA**

The structure and formation of the Rigveda can be summarised from various angles:

- A. The Order of the MaNDalas.
- B. The Formation of the Rigveda.
- C. The Chronology of the RSis.
- D. The Chronology of the MaNDalas.

### **V.A. The Order of the MaNDalas**

The chronological order of the MaNDalas, as we saw, is: VI, III, VII, IV, II, V, VIII, IX, X, with the chronological period of MaNDala I spread out over the periods of at least four other MaNDalas (IV, II, V, VIII).

Needless to say, the chronological order of the ten MaNDalas appears to bear no relationship to the serial order in which the MaNDalas are arranged.

But the matter becomes clearer when we examine the case of the Family MaNDalas separately from the case of the non-family MaNDalas.

There is a general consensus among the scholars that the six Family MaNDalas, II-VII, formed the original core of the Rigveda, and the four non-family MaNDalas, I and VIII-X, were added to the corpus later.

The serial order of the non-family MaNDalas tallies with their chronological order. The only two problems are:

1. Why is MaNDala I placed *before*, rather than after, the corpus of the Family MaNDalas?
2. The Family MaNDalas are *not* arranged in chronological order; so what is the criterion adopted in their arrangement?

These questions have remained unanswered. But actually the answers are clear from the evidence:

1. MaNDala I, unlike the other non-family MaNDalas, is *not* unambiguously later than the Family MaNDalas in terms of composition and compilation: many upa-maNDalas in this MaNDala are contemporaneous with the Later Family MaNDalas, and some even precede them.

It is in recognition of this fact that the compilers of the Rigveda placed it before the Family MaNDalas.

2. The Family MaNDalas were formulated into a text before the addition of the non-family MaNDalas, and the criterion for their arrangement was not chronology, but *size*: MaNDala II is the smallest of the Family MaNDalas with 429 verses, while MaNDala VII is the biggest with 841 verses.

The number of verses in the six Family MaNDalas is, respectively: 429, 617, 589, 727, 765, 841.

Clearly, there is a lacuna here: MaNDala III (617 verses) has more verses than MaNDala IV (589 verses).

The only logical explanation for this is that MaNDala III originally, at the time of fixing of the arrangement of the Family MaNDalas, had *fewer* verses than MaNDala IV; but many verses were

added to it at a later point of time, which upset the equation.

Surprisingly, this is not just a matter of logic: *the fact is directly confirmed in the Aitareya BrAhmaNa the BrAhmaNa text which is connected with the Rigveda.*

According to the Aitareya BrAhmaNa (VI.18), six hymns (III.21, 30, 34, 36, 38-39) were “seen” (i.e. composed) by ViSvAmitra at a later point of time to compensate certain other hymns which were “seen” by ViSvAmitra but were misappropriated by VAmadeva.

That is: after the text of the Family MaNDalas was fixed, a dispute arose with the ViSvAmitras claiming that some of the hymns included in the VAmadeva MaNDala were actually composed by ViSvAmitras. The dispute was resolved by including some new hymns into MaNDala III, by way of compensation, in lieu of the disputed hymns.

If these six hymns (III.21, 30, 34, 36, 38-39), which have a total of 68 verses, are excluded from the verse count of MaNDala III, we get, more or less, the original verse count of the six Family MaNDalas: 429, 549, 589, 737, 765, 841.

## **V.B The Formation of the Rigveda**

The process of formation of the Rigveda took place in four stages.

1. *The Six-MaNDala Rigveda*: The Family MaNDalas.

2. *The Eight-MaNDala Rigveda*: MaNDalas I-VIII.

a. *Major interpolations*: III.21, 30, 34, 36, 38-39.

b. *Minor interpolations*: References to TRkSi Kings in older MaNDalas.

c. *Introductions*: Old BhRgu hymns included in the Rigveda in MaNDala VIII.

3. *The Nine-MaNDala Rigveda*: MaNDalas I-IX.

*Major interpolations*: The VAlakhilya hymns VIII. 49-59.

4. *The Ten MaNDala Rigveda*: MaNDalas 1-X.

a. Minor interpolations: (not specifiable here)

b. Minor adjustments: Splitting and combining of hymns to produce symmetrical numbers (191 hymns each in MaNDalas I and X) or astronomically or ritually significant numbers and sequences (see papers by Subhash C. Kak, Prof. of Electrical and Computer Engineering, Louisiana State University, Baton Rouge, U.S.A.).

The completion of the fourth stage saw the full canonization of the Rigveda, and the text was frozen into a form which it has maintained to this day.

### **V.C. The Chronology of the RSis**

The chronological positions of some major RSis are summarized in the following chart. Asterisks indicate the first RSi from whom the family originated (chart on next page).

The chart is self-explanatory. However, the following points must be clarified, particularly in respect of the eponymous RSis of the general upa-maNDalas, whose period stretches across the periods of four MaNDalas (IV, II, V, VIII):

a. Agastya and Kutsa are contemporaries of VasiSTha, but the upa-maNDalas which bear their names were composed by their descendants, and therefore figure as general upa-maNDalas which come later in time.

b. KaSyapa is later than VAmadeva, but he is

also earlier than Atri (his descendant AvatsAra KASyapa being a senior RSi in V.44), and he must therefore be placed in the period of MaNDala I between the middle and late upa-maNDalas.

c. Parucchepa's upa-maNDala has been classified as a general upa-maNDalas on the ground that there is no direct relationship between Parucchepa and the actual composers of either the Early, Middle or Late MaNDalas. However, it is clear that the beginnings of the Parucchepa upa-maNDala lie in the late rather than the middle period: unlike in the case of other MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas, the Parucchepa upa-maNDala appears to be composed by a single composer rather than by a group of composers comprising many generations (the uniformity of style and content of the hymns certainly gives this impression), and this composer already names Atri, KaNva, and Priyamedha as senior RSis (I.139.9).

## **V.D. The Chronology of the MaNDalas**

[Click Here](#)

We are concerned, in this chapter and this book, with the internal chronology of the Rigveda rather than with its absolute chronology: that is, we are concerned with the chronological sequence of the different parts of the Rigveda, and not with the exact century BC to which a particular part belongs.

However, the absolute chronology of the text is ultimately bound to be a vital factor in our understanding of Vedic history; and, while we leave the subject for the present to other scholars, it will be pertinent to note here that our analysis of the internal chronology of the Rigveda does shed some light on an aspect which is important to any study of absolute chronology: namely, the duration of the period of composition of the Rigveda.



It is clear that the Rigveda was not composed in one sitting, or in a series of sittings, by a conference of RSis: the text is clearly the result of many centuries of composition. The question is: just how many centuries?

The Western scholars measure the periods of the various MaNDalas in terms of decades, while some Indian scholars go to the other extreme and measure them in terms of millenniums and decamillenniums.

Amore rational, but still conservative, estimate would be as follows:

1. There should be, at a very conservative estimate, a minimum of at least six centuries between the completion of the first nine MaNDalas of the Rigveda and the completion of the tenth.
2. The period of the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas (V, VIII, IX, and the corresponding parts of MaNDala I) should together comprise a minimum of three to four centuries.
3. The period of the Middle MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas (IV, II, and the corresponding parts of MaNDala I) and the gap which must have separated them from the period of the Late MaNDalas, should likewise comprise a minimum of another three to four centuries.
4. The period of MaNDalas III and VII and the early upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I, beginning around the period of SudAs, should comprise at least two centuries.
5. The period of MaNDala VI, from its beginnings in the remote past and covering its period of composition right upto the time of SudAs, must again cover a minimum of at least six centuries.

Thus, by a conservative estimate, the total period

of composition of the Rigveda must have covered a period of at least two millenniums.

Incidentally, on all the charts shown by us so far, we have depicted all the MaNDalas on a uniform scale. A more realistic depiction would be as follows:

[Click Here](#)

## **APPENDIX MISINTERPRETED WORDS IN THE RIGVEDA**

There are some words in the Rigveda which have been misinterpreted as names of Kings or RSis (often because some of these words were also the names or epithets of RSis in later parts of the text), thereby causing confusion in Rigvedic interpretation.

The exact nature of these words has, therefore, to be clarified. These words are:

- A. Atri.
- B. Kutsa.
- C. AuSija.
- D. TRkSi.
- E. Atithigva.

### **Appendix A. Atri**

Atri is the name of a RSi, the eponymous founder of the Atri family of MaNDala V. His name is referred to in the following hymns (not counting references, to him, or to themselves, by the Atris):

I.45.3; 51.3; 139.9; 183.5;  
V.15.5;  
VIII.5.25;  
X.150.5

However, the word Atri existed *before* the period of this RSi, as a *name or epithet of the Sun*,

which was the original meaning of this word. The RSi of this name came later.

We will be concerned here only with the references to this mythical Atri, the Sun. These references are found in 15 hymns:

- I. 112.7, 16; 116.8; 117.3; 118.7; 119.6; 180.4;
- II. 8.5;
- V. 40.6-9; 78.4;
- VI. 50.10;
- VII. 68.5; 71.5;
- X. 39.9; 80.3; 143.1, 3.

The word in the above references is confused by scholars with the name of the RSi Atri. However, it is clear that there is a mythical Atri in the Rigveda distinct from the historical Atri, and, for that matter, a mythical Kutsa distinct from the historical Kutsa: Macdonell, in his Vedic Mythology, classifies Atri and Kutsa along with “Mythical Priests and Heroes”<sup>5</sup> like Manu, BhRgu, AtharvaNa, Dadhyanc, ANgiras, Navagvas, DaSagvas and USanA, whom he distinguishes from “several other ancient seers of a historical or semi-historical character... such (as) Gotama, ViSvAmitra, VAmadeva, BharadvAja and VasiSTha”.<sup>6</sup>

That this mythical Atri is distinct from the historical Atri, and the myth existed long before the birth of this historical RSis confirmed by an examination of the references: we find that these references undergo a complete transformation in MaNDala V, affected by RSis of the Atri family in a deliberate attempt to try and appropriate the myth for themselves by identifying the mythical Atri with the eponymous Atri, their ancestor.

This, on the one hand, shows up an interesting aspect of the family psychology of the RSis, and, on the other, confirms our chronological order of the MaNDalas.

The references fall into three categories:

1. References in older MaNDalas (VI, VII, II) where Atri is a name of the Sun.

2. References in MaNDala V where Atri the Sun is deliberately transformed into Atri the RSi, as part of two new myths.

3. References in later MaNDalas (I, X) where the RSi Atri is fully identified with the mythical Atri in a transformed myth.

To elaborate:

1. VI.50.10 and VII.71.5 refer to the ASvins rescuing Atri from “great darkness”. As Griffith points out in his footnote to VII.71.5: “The reappearance, heralded by the ASvins or Gods of Twilight, of the departed Sun, appears to be symbolised in all these legends.”

VII.68.5 also refers to the same natural phenomenon, the gradual appearance of the Sun at dawn, in a different way: it credits the ASvins with making Atri (the Sun) increasingly bright and glorious with food and nourishment from their rich store.

II.8.5 does not refer to the ASvins. It uses the word Atri as an epithet for Agni (who is literally the earthly representative of the Sun). The epithet is clearly a repetition of a simile in the previous verse, II.8.4, where also Agni is likened to the Sun (BhAnu).

2. Two references by the Atris bifurcate the original myth into two distinct myths, both connected up with their eponymous ancestor.

In the original myth, the ASvins rescue Atri, the Sun, from “great darkness”.

In the two transformed myths:

a. The ASvins rescue Atri, the RSi, from a pit or cavern:  
V.78.4.

b. Atri, the RSi, rescues the Sun from “great darkness”:  
V.40.6-9.

In V.78.4, Atri, lying in a deep pit or cavern, calls out to the ASvins for help, and is rescued by them from his distress.

In V.40.6-9, the Sun has been pierced “through and through with darkness” by a demon called SvarbhAnu (literally “sky-sun”), and all creatures stand bewildered and frightened by the sight. Atri, however, by his Brahmanic powers, “discovered SUrya concealed in gloom”, and, with the same powers, “established the eye of SUrya in the heavens”. The hymn smugly concludes: “The Atris found the Sun again... This none besides had power to do.”

3. All the eleven references (in nine hymns) in the later MaNDalas (i.e. in late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I, and in MaNDala X) reflect one of the two transformed versions of the myth:

They refer to the RSi Atri being rescued (X.143.1, 3) from a fiery, burning pit (I.112.7, 16; 116.8; 118.7; 119.6; 180.4; X.39.9; 80.3), or simply a pit (I.117.3), by the ASvins.

The “fiery, burning pit” of the transformed myth is clearly incompatible with the “great darkness” of the original nature-myth.

## **Appendix B. Kutsa**

Kutsa is the name of a RSi, the eponymous ancestor of the Kutsa RSis of MaNDala I. His name is referred to in the following hymns:

VII.25.5;  
X.29.2; 38.5.

However, the word Kutsa existed before the period of this RSi, as a *name or epithet of Vajra, the thunderbolt*, which was the original meaning of this word. The RSi of this name came later.

We will, again, be concerned here only with the references to this mythical Kutsa, the thunderbolt. These references are found in 24 hymns:

- I. 33.14; 51.6; 63.3; 106.6; 112.9, 23; 121.9;  
174.5; 175.4;
- II. 19.6;
- IV. 16.10-12; 26.1; 30.4;
- V. 29.9, 10; 31.8;
- VI. 20.5; 26.3; 31.3;
- VII. 19.2;
- VIII. 1.11; 24.25;
- X. 40.6; 49.3, 4; 99.9; 138.1.

The word in the above references is confused by the scholars with the name of the RSi Kutsa.

It is true that, in this case, there is more of an excuse for this confusion: while the mythical Atri is not a very personalized or anthropomorphised figure in the early references (before the Atris play their sleight of hand), the mythical Kutsa is a highly anthropomorphised form of the thunderbolt from the very beginning.

However, the confusion has been only in the minds of the interpreters of the hymns. The composers were under no delusions about the identity of this mythical Kutsa, and the evidence identifying this Kutsa with the thunderbolt is overwhelming:

1. The NaighaNTuka (2.20) gives *Kutsa* as one of the synonyms of *Vajra* (the thunderbolt).

2. Kutsa is given the epithet Arjuneya in four of the above hymns (I.112.23; IV.26.1; VII. 19.2; VIII.1.11). This is wrongly interpreted as a

patronymic of the RSi Kutsa. Actually, this is an epithet signifying the white flash of the thunderbolt.

In another verse, III.44.5 (which does not refer to Kutsa), *arjunam*, “the Bright”, is given as a synonym of *vajram*.

3. All the references to the mythical Kutsa (except the two by the Kutsas themselves: I.106.6; 112.9, 23) refer directly or indirectly to a celestial battle between Indra, the thunder-god, and SuSNa, the demon of drought whose other epithet is *kuyava*, “bad grain”. (Two of the verses, IV.26.1 and X.40.6, only *mention* Kutsa, and do not refer to this battle, but other factors show that it is the mythical Kutsa who is being referred to.)

The place of Kutsa in these references can be understood only on the basis of his identity as the personified form of Indra’s thunderbolt:

a. In three references, Indra kills the demon *with* Kutsa (*kutsena*) as with a weapon: IV.16.11; V.29.9; VI.31.3.

b. In most of the references, however, Indra is represented as doing the deed of killing the demon *for* Kutsa, or *in aid* of Kutsa. There is, however, a coherent mythological explanation for the conversion of Kutsa from the *instrument* of the deed to its *beneficiary*:

Six of the above references refer to the chariot-wheel of the Sun: I.174.5; 175.4; IV.16.12; 30.4; V.29.9; VI.31.3. In his footnote to I.175.4, Griffith explains that “Indra is said to have taken the wheel of the chariot of the Sun, and to have cast it like a quoit against the demon of drought”. This was done, as per IV.30.4, “for... Kutsa, as he battled” (against the demon of drought).

In another hymn (which does not refer to Kutsa), there is again a reference to this use of the chariot-wheel of the Sun. Here, in his footnote to

I.130.9, Griffith provides the myth in greater detail, albeit in a later evolved form: "*He tore the Sun's wheel off*: according to SAyaNa, BrahmA had promised the Asuras or fiends that Indra's thunderbolt should never destroy them. Indra, accordingly cast at them the wheel of the Sun's chariot and slew them therewith." In short: as the thunderbolt (Kutsa) was proving to be ineffectual as it battled against the demon of drought, Indra despatched the chariot-wheel of the Sun to its aid.

c. In two of the references, Kutsa is even referred to as the charioteer of Indra: II.19.6; VI.20.5.

The connotation of Indra's "chariot" is clear in the Rigveda: Indra's chariot is the thunderbolt on which he streaks across the sky. The BhRgus are credited in the Rigveda with the manufacture of Indra's thunderbolt: in IV. 16.20, they are described as the manufacturers of Indra's chariot.

The sense of Kutsa being Indra's charioteer is therefore clear: the thunderbolt is Indra's chariot, and the anthropomorphised form of the thunderbolt is Indra's charioteer.

4. The identity between the mythical Kutsa and Indra's thunderbolt should have been clear to the scholars:

Griffith, for example, describes Kutsa in his various footnotes as "the particular friend of Indra" (I.33.14); "a favourite of Indra" (I.112.23); "favourite of Indra" (II.19.6); "the favoured friend of Indra" (IV.16.10); "the special friend of Indra" (VI.31.3); "Indra's favourite companion" (X.29.2).

But, wherever there is a reference to Indra's "friend" within the hymns themselves, and no names are mentioned, Griffith, in his footnotes, has no doubt as to the identity of this friend: "*Thy friend*: probably the vajra or thunderbolt, which is Indra's inseparable associate and ally" (1.10.9); "*With thy friend*: the thunderbolt" (1.53.7); "*His friend*: his constant companion, the



thunderbolt" (X.50.2).

Griffith's conclusion is based on a direct statement in VI.21.7: "With thy own ancient friend and companion, the thunderbolt..."

In the circumstance, it is strange that no scholar has seen fit to think twice before deciding that the Kutsa, who is Indra's favourite friend and companion, could be a human RSi.

5. The *only* other name in the Rigveda identified by Griffith in his footnotes as that of a friend of Indra, in a similar manner, is that of USanA KAavya: "the especial friend of Indra" (I.51.10; IV.16.2); "Indra's special friend" (V.29.9); "a favoured friend and companion of Indra" (X.22.6); "Indra's friend" (X.49.3).

What is significant is that USanA is referred to five times in the same verse as Kutsa (VI.26.1; V.29.9; 31.8; X.49.3; 99.9) and five times in the same hymn (Kutsa: I.51.6; 121.9; IV. 16. 10-12; VI.20.5; X.40.6; USanA: I.51.10-11; 121.12; IV.16.2; VI.20.11; X.40.7).

When we consider that there are 1028 hymns and 10552 verses in the Rigveda, and that the mythical Kutsa and USanA are referred to in only 29 verses and 19 verses respectively, the number of hymns and verses they share in common is too significant to be coincidental. Clearly, Kutsa and USanA share a close and special relationship.

And what is this close and special relationship? The Rigveda is very clear at least about the nature of the close and special relationship between Indra and USanA: USanA KAavya is mythically credited with being the (BhRgu) person who manufactured the *Vajra* or thunderbolt, and gave it to Indra for his weapon (I.51.10; 121.12; V.34.2).

The nature of the close and special relationship between USanA, Indra and Kutsa is therefore

clear: they are, respectively, the manufacturer, wielder, and personification of the thunderbolt.

6. Curiously, in a clear case of imitation of the Atris, we find here also a blatant attempt by the Kutsas to transform the myth so as to connect it up with their eponymous ancestor.

But while the transformation by the Atris is effected by bifurcating the original Atri myth into two different myths, the transformation by the Kutsas is effected by taking the original Kutsa myth, and the more successful of the two transformed Atri myths, grafting them together, and then bifurcating them into two different myths:

In the original Kutsa myth, Indra aids the mythical Kutsa in a celestial battle.

In the transformed Atri myth, the ASvins rescue the RSi Atri from a pit.

In the two transformed Kutsa myths:

a. Indra rescues the RSi Kutsa *from a pit*. I.106.6 (which is also the only hymn which emphatically calls Kutsa a “RSi”).

b. The ASvins aid the RSi Kutsa (in a battle? But this is not specified. Note: this is the only hymn in which Indra is replaced by the ASvins): I.112.9, 23.

This transformation of the original myth by the Kutsas is too clumsy, and too late in the day, to influence other references in the Rigveda, unlike the transformation of the Atri myth by the Atris, where the transformed myth becomes the basis for all subsequent references.

And the objective behind this transformation is far more modest than the objective of the Atris: while the Atris seek to glorify their eponymous ancestor by usurping the original deed of the ASvins and crediting their ancestor with supernatural powers,

the Kutsas seem content merely with identifying their eponymous ancestor with the mythical Kutsa of earlier references.

But the transformation serves to underline the fact that the original mythical Kutsa originally had nothing to do with the RSi Kutsa.

Besides the RSi Kutsa and the mythical Kutsa, there is a third Kutsa in the Rigveda who is referred to in four hymns: I.53.10; II.14.7; VI.18.13; X.83.5.

We will examine these references in the course of our examination of the word Atithigva.

### **Appendix C. AuSija**

AuSija is an epithet of the RSi KakSlvAn, who is called KakSlvAn *AuSija* Dairghatamas in the AnukramaNIs, and whose descendants are considered as forming a third major branch of the ANgiras family (after the BharadvAjas and Gotamas), the AuSijas.

In the Rigveda, however, this is neither the exclusive nor the original meaning of the word. In its original meaning, AuSija is *a name of the Sun*.

The word is referred to in the following hymns:

I.18.1; 112.11; 119.9; 122.4, 5;  
IV.21.6, 7;  
V.41.5;  
VI.4.6;  
X.99.11;

The references may be examined in three groups:

#### *1. The Family MaNDalas:*

a. VI.4.6: Agni is compared with the Sun. Agni spreads over both the worlds with splendour “like SUrya with his fulgent rays”, and dispels the darkness “like AuSija with clear flame swiftly

flying”.

b. IV.21.6-8 (the word AuSija is not repeated in verse 8): Indra unbars the spaces of the mountains (i.e. the rain-clouds) and lets loose “his floods, the water-torrents” which are lying hidden in “AuSija’s abode” (analogous to “VivasvAn’s dwelling” in I.53.1; III.34.7; 51.3; X.75.1; especially X.75.1 which also refers to the Waters.)

c. V.41.5: Atri is the priest of AuSija.

The meaning of AuSija is very clear from the above references. In the case of VI.4.6, SAyaNa recognizes AuSija as a name of the Sun. However, Griffith disagrees and feels instead that AuSija in VI.4.6 is “some contemporary priest who is regarded as bringing back the daylight by prayer and sacrifice”. In the case of V.41.5, all scholars, from SAyaNa to Griffith, are in agreement that Atri is “the ministrant priest of KakSlvAn, the son of USij”. According to these scholars, then, AuSija is a RSi (KakSlvAn) who dispels darkness with a clear flame flying in the sky, whose abode is the place (i.e. the sky) where rain-clouds store their water-torrents, and who has another RSi, Atri, as his priest! The absurdity of the above ideas is self-evident. Clearly, it is the Sun being referred to in all the above references: V.40, as we have already seen, makes it very clear that the Atris consider themselves to be special priests of the Sun.

## 2. MaNDala I

All the references to AuSija in MaNDala I are in the general and late upa-maNDalas. Here, it is clear, the word is an epithet of KakSlvAn: it is used in that sense in I.18.1; 119.9; 122.4, 5.

In I.112.11, it is used as an epithet of DlrghaSravas, who is referred to as a merchant. However, KakSlvAn is also referred to in the same verse, and it is natural to assume that the epithet applies to both of them.

### 3. MaNDala X

On the basis of the references in MaNDala 1, the scholars erroneously assume that AuSija is a patronymic of KakSlvAn, rather than an epithet. Hence they presume the existence of an ancestor named USij.

The single occurrence of this word in MaNDala X disproves this presumption: in X.99.11, AuSija is an epithet of RjiSvan, who belongs to the BharadvAja branch of the ANgiras family.

Even Griffith realizes that the explanation of AuSija as a patronymic does not fit the case here: “*AuSija*: son of USij. But as this patronymic does not properly belong to RjiSvan, the word here may perhaps mean ‘vehement’ ‘eagerly desirous’.”

What the scholars do not realize is that the explanation of AuSija as a patronymic does not fit the case anywhere: AuSija is the Sun in the Family MaNDalas, and an epithet in later MaNDalas: an epithet of KakSlvAn in MaNDala I and RjiSvan in (the single use of the word in) MaNDala X.

### **Appendix D. TRkSi**

TRkSi is the name of a tribe: the tribe to which Purukutsa and Trasadasyu belong, and hence equivalent to the IkSvAkus of traditional history.

The word occurs only twice in the Rigveda:

VI.46.8;  
VIII.22.7.

This name is wrongly interpreted as the name of a King on the basis of VIII.22.7, which is translated as: “Come to us, Lords of ample wealth, by paths of everlasting Law; Whereby to high dominion ye with mighty strength raised TRkSi, Trasadasyu’s

son.”

However, VI.46.8 makes it very clear that TRkSi is the name of a *tribe* and not a person. The following is a translation of VI.46.7-8: “All strength and valour that is found, Indra, in tribes of NahuSas, and all the splendid fame that the Five tribes enjoy, bring all manly powers, at once. Or, Maghavan, what vigorous strength in TRkSi lay, in Druhyus or in PUru’s folk, fully bestow on us that, in the conquering fray, we may subdue our foes in fight.”

On TRkSi, Griffith comments: “*TRkSi*: a King so named, says SAyaNa.” However, it is clear that it is only tribes who are being referred to : the idea that the name of one King could be included in a list of tribes is based purely on the interpretation of VIII.22.7.

However, the interpretation of VIII.22.7 is wrong the phrase “TRkSim... TrAsadasyavam” is to be translated, *not* as “TRkSi, Trasadasyu’s son”, but as “*the* TrkSi, Trasadasyu’s son”. The name of the son is not specified, and he is referred to only by his patronymic, as in the case of so many other references in the Rigveda: eg. PrAtardani (V1.26.8, son of Prataradana), SAryAta (I.51.12; III.51.3, son of SaryAta) and so on.

## **Appendix E. Atithigva**

The word Atithigva is found in thirteen hymns in the Rigveda:

- I. 51.6; 53.8, 10; 112.14; 130.7;
- II. 14.7;
- IV. 26.3;
- VI. 18.13; 26.3; 47.22;
- VII. 19.8;
- VIII. 53.2; 68.16, 17;
- X. 48.8.

There is no general misinterpretation as such of this word. However, a clarification of the different

meanings of the word will be in order here:

1. Atithigva is an epithet of DivodAsa in five hymns: I.112.14; 130.7; IV.26.3; VI.26.3 (DivodAsa 26.5); 47.22.

This is also likely to be the case in one more hymn: I.51.6, which refers to Sambara (who is associated in numerous other references, including in four of the above ones, with DivodAsa).

2. But in four hymns, Atithigva is an epithet of a *descendant* of SudAs (while DivodAsa is an *ancestor* of SudAs: VII.18.25): I.53.8; VII.19.8; VIII.68.16, 17; X.48.8.

Hymn VII.19 is a late hymn interpolated into MaNDala VII, as we have seen in our earlier discussion on the TRkSi interpolations, and it pertains to the late period of MaNDala VIII. This hymn refers to SudAs as an ancient figure from the past, while it refers to the second Atithigva in the eighth verse as a contemporary figure. Griffith notes that this Atithigva is “probably a descendant of SudAs who must have lived long before the composition of this hymn”.

In VIII.68.16, 17, as well, this Atithigva is a near contemporary figure: his son Indrota is the patron of the RSi of this hymn.

I.53.8 and X.48.8 refer to the victory of this Atithigva over Karanja and ParNaya, who are not referred to elsewhere in the Rigveda.

The fact that Atithigva represents three different entities in the Rigveda is accepted by many scholars. Keith and Macdonell, in their *Vedic Index of Names and Subjects*,<sup>7</sup> note that “Roth distinguishes three Atithigvas - the Atithigva DivodAsa, the enemy of ParNaya and Karanja, and the enemy of TUrvaYANa”. Keith and Macdonell themselves appear to disagree: “But the various passages can be reconciled.”

However, actually, their own interpretation must also show three Atithigvas, since, even within the favourable references to Atithigva, they admit that while the word refers “in nearly all cases to the same king, otherwise called DivodAsa”, nevertheless “a different Atithigva appears to be referred to in a DAnastuti (‘Praise of Gifts’) where his son Indrota is mentioned”.

3. Finally, there is the third Atithigva who is referred to in four hymns: I.53.10; II.14.7; VI.18.13; VIII.53.2.

This Atithigva is clearly not the hero of the references. All the four references relate to the defeat of Kutsa, Ayu and Atithigva at the hands of (according to I.53.10 and VI.18.13) TURvayANa.

These references, if taken at face value, are *absolutely incompatible* with *all* other information in the Rigveda: all the other references to both Atithigva and Kutsa are favourable ones, while these references are clearly hostile ones in their exultation at their defeat. What is more, I.53.8 exults in Atithigva’s *victory* over Karanja and ParNaya, while two verses later, I.53.10 exults in Atithigva’s *defeat* at the hands of TURvayANa. Clearly, two different Atithigvas are being referred to.

And this second Atithigva is compulsorily to be taken in combination with a Kutsa (obviously a different one from the RSi Kutsa as well as the mythical Kutsa, the thunderbolt) and an Ayu (otherwise the name of an ancestral figure)

These references present an insoluble problem for all scholars engaged in a historical study of the Rigveda. SAyaNa, for example, tries to twist the meaning of the references in order to bring them in line with other references: Griffith notes, in his footnote to VI.18.13, that “SAyaNa represents the exploit as having been achieved *for* Kutsa, Ayu and Atithigva, but this is not the meaning of the words of the text”.



SAYana's attempt to twist the meaning of the references is partly based on his knowledge of the identity of TURvayANa: as Griffith notes, "according to SAYaNa, *tUrvayANa*, 'quickly going', is an epithet of DivodAsa". But Atithigva is also an epithet of DivodAsa. Hence SAYaNa finds what he probably considers to be an internal contradiction within the references; and the only way he can resolve this contradiction is by assuming, *against* the actual meaning of the words of the text, that Kutsa, Ayu and Atithigva must be the heroes of the references.

We have the following rational (if speculative) solution to offer towards the elucidation of these seemingly senseless references:

**a.** Atithigva, as we have seen, is the epithet of an ancestor of SudAs (i.e. DivodAsa), as well as of a descendant. A natural inference is that Atithigva was a common epithet of Kings of the Bharata dynasty.

**b.** The word Kutsa (apart from its identity as a synonym of the thunderbolt) is found in the Rigveda in the names of two persons: the King Purukutsa and the RSi Kutsa. Purukutsa is a King of the TRkSi (IkSvAku) dynasty; and the RSi Kutsa, as per tradition (outside the Rigveda), was also the son of an IkSvaku king. On the analogy of Atithigva, Kutsa may then have been a common epithet of Kings of the TRkSi dynasty.

**c.** There are many references in the Rigveda where tribes are named in combinations purely in a figurative sense, often with special reference to their geographical locations, in order to indicate generality or universality.

Thus, VIII. 10.5: "Whether ye Lords of ample wealth (ASvins) now linger in the east or west, with Druhyu, or with Anu, Yadu, TurvaSa, I call you hither, come to me."

Or I.108.8: "If with the Yadus, TurvaSas ye sojourn, with Druhyus, Anus, PUrur, Indra-Agni!

Even from thence, ye mighty Lords, come hither,  
and drink libations of the flowing Soma.”

However, the reference relevant to us is VI.46.7-8, which we have already seen earlier: “All strength and valour that is found, Indra, in tribes of NahuSas, and all the splendid fame that the Five tribes enjoy, bring all manly powers at once. Or, Maghavan, what vigorous strength in TRkSi lay, in Druhyus or in PUru’s folk, fully bestow on us, that, in the conquering fray, we may subdue our foes in fight.”

The above is Griffith’s translation. The meaning is: “Indra give us the strength and power of the tribes of NahuSas: the five tribes (Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus, PUrus). Give us the strength and power of all the tribes: the TRkSis (in the east), the Druhyus (in the west) and the PUrus (in the centre), that we may be invincible in battle.”

Here, clearly the TRkSis in the east, the Druhyus in the west, and the PUrus in the centre, when named together, signify “all the tribes”.

*The same symbolism is probably expressed in the naming together of Kutsa, Ayu and Atithigva.* The three names probably represent the common epithets of the Kings of the TRkSis, the Druhyus and the PUrus (i.e. Bharatas); and when taken in combination, they mean “all the tribes”.

Therefore, what the four references mean is: “Indra is the Lord of all peoples and lands”; or, in two of them: “Indra made TURvayANa (DivodAsa) the sovereign of all the tribes.”.

*In conclusion:* we have conducted a full examination and analysis of the Rigveda from all the relevant angles, namely:

1. The interrelationships among the composers.
2. The references to composers within the

hymns.

3. The references to Kings and RSis.

4. The family structure of the MaNDalas.

5. The system of ascription of hymns in the MaNDalas.

The chronological picture that we obtain, jointly and severally, in other words unanimously, from all these angles is that the chronological order of the MaNDalas is: VI, III, VII, IV, II, V, VIII, IX, X (The upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I covering the periods of MaNDalas IV, II, V, VIII).

### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>HCIP, p.340.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p.343.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p.340-341.

<sup>4</sup>HCIP, p.233.

<sup>5</sup>VM, pp. 138-147.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., p.147.

<sup>7</sup>VI, Vol. 1, p. 15.

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## Chapter 4

### The Geography of the Rigveda

The internal chronology of the Rigveda being firmly established, the next step in our historical analysis of the Rigveda is the establishment of the geography of the text.

The geography of the Rigveda has been the most misrepresented aspect of the text in the hands of the scholars: the geographical information in the Rigveda, to put it in a nutshell, more or less pertains to the area from Uttar Pradesh in the east to Afghanistan in the west, the easternmost river mentioned in the text being the GaNgA, and the westernmost being the western tributaries of the Indus.

This geographical information is treated in a simplistic manner by the scholars, and the result is a completely distorted picture of Rigvedic geography:

1. Firstly, taking the, Rigveda as one monolithic unit, the information is interpreted to mean that the area of the Rigveda extended from western Uttar Pradesh to Afghanistan.

It is further assumed that the habitat of the Vedic Aryans, during the period of composition of the Rigveda, was the central part of this area: the Saptasindhu or Punjab, the Land of the Five Rivers bounded on the east by the SarasvatI and on the west by the Indus. Their eastern horizon was western Uttar Pradesh and their western horizon was Afghanistan.

The consensus on this point is so general that even in our *own* earlier book dealing with the Aryan invasion theory, where we have *not* yet analysed the Rigveda in detail, we have automatically assumed the Punjab to be the habitat of the Vedic Aryans during the period of

the Rigveda.

However, as we shall see in the course of our analysis, the habitat of the Vedic Aryans during the period was considerably to the east of the Punjab.

2. Secondly, after taking the Punjab to be the habitat of the Rigvedic Aryans, the matter is not left at that. A further slant is introduced into the interpretation of the geographical data in the Rigveda: it is automatically assumed, on the basis of an extraneous theory based on a misinterpretation of linguistic data, and without any basis within the Rigvedic data itself, that a movement from west to east is to be discerned in the Rigveda.

Thus, western places within the horizon of the Rigveda are treated as places old and familiar to the Vedic Aryans, being their “early habitats”; while eastern places within the horizon of the Rigveda are treated as new and unfamiliar places with which the Vedic Aryans are “becoming acquainted”.

The same goes for places *outside* the horizon of the Rigveda (i.e. places *not* named in the Rigveda): places to the west of Afghanistan, not named in the Rigveda, are treated as places which have been “forgotten” by the Vedic Aryans; while places to the east of western Uttar Pradesh, not named in the Rigveda, are treated as places “still unknown” to the Vedic Aryans.

3. Thirdly, and as a direct corollary to the above, it is automatically assumed that there was a movement of place-names as well from west to east.

There are three rivers named in the Rigveda to which this applies: the Sarasvatī, Gomati and Sarayu. The Sarasvatī in the Rigveda is the river to the east of the Punjab (flowing through Haryana) and the Gomati and Sarayu in the Rigveda are rivers to the west of the Punjab

(western tributaries of the Indus). This is the general consensus, and it is confirmed by an examination of the references in the Rigveda.

But a Sarasvatī (Haraxvaitī) and a Sarayū (Haroiu) are also found in Afghanistan; and a Gomati and a Sarayū are found in northeastern Uttar Pradesh. Clearly, there has been a transfer of name, in the case of these three river-names, from one river to another.

The logical procedure would be to suspend judgement, till further evidence is forthcoming, as to the locations of the rivers which originally bore these three names. A second, and slightly less logical, procedure, would be to automatically assume that the Rigvedic rivers originally bore all the three names, since the oldest recorded occurrence of the three names is in the Rigveda.

However, a west-to-east movement is assumed in respect of all three names, and consequently, the westernmost rivers bearing the three names are taken to be the original bearers of those names.

4. Thus far, the distortion in interpretation and presentation of the geographical data in the Rigveda is still relatively mild. It is in fact too mild for some extremist scholars who would like to present a more definitive picture of a west-to-east movement into India.

Some of these scholars attempt to connect stray words in the Rigveda, *often words not even having any geographical context*, with places far to the west of the horizon of the Rigveda: an extreme example of this is the attempt to suggest that a root word *rip-* in the Rigveda indicates a subdued memory of the Rhipaeian mountains: the Urals.

Some scholars, not satisfied with the idea that the Vedic Aryans *came* from the west, attempt to show that they were *still* in the west even during the period of composition of the Rigveda: the Saptasindhu, it is suggested by some, refers to

seven rivers in Central Asia, and the SarasvatI in the Rigveda is *not* the river of Haryana, but the river of Afghanistan.

There is even an extreme lunatic fringe which would like to suggest that the GaNgA and YamunA of the Rigveda are rivers in Afghanistan. A political “scholar”, Rajesh Kochhar, as part of a concerted campaign to show that the events in the RAmAyaNa took place in Afghanistan, transfers the entire locale of the epic to Afghanistan: “Ravana’s Lanka can be a small island in the midst of river Indus... by Vindhya is meant Baluch hills, and by sea the Lower Indus.”<sup>1</sup> He does this under cover of examining the geography of the Rigveda, in his book, *The Vedic People: Their History and Geography* (Orient Longman, New Delhi, 1999), where he decides that in the RAmAyaNa (which he examines for the geography of the Rigveda), SarasvatI is identified with Helmand and GaNgA and YamunA as its tributaries in the hilly areas of Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup> He makes this revolutionary discovery on the basis of a verse in the VAlmIki RAmAyaNa (2.65.6) where “YamunA is described as surrounded by mountains”.<sup>3</sup>

This is the level to which “scholarship” can stoop, stumble and fall.

In this book, we will examine the geography of the Rigveda, *not* on the basis of interpretations of verses from the VAlmIki RAmAyaNa or the HanumAn CAItSA, but on the basis of the actual geographical data within the hymns and verses of the Rigveda itself, under the following heads:

- I. The Rigvedic Rivers.
- II. The Evidence of River-names.
- III. The Evidence of Place-names.
- IV. The Evidence of Animal-names.

Appendix: The So-called Negative Evidence.

# I THE RIGVEDIC RIVERS

The rivers named in the Rigveda can be classified into five geographical categories:

1. *The Northwestern Rivers (i.e. western tributaries of the Indus, flowing through Afghanistan and the north):*

TRSTAmA (Gilgit)  
Susartu  
AnitabhA  
RasA  
SvetI  
KubhA (Kabul)  
Krumu (Kurrum)  
GomatI (Gomal)  
Sarayu (Siritoi)  
Mehatnu  
SvetyAvarI  
Prayiyu (Bara)  
Vayiyu  
SuvAstu (Swat)  
GaurI (Panjkora)  
KuSavA (Kunar)

2. *The Indus and its minor eastern tributaries:*

Sindhu (Indus)  
SuSomA (Sohan)  
ArjIklyA (Haro)

3. *The Central Rivers (i.e. rivers of the Punjab):*

VitastA (Jhelum)  
AsiknI (Chenab)  
ParuSNI (Ravi)  
VipAS (Beas)  
SuturI (Satlaj)  
MarudvRdhA (Maruvaradhvan)

4. *The East-central Rivers (i.e. rivers of Haryana):*

SarasvatI  
DRSadvatI/HariyUplyA/YavyAvatI



ApayA

5. *The Eastern Rivers:*

ASmanvatI (Assan, a tributary of the YamunA)

YamunA/AMSumatI

GaNga/JahnAvI

A few words of clarification will be necessary in the case of the identities of some of these rivers:

1. *HariyUplyA/YavyAvatI*: HariyUplyA is another name of the DRSadvatI: the river is known as RaupyA in the MahAbhArata, and the name is clearly a derivative of HariyUplyA.

The YavyAvatI is named in the same hymn and context as the HariyUplyA, and almost all the scholars agree that both the names refers to the same river.

It is also possible that YavyAvatI may be another name of the YamunA. M.L. Bhargava, in his study of Rigvedic Geography, incidentally (i.e. without making such an identification) makes the following remarks: "The old beds of the ancient DRSadvatI and the YamunA... ran very close to each other... the two rivers appear to have come close at a place about three miles southwest of Chacharaull town, but diverged again immediately after... the YamunA... then again ran southwestwards almost parallel to the DRSadvatI, the two again coming about two miles close to each other near old Srughna....."<sup>4</sup>

The battle described on the HariyUplyA - YavyAvatI may therefore have taken place in the area between these rivers.

However, pending further evidence (of this identity of YavyAvatI with the YamunA), we must assume, with the scholars, that the YavyAvatI is the same as the HariyUplyA.

2. *JahnAvI*: JahnAvI, which is clearly another name of the GaNgA, is named in two hymns; and

in both of them, it is translated by the scholars as something other than the name of a river: Griffith translates it as “Jahnu’s children” (I.116.19) and “the house of Jahnu” (III.58.6).

The evidence, however, admits of only one interpretation:

a. JahnAvI is clearly the earlier Rigvedic form of the later word JAhnAvI: the former word is not found after the Rigveda, and the latter word is not found in the Rigveda.

The word clearly belongs to a class of words in the Rigveda which underwent a particular phonetic change in the course of time: *JhnAvI* in the Rigveda becomes *JAhnAvI* after the Rigveda; *brahmANa* becomes *brAhmaNa* in the Rigveda itself (both words are found in the Rigveda while only the latter is found after the Rigveda); and the word *pavAka* has already become *pAvaka* in the course of compilation of the Rigveda (only the latter form is found in the Rigveda, but according to B.K. Ghosh, “the evidence of the metres... clearly proves that the actual pronunciation of the word *pAvaka* must have been *pavAka* in the Rigvedic age”<sup>5</sup>).

b. The word JAhnAvI (and therefore also the word JahnAvI which has no independent existence, and for which there is no alternative source of information since it is found only twice in the Rigveda and nowhere outside it) literally means “daughter of Jahnu”, and not “Jahnu’s children” or “the house of Jahnu”.

And the word JAhnAvI (and therefore also JahnAvI as well) has only one connotation in the entire length and breadth of Sanskrit literature: it is a name of the GaNgA.

c. One of the two references to the JahnAvI in the Rigveda provides a strong clue to the identity of this word: JahndvI (I. 116.19) is associated with the *SiMSumAra* (I.116.18) or the Gangetic

dolphin. The dolphin is not referred to anywhere else in the Rigveda.

The MaNDala-wise distribution of the names of the rivers in the Rigveda is as follows:

### **Early MaNDala I**

*SarasvatI* : I.3.10-12.

### **Middle MaNDala I**

*SarasvatI* : I.89.3.

*Sindhu* : I.83.1.

### **General and Late MaNDala I**

*GaurI* : I.164.4.

*RasA* : I. 112.12.

*Sindhu* : I.44.12; 122.6; 126.1; 186.5

(plus the references to the Sindhu in the refrain

of the Kutsas in the last verses of I.94-96, 98,

100-103, 105-115).

*SarasvatI* : I.13.9; 142.9; 164.49, 52; 188.8

*JahnAvI* : I.116.19.

### **MaNDala II**

*SarasvatI* : II.1.11; 3.8; 30.8; 32.8; 41.16-18.

### **MaNDala III**

*VipAS*: III.33.1.

*SutudrI*: III.33.1.

*SarasvatI*: III.4.8; 23.4; 54.13.

*DRSadvatI*: III.23.4,

*ApayA*: III.23.4.

*JahnAvI*: III.58.6.

### **MaNDala IV**

*Sarayu*: IV.30.18.

*KuSavA*: IV.18.8.

*Sindhu*: IV.30.12; 54.6; 55.3.

*ParuSNI*: IV.22.2.

*VipAS*: IV.30.11.

*RasA*: IV.43.6.

## **MaNDala V**

*Sarayu*: V.53.9.  
*KubhA*: V.53.9.  
*Krumu*: V.53.9.  
*AnitabhA*: V.53.9.  
*RasA*: V.41.15; 53.9.  
*Sindhu*: V.53.9.  
*ParuSNI*: V.52.9.  
*SarasvatI*: V.5.8; 42.12; 43.11; 46.2,  
*YamunA*: V.52.17.

## **MaNDala VI**

*SarasvatI*: VI.49.7; 50.12. 52.6; 61.1-7, 10-11,  
13-14  
*HariyUplyA*: VI.27.5.  
*YavyAvatI*: VI.27.6.  
*GaNga*: VI.45.31.

## **MaNDala VII**

*AsiknI*: VII.5.3.  
*ParuSNI*: VII.18.8, 9.  
*SarasvatI*: VII.2.8; 9.5; 35.11; 36.6; 39.5; 40.3;  
95.1-2, 4-6; 96.1, 3-6.  
*YamunA*: VII.18.19.

## **MaNDala VIII**

*GomatI*: VIII.24.30.  
*SvetyAvarI*: VIII.26.18.  
*SuvAstu*: VIII.19.37.  
*Prayiyu*: VIII.19.37.  
*Vayiyu*: VIII.19.37.  
*Sindhu*: VIII.12.3; 20.24, 25; 25.14; 26.18,  
72.7.  
*ArjIklyA*: VIII.7.29; 64.11.  
*SuSomA*: VIII.7.29; 64.11.  
*AsiknI*: VIII.20.25.  
*ParuSNI*: VIII.75.15.  
*SarasvatI*: VIII.21.17, 18; 38.10; 54.4  
*AMSumatI*: VIII.96.13.  
*RasA*: VIII.72.13.

## **MaNDala IX**

*Sindhu*: IX.97.58.  
*ArjIklyA*: IX.65.23.

*SarasvatI*: IX.5.8; 67.32; 81.4.

*RasA*: IX.41.6.

## **MaNDala X**

*Sarayu*: X.64.9.

*GomatI*: X.75.6.

*Mehatnu*: X.75.6.

*KubhA*: X.75.6.

*Krumu*: X.75.6.

*Sveti*: X.75.6.

*RasA*: X.75.6; 108.1, 2; 121.4.

*Susartu*: X.75.6.

*TRSTAmA*: X.75.6.

*Sindhu*: X.64.9; 65.13; 66.11; 75.1, 3-4, 6-9.

*ArjIklyA*: X.75.5.

*SuSomA*: X.75.5.

*VitastA*: X.75.5.

*MarudvRdhA*: X.75.5.

*Asiknl*: X.75.5.

*ParuSNl*: X.75.5.

*Sutudrl*: X.75.5.

*SarasvatI*: X.17.7-9; 30.12; 64.9; 65.1,13;  
66.5;

75.5; 110.8; 131.5; 141.5; 184.2

*ASmanvatI*: X.53.8.

*YamunA*: X.75.5.

*GaNga*: X.75.5.

## **II**

### **THE EVIDENCE OF RIVER NAMES**

The names of the rivers in the Rigveda have always formed the basis for any analysis of Rigvedic geography.

Let us examine the geographical picture presented by these river-names when the MaNDalas are arranged in their chronological order (click on the link).

[Click Here](#)

As the Chinese put it, one picture is worth a thousand words. The graph gives us the entire geographical picture in a nutshell: (click on the link)

[Click Here](#)

1. In the pre-Rigvedic period and the early part of the Early Period (MaNDala VI), the Vedic Aryans were inhabitants of an area to the east of the Sarasvatl.

2. In the course of the Early Period (MaNDalas III and VII), and the early part of the Middle Period (MaNDala IV and the middle upa-maNDalas), there was a steady expansion westwards.

3. Though there was an expansion westwards, the basic area of the Vedic Aryans was still restricted to the east in the Middle Period (MaNDala II), and even in the early parts of the Late Period: MaNDala V knows the western rivers from the KubhA (Kabul) in the north to the Sarayu (Siritoi) in the south, but its base is still in the east. Sarasvatl is still the most important river in the MaNDala: it is referred to by the eponymous RSi Atri (V.42.12; 43.11) who also refers to the RasA (V.41.15). All the other references to the western rivers (Sarayu, KubhA, Krumu, AnitabhA, RasA, Sindhu) occur in a single verse (V.53.9) by a single RSi SyAvASva, obviously a very mobile RSi who also refers elsewhere to the ParuSNI (V.52.9) and even the YamunA (V.52.17).

4. In the later part of the Late Period (MaNDalas VIII, IX, X, and the general and late upa-maNDalas) the Vedic Aryans were spread out over the entire geographical horizon of the Rigveda.

Let us examine the evidence of the river-names in greater detail under the following heads:

A. The Westward Expansion in the Bharata Period.

B. The Evidence of Some Key Rivers.

### **II.A. The Westward Expansion in the Bharata Period**

The graph of the rivers clearly shows that there was a *westward* expansion of the Vedic Aryans from the time of SudAs onwards.

In the Early period, right from pre-Rigvedic times to the time of SudAs, the Vedic Aryans were settled in the area to the *east* of the Punjab: MaNDala VI knows of no river to the west of the SarasvatI.

However, in the MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas following MaNDala VI, we find a steady movement westwards:

a. MaNDala III refers to the *first two* rivers of the Punjab *from the east*: the SutudrI and the VipAS.

b. MaNDala VII refers to the next two rivers of the Punjab *from the east*: the ParuSNI and AsiknI.

c. The middle upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I contain the first reference to the Indus, but none to the rivers *west* of the Indus.

d. MaNDala IV contains the first references to rivers *west* of the Indus.

If the case for the westward expansion is strong enough even merely from the evidence of the *names* of the rivers, it becomes unimpeachable when we examine the *context* in which these names appear in the hymns:

1. The SutudrI and VipAS are not referred to in a casual vein. They are referred to in a special context: hymn III.33 is a special ode to these two rivers by ViSvAmitra in commemoration of a historical movement of the warrior bands of the Bharatas led by SudAs and himself, across the

billowing waters of these rivers.

What is important is that this hymn is characterized *by the Western scholars themselves* as a historical hymn commemorating the migratory movement of the Vedic Aryans across the Punjab.,

But the Western scholars depict it as a movement from the west to the east: Griffith calls the hymn “a relic of the traditions of the Aryans regarding their progress eastward in the land of the Five Rivers”.

However, an examination of the facts leaves no doubt that the direction of this historical movement was *from the east to the west*: the very distribution of the river-names in the Rigveda, as apparent from our graph of the rivers, makes this clear.

But there is more specific evidence within the hymns to show that this movement was from the east to the west:

SudAs is a descendant of DivodAsa (VII.18.25), DivodAsa is a descendant of SRnjaya (VI.47.22 and Griffith’s footnotes to it) and SRnjaya is a descendant of DevavAta (IV.15.4): SudAs is therefore clearly a remote descendant of DevavAta.

DevavAta established the sacrificial fire on the banks of the ApayA between the SarasvatI and the DRSadvatl (III.23.3-4) The SarasvatI is to the east of the VipAS and SutudrI, and the ApayA and DRSadvatl are *even further east*. No ancestor of SudAs is associated with any river to the west of the SarasvatI.

The historical movement of the Vedic Aryans across the SutudrI and the VipAS, at the time of SudAs, can only be a *westward* movement.

2. The ParuSNI and AsiknI, also, are not referred



to in a casual vein: they also are referred to in a special context. The context is a major battle fought on the ParuSNI by the Bharatas under SudAs and VasiSTha (who replaced ViSvAmitra as the priest of SudAs).

The direction of the movement is crystal clear in this case as well: SudAs with his *earlier* priest ViSvAmitra is associated with the Sutudri and VipAS, and with his *later* priest VasiSTha is associated with the ParuSNI which is to the west of the two other rivers.

But there is more specific evidence in MaNDala VII about the direction of movement in this battle, which is the subject of various references throughout the MaNDala:

**a.** The battle is fought on the ParuSNI and the enemies of SudAs (who is referred to here as the PUru) are described in VII.5.3 as the people of the Asikni. The Asikni is to the west of the ParuSNI hence it is clear that the enemies of SudAs are fighting from the *west* of the ParuSNI while SudAs is fighting from the *east*.

Curiously, Griffith mistranslates the name of the river Asikni as “dark-hued”, thereby killing two birds with one stone: the people of the Asikni become “the dark-hued races”, thereby wiping out the sense of direction inherent in the reference, while at the same time introducing the racial motif

**b.** In VII.83.1, two of the tribes fighting against SudAs, the PRthus and the ParSus, are described as marching *eastwards* (*prAcA*) towards him.

Griffith again mistranslates the names of the tribes as “armed with broad axes” and the word *prAcA* as “forward”.

**c.** VII.6.5 refers indirectly to this battle by talking of the defeat of the tribes of Nahus (i.e. the tribes of the Anus and Druhyus who fought against

SudAs) as follows: “Far, far away hath Agni chased the Dasyus, and, in the east, *hath turned the godless westward*”. SudAs is therefore clearly pressing forward from the east.

3. The first references to the Indus are in the middle upa-maNDalas (I.83.1) and in MaNDala IV (IV.30.12; 54.6; 55.3). There is, perhaps, a westward movement indicated even in the very identity of the composers of the hymns which contain these references: I.83 is composed by Gotama RAhUgaNa *who does not refer to any river west of the Indus*, while the references in MaNDala IV are by his *descendants*, the VAmadeva Gautamas, who also refer to two rivers to the west of the Indus (IV.18.8; 30.18).

Thus, we have a clear picture of the westward movement of the Vedic Aryans from their homeland in the east of the SarasvatI to the area to the west of the Indus, towards the end of the Early Period of the Rigveda: IV.30.18 refers to what is clearly the westernmost point in this movement, a battle fought in southern Afghanistan “on yonder side of Sarayu”.

## **II. B. The Evidence of Some Key Rivers:**

The key rivers in the Rigveda are:

- a. The Indus to the west of the Five Rivers of the Punjab.
- b. The SarasvatI to the east of the Five Rivers of the Punjab.
- c. The GaNgA and YamunA, the easternmost rivers named in the Rigveda.

The evidence of these key rivers is extremely significant:

### *1. The Indus and the SarasvatI:*

The word Sindhu in the Rigveda primarily means “river” or even “sea”; it is only secondarily a name

of the Indus river: thus Saptasindhava can mean “seven rivers” but not “seven Induses”.

The relative insignificance of the Indus in the Rigveda is demonstrated by the fact that *the Indus is not mentioned even once in the three oldest MaNDalas of the Rigveda.*

Since the word Sindhu, in its meaning of “river”, occurs frequently throughout the Rigveda, scholars are able to juggle with the word, often mistranslating the word Sindhu as “the Indus” even when it means “river”.

However, *even this sophistry is not possible in the case of the three oldest MaNDalas (VI, III and VII):* the word Sindhu, except in eight verses, occurs only in the plural, and can be translated only as “rivers”.

In seven of the eight references, in which the word occurs in the singular, it clearly refers to some other “river” which is specified within the context of the reference itself:

- a. III.33.3, 5; 53.9: VipAS.
- b. VII.18.5: ParuSNI.
- c. VII.33.3: YamunA.
- d. VII.36.6; 95.1: SarasvatI.

In the eighth reference (VII.87.6) the word means “sea”: the verse talks of the sun setting in the sea.

In sharp contrast, the SarasvatI is referred to many times in the three oldest MaNDalas. In fact, there are three whole hymns dedicated to it in these MaNDalas: VI.61; VII.95, 96.

All in all, the SarasvatI is referred to in nine MaNDalas out of ten in the Rigveda (i.e. in all except MaNDala IV, which represents the westernmost thrust in the westward movement of the Vedic Aryans). The Indus is referred to in only six MaNDalas (I, IV, V, VIII, IX, X); and in three of these (V, IX, X), the references to the SarasvatI far outnumber the references to the

Indus.

It is only in the *latest* parts of the Rigveda that the Indus overshadows the SarasvatI:

**a.** In MaNDala VIII, the references to the Indus outnumber the references to the SarasvatI (by six verses to four).

**b.** In the general and late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I, the Indus, but not the SarasvatI, is enumerated with other deities in the refrain of the Kutsas which forms the last verse of nineteen out of their twenty-one hymns.

**c.** In MaNDala X, although there are more references to the SarasvatI, it is the Indus, and not the SarasvatI, which is the main river lauded in the *nadIstuti* (X.75), the hymn in Praise of the Rivers.

The SarasvatI is so important in the *whole* of the Rigveda that it is worshipped as one of the Three Great Goddesses in the AprI-sUktas of all the ten families of composers (being named in nine of them and implied in the tenth). The Indus finds no place in these AprI-sUktas.

The contrast between the overwhelming importance of the SarasvatI and the relative unimportance of the Indus is so striking, and so incongruous with the theory of an Aryan invasion from the northwest, that many scholars resort to desperate explanations to account for it: Griffith, in his footnote to VI.61.2, suggests that perhaps "SarasvatI is also another name of Sindhu or the Indus".

## 2. *The Eastern Rivers*

The GaNgA and the YamunA are the two easternmost rivers named in the Rigveda. One or the other of these two rivers (either by these names, or by their other names, JahnAvI and AMSumatI respectively) is named in seven of the

ten MaNDalas of the Rigveda, *including the three oldest MaNDalas* (VI, III and VII).

By contrast, the Indus and its western tributaries, as we saw, are named in only six MaNDalas, which do *not* include the three oldest MaNDalas of the Rigveda.

But even more significant than these bare statistics is the particular nature of the four references to the GaNgA, the easternmost river of them all:

**a.** The *nadlstuti* begins its enumeration of the rivers with the GaNgA and moves westwards.

Whether this circumstance in itself is a significant one or not is debatable; but while many scholars, without necessarily having arrived at any specific ideas about Rigvedic chronology or geography, find it important, certain others seek to deflect its importance, and even to dismiss the importance of the GaNgA itself in the Rigveda:

Griffith, in his footnote to X.75.5, takes pains to suggest that “the poet addresses first the most distant rivers. *GaNgA*: the Ganges is mentioned, indirectly, in only one other verse of the *Rgveda*, and even there, the word is said by some to be the name of a woman. See VI.45.31.”

**b.** The reference in VI.45.31 is definitely significant: the composer compares the height of a patron’s generosity to the height of the wide bushes on the banks of the GaNgA.

This makes it clear that even in the oldest MaNDala in the Rigveda, the GaNgA is a familiar geographical landmark, whose features conjure up images which are very much a part of traditional idiomatic expression.

**c.** The reference in III.58.6. is infinitely more significant. Griffith translates the verse as follows: “Ancient your home, auspicious is your friendship:

Heroes, your wealth is with the house of Jahnu.”

Here, not only does Griffith mistranslate JahnAvI as “the house of Jahnu”, he compounds it with a further misinterpretation of the grammatical form:

*JahnAvyAm* is clearly “on (the banks of) the JahnAvI” on the lines of similar translations by Griffith himself in respect of other rivers: *ParuSNyAm* (V.52.9: on the banks of the ParuSNI), *YamunAyAm* (V.52.17: on the banks of the YamunA), *DRSadvatyAm... ApayAyAm SarasvatyAm* (III.23.4: on the banks of the DRSadvatl, ApayA and SarasvatI).

The correct translation of III.58.6, addressed to the ASvins, is: “Your ancient home, your auspicious friendship, O Heroes, your wealth is on (the banks of the JahnAvI.”

What is noteworthy is that the phrase *PurANamokah* “ancient home” is used in the second oldest MaNDala in the Rigveda, in reference to the banks of the GaNgA.

**d.** The reference in I.116.19 associates the JahnAvI with BharadvAja, DivodAsa and the Gangetic dolphin (all of whom are referred to in the earlier verse I.116.18). It is clear, therefore, that the river is specially associated with the oldest period of the Rigveda, the period of MaNDala VI (which is also the only place, outside the *nadIstuti*, where the GaNgA is referred to by that name).

The evidence of the rivers in the Rigveda is therefore unanimous in identifying the area to the east of the SarasvatI as the original homeland of the Vedic Aryans.

### III

## THE EVIDENCE OF PLACE-NAMES

The evidence of place-names in the Rigveda, usually ignored, is secondary to the evidence of river-names. Nevertheless, significant evidence in this respect does exist; and an examination of this evidence fully corroborates the geographical picture derived from our examination of the evidence of the river-names.

The places named directly or indirectly in the Rigveda can be classified into five basic geographical regions, from west to east, on the basis of present-day terminology:

- A. Afghanistan.
- B. Punjab.
- C. Haryana.
- D. Uttar Pradesh.
- E. Bihar.

To go into further detail:

### **III.A. Afghanistan**

The only place-name from Afghanistan that we find in the Rigveda is “GandhAri”, and this name occurs only once in the whole of the Rigveda: *in the general and late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I* (I.126.7).

But, the name is also found indirectly in the name of a divine class of beings associated with GandhAra, the gandharvas, who are referred to in the following verses:

I.22.14; 163.2;  
III.38.6;  
VIII.1.11; 77.5;  
IX.83.4; 85.12; 86.36; 113.3;  
X.10.4; 11.2; 85.40, 41; 123.4, 7; 136.6; 139.4, 6;  
177.2.

As we can see, the gandharvas are referred to in 20 verses in 16 hymns, and *all except one* of these references are in the very latest parts of the Rigveda: MaNDalas VIII, IX and X, and the general and late upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I.

The one reference in an early MaNDala (III.38.6) is not even an exception which proves the general rule, *it is in itself strong corroboration of the late provenance of the gandharvas in the Rigveda*: III.38 is one of the six hymns (III.21, 30, 34, 36, 38-39) which are specifically named in the Aitareya BrAhmaNa (VI.18) as being late interpolations into MaNDala III. As we saw in an earlier chapter, these hymns have been incorporated into MaNDala III in the eight-MaNDala stage of the Rigveda, and are contemporaneous with the hymns in MaNDala VIII.

### **III.B. Punjab**

The Punjab is known in the Rigveda as “Saptasindhu”.

There are other phrases in the Rigveda which mean “seven rivers”; but these do not constitute references to the Punjab, as seven is a number commonly applied in the Rigveda to various entities to indicate “all” or “many”: thus we have references to the seven horses and seven wheels of the Sun’s chariot, seven mouths of BRhaspati, seven RSis, seven priests at the sacrifice, seven holy places, seven castles of the aerial demon destroyed by Indra, seven holy singers, seven rays of the sun, seven flames of Agni, seven male children, seven elements, seven Adityas, seven foundations of the sea, seven races of men, seven heads, seven hands, seven tongues, seven threads, seven germs within the seed, seven metres, seven tones, and so on repeated throughout the Rigveda.

The following verses are instructive in this regard:

I.164.3: “The seven who on the seven-wheeled car are mounted, have horses, seven in tale, who draw them onward. Seven sisters utter songs of praise together, in whom the names of the seven cows



are treasured.”

VIII.28.1: “The seven carry seven spears; seven are the splendours they possess, and seven the glories they assume.”

However, the word “Saptasindhu” in the Rigveda (and, for that matter, Hapta-HAndu in the Avesta) is clearly a name for a specific region, which is generally and correctly identified by the scholars with the Punjab (the Land of the Five Rivers ensconced between two more: the Indus in the west and the SarasvatI in the east).

The Saptasindhu is referred to in the following verses:

I.32.12; 35.8;  
II. 12.3, 12;  
IV.28.1;  
VIII.54.4; 69.12; 96.1;  
IX.66.6;  
X.43.3; 67.12.

If Afghanistan is directly or indirectly referred to only in the Late MaNDalas, the Punjab is referred to only in the Middle and Late MaNDalas.

### **III.C. Haryana**

The region in Haryana known as KurukSetra or BrahmAvarta in ancient times was considered to be the holiest place on earth.

However, neither the word Kuruksetra, nor the word BrahmAvarta, is found in the Rigveda.

But the Rigveda refers to this holy region by other names or epithets: it is known as *vara A pRthivyA* (the best place on earth) or *nAbhA pRthivyA* (the navel or centre of the earth); and two specific places in this region are named in the hymns: ILAyAspada or IAspada, and MAnuSa.

These two places are clearly named in III.23.4:

“He (DevavAta) set thee in the best place on earth (*vara A pRthivyA*) in ILAyAspada, on an auspicious day. Shine brightly, Agni, on the DRSadvatl, on MAnuSa on the ApayA, and on the Sarasvatl.”

The above is not Griffith’s translation: he translates ILAyAspada literally as “IA’s place” and misinterprets it as a reference to a fire-altar (*any* fire-altar); likewise, he translates MAnuSa as “man”.

However, the meaning of the verse is clear. And we find detailed confirmation of the identity and location of these two places in the MahAbhArata:

The MahAbhArata, in its TlIrthayAtrA Parva section of the Vana Parva, devotes one part (III.81, containing 178 verses) to the KurukSetra region, and gives details about the locations of the major pilgrim centres in this region.

Within a span of 21 verses (III.81.53-73) it gives details about the locations of the particular places with which we are concerned here:

Mbh. III.81.53-54: “Then from there one should go to the world-famous ManuSa... By bathing (in the lake) there, a man who is chaste and master of his senses is cleansed of all evils, and (he) glories in the world of heaven.”

Mbh. III.81.55-56: “The distance of a cry east of MAnuSa, there is a river called ApagA, visited by the Siddhas;... when one brahmin is fed there, it is as though a crore of them have been fed.”

Mbh. III.81.62-64: “Thereupon one should go to the world-famous SAraka... There is also there the Abode-of-IIA Ford (IIAspada): by

bathing there and worshipping the ancestors and Gods, one suffers no misfortune...”

Mbh. III.81.73: “By bathing in the DRSadvatl and satisfying the deities, a man finds the reward of a Land-of-the-fire (AgniSToma) and an Overnight-Sacrifice (AtirAtra).”<sup>6</sup>

M.L. Bhargava, in his brilliant research on the subject points out that these places are still extant: MANuSa is still known as MAnas, still a pilgrim centre, a village 3½ miles northwest of Kaithal; the ApayA or ApagA *tlrtha* is still recognised at Gadli between MAnas and Kaithal; and ILAyAspada or ILaspada at SAraka is the present-day Shergadh, 2 miles to the southeast of Kaithal: “MANuSa and IAspada were thus situated on the right and left sides of the ApayA, about 5½ miles apart, and in the tract between the DRSadvatl and the Sarasvatl.”<sup>7</sup>

What is more, ILA, the deity worshipped at ILAyAspada or ILaspada, is one of the three Great Goddesses (one, as we saw, is Sarasvatl) who are worshipped in the Aprl-sUktas of all the ten families of composers in the Rigveda, and specifically named in all ten of them.

The third Great Goddess is BhAratl (named in seven of the Aprl-sUktas, called by another name Mahl, in two others, and implied in the tenth), and M.L. Bhargava points out that BhAratl is the deity of the still extant “BhAratl-tlrtha of Kopar or Koer in the middle of KurukSetra, 22 miles east of Kaithal and 12 miles south-southwest of Thanesar”.<sup>8</sup>

It is clear that the three Great Goddesses, who are worshipped in the Aprl-sUktas of all the ten families of composers in the Rigveda, are deities of places in KurukSetra: this is specifically stated in II.3.7 which refers to the “three high places” (*adhI sAnuSu trISu*) in “the centre of the

earth” (*nAbhA pRthivyA* = KurukSetra). The next verse names the three Goddesses, BhAratl, ILA and SarasvatI; and this is the only reference, outside the ten AprI-sUktas, where these Goddesses are named together.

Haryana therefore clearly occupies a central position in the Rigveda in more ways than one.

The following are the verses which refer to these places in Haryana:

a. *Vara A pRthivyA*:

III. 23.4; 53.11.

b. *NAbhA pRthivyA*:

I.143.4;

II.3.7;

III.5.9; 29.4;

IX.72.7; 79.4; 82.3; 86.8

X.1.6.

c. *ILaspada/ILAyAspada*:

I. 128.1;

II. 10.1;

III. 23.4; 29.4;

VI. 1.2;

X. 1.6; 70.1; 91.1, 4; 191.1.

d. *MAnuSa*:

I. 128.7;

III. 23.4.

(As the word *MAnuSa* can also mean “man”, it is difficult to recognize the references to the holy spot of that name in other occurrences of the word in the Rigveda. Hence it will be safe to cite only the two above verses, in which the references are indisputable.)

The references to Haryana are fairly distributed throughout the Rigveda, right from the oldest MaNDala VI: VI.1.2 refers to Agni being established at ILaspada. Even more significantly, III.23.4 tells us that DevavAta (an *ancestor* of DivodAsa of the oldest MaNDala VI) established Agni at that spot. (Incidentally this appears to reflect an ancient custom of maintaining a

perpetual fire, a custom still preserved by the Zoroastrians.)

The references to these places are particularly profuse in MaNDala III, *the MaNDala which represents the commencement of the westward expansion of the Vedic Aryans.*

### **III.D. Uttar Pradesh:**

The Uttar Pradesh of the present-day is more or less equivalent to the land known in ancient literature as AryAvarta or MadhyadeSa. Neither the word AryAvarta, nor the word MadhyadeSa, is found in the Rigveda. Nor is there any direct reference in the hymns to any place in Uttar Pradesh.

But, the AnukramaNIs provide us with a priceless clue: hymns IX.96 and X.179.2 are composed by a late Bharata RSi who (like many other composers in MaNDala X and the corresponding parts of MaNDala IX) attributes his compositions to his remote ancestor, Pratardana. He, accordingly, uses the epithets of his ancestor: in IX.96, the epithet is DaivodAsI (son or descendant of DivodAsa); and in X.179.2, the epithet is KASirAja (King of KASI).

Pratardana was a king of KASI, which is in eastern Uttar Pradesh. This can only mean that the Bharata Kings of the Early Period of the Rigveda were Kings of KASI; and, in the light of the other information in the Rigveda, the land of the Bharatas extended from KASI in the east to KurukSetra in the west.

The above conclusion is inescapable: the information in the AnukramaNIs cannot be rejected on any logical ground (short of suggesting a conspiracy theory), and it fits in with *all* the other evidence:

- a. The evidence of Indian tradition outside the Rigveda which knows

the land from KASI to KurukSetra as AryAvartha or MadhyadeSa throughout not only the Puranic and Epic literature (which, moreover, clearly describes this land as the original homeland in its traditional accounts, as noted by Pargiter), but even the rest of the Vedic literature. The geography even of the Yajurveda is clearly an Uttar Pradesh centred geography. That the geography of the Rigveda is also the same has escaped the recognition of the scholars purely and simply because these scholars are so mesmerised by the Aryan invasion theory, *and so obsessed with the vital need to locate the Rigveda in the northwest and the Punjab for the sheer survival of the theory*, that their ideas and conclusions about the geography of the Rigveda are based on the tenets of this theory rather than on the material within the hymns of the text.

It may be noted that all the pilgrim-centres of Hinduism are located to the east of Haryana. There is no Hindu pilgrim centre worthy of particular note in the Punjab or the northwest. This also discounts the possibility that the oldest and hoariest text of Hinduism could have been composed in those parts.

**b.** The evidence of the rivers in the Rigveda, particularly the evidence of the references to the GaNgA.

**c.** The evidence of the other place-names in the Rigveda, particularly the reference to Bihar.

### **III.E. Bihar**

The most historically prominent part of ancient Bihar was Magadha, also known as KlkaTa.

While the word Magadha is not found in the Rigveda, the word KlkaTa is found in III.53.14. The reference is to SudAs's battle with the KlkaTas and their king Pramaganda (whose name is connected by many scholars with the word Magadha = *Pra-maganda*).

This clinches the origin of the Bharatas in Uttar Pradesh: the expansion of the Bharatas under SudAs took place in two directions, eastwards into Bihar, and westwards across the SarasvatI into the Punjab. Clearly, only a homeland in the area between KASl and KurukSetra fits into this picture.

The evidence of the place-names in the Rigveda can be summarized as follows:

[Click Here](#)

## **IV**

### **THE EVIDENCE OF ANIMAL-NAMES**

The evidence of the river-names and the place-names is so clear that it does not really require further confirmation.

However, we may note the evidence of the animals named in the Rigveda, which tends to further confirm the eastern provenance of the Rigvedic Aryans.

There are many animals which are peculiar to India: that is, animals found only in India, or only in India and places east (such as Southeast Asia), or, if they are found elsewhere, only in places (such as the interior of Africa) which cannot have

any relevance to the history of the Vedic Aryans or the Indo-Europeans.

The following are examples of some such prominent animals named in the Rigveda:

[Click Here](#)

1. *The Elephant (Elaphus Maximus: ibha, vAraNa, hastin, sRNi):*

I.64.7; 84.7; 140.2;  
IV.4.1; 16.14;  
VI.4.5; 20.8;  
VIII.33.8;  
IX.57.3;  
X.40.4; 106.6.

2. *The Buffalo (Bubalus Bibalus: mahiSa):*

I.64.7; 95.9; 121.2; 141.3;  
III.46.2;  
IV. 18.11;  
V.29.7, 8;  
VI.8.4; 17.11;  
VII.44.5;  
VIII.12.8; 35.7-9; 69.15; 77.10;  
IX.33.1; 69.3; 73.2; 86.40; 87.7; 92.6; 95.4;  
96.6,  
18, 19; 97.41; 113.3.  
X.8.1; 28.10; 45.3; 60.3; 65.8; 66.10; 106.2;  
123.4;  
128.8; 140.6; 189.2.

3. *The Indian Bison (Bibos Gaurus: gaura):*

I.16.5;  
IV.21.8; 58.2;  
VII.69.6; 98.1;  
VIII.4.3; 45.24;  
X.51.6; 100.2.

4. *The Peacock (Pavo Cristatus: mayUra):*

I.191.14;  
III.45.1;  
VIII.1.25.



5. *The Chital or Spotted Deer (Axis Axis: pRSatl)*:  
I.37.2; 39.6; 64.8; 85.4, 5; 87.4; 89.7; 162.21;  
186.8;  
II.34.3, 4; 36.2;  
III.26.4, 6;  
V.42.15; 55.6.; 57.3; 58.6; 60.2;  
VII.40.3;  
VIII.7.28.

These animals are found mentioned in references throughout the different periods of the Rigveda.

Further, the names of all these animals are purely Aryan or Indo-European: the elephant, for example has four names, each of which has a purely “Aryan” etymology.

And the references to these animals are not casual ones. It is clear that the animals form an intimate part of the idiomatic lore and traditional imagery of the Rigveda: the spotted deer, for example, are the official steeds of the chariots of the Maruts; and the name of the buffalo (like that of the bull, boar and lion) serves as an epithet, applied to various Gods, signifying great strength and power. The Gods approaching the place of sacrifice to drink the libations evoke the image of thirsty bisons converging on a watering place in the forest. The outspread tails or manes of Indra’s horses evoke the image of the outspread plumes of the peacock’s tail.

The elephant is referred to not only in its wild form, with the image of a wild elephant crashing through the forest, uprooting the trees and bushes in its path, but in its fully domesticated form as well: one verse (X.40.4) refers to wild elephants being tracked by hunters; another (IV.4.1) refers to a mighty king with his (retinue of) elephants; another (IX.57.3) refers to an elephant (perhaps a temple elephant?) being decked up by the people; and yet another (VI.20.8) refers to Tugra with his (garrisons of) elephants in what is clearly a reference to a battle. (In IV.4.1 and VI.20.8, Griffith mistranslates *ibha* as “attendants”

or “servants”.)

In sharp contrast to these intimate references to typically Indian animals are the references to an animal which is restricted to the extreme northwest: the bactrian camel of Afghanistan and beyond.

This camel, *uSTra*, is referred to only in the following verses:

I.138.2;

VIII.4.7; 5.37; 46.22, 31.

The distribution of these references is restricted only to hymns belonging to the Late Period. It is clear that this distribution indicates an expanding horizon of the Vedic Aryans; and this is not the expanding horizon of a people from outside India expanding into India, but of a people from within India expanding out into the northwest.

The significance of the late “appearance” of the camel in the Rigveda may be expressed in the words of a modern Western scholar, a staunch and even fanatical supporter of the Aryan invasion theory: Michael Witzel, in referring to the geography of MaNDala VIII tells us that “*Book 8* concentrates on the whole of the west cf. camels, *mathra* horses, wool sheep. It frequently mentions the Sindhu, but also the Seven Streams, mountains and snow.”<sup>9</sup> This book also “lists numerous tribes that were unknown to other books.”<sup>10</sup> Witzel further notes that “camels appear (8.5.37-39) together with the Iranian name *KaSu* ‘small’ (Hoffman 1975), or with the suspicious name Tirindra and the ParSu (8.6.46). The combination of camels (8.46.21, 31), *mathra* horses (8.46.23) and wool, sheep and dogs (8.56.3) is also suggestive: the borderlands (including GandhAra) have been famous for wool and sheep, while dogs are treated well in Zoroastrian Iran but not in South Asia.”<sup>11</sup>

Although Witzel (whose writings we will be dealing with in an appendix to this book) tries

generally to twist and distort the information in the Rigveda so as to demonstrate a movement into India from the northwest, his reaction to the information in MaNDala VIII (a late MaNDala, although Witzel does not admit it) unwittingly, but clearly, shows the expanding horizon of a people from “South Asia” coming into contact with “the borderlands (including GandhAra)”.

The combined evidence of river-names, place-names and animal-names gives us a single unanimous verdict: the Vedic Aryans were inhabitants of the interior of India, and their direction of expansion was from the east to the west and northwest.

## **APPENDIX THE SO-CALLED NEGATIVE EVIDENCE**

The evidence of the Rigveda is so clear that it brooks no other conclusion except that the Vedic Aryans expanded from the interior of India to the west and northwest.

However, there are certain points, raised by the scholars, which claim to negate such a conclusion and to establish that the Vedic Aryans were in fact newcomers into India who were still floundering around in the northwestern outskirts of the land.

We will examine these points under the following heads:

- A. Tigers and Rice.
- B. Soma.

### **Appendix A. Tigers and Rice**

According to the scholars, the Rigveda does not mention either the tiger or rice; and this is significant, since it shows that the Vedic Aryans at that time were still unacquainted with that common Indian animal and that common Indian cereal.

In delineating the parts of India which had become “known” to the incoming Aryans at the time of the Rigveda, Michael Witzel (whom we have already referred to earlier) declares: “It is also important to note that the tiger and rice are still unknown to the RV, which excludes the areas, roughly speaking, east of Delhi: the GaNgA-YamunA Doab and the tracts of land South of it.”<sup>12</sup>

Let us examine the logic:

*The Tiger.* It is “important to note” that the scholars claim that the Vedic Aryans were unacquainted with the tiger right from the time of composition of the earliest hymn of the Rigveda to the time of composition of the latest hymn (in whatever chronological order the hymns are arranged).

But what these scholars deliberately ignore, in their desperate attempt to grab at whatever straw they think is available, is that the tiger is not restricted to the area “east of Delhi”: the tiger was a very common animal in the western Punjab (the seals of Harappa and Mohenjodaro contain many pictorial representations of the tiger, even when they do not have a single one of the lion) and in fact, *the tiger in ancient times was found as far to the northwest as northern Afghanistan, northern Iran and parts of Central Asia.*

Even if we follow the logic of the invasion-theorists and assume that the Vedic Aryans migrated into India from the northwest, these Vedic Aryans should have been very long familiar with the tiger well before they even glimpsed their very first elephant, spotted deer, peacock or Indian bison.

It is clearly *impossible* that the tiger could have been “still unknown” to the Vedic Aryans who were so intimately familiar with all these animals, and whose area of acquaintance (even assuming that they came from outside) extended upto Bihar

(KlkaTa) in the east.

Incidentally, when the tiger is mentioned in later texts (including the other Veda SaMhitAs), it has a purely “Aryan” name: *vyAghra*, which not only has a purely Indo-European etymology, but also has cognate forms in Iranian *babr* and Armenian *vagr*. And even in the Rigveda, while the word *vyAghra* does not occur even once in the text, it occurs in the name of one of the composers of IX.97: VyAghrapAda VAsiSTha.

That the tiger is not mentioned even *once* in the whole of the Rigveda certainly does call for an explanation, but non-familiarity with the animal cannot be that explanation under any circumstance. Possible explanations are:

**a.** There was some kind of a ritual taboo on the mention of the tiger during the period of composition of the Rigvedic hymns, OR

**b.** The word *siMha* (lion) which occurs in the Rigveda in the following references, stood for both the lion as well as the tiger (according to American archaeologist Mark Kenoyer, it probably stood for the tiger *rather* than for the lion):

I.64.8; 95.5; 174.3;  
III.2.11; 9.4; 26.5;  
IV.16.4;  
V.15.3; 74.4; 83.3;  
VII.18.17;  
IX.89.3; 97.28;  
X.28.4, 10; 67.9.

Of these two possible explanations, the first is a more likely one.

*Rice*: Rice is not mentioned in the Rigveda, *but nor is any other specific grain*: neither wheat, nor millet, *nor even barley* (the word *yava*, like the word *dhAnA/dhAnyA*, in the Rigveda is accepted by most of the scholars to be a reference to “grain” in general, and not to barley as it does in

later times. The word is cognate to the Lithuanian word *javai* which also means “grain”, the Lithuanian word for barley being *mieZiai*). All these grains are known to have been cultivated in the Indus sites, but not one of them is mentioned by name in the Rigveda which knows of lands as far east as Bihar (KikaTa).

Yet not only do the scholars deduce that rice in particular was “unknown” to the Vedic Aryans, because it is not mentioned by name in the hymns; they even draw far-reaching and fundamental historical conclusions from this omission.

And yet, is it true that rice was unknown to the Vedic Aryans? *And, more to the point, do these scholars themselves sincerely believe that this was the case?*

The Rigveda clearly refers to certain culinary preparations made from rice: *apUpa* and *puroLNS* (varieties of rice-cakes) and *odana* (rice-gruel).

These are referred to in the following verses:

*ApUpa:*

III. 52.1, 7;

VIII. 91.2;

X. 45.9.

*PuroLAS:*

I. 162.3;

III. 28.1-6; 41.3; 52.2-6, 8;

IV. 24.5; 32.16;

VI. 23.7;

VII. 18.6;

VIII. 2.11; 31.2.

*Odana:*

VIII. 69.14; 77.6, 10.

That these were rice preparations is something that cannot be easily denied outright. Even Witzel himself, elsewhere, somewhat qualifies, although negatively, his firm assertion that rice was “still unknown” to the Vedic Aryans: “Unless

the Rgvedic words (*brahma-*)-*udana* and *puroLAS* mean a certain rice dish, as they do later on, cultivation and ritual use of rice first appear in the Atharvaveda...<sup>13</sup>

Griffith translates the words *apUpa* and *puroLAS* by neutral words like “cake”, “sacrificial cake” and “me al-cake”, and even suggests in one place (in his footnote to VIII.2.3, in reference to the word *yava*) that the sacrificial cake is “made of barley-meal”.

But in his footnote to 1.40.3, he also admits that “the fivefold gift” offered to Agni consists of “an offering of grain, gruel, curdled milk, *rice-cake*, and curds”.

And he clearly translates the word *odana* in VIII.77.6, 10 as “brew of rice” and “brew of rice and milk”.

## **Appendix B. Soma**

In the case of Soma, the argument is to the opposite effect: according to the scholars, the Soma plant was a species of Ephedra found in the extreme northwestern parts of India extending to Central Asia and beyond. Species of Ephedra found further eastwards were not capable of yielding the kind of juice described in the Rigveda.

Hence, the fact that the ritual use of Soma formed such an integral part of the Rigvedic religion in every period of the text (and that this feature is shared with the Iranians) proves that the Vedic Aryans entered India from the northwest, bringing the Soma plant and cult with them.

This is the argument. But is this argument either valid or logical, or in keeping with the facts of the case?

One undeniable fact is that the Soma plant was a native of the extreme northwestern and northern regions: all the references to the sources of

Soma, in the Rigveda, make it very clear that the plant grew in the mountains of Kashmir, Afghanistan, and the extreme northwest of the Punjab.

But, arguing, solely from this fact, that the Vedic Aryans, who used Soma prominently in their rituals, *also* came from the northwestern parts, bringing the plant with them, is like arguing that the Irish people, to whom potatoes constitute a staple food, came from America to Ireland, bringing the potato plant with them. Or, that the medieval Europeans, who used Indian spices in their culinary diet, went to Europe from India, taking the spices with them.

Clearly, the use of a particular plant by a particular people cannot be the basis for historical conclusions about the geographical origins of that people, *unless this is demonstrated by their traditional understanding of their association with the plant in question.*

And the evidence in the Rigveda shows that:

1. The actual Soma-growing areas were distant and unknown to the Vedic Aryans in the early parts of the Rigveda, and became known to them only *later* after they expanded westwards.
2. The Soma plant and its ritual were not originally known to the Vedic Aryans and their priests, but were introduced to them in very early times by priests from the Soma-growing areas.
3. The expansion of the Vedic Aryans (and, by a chain of events, *the dispersion of the Indo-Europeans*, as we shall see in later chapters) into the west and northwest was a direct consequence of their quest for



## Soma.

The detailed evidence is as follows:

1. Soma is regarded as growing in distant areas: this area is so distant that it is constantly identified with the heavens (IV.26.6; 27.3, 4; VIII.100.8; IX.63.27; 66.30; 77.2; .86.24, etc.)

The only specific thing known about the place of origin of Soma is that it grows on mountains (I.93.6; III.48.2; V.43.4; 85.2; IX.18.1; 62.4; 85.10; 95.4; 98.9, etc.). Nothing more specific is mentioned in the Family MaNDalas or the early upa-maNDalas of MaNDala I.

The area of Soma is clearly not part of the Vedic area (nor is there even the slightest hint anywhere in the Rigveda *that it ever was*): it is constantly referred to as being far away (IV.26.6; IX.68.6; X.11.4; 144.4). This area is also known as the “dwelling of TvaSTR” (IV.18.3); and this is what the scholars have to say about TvaSTR: “TvaSTR is one of the obscurest members of the Vedic pantheon. The obscurity of the concept is explained... (by) HILLEBRANDT (who) thinks TvaSTR was derived from a mythical circle outside the range of the Vedic tribes.”<sup>14</sup>

Soma is mythically reported to be brought by an eagle to the Vedic people, and even to their Gods, from its place of origin:

I.80.2; 93.6;  
III.43.7;  
IV.18.13; 26.4-7; 27.3, 4;  
V.45.9;  
VI.20.6;  
VIII.82.9; 100.8;  
IX.68.6; 77.2; 86.24; 87.6;  
X.11.4; 99.8; 144.4, 5.

That this place of origin is alien to the Vedic people is clear from the fact that this eagle is reported to have to hurry (IV.26.5) to escape the guardians of Soma, who are described as

attacking the eagle (IV.27.3) to prevent it from taking the Soma away.

“TvaSTR is especially the guardian on Soma, which is called ‘the mead of TvaSTR’ (I.117.22)”<sup>15</sup> and Indra is described as conquering TvaSTR in order to obtain the Soma.

In his footnote to 1.43.8, Griffith refers to “the people of the hills who interfere with the gathering of the Soma plant which is to be sought there”.

The Family MaNDalas are generally ignorant about the exact details of the Soma-growing areas. Whatever specific information is there is in the later MaNDalas:

The prime Soma-growing areas are identified in VIII.64.11 as the areas near the SuSomA and ArjlklyA rivers (the SohAn and HAro, northeastern tributaries of the Indus, in the extreme north of the Punjab and northwest of Kashmir) and SaryaNAvAn (a lake in the vicinity of these two rivers). In VIII.7.29, the reference is to the SuSoma and Arjlka (in the masculine gender, signifying mountains; while the rivers of these names are in the feminine gender), clearly the mountains which gave rise to the SusomA and ArjlklyA rivers, alongwith SaryaNAvAn (which also appears in X.35.2 as a mountainous area, perhaps referring to the mountains surrounding the lake of the same name).

In another place, the best Soma is said to be growing on the MUjavat mountains. The MUjavat tribes are identified (Atharvaveda V-XXII-5, 7, 8, 14) with the GandhArIs. These mountains are therefore also in the extreme north of the Punjab and in adjacent parts of Afghanistan.

That GandhArl (Afghanistan) in the Rigveda is associated with Soma is clear from the specific role assigned in the Rigveda to the Gandharva or gandharvas (mythical beings associated in the Rigveda with that region). In the words of

Macdonell: "Gandharva is, moreover, in the RV often associated (chiefly in the ninth book) with Soma. He guards the place of Soma and protects the races of the gods (9.83.4; cp. 1.22.14). Observing all the forms of Soma, he stands on the vault of heaven (9.85.12). Together with Parjanya and the daughters of the sun, the Gandharvas cherish Soma (9.113.3). Through Gandharva's mouth the gods drink their drought (AV.7.73.3). The MS (3.8.10) states that the Gandharvas kept the Soma for the gods... It is probably as a jealous guardian of Soma that Gandharva in the RV appears as a hostile being, who is pierced by Indra in the regions of air (8.66.5) or whom Indra is invoked to overcome (8.1.11). ... Soma is further said to have dwelt among the Gandharvas..."<sup>16</sup>

All these places are found mentioned only in the later MaNDalas (i.e. after the westward expansion of the Vedic Aryans):

*ArjIkA/ArjIklyA:*

VIII. 7.29; 64.11;  
IX. 65.23; 113.2;  
X. 75.5.

*SuSoma/SuSomA:*

VIII. 7.29; 64.11;  
X. 75.5.

*SaryaNAvAn:*

I. 84.14;  
VIII. 6.39; 7.29; 64.11;  
IX. 65.22: 113.1;  
X. 35.2.

*MUjavat:*

X. 34.1.

*GandhAri:*

I. 126.6.

2. The special priests of the Vedic Aryans (i.e. of

the Bharatas) were the ANgirasas, VasiSThas and ViSvAmitras. These priests, however, are *not* specially associated with the Soma plant and ritual.

The following table will make the position clear:  
(click on the link)

[Click Here](#)

As we can see, the nine priestly families are divided into two distinct categories: the KaSyapas and BhRgus, who are very specially associated with Soma, and the other seven families which are not. The Bharatas separate the two groups.

Clearly, the KaSyapas and BhRgus are the two families which are specially associated with Soma. And these are the two families which were originally alien to the Vedic Aryans: the KaSyapas are associated throughout Indian tradition with Kashmir (KaSyapa-mlra); and the BhRgus, except for one branch consisting of Jamadagni and his descendants, are associated with the enemies of the Vedic Aryans living to their north and northwest (as we shall see in greater detail in our chapter on the Indo-Iranian homeland). Both these families are thus directly associated with the Soma-growing areas to the north and northwest of the Vedic Aryan territory.

It is not only in the statistical analysis of the number of verses to Soma that the special relationship shared by these two families with the Soma plant and ritual becomes apparent; the joint testimony of the Avesta and the Rigveda also confirms this special relationship. As Macdonell puts it: "The RV and the Avesta even agree in the names of ancient preparers of Soma; Vivasvat and Trita Aptya on the one hand, and Vivanhvant, Athwya and Thritha on the other."<sup>17</sup>

According to the Avesta, the first preparer of Soma was Vivanhvant (Vivasvat), the second was

Athwya (Aptya) and the third was Thritha (Trita).

Vivasvat in the Rigveda is generally the Sun (note: in many references, the sky is referred to as “VivasvAn’s dwelling”, which may be compared with the reference to AuSija’s dwelling or abode in our discussion on the word AuSija in our chapter on the chronology of the Rigveda); but Vivasvat is also the name of the father of two persons: Yama and Manu. In the Avesta also, Vivanhvant is the father of Yima.

Both Vivasvat and Yama Vaivasvata are identified in the Rigveda as BhRgus (see the discussion on the YAmAyana group of RSis in our chapter on the composers of the Rigveda); and Manu Vaivasvata is identified in the AnukramaNIs of VIII.29 with KaSyapa.

Trita Aptya is not clearly identified with any family in the Rigveda, but it is significant that he is described by the GRtsamadas (Kevala *BhRgus*) in II.11-19 as belonging to “our party” (Griffith’s translation).

The KaSyapas are indeed very closely associated with Soma: not only are 70.60% of the verses composed by them dedicated to Soma PavamAna, but the AprI-sUkta of the KaSyapas is the only AprI-sUkta dedicated to Soma (all the other nine AprI-sUktas are dedicated to Agni).

But while the KaSyapas *are* exclusive Soma priests, the fact is that they entered the Rigveda at a late stage: they became exclusive Soma priests in the period *following* the expansion of the Vedic Aryans into the Soma-growing areas.

The identification of the BhRgus with Soma is deeper, older and more significant: it is clear that the Soma plant originated among the BhRgus of the northwest, and it is they who introduced the plant and its rituals to the Vedic Aryans and their priests:

**a.** The word Soma, which occurs thousands of times in the hymns of the Rigveda, is found in the name of only *one* composer RSi: SomAhuti BhArgava.

**b.** The word PavamAna, which occurs more than a hundred times in the Soma PavamAna MaNDala, is found only once outside MaNDala IX: in VIII.101.14 composed by Jamadagni BhArgava.

**c.** Both the Rigveda and the Avesta, as we have seen, are unanimous in identifying BhRgus as the earliest preparers of Soma..

**d.** The overwhelming majority of the hymns to Soma in MaNDala IX, as we have seen in our chapter on the chronology of the Rigveda, are composed by RSis belonging to the Middle and Late Periods of the Rigveda: the only two hymns (other than hymns by BhRgus) which can be ascribed (and *only*, as we have pointed out, for the lack of clear contrary evidence) to RSis belonging to the period of the three Early Family MaNDalas are IX.71 (ascribed to RSabha VaiSvAmitra of MaNDala III) and IX.90 (ascribed to VasiSTha MaitrAvaruNI of MaNDala VII).

However, fourteen hymns are ascribed to BhRgu RSis. Of these, two which are ascribed to Jamadagni BhArgava (IX.62, 65) of the period of MaNDala III, are clearly composed by his descendants; but the remaining twelve hymns are ascribed to remote ancestral BhRgu RSis of the

pre-Rigvedic period, who are already ancient and mythical even in the oldest MaNDalas: Vena BhArgava (IX.85), USanA KAvyA (IX.87-89) and Kavi BhArgava (IX.47-49, 75-79).

The oldest Soma hymns in the Rigveda therefore appear to be composed exclusively by BhRgus.

e. The Rigveda clearly indicates that it was the BhRgus who introduced Soma to the Vedic Aryans, and to their Gods and priests. According to at least three references (I.116.12; 117.22; 119.9), the location or abode of Soma was a secret; and this secret was revealed to the ASvins by Dadhyanc, an ancient BhRgu RSi, already mythical in the Rigveda, and older than even Kavi BhArgava and USanA KAvya. Dadhyanc is the son of AtharvaNa, and grandson of the eponymous BhRgu.

Even the symbolism inherent in the eagle who brought Soma to the Vedic Aryans probably represents this role of the BhRgus: according to Macdonell, “the term eagle is connected with Agni Vaidyuta or lightning (TB 3, 10, 5<sup>1</sup>; cp. 12.12)”;<sup>18</sup> and likewise, “BERGAIGNE thinks there can hardly be a doubt that *bhRgu* was originally a name of fire, while KUHN and BARTH agree in the opinion that the form of fire it represents is lightning”<sup>19</sup> (see also Griffith’s footnote to IV.7.4)

The evidence in the Rigveda thus clearly shows that the Vedic Aryans did not *come* from the

Soma-growing areas bringing the Soma plant and rituals with them: the Soma plant and rituals were *brought* to the Vedic Aryans from the Soma-growing areas of the northwest by the BhRgus, priests of those areas.

3. The expansion of the Vedic Aryans into the west and northwest was a direct consequence of their quest for Soma:

The westward movement commenced with the crossing of the Sutudri and VipAS by ViSvAmitra and the Bharatas under SudAs, described in hymn III.33; and the fifth verse of the hymn clarifies both the direction and purpose of this crossing.

Griffith translates III.33.5 (in which ViSvAmitra addresses the rivers) as: “Linger a little at my friendly bidding; rest, Holy Ones, a moment in your journey...”; but he clarifies in his footnote: “*At my friendly bidding*: according to the Scholiasts, YAska and SAyaNa, the meaning of *me vAcase somyAya* is ‘to my speech importing the Soma’; that is, the object of my address is that I may cross over and gather the Soma-plant.”

This crossing, and the successful foray into the northwest, appears to have whetted the appetite of SudAs and the Bharatas for conquest and expansion: shortly afterwards, the ViSvAmitras perform an *aSvamedha* sacrifice for SudAs, described in III.53.11: “Come forward KuSikas, and be attentive; let loose SudAs’s horses to win him riches. East, west, and north, let the king slay the foeman, then at earth’s choicest place (*vara A pRthivyA* = KurukSetra) perform his worship.”

While some expansion took place towards the east as well (KIkTa in III.53.14), the main thrust of the expansion is clearly towards the west and northwest: the first major battle in this long drawn out western war is on the YamunA, the second (the DASarAjña) on the ParuSNI, and the final one in southern Afghanistan beyond the Sarayu.



While SudAs was still the leader of the Bharatas in the battles on the YamunA and the ParuSNI, the battle beyond the Sarayu appears to have taken place under the leadership of his remote descendant Sahadeva in the Middle Period of the Rigveda.

Sahadeva's son (referred to by his priest VAmadeva in IV.15.7-10), who also appears to have been a participant in the above battle beyond the Sarayu, may have been named Somaka in commemoration of earlier conquests of the Soma-growing areas of eastern Afghanistan by his father Sahadeva.

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>VPHG, p.211.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>ibid.

<sup>4</sup>GORI, p.41-42.

<sup>5</sup>HCIP, p.341.

<sup>6</sup>MBH, pp.381-382.

<sup>7</sup>GORI, p.32.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., p.35.

<sup>9</sup>IASA, p.317.

<sup>10</sup>ibid., p.319.

<sup>11</sup>ibid., p.322.

<sup>12</sup>IAW, p. 176.

[13](#)IASA, p.102.

[14](#)VM, p. 117.

[15](#)ibid., p.116.

[16](#)VM, p.136.

[17](#)VM, p.114.

[18](#)VM, p.112.

[19](#)ibid., p.140.

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## Chapter 5

### The Historical Identity of the Vedic Aryans

We have examined the chronology and geography of the Rigveda, and seen the expansion of the Vedic Aryans from their original, homeland in the east to the west and northwest.

But a basic question that remains is: who exactly were these Vedic Aryans and what was their historical identity?

According to the scholars, the Vedic Aryans were a branch of the Indo-Iranians of Central Asia; and these Indo-Iranians were themselves a branch of the Indo-Europeans of South Russia.

That is, the Indo-Europeans were originally a people in South Russia; one branch of these Indo-Europeans, the Indo-Iranians, migrated towards the east and settled down in Central Asia; much later, one branch of these Indo-Iranians, the Indoaryans, migrated southeastwards into the northwestern parts of India; and thus commenced the story of the Aryans in India.

These Indoaryans are called Vedic Aryans since they composed the hymns of the Rigveda during the period of their earliest settlements in the northwest and the Punjab, before they came into contact with other parts of India.

These Vedic Aryans were faceless and anonymous groups of people, whose only historical identity is that they were the ultimate ancestors of the different tribes, peoples, priestly families and royal dynasties found throughout the Sanskrit texts.

*But all this is the version of the scholars. As we have already seen, the scholars are wrong in their fundamental proposition that the Vedic Aryans moved into India from the northwest. They are*

also wrong in their conclusions about the historical identity of the Vedic Aryans:

The Vedic Aryans were not the ultimate ancestors of the different tribes and peoples found in the Sanskrit texts: they were in fact *just one* of these tribes and peoples. They have a definite historical identity: *the Vedic Aryans were the PUrus of the ancient texts.*

And, in fact, the particular Vedic Aryans of the Rigveda were *one section among these PUrus*, who called themselves Bharatas.

F.E. Pargiter, the eminent western analyst of India's traditional history, came close to making this identification when he remarked that "the bulk of the Rigveda was composed in the great development of Brahmanism that arose under the successors of king Bharata who reigned in the upper Ganges-Jumna doab and plain".<sup>1</sup> And when he noted, in referring to the kings identified in the PurANas as the kings of North PañcAla, that "they and their successors are the kings who play a prominent part in the Rigveda".<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, Pargiter went off at a tangent, consciously trying to identify the presence of Aryans, Dravidians and Austrics among the tribes and dynasties in the PurANas; and thereby missed out on clinching the identification which is so crucial to an understanding of Vedic, Indian and Indo-European history.

We will examine the evidence, identifying the PUrus, *and among them the Bharatas*, as the Vedic Aryans of the Rigveda, under the following heads:

- I. The Kings and Tribes in the Rigveda.
- II. The RSis and Priestly Families in the Rigveda.
- III. The Aryas in the Rigveda.

## THE KINGS AND TRIBES IN THE RIGVEDA

We will examine the evidence under the following heads:

- A. The Kings in the Rigveda.
- B. The Tribes in the Rigveda.

### I.A. The Kings in the Rigveda

As we have seen in our chapter on the chronology of the Rigveda, the predominant dynasty in the Rigveda is the dynasty of DevavAta, one of the descendants of the ancient king Bharata.

The kings in this dynasty, as we have already seen, are:

DevavAta  
SRnjaya  
VadhryaSva  
DivodAsa  
Pratardana  
Pijavana  
DevaSravas  
SudAs  
Sahadeva  
Somaka

These kings are Bharatas, but they are also PUrus: according to the PurANas, *the Bharatas are a branch of the PUrus*; and this is confirmed in the Rigveda, where both DivodAsa (I.130.7) and SudAs (I.63.7) are called PUrus, and where the Bharata composer Parucchepa DaivodAsI repeatedly speaks as a PUru (I.129.5; 131.4).

Some other names of kings in the Rigveda who appear in the Puranic lists as PUru kings (some belonging to the Bharata dynasty of DevavAta, and some not) are:

AjamILha (IV.44.6).  
Dhvasra/Dhvasanti and PuruSanti (I.112.23;

IX.58.3).

(SuSanti and PurujAti of the Puranic lists.)

Mudgala (X.102.2, 5, 6, 9).

RkSa (VIII.68.15, 16; 74.4, 13).

Srutarvan (VIII.74.4, 13; X.49.5).

Vidathin (IV.16.13; V.29.11).

Santanu (X.98.1, 3, 7).

KuSika (III.26.1).

Incidentally, the other Veda SaMhitAs also refer to the following prominent PUru kings:

Bhlmasena of KASI (Yajurveda, KAThaka SaMhitA, VII.1.8)

ParlkSita I (Atharvaveda, XX.127.7-10)

Pratlpa (Atharvaveda, XX.129.2)

VicitravIrya (Yajurveda, KAThaka SaMhitA, X.6)

DhRtarASTra (Yajurveda, KAThaka SaMhitA, X.6)

The *only* other prominent dynasty in the Rigveda is the TRkSi dynasty of MandhAtA, identifiable as a branch of the IkSvAkus of the PurANas.

The kings of this dynasty, as we have already seen, are:

MandhAtA

Purukutsa

Trasadasyu

These kings are *not* PUrus; but they are accorded a special position in the Rigveda *only because of the special aid given by them to the PUrus*.

According to the PurANas, MandhAtA's father was an IkSvAku king, *but his mother was a PUru*, being the daughter of a PUru king MatInAra. Moreover, the PurANas record that the Druhyus, who, in the earliest pre-Rigvedic period, were inhabitants of the Punjab, were pressing eastwards onto the PUrus. In this context, MandhAtA moved westwards, confronted the invading hordes of Druhyus, defeated them, and drove them out into Afghanistan and beyond.

The Rigveda itself records (I.63.7; VI.20.10) that Indra, through Purukutsa, rendered help to the PУrus in a war against the DАsa tribes; and VII.19.3 refers to Indra aiding the PУrus, through Trasadasyu, in “winning land and slaying foemen”. IV.38.1, likewise, thanks Mitra and Varuna for the help which Trasadasyu, “the winner of our fields and ploughlands, and the strong smiter who subdued the Dasyus”, rendered to the PУrus.

It may be noted that most scholars, on the basis of these references, even go so far as to classify Purukutsa and Trasadasyu themselves as PУrus.

The only other kings of identifiable dynasty who are classifiable as heroes in the Rigveda (as distinct from kings who are merely praised in *dAnastutis* on account of liberal gifts given by them to the RSis concerned: such liberal donors or patrons include DАsas and PaNis, as in VIII.46.32 and VI.45.31) are AbhyAvartin CAyamAna and VItahavya.

AbhyAvartin CAyamAna is an Anu king, and he clearly appears as a hero in VI.27. However, it is equally clear that this is only because he is an ally of the Bharata king SRnjaya: his descendant Kavi CAyamAna who appears (though not in Griffith’s translation) in VII.18.9 as an *enemy* of the Bharata king SudAs, is referred to in hostile terms.

VItahavya is a Yadu, and he is referred to in VI.15.2, 3 and VII.19.2 (and also in the Atharvaveda VI.137.1). However, nothing more is known about him in the Rigveda; and it may be noted that he is associated in VI.15 with BharadvAja, the priest of the Bharata king DivodAsa, and again remembered in passing (though not in Griffith’s translation) in the context of the Bharata king SudAs’ battle with the ten kings.

Clearly, the only kings that really matter in the Rigveda are the kings of the PУrus (and, in

particular, of the Bharatas); and the only non-PUru kings who matter are those closely aligned with the PUrus or those to whom the PUrus as a race are deeply indebted.

### **I.B. The Tribes in the Rigveda**

Traditional history knows of many different streams of tribes or peoples, but the two main streams are of those belonging to the Solar Race of the IkSvAkus, and those belonging to the Lunar Race of the AiLas. The AiLas are further divided into five main branches: the Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus and PUrus.

The Rigveda is little concerned with the IkSvAkus as a people, inspite of the fact that the second most important dynasty in the Rigveda (but *only*, as we have seen, because of the aid given by the kings of this dynasty to the PUrus) is that of the TRkSis, a branch of the IkSvAkus.

The word IkSvAku itself occurs only once in the Rigveda as a name of the Sun (X.60.4).

The word TRkSi occurs only twice, once in a list of enumeration of tribes or peoples (VI.46.8), and once as an epithet of Trasadasyu's son (VIII.22.7).

The Five branches of the AiLas, however, are referred to much more frequently.

Some of these references are those in which various tribes or peoples are merely enumerated (or in which the tribes serve as pointers of direction):

- a. I.108.8: Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus, PUrus.
- b. VIII.10.5: Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus.
- c. VI.46.8: Druhyus, PUrus, (and TRkSis).
- d. VIII.4.1: Anus, TurvaSas.
- e. I.47.7: TurvaSas.



But the other references to these five peoples, more concrete in nature, are quite conclusive in establishing the identity of the Vedic Aryans with the P<sup>U</sup>rus:

### *Anus and Druhyus*

The Anus and Druhyus (apart from the above-mentioned enumerations of tribes or peoples) are referred to only in a few verses:

*Anus*: V.31.4;

VI. 62.9;

VII. 18.13, 14;

VIII. 74.4.

*Druhyus*: VII. 18.6, 12, 14.

It is significant that most of these references are hostile references, in which Anus and Druhyus feature as enemies: VI.62.9: VII.18.6, 12-14.

Only two verses (both referring to the Anus) are more ambiguous:

**a.** In V.31.4, the Anus are described as manufacturing a chariot for Indra. The reference is clearly to the BhRgus who (as we have already seen in earlier chapters, and will see in greater detail in the chapter on the Indo-Iranian homeland) were the priests of the people who lived to the northwest of the Vedic Aryans: i.e. of the Anus, who lived to the northwest of the P<sup>U</sup>rus. Griffith himself puts it as follows in his footnote: “*Anus*: probably meaning BhRgus who belonged to that tribe.”

This identity of the Anus and BhRgus is clear in VII.18: verse 14 refers to the Anus and Druhyus, while verse 6 refers to the BhRgus and Druhyus.

Likewise, while V.31.4 describes the Anus as manufacturing a chariot for Indra, IV.16.20 refers to the BhRgus as manufacturing a chariot for Indra.

**b.** VIII.74.4 refers to Agni as Agni of the Anus:

this again is probably a reference to the fact that the BhRgus are credited with the introduction of fire.

The verse in question, in any case, does not refer to any Anu king or person, it refers to the PUru king Srutarvan, son of RkSa.

It is clear from these references that the Anus and Druhyus are not identifiable with the Vedic Aryans.

#### *Yadus and TurvaSas*

The Yadus and TurvaSas (apart from the verses which enumerate tribes or peoples) are referred to in many verses (often together):

#### *Yadus and TurvaSas:*

- I. 36.18; 54.6; 174.9;
- IV. 30.17;
- V. 31.8;
- VI. 20.12; 45.1;
- VII. 19.8;
- VIII. 4.7; 7.18; 9.14; 45.27;
- IX. 61.2;
- X. 49.8; 62.10.

#### *Yadus:*

- VIII. 1.31; 6.46, 48.

#### *TurvaSas:*

- VI. 27.7;
- VII. 18.6;
- VIII. 4.19.

But these references make it very clear that the Yadus and TurvaSas are not identifiable with the Vedic Aryans:

**a.** The two peoples appear to be located at a great distance from the land of the Vedic Aryans: they are described as coming “from afar” (I.36.18; VI.45.1), from “the further bank” (V.31.8) and

“over the sea” (VI.20.12). Some of the verses refer to the Gods “bringing” them across flooded rivers (I.174.9; IV.30.17).

**b.** The very fact, that inspite of being two distinct tribes of the five, they are overwhelmingly more often referred to in tandem, is evidence of the fact that their individuality is blurred and they are thought of as a pair. This is definitely a measure of their distant location from the Vedic Aryans.

Even among the six verses which refer to only one of the two, VI.27.7 refers to the TurvaSas alongwith the VRclvans, who are Yadus (cf. VRjnlvant of the traditional dynastic lists).

**c.** Four of the references to the Yadus and TurvaSas are definitely hostile ones, in which they figure as enemies of the Vedic Aryans: VI.27.7; VII.18.6; 19.8; IX.61.2.

**d.** Although there are so many references to the Yadus and TurvaSas, the majority of them refer to just two historical incidents in which (as in the case of Purukutsa and Trasadasyu) the Yadus and TurvaSas appear to have come to the aid of the Vedic Aryans (thereby making it clear that they were not always enemies of the Vedic Aryans; unlike the Druhyus, and, to a slightly lesser extent, the Anus).

The first incident is clearly a very old one, in which Indra is credited with bringing the Yadus and TurvaSas safely over flooded rivers: I.174.9; IV.30.17; V.31.8; VI.20.12; 45.1.

The second incident, in which the Yadus came to the aid of the KaNvas in fighting their enemies, in response to an appeal contained in I.36.18 (in which they are called “from afar” to come to the aid of KaNva), is referred to in I.36.18; 54.6; VIII.4.7; 7.18; 9.14; 45.27; X.49.8.

**e.** All the other references (apart from the hostile references and the references to the two historical

incidents) are merely references in *dAnastutis* (and, as we have seen, even DAsas and PaNis are praised in such circumstances) in VIII.1.31; 4.19; 6.46, 48; X.62.10.

*PUrus:*

The references to the PUrus, on the other hand, make it very clear that the PUrus, and in particular the Bharatas among them, are the Vedic Aryans, the People of the Book in the literal sense.

The Bharatas are referred to in the following verses:

- I. 96.3;
- II. 7.1, 5; 36.2;
- III. 23.2; 33.11, 12; 53.12, 24;
- IV. 25.4;
- V. 11.1; 54.14;
- VI.16.19, 45;
- VII.8.4; 33.6.

The references are very clear:

**a.** In many verses, even Gods are referred to as Bharatas: Agni in I.96.3; II.7.1, 5; IV.25.4, and VI.16.9; and the Maruts in II.36.2.

**b.** In other verses, Agni is described as belonging to the Bharatas: III.23.2; V.11.1; VI.16.45; VII.8.4.

**c.** In the other references to the Bharatas (III.33.11, 12; 53.12, 24; V.54.14; VII.33.6) it is clear that they are the unqualified heroes of the hymns.

There is not a single reference even faintly hostile to the Bharatas in the whole of the Rigveda.

The PUrus (apart from the verses which enumerate tribes or peoples) are referred to in the following verses:

- I.59.6; 63.7; 129.5; 130.7; 131.4;
- IV.21.10; 38.1, 3; 39.2;

V.17.1;  
VI.20.10;  
VII.5.3; 8.4; 18.13; 19.3; 96.2;  
VIII.64.10;  
X.4.1; 48.5.

The references make it very clear that the P $\bar{U}$ rus are being referred to in a first-person sense:

**a.** The Vedic Gods are clearly identified as the Gods of the P $\bar{U}$ rus:

Agni is described as a “fountain” to the P $\bar{U}$ rus (X.4.1), a “priest” who drives away the sins of the P $\bar{U}$ rus (I.129.5), the Hero who is worshipped by the P $\bar{U}$ rus (1.59.6), the protector of the sacrifices of the P $\bar{U}$ rus (V.17.1), and the destroyer of enemy castles for the P $\bar{U}$ rus (VII.5.3).

Mitra and Varuna are described as affording special aid in battle and war to the P $\bar{U}$ rus, in the form of powerful allies and mighty steeds (IV.38.1, 3; 39.2).

Indra is identified as the God to whom the P $\bar{U}$ rus sacrifice in order to gain new favours (VI.20.10), and for whom the P $\bar{U}$ rus shed Soma (VIII.64.10). Indra gives freedom to the P $\bar{U}$ rus by slaying VRtra (IV.21.10), helps the P $\bar{U}$ rus in battle (VII.19.3), and breaks down enemy castles for the P $\bar{U}$ rus (I.63.7; 130.7; 131.4).

Indra even speaks to the P $\bar{U}$ rus and asks them to sacrifice to him alone, promising in return his friendship, protection and generosity (X.48.5.). In a Biblical context, this would have been a testimony of “God’s

covenant” with the People of the Book.

**b.** It is generally accepted by the scholars that the Sarasvatī represents the geographical heartland of the Vedic Aryan civilization. Sarasvatī is invoked (along with two other Goddesses who, as we have seen in our chapter on the Geography of the Rigveda, were deities of places close to the banks of the Sarasvatī) in the Aprī-sUktas of all the ten families of composers of hymns in the Rigveda.

It becomes clear, in VII.96.2, that the Sarasvatī was a PŪru river, and it flowed through PŪru lands. The river is addressed with the words: “The PŪrus dwell, Beauteous One, on thy two grassy banks.”

**c.** The identity of the PŪrus with the Vedic Aryans is so unmistakable, that the line between “PŪru” and “Man” is distinctly blurred in the Rigveda:

Griffith, for example, sees fit to translate the word PŪru as “Man” in at least five verses: I.129.5; 131.4; IV.21.10; V.171.1; X.4.1.

The Rigveda itself, in no uncertain terms, identifies the PŪrus in VIII.64.10 with “mankind”: PŪrave... *mAnave jane*.

In fact, the Rigveda goes so far as to coin a word *PŪruSa/PuruSa* (descendant of PŪru) for “man”, on the lines of the word *manuSa* (descendant of Manu).

While the word *ManuSa* for “man” is representative of a general Indo-European word with counterparts in other Indo-European branches (Germanic, as in English “man”), the word *PUruSa/PuruSa* is purely Rigvedic in origin: the word is found in the Rigveda in 28 verses, of which 17 are found in the late MaNDala X. Of the 11 verses in the other nine MaNDalas, 9 are by the priests of SudAs and his descendant Somaka (i.e. by ViSvAmitra, VasiSTha, Kutsa and VAmadeva). The word, therefore, was clearly coined during the period of SudAs, and gained increasing currency during the period of composition of the Rigvedic hymns.

**d.** There are two verses in which the PUrus are referred to in hostile terms: VII.8.4; 18.3.

Far from disproving the general scenario, however, these references only further confirm the point that the Bharatas, themselves a branch of the PUrus, were the particular Vedic Aryans of the Rigveda: both the verses refer to conflict between the Bharatas and the other PUrus.

In VII.8.4. “Bharata’s Agni” is described as conquering the PUrus in battle.

In VII.18.3, VasiSTha, speaking on behalf of the Bharata king SudAs, addresses Indra with the plea: “May we, in sacrifice, conquer (the) scornful PUru(s).”

## THE RSIS AND PRIESTLY FAMILIES IN THE RIGVEDA

As we have seen, the Rigveda, by way of its ten Aprl-sUktas, recognizes ten families of RSis or composers. The Aprl-sUktas are therefore a key to an understanding of some of the basic aspects of the system of priestly families in the Rigveda.

Two basic points which become apparent from the Aprl-sUktas are of great importance in identifying the Bharatas, among the PUrius, as the particular Vedic Aryans of the Rigveda:

1. Nine of the ten families recognized in the Rigveda are identifiable with the seven primary and two secondary families of RSis recognized in Indian tradition: the seven primary families are the ANgirasas, BhRgus, ViSvAmitras, VasiSThas, Agastyas, KaSyapas and Atris, and the two secondary families are the Kevala-ANgirasas (KaNvas in the Rigveda) and Kevala-BhRgus (GRtsamadas in the Rigveda).

But the Rigveda also recognizes a tenth family, the Bharatas. This family does not figure as a separate family in later priestly traditions, which place kings who became RSis among either the ANgirasas or the BhRgus.

This special treatment shows that to the Vedic Aryans, there were nine families of priestly RSis, but only one family of royal RSis; and, by implication, the tribal identity of these royal RSis is also the tribal identity of the Vedic Aryans.

2. There are three Great Goddesses invoked in the ten Aprl-sUktas. One of them is BhAraatl, who, as the very name suggests, was the tutelary deity of the Bharatas.

An examination of the references to this Goddess in the Aprl-sUktas brings out a significant state of affairs: the ten Aprl-sUktas fall into three distinct categories *in line with our classification of the*



*periods of the Rigveda into Early, Middle and Late.*

As per our chronology, five families of RSis originated in the Early Period of the Rigveda: the ANgirasas, BhRgus, ViSvAmitras, VasiSThas and Agastyas. All these five families refer to the Three Goddesses *in a particular order of reference*: BhAraṭī, ILA, Sarasvatī (I.142.9; X.110.8; III.4.8; VII.2.8; I.188.9).

Two families originated in the Middle Period of the Rigveda, when the heyday of the Bharatas was waning, but the Rigveda was still a Bharata book: the KaSyapas and GRtsamadas. Both these families still refer to the same Three Goddesses, but in changed order of reference: The KaSyapas change the order to BhAraṭī, Sarasvatī, ILA, (IX.5.8); and the GRtsamadas to Sarasvatī, ILA, BhAraṭī (II.3.8).

The GRtsamadas reverse the order and place BhAraṭī last; but, in another hymn, they make amends for it by naming all the Three Goddesses in the original order: BhAraṭī, ILA, Sarasvatī (II.1.11). This, incidentally, is the only hymn, apart from the Aprī-sUktas, to refer to the Three Goddesses by name.

Three families originated in the Late Period of the Rigveda, when the predominance of the Bharatas (of the particular branch whose ruling dynasty was descended from DevavAtā) was practically a thing of the past: the Atris, KaNvas, and the Bharatas themselves. *Not one of the three refers to BhAraṭī at all.*

The Atris and KaNvas replace the suggestive name of the Goddess BhAraṭī with the more general name Mahl (which is an epithet of the Goddesses in I.142.9 and IX.5.8) *and* change the order to ILA, Sarasvatī, Mahl (V.5.8; I.13.9).

The Bharatas, caught in a bind, since they can neither refer to the Goddess as BhAraṭī, nor replace her name with another, follow a safe path:

they *refer* to Three Goddesses, but *name* only one: ILA. (X.70.8).

All this proves one more thing contrary to general belief: according to the scholars, the Aprl-sUktas were late compositions. On the contrary, it becomes clear that each new family of RSis, soon after it came into being and became a party to the performance of ritual sacrifices, composed its own Aprl-sUkta. The Aprl-sUkta, therefore, depicts the situation prevailing close to the time of the *birth* of the family (which, of course, does not apply to the two ancient pre-Rigvedic families, the ANgirasas and BhRgus, whose antecedents go back deep into the pre-Rigvedic past).

It must be noted that any RSi performing a particular sacrifice was required to chant verses appropriate to that particular sacrifice, regardless of the family identities of the composers of those verses. It is only at the point where an Aprl-sUkta was to be chanted, that he had to chant the particular Aprl-sUkta of his own family. Hence, the composition of an Aprl-sUkta, if no other hymn, was a must for any family, for a RSi belonging to that family to be able to participate in certain sacrifices.

This, incidentally, also explains why the Aprl-sUkta of the Agastyas, whose other hymns were certainly composed in the Middle and Late periods of the Rigveda, clearly shows that it was composed in the Early period of the Rigveda.

The Bharata-PUru factor is vital to an understanding of the very presence of the different families of RSis in the corpus of the Rigveda:

1. The ANgirasas and VasiSThas are two families which are *fully and militantly affiliated to the Bharatas throughout the Rigveda*.

2. The ViSvAmitras are a partially affiliated family: they were fully and militantly affiliated to the Bharatas in the period of MaNDala III, and,

moreover, the ViSvAmitras were themselves descended from a branch of PUrus (a different branch from that of DivodAsa and SudAs, but *possibly* descended from DevavAta) who also called themselves Bharatas.

However, their close affiliation with the Bharatas of the Rigveda ceased after the ViSvAmitras were replaced by the VasiSThas as the priests of SudAs.

3. The KaSyapas and GRtsamadas are two families which are associated with the Bharatas, but *not* militancy affiliated to them.

Their association is based on the fact that the provenance of these two families was in the Middle Period of the Rigveda, which was still the (albeit late) period of the Bharatas.

The two families were more concerned with religious subjects (nature-myths and rituals), and hardly at all with politics or militancy; but the only kings referred to by the KaSyapas (as patrons) are the PUru or Bharata kings Dhvasra and PuruSanti (IX.58.3), and the only prominent king remembered by the GRtsamadas is DivodAsa (II.19.6).

4. The BhRgus and Agastyas are relatively neutral families in the Rigveda, both being basically aloof from the Vedic mainstream:

The BhRgus were, in fact, the priests of the people (the Anus) who lived to the northwest of the Vedic Aryans, and therefore generally on hostile terms with the Vedic Aryans and their RSis. However, *one* branch of the BhRgus, consisting of Jamadagni and his descendants, became close to the Vedic RSis; and these are the BhRgus of the Rigveda.

The Agastyas are traditionally a family of RSis whose earliest and most prominent members migrated to the South, away from the area of the

Vedic Aryans, at an early point of time in their history.

Both these families owe their presence in the Rigveda to two factors:

**a.** Agastya and Jamadagni, the founders of these two families, were closely related to, and associated with, two other prominent eponymous RSis: Agastya was VasiSTha's brother, and Jamadagni was ViSvAmitra's nephew.

**b.** The two families were not affiliated to, or even associated with, the Bharatas, but nor were they affiliated to, or associated with, any other tribe or people.

Both the families, nevertheless, gained a late entry into the corpus of the Rigveda: even the oldest hymns of the BhRgus are found in the late MaNDalas; while the hymns of the Agastyas are, anyway, late hymns by RSis belonging to a later branch of the family.

5. The Atris and KaNvas are also relatively neutral families, but in a different sense from the BhRgus and Agastyas.

These two families, in fact, are not only *not* affiliated to the Bharatas in particular or the PUrus in general, but *they are more often associated with non-PUrus* (IkSvAkus, Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus). This association is basically mercenary: the Atris and KaNvas appear to have officiated as priests for, and composed *dAnastutis* in praise of, any king (irrespective of his tribal identity) who showered them with gifts. This more catholic or cosmopolitan nature of these two families is also recognized (in the case of the Atris) in I.117.3, where Atri is characterised as *pAñcajanya* (belonging to all the five tribes).

The KaNvas are even associated with the Yadus and TurvaSas in the con text of a battle, in which the Yadus and TurvaSas came to their aid in

response to an appeal by the KaNvas.

All this raises a question: if the PUrus *alone*, among the five tribes, are to be identified with the Vedic Aryans, and the Rigveda itself is a PUru book, what is the explanation for the presence of these two families in the Rigveda?.

The answer is simple:

a. These two families originated in the Late Period of the Rigveda, when the predominance of the Bharatas had ended, and the PUrus in general had become more catholic and cosmopolitan in their attitudes.

b. Tradition testifies that *both these priestly families were themselves of PUru origin*:

According to the VAYu PurANa (1.59), the earliest Atri RSi was PrabhAkara, who married the ten daughters of a PUru king BhadrASva or RaudrASva, and had ten sons from whom all the Atri clans are descended.

As for the KaNvas, “all the authorities agree that they were an offshoot from the Paurava line”.<sup>3</sup>

c. While the Atris and KaNvas (though descended from PUrus) were generally catholic or cosmopolitan in their associations, the most important Atri and KaNva RSis in the Rigveda are closely associated with the PUrus:

Among the Atris, SyAvASva Atreya is closely associated with the PUrus: according to SAyaNa’s

interpretation of V.54.14, SyAvASva was himself a Bharata. He is also the only Atri to pay homage to the memory of SudAs (V.53.2).

Among the KaNvas, PragAtha KANva and Sobhari KANva are closely associated with the PUrus: PragAtha identifies himself as a PUru directly in VIII.64.10, and also indirectly in VIII.10.5 (where he asks the ASvins to abandon the other four tribes, who are named, and come to the PUrus, who are not directly named). Sobhari is the only KaNva RSi to pay homage to the memory of DivodAsa (VIII.103.2) and to call him an Arya.

Sobhari KANva and SyAvASva Atreya are also two RSis associated (VIII.19.32, 36; 36.7; 37.7) with Trasadasyu, whose importance in the Rigveda is due to the help given by him to the PUrus.

It is significant that these three RSis are perhaps the most important Atri and KaNva RSis in the Rigveda:

SyAvASva Atreya has the largest number of hymns and verses (17 hymns, 186 verses) among the Atris in the Rigveda, more than those ascribed to the eponymous Atri Bhauma (13 hymns, 126 verses). Apart from these two Atris, all the other Atri RSis have one, two, three, or at the most four hymns.

PragAtha KANva does *not* have the largest number of hymns among the KaNvas in the Rigveda, but, MaNDala VIII, associated with the KaNvas, is called the "PragAtha

MaNDala”, and the dominant form of metre used in this MaNDala is also named after PragAtha.

These three RSis are the only RSis, belonging to the Atri and KaNva families, whose descendants have a place in the Rigveda: AndhIgu SyAvASvl (IX.101.1-3), Bharga PrAgAtha (VIII.60-61), Kali PrAgAtha (VIII.66), Haryata PrAgAtha (VIII.72) and KuSika Saubhara (X.127).

The presence of the Atris and KaNvas in the Rigveda is therefore fully in keeping with the PUru character of the Rigveda.

### III THE ARYAS IN THE RIGVEDA

One word which the scholars are unanimous in treating as a denominative epithet of the Vedic Aryans in the Rigveda is, beyond any doubt, the word Arya: according to them, Arya in the Rigveda refers to the Vedic Aryans (and, by implication, words like DAsa and Dasyu, contrasted with the word Arya, refer to people *other* than the Vedic Aryans).

This is a perfectly logical understanding of the use of the word Arya in the Rigveda (although scholars opposed to the Aryan invasion theory balk at this interpretation of the word, in the mistaken belief that this interpretation somehow symbolises the concept of invader Aryans and native non-Aryans).

But the actual connotation of this fact must be made clear. The Vedic Aryans called themselves Arya in the Rigveda, the Iranians called themselves Airya in their texts, the Irish called themselves, or their land, Eire, in their traditions: all these different Indo-European peoples were *each, individually and separately*, calling themselves by this particular name. *But it does not follow that they would also be calling each other by the same name.*

The word is used in the sense of “We, the Noble”. When an Iranian, for example, used the word Airya, he undoubtedly meant an Iranian, *or even perhaps an Iranian belonging to his own particular tribe or community*. He would never have dreamt of referring to a Vedic Aryan or an Irishman by the same term.

The use of the word Arya in the Rigveda must be understood in this sense: the Vedic Aryans used the word Arya in reference to Vedic Aryans as distinct from other people, *and not in reference to Indo-European language speaking people as distinct from non-Indo-European language speaking people*. All other people, Indo-Europeans or otherwise, other than themselves, were non-Aryas to the Vedic Aryans.

Therefore, also, in order to identify the Vedic Aryans, *it is necessary to identify the people who are referred to as Arya in the Rigveda*.

The word Arya is used 36 times in 34 hymns in the Rigveda:

I.51.8; 59.2; 103.3; 117.21; 130.8; 156.5;  
II.11.18, 19;  
III.34.9;  
IV.26.2; 30.18;  
V.34.6;  
VI.18.3; 22.10; 25.2; 33.3; 60.6;  
VII.5.6; 18.7; 33.7; 83.1;  
VIII.24.27; 51.9; 103.1;  
IX.63.5, 14;  
X.11.4; 38.3; 43.3; 49.3; 65.11; 69.6; 83.1; 86.19;  
102.3; 138.3.

But the word has an individual-specific connotation *only* in the case of three persons:

**a.** In three hymns (I.130.8; IV.26.2; VIII.103.1) DivodAsa is clearly the person referred to as an Arya.



**b.** In one hymn, the word refers to DivodAsa's father VadhryaSva (X.69.6).

**c.** The word occurs in *all* the three DASarAjña hymns pertaining to SudAs' great Battle of the Ten Kings (VII.18, 33, 83).

In the tribal sense, the word is used only in reference to the PUrus:

**a.** In I.59.2, Agni is said to have been produced by the Gods to be a light unto the Arya. In the sixth verse, it is clear that the hymn is composed on behalf of the PUrus.

**b.** In VII.5.6, again, Agni is said to have driven away the Dasyus and brought forth broad light for the Arya. In the third verse, the deed is said to have been done for the PUrus.

An examination of the family identity of the RSis who use the word Arya clinches the identification of the PUrus (and particularly the Bharatas) as the Aryas of the Rigveda: of the 34 hymns in which the word is used, 28 hymns are composed by the Bharatas, ANgirasas and VasiSThas.

The situation stands out in extraordinary clarity if we examine the number of hymns, which refer to the Aryas, from a statistical viewpoint: the Bharatas themselves, for example, use the word Arya in three hymns. The Bharatas have a total of 19 hymns out of 1028 hymns in the Rigveda: this amounts to 1.85% of the total number of hymns in the Rigveda. And they have 3 hymns which use the word Arya, out of 34 such hymns in the Rigveda: this amounts to 8.82% of the total number of such hymns in the Rigveda. The frequency rate of Arya-hymns by the Bharatas is therefore 8.82 divided by 1.85, which comes to 4.77.

The following table shows how, when the same test is applied to all the ten families of RSis in the Rigveda, they fall into four distinct categories in line with their relationship to the Bharatas (the standard frequency rate being 1). (Table on next page.)

The frequency rate of Arya-hymns by the Bharatas is 4.77. The only other families with a frequency rate above one are the priestly families of the Bharatas. The general associates and partial affiliates of the Bharatas have a frequency rate below one. The neutral families have a frequency rate of zero, *except for the KaNvas, who appear to constitute an exception to the rule.*

However, this is an exception which proves the rule loudly and clearly. The two references by the KaNvas establish beyond any doubt that the PUrus, and particularly the Bharatas, are the Aryas of the Rigveda:

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**a.** In VIII.51.9, SruStigu KANva refers to Indra as the “Good Lord of Wealth... to whom all Aryas, DAsas, here belong”.

**b.** In VIII.103, Sobhari KANva identifies DivodAsa as an Arya.

VIII.51.9 is the *only reference in the whole of the Rigveda in which Aryas and DAsas are both specifically mentioned together in an equally benevolent sense*: Indra is declared to be a God who is close to both Aryas and DAsas.

The KaNvas, like the Atris, are a priestly family with patrons from all the different tribes: the IkSvAkus, Yadus, TurvaSas, and even the Anus (in VIII.1.31; 4.19; 5.37; 6.46, 48; 19.32, 36; 65.12, etc.) more than the PUrus. This family is therefore neutral between the PUrus (i.e. the

Aryas) and the non-PUrus (i.e. the DAsas); and the use of the word Arya, in VIII.51.9, is made in order to express this neutrality. It is made, moreover, in the context of a reference to a patron RuSama Pavlru, who is clearly a non-PUrus (DAsa).

The second KaNva use of the word Arya is even more significant: the KaNvas refer to numerous IkSvAku, Yadu, TurvaSa and Anu kings as patrons (as mentioned above), and, in many other verses (I.36.18; VIII.4.7; 7.18; 9.14; 39.8; 40.12; 45.27; 49.10) they even refer to a historical incident in which the Yadus and TurvaSas came to their aid in battle. *But not one of these kings is referred to as an Arya.*

DivodAsa is referred to *only once* in the KaNva hymns, in VIII.103.2, and *he is called an Arya in the previous verse.*

Therefore, it is clear that even the neutral families of RSis used the word Arya in the Rigveda *only* in reference to the Bharatas in particular or the PUrus in general.

Incidentally, Purukutsa and Trasadasyu are eulogised to the skies by the priestly families affiliated to the Bharatas, for their rescue-act performed for the PUrus. A VAmadeva even calls Trasadasyu an *ardhadeva* or demi-god (IV.42.8, 9). *But nowhere is either Purukutsa or Trasadasyu called an Arya.*

The connotation of the word Arya in the Rigveda is therefore clear and unambiguous.

But there is more: there is a circumstance in the Rigveda, in connection with the word Arya, which is the subject of debate and controversy: the word Arya is used, in nine of the thirty-four hymns which refer to Aryas, *in reference to enemies of the Vedic Aryans.* In eight of these nine, the verses refer to *both Arya and DAsa enemies together.*

The exact implication of this should be understood: there are two entities being referred to: Aryas and DAsas. In these nine references, both the Aryas and DAsas are referred to as enemies. So who are these people (the protagonists of these nine hymns): are they Aryas, are they DAsas, or are they a *third* group of people different from both Aryas and DAsas?

The consensus among all serious scholars, fortunately, is a logical one: it is accepted that the protagonists of these nine hymns are definitely Aryas themselves, although their enemies in these cases include both Aryas and DAsas (non-Aryas).

These references become meaningful only in one circumstance: the PUrus are the Aryas of the Rigveda; the Bharatas (the predominant branch of the PUrus through most of the Rigveda) are the protagonist Aryas of the Rigveda; and these references refer to Bharata conflicts with other Aryas (other PUrus) and non-Aryas (non-PUrus).

This conclusion is fully confirmed by an examination of the references:

1. There are nine hymns which refer to Arya enemies in the Rigveda (of which the first one does not refer to DAsa enemies as well):

IV. 30.18;

VI. 22.10; 33.3; 60.6;

VII. 83.1;

X. 38.3; 69.6; 83.1; 102.3.

*All these nine references are either by the Bharatas themselves (X.69.6; 102.3), or by the ANgirasas (IV.30.18; VI.22.10; 33.3; 60.6) and VasiSThas (VII.83.1; X.38.3; 83.1).*

2. The idea expressed in these nine hymns is also expressed in another way: there are eight *other* references which refer to the Arya and DAsa enemies as “kinsmen” and “non-

kinsmen” (“strangers” in Griffith’s translation) enemies.

The following seven references refer to these enemies as *jAmi* (kinsmen) and *ajAmi* (non-kinsmen):

I. 100.11; 111.3;  
IV. 4.5;  
VI. 19.8; 25.3; 44.17;  
X. 69.12.

One of the above verses (X.69.12) is in the same hymn as a verse (X.69.6) which refers to Arya and DAsa enemies, thereby confirming that the same situation is referred to.

*All these seven references are either by the Bharatas themselves (X.69.12) or by the ANgirasas (I.100.11; 111.13; IV.4.5; VI.19.8; 25.3; 44.17).*

The eighth reference uses different words to express the same idea: it refers to *sanAbhi* (kinsmen) and *niSTya* (non-kinsmen) enemies.

This reference, X. 133.5, is *composed by a Bharata* in the name of SudAs himself

3. In case any more uncertainty could possibly remain about the exact identity of the protagonist Aryas in all the above references, it is cleared by the ViSvAmitras, who express the same above idea in more specific terms.

The ViSvAmitras were fully and militantly affiliated to the Bharatas under SudAs, in the period of MaNDala III. Their association with SudAs is detailed in two hymns: III.33 and 53. Of these, hymn 53 alone refers to SudAs by name (III.53.9, 11) and describes the *aSvamedha* performed by the ViSvAmitras for SudAs and the Bharatas.

The last verse of this hymn tells us: “These men, the sons of Bharata, O Indra, regard not

severance or close connexion. They urge their own steed, as it were another's, and take him, swift as the bow's string, to battle" (III.53.24).

The Bharatas, in short, are the protagonist Aryas of the Rigveda who disregard both severance (*apapitvam*: i.e. non-relationship with the *ajAmi*, *niSTya*, DAsas, non-kinsmen, non-PUrus) as well as close connexion (*prapitvam*: i.e. relationship with the *jAmi*, *sanAbhi*, Aryas, kinsmen, PUrus) when they set out to do battle.

In short, the PUrus alone were the Vedic Aryans, the Aryas of the Rigveda; and the non-PUrus were the DAsas of the Rigveda.

#### Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup>AIHT, p.297.

<sup>2</sup>ibid, p.275.

<sup>3</sup>IVA, p. 179.

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## Chapter 6

### The Indo-Iranian Homeland

So far, we have examined the history of the Vedic Aryans on the basis of the Rigveda.

This history is important in a wider context: the context of the history of the Indo-Iranians, and, further, the history of the Indo-Europeans.

According to the scholars, the Vedic Aryans had three historical and prehistorical habitats:

1. An *early* Indoaryan (i.e. Vedic Aryan) habitat in the Punjab.
2. An *earlier* Indo-Iranian habitat in Central Asia (shared by the Vedic Aryans with the Iranians).
3. An *even earlier* Indo-European habitat in and around South Russia (shared by both the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians with the other Indo-European groups).

There were therefore two basic migrations according to this theory. the Indoaryans migrated first (alongwith the Iranians) from South Russia to Central Asia; and later (separating from the Iranians) from Central Asia to the Punjab through the northwest.

The concepts of a common Indo-Iranian habitat and a common Indo-European habitat are based on the fact that the Vedic Aryans share a common linguistic ancestry and cultural heritage with the other Indo-European groups in general and the Iranians in particular.

But the identification of Central Asia as the location of this common Indo-Iranian habitat and of South Russia as the location of this common Indo-European habitat are *purely arbitrary*

*hypotheses with absolutely no basis in archaeology or in written records.*

As we have seen, the Vedic Aryans, far from migrating into the Punjab from the northwest, actually advanced into the Punjab from the *east*, and *later* advanced further into the northwest. This certainly goes against the accepted ideas of the geographical locations of their earlier habitats.

So what is the geographical location of the Indo-Iranian homeland (the subject of this chapter) which, in effect, means *the area where the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians developed common linguistic and cultural elements which distinguish them from other Indo-Europeans?*

We will examine this question under the following heads:

- I. The ANgirasas and BhRgus.
- II. The Avestan Evidence as per Western Scholars.
- III. The Historical Identity of the Iranians.
- IV. The Iranian Migrations.

## I

### **THE ANGIRASES AND BHRGUS**

One very important feature which must be examined, in order to get a proper perspective on Indo-Iranian history, is the special position of, and the symbiotic relationship between, two of the ten families of RSis in the Rigveda: the ANgirasas and the BhRgus.

While all the other families of RSis came into existence at various points of time during the course of composition of the Rigveda, these two families *alone* represent the pre-Rigvedic past: they go so far back into the past that not only the eponymous founders of these families (ANgiras and BhRgu respectively) but even certain other



ancient RSis belonging to these families (BRhaspati, AtharvaNa, USanA) are already remote mythical persons in the Rigveda; and the names of the two families are already names for mythical and ritual classes: the ANgirasas are deified as “a race of higher beings between Gods and men” (as Griffith puts it in his footnote to I.1.6), and the BhRgus or AtharvaNas are synonymous with fire-priests in general.

What is more, the names of these two families are also found in the Iranian and Greek texts, and they have the same role as in the Rigveda: the Iranian *angra* and Greek *angelos* are names for classes of celestial beings (although malignant ones in the Iranian version) and the Iranian *Athravan* and Greek *phleguai* are names for fire-priests.

But an examination of the Rigveda shows a striking difference in the positions of these two families:

**a.** The ANgirasas are the dominant protagonist priests of the Rigveda.

**b.** The BhRgus are more or less outside the Vedic pale through most of the course of the Rigveda, and gain increasing acceptance into the Vedic mainstream only towards the end of the Rigveda.

The situation is particularly ironic since not only are *both* the families equally old and hoary, but it is the BhRgus, and not the ANgirasas, who are the real initiators of the two main ritual systems which dominate the Rigveda: the fire ritual and the Soma ritual.

The situation may be examined under the following heads:

- A. The ANgirasas and BhRgus as Composers.
- B. The ANgirasas and BhRgus in References.

C. The Post-Rigvedic Situation.

D. Vedic Aryans and Iranians.

### **I.A.. The ANgirasas and BhRgus as Composers**

There is a sea of difference in the relative positions of the ANgirasas and BhRgus as composers in the Rigveda.

To begin with, the bare facts may be noted (table on next page).

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The ANgirasas have two whole MaNDalas (IV and VI) exclusively to themselves (no other family has a MaNDala exclusively to itself, and the BhRgus do not have a Family MaNDala at all), and are the dominant family in two of the four non-family MaNDalas (I and X) and second in importance in the two others (VIII and IX). They are also present as composers in all the other Family MaNDalas (except in MaNDala II, but there we have the GRtsamadas whom we shall refer to presently).

In respect of the BhRgus, we may go into more details:

	No. of Hymns	No. of Verses
EARLY PERIOD	[1 joint]	[3 joint]
MIDDLE PERIOD	4	31
MANDALA VIII	4	46
MANDALA	14	140
MANDALA	24	256

It is clear from the above details that the BhRgus are increasingly accepted into the Vedic mainstream only in the Late Period of the Rigveda.

This is confirmed also by the fact that the BhRgu hymns in MaNDalas VIII and IX are all old hymns (with the exception of IX.62, 65, which are composed by late descendants of Jamadagni), the overwhelming majority of them even attributed to pre-Rigvedic BhRgu RSis, *all of which were kept outside the Vedic corpus and included in it Only in the Late Period.*

A more detailed examination of the hymns by the BhRgus brings to light the following facts:

1. The few hymns or verses by BhRgus in the MaNDalas of the Early and Middle Periods are not there on their own strength, but on the strength of the close relations of their composers with the families of the MaNDalas concerned:

**a.** In the Early Period, we find only 3 verses (III.62.16-18) by a BhRgu (Jamadagni), all of which are *jointly* composed with ViSvAmitra, the eponymous RSi of the MaNDala. Jamadagni, by all traditional accounts, is the nephew of ViSvAmitra, his mother being ViSvAmitra's sister.

**b.** In the Middle Period, we find only 4 hymns (II.4-7) by a BhRgu (SomAhuti), and it is clear in this case also that the composer is closely associated with the family of MaNDala II: in the very first of these hymns, he identifies himself with the GRtsamadas (II.4.9).

2. The hymns in the Late Period are also clearly composed by a section of BhRgus who have become close to the ANgirasas, and who, moreover, find it necessary or expedient to make this point clear in their hymns:

**a.** In MaNDala VIII, hymn 102 is composed by a BhRgu jointly with

an ANgiras RSi; and the hymn to Agni refers to that God as “ANgiras”.

**b.** In MaNDala IX, a BhRgu, descendant of Jamadagni, identifies himself with the ANgiras (IX.62.9). In his footnote, Griffith notes Ludwig’s puzzled comment that “the Jamadagnis were not members of that family”.

**c.** In MaNDala X, a BhRgu composer refers to both the BhRgus *and* the ANgiras as his ancestors (X.14.3-6).

Incidentally, the GRtsamadas of MaNDala II are classified as “Kevala-BhRgus” and have a separate Aprl-sUkta from both the ANgiras and the BhRgus. It is, however, clear that they are actually full-fledged ANgiras who adopted some specifically BhRgu practices and hence formed a separate family:

The AnukramaNIs classify the GRtsamadas as “Saunahotra ANgiras paScAt Saunaka BhArgava”: i.e. ANgiras of the Saunahotra branch who later joined the Saunaka branch of the BhRgus. However, the hymns clearly show that the GRtsamadas identify themselves *only* as Saunahotras (II.18.6; 41.14, 17) and *never* as Saunakas. They refer *only* to ANgiras (II.11.20; 15.8; 17.1; 20.5; 23.18) and *never* to BhRgus. They refer *only* to the ancestral ANgiras RSi BRhaspati (who is deified in four whole hymns, II.23-26, as well as in II.1.3; 30.4, 9) and *never* to the ancestral BhRgu RSis AtharvaNa, Dadhyanc or USanA.

All in all, it is clear that while the BhRgus are historically at least as ancient a family as the ANgiras and, in respect of the origin of Vedic rituals, even more important than the ANgiras, nevertheless, in the Rigveda, they are a family outside the pale who find a place in the Vedic

mainstream only in the Late Period.

And all the BhRgus of the Rigveda (excluding, of course, the pre-Rigvedic BhRgus whose hymns are accepted into the corpus in the Late Period) and of later Indian tradition are clearly members of one single branch descended from Jamadagni, or of groups later adopted into this branch.

Significantly, Jamadagni is half a PUru: his mother is the sister of ViSvAmitra who belongs to a branch of PUsus who also call themselves Bharatas.

This probably explains the gradual separation of the Jamadagni branch from the other BhRgus and their subsequent close association with the Vedic Aryans (the PUsus) and their priests, the ANgirasas.

### **I.B. The ANgirasas and BhRgus in References**

In the case of *references* to ANgirasas and BhRgus within the hymns, also, the same case prevails: we see a sharp difference in the number and nature of references to the two families as a whole as well as to the individual mythical ancestral RSis belonging to the two families. And there is a difference between the nature of references to them in the earlier parts of the Rigveda and those in its later parts:

1. To begin with, the ANgirasas are referred to in at least 76 hymns (97 verses), while the BhRgus are referred to in 21 hymns (24 verses).

The difference in the references to the ANgirasas and BhRgus in the first seven MaNDalas of the Rigveda may be noted:

The ANgirasas are clearly the heroes and protagonist RSis of these MaNDalas:

**a.** Even the Gods are referred to as ANgirasas: Agni (I.1.6; 31.1, 2, 17;

74.5; 75.2; 127.2; IV.3.15; 9.7;  
V.8.4; 10.7; 11.6; 21.1; VI.2.10;  
11.3; 16.11), Indra (I.100.4; 130.3),  
the ASvins (1.112.8) and USas  
(VII.75.1; 79.3).

**b.** The ancient ANgirasas as a  
class are deified as a semi-divine  
race participating in Indra's celestial  
activities (I.62.1-3, 5; 83.4; II.11.20;  
15.8; 17.1; 20.5; 23.18; IV.3.11;  
16.8; V.45.7, 8; VI.17.6; 65.5).

In a corollary to this, special classes  
of semi-divine ANgirasas, called  
Navagvas and DaSagvas are also  
"described as sharing in Indra's  
battles" (Griffith's footnote to I.33.6).  
They are referred to in 8 hymns and  
verses (I.33.6; 62.4; II.34.12;  
III.39.5; IV.51.4; V.29.12; 45.7;  
VI.6.3).

**c.** ANgirasas are invoked as a class  
of Gods themselves, in the  
company of other classes of Gods  
like the Adityas, Maruts and Vasus  
(III.53.7; VII.44.4) or as  
representatives of brAhmanas as a  
whole (VII.42.1).

**d.** The eponymous ANgiras (I.45.3;  
78.3; 139.9; III.31.7, 19; IV.40.1;  
VI.49.11; 73.1) or the ANgirasas as  
a whole (I.51.3; 132.4; 139.7;  
VII.52.3) are referred to as the  
receptants of the special favours of  
the Gods.

And finally, many verses, by  
composers belonging to the  
ANgiras family, refer to themselves  
by the name (I.71.2; 107.2; 121.1,  
3; IV.2.15; VI.18.5; 35.5).

In sharp contrast, there are only twelve

references to the BhRgus in these seven MaNDalas. Eleven of them (I.58.6; 60.1; 127.7; 143.4; II.4.2; III.2.4; 5.10; IV.7.1,4; 16.20; VI.15.2) are in hymns to Agni, and they merely acknowledge the important historical fact that the fire-ritual was introduced by the ancient BhRgus.

And, in VII.18.6, the *only contemporary reference* to the BhRgus in the first seven MaNDalas of the Rigveda, *the BhRgus figure as enemies*.

Again, while the pattern of references to the ANgirasas in the last three MaNDalas of the Rigveda is *exactly the same* as in the first seven MaNDalas, the pattern of references to the BhRgus *changes*.

The BhRgus are referred to in ten hymns (12 verses) in MaNDalas VIII, IX and X; and *now* the references to them are analogous to the references to the ANgirasas:

**a.** In some references, the BhRgus and the ANgirasas are specifically classed together (VIII.6.18; 43.14; as well as in X.14.6 below).

**b.** The ancient BhRgus are deified as a semi-divine race participating in the celestial activities of the Gods (VIII.3.16; IX.101.13).

**c.** BhRgus are specifically referred to as Gods (X.92.10) and named alongwith other classes of Gods such as the Maruts (VIII.35.3; X.122.5).

The eponymous BhRgu (VIII.3.9) is referred to as a recipient of the special favours of the Gods.

There are also, of course, references which refer to the introduction of the fire ritual by the BhRgus (X.39.14; 46.2, 9; as well as X.122.5 above); and

in one reference, a BhRgu composer refers to his ancestors (X.14.6).

2. In respect of individual pre-Rigvedic RSis who have already acquired a mythical status in the earliest parts of the Rigveda, we have BRhaspati and the Rbhus among the ANgirasas, and AtharvaNa, Dadhyanc and USanA KAavya among the BhRgus.

The difference in treatment of these RSis is also sharp:

a. BRhaspati is *completely deified*, and, by a play on sounds, identified also as BrahmaNaspati, the Lord of prayer, worship and brahmanhood itself; he is the deity of *thirteen whole hymns* (I.18, 40, 191; II.23-26; VI.73; VII.97; X.67-68, 182), and the joint deity with Indra in one more (IV.49).

He is, *in addition*, lauded or invoked as a deity in 69 other verses, distributed throughout the Rigveda:

I. 14.3; 38.13; 62.3; 89.6; 90.9;  
105.17;  
106.5; 139.10; 161.6;  
II. 1.3; 30.4, 9;  
III. 20.5; 26.2; 62.4-6;  
IV. 40.1;  
V. 42.7, 8; 43.12; 46.3, 5; 51.12;  
VI. 47.20; 75.17;  
VII. 10.4; 41.4; 44.1;  
VIII. 10.2; 27.1; 96.15;  
IX. 5.11; 80.1; 81.4; 83.1; 85.6;  
X. 13.4; 14.3; 17.13; 35.11; 42.11;  
43.11;  
44.11; 53.9; 64.4, 15; 65.1, 10;  
92.10; 97.15,  
19; 98.1, 3, 7; 100.5; 103.4;  
108.6, 11;  
109.5; 130.4; 141.2-5; 167.3;



173.3, 5; 174.1.

**b.** Likewise, the Rbhus, a group of three pre-Rigvedic ANgirases, three brothers named Rbhu, VAja and Vibhvan, are also completely deified. They are collectively known as Rbhus, but, rarely, also as VAjas. They are the deities of *eleven whole hymns* (I.20, 110-111, 161; III.60; IV.33-37; VII.48).

They are, *in addition*, lauded or invoked in 30 other verses distributed throughout the Rigveda:

I. 51.2; 63.3;  
III. 52.6; 54.12, 17;  
IV. 51.6;  
V. 42.5; 46.4; 51.3;  
VI. 50.12;  
VII. 35.12; 37.1, 2, 4; 51.3;  
VIII. 3.7; 9.12; 35.15; 77.8; 93.34;  
X. 39.12; 64.10; 65.10; 66.10; 76.5;  
80.7;  
92.11; 93.7; 106.7; 176.1.

In addition, Agni is called a Rbhu in II.1.10, and Indra in X.23.2. The name RbhukSan, an alternative name for Rbhu, is also applied to other Gods: Indra (I.162.1; 167.10; 186.10; II.31.6; V.41.2; VIII.45.29; X.74.5) and the Maruts (VIII.7.9, 12; 20.2).

**c.** On the other hand, the praise of the ancient pre-Rigvedic BhRgu RSis is meagre and subdued.

The three RSis (AtharvaNa, Dadhyanc and USanA KAvya) are together referred to in a total of only 39 verses throughout the Rigveda:

I. 51.10, 11; 80.16; 83.5; 84.13;  
116.12;

117.12, 22; 119.9; 121.12; 139.9;  
IV. 16.2; 26.1;  
V. 29.9; 31.8; 34.2;  
VI. 15.17; 16.13, 14; 20.11; 47.24;  
VIII. 9.7; 23.17;  
IX. 11.2; 87.3; 97.7; 108.4;  
X. 14.3, 6; 15.19; 21.5; 22.6; 40.7;  
48.2;  
49.3; 87.12; 92.10; 99.9; 120.9.

Although these references are laudatory ones, these RSis are definitely not treated as deities in the Rigveda. And it is clear that the praise accorded to them, in these references, is primarily on account of the historical role played by them in introducing the ritual of fire-worship among the Vedic Aryans.

This role is hinted at in a number of ways:

Some of the references refer directly or indirectly to the introduction of fire-worship by these RSis (I.80.16; 83.5; VI.15.17; 16.13, 14; VIII.23.17). But many refer to this symbolically by connecting these RSis in a mythical way with Indra's thunderbolt (the BhRgus are mythically identified with lightning since it also plays the role of bringing down fire from the heavens to the earth): this thunderbolt is said to be made out of the bones of Dadhyanc (I.84.13), and USanA is said to have manufactured this bolt for Indra (I.51.10, 11; 121.12; V.34.2). In this connection, USanA is often closely associated with the mythical Kutsa (the personified form of the thunderbolt) and Indra (IV.26.1; V.29.9; 31.8; X.49.3; 99.9), in some cases both USanA and this mythical Kutsa being mentioned in different verses in the same hymn (IV.16; VI.20).

The references to the three RSis fall into clear chronological categories:

**a.** The oldest references, in the MaNDalas of the Early and Middle

Periods (i.e. MaNDalas VI, III, VII, IV, II, and the early and middle upa-maNDalas) are *only* by ANgirasas, and they refer *only* to the introduction of fire-worship by the BhRgus (in the different ways already described).

**b.** The next batch of references, in the MaNDalas of the relatively earlier parts of the Late MaNDalas (MaNDalas V, VIII, and most of the late upa-maNDalas) are now by RSis belonging to different families (ANgirasas, ViSvAmitras, VasiSThas, Atris, and KaNvas), but they *still* refer *only* to the introduction of fire-worship by the BhRgus.

**c.** The latest references (in MaNDalas IX and X, and in the latest hymns of MaNDala I, the hymns of Parucchepa and the ASvin hymns of the KakSlvAns) also refer to the introduction of fire-worship by the BhRgus (I.121.12; X.49.3; 99.9), but now there are other kinds of references:

Some verses refer to the introduction of Soma (I.116.12; 117.12, 22; 119.9; IX.87.3; 108.4). In some, BhRgu composers refer to their ancestors (X.14.3, 6; 15.9), and in one, the BhRgu composer calls himself an AtharvaNa (X.120.9). In the other references, these RSis are mentioned as the favoured of the Gods, either alone (I.117.12; IX.97.7; X.22.6) or in the company of other RSis (I.139.9; X.40.7; 48.2; 87.12).

The picture is clear: the ANgirasas were the dominant priests of the Vedic Aryans, and the

BhRgus were outside the Vedic pale. They were only referred to, in early parts of the Rigveda, in deference to the fact that it was they who introduced the ritual of fire-worship among the ANgirasas.

It is only in the Late Period of the Rigveda that the BhRgus were increasingly accepted into the Vedic mainstream.

### **I.C. The Post-Rigvedic Situation**

The BhRgus, outside the Vedic pale for most of the period of the Rigveda, were accepted into the Vedic mainstream only towards the end of the Rigvedic period.

However, in the post-Rigvedic period, there is a sudden miraculous transformation in their status and position.

The BhRgus were clearly a very enterprising and dynamic family (if their ancient role in the introduction of fundamental rituals is a pointer), and, once they were accepted into the Vedic mainstream, they rapidly became an integral part of this mainstream. In fact, before long they took charge of the whole Vedic tradition, and became the most important of all the families of Vedic RSis.

The extent of their domination is almost incredible, and it starts with a near monopoly over the Vedic literature itself: *the only recession of the Rigveda that is extant today is a BhRgu recession (SAkala)*; one (and the *more* important one) of the two extant recessions of the Atharvaveda is a BhRgu recession (Saunaka); one (and the most important one) of the three extant recessions of the SAMaveda is a BhRgu recession (Jaiminlya); and one (and the *most* important one among the four KRSNa or Black recessions) of the six extant recessions of the Yajurveda is a BhRgu recession (Taittirilya).

The BhRgus are the *only* family to have extant recessions of all the four Vedas (next come the VasiSThas with extant recessions of two; other families have either one extant recession or none).

Not only is the *only* extant recession of the Rigveda a BhRgu recession, but nearly every single primary text on the Rigveda, and on its subsidiary aspects, is by a BhRgu.

- a. The *PadapAtha* (SAkalya).
- b. The all-important *AnukramaNI*s or Indices (Saunaka).
- c. The *BRhaddevatA* or Compendium of Vedic Myths (Saunaka).
- d. The *RgvidhAna* (Saunaka).
- e. The *ASTAdhyAyl* or Compendium of Grammar (PANini).
- f. The *Nirukta* or Compendium of Etymology (YAska).

Later on in time, the founder of the one system (among the six systems of Hindu philosophy), the *PUrva MImAMsA*, which lays stress on Vedic ritual, is also a BhRgu (Jaimini).

The dominance of the BhRgus continues in the Epic-Puranic period: the author of the RAmAyaNa is a BhRgu (VAImIki).

The author of the MahAbhArata, VyAsa, is *not* a BhRgu (he is a VasiSTha), but his primary disciple VaiSampAyana, to whom VyAsa recounts the entire epic, and who is then said to have related it at Janamejaya's sacrifice, whence it was recorded for posterity, is a BhRgu. Moreover, as Sukhtankar has conclusively proved (*The BhRgus and the BhArata*, Annals of the Bhandarkar Research Institute, Pune, XVIII, p.1-76), the BhRgus were responsible for the final development and shaping of the MahAbhArata as we know it today.

In the PurANas, the *only* RSi to be accorded the

highest dignity that Hindu mythology can give any person - the status of being recognised as an *avatAra* of ViSNu - is a BhRgu (ParaSu-RAMA, son of Jamadagni).

The BhRgus are accorded the primary position in all traditional lists of *pravaras* and *gotras*; and in the BhagavadgItA, Krishna proclaims: "Among the Great RSis, I am BhRgu; and among words I am the sacred syllable OM..." (BhagavadgItA, X.25).

In fact, down the ages, it is persons from BhRgu gotras who appear to have given shape to the most distinctive and prominent positions of Hindu thought on all aspects of life: KAMA, Artha, Dharma and MokSa; from VATsyAyana to KauTilya to Adi SankarAcArya.

#### **I.D. Vedic Aryans and Iranians**

The BhRgus clearly occupy a very peculiar position in Indian tradition and history.

An American scholar, Robert P. Goldman, in a detailed study of the history of the BhRgus as it appears from the myths in the MahAbhArata, makes some significant observations. According to him:

1. The mythology clearly "sets the BhRgus apart from the other brahmanical clans... The myths... unequivocally mark the BhRgus as a group set apart from their fellow brahmans."<sup>1</sup>

The characteristic feature which sets the BhRgus apart is "open hostility to the gods themselves... One of the greatest of the BhRgus is everywhere said to have served as the priest and chaplain of the asuras, the demon enemies of heaven and of order (*dharma*)."<sup>2</sup>

After analysing various myths involving the most prominent BhRgu RSis, Goldman again reiterates his point that "hostility emerges as the more characteristic phenomenon, and the one that

most clearly sets the group apart from the other famous sages and priestly families of Indian myth... the motifs of hostility, violence and curses between gods and sages... are virtually definitive of the BhArgava cycle.”<sup>3</sup>

And “the association of the sage Sukra with the asuras is one of the strangest peculiarities of the BhArgava corpus”.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, the traditions record certain ambiguous moments in this hostility where it appears that “the BhArgava seems unable to decide between the asuras and their foes on any consistent basis”.<sup>5</sup>

There is, for example, “a myth that is anomalous... at the request of Siva, RAma, although he was unskilled at arms, undertakes to do battle against the asuras... He does so, and, having slain all the asuras, he receives the divine weapons that he wishes.”<sup>6</sup> Here, it must be noted, RAma (ParaSu-RAma) is actually “said to associate with the gods, and, especially, to fight their battles with the asuras”.<sup>7</sup>

And even in “the long and complex saga of Sukra and the asuras, Sukra is twice said to have abandoned the, demons to their fate, and even to have cursed them... the first time he appears to have been motivated simply by a desire to join the gods and assist at their sacrifice.”<sup>8</sup>

Goldman, therefore, arrives at two conclusions:

1. “The identification of Sukra as the purohita and protector of the asuras may shed some light on some of the most basic problems of early Indian and even early Indo-Iranian religion. If, as has been suggested on the basis of the Iranian evidence, the asuras were the divinities of Aryans for whom, perhaps, the devas were demons, then

Sukra and perhaps the BhArgavas were originally their priests.”<sup>9</sup>

2. “The repeated theme of Sukra and his disciples’... ultimate disillusionment with the demons and their going over to the side of the gods may also be viewed as suggestive of a process of absorption of this branch of the BhRgus into the ranks of the orthodox brahmins.”<sup>10</sup>

Goldman’s conclusions fully agree with our analysis of the position of the BhRgus in the Rigveda: in short, the traditional Indian myths about the BhRgus, as recorded in the Epics and PurANas, conjure up a historical picture which tallies closely with the historical picture which emerges from any logical analysis of the information in the hymns of the Rigveda.

What is particularly worthy of note is that these myths, and these hymns, have been faithfully preserved for posterity by a priesthood dominated by none other than the BhRgus themselves - i.e. the BhRgus of the post-Rigvedic era.

And it is clear that these later BhRgus, even as they faithfully recorded and maintained hymns and myths which showed their ancestors in a peculiar or questionable light, were puzzled about the whole situation.

As Goldman puts it: “That one of the greatest BhArgava sages should regularly champion the asuras, the forces of chaos and evil - in short, of adharma - against the divine personifications of dharma is perplexing and has no non-BhArgava parallel in the literature. The origin of the relationship was evidently puzzling to the epic redactors themselves, for the question is raised at least twice in the *MahAbhArata*. In neither case is the answer given wholly satisfactory.”<sup>11</sup>

We have one advantage over the redactors of the *MahAbhArata* - we have the evidence of the



Avesta before us:

1. The Avesta clearly represents the opposite side in the conflict:

**a.** In the Avesta, the Asuras (Ahura) are the Gods, and Devas (DaEva) are the demons.

**b.** Here also the BhRgus or AtharvaNas (AthraVan) are associated with the Asuras (Ahura), and the ANgirasas (Angra) with the Devas (DaEva).

2. The Avesta also shows the movement of a group from among the BhRgus towards the side of the Deva-worshippers: there are two groups of AthraVan priests in the Avesta, the Kavis and the Spitamas, and it is clear that the Kavis had moved over to the enemies.

The pre-Avestan (and pre-Rigvedic) Kavi Usan (Kavi USanA or USanA KAvya) is lauded in the BahrAm YaSt (Yt.14.39) and AbAn YaSt (Yt.5.45). Also, a dynasty (the most important dynasty in Avestan and Zoroastrian history) of kings from among the Kavis is twice lauded in the Avesta, in the FarvardIn YaSt (Yt.13.121) and the ZamyAd YaSt (Yt.19.71). The kings of this dynasty, named in these YaSts, include Kavi KavAta (KaikobAd of later times) and Kavi Usadhan (Kaikaus of later times, *who is regularly confused, in later traditions, with the above Kavi Usan*).

However, the Kavis as a class are regularly condemned throughout the Avesta, right from the GATHAs of ZarathuStra onwards, and it is clear that they are regarded as a race of priests who have joined the ranks of the enemies even before the period of ZarathuStra himself.

Hence, it is not the BhRgus or AtharvaNas as a whole who are the protagonist priests of the

Avesta, it is only the Spitama branch of the Athravans. Hence, also, the name of the Good Spirit, opposed to the Bad Spirit Angra Mainyu (a name clearly derived from the name of the ANgirasas), is Spenta Mainyu (a name clearly derived from the name of the Spitamas).

The picture that emerges from this whole discussion is clear:

**a.** The ANgirasas were the priests of the Vedic Aryans, and the BhRgus were the priests of the Iranians.

**b.** There was a period of acute hostility between the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians, which left its mark on the myths and traditions of both the peoples.

Now the crucial question on which hinges the history of the Indo-Iranians, and the problem of the Indo-Iranian homeland, is: where and when did this hostility take place?

According to the scholars, this hostility took place in the Indo-Iranian homeland, which they locate in Central Asia; and this hostility preceded, and was the reason behind, the Indoaryans and Iranians splitting from each other and going their own separate ways into India and Iran respectively.

This scenario, however, lies only in the field of hypothesis, and is totally unsupported by the facts as testified by the joint evidence of the Rigveda and the Avesta.

To arrive at the true picture, therefore, we must now turn to the evidence of the Avesta.

## II THE AVESTAN EVIDENCE AS PER WESTERN SCHOLARS

The official theory about the Indo-Iranians is that they migrated into Central Asia from the West (from an original Indo-European homeland in South Russia) and then they split into two: the Iranians moving southwestwards into Iran, and the Indoaryans moving southeastwards into India.

According to another version, now generally discarded by the scholars, *but which still forms the basis for off-hand remarks and assumptions*, the Indo-Iranians first migrated into the Caucasus region, from where they moved southwards into western Iran. From there, they moved eastwards, with the Indoaryans separating from the Iranians somewhere in eastern Iran and continuing eastwards into India.

It will therefore be necessary to examine what exactly are the facts, and the evidence, about the early history of the Indo-Iranians, *as per the general consensus among the Western scholars*.

This is very important because an examination shows that *there is a sharp contradiction between the facts of the case as presented, or admitted to, by the scholars, and the conclusions reached by themselves on the basis of these facts*.

The Iranians are historically known in three contiguous areas: Central Asia, Iran and Afghanistan. The basic question which arises, therefore, is: which of these areas was historically the earliest one?

Michael Witzel, a western scholar whose writings we will be dealing with in greater detail in an appendix to this book, refers dismissively to the theory outlined by us in our earlier book that India was the original Indo-European homeland, as the “contrary view that stresses the Indian home of the Indo-Aryans. Even Indo-Iranians, not to mention all Indo-Europeans (!) are increasingly located in South Asia whence they are held to have migrated westwards, a clearly erroneous view...”<sup>12</sup>

However, Witzel is compelled to admit that “it is not entirely clear where the combined Indo-Iranians lived together before they left for Iran and India, when they went on their separate ways, by what routes, and in what order”.<sup>13</sup>

As we can see, in spite of admitting that the evidence does not tell him “where the combined Indo-Iranians lived together”, he goes on with “before they left for Iran and India”. That they did *not* live together in either Iran or India is to him a foregone conclusion which requires no evidence.

There is thus a natural inbuilt bias in the minds of most scholars towards a conclusion favouring a movement into Iran and India from Central Asia, which is not based on evidence but on a *theory* which locates the original Indo-European homeland in South Russia, making Central Asia a convenient stopping point on the way to Iran and India.

However, another scholar, P. Oktor Skjærvø, in his paper published in the same volume as Witzel’s papers, gives us a summary of whatever evidence does exist on the subject. According to him: “Evidence either for the history of the Iranian tribes or their languages from the period following the separation of the Indian and Iranian tribes down to the early 1st millennium BC is sadly lacking. There are no written sources, and archaeologists are still working to fill out the picture.”<sup>14</sup>

Thus, there is neither literary evidence nor archaeological evidence for Iranians before the early first millennium BC.

When literary evidence does turn up, what does it indicate?

“The earliest mention of Iranians in historical sources is, paradoxically, of those settled on the Iranian plateau, not those still in Central Asia,

their ancestral homeland. 'Persians' are first mentioned in the 9th century BC Assyrian annals: on one campaign, in 835 BC, Shalmaneser (858-824 BC) is said to have received tributes from 27 kings of ParSuwaS; the Medes are mentioned under Tiglath-Pileser III (744-727 BC); at the battle of Halulê on the Tigris in 691 BC, the Assyrian king Sennacherib (704-681 BC) faced an army of troops from Elam, ParsumaS, Anzan, and others; and in the Vassal Treaties of Esarhaddon (680-669 BC) and elsewhere numerous 'kings' of the Medes are mentioned (see also, for example, Boyce 1975-82: 5-13). ... There are no literary sources for Iranians in Central Asia before the Old Persian inscriptions (Darius's Bisotun inscription, 521-519 BC, ed. Schmitt) and Herodotus' *Histories* (ca. 470 BC). These show that by the mid-1st millennium BC tribes called Sakas by the Persians and Scythians by the Greeks were spread throughout Central Asia, from the westernmost edges (north and northwest of the Black Sea) to its easternmost borders."<sup>15</sup>

Thus, while Witzel indicates his bias towards Central Asia as the earliest habitat of the Iranians *while admitting to absence of specific data to that effect*, Skjærvø indicates the same bias *while admitting to specific data to the opposite effect*.

The sum of the specifically datable inscriptional evidence for the presence of Iranians is therefore 835 BC in the case of Iran and 521 BC in the case of Central Asia. This may not be clinching evidence (indicating that Iranians were *not* present in these areas before these dates), *but, such as it is, this is the evidence*.

There is, however, an older source of evidence: the Avesta.

As Skjærvø puts it, "the only sources for the early (pre-Achaemenid) history of the eastern Iranian peoples are the Avesta, the Old Persian inscriptions, and Herodotus. ... In view of the dearth of historical sources it is of paramount

importance that one should evaluate the evidence of the Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrians, parts at least of which antedate the Old Persian inscriptions by several centuries.”<sup>16</sup>

The Avesta is the *oldest* valid source for the earliest history and geography of the Iranians, and Skjærvø therefore examines the “internal evidence of the Avestan texts” in respect of geographical names.

About the “earliest geographical names”, he tells us: “A very few geographical names appear to be inherited from Indo-Iranian times. For instance, OPers. *HaraiVa-*, Av. (acc.) *HarOiium*, and OPers. *Harauvatl*, Av. *Haraxvaitl-*, both of which in historical times are located in the area of southern Afghanistan (Herat and Kandahar), correspond to the two Vedic rivers *Sarayu* and *Sarasvatl*. These correspondences are interesting, but tell us nothing about the early geography of the Indo-Iranian tribes.”<sup>17</sup>

Here again we see the sharp contradiction between the facts and the conclusion: “the earliest geographical names ... inherited from Indo-Iranian times” indicate an area in southern Afghanistan, as per Skjærvø’s own admission. However, this evidence does not accord with the Theory. Hence Skjærvø concludes that while this information is “interesting” (whatever that means), it “tells us nothing about the early geography of the Indo-Iranian tribes”!

The geography of the Avesta is also equally “interesting”: “Two Young Avestan texts contain lists of countries known to their authors, *YaSt* 10 and *VidEvdAd*, Chapter 1. The two lists differ considerably in terms of composition and are therefore most probably independent of one another. Both lists contain only countries in northeastern Iran.”<sup>18</sup> Skjærvø clarifies on the same page that when he says “northeastern Iran”, he means “Central Asia, Afghanistan and northeastern modern Iran”.<sup>19</sup> All these places are

“located to the east of the Caspian Ocean, with the possible exception of Raga”.<sup>20</sup> But, again, he clarifies later that this is only if Raga is identified with “Median *RagA* ... modern Ray south of Tehran. In the *VidEvdAd*, however, it is listed between the Helmand river and Caxra (assumed to be modern Carx near Ghazna in southeast Afghanistan) and is therefore most probably different from Median *RagA* and modern Ray.”<sup>21</sup>

While Skjærvø accepts that western Iran was unknown to the early Iranians, he is *deliberately silent* on a crucial part of the Avestan evidence.

He *deliberately omits to mention* in his list of names “inherited from Indo-Iranian times” (i.e. common to the Rigveda and the Avesta) as well as in his description of the areas covered in *YaSt* 10 and *VidEvdAd*, Chapter 1, the name of a crucial area known to the Avesta: the *Hapta-HAndu* or the Punjab!

Skjærvø does mention the *Hapta-HAndu* when he details the list of names given in the *VidEvdAd*; but he merely translates it as “the Seven Rivers”,<sup>22</sup> pointedly avoids mentioning anywhere that this refers to the Punjab, and generally treats it as just another piece of information which is “interesting” but “tells us nothing” about anything, since it runs counter to the Theory.

But whatever the conclusions of the scholars, *the facts of the case, as indicated by themselves*, give us the following picture of Iranian geography:

1. Pre-Avestan Period: Punjab, southern Afghanistan.

2. Early and Late Avestan Periods: Punjab, Afghanistan, Central Asia,

northeastern Iran.

3. Post-Avestan Period:  
Afghanistan, Central Asia, Iran.

To deviate slightly from the evidence of the Western scholars, we may compare this with the following picture of Rigvedic geography *derived by us in this book on the basis of the evidence in the Rigveda*:

1. *Pre-Rigvedic Period*: Haryana and areas east.

2. *Early Rigvedic Period*: Haryana and areas east, eastern and central Punjab.

3. *Middle Rigvedic Period*: Haryana and areas east, Punjab.

4. *Late Rigvedic Period*: Haryana and areas east, Punjab, southern Afghanistan.

The direction of origin and movement is clear:

1. Originally, the Vedic Aryans were in Haryana and areas to the east, while the Iranians were in Punjab and southern Afghanistan.

2. Towards the end of the Early Period of the Rigveda, the Vedic Aryans had started moving westwards and penetrating into the Punjab, entering into direct conflict with the Iranians.

3. In the Middle and Late Periods of the Rigveda, the Vedic Aryans were now together with the Iranians in the Punjab and southern Afghanistan, and the Iranians had



also spread out further northwards  
and westwards.

To return to the Western scholars P. Oktor Skjærvø and Michael Witzel, it is not only the facts about the Avesta (as detailed by Skjærvø) which clearly indicate a movement from east to west; even the *relative chronology* suggested by the two scholars, *extremely late though it is*, and coloured as it is by their staunch belief in the Theory, clearly shows a movement from India to the west:

Skjærvø admits that the earliest evidence for the Iranians is 835 BC in the case of Iran, and 521 BC in the case of Central Asia.

In respect of the Avesta, which is the earliest source for the Iranians (and whose earliest geographical names pertain to southern Afghanistan and the Punjab), Skjærvø notes that “the most common estimates range between 10,00-600 BC”.<sup>23</sup> However, he opines that “the ... ‘early date’ for the older Avesta would be the 14th-11th centuries BC, close to the middle of the second millennium ... the extreme ‘late date’ - 8th-7th centuries BC”.<sup>24</sup>

In respect of the Rigveda, Witzel himself goes far beyond these dates. As he puts it: “Since the Sarasvatī, which dries up progressively after the mid 2nd millennium BC (Erdosy 1989) is still described as a mighty river in the Rigveda, the earliest hymns in the latter must have been composed by c.1500 BC”.<sup>25</sup>

He repeats this point in respect of a specific historical incident: the Sarasvatī is “prominent in Book 7: it flows from the mountains to the sea (7.95.2) - which would put the battle of 10 kings prior to 1500 BC or so due to the now well-documented dessication of the Sarasvatī (Yash Pal et al, 1984)”.<sup>26</sup>

Witzel states that “the earliest hymns” in the Rigveda “must have been composed by 1500 BC”. But the specific incident he quotes suggests that, *by his reckoning, even very late* hymns were already in existence by 1500 BC: the hymn he quotes is VII.95. According to him elsewhere, MaNDala VII is “the latest of the family books”<sup>27</sup>; even within this MaNDala, hymn 95 must, by his reckoning, be “a comparatively late hymn”<sup>28</sup>, which is how he describes hymn 96 which is a companion hymn to hymn 95.

The historical incident he refers to, which he places far earlier than Skjærvø’s *earliest* dating for the *earliest* parts of the Avesta (whose *earliest* references are to areas in southern Afghanistan and the Punjab), is SudAs’s battle of the ten kings, fought on the ParuSNI central Punjab.

This battle was, moreover, preceded by other battles fought by SudAs. SudAs’s priest in the battle of ten kings was VasiSTha. VasiSTha’s predecessor was ViSvAmitra, and under his priesthood SudAs had fought a battle, considerably to the east of the Punjab, with the KIkaTas of Bihar.

Witzel, of course, refuses to accept the location of Mata in Bihar. But, even so, he places KIkaTa at least as far east of the Punjab as the area to “the south of KurukSetra, in eastern Rajasthan or western Madhya Pradesh.”<sup>29</sup>

In sum, the facts and the evidence of the Indo-Iranian case, *as detailed by the Western scholars* (and in spite of the contrary “conclusions” reached by them), show beyond any doubt that *the only area of Indo-Iranian contact was in the Punjab-Haryana region and southern and eastern Afghanistan*.

To get a final and complete perspective on the geography of the Avesta, let us examine what perhaps the most eminent Western scholar on the

subject, Gherardo Gnoli, has to say. Gnoli is *not* a scholar who is out to challenge the standard version of an Indo-Iranian movement from Central Asia into Iran and India, and, indeed, *he probably does not even doubt that version.*

But the geographical facts of the Avesta, as set out by Gnoli in great detail in his book *Zoroaster's Time and Homeland*, show very clearly that the oldest regions known to the Iranians were Afghanistan and areas to its east. They also show (and he says so specifically in no uncertain terms) that areas *to the west, and also to the north*, were either totally unknown to the Iranians, or else they were areas newly known to them and which did not form a part of their traditional ethos. *Any references to migrations, in his analysis, are always to migrations from east to west or from south to north.*

The Avesta, incidentally, contains five groups of texts:

1. *The Yasna* (Y), containing 72 chapters divided into two groups:
  - a. *The GATHAs of ZarathuStra* (Y.28-34, 43-51, 53).
  - b. *The Yasna* (proper) (Y.1-27, 35-42, 52, 54-72).
2. *The YaSts* (Yt.), 24 in number.
3. *The VidEvdAt or VendidAd* (Vd), containing 22 chapters.
4. *The VisprAt or Vispered.*
5. *The Khordah Avesta* or the Lesser Avesta, containing the SlrOzas, NyAyIS, AfrIn, etc.

Only the first three, because of their size, antiquity and nature, are of importance in any historical study: of these, the GATHAs and some of the YaSts form the chronologically oldest portions. In terms of language, the dialect of the GATHAs and some of the other chapters of the Yasna, i.e. Y.19-21, 27, 35-42, 54, called GATHic, is older than the

Zend dialect of the rest of the Avesta.

We will examine the geography of the Avesta, as detailed by Gnoli as follows:

- A. The West and the East.
- B. The North and the South.
- C. The Punjab.

## II. A. The West and the East

Gnoli repeatedly stresses “the fact that Avestan geography, particularly the list in Vd. I, is confined to the east,”<sup>30</sup> and points out that this list is “remarkably important in reconstructing the early history of Zoroastrianism”.<sup>31</sup>

Elsewhere, he again refers to “the entirely eastern character of the countries listed in the first chapter of the VendidAd, including Zoroastrian RaYa, and the historical and geographical importance of that list”.<sup>32</sup>

The horizon of the Avesta, Gnoli notes, “is according to Burrow, wholly *eastern and therefore certainly earlier than the westward migrations of the Iranian tribes*.”<sup>33</sup>

In great detail, he rejects theories which seek to connect up some of the places named in the Avesta (such as Airyana VaEjah and RaYa) with areas in the west, and concludes that this attempt to transpose the geography of the Avesta from Afghanistan to western Iran “was doubtless due to different attempts made by the most powerful religious centres of western Iran and the influential order of the Magi to appropriate the traditions of Zoroastrianism that had flourished in the eastern territories of the plateau in far-off times. Without a doubt, the identification of RaYa with AdurbAdagAn, more or less parallel with its identification with Ray, should be fitted into the vaster picture of the late location of Airyana VaEjah in ADarbAyjAn.”<sup>34</sup>

The crucial geographical list of sixteen Iranian lands, in the first chapter of the VendidAd, is fully identified: “From the second to the sixteenth country, we have quite a compact and consistent picture. The order goes roughly from north to south and then towards the east: Sogdiana (Gava), Margiana (Mourv), Bactria (BAX?I, Nisaya between Margiana and Bactria, Areia (HarOiva), KAbulistAn (VaEkArAta), the Gaznl region (UrvA), XnAnta, Arachosia (Haraxvaitl), Drangiana (HaEtumant), a territory between Zamin-dAvar and Qal’at-i-Gilzay (RaYa), the LUgar valley (Caxra), BunEr (VarAna), PañjAb (Hapta HAndu), RaNhA ... between the KAbul and the Kurram, in the region where it seems likely the Vedic river RasA flowed.”<sup>35</sup>

Gnoli notes that India is very much a part of the geographical picture: “With VarAna and RaNhA, as of course with Hapta HAndu, which comes between them in the Vd. I list, we find ourselves straight away in Indian territory, or, at any rate, in territory that, from the very earliest times, was certainly deeply permeated by Indo-Aryans or Proto-Indoaryans.”<sup>36</sup>

Although the scholars are careful to include “northeastern modern Iran” in their descriptions, the areas covered by the VendidAd list only touch the easternmost borders of Iran: but they cover the whole of Afghanistan, the northern half of present-day Pakistan (NWFP, Punjab), and the southern parts of Central Asia to the north of Afghanistan, and, again, in the east, they enter the northwestern borders of present-day (post-1947) India.

Gnoli identifies fifteen of the sixteen Iranian lands named in the VendidAd list. But he feels that “the first of the countries created by Ahura Mazda, Airyana VaEjah, should be left out” of the discussion, since “this country is characterized, in the Vd. I context, by an advanced state of mythicization”.<sup>37</sup>

While this (i.e. that Airyana VaEjah is a mythical land, a purely imaginary Paradise) is a possibility, there is another alternate possibility: the other fifteen lands, from Gava (Sogdiana) to RaNhA (the region between the KAbul and Kurrum rivers in the NWFP) are clearly named in geographical order proceeding from north to south, turning east, and again proceeding northwards.

That the list of names leads back to the starting point is clear also from the fact that the accompanying list of the evil counter-creations of Angra Mainyu, in the sixteen lands created by Ahura Mazda, starts with “severe winter” in the first land, Airyana VaEjah, moves through a variety of other evils (including various sinful proclivities, obnoxious insects, evil spirits and physical ailments), and comes back again to “severe winter” in the sixteenth land, RaNhA.

A logical conclusion would be that the first land, Airyana VaEjah, lies close to the sixteenth land (RaNhA). The lands to the north (VarAna), west (VaEkArAta, Caxra, UrvA), and south (Hapta-HAndu) of RaNhA are named, so Airyana VaEjah must be in Kashmir to the east of RaNhA. RaNhA itself leads Gnoli “to think of an eastern mountainous area, Indian or Indo-Iranian, hit by intense cold in winter”.<sup>38</sup>

In sum, the geography of the Avesta almost totally excludes present-day Iran and areas to its north and west, and consists exclusively of Afghanistan and areas to its north and east, including parts of Rigvedic India (see map opposite p.120).

## **II. B. The North and the South**

The geographical horizon of the Avesta (excluding for the moment the Punjab in the east) extends from Central Asia in the north to the borders of Baluchistan in the south.

This region, from north to south, can be divided

as follows:

1. Northern Central Asia (X<sup>v</sup>AirizAm).
2. Southern Central Asia (Gava, Mourv, Bax?I, Nisaya), including the northern parts of Afghanistan to the *north* of the HindUkuS.
3. Central Afghanistan (HarOiva, VaEkArAta, UrvA, XnAnta, Caxra) to the *south* of the HindUkuS
4. Southern Afghanistan (Harax<sup>v</sup>aitl, HaEtumant, RaYa) to the borders of Baluchistan in the south.

Let us examine the position of each of these four areas in the geography of the Avesta:

1. The Avesta does not know any area to the north, or west, of the Aral Sea. The northernmost area, *the only place in northern Central Asia*, named in the Avesta is Chorasmia or KhwArizm, to the south of the Aral Sea.

The compulsion to demonstrate an Iranian (and consequently Indo-Iranian) migration from the north into Afghanistan has led many scholars to identify Chorasmia with Airyana VaEjah, and to trace the origins of both Zoro-astrianism as well as the (Indo-)Iranians to this area.

However, Gnoli points out that Chorasmia “is mentioned only once”<sup>39</sup> in the whole of the Avesta. Moreover, it is not mentioned among the sixteen lands created by Ahura Mazda listed in the first chapter of the VendidAd. It is mentioned among the lands named in the Mihr YaSt (Yt.10.14) in a description of the God Mi?ra standing on the mountains and surveying the lands to his south and north.

Gnoli emphasizes the significance of this distinction: “the countries in *Vd.I* and *Yt.X* are of a quite different nature: the aim of the first list is

evidently to give a fairly complete description of the space occupied by the Aryan tribes in a remote period in their history.”<sup>40</sup> Clearly, Chorasmia is not part of this space.

As a matter of fact, Chorasmia is named as “practically the very furthest horizon reached by Mi?ra’s gaze”<sup>41</sup> and Gnoli suggests that “the inclusion of the name of Chorasmia in this YaSt ... could in fact be a mention or an interpolation whose purpose, whether conscious or unconscious, was rather meant to continue in a south-north direction the list of lands over which Mi?ra’s gaze passed by indicating a country on the outskirts such as Chorasmia (which must have been very little known at the time the YaSt was composed)”.<sup>42</sup>

The suggestion that the inclusion of Chorasmia in the YaSt is an interpolation is based on a solid linguistic fact: the name, X<sup>v</sup>AirizAm, as it occurs in the reference, is “in a late, clearly Middle Persian nominal form”.<sup>43</sup>

Hence Gnoli rejects as “groundless” any theory which attempts “to show that *airyanAm VaEjO* in the *VendidAd* is equivalent to X<sup>v</sup>AirizAm in the *Mihr YaSt*”<sup>44</sup>, and which tries to reconstruct “from a comparison of the geographical data in the *Mihr YaSt* and the *ZamyAd YaSt* the route followed by the Iranian tribes in their migration southwards, or the expansion in the same direction of the Zoroastrian community”.<sup>45</sup>

As a matter of fact, even though it contradicts the Theory, there have been a great many scholars who have claimed a movement in the *opposite* direction in the case of Chorasmia: “It has been said that the Chorasmians moved from the south (from the territory immediately to the east of the Parthians and the Hyrcanians) towards the north (to XwArizm)”.<sup>46</sup>

The scholars who make this claim suggest that



“the probable ancient seat of the Chorasmians was a country with both mountainous areas and plains, much further south than Xlva, whereas the oasis of Xlva was a more recent seat which they may have moved to precisely in consequence of the growing power of the Achaemenians by which, as Herodotus says, they were deprived of a considerable part of their land”.<sup>47</sup>

While Gnoli does not agree with the late chronology suggested for this south-to-north movement, and gives evidence to show that “Chorasmia corresponded more or less to historical XwArizm even before Darius I’s reign (521-486 BC)”<sup>48</sup>, he nevertheless agrees with the suggested direction of migration, which is, moreover, backed by the opinion of archaeologists:

“As a matter of fact, we are able to reconstruct a south-north migration of the Chorasmians on a smaller scale only, as it is a well known fact that the delta of the Oxus moved in the same direction between the end of the second millennium and the 6th century BC and ended up flowing into the Aral Sea.”<sup>49</sup> Therefore, “we cannot rule out the possibility that the Chorasmians, as pointed out, moved in this same direction and that at the beginning of the Achaemenian empire there were still settlements of them further south. At all events, this is the explanation that archaeologists give for the proto-historic settlement of Chorasmia, without taking into account precise ethnic identifications.”<sup>50</sup>

In short, far from being the early homeland from which the (Indo-)Iranians migrated southwards, “XwArizm ... appears upon an unprejudiced examination, as a remote, outlying province which never played a really central part in the political and cultural history of Iran before the Middle Ages”.<sup>51</sup> And the region was so unknown that there was, among the Iranians, “absence of any sure knowledge of the very

existence of the Aral Sea as a separate body of water with a name of its own, even as late as the time of Alexander”.<sup>52</sup>

2. The countries in southern Central Asia and northern Afghanistan (Sogdiana, Margiana and Bactria), particularly southern Bactria or Balkh which falls in northern Afghanistan, are very much a part of Iranian territory as per the evidence of the Avesta.

However, this evidence also makes it clear that these territories were, in the words of Gnoli, “peripheral”, and the traditions to this effect persisted as late as the period of the Macedonian conquest of these areas.

As Gnoli puts it: “in the denomination of Ariana, which became known to the Greeks after the Macedonian conquest of the eastern territories of the old Persian empire, there was obviously reflected a tradition that located the Aryan region in the central-southern part of eastern Iran, roughly from the HindUkuS southwards, and that considered some of the Medes and the Persians in the west and some of the Bactrians and Sogdians in the north as further extensions of those people who were henceforth known by the name of Ariani. And this, to tell the truth, fits nicely into the picture we have been trying to piece so far. Here too, as in the passages of the Avesta we have studied from the *Mihr YaSt* and the *ZamyAd YaSt*, the geographical horizon is central-eastern and southeastern; the northern lands are also completely peripheral, and Chorasmia, which is present only in the very peculiar position of which we have spoken in the *Mihr YaSt*, is not included.”<sup>53</sup> (Note: by “eastern Iran”, Gnoli refers to Afghanistan, which forms the eastern part of the Iranian plateau.)

Balkh or southern Bactria does play a prominent role in later Iranian and Zoroastrian tradition “which would have ViStAspa linked with Balx and

SlstAn”<sup>54</sup> (i.e. with both the northernmost and southernmost parts of Afghanistan).

However, referring to “the tradition that links Kavi ViStAspa with Bactria”, Gnoli notes that “the explanation of ViStAspa being Bactrian and not Drangian is a feeble one”.<sup>55</sup> He attributes the tradition to “the period of Bactrian hegemony which Djakonov dates between 650 and 540 BC”, during which “the old ... tradition of Kavi ViStAspa, who was originally linked with Drangiana, could have taken on, so to speak, a new, Bactrian guise”.<sup>56</sup>

The Avesta itself is clear in identifying ViStAspa with the southern regions only.

In sum, the more northern regions of Sogdiana and Margiana were “completely peripheral”, and, in the words of Gnoli, “we may consider that the northernmost regions where Zoroaster carried out his work were Bactria and Areia”.<sup>57</sup>

3. When we come to the areas to the *south* of the HindUkuS, we are clearly in the mainland of the Avestan territory.

Gnoli repeatedly stresses throughout his book that the *airyo-Sayana* or Land of the Aryans described in the Avesta refers to “the vast region that stretches southward from the HindUkuS”,<sup>58</sup> that is, “from the southern slopes of the great mountain chains towards the valleys of the rivers that flow south, like the Hilmand...”.<sup>59</sup> In this respect he notes that “there is a substantial uniformity in the geographical horizon between *Yt. XIX* and *Yt.X* ... and the same can be said for *Vd.I* ... these Avestan texts which contain in different forms, and for different purposes, items of information that are useful for historical geography give a fairly uniform picture: eastern

Iran, with a certain prevalence of the countries reaching upto the southern slopes of the HindUkuS.”<sup>60</sup>

Likewise, in later Greek tradition, ArianE “is the Greek name which doubtless reflects an older Iranian tradition that designated with an equivalent form the regions of eastern Iran lying mostly south, and not north, of the HindUkuS. It is clear how important this information is in our research as a whole.”<sup>61</sup>

Again, it must be noted that Gnoli uses the term “eastern Iran” to designate Afghanistan, which forms the eastern part of the Iranian plateau.

4. But it is the southern part of this “vast region that stretches southward from the HindUkuS,” which clearly constitutes the very core and heart of the Avesta: S1stAn or Drangiana, the region of HaEtumant (Hilmand) and the HAmUn-i Hilmand basin which forms its western boundary (separating Afghanistan from present-day Iran).

Gnoli notes that “the Hilmand region and the HAmUn-i Hilmand are beyond all doubt the most minutely described countries in Avestan geography. The *ZamyAd YaSt*, as we have seen, names the Kasaoya, i.e. the HAmUn-i Hilmand, USi?am mountain, the KUh-i XwAja, the HaEtumant, the Hilmand, and the rivers XvAstrA, HvaspA, Frada?A, X?arAnahvaitl, UStavaitl, Urva? a, ?rAzi, ZarAnumaiti, which have a number of parallels both in the Pahlavi texts, and especially in the list in the *TAr1x-i S1stAn*. Elsewhere, in the *AbAn YaSt*, there is mention of Lake FrazdAnu, the Gawd-i Zira.”<sup>62</sup>

He notes the significance of “the identification of the VourukaSa in Yt.XIX with the HAmUn-i Hilmand ... of the NAYdAg with the Si1A, the branch connecting the HAmUn to the Gawd-i Zira, of the FrazdAnu with the Gawd-i Zira ... and above all, the peculiar relationship pointed out by Markwart, between VaNuhl DAityA and the

HaEtumant...”<sup>63</sup>

Gnoli points out that “a large part of the mythical and legendary heritage can be easily located in the land watered by the great Sīstānic river and especially in the HamUn”<sup>64</sup>, including the “important place that Yima/ JamSīd, too, has in the Sīstānic traditions in the guise of the beneficent author of a great land reclamation in the Hilmand delta”.<sup>65</sup>

ViStAspa is identified with Drangiana, ZarathuStra with RaYa to its northeast. But, “the part played by the Hilmand delta region in Zoroastrian eschatology ... (is) important not only and not so much for the location of a number of figures and events of the traditional inheritance - we can also call to mind DaSt-i HAmOn, the scene of the struggle between WiStAsp and ArjAsp - as for the eschatology itself. The natural seat of the *XvarAnah* - of the Kavis and of the *XvarAnah* that is called *axvarAta* - and of the glory of the Aryan peoples, past, present and future, the waters of the Kasaoya also receive the implantation of the seed of Zara?uStra, giving birth to the three *saoSyant- fraSO- CarAtar*”.<sup>66</sup>

This region is subject to “a process of spiritualization of Avestan geography ... in the famous celebration of the Hilmand in the *ZamyAd YaSt*...”<sup>67</sup>, and “this pre-eminent position of SīstAn in Iranian religious history and especially in the Zoroastrian tradition is a very archaic one that most likely marks the first stages of the new religion ... the sacredness of the HAmUn-i Hilmand goes back to pre-Zoroastrian times...”<sup>68</sup>

Clearly, the position of the four areas, from north to south, into which the geographical horizon of the Avesta can be divided, shows the older and more important regions to be the more southern ones; and any movement indicated is from the south to the north.

Before turning to the Punjab, one more crucial aspect of Avestan geography must be noted.

According to Gnoli: “the importance of cattle in various aspects of the Gathic doctrine can be taken as certain. This importance can be explained as a reflection in religious practice and myth of a socioeconomic set-up in which cattle-raising was a basic factor.”<sup>69</sup>

Therefore, in identifying the original milieu of the Iranians, since “none of the countries belonging to present-day Iran or Afghanistan was recognised as being a land where men could live by cattle-raising, the conclusion was reached once again that the land must be Chorasmia, and Oxus the river of Airyana VaEjah”.<sup>70</sup>

However, this conclusion was reached “on the basis of evidence that turned out to be unreliable, perhaps because it was supplied too hastily”. As a matter of fact, a “recent study ... and, in general, the results obtained by the Italian Archaeological Mission in SIstAn, with regard to the protohistoric period as well, have given ample proof that SIstAn, especially the HAmUn-i Hilmand region, is a land where cattle-raising was widely practised. And it still is today, though a mere shadow of what it once was, by that part of the population settled in the swampy areas, that are called by the very name of GAwdAr. From the bronze age to the Achaemenian period, from Sahr-i Suxta to Dahana-i-GulAmAn, the archaeological evidence of cattle-raising speaks for itself: a study of zoomorphic sculpture in protohistoric SIstAn, documented by about 1500 figurines that can be dated between 3200 and 2000 BC leads us to attribute a special ideological importance to cattle in the Sahr-i Suxta culture, and this is fully justified by the place this animal has in the settlement’s economy and food supply throughout the time of its existence.”<sup>71</sup>

We may now turn to the Punjab, *an area in which there can be no doubt whatsoever about cattle-raising always having been an important*

*occupation.*

## **II.C. The Punjab**

The easternmost regions named in the Avesta cover a large part of present-day Pakistan, and include western Kashmir and the Indian Punjab: VarAna, RaNhA and Hapta-HAndu, and, as we have suggested, Airyana VaEjah itself.

Gnoli's descriptions of Avestan geography, whether or not such is his intention, indicate that the Iranians ultimately originated either in southern Afghanistan itself or in areas further east. Neither of these possibilities is suggested, or even hinted at, by Gnoli, since, as we have pointed out, Gnoli is not out to challenge the standard version of Indo-European history, nor perhaps does he even doubt that version.

However, his analysis and description of Avestan geography clearly suggest that the antecedents of the Iranians lie further east:

1. Gnoli repeatedly stresses the fact that the evidence of the Avesta must be understood in the background of a close presence of Indoaryans (or Proto-Indoaryans, as he prefers to call them) in the areas to the east of the Iranian area: "With VarAna and RaNhA, as of course with Hapta-HAndu, which comes between them in the *Vd.I* list, we find ourselves straightaway in Indian territory or, at any rate, in territory that, from the very earliest times, was certainly deeply permeated by Indo-Aryans or Proto-Indoaryans."<sup>72</sup>

In the Avestan descriptions of VarAna (in the *VendidAd*), Gnoli sees "a country, where the 'Airyas' (Iranians) were not rulers and where there was probably a hegemony of Indo-Aryan or proto-Indoaryan peoples."<sup>73</sup>

Gnoli is also clear about the broader aspects of a historico-geographical study of the Avesta: "This

research will in fact help to reconstruct, in all its manifold parts, an historical situation in which Iranian elements exist side by side with others that are not necessarily non-Aryan (i.e. not necessarily non-Indo-European) but also, which is more probable, Aryan or Proto-Indoaryan.”<sup>74</sup>

The point of all this is as follows: Gnoli’s analysis, alongwith specific statements made by him in his conclusions with regard to the evidence, makes it clear that the areas to the *west* (i.e. Iran) were as yet totally unknown to the Avesta; and areas to the *north*, beyond the “completely peripheral” areas of Margiana and Sogdiana, were also (apart from an *interpolated* reference to Chorasmia in the Mihr YaSt) totally unknown.

On the other hand, the areas to the *east* were certainly occupied by the Indoaryans: the eastern areas known to the Avesta were already areas in which Iranians existed “side by side” with Indoaryans, and “where there was probably a hegemony” of Indoaryans. Logically, therefore, areas even further east must have been full-fledged Indoaryan areas.

The earlier, or “Indo-Iranian”, ethos of the Iranians cannot therefore, *at any rate on the evidence of the Avesta*, be located towards the west or the north, but must be located towards the east.

2. Gnoli, as we saw, describes the eastern areas as “Indian territory”, which is quite correct.

However, he goes on to modify this description as “at any rate ... territory that, from the very earliest times was certainly deeply permeated by Indo-Aryans or Proto-Indoaryans”.<sup>75</sup>

Here Gnoli falls into an error into which all analysts of Iranian or Vedic geography inevitably fall: he blindly assumes (as we have also done in our earlier book) that the Saptasindhu or Punjab is the home of the Vedic Aryans.



This assumption, however, is supported neither by the evidence of the Rigveda nor by the evidence of the Avesta:

The evidence of the Rigveda shows that the home of the Vedic Aryans lay to the *east* of the Punjab, and the Saptasindhu became familiar to them only *after* the period of SudAs' conquests westwards.

The evidence of the Avesta shows that the home of the Iranians at least *included* the Punjab, long before most of the present-day land known as "Iran" became even known to them.

The point of all this is as follows: Gnoli's analysis shows that most of the historical Iranian areas (even present-day Iran and northern Central Asia, let alone the distant areas to the west of the Caspian Sea) were *not* part of the Iranian homeland in Avestan times.

On the other hand, an area which has not been an Iranian area in any known historical period, the Punjab, was a part of the Iranian homeland in Avestan times.

So any comparison of Avestan geography with latter-day and present Iranian geography shows Iranian migration only in the northward and westward directions from points as far east as the Punjab.

The Avesta can give us no further information on this subject.

But, as Gnoli himself puts it, "Vedic-Avestan comparison is of considerable importance for the reconstruction of the 'Proto-Indoaryan' and early Iranian historical and geographical milieu."<sup>76</sup>

Hence, we must now turn once again to the Rigveda.

### III

#### THE HISTORICAL IDENTITY OF THE IRANIANS

Gnoli points out that the Avesta reflects “an historical situation in which Iranian elements exist side by side with ... Aryan or Proto-Indoaryan (elements)”.

Turning to the Rigveda, it is natural to expect to find the same situation reflected there as well. And if that is so, it must also be likely that the Iranians have a specific historical identity in Vedic terms.

The historical identity of the Vedic Aryans themselves, as we have seen, is quite specific: this identity does not embrace *all* the tribes and peoples named in the Rigveda, but is confined to the P<sub>U</sub>rus (and particularly the Bharatas among them) who are alone called Aryas in the Rigveda.

All the other people, i.e. *all non-P<sub>U</sub>rus*, are called DAsas in the Rigveda. While it is natural to infer that the term DAsa was a *general* term for all non-P<sub>U</sub>rus as well as a *specific* term for the *particular* non-P<sub>U</sub>rus who existed “side by side” with the P<sub>U</sub>rus (i.e. for the Iranians), there must also have been a specific tribal name for these particular non-P<sub>U</sub>rus.

The Rigveda (in agreement with the PurANas) classifies the P<sub>U</sub>rus as one of the five tribes: namely, the Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus, P<sub>U</sub>rus (I.108.8). *Prima facie*, the Iranians must be identifiable with one of the remaining four.

Of the four, all sources locate the Yadus and TurvaSas together in the *interior* of India, and the Druhyus are located *outside* the frontiers of India. The most likely candidates are therefore *the Anus* who are located “side by side” with the P<sub>U</sub>rus in all geographical descriptions (and, incidentally, even in the enumeration of the names of the five tribes in I.108.8).

And an examination of the evidence demonstrates beyond the shadow of any doubt that *the ancient Indian tribes of the Anus are identical with the ancient Iranians:*

1. As we have already seen, the Indoaryan-Iranian conflict very definitely had an ANgiras-BhRgu dimension to it, with the ANgiras being the priests of the Indoaryans and the BhRgus being the priests of the Iranians: a situation reflected in the traditions of both the peoples.

This situation is also reflected in the Rigveda where the dominant priests of the text, *and* the particular or exclusive priests of the Bharatas (the Vedic Aryans), are the ANgiras: *all* the generations before SudAs have BharadvAjas as their priests (which, perhaps, explains the etymology of the name Bharad-vAja); SudAs himself has the Kutsas also as his priests (besides the new families of priests: the ViSvAmitras and the VasiSThas); and SudAs's descendants Sahadeva and Somaka have the Kutsas and the VAmadevas as their priests.

The BhRgus are clearly not the priests of the Bharatas, and, equally clearly, they *are* associated with a particular other tribe: the Anus.

The names Anu and BhRgu are used interchangeably: compare V.31.4 with IV.16.20, and VII.18.14 with VII.18.6.

Griffith also recognizes the connection in his footnote to V.31.4, when he notes: "Anus: probably meaning BhRgus who belonged to that tribe."

2. The Rigveda and the Avesta, as we saw, are united in testifying to the fact that the Punjab (Saptasindhu or Hapta-HAndu) was *not* a homeland of the Vedic Aryans, but was a homeland of the Iranians.

The PurANas as well as the Rigveda testify to the

fact that the Punjab was a homeland of the Anus:

Pargiter notes the Puranic description of the spread of the Anus *from the east* and their occupation of the whole of the Punjab: "One branch headed by USInara established separate kingdoms on the eastern border of the Punjab, namely those of the Yaudheyas, AmbaSThas, NavarASTra and the city KRmilA; and his famous son Sivi originated the Sivi [footnote: called Sivas in Rigveda VII.18.7] in Sivapura, and extending his conquests westwards, founded through his four sons the kingdoms of the VRSadarbhas, Madras (or Madrakas), Kekayas (or Kaikeyas), and Suvlras (or Sauvllras), thus occupying the whole of the Punjab except the north-west corner."<sup>77</sup>

In the Rigveda, the Anus are repeatedly identified with the ParuSNI river, the central river of the Punjab, as the PUrus are identified with the SarasvatI: in the DASarAjña battle, the Anus are clearly the people of the ParuSNI area and beyond. Likewise, another hymn which refers to the ParuSNI (VIII.74.15) also refers to the Anus (VIII.74.4).

Michael Witzel notes about the locations of "the Yadu-TurvaSa and the Anu-Druhyu", that "the Anu may be tied to the ParusNSI, the Druhyu to the northwest and the Yadu with the YamunA".<sup>78</sup>

3. The name Anu or Anava for the Iranians appears to have survived even in later times: the country and the people in the very heart of Avestan land, to the immediate north of the HAmUn-i Hilmand, were known, as late as Greek times (cf. *Stathmoi Parthikoi*, 16, of Isidore of Charax), as the *Anauon* or *Anauoi*.

4. The names of Anu tribes in the Rigveda and the PurANas can be clearly identified with the names of the most prominent tribes among latter-day Iranians.

The DASarAjña battle (described in three hymns in the Rigveda, VII.18, 33, 83) was between SudAs on the one hand, and a confederation of ten tribes from among the Anus and Druhyus on the other, which took place on the ParuSNI (i.e. in Anu territory, hence, logically, most of the tribes were Anus).

Of these ten tribes, the following six, named in just two verses, may be noted:

- a. PRthus or PArthavas (VII.83.1): Parthians.
- b. ParSus or ParSavas (VII .83.1): Persians.
- c. Pakthas (VII.18.7): Pakhtoons.
- d. BhalAnas (VII.18.7): Baluchis.
- e. Sivas (VII.18.7): Khivas.
- f. ViSANins (VII.18.7): Pishachas (Dards).

Three more tribes, named in adjacent verses, must be noted separately (as we will have to refer to them again in the next chapter):

- a. BhRgus (VII.18.6): Phrygians.
- b. Simyus (VII. 18.5): Sarmatians (Avesta = Sairimas).
- c. Alinas (VII.18.7): Alans.

A major Iranian tribe which is not named in the Rigveda, but appears as a prominent Anu tribe in the PurANas and epics is the Madras: Medes (Madai).

Significantly, the Anu king who leads the confederation of Anu tribes against SudAs (and who is named in VII.18.12) has a name which to this day is common among Zoroastrians: KavaSa.

Furthermore, this king is also called Kavi CAyamAna four verses earlier (in VII.18.8). This is significant because an ancestor of this king, AbhyAvartin CAyamAna, is identified in VI.27.8 as a PArthava (Parthian). At the same time, Kavi is the title of the kings of the most important dynasty in Avestan and Zoroastrian history, the KavyAn or Kayanian dynasty. In later times, it is the Parthian

kings who were the loudest and most persistent in their claims to being descendants of the Kayanians.

If the full name of this king is interpreted as Kavi KavaSa of the line of CAyamAnas, he can be identified with Kavi KavAta, the founder of the pre-Avestan dynasty of KavyAn or Kayanian kings, whose most prominent descendant was Kavi ViStAspa.

Incidentally, other descendants of Kavi KavaSa may be the Kekayas or Kaikayas, one of the two most prominent Anu tribes of the PurANas and later Indian tradition (the other being the Madras), who are located in western Punjab, and whose name bears such a close resemblance to the names of the Kayanian kings.

5. The DAsas of the Rigveda are opposed to the Aryas: since the word Arya refers to PUrus in general and the Bharatas in particular, the word DAsa should logically refer to non-PUrus in general and the Anus (or Iranians) in particular.

The word DAsa is found in 54 hymns (63 verses) and in an overwhelming majority of these references, it refers either to human enemies of the Vedic Aryans, or to atmospheric demons killed by Indra: in most of the cases, it is difficult to know which of the two is being referred to, and in some of them perhaps both are being simultaneously referred to. In any case, since these references are usually non-specific, it makes no material difference to our historical analysis.

There are eight verses which refer to both *Arya and Dasa enemies*; and in this case it is certain that human *enemies* are being referred to. As we have already seen in an earlier chapter, these verses (VI.22.10; 33.3; 60.6; VII.83.1; X.38.3; 69.6; 83.1; 102.3) help us to confirm the identity of the Aryas of the Rigveda. However, they give us no help in respect of the DAsas.

But finally, there are three verses which stand out from the rest: *they contain references which are friendly towards the DASas:*

a. In VIII.5.31, the ASvins are depicted as accepting the offerings of the DASas.

b. In VIII.46.32, the patrons are referred to as DASas.

c. In VIII.51.9, Indra is described as belonging to both Aryas and DASas.

Given the nature (and, as we shall see later, the period) of MaNDala VIII, and the fact that all these three hymns are *dAnastutis* (hymns in praise of donors), it is clear that the friendly references have to do with the identity of the patrons in these hymns.

A special feature of these *dAnastutis* is that, while everywhere else in the Rigveda we find patrons gifting cattle, horses and buffaloes, these particular patrons gift camels (*uSTra*): at least, the first two do so (VIII.5.37; 46.22, 31), and it is very likely that the third one does so too (this *dAnastuti* does not mention the specific gifts received, and merely calls upon Indra to shower wealth on the patron).

In any case, there is a fourth patron in another *dAnastuti* in the same MaNDala (VIII.6.48) who also gifts camels.

Outside of these three hymns, the camel is referred to only once in the Rigveda, in a late upa-maNDala of MaNDala I (I.138.2), where it is mentioned in a simile.

Now, as to the identity of the patrons in these four hymns:

a. In VIII.5, the patron is KaSu.

b. In VIII.6, the patrons include Tirindira ParSava.

c. In VIII.46, the patrons include PRthuSravas son

of Kanlta.

d. In VIII.51, the patron (whose gifts are not specified) is RuSama Pavlru.

In two of these cases, as we can see, the identity is self-evident: one patron is called a ParSava (Persian) and another has PRthu (Parthian) in his name.

But, *here is what the Western scholars themselves have to say*: according to Michael Witzel, “there are, in the opinion of some scholars (Hoffman, 1975) some Iranian names in Rgveda (KaSu, Kanlta, etc.)”<sup>79</sup> More specifically: “An Iranian connection is also clear when camels appear (8.5. 37-39) together with the Iranian name *KaSu* ‘small’ (Hoffman 1975) or with the suspicious name *Tirindira* and the *ParSu* (8.6.46)”<sup>80</sup>

Griffith also notes the Iranian connection in his footnote to VIII.6.46: “*From ParSu, from Tirindira*: ‘from Tirindira the son of ParSu’ - Wilson. Both names are Iranian (cf. Tiridates, Persa). See Weber’s ‘*Episches in Vedischen Ritual*’, pp.36-38, (*Sitzungsberichte der K.P. Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1891, XXXVIII*).”

The only patron whose identity is not specifically named as Iranian by the scholars is RuSama Pavlru. However, the RuSamas are identified by M.L. Bhargava<sup>81</sup> as a tribe of the extreme northwest, from the Soma lands of SuSomA and ArjlklyA. This clearly places them in the territory of the Iranians.

In sum, the Iranians are fully identifiable with the Anus, the particular DAsas (non-PUrus) of the Rigveda.

#### IV THE IRANIAN MIGRATIONS



The evidence of the Rigveda and the Avesta makes it clear that the Iranians, in the earliest period, were restricted to a small area in the east, and the vast area which they occupied in later historical times was the result of a series of migrations and expansions.

The early migrations of the Iranians follow a clear trail: from Kashmir to the Punjab; from the Punjab to southern and eastern Afghanistan; from southern and eastern Afghanistan to the whole of Afghanistan and southern Central Asia; and finally, in later times, over a vast area spread out at least as far west as western Iran and as far north as northern Central Asia and the northern Caucasus.

The early history of the Iranians may be divided into the following periods (see chart on next page).

The details may be examined under the following heads:

- A. The Pre-Rigvedic Period.
- B. The Early Period of the Rigveda.
- C. The Middle period of the Rigveda.
- D. The Late Period of the Rigveda.

#### **IV.A. The Pre-Rigvedic Period**

In the pre-Rigvedic period, the Iranians were inhabitants of Kashmir.

Period	Rigveda	Avesta	Iranian Geographical Area
1	Pre-Rigvedic Period	---	Kashmir

2	Early Period of the Rigveda	Pre- Avestan Period	Punjab
3	Middle Period of the Rigveda	Period of GAthAs and early YaSts	Punjab, southern and eastern Afghanistan
4	Late Period of the Rigveda	Proper Avestan Period	Punjab, Afghanistan, southern Central Asia

In the Avesta, this period is remembered as a remote period of prehistory, enshrined in the myth of Airyana VaEjah, the land of severe winters.

This period is not remembered at all in the Rigveda, since the Rigveda is a PUru book and is not concerned with the prehistory of the Anus. Hence, in the case of this period at least, one must turn to the PurANas, which have a broader perspective.

In the PurANas, this period is remembered in the description of the original geographical distribution of the five AiLa or Lunar tribes. According to this description, the PUrus were located in the centre (i.e. Haryana-Uttar Pradesh) and the other four tribes, in relation to them, were located as follows: the Anus to their north (i.e. Kashmir), the Druhyus to their west (i.e. Punjab), the Yadus to their south-west (i.e. Rajasthan and western Madhya Pradesh, perhaps extending as far south as Gujarat and Maharashtra) and the TurvaSas to their south-east (to the east of the Yadus). To the northeast of the PUrus were the tribes of the IkSvAku or Solar race.

The PurANas also relate a series of historical events which changed the original geographic locations of at least two of the five tribes:

The Druhyus, inhabitants of the Punjab, started conquering eastwards and southwards, and their

conquests seem to have brought them into conflict with all the other tribes and peoples: the Anus, PUrus, Yadus, TurvaSas, and even the IkSvAkus.

The result was a more or less concerted attempt by the different tribes, which led to the Druhyus being driven out not only from the eastern areas occupied by them, but even from the Punjab, and into the northwest and beyond. The place vacated by them was occupied by the Anus.

This is important here only because it accounts for the fact that the Anus came to occupy the area to the west of the PUrus (i.e. the Punjab), while the Druhyus were pushed further off into the northwest beyond the Anus.

#### **IV.B. The Early Period of the Rigveda**

In the Early Period of the Rigveda, the Iranians were inhabitants of the Punjab.

In the Avesta, this period is remembered as a period of prehistory, enshrined in the myth of the “Vara” or enclosure which Ahura Mazda asks Yima, the king of Airyana VaEjah, to build as a defence against the severe winters about to befall the land: clearly a mythicization of a migration from a severely cold land to a more congenial one.

The “Vara” would appear to be a mythicization of the areas in eastern Punjab occupied by the Iranians after their migration southwards from Kashmir: these areas would have been bordered on the east by the KurukSetra region, which is referred to in the Rigveda as *Vara A PRthivyA* (the best place on earth) or *NAbhA PRthivyA* (the navel or centre of the earth). The Avestan “Vara” (later taken to mean “enclosure”, but originally merely the first word of the phrase *Vara A PRthivyA*) is also thought of as a kind of Paradise occupying a central position on earth (and was, on this basis, identified by Tilak with the North Polar region).

The Avestan concept of a six-month long day and a six-month long night in the Vara is probably an indication of the special and sacred position of the Vara in Avestan mythology: in later Indian tradition, a six-month long period each represents the day and night of the Gods; and the KurukSetra region is known as BrahmAvarta (the land of BrahmA or the Land of the Gods) as distinct from AryAvarta (the Land of the Aryas) to its east.

The KurukSetra region was thus the common sacred land of the Iranians to its west (the Anus in the Punjab) and the Vedic Aryans to its east (the PUrus in Uttar Pradesh).

The hostilities and conflicts which led to the migrations of the Iranians from this land may be symbolises in the “excessive heat” created by Angra Mainyu to drive them out of Hapta-HAndu: in the Rigveda (VII.6.3) the Dasyus were chased westwards by Agni.

The memories of the eastern land in the Avesta are not, however, restricted only to the myth of the Vara: we find a very significant reference in the very first verse of the ZamyAd YaSt (Yt.19.1), the most geographically descriptive YaSt in the Avesta.

Darmetester translates the verse as follows: “The first mountain that rose up out of the earth, O Spitama ZarathuStra! was the Haraiti Barez. That mountain stretches all along the shores of the land washed by waters towards the east. The second mountain was Mount ZeredhO outside Mount Manusha; this mountain too stretches all along the shores of the land washed by waters towards the east.”<sup>82</sup> In his footnote to the word “outside” which precedes Mount Manusha in his translation, he notes that the phrase *pArentarem aredhO* which he translates as “outside” is of doubtful meaning and probably means “beyond”.

The Manusha of Yt.19.1 (which no one has been

able to identify to this day) is certainly the MAnuSa of the Rigveda:

a. The Avestan description specifically states that Manusha is located in the east.

b. The name is identified, even by the Western scholars, as a name alien to the Iranian ethos and connected with the Indoaryan ethos: *The Cambridge History of Iran*, in its reference to the word Manusha as it occurs in the name of an Avestan hero ManuSCithra (whom we will refer to again shortly) points out that it “means ‘from the race of Manu’, and refers to the ancient mythical figure, Manu, son of Vivasvant, who was regarded in India as the first man and father of the human race. He has no place in Iranian tradition, where his role is played by Yima, and later GayOmar. It appears, though, that we have a derivative of his name in Manusha (Yasht 19.1), the name of a mountain...”<sup>83</sup>

c. The scholars translate the Avestan reference as “Mount Manusha”.

However, the reference not only does *not* call Manusha a mountain, but the context makes it clear that it is definitely *not* one: the verse clearly states that it is referring to only two mountains, Haraiti Barez and ZeredhO, and Manusha is named only in order to point out the direction of Mount ZeredhO. Haraiti Barez and ZeredhO are the first two in a list of mountains named in the following verses of the YaSt, and if Manusha had also been the name of a mountain, it would have figured in the list as such in its own right. The words *pArentarem aredhO* precede the word Manusha; and while *pArentarem* means “beyond”, the word *aredhO* (whose meaning is not known) probably refers to a river or body of water: a similar word occurs in the name of the Avestan goddess of waters: *aredvi- sUrA anAhitA*.

And the name MAnuSa as the name of a place associated with a body of water occurs in the Rigveda, as we have already seen: III.23.4

specifically describes this place as being located between the Sarasvatī and Drśadvatī rivers in the *Vara A PRthivyA* (i.e. KurukSetra), which is literally a “land washed by waters towards the east” of the Iranian area.

The Manusha in the Avestan reference (Yt.19.1) clearly represents a residual memory of the earlier eastern homeland.

Information in the Rigveda about the events in the Early Period is more specific, since this period represents contemporary events in the Early MaNDalas while it represents prehistory in the Avesta.

In the earlier part of the Early Period, there appears to have been some degree of bonhomie between the PŪrus (Vedic Aryans) and Anus (Iranians) when they shared a common religious heritage in the region stretching out on both sides of KurukSetra.

MaNDala VI, in fact, records an alliance between the Bharatas (led by SRnjaya) and the Anus (led by AbhyAvartin CAYamAna) against the Yadus and TurvaSas who were attacking KurukSetra (HaryUplyA = Drśadvatī) from the south (VI.27).

However, in the course of time, relations deteriorated, and MaNDala VI itself later identifies the Anus as droghas (enemies or fiends) in VI.62.9. The hostilities reached a climax during the time of SudAs, in the DASarAjña battle.

This battle is crucial to an understanding of early Indo-Iranian history:

1. The evidence of the hymns shows that in this period *all the major Iranian groups were settled in the Punjab*, including all those found, in later times, in the geographically furthest areas from the Punjab: the Phrygians (later in Turkey), the Alans (later in the northern Caucasus), and the Khivas (later in Chorasmia), not to mention the

major peoples of latter-day Afghanistan (Pakhtoons) and Iran (Persians, Parthians, Medes).

2. The hymns clearly record that this battle saw the defeat of the Anus, the conquest of their territories by SudAs (VII.18.13), and the commencement of their migration westwards.

It may also be noted that the Spitama line of priests also appears to be referred to in the DASarAjña hymns in the form of a special figure of speech which has not been understood by the scholars so far:

In VII.33.9, 12, VasiSTha is referred to as wearing the vestments spun by Yama and brought to him by Apsaras.

Yama, as we have seen, is identified with the BhRgus and the Iranians; and the Apsaras are mythical beings closely identified with the Gandharvas who represent the western region of GandhAri or southeastern Afghanistan.

The references in VII.33.9, 12 are the *only* references to Yama or to the Apsaras in the whole of the Early and Middle MaNDalas and upamaNDalas (i.e. in MaNDalas VI, III, VII, IV, II, and the early and middle upamaNDalas of MaNDala I) except for *one* other reference to Yama in I.83.5, which also emphasises his BhRgu identity by naming him with other ancient BhRgus like AtharvaNa and USanA.

VasiSTha wearing the vestments spun by Yama, who represents the BhRgus who are his *enemies* in the battle, can be understood only in the sense of a figure of speech indicating victory over his enemies.

Therefore, this must also be the meaning of the only other references, in these hymns, to the vestments of the VasiSThas or the TRtsus: they are twice referred to as wearing what Griffith

translates as “white robes” (VII.33.1; 83.8).

The word *Svityanca*, which occurs *only* in these two verses in the whole of the, Rigveda, clearly has some unique connotation different from the commonplace meaning of “white”.

On the lines of the references to the vestments spun by Yama, it is clear that the word *Svityanca* refers to the identity of the enemies: to the Spitamas, the particular priests of the enemies of SudAs and VasiSTha.

To sum up: in the Early Period of the Rigveda, the Iranians were inhabitants of the Punjab, and it is only towards the end of this period, in the time of SudAs, that they started on their migration westwards.

IV.C. The Middle Period of the Rigveda

#### **IV.C. The Middle Period of the Rigveda**

In the Middle Period of the Rigveda, the Iranians were settled in Afghanistan.

From the viewpoint of Indo-Iranian relations, this period can be divided into two parts:

The earlier part of this period (MaNDala IV and the middle upa-maNDalas) represents a continuation and culmination of the Indo-Iranian hostilities which commenced in the Early Period. Unlike the Early Period, however, this period is contemporaneous with the period of composition of the earliest parts of the Avesta (the GAthAs and the earliest core of the YaSts) and hence the events of this period are contemporary events for the composers of the Early Avesta, and have a central place in the text. To the Rigveda, however, these events are more peripheral, unlike the earlier events in the Punjab at the time of SudAs.

The later part of this period (MaNDala II) is a



period of peace in which the two peoples (the Vedic Aryans in the east and the Iranians in Afghanistan) developed their religions, and the hostilities slowly cooled down and became mythical and terminological memories.

The major historical event of this period is the great battle which took place in Afghanistan between a section of Vedic Aryans (led by RjrASva and the descendants of SudAs) on the one hand, and the Iranians (led by ZarathuStra and ViStAspa) on the other.

In the Rigveda, the correspondences with the early Avestan period of ZarathuStra are all found in the hymns of the early part of the Middle Period:

1. The leader of the Iranians in the battle was Kavi ViStAspa, the patron of ZarathuStra (mentioned by ZarathuStra in his GATHAs: Y.28.7; 46.16; 51.16; 53.2).

In the Rigveda, IStASva (ViStAspa) is mentioned in I.122.13, attributed to KakSlvAn Dairghatamas AuSija: *kimiStASva iSTaraSmireta ISAnAsastaruSa Rnjate nRn*.

Griffith translates the above vaguely as “What can he do whose steeds and reins are choicest? These, the all potent, urge brave men to conquest”. And, in his footnotes, he opines that “the whole hymn, as Wilson observes, ‘is very elliptical and obscure’ and much of it is at present unintelligible”.

But S.K. Hodiwala<sup>84</sup> points out that SAYaNa translates it as follows: “What can ISTASva, IStaraSmi, or any other princes do against those who enjoy the protection (of Mitra and VaruNa)?”, and Wilson, while following this translation, notes that “the construction is obscure and the names, which are said to be those of Rajas, are new and unusual”.

A second Avestan hero, whose name may be noted here, is ThraEtaona.

In the Rigveda, Traitana (ThraEtaona) is referred to as being killed by (the grace of) Indra in I.158.5, attributed to Dlrghatamas, the father of KakSlvAn.

2. The VArSAgira battle (referred to in hymn I.100) is identified by many Zoroastrian scholars as a battle between the Iranians and Indoaryans at the time of ZarathuStra. The hymn (in I.100.17) names five persons as being the main protagonists in the battle:

**a.** The leader of the VArSAgiras is RjrASva. He is identified by most scholars with the Arejataspa or ArjAspa who is referred to in the Avesta as the main enemy of ViStAspa and his brothers (AbAn YaSt, Yt.5.109, 113; and GOs YaSt, Yt.9.30). Later Iranian tradition (as in the ShAhname) goes so far as to hold ZarathuStra himself to have been killed by ArjAspa.

**b.** Sahadeva is one of the four companions of RjrASva in the battle. He is correctly identified by S.K. Hodiwala<sup>85</sup> with the Hushdiv remembered in the ShAhname (Chapter 462) as one of the main enemies of ViStAspa in the battle, who led ArjAspa's troops from the rear. Although not mentioned in the Avesta, Hushdiv is a natural development of HazadaEva, which would be the exact Avestan equivalent of the Vedic name Sahadeva.

**c.** The other three companions of RjrASva in the battle are AmbarISa, BhayamAna and SurAdhas.

S.K. Hodiwala points out that “in the Cama Memorial Volume, E. Sheheriarji quotes RV I.100.17 .... (and) tries to identify the other persons mentioned in the said Rigvedic verse by showing that the names of certain persons known to be connected with ArjAspa in the Avesta bear the same meanings as the names of the persons in the said verse. Thus he says that AmbarISa is identical with Bidarfsha (= Av. Vidarafshnik) brother of ArjAspa, since both the names mean ‘one with beautiful garments’. Similarly, BhayamAna = Vandaremaini, father of ArjAspa, both meaning ‘the fearless one’; also SurAdhas = Humayaka, brother of ArjAspa, as both the words mean ‘one with much wealth’...”<sup>86</sup>

Hodiwala, of course, discounts the above identifications by conceding that “the identification of persons in two different languages from the meanings of their names, which are quite different in sound, can have but little weight”.<sup>87</sup>

However, Hodiwala<sup>88</sup> correctly identifies Humayaka, ArjAspa’s comrade in the Avesta (AbAn YaSt, Yt.5.113) with Somaka, the son of Sahadeva (IV.15.7-10).

S.K. Hodiwala thus identifies Humayaka of the Avesta with the Rigvedic Somaka (IV.15.7-10) while E. Sheheriarji identifies him with the Rigvedic SurAdhas (I.100.17).

Incidentally, there is a strong likelihood that the SurAdhas of I.100.17 is the same as the Somaka of IV.15.7-10.

The distribution of the word SurAdhas in the Rigveda (everywhere else, outside I.100.17, the word is an epithet meaning “bountiful”) suggests that the word may have originally been coined by ViSvAmitra as an epithet for his patron SudAs, perhaps on the basis of the similarity in sound between the two words, SudAs and SurAdhas, and later the word was also applied to his descendants:

The word SurAdhas is found only *twice* in the Early MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas, in III.33.12; 53.12, *and these are the only two hymns in MaNDala III which deal with ViSvAmitra's relationship with SudAs.*

In the Middle MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas, the word is found in I.100.17 as the name of a companion of RjrASva and Sahadeva; and elsewhere it is found in IV.2.4; 5.4; 17.8 (all three in MaNDala IV, which is connected with Somaka).

It is found many times in the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas as a general term meaning "bountiful": I.23.6; VIII.14.12; 46.24; 49.1; 50.1; 65.12; 68.6; X.143.4.

In I.100.17, therefore, it is probably an epithet, rather than the name, of one of RjrASva's companions; and as Sahadeva is already named separately as one of the companions, the epithet must be used here for his son Somaka, another participant in the battle.

3. The VArSAgira battle clearly has historical links with the earlier DASarAjña battle:

**a.** The protagonists in the battle include Sahadeva and (as we have seen) his son Somaka, both descendants of SudAs, the protagonist in the DASarAjña battle.

**b.** This battle hymn contains the *only* reference (in I.100.18) in the whole of the Rigveda outside the DASarAjña hymns (VII.18.5) to the Simyus, who figure as the enemies in both the references.

**c.** The word *Svitnyebhi* occurs in this hymn (I.100.18) in reference to the protagonists of the hymns, in the same sense as the word

*Svityanca* occurs in the DASarAjña hymns (VII.33.1; 83.8). (Incidentally, the only other occurrence of the word Svitnya in the whole of the Rigveda is in VIII.46.31, in reference to the cows gifted by the camel-donor, PRthuSravas KAnIta, identified by the scholars, as we have seen, as an Iranian.)

And it is clear that this battle is between the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians:

**a.** As we have seen, it has historical links with the earlier DASarAjña battle, which was between these two peoples.

**b.** As we have also seen, the main protagonists on both sides, in the battle, are found referred to in both the Rigveda and the Avesta.

**c.** The geography of the river-names in the Rigveda shows a westward thrust from the time of SudAs, which culminates beyond the Indus in the middle upa-maNDalas and MaNDala IV.

**d.** The battle in the Avesta took place in southern Afghanistan: Gnoli points out that the Hilmand delta region is “the scene of the struggle between WiStAsp and ArjAsp”.<sup>89</sup>

In the Rigveda, the battle is referred to as taking place “beyond the Sarayu” (Siritoi) (IV.30.18), placing it squarely in southern Afghanistan.

4. The reference to the battle “beyond the Sarayu” in IV.30.18 refers to ArNa and Citraratha, “both Aryas”, who were killed in the battle by (the

grace of) Indra.

There are eight other verses in the Rigveda (VI.22.10; 33.3; 60.6; VII.83.1; X.38.3; 69.6; 83.1; 102.3) which refer to Arya enemies; but in all those cases, the references are general references to both Arya and DAsa enemies, and no specific persons identifiable as Aryas are named as such. In this unique reference (IV.30.18), however, we find two specific individuals named as Arya enemies.

By the logic of the situation, these two persons should then be two prominent Vedic Aryans (PUrus) who had aligned with the enemy Iranians (Anus) in this battle.

That the followers of ZarathuStra must have included some Vedic Aryans is accepted by the scholars: Gnoli points out that “there is no evidence for thinking that the Zoroastrian message was meant for the Iranians alone. On the-contrary, history suggests that the exact opposite is likely, and there are also indisputable facts ... which show clearly that Zoroaster’s teaching was addressed, earlier on at least to all men ... whether they were Iranians or not, Proto-Indoaryans or otherwise...”<sup>90</sup>

*The Cambridge History of Iran*, as we have seen, refers to ManuSCithra (later ManUchlhr or Minocher, the common Parsee name popularly shortened to Minoo), and notes that his name “means ‘from the race of Manu’, and refers to the ancient mythical figure, Manu, son of Vivasvant, who was regarded in India as the first man and founder of the human race. He has no place in Iranian tradition, where his role is played by Yima and later GayOmard.”<sup>91</sup>

The reference goes on to add that the word Manusha is found in only one other place in the Avesta: in YaSt 19.1 as “the name of a mountain”.

In later Pahlavi texts, the word is found only in two

contexts: firstly in the genealogies of ManUchlhr and LuhrAsp, and secondly in the identification of the Manusha of Yt.19.1 as the birthplace of ManUchlhr.

ManuSCithra was therefore clearly a Vedic Aryan born in the KurukSetra region. And the reason he is held high in Zoroastrian tradition is also clear: as *The Cambridge History of Iran* notes: “In the Avesta, ManUchlhr is called Airyana, ‘helper of the Aryans’ ...”<sup>92</sup>

In short, ManuSCithra was a Vedic Aryan who aligned with the Iranians in the great battle; and if ManuS is his epithet (indicating his Indoaryan identity) and Cithra is his name, he is clearly the Citraratha of IV.30.18.

5. The main priestly enemies of the Iranians are the Angras (ANgirases) who are condemned throughout the Avesta right down from the GATHAs of ZarathuStra.

Significantly, the Avesta does not refer to any of the other Rigvedic families: neither the ViSvAmitras and VasiSThas of the Early Period, nor the GRtsamadas and KaSyapas of the later Middle Period, nor the Atris, KaNvas and Bharatas of the Late Period, nor the Agastyas.

And, of the three branches of ANgirases, it does not refer even once to the BharadvAjas. The Avesta, however, does refer to the two other branches of ANgirases, the Usijs (AuSijas) and Gaotemas (Gautamas), *both of which originated in and dominated the early Middle Period, and in whose hymns alone we find references to the conflict with the Zoroastrians:*

a. The Usijs (AuSijas) are mentioned by ZarathuStra himself in the GATHAs (Y. 44.20) where they are identified with the Karapans (a derogatory word used in the GATHAs in reference to

enemy priests).

**b. NAdhyAongha Gaotema**  
(NodhAs Gautama) is mentioned in the early YaSts (FarvardIn YaSt, Yt.13.16) as a priest defeated by ZarathuStra in debate. While many scholars ignore or reject the identification of the word NAdhyAongha with NodhAs, the identity of the second word as the name of an enemy priest, (a) Gaotema, is not disputed by anyone.

In sum: any analysis of the Rigveda and Avesta will make it clear that the main enemies of the Iranians in the Avesta, at least at the time of ZarathuStra, were the “Indoaryans”: i.e. the Vedic Aryans or PUrus.

In later Indian tradition, the Iranians became the *asuras* or demons of Indian mythology, who ceased to bear even the faintest resemblance to the original Iranian prototypes. Likewise, the *angras* and other enemies of the time of ZarathuStra were so mythologized in later Iranian traditions (in the Pahlavi texts, and in the very much later ShAhnâme; and even in later parts of the Avesta itself) that they ceased to be identifiable with the original Indoaryan prototypes. Hence, later interpretations of the Avestan words (e.g. the identification of the *tUiryas* or Turanians with latter-day peoples like the Turks, etc.) are untenable in any study of the Zoroastrian period.

The Avesta does not appear to refer to the PUrus or Bharatas by those names, but then it is not necessary that they do so: the Rigveda refers to the Iranians as the Anus (a term which does not appear in the Avesta); and although SudAs and his descendants are Bharatas, the DASarAjña hymns refer to them as TRtsus, and the VArSAgira hymn refers to them as VArSAgiras. The Iranians must have had their own names for



the Indoaryans in the Avesta. And it is not necessary that the names or epithets used by the Iranians for the Indoaryans should be located in the Rigveda.

However, we can *speculate* as follows:

**a.** The word TURvayANa occurs four times in the Rigveda, and in two of the verses it refers to the person for whom Indra conquered all the tribes from east to west (i.e. Kutsa-Ayu-Atithigva). About TURvayANa, Griffith notes in his footnote to VI.18.13: “According to SAyaNa, *tUrvAyANa*, ‘quickly going’ is an epithet of DivodAsa.”

If this is correct, then it is possible that this may have been a general epithet of the Bharata kings, descendants of DivodAsa, particularly in conflict situations; and the Avestan word *tUirya* for the enemies of the Iranians may be derived from this word as a contrast to the word *airya*. It may be noted that according to Skjærvø. the “evidence is too tenuous to allow any conclusions as to who the Turas were or at what time the conflict took place”.<sup>93</sup>

**b.** ZarathuStra, in his GAthAs (Y.32.12-14) refers to the *grAhma* as the most powerful and persistent of his enemies.

A similar, though not exactly cognate, word *grAma*, in the Rigveda, refers to the warrior troops of the Bharatas in III.33.11 (where it refers to these troops, under SudAs and ViSvAmitra. crossing the Sutudri and VipAS in their

expedition westwards), and in I.100.10 (where it refers to the troops of the VArSAgiras). These are the *only two* occurrences of this word in the MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas of the Early Period and the early part of the Middle Period.

The word *grAma* occurs *once* in the hymns of the later Middle Period, in II.12.7, *in its new and subsequent meaning of “village”*. It occurs many times in the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas (I.44.10; 114.1; V.54.8; X.27.19; 62.11; 90.8; 107.5; 127.5, 146.10 149.4) always meaning “village” (except in I.44.10, where it means “battle”, like the later word *saMgrAma*).

While the early part of the Middle Period of the Rigveda represents a continuation and culmination of the Indo-Iranian conflicts of the Early Period, the later part (MaNDala II and corresponding parts of the upa-maNDalas) is a period of peace in which the two people develop their religions and cultures in their respective areas. MaNDala II does not refer to any river other than the sacred SarasvatI.

The first signs of a thaw taking place in Indo-Iranian relations, in this period, are the appearance in the Rigveda of an Avestan personality Thrita, who is counted among the important persons (Yt.13.113), and is primarily associated with the Haoma (Soma) ritual (Y.9.10) and with medicines (Vd.20).

Thrita (Rigvedic Trita) is a post-Zoroastrian figure: he is *not* mentioned in the GAthAs, nor is he mentioned *even once* in the MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas of the Early Period and early Middle Period (MaNDalas VI, III, VII, IV, and the early and middle upa-maNDalas).

He first appears in the hymns of the later Middle

Period, i.e. in MaNDala II (II.11.19, 20; 31.6; 34.10, 14), and he is clearly a contemporary figure here: II.11.19, even in the context of a hostile reference to Dasyus (i.e. enemy priests, as we shall see in the next chapter) in general, asks Indra to ensure the friendship of Trita (Griffith translates the verse as a reference to “Trita of our party”), and the next verse refers to Trita offering libations of Soma.

Trita appears in *all* the MaNDalas of the Late Period as a mythical personality.

The later part of the Middle Period is thus a transitional period between the earlier period of Indo-Iranian conflicts, and the later period of general peace and religious development.

#### **IV.D. The Late Period of the Rigveda**

In the Late Period of the Rigveda, the Iranians were now spread out over the whole of Afghanistan and southern Central Asia, and were still present in northwestern Punjab. The late VendidAd, as we have already seen, delineates this area in its description of the sixteen Iranian lands.

This period represents a new era in Indo-Iranian relations, where the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians, in their respective areas, developed their religions independently of each other and yet influencing each other, the hostilities of the past rapidly turning into mythical and terminological memories:

1. The BhRgus, as we have seen, are now completely accepted into the Vedic mainstream in MaNDala VIII, with their old hymns being included in the MaNDala and the references to them acquiring a friendly, respectful, and contemporary air.

2. Iranian kings of the northwestern Punjab (KaSu, PRthuSravas KANlta, Tirindira ParSava,

RuSama), as we have also seen, now become patrons of Vedic RSis.

3. Geographical names of the northwest now start appearing in the Rigveda, as we have already seen, and most of these are names which are also found in the Avesta.

**a.** SuSoma/SuSomA, ArjIka/  
ArjIklyA, SaryaNAvat and MUjavat,  
the four northwestern areas  
associated with Soma (I.84.14 in  
the middle upa-maNDalas; all the  
rest in the hymns of the Late  
Period: VIII.6.39; 7.29; 64.11;  
IX.65.22, 23; 113.1, 2; X.34.1;  
75.5). Of these MUjavat is found in  
the Avesta: MuZA, Yt.8.125.

**b.** GandhAri and the Gandharvas  
(III.38.6, *a late interpolated hymn*,  
as we have already seen; all the  
rest in the hymns of the Late  
Period: 1.22.14; 126.7; 163.2;  
VIII.1.11; 77.5; IX.83.4; 85.12;  
86.36; 113.3; X.10.4; 11.2; 80.6.  
85.40, 41; 123.4, 7-8;. 136.6; 139.4-  
6; 177.2). Gandarewa is found in  
the Avesta: Yt.5.38.

**c.** RasA (IV.43.6 in the Middle  
Period at the westernmost point of  
the westward thrust; all the rest in  
the hymns of the Late Period:  
I.112.12; V.41.15; 53.9; VIII.72.13;  
IX.41.6; X.75.6; 108.1, 2; 121.4).  
RaNhA is found in the Avesta:  
Vd.1.19.

**d.** Sapta Sindhu (Sapta SindhUn in  
the Middle Period: II.12.3, 12;  
IV.28.1; and later as well: I.32.12;  
35.8; X.67.12; crystallizing into  
Sapta Sindhava only in the Late  
Period: VIII.54.4; 69.12; 96.1;  
IX.66.6; X.43.3). Hapta HAndu is

found in the Avesta: Vd.1.18.

4. Certain animals and persons common to the Rigveda and the Avesta appear, or become common, only in the hymns of the Late Period:

**a.** The camel *uSTra* (Avestan *uStra*, found in the name of ZarathuStra himself) appears only in 1.138.2; VIII.5.37; 6.48; 46.22, 31.

**b.** The word *varAha* as a name for the boar (Avestan *varAza*) appears only in I.61.7; 88.5; 114.5; 121.11; VIII.77.10; IX.97.7; X.28.4; 67.7; 86.4; 99.6.

**c.** Yima (Vedic Yama), first man of the Avesta, is accepted into the Rigveda only in the latest period (although he is mentioned once, in special circumstances, in VII.33.9, 12; and once, alongwith other ancient BhRgus like AtharvaNa and USanA KAvya, in I.83.5), when the BhRgus gain in importance:

I. 38.5; 116.2; 163.2;  
X. 10.7, 9, 13; 12.6; 13.4; 14.1-5, 7-15; 15.8;  
16.9; 17.1; 21.5; 51.3; 53.2; 58.1;  
60.10; 64.3;  
92.11; 97.16; 123.6; 135.1, 7;  
154.4, 5; 165.4.

**d.** The Avestan hero associated with Soma and medicines, Thritha (Vedic Trita) becomes a popular mythical figure in the Rigveda in the Late Period. After his first appearance in the Rigveda in MaNDala II (II.11.19, 20; 31.6; 34.10, 14), he now appears frequently in the Late MaNDalas and upa-maNDalas:

I. 52.5; 105.9, 17; 163.2, 3; 187.1;  
V. 9.5; 41.4, 10; 54.2; 86.1;  
VIII. 7.24; 12.16; 41.6; 47.13-16;  
52.1;  
IX. 32.2; 34.4; 37.4; 38.2; 86.20;  
95.4; 102.2, 3;  
X. 8.7, 8; 46.3, 6; 48.2; 64.3; 99.6;  
115.4.

ThraEtaona (Faridun of later texts) is an earlier Avestan hero associated with the Indo-Iranian conflicts, and hence he has already been demonised in the Rigveda (I.158.5). Hence, features associated with him in the Avesta are transferred to Trita in the Rigveda: ThraEtaona's father Athwya is transformed in the Rigveda into Aptya, a patronymic of Trita (I.105.9; V.41.1; VIII.12.16; 15.17; 47.13, 14; X.8.8; 120.6).

ThraEtaona, in Avestan mythology, is mainly associated with the killing of the three-headed dragon, Azhi Dahaka; just as Indra, in Rigvedic mythology, is mainly associated with the killing of the dragon Ahi VRtra (hence his common epithet VRtrahan, found in every single MaNDala of the Rigveda, which also becomes VRtraghna in the khila-sUktas and later SaMhitAs).

The Late Period sees a partial exchange of dragon-killers between the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians: while ThraEtaona is demonised in the Rigveda, his dragon-killing feat is transferred to Trita (X.87.8, where Trita kills the three-headed dragon TriSiras), who consequently also appears as a partner of Indra in the killing of VRtra (VIII.7.24) or even as a killer of VRtra in his own right (I.187.1).

Likewise, while Indra is demonised in the Avesta, his epithet is adopted in the late Avestan texts as the name of a special God of Victory, Verethraghna (Yt.1.27; 2.5, 10; 10.70, 80; 14 whole; Vd.19.125; and in the Vispered and Khordah Avesta. Verethraghna is the BehrAm of later texts).

Scholars examining the Rigveda and the Avesta cannot help noticing that the late parts of the Rigveda represent a period of increasing contact and mutual influence between the Vedic Aryans and Iranians.

Michael Witzel, as we have already seen, clearly sees MaNDala VIII as representing a period when the Vedic Aryans seem to be entering into a *new* environment, the environment of the northwest: “Book 8 concentrates on the whole of the west: cf. camels, mathra horses, wool, sheep. It frequently mentions the Sindhu, but also the Seven Streams, mountains and snow.”<sup>94</sup> This MaNDala “lists numerous tribes that are unknown to other books”.<sup>95</sup> In this MaNDala, “camels appear (8.5.37-39) together with the Iranian name KaSu, ‘small’ (Hoffman 1975) or with the suspicious name Tirindra and the ParSu (8.6.46). The combination of camels (8.46.21, 31), Mathra horses (8.46.23) and wool, sheep and dogs (8.56.3) is also suggestive: the borderlands (including GandhAra) have been famous for wool and sheep, while dogs are treated well in Zoroastrian Iran but not in South Asia.”<sup>96</sup>

In fact, the period of MaNDala VIII is the period of composition of the major part of the Avesta. That is, to the original GAthAs and the core of the early YaSts, which belong to the Middle Period of the Rigveda, were now added the rest of the Yasna (other than the GAthAs) and YaSts (late YaSts, as well as post-Zoroastrian additions to the early YaSts), and the VendidAd,

A very eminent Zoroastrian scholar, J.C. Tavadia, had noted as long ago as in 1950: “Not only in grammatical structure and vocabulary, but also in literary form, in certain metres like the TriSTubh and in a way GAyatrI, there is resemblance between the Avesta and the Rgveda. The fact is usually mentioned in good manuals. But there is a peculiarity about these points of resemblance which is not so commonly known: *It is the eighth MaNDala which bears the most striking similarity*

*to the Avesta*. There and there only (and of course partly in the related first MaNDala) do some common words like *uSTra* and the strophic structure called *pragAtha* occur. ... Further research in this direction is sure to be fruitful.”<sup>97</sup>

That this correlation between the Avesta as a whole and MaNDala VIII, is really a correlation between the period of the Avesta proper and the period of the *later* parts of the Rigveda, is not acknowledged by either Witzel or Tavadia, since neither of them admits that MaNDala VIII is chronologically a *late* part of the Rigveda.

But the following conclusions of another eminent, and recent, scholar may be noted. According to Helmut Humbach: “It must be emphasised that the process of polarisation of relations between the Ahuras and the DaEvas is already complete in the GATHAs, whereas, in the Rigveda, the reverse process of polarisation between the Devas and the Asuras, which does not begin before the later parts of the Rigveda, develops as it were before our very eyes, and is not completed until the later Vedic period. Thus, it is not at all likely that the origins of the polarisation are to be sought in the prehistorical, the Proto-Aryan period. More likely, ZarathuStra’s reform was the result of interdependent developments, when Irano-Indian contacts still persisted at the dawn of history. With their Ahura-DaEva ideology, the Mazdayasnians, guided by their prophet, deliberately dissociated themselves from the Deva-Asura concept which was being developed, or had been developed, in India, and probably also in the adjacent Iranian-speaking countries... All this suggests a synchrony between the later Vedic period and ZarathuStra’s reform in Iran.”<sup>98</sup>

Thus, it is clear that the bulk of the Avesta is contemporaneous with the Late Period of the Rigveda, while the earliest part of the Avesta (consisting of the GATHAs and the core of the early YaSts) is contemporaneous with the Middle Period.



In sum, the cold, hard facts lead inescapably to only one logical conclusion about the location of the Indo-Iranian homeland:

1. The concept of a common Indo-Iranian habitat is based *solely* on the fact of a common Indo-Iranian culture reconstructed from linguistic, religious and cultural elements common to the Rigveda and the Avesta.

2. The period of development of this common Indo-Iranian culture is *not*, as Humbach aptly puts it, “the prehistorical, the Proto-Aryan period”, but “the later Vedic period”.

3. The location of this common Indo-Iranian habitat must therefore be traced from the records of “the later Vedic period” available jointly within the hymns of the Rigveda and the Avesta.

4. The records of “the later Vedic period” show that the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians were located in an area stretching from (and including) Uttar Pradesh in the east to (and including) southern and eastern Afghanistan in the west.

*This is the area which represents the common “Indo-Iranian homeland”.*

The scholars, however, are not accustomed to deriving conclusions from facts; it is their practice to arrive at conclusions beforehand (the conclusion, in this particular case, being based on an extraneous, and highly debatable, linguistic theory about the location of the original Indo-European homeland), and to twist or ignore all facts which fail to lead to this predetermined conclusion.

The three scholars in question, Witzel, Tavadia and Humbach, to different degrees and in different ways, note the facts as they are; but they do not take these facts to their logical conclusion about Indo-Iranian geography and prehistory: *all three scholars firmly believe in the theory that, in*

*“the prehistorical, the Proto-Aryan period”, the Indo-Iranians were settled in Central Asia whence they migrated to Iran and India.*

This can lead to a ludicrously topsy-turvy perspective, as will be evident, for example, from the following observations by Humbach on the subject:

Humbach clearly states that the facts suggest a synchrony between “the later Vedic period and ZarathuStra’s reform”, and that the GAthAs of ZarathuStra were therefore composed at a time when “the Deva-Asura concept *was being developed, or had been developed, in India*”.<sup>99</sup> In short, Humbach concludes that the GAthAs, *one of the oldest parts of the Avesta*, were composed at a point of time *when the Indoaryans were settled, and had already been settled for some time, in India.*

But, when identifying the Hapta HAndu in the list of sixteen Iranian lands named in the VendidAd list, he chooses to identify it with the “upper course of the Oxus River”.<sup>100</sup> Now there is no earthly reason why Hapta H?ndu should be identified with the upper course of the Oxus rather than with the plains of the Punjab (as very correctly done, for example, by Darmetester, Gnoli, etc.), and this identification was mooted by scholars who sought to identify the sixteen lands on the basis of the theory that the lands named in the list refer to a period when the (Indo-)Iranians *were still in Central Asia*, and the Indoaryans had not yet migrated southeastwards as far as the Punjab. In short, Humbach concludes that the VendidAd, *a late part of the Avesta*, was composed at a point of time *when the Indoaryans had not yet reached the Punjab in their journey into India.*

The incongruity between the two conclusions is striking.

Clearly, the theory, that the Indo-Iranians were in

Central Asia in any “prehistorical, Proto-Aryan period”, is not conducive to any logical understanding of the Rigveda or the Avesta, or of Indo-Iranian history.

The facts show a different picture from the one assumed by these scholars:

1. The development of the common Indo-Iranian culture, reconstructed from linguistic, religious, and cultural elements in the Rigveda and the Avesta, took place in the “later Vedic period”.

2. Therefore, details about the geographical situation in “the prehistorical, the Proto-Aryan period” must be looked for in the “earlier Vedic period”, i.e. in the hymns of the Early Period of the Rigveda.

3. The evidence of the hymns of the Early Period of the Rigveda, as we have already seen, locates the Indo-Iranians further east: i.e. in the area from (and including) Uttar Pradesh in the east to (and including) the Punjab in the west.

It is not, therefore, Central Asia, but India, which is the original area from which the Iranians migrated to their later historical habitats.

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>GPW, p.4.

<sup>2</sup>ibid., p.5.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., pp.114-15.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., p.120.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p.127.

<sup>6</sup>ibid., pp.122-23.

[7](#)ibid., p.123.

[8](#)ibid., p.126.

[9](#)ibid, p.146.

[10](#)ibid.

[11](#)ibid.,p.125.

[12](#)IASA, p.116.

[13](#)ibid., p.110.

[14](#)ibid., p.155.

[15](#)ibid., p.156.

[16](#)ibid., p.157-58.

[17](#)ibid., p.163.

[18](#)ibid., p.164.

[19](#)ibid.

[20](#)ibid.

[21](#)ibid., p.165.

[22](#)ibid., p.164.

[23](#)ibid., p.160.

[24](#)ibid., pp.166-67.

[25](#)ibid., p.98.

[26](#)ibid., p.335, fn.82.

[27](#)ibid., p.324.

<sup>28</sup>ibid., p.331.

<sup>29</sup>ibid., p.333, fn.75

<sup>30</sup>ZTH, p.45.

<sup>31</sup>ibid.

<sup>32</sup>ibid., p.59.

<sup>33</sup>ibid., p.161.

<sup>34</sup>ibid., pp.25-26.

<sup>35</sup>ibid., pp.63-64.

<sup>36</sup>ibid., p.47.

<sup>37</sup>ibid., p.63.

<sup>38</sup>ibid., p.53.

<sup>39</sup>ibid., p.110.

<sup>40</sup>ibid., pp.84-85.

<sup>41</sup>ibid., p.110.

<sup>42</sup>ibid., p.89.

<sup>43</sup>ibid., p.110.

<sup>44</sup>ibid., p.88.

<sup>45</sup>ibid..

<sup>46</sup>ibid., p.102.

<sup>47</sup>ibid., p.105.

<sup>48</sup>ibid.

<sup>49</sup>ibid.

<sup>50</sup>ibid., pp.107-08.

<sup>51</sup>ibid., p.111.

<sup>52</sup>ibid., p.240.

<sup>53</sup>ibid., p.141.

<sup>54</sup>ibid., p.17.

<sup>55</sup>ibid.

<sup>56</sup>ibid.

<sup>57</sup>ibid., p.227.

<sup>58</sup>ibid., p.88.

<sup>59</sup>ibid., p.87.

<sup>60</sup>ibid., p.88.

<sup>61</sup>ibid., p.7.

<sup>62</sup>ibid., p.131.

<sup>63</sup>ibid., p.133.

<sup>64</sup>ibid., p.131.

<sup>65</sup>ibid., p.132.

<sup>66</sup>ibid., pp.134-35.

<sup>67</sup>ibid., p.14.

<sup>68</sup>ibid., p.135.

<sup>69</sup>ibid., p.153.

<sup>70</sup>ibid.

<sup>71</sup>ibid., pp.153-54.

<sup>72</sup>ibid., p.47.

<sup>73</sup>ibid, p.50.

<sup>74</sup>ibid, p.69.

<sup>75</sup>ibid, p.47.

<sup>76</sup>ibid, p.56.

<sup>77</sup>AIHT, p.264.

<sup>78</sup>IASA, pp.338-39.

<sup>79</sup>IASA, p.110.

<sup>80</sup>ibid., p.322.

<sup>81</sup>GORI, p.26.

<sup>82</sup>SBE, p.287.

<sup>83</sup>CHI, p.433.

<sup>84</sup>ZCR, pp.11-12.

<sup>85</sup>ZCR, pp.12, 16.

<sup>86</sup>ZCR, p.12-13.

<sup>87</sup>ibid, p.13.

<sup>88</sup>ibid, p.16.



<sup>89</sup>ZTH, p.134.

<sup>90</sup>ibid., pp.74-75.

<sup>91</sup>CHI, P.433.

<sup>92</sup>ibid.

<sup>93</sup>IASA, p.171.

<sup>94</sup>IASA, p.317.

<sup>95</sup>ibid, p.319.

<sup>96</sup>ibid., p.322.

<sup>97</sup>IIS, pp.3-4.

<sup>98</sup>GZ, p.23.

<sup>99</sup>ibid.

<sup>100</sup>ibid, p.34.

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## Chapter 7

### The Indo-European Homeland

The evidence of the oldest literary records of the Indo-European family of languages, the Rigveda and the Avesta, as we have seen, clearly and unambiguously depicts a movement of the “Indo-Iranians” from the east to the west and northwest.

And Central Asia and Afghanistan, which, according to the standard theory, is the route by which the Indoaryans migrated into India, turns out to be the route by which the Iranians migrated westwards and northwards.

This deals a body-blow to a very vital aspect of the theory which places the original Indo-European homeland to the northwest of Central Asia (ie. in and around South Russia), and it lends strong support to the theory that the Indo-European family of languages originated in India.

If, therefore, the scholars,, by and large, remain strongly resistant to the Indian homeland theory, it is not because the facts of the case rule out this theory, but because a defence of the standard theory has become a dogma with the scholars, and any scholar, particularly an Indian one, who pursues the Indian homeland theory is automatically held suspect as a fundamentalist or a chauvinistic nationalist.

So much so that any theoretical scenario which is loaded against the Indian homeland theory gains respectability; and some scholars go to the extent of deliberately projecting a blatantly false picture of the whole situation, calculated to place the Indian geographical area as far out of the geographical ambits of early Indo-European history as possible.

An example of this is the clearly fraudulent case presented by a Western scholar, Victor H. Mair, in

a compilation, edited by himself, of the papers presented at the International Conference on the Bronze Age and Iron Age Peoples that was held at the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Anthropology and Archaeology (April 19-21, 1996).

Mair prefaces his presentation with a sharp diatribe against a wide range of what he calls “extremists, chauvinists, and other types of deranged - and possibly dangerous - persons (eg. those who locate the Indo-European homeland in such highly improbable, if not utterly impossible, places as the Arctic, along the Indus Valley, in the Tarim Basin, in China; nationalists and racists of various stripes; kooks and crazies who attribute the rise of Indo-Europeans to extraterritorial visitations, etc.)”.<sup>1</sup>

At the same time, he places himself in a beatific light by announcing that he himself is impelled to carry out “the search for the Indo-Europeans and their homeland”, and to “pursue it with enthusiasm”, because: “I perceive such an inquiry to be (1) intrinsically compelling. (2) innately worthwhile. (3) historically significant. (4) humanistically important. (5) devoid of political content. (6) scientifically solvable. (7) intellectually satisfying”, and dismisses scholars of a lesser breed with the pompous announcement: “If other people want to distort or pervert the search for their own purposes, that is their problem.”<sup>2</sup>

Mair proceeds to present his thesis, in a quasi-humorous vein, likening the spreading Indo-European family to a spreading amoeba.

And he presents his final conclusions, about the schedule of migrations and expansions of the Indo-European family, in the form of a series of nine maps, supposed to represent the situations in 4200 BC, 3700 BC, 3200 BC, 3000 BC, 2500 BC, 2000 BC, 1500 BC, 1000 BC, and 100 BC respectively.

We are concerned here only with his depiction of

the Indian geographical area in these maps: incredible as it will seem to any scholar who is even generally acquainted with the facts of the Indo-Iranian case, *Mair's map for 1500 BC*<sup>3</sup> shows the undifferentiated Indo-Iranians still located to the north and west of the Caspian Sea!

Which western academic scholar in his right senses, and with any concern for his academic credentials, will accept that this depiction of the Indo-Iranian case in 1500 BC is even reasonably honest, or deny that it represents a most blatantly mischievous distortion of the facts?

It may be noted that Mair, pompously and sweepingly, claims that his maps “are intended isochronously to take into account the following types of evidence: linguistic, historical, archaeological, technological, cultural, ethnological, geographical, climatological, chronological and genetic-morpho-metric - roughly in the order of precision with which I am able to control the data, from greatest to least. I have also endeavoured to take into consideration types of data which subsume or bridge two or more basic categories of evidence (eg. glotto-chronology, dendrochronology, and linguistic paleontology).”<sup>4</sup>

An examination of the maps, even as a whole (and not just in respect of the Indo-Iranians) shows that Mair would be hard put to explain how his arbitrarily, and even whimsically, drawn-out schedule of migrations and expansions fulfils even *any one* of the above academic criteria, let alone *all* of them.

Mair claims to be interested, for a variety of noble reasons, in “the search for the Indo-Europeans and their homeland”; but it is clear that a “search” of any kind is as far from his intentions as possible, since his answer (South Russia) is already determined (although he does let out that his greater personal preference would have been to locate the core of the homeland “in Southern Germany, northern Austria, and the western part

of what is now the Czech Republic”<sup>5</sup>, ie. in Hitler’s home-grounds), and all those who advocate any other solution automatically fall, in his opinion, in the same category as “kooks and crazies who attribute the rise of Indo-Europeans to extra-territorial visitations”!

Mair’s presentation can certainly be classified, in his own words, as among the presentations of “extremists, chauvinists, and other types of deranged - and possibly dangerous - persons”: doubly dangerous since scholars like him function on the strength of a monopolistic academic world which grants respectability to their most blatantly fraudulent efforts’ while shunning or condemning genuinely factual studies, among which we definitely count our own.

In such a situation, where any scholar, Indian or Western, who finds that the facts indicate an Indian homeland, has to struggle against a strong tide of prejudice in Western academic circles (not to mention the deeply entrenched leftist lobby in Indian academic circles), it is clear that establishing the truth about the original homeland is, practically speaking, an uphill task.

And the fundamental obstacle is the widely held belief that the science of LINGUISTICS has proved conclusively that the Indo-European homeland is located in and around South Russia, and, equally conclusively, that this homeland could not have been located in India: this *belief*, as we shall see in our Appendix One (Chapter 8) on misinterpretations of Rigvedic history, is so deeply entrenched in the psyche of all scholars, whatever their views, who examine the problem, that it appears to overshadow and nullify, in their perceptions, the effect of all other *evidence* to the contrary.

We will, therefore, primarily be examining, in this chapter, the linguistic evidence in respect of the location of the Indo-European homeland, and it will be clear that this evidence, wherever it indicates any geographical location, invariably

points towards India.

We will examine the case for the Indo-European homeland as follows:

- I. Archaeology and Linguistics.
- II. The Literary Evidence.
- III. The Evidence of Linguistic Isoglosses.
- IV. Inter-Familial Linguistics.
- V. Linguistic Substrata in Indoaryan.
- VI. Protolinguistic Studies.

## I ARCHAEOLOGY AND LINGUISTICS

The archaeological evidence has always been against the theory that there was an Aryan influx into India in the second millennium B.C., an influx so significant that it was able to *completely* transform the linguistic character and ethos of almost the entire country.

Even D.D. Kosambi, for example, admitted the fact even as he waxed eloquent on the Aryan invasion: "Archaeologically, this period is still blank... There is no special Aryan pottery... no particular Aryan or Indo-Aryan technique is to be identified by the archaeologists even at the close of the second millennium."<sup>6</sup>

This is in sharp contrast to the situation so far as Europe is concerned. Shan M.M. Winn, for example, points out that "a 'common European horizon' developed after 3000 BC, at about the time of the Pit Grave expansion (Kurgan Wave #3). Because of the particular style of ceramics produced, it is usually known as the Corded Ware horizon. However, some authors call it the Battle Axe culture because stone battle axes were frequently placed in burials... The expansion of the Corded Ware cultural variants throughout central, eastern and northern Europe has been construed as the most likely scenario for the origin and dispersal of PIE (Proto-Indo-European)

language and culture.”<sup>7</sup>

After a detailed description of this archaeological phenomenon, Winn notes: “Only one conclusion seems reasonably certain: the territory inhabited by the Corded Ware/ Battle Axe culture, after its expansions, geographically qualifies it to be the ancestor of the Western or European language branches: Germanic, Baltic, Slavic, Celtic and Italic.”<sup>8</sup>

However, this archaeological phenomenon “does not... explain the presence of Indo-Europeans in Asia, Greece and Anatolia”.<sup>9</sup>

This Corded Ware/Battle Axe culture represented the third wave of “the Pit Grave expansion (Kurgan Wave #3)” in the *westward* direction. Winn suggests that “an eastern expansion from the Caspian Steppe also occurred at this time”,<sup>10</sup> and tries to connect up the Tocharians with “the culture... known as Afanasievo... located in the Altai region... across the expanse of the Central Asian steppe to its ragged eastern boundary”,<sup>11</sup> and the Indo-Iranians with the Andronovo culture which “covers much of the Central Asian steppe east of the Ural river and Caspian Sea”.<sup>12</sup>

However, he admits that these identifications are *purely hypothetical*, and that, even in hypothesis, and assuming the Andronovo culture to be Indo-Iranian, “it is still a hazardous task to connect the archaeological evidence... in the Central Asian steppe with the appearance of Iranian (Aryan) and Indic (Indo-Aryan) tribes in Iran, Afghanistan and India”.<sup>13</sup>

Consequently, he describes Indo-Iranian, archaeologically, as an “Indo-European branch which all the homeland theories we have reviewed so far have failed to explain”.<sup>14</sup>

The archaeological evidence for any Indo-

European (Aryan) influx into India is missing in every respect:

- a.** There is no archaeological link with any other Indo European culture outside India.
  
- b.** There is no archaeological trail leading from outside into India.
  
- c.** There is no internal evidence in respect of any notable change in the anthropological or material-cultural situation in the northwestern parts of India, in the second millennium BC, which could be attributed to an Aryan influx.

In fact, the situation is so clear that a majority of archaeologists, both in India and in the West, today summarily reject the idea that there was any Aryan influx into India from outside in the second millennium BC. They, in fact, go so far as to reject even the very validity of Linguistics itself as an academic discipline which could be qualified to have any say in the matter.

This has created quite a piquant situation in Western academic circles. In his preface to a published volume (1995) of the papers presented during a conference on Archaeological and Linguistic Approaches to Ethnicity in Ancient South Asia, held in Toronto on 4th-6th October 1991, George Erdosy notes that the Aryan invasion theory "has recently been challenged by archaeologists who - along with linguists - are best qualified to evaluate its validity. Lack of convincing material (or osteological) traces left behind by the incoming Indo-Aryan speakers, the possibility of explaining cultural change without reference to external factors and - above all - an altered world view (Shaffer 1984) have all contributed to a questioning of assumptions long taken for granted and buttressed by the accumulated weight of two centuries of scholarship."<sup>15</sup>



However, Erdosy points out, the perspective offered by archaeology, “that of material culture... is in direct conflict with the findings of the other discipline claiming a key to the solution of the ‘Aryan problem’, linguistics... In the face of such conflict, it may be difficult to find avenues of cooperation, yet a satisfactory resolution of the puzzles set by the distribution of Indo-Aryan languages in South Asia demands it. The present volume aims for the first step in that direction, by removing mutual misconceptions regarding the subject matter, aims, methods and limitations of linguistics and archaeology which have greatly contributed to the confusion currently surrounding ‘Aryans’. Given the debates raging on these issues within as well as between the two disciplines, a guide to the range of contemporary opinion should be particularly valuable for anyone wishing to bridge the *disciplinary divide*... indeed, the volume neatly encapsulates the relationship between two disciplines intimately involved in a study of the past.”<sup>16</sup>

The archaeologists and anthropologists whose papers feature in the volume include Jim G. Shaffer and Diane A. Lichtenstein, who “stress the indigenous development of South Asian civilization from the Neolithic onwards, and downplay the role of language in the formation of (pre-modern) ethnic identities”;<sup>17</sup> J. Mark Kenoyer, who “stresses that the cultural history of South Asia in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium B.C. may be explained without reference to external agents”,<sup>18</sup> and Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, who concludes “that while discontinuities in physical types have certainly been found in South Asia, they are dated to the 5<sup>th</sup>/4<sup>th</sup>, and to the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, respectively, too early and too late to have any connection with ‘Aryans’.”<sup>19</sup>

Erdosy and Michael Witzel (a co-editor of the volume, and a scholar whose writings we will be examining in detail in Appendix Two: Chapter 9) seek to counter the archaeologists in two ways:

1. By dismissing the negative archaeological evidence.
2. By stressing the alleged linguistic evidence.

We will examine their efforts under the following heads:

- A. The Archaeological Evidence.
- B. The Linguistic Evidence.

### **I.A. The Archaeological Evidence**

According to Erdosy, “archaeology offers only one perspective, that of material culture”.<sup>20</sup> This limit renders the archaeologists unable to understand the basis of the linguistic theory.

Erdosy stresses that the theory of the spread of the Indo-European languages cannot be dispensed with: “The membership of Indic dialects in the Indo-European family, based not only on lexical but structural criteria, their particularly close relationship to the Iranian branch, and continuing satisfaction with a family-tree model to express these links (Baldi, 1988) all support migrations as the principal (albeit not sole) means of language dispersal.”<sup>21</sup>

But, according to him, the archaeologists fail to understand the nature of these migrations: they think that these migrations are alleged to be mass migrations which led to cataclysmic invasions, all of which would indeed have left behind archaeological evidence.

But, these “images of mass migration... (which) originated with 19<sup>th</sup> century linguists... exist today principally in the minds of archaeologists and polemicists”.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, “the concept of cataclysmic invasions, for which there is little evidence indeed... are principally held by archaeologists nowadays, not by linguists who postulate more gradual and complex phenomena”.<sup>23</sup>

It is this failure to realize that the “outmoded models of language change”<sup>24</sup> of the nineteenth century linguists have now been replaced by more refined linguistic models, that leads to “overreactions to them (by denying the validity of any migrationist model) by both archaeologists and Hindu fundamentalists”.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, Erdosy, at one stroke, attributes the opposition of the archaeologists to the linguistic theory to their ignorance of linguistics and clubs them together with “polemicists” and “Hindu fundamentalists” in one broad category of ignoramuses.

But, it is not as easy to dismiss the views of the archaeologists as it is to dismiss those of “Hindu fundamentalists”.

It must be noted that the opposition of the archaeologists is to the specific aspect of the Aryan theory which states that there was an Aryan influx into India in the second millennium B. C., and not to the general theory that the Indo-European language family (whose existence they do not dispute) must have spread through migrations of its speakers: obviously the languages could not have spread through the air like pollen seeds.

But Erdosy puts it as if the archaeologists are irrationally opposed to the very idea of “the membership of the Indic dialects in the Indo-European family” or to the “family-tree model”. It is as if a scientist were to reject the prescriptions of a quack doctor, and the quack doctor were to retaliate by accusing the scientist of rejecting the very science of medicine itself.

The linguistic answer to the total lack of archaeological evidence of any Aryan influx into India in the second millennium BC, is to “postulate more gradual and complex phenomena”.

But, apart from the fact that this sounds very sophisticated and scientific, not to mention superior and patronising, does the phrase really mean anything? What “gradual and complex phenomena” could account for the linguistic transformation of an entire subcontinent which leaves no perceptible archaeological traces behind?

And it is not just linguistic transformation. Witzel admits that while “there *have* been cases where dominant languages succeeded in replacing (almost) all the local languages... what is relatively rare is the adoption of *complete* systems of belief, mythology and language... yet in South Asia we are dealing precisely with the absorption of not only new languages but also an entire complex of material and spiritual culture ranging from chariotry and horsemanship to Indo-Iranian poetry whose complicated conventions are still used in the Rgveda. The old Indo-Iranian religion... was also adopted, alongwith the Indo-European systems of ancestor worship.”<sup>26</sup>

In keeping with a pattern which will be familiar to anyone studying the writings of supporters of the Aryan invasion theory, such unnatural or anomalous phenomena do not make these scholars rethink their theory; it only makes them try to think of ways to maintain their theory in the face of inconvenient facts.

Witzel tries to suggest an explanation which he hopes will suffice to explain away the lack of archaeological-anthropological evidence: according to him, the original Indic racial stock had settled down in Central Asia, and had “even before their immigration into South Asia, completely ‘Aryanised’ a local population, for example, in the highly developed Turkmenian-Bactrian area... involving both their language and culture. This is only imaginable as the result of the complete acculturation of both groups... the local Bactrians would have appeared as a typically ‘Vedic’ people with a Vedic civilization.”<sup>27</sup>

These new “Vedic people” (ie. people belonging to the racial stock of the original non-Aryan inhabitants of Bactria, but with language, mythology and culture of the Indic people who had earlier migrated into Bactria from further outside) “later on... moved into the Panjab, assimilating (‘Aryanising’) the local population”.<sup>28</sup>

“By the time they reached the Subcontinent... they may have had the typical somatic characteristics of the ancient population of the Turanian/Iranian/Afghan areas, and may not have looked very different from the modern inhabitants of the Indo-Iranian Boderlands. Their genetic impact would have been negligible, and... would have been ‘lost’ in a few generations in the much larger gene pool of the Indus people. One should not, therefore, be surprised that ‘Aryan bones’ have not been found so far (Kennedy, this volume; Hemphill, Lukas and Kennedy, 1991).”<sup>29</sup>

What Witzel, like other scholars who suggest similar scenarios, is doing, is suggesting that the Aryans who migrated into India were *not* the original Indoaryans, but groups of people native to the areas further northwest, who were “completely Aryanised” in “language and culture”, and further that they were so few in number that “their genetic impact would have been negligible” and “would have been ‘lost’ in a few generations in the much larger gene pool of the Indus people”.

The scholars thus try to explain away the lack of archaeological-anthropological evidence by postulating a fantastic scenario which is totally incompatible with the one piece of solid evidence which is available to us today: THE RIGVEDA.

The Rigveda represents a language, religion and culture which is the most archaic in the Indo-European world. As Griffith puts it in his preface to his translation: “As in its original language, we see the roots and shoots of the languages of Greek and Latin, of Celt, Teuton and Slavonian, so the deities, the myths and the religious beliefs and practices of the Veda throw a flood of light

upon the religions of all European countries before the introduction of Christianity. As the science of comparative philology could hardly have existed without the study of Sanskrit, so the comparative history of the religions of the world would have been impossible without the study of the Veda.”

Vedic mythology represents the most primitive form of Indo-European mythology: as Macdonell puts it, the Vedic Gods “are nearer to the physical phenomena which they represent, than the gods of any other Indo-European mythology”.<sup>30</sup> Vedic mythology not only bears links with every single other Indo-European mythology, but is often the only link between any two of them (as we will see in Appendix Three, Chapter 10)

Does it appear that the Rigveda could be the end-product of a long process of migration in which the Indoaryans not only lost contact with the other Indo-European branches countless generations earlier in extremely distant regions, and then migrated over long periods through different areas, and finally settled down for so long a period in the area of composition of the Rigveda that even Witzel admits that “in contrast to its close relatives in Iran (Avestan, Old Persian), Vedic Sanskrit is already an *Indian* language”;<sup>31</sup> but in which the people who composed the Rigveda were in fact not the original Indoaryans at all, but a completely new set of people who bore no racial connections at all with the original Indoaryans, and were merely the last in a long line of racial groups in a “gradual and complex” process in which the Vedic language and culture was passed from one completely different racial group to another completely different racial group like a baton in an “Aryanising” relay race from South Russia to India?

Clearly, the explanation offered by Witzel is totally inadequate, and even untenable, as an argument against the negative archaeological evidence.

## **I.B. The Linguistic Evidence**

Erdosy speaks of the “disciplinary divide” between linguistics and archaeology.

And it is Michael Witzel whom Erdosy pits against the archaeologists whose papers are included in the volume: “Placed against Witzel’s contribution, the paper by J.Shaffer and D. Lichtenstein will illustrate the gulf still separating archaeology and linguistics.”<sup>32</sup>

We will not assume that Witzel’s papers in this particular volume represent the sum total of the linguistic evidence, but, since the volume *does* pit him against the archaeologists, let us examine the linguistic evidence stressed by him.

According to Erdosy, “M. Witzel begins by stressing the quality of linguistic (and historical) data obtainable from the Rgveda, along with the potential of a study of linguistic stratification, contact and convergence. Next, the evidence of place-names, above all hydronymy, is scrutinised, followed by an evaluation of some of the most frequently invoked models of language change in light of this analysis.”<sup>33</sup>

We have already examined Witzel’s “models of language change” by which he seeks to explain away the lack of archaeological evidence. We will now examine “the evidence of place-names, above all hydronymy”, on the basis of which Witzel apparently contests the claims of the archaeologists and proves the Aryan invasion.

Witzel does not have much to say about place-names. He points out that most of the place-names in England (all names ending in -don, -chester, -ton, -ham, -ey, -wick, etc., like London, Winchester, Uppington, Downham, Westrey, Lerwick, etc.) and in America (like Massachussetts, Wachussetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Chicago, etc) are remnants of *older* languages which were spoken in these areas.



But, far from finding similar evidence in respect of India, Witzel is compelled to admit: “In South Asia, relatively few pre-Indo-Aryan place-names survive in the North; however, many more in central and southern India. Indo-Aryan place-names are generally not very old, since the towns themselves are relatively late.”<sup>34</sup>

Witzel clearly evades the issue: he refers to “relatively few pre-Indo-Aryan place names” in the North, but judiciously refrains from going into *any* specifics about these names, or the number of such names.

He insinuates that there are “many more” pre-Indoaryan place-names in Central and South India, but this is clearly a misleading statement: by Central India, he obviously means the Austric-language speaking areas, and by South India, he definitely means the Dravidian-language speaking areas, and perhaps other areas close to these. So, if these areas have Austric or Dravidian place-names respectively, does it prove anything?

And, finally, he suggests that the paucity (or rather absence) of any “pre-Indo-Aryan” place-names in the North is because the towns concerned “are relatively late” (ie. came into being after the Aryan influx). This excuse is rather strange: the Indus people, alleged to be “pre-Indo-Aryans” *did* have towns and cities, but no alleged earlier place-names have survived, while the American Indians (in the U.S.A.) did not have large towns and cities, but their place-names have survived in large numbers.

Witzel goes into more detail in respect of the hydronomes (ie. names of rivers), but the results of his investigation, and even his own comments on them, are intriguing.

According to Witzel: “A better case for the early linguistic and ethnic history of South Asia can be made by investigating the names of rivers. In Europe river-names were found to reflect the languages spoken before the influx of Indo-



European speaking populations. They are thus older than c. 4500-2500 BC (depending on the date of the spread of Indo-European languages in various parts of Europe). It would be fascinating to gain a similar vantage point for the prehistory of South Asia.”<sup>35</sup>

It is indeed fascinating. Witzel finds, to his chagrin, that “in northern India, rivers in general have early Sanskrit names from the Vedic period, and names derived from the daughter languages of Sanskrit later on.”<sup>36</sup>

Witzel tries to introduce the non-Aryan element into the picture: “River names in northern India are thus principally Sanskrit, with few indications of Dravidian, MuNDa or Tibeto-Burmese names. However, *Kosala*, with its uncharacteristic -s- after -o- may be Tibeto-Burmese (Sanskrit rules would demand KoSala or KoSala, a corrected form that is indeed adopted in the Epics).”<sup>37</sup> Likewise, “there has been an almost complete Indo-Aryanisation in northern India; this has progressed much less in southern India and in the often inaccessible parts of central India. In the northwest there are only a few exceptions, such as the names of the rivers GangA, Sutudrl and perhaps KubhA (Mayrhofer, 1956-1976).”<sup>38</sup>

Thus, there are four river-names which he tries to connect with “pre-Indo-Aryan” languages. But three of them, Kosala, Sutudrl and KubhA are clearly Indo-European names (the hairsplitting about the letter -s- in Kosala is a typical “linguistic” ploy which we will refer to later on in our examination of linguistic substrata), and only GaNgA is generally accepted as a possible non-Indo-European name.

But the answer to this is given by Witzel himself: “Rivers often carry different names, sometimes more than two, along their courses. Even in a homogenous, monolingual country, such as Japan, this can be the case as names change as soon as the river passes through a major

mountain range. In South Asia, to quote one well-known example, the *BhAgIrathI* and *AlaknandA* become the *GaNga*. This increases the probability of multiple names from various languages for one and the same river of which only one may have survived in our sources.”<sup>39</sup> (It may be noted that the Rigveda itself refers to the river as both *GaNga* and *JahnAvI*).

Witzel cannot escape the “evidence of hydronymy” as he calls it, and he tries to explain it away by suggesting that “there has been an almost complete Indo-Aryanisation”<sup>40</sup> of the river-names in northern India.

But his explanation rings hollow: “The Indo-Aryan influence, whether due to actual settlement, acculturation, or, if one prefers, the substitution of Indo-Aryan names for local ones, was powerful enough from early on to replace local names, *in spite of the well-known conservatism of river-names. This is especially surprising in the area once occupied by the Indus civilization, where one would have expected the survival of earlier names, as has been the case in Europe and the Near East.* At the least, one would expect a palimpsest, as found in New England, with the name of the State of Massachusetts next to the Charles River formerly called the Massachusetts River, and such new adaptations as Stony Brook, Muddy Creek, Red River, etc. next to the adaptations of Indian names such as the Mississippi and the Missouri. The failure to preserve old hydronomes even in the Indus Valley (with a few exceptions noted above) indicates the extent of the social and political collapse experienced by the local population.”<sup>41</sup>

Apart from anything else, does this last bit at all harmonize with the claim made elsewhere in the same volume (to explain the lack of archaeological-anthropological evidence of any invasion) that the “Indo-Aryanisation” of the northwest was a “gradual and complex” rather than a “cataclysmic” event?

Witzel starts out with the intention of pitting the linguistic evidence of place-names and river-names against the evidence of archaeology; and he ends up having to try and argue against, or explain away, this linguistic evidence, *since it only confirms the archaeological evidence.*

The long and short of the evidence of place-names and river-names is as follows:

The place-names and river-names in Europe, *to this day*, represent pre-Indo-European languages spoken in Europe *before 2500 BC*. The same is the case with Armenia: “among the numerous personal and place-names handed down to us from Armenia up to the end of the Assyrian age, there is absolutely nothing Indo-European.”<sup>42</sup> And with Greece and Anatolia: “numerous place-names... show that Indo-Europeans did not originate in Greece. The same can be said for Italy and Anatolia.”<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, northern India is the only place where place-names and river-names are Indo-European *right from the period of the Rigveda* (a text which Max Müller refers to as “the first word spoken by the Aryan man”) with no traces of any alleged earlier non-Indo-European names.

Witzel’s attitude towards this evidence is typical of the generally cavalier attitude of Western scholars towards inconvenient evidence in the matter of Indo-European origins: he notes that the evidence is negative, finds it “surprising” that it should be so, makes an offhand effort to explain it away, and then moves on.

And, later on, in his second paper included in the volume, he actually refers complacently to the whole matter: “in view of the discussion of hydronymy and place-names in the previous paper, it is also interesting that the Indo-Aryans could not, apparently, pronounce local names.”<sup>44</sup>

But, like it or not, the evidence of place-names and river-names is a *very important* factor in locating the Indo-European homeland in any particular area. And India, and India alone, passes this test with flying colours.

## II THE LITERARY EVIDENCE

We have already examined the evidence in the Rigveda which clearly proves that the original Indo-Iranian habitat was in India and that the Iranians migrated westwards and northwestwards from India.

We will now examine further literary evidence regarding the location of the original Indo-European homeland in India, under the following heads:

- A. Tribes and Priests.
- B. The Three Priestly Classes.
- C. The Anu-Druhyu Migrations.

### II.A. Tribes and Priests

The political history of the Vedic period is centred around the division of the various peoples who fall within its ambit into five major tribal groupings (not counting the TRkSis, who fall outside this tribal spectrum): the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus, Druhyus and PUrus.

As we have seen, it is *only one* of these five tribal groupings, *the PUrus*, who represent the various branches of the Vedic Aryans, and it is only the PUrus who are referred to as Aryas in the Rigveda.

This brings us to the second division of the various peoples who fall within the ambit of the Rigveda: the division into Aryas (the PUrus) and Others (the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus, Druhyus, etc.)

But there are two distinct words by which the Rigveda refers to these Others:

- a. DAsas
- b. Dasyus

It is necessary to understand the distinction between the two words.

The word DAsa is found in 54 hymns (63 verses):

- I. 32.11; 92.8; 103.3; 104.2; 158.5; 174.7;
- II. 11.2, 4; 12.4; 13.8; 20.6, 7;
- III. 12.6; 34.1;
- IV. 18.9; 28.4; 30.14, 15, 21; 32.10;
- V. 30.5, 7-9; 33.4; 34.6;
- VI. 20.6, 10; 22.10; 25.2; 26.5; 33.3; 47.21; 60.6;
- VII. 19.2; 83.1; 86.7; 99.4;
- VIII. 5.31; 24.27; 32.2; 40.6; 46.32; 51.9; 56.3, 70.10, 96.18;
- X. 22.8; 23.2; 38.3; 49.6, 7; 54.1; 62.10; 69.6; 73.7; 83.1; 86.19; 99.6; 102.3; 120.2; 138.3; 148.2.

The word Dasyu is found in 65 hymns (80 verses):

- I. 33.4, 7, 9; 36.18; 51.5, 6, 8; 53.4; 59.6; 63.4; 78.4; 100.18; 101.5; 103.3, 4; 104.5; 117.3, 21; 175.3.
- II. 11.18, 19; 12.10; 13.9; 15.9; 20.8;
- III. 29.9; 34.6, 9; 49.2
- IV. 16.9, 10, 12; 28.3, 4; 38.1;
- V. 4.6; 7.10; 14.4; 29.10; 30.9; 31.5, 7; 70.3;

VI. 14.3; 16.15; 18.3; 23.2; 24.8;  
29.6; 31.4;  
45.24;  
VII. 5.6; 6.3; 19.4;  
VIII. 6.14; 14.14; 39.8; 50.8; 70.11;  
76.11; 77.3;  
98.6;  
IX. 41.2; 47.2; 88.4; 92.5;  
X. 22.8; 47.4; 48.2; 49.3; 55.8; 73.5;  
83.3, 6;  
95.7; 99.7, 8; 105.7, 11; 170.2.

There are two distinct differences between the DAsas and Dasyus:

1. The first difference is that the term DAsa clearly refers to *other tribes* (ie. non-PUru tribes) while the term Dasyu refers to their *priestly classes* (ie. non-Vedic priestly classes).

[This is apart from the fact that both the terms are freely used to refer to the atmospheric demons as much as to the human enemies to whom they basically refer.]:

**a.** According to IV. 28.4, the Dasyus are a section among the DAsas.

**b.** The Dasyus are referred to in terms which clearly show that the causes of hostility are religious:

*ayajña* (worshipless): VII.6.3.

*ayajvan* (worshipless): I.33.4;

VIII.70.11.

*avrata* (riteless): I.51.8; 175.3;

VI.14.3; IX.41.2.

*akarmA* (riteless): X.22.8.

*adeva* (godless): VIII.70.11.

*aSraddha* (faithless): VII.6.3.

*amanyamAna* (faithless): I.33.9;

11.22.10.

*anyavrata* (followers of different rites): VIII.70.11; X.22.8.

*abrahma* (prayerless): IV.16.9.

Not one of these abuses is used even *once* in reference to DASas.

**c.** The family-wise pattern of references to them also shows that the Dasyus are priestly rivals while the DASas are secular rivals.

The Dasyus are referred to by *all* the nine priestly families of RSis, but not by the *one* non-priestly family of RSis (the Bharatas).

The DASas are referred to by the Bharatas (X.69.6; 102.3) also; but *not* by the most purely ritualistic family of RSis, the KaSyapas, *nor* in the most purely ritualistic of MaNDalas, MaNDala IX.

**d.** The Dasyus, being priestly entities, do not figure as powerful persons or persons to be feared, but the DASas, being secular entities (tribes, tribal warriors, kings, etc.) do figure as powerful persons or persons to be feared:

In three references (VIII.5.31; 46.32; 51.9), the DASas are rich patrons.

In seven references, the DASas are powerful enemies from whose fury and powerful weapons the composers ask the Gods for protection (I.104.2; VIII.24.27; X.22.8; 54.1; 69.6; 102.3) or from whom the Gods rescue the RSis (I.158.5). In three others, the word DAAsa refers to powerful atmospheric demons who hold the celestial waters in their thrall (I.32.11; V.30.5; VIII.96.18).

In contrast, Dasyus never figure as rich or powerful enemies. They are depicted as sly enemies who incite others into acts of boldness (VI.24.8).

**e.** While both DASas and Dasyus are referred to as enemies of the

Aryas, it is only the DAsas, and never the Dasyus, who are sometimes bracketed together with the Aryas.

Seven verses refer to both Aryas and DAsas as enemies (VI.22.10; 33.3; 60.6; VII.83.1; X.38.3; 69.6; 83.1; 102.3) and one verse refers to both Aryas and DAsas together in friendly terms (VIII.51.9).

This is because both, the word DAsa and the word Arya, refer to broad secular or tribal entities, while the word Dasyu refers to priestly entities: thus, one would generally say “both Christians and Muslims”, or “both padres and mullahs”, but not “both Christians and mullahs” or “both Muslims and padres”.

2. The second difference is in the degree of hostility towards the two. The Dasyus are clearly regarded with uncompromising hostility, while the hostility towards the DAsas is relatively mild and tempered:

**a.** The word Dasyu has a purely hostile connotation even when it occurs in the name or title of heroes:

Trasadasyu = “tormentor of the Dasyus”.

DasyavevRka = “a wolf towards the Dasyus”.

On the other hand, the word DAsa has an etymological meaning beyond the identity of the DAsas. When it occurs in the name or title of a hero, it has a benevolent connotation:

DivodAsa = “light of Heaven” or “slave of Heaven”.

**b.** All the 80 verses which refer to Dasyus are uncompromisingly hostile.



On the other hand, of the 63 verses which refer to DASas, 3 are friendly references (VIII.5.31; 46.32; 51.9); and in one more, the word means “slave” in a benevolent sense (VII.86.7: “slave-like, may I do service to the Bounteous”, ie. to VaruNa).

**c.** Of the 80 verses which refer to Dasyus, 76 verses talk of direct, violent, physical action against them, ie. they talk of killing, subduing or driving away the Dasyus.

On the other hand, of the 63 verses which refer to DASas, only 38 talk of such direct physical action against them.

The importance of this analysis is that it brings to the fore two basic points about the rivalries and hostilities in the Rigvedic period:

**a.** The rivalries or hostilities were on two levels: the secular level and the priestly level.

**b.** The rivalries on the priestly level were more sharp and uncompromising.

Hence, any analysis of the political history of the Rigvedic period must pay at least as much attention, if not more, to the priestly categories as to secular or tribal categories.

## **II.B. The Three Priestly Classes**

The basic tribal spectrum of the Rigveda includes the five tribal groupings of Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus, Druhyus and PUrus, and of these the PUrus *alone* represent the Vedic Aryans, while the other four represent the *Others*.

But among these four it is clear that the Yadus and TurvaSas represent more distant tribes (they are, as we have seen earlier, mostly referred to in tandem, and are also referred to as residing far away from the Vedic Aryans), while the Anus and

Druhyus fall into a closer cultural spectrum with the P<sub>U</sub>rus:

**a.** In the PurANas, the Yadus and TurvaSas are classified together as descendants of sons of DevayAnI, and the Anus, Druhyus and P<sub>U</sub>rus are classified together as descendants of sons of SarmiSThA.

**b.** The geographical descriptions of the five tribes, as described in the PurANas, place the Yadus and TurvaSas together in the more southern parts (of northern India), and the Anus, Druhyus and P<sub>U</sub>rus together in the more northern parts.

**c.** The Rigveda itself, where it refers to the five tribes together (I.108.8) refers to the Yadus and the TurvaSas in one breath, and the Druhyus, Anus and P<sub>U</sub>rus in another: *“yad IndrAgni YaduSu TurvaSeSu, yad DruhyuSu AnuSu P<sub>U</sub>ruSu sthA”*.

But, the P<sub>U</sub>rus represent the various branches of the Vedic Aryans, and the Anus represent various branches of Iranians. It is clear, therefore, that the Druhyus represent the third entity in this cultural spectrum, and that it is mainly the Druhyus who will take us beyond the Indo-Iranian arena into the wider Indo-European one: appropriately, while the P<sub>U</sub>rus are located in the heartland of North India (U.P.-Delhi-Haryana) and the Anus in the northwest (Punjab), the Druhyus are located beyond the Indian frontiers, in Afghanistan and beyond.

The priestly categories, as we have seen, play a *more* important role in the rivalries and hostilities in the Rigvedic period than the secular categories.

In the earliest period, the only two families of RSis (from among the families who figure as

composers in the Rigveda) were the ANgirasas and the BhRgus, who were the priests of the PUrus and the Anus respectively. Logically, there must have been a priestly class among the Druhyus as well, but no such priestly class figures among the composers in the Rigveda.

The explanation for this is simple: the Druhyus were a *rival* and *non-PUru* (DAsa) tribe, hence their priests do not figure as composers in the Rigveda. Of course, the BhRgus, who were also the priests of a rival and non-PUru tribe, do figure as composers in the Rigveda, but that is because, as we have seen in the previous chapter, a section of BhRgus (after Jamadagni) aligned themselves with the Vedic Aryans and joined the Vedic mainstream (where, in fact, they later superseded all the other priestly families in importance, and became the dominant priests of Vedic tradition).

But since the Druhyus figure in the Rigveda, the name of their priestly class must also be found in the text, even if not as the name of a family of composers.

Since no such name appears, it seems logical that the name *Druhyu* itself must originally have been the name of this third priestly class: since priestly categories were *more* important for the composers of the Rigveda than the secular categories, and since the tribes for whom the Druhyus functioned as priests were an amorphous lot located far out on the frontiers of India and beyond, the name of the priestly classes became a general appellation for the tribes themselves.

Therefore, there were three tribal groupings with their three priestly classes:

PUrus - Angirasas.  
Anus - BhRgus/AtharvaNas.  
Druhyus - Druhyus.

This trinary situation tallies with the Indo-

European situation: outside of the Vedic and Iranian cultures, the only other priestly class of a similar kind is found among the Celts and the related Italics. While the Italics called their priests by the general name *fIAmen* (cognate to Sanskrit *brAhmaNa*, “priest”), the priests of the Celts were called *Dru*i (genitive *Druad*, hence *Druids*).

Shan M.M. Winn notes that “India, Rome, Ireland and Iran” are the “areas in which priesthoods are known to have been significant”;<sup>45</sup> and he describes this phenomenon as follows: “Long after the dispersion of Indo-Europeans, we find a priestly class in Britain in the west, in Italy to the South, and in India and Iran to the east. Though these cultures are geographically distant from one another... they have striking similarities in priestly ritual, and even in religious terminology. For example, taboos pertaining to the Roman *fIAmen* (priest) closely correspond to the taboos observed by the Brahmans, the priests of India.”<sup>46</sup> Like the Indian priesthood, the curriculum of the “Celtic Druids ... involved years of instruction and the memorization of innumerable verses, as the sacred tradition was an oral one”.<sup>47</sup>

After noting, in some detail, the similarities in their priestly systems, rituals, and religious and legal terminology, Winn concludes that the “Celts, Romans and Indo-Iranians shared a religious heritage dating to an early Indo-European period...”<sup>48</sup>

While the three priesthoods flourished only in these areas, they must originally have been the priests of all the branches of Indo-Europeans in the early Indo-European period. While the priesthoods themselves did not survive elsewhere, the names of the three priesthoods did survive in different ways. An examination of these words helps us to classify the various Indo-European branches into three groups:

1. PURUS: Indoaryan.

In the Rigveda, hymn VII.18, the DASarAjña battle hymn, refers to the enemy confederation once in secular (tribal) terms as “Anus and Druhyus” (VII.18.14), *and once in what is clearly priestly terms as “BhRgus and Druhyus”* (VII.18.6: the only reference in the whole of the Rigveda which directly refers to the BhRgus as enemies). Once, it may be noted, it also refers to the kings of the two tribal groupings as “KavaSa and the Druhyu” (VII. 1.8.12. Thus, even here, the general appellation “Druhyu” is used instead of the specific name of the king of the Druhyus).

The words *Druh/Drugh/Drogha* occur throughout the Rigveda in the sense of “demon” or “enemy”. (The word BhRgu, for obvious reasons, does not suffer the same fate.)

## 2. ANUS: Iranian, Thraco-Phrygian, Hellenic.

**a. Iranian:** In the Avesta, in Fargard 19 of the VendidAd, it is an *Angra* (ANgiras) and a *Druj* (Druhyu) who try to tempt Zarathushtra away from the path of Ahura Mazda.

The priests of the Iranians were the *Athravans* (AtharvaNas = BhRgus), and the words *Angra* and *Druj* occur throughout the Avesta as epithets for the demon enemies of Ahura Mazda and Zarathushtra.

**b. Thraco-Phrygian:** While the Armenians, the only surviving members of this branch, have not retained any tradition about any of these priestly classes, it is significant that one of the most prominent groups, belonging to this branch, were known as the *Phryge* (BhRgu).

**c. Hellenic:** The fire-.priests of the Greeks were known as the *Phleguai* (BhRgu).

What is more, Greek mythology retains memories of both the other priestly classes, *though not in a hostile sense*, as the names of mythical beings: *Angelos* (ANgiras) or divine messengers, and *Dryad* (Druhyu) or tree-nymphs.

### 3. DRUHYUS: Baltic and Slavonic, Italic and Celtic, Germanic.

**a. *Baltic and Slavonic*:** The word *Druhyu* occurs in the languages of these two branches in exactly the opposite sense of the Vedic *Druh/Druh/Drogha* and the Iranian *Druj*. In Baltic (eg. Lithuanian *Draugas*) and Slavonic (eg. Russian *Drug*) the word means “friend”.

**b. *Italic and Celtic*:** While the Italic people did not retain the name of the priestly class (and called their priests *flAmen* = BrAhmaNa), the Celtic priests, as we have seen, were called the *Dru* (genitive *Druad*, hence *Druid*).

A significant factor, showing that the Celtic priests must have separated from the other priestly classes *before* the priestly hostilities became intense, is that the BhRgus appear to be indirectly remembered in Celtic mythology *in a friendly sense*.

The *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* notes: “whereas the Celtic Gods were specifically Celtic... the goddesses were restatements of an age-old theme”.<sup>49</sup> And two of the three Great Goddesses of the Celts were named *Anu* and *Brigit* (Anu and BhRgu?). And while all the Goddesses in general were associated with fertility cults, “Brigit, however, had additional functions as a tutelary deity of learning, culture

and skills”.<sup>50</sup>

The main activity of the *Druī*, as we have seen, was to undergo “years of instruction and the memorization of innumerable verses, as the sacred tradition was an oral one”.<sup>51</sup> The fact that the Goddess of learning was named *Brigit* would appear to suggest that the *Druī* remembered the ancient BhRgus, in a mythical sense, as the persons who originally introduced various priestly rituals among them (a debt which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is also remembered by the ANgirasas in the MaNDalas of the Early Period of the Rigveda). The BhRgus, by the joint testimony of Vedic and Celtic mythology, would thus appear to have been the oldest or most dominant and innovative of the three priestly classes.

**c. Germanic:** The word *Druhyu* occurs in the Germanic branch as well. However the meaning (although the words are cognate<sup>52</sup> to the Russian *Drug* and Lithuanian *Draugas*) is more militant: Gothic *driugan*, “do military service” and *ga-drauhts*, “soldier”; and Old Norse (Icelandic) *drOtt*, Old English *dryht* and Old German *truht*, all meaning “multitude, people, army”.

The meanings of the word *Druhyu* as it occurs in the Celtic branch (“priest”), the Germanic branch (“soldier”, etc. or “people”) and the Baltic-Slavonic branches (“friend”) clearly correspond with the word in the Rigveda and Avesta, where *Druhyu*/*Druh*/*Drugh*/*Drogha* and *Druj* represent enemy priests, soldiers or people.

Thus, to sum up:

1. *PUru* (priests ANgirasas): Indoaryan.
2. *Anu* (priests BhRgus/

AtharvaNas): Iranian, Thraco-Phrygian, Hellenic.

3. *Druhyu* (priests Druhyus): Celtic-Italic, Baltic-Slavonic, Germanic.

## II.C. The Anu-Druhyu Migrations

The evidence of the Rigveda, and Indian tradition, clearly shows that the Anus and Druhyus were Indian tribes.

If they were also the ancestors of the Indo-European branches outside India, as is indicated by the evidence of the names of their priestly classes, then it is clear that the Rigveda and Indian tradition should retain memories of the migrations of these two groups from India.

Significantly, this is exactly the case: the Rigveda and the PurANas, between them, record two great historical events which led to the emigration of precisely these two tribes from India:

1. The first historical emigration recorded is that of the Druhyus. This emigration is recorded in the PurANas, and it is so historically and geographically specific that no honest, student of the Puranic tradition has been able to ignore either this event or its implications for Indo-European history (even without arriving at the equation PUrus = Vedic Aryans):

The PurANas (VAyu 99.11-12; BrahmANDa III.74.11-12; Matsya 48.9; ViSNu IV.17.5; BhAgavata IX.23.15-16) record: *PracetasaH putra-Satam rAjAnAH sarva eva te, mleccha-rASTrAdhipAH sarve hyudlclm diSam ASritAH.*

As Pargiter points out: "Indian tradition knows nothing of any Aila or Aryan invasion of India from Afghanistan, nor of any gradual advance from thence eastwards."<sup>53</sup> On the contrary, "Indian tradition distinctly asserts that there was an Aila



outflow of the Druhyus through the northwest into the countries beyond where they founded various kingdoms.”<sup>54</sup>

P.L. Bhargava also notes this reference to the Druhyu emigration: “Five PurANas add that Pracetas’ descendants spread out into the *mleccha* countries to the north beyond India and founded kingdoms there.”<sup>55</sup>

This incident is considered to be the earliest prominent historical event in traditional memory: The Druhyus, inhabitants of the Punjab, started conquering eastwards and southwards, and their conquest brought them into conflict with all the other tribes and peoples: the Anus, PUrus, Yadus. TurvaSas, and even the IkSvAkus.

This led to a concerted attempt by the other tribes against the Druhyus. AD Pusalker records: “As a result of the successful campaigns of SaSabindu, YuvanASva, MAndhAtRI and Sibi, the Druhyus were pushed back from RAjputAna and were cornered into the northwestern portion of the Punjab. MAndhAtRI killed their king ANgAra, and the Druhyu settlements in the Punjab came to be known as GAndhAra after the name of one of ANgAra’s successors. After a time, being overpopulated, the Druhyus crossed the borders of India and founded many principalities in the Mleccha territories in the north, and probably carried the Aryan culture beyond the frontiers of India.”<sup>56</sup>

This first historical emigration represents an outflow of the *Druhyus* into the areas to the north of Afghanistan (ie. into Central Asia and beyond).

2. The second historical emigration recorded is that of the Anus and the residual *Druhyus*, which took place after the DASarAjña battle in the Early Period of the Rigveda.

As we have already seen in our chapter on the Indo-Iranian homeland, the hymns record the

names of ten tribes (from among the two main tribal groupings of Anus and Druhyus) who took part in the confederacy against SudAs.

Six of these are clearly purely Iranian peoples:

- a. PRthus or PArthavas (VII.83.1): Parthians.
- b. ParSus or ParSavas (VII.83.1): Persians.
- c. Pakthas (VII.18.7): Pakhtoons.
- d. BhalAnas (VII.18.7): Baluchis.
- e. Sivas (VII.18.7): Khivas.
- f. ViSANins (VII.18.7): Pishachas (Dards).

One more Anu tribe, not named in the Rigveda, is that of the Madras: Medes.

All these Iranian peoples are found in later historical times in the historical Iranian areas proper: Iran, Afghanistan, Central Asia.

Two of the other tribes named in the hymns are Iranian peoples who are found in later historical times, on the northwestern periphery of the Iranian areas, ie. in the Caucasus area:

- a. Simyus (VII.18.5): Sarmatians (Avesta = Sairimas).
- b. Alinas (VII.18.7): Alans.

And the name of one more tribe is clearly the name of another branch of Indo-Europeans - non-Iranians, but closely associated with the Iranians - found in later historical times in the area to the west of the Iranians, ie. in Anatolia or Turkey: the BhRgus (VII.18.6): Phrygians.

Significantly, the names of the two tribes found on the northwestern periphery of the Iranian area are also identifiable (as we have noted in our earlier book) with the names of two other branches of Indo-Europeans, found to the *west* of Anatolia or

Turkey.

- a. Simyus (VII.18.5): Sirmios (ancient Albanians).
- b. Alinas (VII.18.7): Hellenes (ancient Greeks).

The DASarAjña battle hymns record the emigration of these tribes westward from the Punjab after their defeat in the battle.

Taken together, the two emigrations provide us with a very logical and plausible scenario of the expansions and migrations of the Indo-European family of languages from an original homeland in India:

1. The two tribal groupings of Anus and Druhyus were located more or less in the Punjab and Afghanistan respectively *after* the Druhyu versus non-Druhyu wars in the earliest pre-Rigvedic period.
2. The first series of migrations, of the Druhyus, took place shortly afterwards, with major sections of Druhyus migrating northwards from Afghanistan into Central Asia in different waves. From Central Asia many Druhyu tribes, in the course of time, migrated westwards, reaching as far as western Europe.

These migrations must have included the ancestors of the following branches (which are not mentioned in the DASarAjña battle hymns):

- a. Hittite.
- b. Tocharian.
- c. Italic.
- d. Celtic.
- e. Germanic.
- f. Baltic.
- g. Slavonic.

3. The second series of migrations of Anus and Druhyus, took place much later, in the Early

Period of the Rigveda, with various tribes migrating *westwards* from the Punjab into Afghanistan, many later on migrating further westwards as far as West Asia and southwestern Europe.

These migrations must have included the ancestors of the following branches (which *are* mentioned in the DASrAjña battle hymns):

- a. Iranian.
- b. Thraco-Phrygian (Armenian).
- c. Illyrian (Albanian).
- d. Hellenic.

The whole process gives a clear picture of the ebb-and-flow of migratory movements, where remnants of migrating groups, which remain behind, get slowly absorbed into the linguistic and cultural mainstream of the other groups among whom they continue to live, retaining only, at the most, their separate names and distinctive identities:

1. The Druhyus, by and large, spread out northwards from northwestern Punjab and Afghanistan into Central Asia (and beyond) in the first Great Migration.

A few sections of them, who remained behind, retained their distinctive names and identities (as Druhyus), but were linguistically and culturally absorbed into the Anu mainstream.

2. The Anus (including the remnants of the Druhyus), by and large, spread out westwards from the Punjab into Afghanistan in the second Great Migration after the DASarAjña battle.

A few sections of them, who remained behind, retained their distinctive names and identities (as Anus), but linguistically and culturally, they were absorbed into the PUru mainstream and they remained on the northwestern periphery of the Indoaryan cultural world as the *Madrās* (remnants

of the *Madas* or *Medes*), *Kekayas*, etc.

3. Further migrations took place from among the Anus in Afghanistan, with non-Iranian Anu groups, such as the *BhRgus* (*Phryges*, Thraco-Phrygians), *Alinas* (*Hellenes*, Greeks) and *Simyus* (*Sirmios*, Illyrians or Albanians) migrating westwards from Afghanistan as far as Anatolia and southeastern Europe.

A few sections of these non-Iranian Anus, who remained behind, retained their distinctive names and identities, but, linguistically and culturally, they were absorbed into the Iranian mainstream, and remained on the northwestern periphery of the Iranian cultural world as the Armenians (who, however, retained much of their original language, though greatly influenced by Iranian), and the *Alans* (remnants of the *Hellenes* or Greeks) and *Sarmations* (remnants of the *Sirmios* or Albanians).

The literary evidence of the Rigveda, thus, provides us with a very logical and plausible scenario of the schedule and process of migrations of the various Indo-European branches from India.

At this point, we may recall the archaeological evidence in respect of Europe, already noted by us. As we have seen, the Corded Ware culture (Kurgan Wave # 3) expanded from the east into northern and central Europe, and the “territory inhabited by the Corded Ware/Battle Axe culture, after its expansions, qualifies it to be the ancestor of the Western or European language branches: Germanic, Baltic, Slavic, Celtic and Italic”.<sup>57</sup>

The origins of the Kurgan culture have been traced as far east as Turkmenistan in 4500 BC.

This fits in perfectly with our theory that the seven branches of Indo-Europeans, not mentioned in the DASarAjña hymns, migrated northwards into Central Asia during the first Great Migration. Five

of these, the five European branches mentioned above, later migrated westwards into Europe, while the other two, Hittite and Tocharian, remained behind in parts of Central Asia till the Hittites, at a much later date, migrated southwestwards into Anatolia.

These two branches, which remained behind in Central Asia, it is possible, retained contact with the Indoaryans and Iranians further south: the fact that Hittite mythology is the only mythology, outside the Indo-Iranian cultural world, which mentions Indra (as Inar) may be evidence of such contacts.

Even more significant, from the viewpoint of literary evidence, is the fact that Indian tradition remembers two important peoples located to the north of the Himalayas who are called the Uttarakurus and the Uttaramadras: "The Uttarakurus alongwith the Uttaramadras, are located beyond the HimAlayas. Though regarded as mythical in the epic and later literature, the Uttarakurus still appear as a historical people in the *Aitareya BrAhmaNa* (VII.23)."<sup>58</sup>

It is possible that the Uttarakurus and the Uttaramadras were the Tocharian (Uttarakuru = Tokhri) and Hittite branches of Indo-Europeans located to the north of the Himalayas.

The scenario we have reconstructed from the literary evidence in the Rigveda fits in perfectly with the linguistic scenario of the migration schedule of the various Indo-European branches, as reconstructed by the linguists from the evidence of isoglosses, which we will now be examining.

### III

#### THE EVIDENCE OF LINGUISTIC ISOGLOSSES

One linguistic phenomenon which is of great help to linguists in their efforts to chalk out the likely

scenario of the migration schedule of the various Indo-European branches from the original homeland, is the phenomenon of linguistic isoglosses.

A linguistic isogloss is a linguistic feature which is found in *some* of the branches of the family, and is not found in the *others*.

This feature may, of course, be either an original feature of the parent Proto-Indo-European language which has been lost in some of the daughter branches but retained in others, or a linguistic innovation, not found in the parent Proto-Indo-European language, which developed in some of the daughter branches but not in the others. But this feature is useful in establishing early historico-geographical links between branches which share the same isogloss.

We will examine the evidence of the isoglosses as follows:

- A. The Isoglosses
- B. The Homeland Indicated by the Isoglosses

### **III.A. The Isoglosses**

There are, as Winn points out, “ten ‘living branches’... Two branches, Indic (Indo-Aryan) and Iranian dominate the eastern cluster. Because of the close links between their classical forms - Sanskrit and Avestan respectively - these languages are often grouped together as a single Indo-Iranian branch.”<sup>59</sup> But Meillet notes: “It remains quite clear, however, that Indic and Iranian evolved from different Indo-European dialects whose period of common development was not long enough to effect total fusion.”<sup>60</sup>

Besides these ten living branches, there are two extinct branches, Anatolian (Hittite) and Tocharian.

Of these twelve branches, one branch, Illyrian (Albanian), is of little use in this study of isoglosses: “Albanian... has undergone so many influences that it is difficult to be certain of its relationships to the other Indo-European languages.”<sup>61</sup>

An examination of the isoglosses which cover the other eleven branches (living and extinct) gives a more or less clear picture of the schedule of migrations of the different Indo-European branches from the original homeland.

Whatever the dispute about the exact order in which the different branches migrated away from the homeland, the linguists are generally agreed on two important points:

1. Anatolian (Hittite) was the first branch to leave the homeland: “The Anatolian languages, of which Hittite is the best known, display many archaic features that distinguish them from other Indo-European languages. They apparently represent an earlier stage of Indo-European, and are regarded by many as the first group to break away from the proto-language.”<sup>62</sup>

2. Four branches, Indic, Iranian, Hellenic (Greek) and Thracio-Phrygian (Armenian) were the last branches remaining behind in the original homeland after the other branches had dispersed:

“After the dispersals of the early PIE dialects,... there were still those who remained... Among them were the ancestors of the Greeks and Indo-Iranians...”<sup>63</sup>

“Greek and Sanskrit share many complex grammatical features: this is why many earlier linguists were misled into regarding them as examples of the most archaic stage of Proto-Indo-European. However, the similarities between the two languages are now regarded as innovations that took place during a late period of PIE, which we call stage III. One of these Indo-Greek



innovations was also shared by Armenian; all these languages it seems, existed in an area of mutual interaction.”<sup>64</sup>

Thus we get: “Greek Armenian, Phrygian, Thracian and Indo-Iranian. These languages may represent a comparatively late form of Indo-European, including linguistic innovations not present in earlier stages. In particular, Greek and Indic share a number of distinctive grammatical features.....”<sup>65</sup>

The following are some of the innovations shared only by Indic, Iranian, Greek and Armenian (Thraco-Phrygian); features which distinguish them from the other branches, particularly the other living branches:

**a.** “The prohibitive negation \**mE* is attested only in Indo-Iranian (*mA*), Greek (*mE*) and Armenian (*mi*); elsewhere, it is totally lacking... and there is no difference in this respect between the ancient and modern stages of Greek, Armenian or Persian”;<sup>66</sup> or, for that matter, sections of Indic (eg. the prohibitive negation *mat* in Hindi).

**b.** “In the formation of the Perfect also, there is a clear ‘distinction’ between Indo-Iranian and Armenian and Greek on the one hand, and all of the other languages on the other.”<sup>67</sup>

**c.** The “Indo-European voiceless aspirated stops are completely attested only in Indo-Iranian and Armenian... Greek... clearly preserves two of the three voiceless aspirated stops whose existence is established by the correspondence of Indo-Iranian and Armenian.”<sup>68</sup> All the other branches show “complete

fusion”<sup>69</sup> of these voiceless aspirated stops.

**d.** “The suffix *\*-tero-*, *\*-toro-*, *\*-tro-* serves in bell Indo-European languages to mark the opposition of two qualities, but only in two languages, Greek and Indo-Iranian, is the use of the suffix extended to include the formation of secondary adjectival comparatives... This development, by its very difference, points to the significance of the Greek and Indo-Iranian convergence... Armenian, which has a completely new formation, is not instructive in this regard.”<sup>70</sup> But, “Latin, Irish, Germanic, Lithuanian and Slavic, on the other hand, borrow their secondary comparative from the original primary type.”<sup>71</sup>

**e.** “The augment is attested only in Indo-Iranian, Armenian and Greek; it is found nowhere else.”<sup>72</sup> And it is “significant that the augment is not found in any of the other Indo-European languages... The total absence of the augment in even the earliest texts, and in all the dialects of Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic, is characteristic.”<sup>73</sup>

Hence, “the manner in which Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavic eliminated the imperfect and came to express the preterite presupposes an original, Indo-European, absence of the augment throughout this group of languages. We thus have grounds for positing two distinct Indo-European dialect groups.”<sup>74</sup>

**f.** The division of the Indo-European

branches into two distinct groups is confirmed by what Meillet calls the Vocabulary of the Northwest:

“There is quite a large group of words that appear in the dialects of the North and West (Slavic, Baltic, Germanic, Celtic and Italic) but are not found in the others (Indic, Iranian, Armenian and Greek)... their occurrence in the dialects of the North and West would indicate a cultural development peculiar to the peoples who spread these dialects.”<sup>75</sup>

While Anatolian (Hittite) was “the first group to break away from the protolanguage”, and Indic, Iranian, Armenian and Greek were “those who remained” after “the dispersals of the early PIE dialects”, the other branches share isoglosses which can help in placing them between these two extremes:

1. “Hittite, the first to separate itself, shares many isoglosses with Germanic and Tocharian.”<sup>76</sup>
2. “Celtic, Italic, Hittite, Tocharian and (probably) Phrygian share an interesting isogloss: the use of ‘r’ to indicate the passive forms of verbs. This feature... does not occur in any other Indo-European language.”<sup>77</sup>
3. Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavonic, as we have seen, constitute one distinct group (in contradistinction to another distinct group consisting of Indic, Iranian, Armenian and Greek).

However, within themselves, these five branches link together as follows:

**a.** Italic and Celtic: “Comparative linguists have long been aware of the links between Italic and Celtic, which share a number of archaic

features. These links suggest that the two branches developed together.”<sup>78</sup> Among other things: “Vocabulary is identical in parts; this is true of some very important words, particularly prepositions and preverbs.”<sup>79</sup>

**b. Baltic and Slavonic:** “The general resemblance of Baltic and Slavic is so apparent that no-one challenges the notion of a period of common development... Baltic and Slavic are the descendants of almost identical Indo-European dialects. No important isogloss divides Baltic from Slavic... the vocabularies of Slavic and Baltic show numerous cognates - more precisely, cognates that are found nowhere else or cognates that in Baltic and Slavic have a form different from their form in other languages.”<sup>80</sup>

**c. Italic, Celtic and Germanic:** “The Germanic, Celtic and Italic idioms present... certain common innovational tendencies.”<sup>81</sup> But, Italic apparently separated from the other two earlier: “Germanic, Celtic and Italic underwent similar influences. After the Italic-Celtic period, Italic ceased undergoing these influences and underwent others... Germanic and Celtic, remaining in adjacent regions, developed in part along parallel lines.”<sup>82</sup>

**d. Germanic, Baltic and Slavonic:** “Because Germanic shares certain important features with Baltic and Slavic, we may speculate that the history of the three groups is linked

in some way.”<sup>83</sup>

To go into more precise detail: “The difference between a dative plural with *\*-bh-*, eg. Skr. *-bhyah*, Av. *-byO*, Lat. *-bus*, O.Osc. *-fs*, O.Ir. *-ib*, Gr. *-fi(n)*, and one with *\*-m-*, eg. Goth. *-m*, O.Lith. *-mus*, Ol.Sl. *-mU*, is one of the first things to have drawn attention to the problem of Indo-European dialectology. Since it has been established, principally by A. Leskien, that there was no unity of Germanic, Baltic and Slavic postdating the period of Indo-European unity, the very striking similarity of Germanic, Baltic and Slavic which we observe here cannot... be explained except by a dialectical variation within common Indo-European.”<sup>84</sup> It is, therefore, clear “that these three languages arose from Indo-European dialects exhibiting certain common features.”<sup>85</sup>

To sum up, we get two distinct groups of branches:

*Group A:* Hittite, Tocharian, Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic, Slavonic.

*Group B:* Indic, Iranian, Thraco-Phrygian (Armenian), Hellenic (Greek).

No major isogloss cuts across the dividing line between the two groups to suggest any alternative grouping: the phenomenon of palatalization appears to do so, but it is now recognized as “a late phenomenon” which took place in “a post-PIE era in which whatever unity that once existed had broken down and most of the dialect groups had dispersed”,<sup>86</sup> and we will examine the importance of this phenomenon later on.

Other similarities between languages or branches which lie on opposite sides of the above dividing line are recognizable as phenomena which took place after the concerned branches had reached their historical habitats, and do not, therefore, throw any light on the location of the original

homeland or the migration-schedule of the branches.

The following are two examples of such similarities:

1. The Phrygian language appears to share the “*r*-isogloss” which is found only in the Hittite, Tocharian, Italic and Celtic branches. However:

**a.** The Phrygian language is known only from fragments, and many of the linguistic features attributed to it are speculative. About the “*r*-isogloss”, it may be noted, Winn points out that it is shared by “Celtic, Italic, Hittite, Tocharian and (probably) Phrygian”.<sup>87</sup>

**b.** Armenian, the only living member of the Thraco-Phrygian branch, does not share the “*r*-isogloss”, and nor did the ancient Thracian language.

**c.** The seeming presence of this isogloss in Phrygian is clearly due to the influence of Hittite, with which it shared its historical habitat: “Phrygian later replaced Hittite as the dominant language of Central Anatolia.”<sup>88</sup>

2. Greek and Italic alone share the change of Proto-Indo-European voiced aspirated stops (*bh*, *dh*, *gh*) into voiceless aspirated stops (*ph*, *th*, *kh*). Sanskrit is the only language to have retained the original voiced aspirated stops, while all the other branches, except Greek and Italic, converted them into unaspirated stops (*b*, *d*, *g*).

But this similarity between Greek and Italic is because “when Indo-European languages were brought to Mediterranean people unfamiliar with voiced aspirated stops, this element brought

about the process of unvoicing”,<sup>89</sup> and this change took place in the two branches “both independently and along parallel lines”.<sup>90</sup> Hence, this is not an isogloss linking the two branches.

Therefore, it is clear that the two groups represent two distinct divisions of the Indo-European family.

### **III. B. The Homeland Indicated by the Isoglosses**

The pattern of isoglosses shows the following order of migration of the branches of Group A:

1. Hittite.
2. Tocharian.
3. Italic-Celtic.
4. Germanic.
5. Baltic-Slavonic.

Some of these branches share certain isoglosses among themselves which represent innovations which they must have developed in common after their departure from the original homeland, since the remaining branches (Indic, Iranian, Armenian and Greek) do not share these isoglosses.

This clearly indicates the presence of a *secondary homeland*, outside the exit-point from the original homeland, which must have functioned as an area of settlement and common development for the migrating branches.

The only homeland theory which fits in with the evidence of the isoglosses is the Indian homeland theory:

The exit-point for the migrating branches was Afghanistan, and these branches migrated towards the *north* from Afghanistan into Central Asia, which clearly functioned as the secondary homeland for emigrating branches.

As Winn points out: “Evidence from isoglosses...

shows that the dispersal cannot be traced to one particular event; rather it seems to have occurred in bursts or stages."<sup>91</sup>

Hittite was the first to emigrate from Afghanistan into Central Asia, followed by Tocharian.

Italic-Celtic represented the next stage of emigration. The four branches developed the “*r*-isogloss” in common.

Germanic was the next branch to enter the secondary homeland, and it developed some isoglosses in common with Hittite and Tocharian.

The Baltic-Slavonic movement apparently represented the last major emigration. And its sojourn in the secondary homeland was apparently not long enough for it to develop any isoglosses in common with Hittite or Tocharian.

The five branches (Italic, Celtic, Germanic, Baltic and Slavonic, in that order) later moved further off, north-westwards, into the area to the north of the Caspian Sea, and subsequently formed part of the Kurgan III migrations into Europe. The Slavonic and Baltic branches settled down in the eastern parts of Europe, while the other three proceeded further into Europe. Later, the Italic branch moved towards the south, while the Germanic and Celtic branches moved to the north and west.

Meanwhile, the other branches (barring Indic), Greek Armenian and Iranian, as also, perhaps, the one branch (Illyrian or Albanian) which we have not taken into consideration so far, migrated westwards from India by a different and southern route.

The scholars, now, generally accept the evidence of the isoglosses, so far as it concerns the schedule of migrations of the different Indo-European branches from the original homeland, or the interrelationships between different



branches. However, when it comes to determining the actual location of the original homeland, on the basis of this evidence, they abandon their objective approach and try to make it appear as if the evidence fits in with the particular homeland theory advocated by them, *even when it is as clear as daylight that they are trying to fit a round peg into a square hole.*

The homeland theory generally advocated by the scholars is the South Russian homeland theory. Shan M.M. Winn advocates the “Pontic-Caspian area” within this region as the particular location of the homeland.

An examination shows that the South Russian homeland theory (“Pontic-Caspian” or otherwise) is totally incompatible with the evidence of the isoglosses:

1. To begin with, it is clear that we have two distinct groups of branches, which we have already classified as Group A and Group B.

As per the evidence of the isoglosses, the branches in Group A are the branches which migrated away from the original homeland, and those in Group B are the branches which remained behind in the homeland after the other branches had departed.

At the same time, all the branches in Group A are found to the *north* of the Eurasian mountain chain (except for Hittite in Anatolia, but this branch is known to have migrated into Anatolia from the *north-east*), while all the branches in Group B are found to the *south* of the Eurasian mountain chain (the northernmost, Greek, is known to have migrated into southeastern Europe from the *south-east*).

The logical corollary should have been that the original homeland is also to the south of the Eurasian mountain chain, and that it is located in the historical habitat of one of the branches in Group B.

However, the scholars regularly advocate homeland theories which place the homeland in the area of one or the other of the branches in Group A.

2. The branches in Group A developed certain isoglosses in common after they had migrated away from the homeland. As we have pointed out, this makes it likely that there was a secondary homeland where they must have developed these isoglosses.

However, any homeland theory which locates the homeland in a central area, like South Russia or any area around it, makes the location of this secondary homeland a problem: the Tocharian branch is historically located well to the *east* of South Russia, the Hittite branch is located well to the *south* of South Russia, and the Germanic and Italic-Celtic branches are located well to the west of South Russia. It is difficult to think of a way in which all these branches could have moved together in one direction from South Russia before parting from each other and moving off in totally opposite directions.

It is perhaps to avoid this problem that Winn suggests that the isoglosses shared in common by these branches are not *innovations* developed by these branches in common, but *archaic features* which have been retained by otherwise separately migrating branches.

In respect of the *r*-isogloss, for example, Winn puts it as follows: "Celtic, Italic, Hittite, Tocharian, and (probably) Phrygian share an interesting isogloss: the use of 'r' to indicate the passive forms of verbs. This feature, which does not occur in any other Indo-European language, is probably an example of the 'archaism of the fringe' phenomenon. When a language is spread over a large territory, speakers at the fringe of that territory are likely to be detached from what goes on at the core. Linguistic innovations that take place at the core may never find their way out to

peripheral areas; hence dialects .spoken on the fringe tend to preserve archaic features that have long since disappeared from the mainstream... Tocharian... was so remote from the center that it could hardly have taken part in any innovations.”<sup>92</sup>

However, it is more logical to treat this isogloss as an innovation developed in common by a few branches after their departure from the homeland, than to postulate that *all* the other, otherwise disparate, branches *eliminated* an original “use of ‘r’ to indicate the passive forms of verbs”.

3. What is indeed an example of the “archaism of the fringe” phenomenon is the phenomenon of palatalization.

Winn describes it as follows: “Palatalization must have been a late phenomenon; that is, we date it to a post-PIE era, in which whatever unity that once existed had now broken down, and most of the dialect groups had dispersed: looking at the geographical distribution of this isogloss, we may note its absence from the peripheral languages: Germanic (at the northwest limit of Indo-European language distribution); Celtic (western limit); Italic, Greek and Hittite (southern limit); and Tocharian (eastern limit). It is the languages at the center that have changed. Here, at the core, a trend towards palatalization started; then gradually spread outward. It never reached far enough to have any effect on the outlying languages.”<sup>93</sup>

Note that Winn calls it a “post-PIE era, in which whatever unity that once existed had now broken down, and most of the dialect groups had dispersed”, and that *he locates every single other branch (except Indic and Iranian), including Greek, in its historical habitat*. He does not specifically name Baltic-Slavonic and Armenian, but it is understood that they are also located in their historical habitats, since he implies that they are “the languages at the centre” (ie. languages in and around South Russia, which is, anyway, the historical habitat of these branches).

*Indic and Iranian alone are not located by him in their historical habitats*, since that would clearly characterize them as the most “peripheral” or “outlying” branches of all, being located at the extreme southern as well as extreme eastern limit of the Indo-European language distribution. And this would completely upset his pretty picture of an evolving “center” with archaic “outlying languages”, since the most outlying of the branches would turn out to be the most palatalized of them all. Hence, Winn without expressly saying so, but with such a location being implicit in his argument, locates all the other branches, *including Greek*, in their historical habitats, but only the Indic and Iranian branches *well outside* their historical habitats and still in South Russia, and keeps his fingers crossed over the possibility of the anomaly being noticed.

Here we see, once again, how the manipulation required to locate the Indo-European homeland in South Russia compels the scholars, again and again, to postulate weird and unnatural schedules of migrations which make the Indo-Iranians the last to leave South Russia, and which locate them in South Russia long after *all* the other branches, including Greek, are already settled in their historical habitats: a picture which clashes *sharply* with, among other things, the extremely representative nature of the Rigvedic language and mythology, the purely Indian geographical milieu of the Rigveda (and the movement depicted in it from east to west, as we have seen in this book), and the evidence of the names of places and rivers in northern India right from the period of the Rigveda itself.

The “late phenomenon” of a “trend towards palatalization” which started “at the core” and “then gradually -spread outward”, and “never reached far enough to have any effect on the outlying languages”, can be explained naturally only on the basis of the Indian homeland theory: the trend started in the “core area”, in north and northwest India, and spread outwards as far as the *innermost* of the branches in Group A: Baltic

and Slavonic, but not as far as the *outermost* of the branches in Group B: Greek.

Incidentally, here is how Meillet<sup>94</sup> depicts the interrelationships between the various extant branches (he does not include Hittite and Tocharian in the picture, but it is clear that they will fall in the same group as Germanic, Celtic and Italic). (Figure on next page.)

While the north-south axis clearly divides the non-palatalized branches in the west from the palatalized branches in the east (where we must locate the “core” area where palatalization started), the northeast-southwest axes neatly divide the branches into the three tribal groupings testified by Indian literary records, (click on next link).

[Click Here](#)

[Click Here](#)

4. More than anything else, the one aspect of the evidence of the isoglosses, which disproves the South Russian theory, is the close relationship between Indic or Indo-Iranian and Greek, which is not satisfactorily explained by any homeland theory other than the Indian homeland theory.

In dismissing Colin Renfrew’s Anatolian homeland theory, Winn cites this as the single most important factor in disproving the theory: “All the migrations postulated by Renfrew ultimately stem from a single catalyst: the crossing of Anatolian farmers into Greece... For all practical purposes, Renfrew’s hypothesis disregards Tocharian and Indo-Iranian.”<sup>95</sup>

Supporters of Renfrew’s theory, Winn points out, “have tried to render the Indo-Iranian problem moot. They argue that the Indo-Iranian branch was somehow divided from the main body of Proto-Indo-European before the colonists brought agriculture to the Balkans. Greek and Indic are

thus separated by millenniums of linguistic change - despite the close grammatical correspondences between them (as we saw in Chapter 12, these correspondences probably represent shared innovations from the last stage of PIE).”<sup>96</sup>

Winn’s very valid argument against the Anatolian theory is *just as applicable to the South Russian homeland theory, or any other theory which seeks to bring Indic and Iranian into their historical habitats through Central Asia*: this involves an extremely long period of separation from Greek, which does not fit into the evidence of the isoglosses which shows that Indic and Greek have many “shared innovations from the last stage of PIE”.

Archaeology, for one, completely rules out any links between the alleged Proto-Indo-Iranians located by these scholars in Central Asia, and the Greeks: Winn, as we saw, tries to identify the Andronovo culture which “covers much of the Central Asian Steppe east of the Ural river and Caspian Sea”,<sup>97</sup> with the “Proto-Indo-Iranians” during their alleged sojourn in Central Asia.

However, not only does he admit that “it is still a hazardous task to connect (this) archaeological evidence of Indo-Iranians in the Central Asian Steppe with the appearance of Iranian (Aryan) and Indic (Indo-Aryan) tribes in Iran, Afghanistan and India,”<sup>98</sup> but he also accepts that these so-called Proto-Indo-Iranians in Central Asia have “no links with... south-eastern Europe”,<sup>99</sup> ie. with the Greeks.

It is only the Indian homeland theory which fits in with the evidence of the isoglosses. It may be noted again that:

- a. The evidence of the isoglosses suggests that the Indic, Iranian, Armenian and Greek branches, as well as the Albanian branch, were

the last to remain behind in the original homeland after the departure of the other branches.

**b.** These (naturally, barring Indic) are also the same branches which show connections with the BhRgus/ AtharvaNas, while those which departed show connections with the Druhyus.

**c.** Again, all these branches form a long belt to the south of the Eurasian mountain chain, while the other (departed) branches are found to its north.

**d.** And, finally, these are the only branches which are actually recorded in the DASarAjña hymns as being present in the Punjab area during the time of SudAs.

#### **IV INTER-FAMILIAL LINGUISTICS**

We have, in our earlier book, examined the question of the historico-linguistic connections between Indo-European and other language families like Uralic and Semitic. These connections are projected by many scholars as linguistic evidence for the origin of the Indo-European family in or around South Russia, but the evidence, as we saw, fails to prove their point.

However, a more complex and scientific analysis of the linguistic connections between Indo-European and other families forms the subject of a paper by Johanna Nichols, entitled, significantly, *The Epicentre of the Indo-European Linguistic Spread*, which is part of a more detailed study contained in the two volumes of *Archaeology and Language* (of which the particular paper under discussion constitutes Chapter 8 of the first volume).

Nichols determines the location of “the epicentre of the Indo-European linguistic spread” primarily on the basis of an examination of loan-words from Mesopotamia and the Fertile Crescent of West Asia.

As she points out, loan-words from this region must have spread out via three trajectories (or routes):

“To Central Europe via the Bosphorus and the Balkans, to the western steppe via the Caucasus... and eastward via Iran to western Central Asia...”<sup>100</sup>

“The first step in specifying a locus for the IE homeland is to narrow it down to one of these three trajectories, and that can be done by comparing areal *Wanderwörter* in the IE cultural vocabulary to those of other language families that can be located relative to one or another trajectory in ancient times.”<sup>101</sup>

Therefore, Nichols examines loan-words from West Asia (Semitic and Sumerian) found in Indo-European and in other families like Caucasian (separately Kartvelian, Abkhaz-Circassian and Nakh-Daghestanian), and the mode and form of transmission of these loan-words into the Indo-European family as a whole as well as into particular branches; and combines this with the evidence of the spread of Uralic and its connections with Indo-European.

After a detailed examination, her final conclusions about the locus or epicentre of the Indo-European linguistic spread are as follows: “Several kinds of evidence for the PIE locus have been presented here. Ancient loanwords point to a locus along the desert trajectory, not particularly close to Mesopotamia and probably far out in the eastern hinterlands. The structure of the family tree, the accumulation of genetic diversity at the western periphery of the range, the location of Tocharian



and its implications for early dialect geography, the early attestation of Anatolian in Asia Minor, and the geography of the *centum-satem* split all point in the same direction: a locus in western central Asia. Evidence presented in Volume II supports the same conclusion: the long-standing westward trajectories of languages point to an eastward locus, and the spread of IE along all three trajectories points to a locus well to the east of the Caspian Sea. The *satem* shift also spread from a locus to the south-east of the Caspian, with *satem* languages showing up as later entrants along all three trajectory terminals. (The *satem* shift is a post-PIE but very early IE development). *The locus of the IE spread was therefore somewhere in the vicinity of ancient Bactria-Sogdiana.*<sup>102</sup>

This linguistic evidence thus fits in perfectly with the literary and other evidence examined by us in this book, and with the theory outlined by us.

Nichols' analysis involves three concepts:

1. *The Spread Zone*: "The vast interior of Eurasia is a linguistic spread zone - a genetic and typological bottleneck where many genetic lines go extinct, structural types tend to converge, a single language or language family spreads out over a broad territorial range, and one language family replaces another over a large range every few millennia..."<sup>103</sup>

2. *The Locus*: "The locus is a smallish part of the range which functions in the same way as a dialect-geographical centre: an epicentre of sorts from which innovations spread to other regions and dialects, and a catchpoint at which cultural borrowings and linguistic loanwords entered from prestigious or economically important foreign societies to spread (along with native linguistic innovations) to the distant dialects. If an innovation arose in the vicinity of the locus, or a loanword entered, it spread to all or most of the family; otherwise, it remained a regionalism. Diversification of daughter dialects in a spread

zone takes place far from the locus at the periphery, giving the family tree a distinctive shape with many major early branches, and creating a distinctive dialect map where genetic diversity piles up at the periphery. These principles make it possible to pinpoint the locus in space more or less accurately even for a language family as old as IE. Here it will be shown that the locus accounting for the distribution of loanwords, internal innovations and genetic diversity within IE could only have lain well to the east of the Caspian Sea.”<sup>104</sup>

As we have already seen, the specific location is “in the vicinity of Bactria-Sogdiana”.<sup>105</sup>

“The central Eurasian spread zone (Figure 8.4), as described in Volume II, was part of a standing pattern whereby languages were drawn into the spread zone, spread westward, and were eventually succeeded by the next spreading family. The dispersal for each entering family occurred after entry into the spread zone. The point of dispersal for each family is the locus of its proto-homeland, and this locus eventually is engulfed by the next entering language. Hence in a spread zone the locus cannot, by definition, be the point of present greatest diversity (except possibly for the most recent family to enter the spread zone). On the contrary, the locus is one of the earliest points to be overtaken by the next spread.”<sup>106</sup>

Further, “the Caspian Sea divides westward spreads into steppe versus desert trajectories quite close to the locus and hence quite early in the spread.”<sup>107</sup>

3. *The Original Homeland*: “Central Eurasia is a linguistic bottleneck, spread zone, and extinction chamber, but its languages had to come from somewhere. The locus of the IE spread is a theoretical point representing a linguistic epicentre, not a literal place of ethnic or linguistic origin, so the ultimate origin of PIE need not be in

the same place as the locus. There are several linguistically plausible possibilities for the origin of Pre-PIE. It could have spread eastward from the Black Sea steppe (as proposed by Mallory 1989 and by Anthony 1991, 1995), so that the locus formed only after this spread but still very early in the history of disintegrating PIE... It could have come into the spread zone from the east as Mongolian, Turkic, and probably Indo-Iranian did. Or it could have been a language of the early urban oases of southern central Asia.”<sup>108</sup>

Thus, the linguistic evidence fully confirms our theory of an original homeland in India, an exit-point in Afghanistan, and two streams of westward emigration or expansion.

Nichols does not advocate an Indian homeland, but:

- a.** She does accept that the Pre-PIE language could have come from any direction (east or west), or could have been native to south Central Asia (Bactria-Sogdiana) itself, since the linguistic data only accounts for the later part of the movement, and not the earlier one.
- b.** The later part of the movement, indicated by the linguistic data, is in the opposite direction (ie. away from India).
- c.** The literary evidence, as we have seen in this book, provides the evidence for the earlier part of the movement.

Nichols' analysis of the linguistic data, moreover, produces a picture which is more natural, and more compatible with what may be called “linguistic migration theory”:

“As defined by Dyen (1956), a homeland is a

continuous area and a migration is any movement causing that area to become non-continuous (while a movement that simply changes its shape or area is an expansion or expansive intrusion). The linguistic population of the homeland is a set of intermediate protolanguages, the first-order daughters of the original protolanguage (in Dyen's terms, a chain of coordinate languages). The homeland is the same as (or overlaps) the area of the largest chain of such co-ordinates, i.e. the area where the greatest number of highest-level branches occur. *Homelands are to be reconstructed in such a way as to minimize the number of migrations, and the number of migrating daughter branches, required to get from them to attested distributions* (Dyen 1956: 613)."<sup>109</sup>

The theories which place the original homeland in South Russia postulate a great number of separate emigrations of individual branches in different directions: Hittite and Tocharian would be the earliest emigrants in two different and opposite directions, and Indo-Iranian, Armenian and Greek would be the last emigrants, again, in three different and opposite directions.

But the picture produced by the evidence analysed by Nichols is different: "no major migrations are required to explain the distribution of IE languages at any stage in their history up to the colonial period of the last few centuries. All movements of languages (or more precisely all viable movements - that is, all movements that produced natural speech communities that lasted for generations and branched into dialects) were expansions, and all geographically isolated languages (eg. Tocharian, Ossetic in the Caucasus, ancestral Armenian, perhaps ancestral Anatolian) appear to be remnants of formerly continuous distributions. They were stranded by subsequent expansions of other language families, chiefly Turkic in historical times."<sup>110</sup>

It must be noted that the picture produced by the linguistic evidence analysed by Nichols fits in

perfectly with the Indian homeland theory derived from our analysis of the literary evidence, *but Nichols is not herself a supporter of the Indian homeland theory*, and this makes her testimony all the more valuable.

Nichols suggests that there was a point of time during the expansion of the Indo-Europeans when “ancestral Proto-Indo-Aryan was spreading into northern India,”<sup>111</sup> and that “the Indo-Iranian distribution is the result of a later, post-PIE spread”.<sup>112</sup>

How far does this fit in with the evidence analysed by Nichols?

The evidence primarily shows two things:

- a. “The long-standing westward trajectories of languages point to an eastward locus, and the spread of IE along all these trajectories point to a locus well to the east of the Caspian Sea.”<sup>113</sup>
- b. “The locus of the IE spread was therefore somewhere in the vicinity of ancient Bactria-Sogdiana.”<sup>114</sup>

The evidence shows “westward trajectories of languages” from a locus “in the vicinity of ancient Bactria-Sogdiana,” *it does not show eastward or southward trajectories of languages from this locus.*

Therefore, while Nichols’ conclusion, that the Indo-European languages found to the west of Bactria-Sogdiana, were the results of expansions from Bactria-Sogdiana are *based on linguistic evidence*, her conclusion that the Indo-European languages found to the *south and east* of Bactria-Sogdiana were *also* the results of expansions from Bactria-Sogdiana, are not based on linguistic evidence, but on a routine application of the

dictum “what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander”. Also, perhaps, Nichols, who has no particular reason to believe that India could be the original homeland, finds no reason to go much further than is absolutely necessary in challenging established notions: as it is, she is conscious that the locus indicated by the linguistic evidence “is unlike any other proposed homeland”,<sup>115</sup> and, therefore, she probably sees no reason to make it so unlike as to be provocative.

But the Indian homeland theory fits in perfectly with Nichols’ conclusion that the homeland lay along the *easternmost* of the three trajectories, the one which led “eastward via Iran to western central Asia,”<sup>116</sup> since this same trajectory *also led to India*.

While Nichols’ detailed linguistic analysis brings into focus the geographical location of the original homeland as indicated by the relationship of Indo-European with certain western families of languages, some other scholars have also noted the relationship of Indo-European with certain eastern families of languages: we refer, in particular, to two studies conducted, respectively, by Tsung-tung Chang in respect of the Chinese language, and Isidore Dyen, in respect of the Austronesian family of languages.

### **A. The Chinese Language**

Tsung-tung Chang, a scholar of Chinese (Taiwanese,) origin, has shown, on the basis of a study of the relationship between the vocabulary of Old Chinese, as reconstructed by Bernard Karlgren (*Grammata Serica*, 1940, etc.), and the etymological roots of Proto-Indo-European vocabulary, as reconstructed by Julius Pokorny (*Indogermanisches Etymologisches Wörterbuch*, 1959), that there was a strong Indo-European influence on the formative vocabulary of Old Chinese.

He provides a long list of words common to Indo-

European and Old Chinese, and adds: “In the last four years, I have traced out about 1500 cognate words, which would constitute roughly two-thirds of the basic vocabulary in Old Chinese. The common words are to be found in all spheres of life including kinship, animals, plants, hydrography, landscape, parts of the body, actions, emotional expressions, politics and religion, and even function words such as pronouns and prepositions, as partly shown in the lists of this paper.”<sup>117</sup>

This Indo-European influence on Old Chinese, according to him, took place at the time of the founding of the *first* Chinese empire in about 2400 BC. He calls this the “Chinese Empire established by Indo-European conquerors,”<sup>118</sup> and identifies Huang-ti (the “Yellow Emperor”), traditional Chinese founder of this first empire, as an Indo-European (suggesting that his name should actually be interpreted as “blond heavenly god”, in view of his identity).

About Huang-ti, he tells us that he was a nomadic king who “ordered roads to be built, and was perpetually on the move with treks of carriages. At night he slept in a barricade of wagons. He had no interest in walled towns... All of this indicates his origin from a stock-breeding tribe in Inner Mongolia. With introduction of horse- or oxen-pulled wagons, transport and traffic in northern China was revolutionized. Only on this new technical basis did the founding of a state with central government become feasible and functional.”<sup>119</sup>

Further, “Huang-ti is mentioned also as the founder of Chinese language in the *Li-Chi (Book of Rites)*. In the Chapter 23 *chi-fa (Rules of Sacrifices)*,... we read: ‘Huang-ti gave hundreds of things their right names, in order to illumine the people about the common goods.....’”<sup>120</sup>

In this way: “The aboriginal people had thus to learn new foreign words from the emperors.

Probably thereby the Proto-Indo-European vocabulary became dominant in Old Chinese.”<sup>121</sup>

What Tsung attempts to do to Chinese civilization is more or less what invasionist scholars have tried to do to Indian civilization, and we can take his insistence that the first Chinese civilization was established by “Indo-European conquerors” with a fistful of salt. The logical explanation for the similarity in vocabulary is simply that there was a mutual influence between Old Chinese and certain Indo-European branches which were located in Central Asia in the third millennium BC or slightly earlier.

Basically, that is what his own hypothesis also actually suggests. According to Tsung: “Among Indo-European dialects, Germanic languages seem to have been mostly akin to Old Chinese... Germanic preserved the largest number of cognate words also to be found in Chinese... Germanic and Chinese belong to the group of so-called *centum* languages... The initial /h/ in Germanic corresponds mostly to /h/ and /H/ in Old Chinese... Chinese and Northern Germanic languages are poor in grammatical categories such as case, gender, number, tense, mood, etc...”<sup>122</sup>

It is unlikely that this relationship between Germanic and Old Chinese developed in Europe, and nor does Tsung himself make such a claim. He accepts that “Indo-Europeans had coexisted for thousands of years in Central Asia... (before) they emigrated into Europe”.<sup>123</sup>

The influence on the Chinese language probably, according to Tsung, spread to other related languages later on: “Sino-Thai common vocabulary, too, bristles with Indo-European stems. In my opinion, these southern tribes were once the aborigines of Northern China, who immigrated to the south... Nevertheless they could not escape since then the influence of Chinese languages and civilization.”<sup>124</sup>



How far Tsung's hypothesis will find acceptance is not clear. It is, however, a scholarly work by a Western academician (albeit one of Taiwanese origin) established in Germany, and it is being seriously studied in the West.

Such as it is, it constitutes further linguistic support for our theory that Central Asia was the secondary homeland for various Indo-European branches on their route from India to Europe.

## **B. The Austronesian Family of Languages**

Isidore Dyen, in his paper, *The Case of the Austronesian Languages*, presented at the 3rd Indo-European Conference at the University of Pennsylvania in 1966, has made out a case showing the similarities between many basic words reconstructed in the Proto-Indo-European and Proto-Austronesian languages, as we have seen in our earlier book.

They include such basic words as the very first four numerals, many of the personal pronouns, the words for "water" and "land", etc. And Dyen points out that "the number of comparisons could be increased at least slightly, perhaps even substantially, without a severe loss of quality".<sup>125</sup>

Dyen is not, by any stretch of the imagination, a supporter of the Indian homeland theory; and in fact such a theory does not strike him even after he notes these similarities, since he points out that the distribution of the two families, and their respective homelands as understood by him, do not explain the situation. In his own words: "The hypothesis to be dealt with is not favoured by considerations of the distribution of the two families... The probable homelands of the respective families appear to be very distant; that of the Indo-European is probably in Europe, whereas that of the Austronesian is no farther west than the longitude of the Malay Peninsula in any reasonable hypothesis, and has been placed considerably farther east in at least one

hypothesis. The hypothesis suggested by linguistic evidence is not thus facilitated by a single homeland hypothesis.”<sup>126</sup>

Dyen feels that the Indo-European homeland is “probably in Europe” and the Austronesian homeland “no farther west than the longitude of the Malay Peninsula”, and hence he finds that the “linguistic evidence is not... facilitated by a single homeland hypothesis”.

But, apart from the Indian homeland theory for the Indo-European family of languages, which Dyen ignores, there is also an Indian homeland theory for the ultimate origins of the Austronesian family of languages: S.K. Chatterji, *an invasionist scholar*, suggests that “India was the centre from which the Austric race spread into the lands and islands of the east and Pacific”,<sup>127</sup> and that “the Austric speech... in its original form (as the ultimate source of both the Austro-Asiatic and Austronesian branches)... could very well have been characterised within India”.<sup>128</sup>

Therefore the linguistic evidence is “facilitated by a single homeland hypothesis” in the prehistoric past: the Indian homeland hypothesis.

Thus, any linguistic evidence there is, in respect of connections between Indo-European and other families in the Proto-Indo-European period, all point towards an Indian homeland for the Indo-European family of languages.

## V

### LINGUISTIC SUBSTRATA IN INDOARYAN

As we have seen, there is plenty of linguistic evidence which clearly shows that the Indo-European family of languages originated in India.

We will now examine the linguistic “evidence” on the basis of which the linguists usually dismiss the Indian homeland theory, and in the name of which

archaeologists are classified together with “Hindu fundamentalists”. Entire schools of scholars (as we shall see in our Appendix on Misinterpretations of Rigvedic History) are mesmerised into treating the external (to India) homeland and the Aryan invasion of India as linguistically established facts.

There are two main fields of linguistic study which have contributed to this misrepresentation of the linguistic situation:

- a.** The study of the so-called non-Aryan substrata in Indoaryan languages.
- b.** The study of the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European language, society and culture.

In this section of the chapter, we will examine the first of the two above aspects: ie. the so-called non-Aryan linguistic substrata in Indoaryan languages.

According to many linguists, the Indoaryan languages contain a large number of non-Aryan words, as well as grammatical and syntactical features, which appear to be Dravidian, or occasionally Austric - words and features which are missing in Indo-European languages outside India, and which therefore show that the Indoaryan languages were intruders into an area (North India) formerly occupied by speakers of Dravidian and Austric languages, who, in the course of time, adopted the Indoaryan speech forms. A special aspect of this argument is that names of Indian animals and plants, in Indoaryan languages, are alleged to be adopted from non-Aryan (Dravidian or Austric), thereby showing that the original Indoaryan speakers were not acquainted with the flora and fauna of India.

We have examined these claims at some length in our earlier book, and we will only summarise here our arguments given therein against them:

1. In respect of the grammatical and syntactical features common to Indoaryan and Dravidian, most of these features are also found in different Indo-European branches or languages outside India, so that the features in Indoaryan are not foreign to Indo-European and are more likely to be internal developments. And the modern Indoaryan languages do not necessarily represent a change from an originally Vedic like structure, since these modern Indoaryan languages are *not*, as popularly believed, descendants of the Vedic language, but descendants of other Indo-European dialects which we have called Inner-Indo-European dialects, whose grammatical and syntactical features may have been different from that of the dialects of the northwest and northernmost India, which produced Vedic and the ancestors of the extra-Indian Indo-European languages, and similar to the other non-Indo-European families within India (Dravidian, Austric), from pre-Vedic times.

2. The linguists classify words as non-Aryan not because they are *recognizable loan-words* from Dravidian or Austric (ie. words which have a clear Dravidian or Austric etymology and no Indo-European or Sanskrit etymology), but simply because they are words for which, in the subjective opinions of these scholars (who, in any case, are on a mission to hunt out non-Aryan words in the Indoaryan languages), the Indo-European or Sanskrit etymologies are “not satisfactory”.

In most cases, these words, or equivalent forms, are not even found in the Dravidian or Austric languages, and the scholars are therefore compelled to invent the “possibility of non-Aryan speeches (other than Dravidian, Kol and the later Tibeto-Burman), *speeches now extinct*, being present in India”, <sup>129</sup> and being the source for these words. There is thus a clear predisposition to brand these words as “non-Aryan” by hook or by crook.

3. Most of the non-Aryan (Dravidian or Austric) etymological derivations sought to be postulated by the linguists for particular words are challenged or refuted by *other* linguists, who give clear Indo-European or Sanskrit etymological derivations for the same words; and it is clear that there is no consistency or consensus in the assertions of the linguists, beyond the basic dogma that there *must* be non-Aryan words in the Indoaryan languages.

4. Many of the derivations which the scholars try to assert from Dravidian or Austric are basically impossible ones, since, even apart from other considerations, these words contain phonetic characteristics which are inconsistent with those of the alleged source-languages. Thus words original to the Dravidian languages could not start with an initial cerebral or liquid (T, D, r, l), did not contain aspirate sounds (h, kh, gh, ch, jh, Th, Dh, th, dh, ph, bh) and sibilants (s, S), could not start with initial voiced stops (g, j, D, d, b) or have intervocalic voiceless obstruents (k, c, T, t, p), and did not contain obstruents + liquids (kr, pi, pr, tr, etc). And yet, the linguists regularly postulate a Dravidian origin for large numbers of words which contain these phonetic characteristics.

5. In the case of names of Indian plants and animals, the majority of them have been given Sanskrit etymologies, not only by ancient Sanskrit grammarians and etymologists, but even by modern Western Sanskritists like Sir Monier-Williams, etc. Linguists who are predisposed to reject these etymologies, without being able to give definite and *indisputable* alternatives, cannot be taken seriously.

6. Names of plants and animals which appear to have no clear or credible Indo-European or Sanskrit etymologies *cannot* be automatically treated as non-Aryan words (unless they have clear and indisputable Dravidian or Austric etymologies) purely on that ground, since the situation is identical in the case of words which are very clearly and definitely *inherited* Indo-

European words.

Thus, Carl D. Buck points out: “In the inherited names of animals there is little to be said about their semantic nature, for *in most of them, the root-connection is wholly obscure.*”<sup>130</sup> Likewise, in the few inherited names of plants common to various Indo-European branches, he points out that “*the root connections are mostly obscure.*”<sup>131</sup> Specifically, even a universal Indo-European word like \**kuon* (dog) has a “*root connection much disputed and dubious*”;<sup>132</sup> and the equally universal word \**ekwo* (horse) has a “*root connection wholly obscure*”.<sup>133</sup>

Therefore, unless it is to be assumed that the Proto-Indo-Europeans were totally unacquainted with *any* plants and animals *at all*, it must be accepted that the names of plants and animals in any language need not necessarily be derivable from the etymological roots of that language: these names are more likely to have been “at first colloquial or even slang words”<sup>134</sup> which rose up from common speech into the standard vocabulary.

7. When the names of certain plants or animals in the Indoaryan languages are demonstrably Dravidian or Austric, this will be because the plants or animals concerned are native to *those* parts of India where Dravidian or Austric languages are spoken. Thus the Sanskrit word *ela* is certainly derived from the Dravidian word *yela*, since the plant concerned (cardamom) is native to Kerala, which is in the heart of the Dravidian language area. The South Indian plant was borrowed, alongwith its name, by the people of North India.

In such cases, it need not even be necessary that the plant must *not* be found in the area of the borrowers. If a plant which is native to both North and South India was first cultivated and popularised in the South, then it is possible that the South Indian name would stick to the

cultivated plant, *even in the North*. Thus, the tea plant is native to both China and India (Assam, etc.), and the cultivated varieties of tea *today* include both Chinese tea and Assamese tea. But China was the first to cultivate and popularise the beverage, and even today, the plant is known everywhere, including in India (and Assam) by its Chinese names (*cA/cAy, tea*).

Therefore, when there is any Dravidian or Austric name for any plant in Indoaryan languages, it is due to the geographical origin or historical cultivation of the plant in a Dravidian or Austric area, and *not* because the original Indoaryan speakers came from outside into an originally Dravidian or Austric India.

8. The names of plants and animals which are native to North India are of Indo-European or Sanskrit origin *even in the Dravidian languages of South India and the Austric languages of eastern India*. Thus, the words for camel (Sanskrit *uSTra*), lion (Sanskrit *siMha*) and rhinoceros (Sanskrit *khaDgl* or *gaNDa*) are derived from purely Indo-European roots: the word *uSTra*, in fact, is found in Iranian (*uStra*).

But, the Dravidian words for camel (Tamil-Malayalam *oTTagam*, Kannada-Telugu *oNTe*, Toda *oTTe*, Brahui *huch*, etc.), lion (Tamil *cingam*, Telugu *siMhamu*, Kannada *siMha*, etc.) and rhinoceros (Tamil *kANDAmirugam*, Telugu, *khaDga-mRgamu*, Kannada *khaDgamRga*; note also the Sanskrit word *mRga*, animal, necessarily added to the basic name), are all derived from the Sanskrit words. Likewise, the Austric words for camel (Santali *Ut*, Khasi *ut*) and lion (Santali *sinho*, Sora *sinam-kidan*, etc.).

This would clearly not have been the case if the northwestern areas, native to the camel, lion, and (at least in the Indus Valley period) the rhinoceros, had originally been Dravidian or Austric, or any other non-Aryan language areas before the alleged advent of the Indoaryans.

9. In addition (this is a point not made in our earlier book), it must be noted that the linguists often reject the Sanskrit or Indo-European origins of words in Indoaryan languages, or they reject correspondences between Indoaryan words and words in other branches of Indo-European, on the flimsiest of grounds: even a single vowel or consonant in a word which, according to them, is not what it should have been according to the strict and regular rules of Sanskrit or Indo-European derivations, is sufficient for them to brand the word as probably or definitely non-Aryan.

Thus, the connection between Vedic *VaruNa*, Greek *Ouranos* and Teutonic *Woden* is rejected, inspite of the fact that the close similarity of the names is backed by close correspondences in the mythical nature and characteristics of the three Gods, on the ground that the derivations are irregular. Likewise, the connection between Vedic *PaNi/VaNi*, Greek *Pan* and Teutonic *Vanir* will also be rejected on similar flimsy grounds, although, as we will see in Chapter 10 of this book, the three are definitely cognate names.

On the other hand, linguists connecting up Indoaryan words with Dravidian or Austric words have no compunctions about linguistic regularity or accuracy: thus T. Burrow ('Some-Dravidian Words in Sanskrit', in *Transactions of the Philological Society-1945*, London, 1946) derives Sanskrit *paN* (to negotiate, bargain) and *paNa* (wager) from "Tamil *puNai*, to tie; tie, bond, pledge, security, surety, Kannada *poNe*, bond, bail..." etc. If these are Dravidian words in Sanskrit, then the related Greek *Pan* and Teutonic *Vanir* are also Dravidian words in these languages.

It is not only in respect of Indoaryan words that the linguists indulge in such hairsplitting: even in respect of the Greek word *theós* (God), instead of accepting that the word is an irregular derivation from Indo-European \**deiwos*, the linguists insist that *theós* is unrelated to \**deiwos*, and try to suggest alternative etymologies for it, eg. "from



\**thesós* (cf. *théspharos*, ‘spoken by god, ordained’), but root connection much disputed and still dubious”.<sup>135</sup> Some linguists go further: “Mr. Hopkins... rejects all the proposed etymologies and suggests that... *théos* itself is a loanword from pre-Greek sources.”<sup>136</sup> However, while this kind of hairsplitting is occasional in respect of Greek, it is a regular feature in respect of Indoaryan.

We have seen, earlier on in this chapter, how Michael Witzel, while admitting to the fact that the rivers in North India have Sanskrit names from the earliest recorded (Rigvedic) period itself, tries to suggest that at least three river names, KubhA, Sutudrl and KoSala, are non-Aryan, on grounds of the suggested Sanskrit etymologies being irregular.

But this kind of argument is basically untenable: while there can be no doubt that there is such a thing as regular derivations according to definite phonetic rules of etymology and phonetic change, there *can* be irregular derivations also, since human speech in its historical evolution has not evolved strictly according to rules. Thus, the Latin word *canis* (dog) is definitely derived from Indo-European \**kuon*: according to Buck, the “phonetic development is peculiar, but connection not to be questioned”.<sup>137</sup> Likewise, the modern Greek *ikkos* (horse) is definitely derived from Indo-European \**ekwo*, although, as Buck points out, “with some unexplained phonetic features”.<sup>138</sup>

Hence, it is clear that linguists seeking to reject Indo-European correspondences, or Sanskrit etymologies, of Indoaryan words, on the grounds of irregular phonetic features, are not being strictly honest, and their opinions cannot be considered conclusive in any sense of the term.

This was a brief summary of our main arguments in our earlier book.

An examination of the writings of the various

linguists who have written on this subject, as part of the sustained effort to produce long lists of “non-Aryan” words which form a “substratum” in Indoaryan languages, shows that logic and objectivity play no part in this exercise: any word in Sanskrit or in the modern Indoaryan languages, which appears to be similar in sound to any Dravidian word with even a vaguely similar meaning, automatically represents a Dravidian word adopted by Indoaryan in the eyes of these scholars, *even when most of such words have clear Sanskrit etymologies, and many of them, or similar words, are found in other Indo-European languages outside India as well.*

An examination or comparative study of the works of these linguists has been undertaken by an American scholar, Edwin F. Bryant, in his paper *Linguistic Substrata and the Indigenous Aryan Debate*. The quotations to follow are based on the rough draft of the above paper, the final version of which was presented at the October 1996 Michigan-Laussane International Seminar on Aryan and Non-Aryan in South Asia: Evidence, Interpretation and Ideology. (Bryant is currently on the faculty of the Department of History, Harvard University, Cambridge, USA.)

Bryant finds that “all these linguists are operating on the assumption, based on other criteria, that the Aryans ‘must have’ invaded India where there could not have been a ‘linguistic vacuum’”, and that, beyond this shared predisposition, there is no consensus among them on any specific point. His examination of the works of different linguists shows “that they are not internally consistent, since the opinions of the principal linguists in this area have differed quite considerably. This problematizes the value of this method as a significant determinant in the Indo-Aryan debate...”.

The extent to which these linguists (all of whom are otherwise in agreement in the belief that the Indoaryans are immigrants into India from an original homeland in South Russia) differ in the matter is made clear by Bryant:

1. About the grammatical and syntactical features common to both Dravidian and Indoaryan, Robert Caldwell (1856) was the first to draw attention to many of them; but he rejected the idea that these features constituted originally Dravidian grammatical and syntactical elements (which surfaced in Indoaryan as a substratum):  
“whatever the ethnological evidence of their identity may be supposed to exist... when we view the question philologically, and with reference to the evidence furnished by their languages alone, the hypothesis of their identity does not appear to me to have been established.”

But, a hundred years later, M.B. Emeneau (1956) drew up a whole list of such grammatical and syntactical features, and added to them in his later studies (1969, 1974). F.B.J. Kuiper (1967) and Massica (1976) also added to the list. These linguists concluded that these features were definitely evidence of a Dravidian substratum.

However, H. Hock (1975, 1984) strongly rejected the idea that these features are due to a Dravidian substratum. He pointed out that most of these features actually have parallels in other Indo-European languages outside India, and therefore they were more likely to be internal developments in Indoaryan. Since then, several other linguists, all otherwise staunch believers in the Aryan invasion theory, have rejected the idea that these features are Dravidian features.

F.B.J Kuiper (1974), a staunch protagonist of the substratum theory, admits that “we cannot compare the syntax of the Rigveda with contemporaneous Dravidian texts. The oldest Dravidian texts that we know are those of old Tamil. They probably date from about the second century AD and are, accordingly, at least a thousand years later than the Rgveda.”

M.B. Emeneau himself, although he sticks to the claim that a Dravidian substratum explains the situation better, admits (1980) that it is not as

easy as that: “Is the whole Indo-Aryan history one of self-development, and the complex Dravidian development triggered by Indo-Aryan, perhaps even New Indo-Aryan, influence, or, in the case of Kurukh, borrowed from New Indo-Aryan?... no easy solution is yet at hand.”

2. F.B.J. Kuiper (1991) produced a list of 380 words from the Rigveda, constituting four percent of the Rigvedic vocabulary, which he claimed were of non-Aryan (primarily Dravidian) origin. Earlier linguists were more cautious in the matter of Rigvedic vocabulary. M.B. Emeneau (1980), for example, hoped that the linguists would agree at least on *one* word *mayUra*, as a borrowing from Dravidian: “I can only hope that the evidence for *mayuura* as a RV borrowing from Dr. is convincing to scholars in general.”

But P. Thieme (1994) examined and rejected Kuiper’s list in toto, gave Indoaryan or Sanskrit etymologies for most of these words, and characterized Kuiper’s exercise as an example of a misplaced “zeal for hunting up Dravidian loans in Sanskrit”. In general, Thieme sharply rejects the tendency to force Dravidian or Austric etymologies onto Indoaryan words, and insists (1992) that “if a word can be explained easily from material extant in Sanskrit itself, there is little chance for such a hypothesis”.

Rahul Peter Das (a believer in the Aryan invasion theory), likewise rejects (1994) Kuiper’s list, and emphasises that there is “*not a single case* in which a *communis opinio* has been found confirming the foreign origin of a Rgvedic (and probably Vedic in general) word”.

Therefore, it is clear that claims regarding Dravidian loan-words in Vedic Sanskrit are totally baseless.

3. So far as the modern Indoaryan languages are concerned, also, the untenability of the whole exercise of hunting down non-Aryan words in Indoaryan can be illustrated by an examination of

a detailed study conducted by Massica (1991), a staunch believer in the Aryan invasion theory (and who, in fact, concludes that his study *confirms* the theory), who examined a complete list of names of plants and agricultural terms in Hindi.

Massica's study found that only 4.5% of the words have Austric etymologies, and 7.6% of the words have Dravidian etymologies, and, even here, "a significant portion of the suggested Dravidian and Austroasiatic etymologies is uncertain". When we consider that the few words where an Austric or a Dravidian etymology can be proved probably refer to plants and agricultural processes native to South India or Eastern India, Massica's study clearly contradicts his conclusions.

Massica, however, classifies 55% of the words as non-Aryan (other than Dravidian and Austric, and other than non-Indian names for non-Indian plants), but of "unknown origin".

It is words of this kind which, as we have already seen, have led the linguists to postulate extinct indigenous families of non-Aryan, non-Dravidian and non-Austric languages in ancient India, which have disappeared without a trace, but which constitute the main non-Aryan substrata in Indoaryan. As T. Burrow notes, even the most liberal Dravidian and Austric etymologising may not serve in explaining words which (in his opinion) are non-Aryan, since "it may very well turn out that the number of such words which cannot be explained will outnumber those which can be. This is the impression one gets, for example, from the field of plant names, since so far only a minority of this section of the non-Aryan words has been explained from these two linguistic families."

However, although the linguists are compelled to resort to these stratagems, they are not very comfortable with them. Emeneau (1980), for example, admits: "it hardly seems useful to take into account the possibilities of another language, or language family, *totally lost to the record*, as

the source” for the supposedly non-Aryan words.

Massica himself, although he brands the words as non-Aryan on the ground that there are no acceptable Sanskrit etymologies, admits that “it is not a requirement that the word be connected with a root, of course: there are many native words in Sanskrit as in all languages that cannot be analysed”.

Bloch and Thieme emphasize the point that the names of plants need not be analysable from etymological roots, since most of them will be slang or colloquial words derived from the “low culture” vernaculars of the same language.

4. It is in Classical Sanskrit word-lists that we find many words which can be, or have been, assigned Dravidian or Austric origins. This has led the linguists to emphasise a theory first mooted by Burrow (1968), according to which there was a very small number of Dravidian and Austric words (or none at all) in the Rigveda, which grew in the later Vedic literature, reached a peak in the Epics and PurANas, and in the Classical Sanskrit word-lists, and finally dwindled in the Prakrits, and even more so in the modern Indoaryan languages. This situation, according to Burrow, depicts a scenario where the Aryan immigrants into India were new arrivals at the time of composition of the hymns, and hence hardly any indigenous words had infiltrated into the vocabulary of the Rigveda. As the process of bilingualism developed (involving both the local inhabitants of the North preserving some of their original non-Aryan vocabulary as they adopted the Aryan speech-forms, as well as post-first generation Aryans inheriting non-Aryan words as they merged with the local people), the number of such words increased in the language of the Epics and PurANas, and the Classical Sanskrit word-lists. Finally, when there were no more bilingual speakers left in the North, since everyone had adopted the Aryan speech-forms, the appearance of non-Aryan words in the Indoaryan languages ceased, hence the modern Indoaryan languages have few such words.

However, Caldwell (1856), who was the first to produce lists of words “probably” borrowed by Sanskrit from Dravidian, rejected this substratum theory. He noted that the words did not include the essential aspects of vocabulary (such as actions, pronouns, body parts, etc.), and consisted almost exclusively of words “remote from ordinary use”, and hence concluded that the Dravidian languages could not possibly have been spoken in North India at the time of the alleged Aryan invasion.

Bloch (1929), who rejected the substratum theory completely, pointed out that the Dravidian languages of the South, even at the level of common speech, contain a massive amount of borrowed Sanskrit vocabulary covering every aspect of life. But this is not explained as an Aryan substratum in South India. The natural explanation for these borrowings is that a relatively small number of Sanskrit-speaking individuals were responsible for them. Likewise, the Dravidian words in Sanskrit were reverse borrowings, being introductions of Dravidian words into literary Sanskrit by similar Sanskrit-speaking individuals from the South. Such words were only part of the Classical Sanskrit lexicon, and few of them percolated to the Indoaryan vernaculars. Thus, even popular Sanskrit words like *nīra* (water, Tamil *nīr*), *mīna* (fish, Tamil *mīn*), heramba (buffalo, Tamil *erumai*), etc. are not used in the modern Indoaryan languages, which use, instead, derivatives of the Sanskrit words *pānīyam*, *matsya* and *mahīśa* respectively. Such words, as Bloch points out, were artificial and temporary introductions into literary Sanskrit, most of which (although it is likely that some of them became so popular that they replaced, or accompanied, original Sanskrit words, and percolated down into modern Indoaryan) either died out completely, or remained purely literary words which did *not* become a part of naturally spoken Indoaryan speech.

Massica, in his recent study (1991) already referred to, also notes that Dravidian words in

Sanskrit are not found in present-day Indoaryan languages like Hindi. Clearly, these words do not represent a Dravidian substratum in Sanskrit, but a process of artificial adoption of vocabulary from regional speech-forms, both Aryan and non-Aryan.

5. Many linguists question the idea that there could be a Dravidian or Austric substratum in the Indoaryan languages of North India, even on the grounds of the likely geographical distribution of these two families in ancient times. In respect of the Austric languages, even a staunch supporter of the non-Aryan substratum theory like Burrow (1968) admits that the possibility of an Austric substratum is remote since “the evidence as it is so far established would suggest that these languages in ancient times as well as now were situated only in eastern India”. Massica (1979) and Southworth (1979) also reiterate this point.

R.P. Das (1994) points out that there is “not a single bit of *uncontroversial* evidence on the actual spread of Dravidian and Austro-Asiatic in prehistoric times, so that any statement on Dravidian and Austric in Rgvedic times is nothing but speculation”.

6. In fact, when words are similar in both Indoaryan and Dravidian, it is more natural to conclude that the Indoaryan words are the original ones. According to Thieme, “all the Dravidian languages known to us fairly bristle with loans from Sanskrit and the Aryan vernaculars. Dravidian literature in South India came into existence under the impulse and influence of Sanskrit literature and speech. Wherever there is a correspondence in the vocabularies of Sanskrit and Dravidian, there is a presumption, *to be removed only by specific argument*, that Sanskrit has been the lender, Dravidian the borrower.”

While Thieme is, of course, an opponent of the substratum theory, even so staunch a supporter of the substratum theory as Emeneau (1980) admits that it is “always possible, eg. to counter a



suggestion of borrowing from one of the indigenous language families by suggesting that there has been borrowing in the other direction”.

7. Ultimately, therefore, the whole question of a Dravidian, or non-Aryan, substratum in the Indoaryan languages is a matter of dogma rather than scientific study.

R.P. Das (1994), for example, points out that there is little linguistic logic involved in the debate about the Dravidian or Austric origins of Indoaryan words: “Many of the arguments for (or against) such foreign origin are often not the results of impartial and thorough research, but rather of (often wistful) statements of faith.”

Bloch (1929), likewise, had earlier dismissed the Dravidian derivations which many linguists sought to force on Sanskrit words, as being not “self-evident” but “a matter of probability and to a certain extent of faith”.

While both Das and Bloch are opponents of the substratum theory (though believers in the Aryan invasion theory in general), Emeneau (1980), a staunch supporter of the substratum theory, himself admits that these derivations are “in fact all merely ‘suggestions’. Unfortunately, all areal etymologies are in the last analysis unprovable, are ‘acts of faith’.”

The “faith” in all these cases is the faith in the external (to India) origin of the Indoaryans (and Indo-Europeans), which Emeneau (1980) describes as “our linguistic doctrine which has been held now for more than a century and a half”.

Hence, after his examination of the claims and counterclaims of the linguists, Bryant reaches the logical conclusion that “the theory of Aryan migrations must be established without doubt *on other grounds* for research into pre-Aryan linguistic substrata to become meaningful. However, the ‘evidence’ of a linguistic substratum

in Indo-Aryan, in and of itself, due to its inconclusive nature, cannot be presented in isolation as decisive proof in support of the theory of Aryan invasions or migrations into the Indian subcontinent.”

## VI PROTOLINGUISTIC STUDIES

Finally, we come to that aspect of linguistic studies which first led the linguists to dismiss the idea of India being the original homeland, and which first created the impression, which persists to this day, *even after this aspect of linguistic studies has now been recognized by serious linguists as a method which cannot be relied upon for arriving at any conclusions on the subject*, that linguistics has “proved” the non-Indian origin of the Indo-Europeans. We refer to the study of the proto-language and of its geographical implications for the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages.

The linguists have reconstructed the Proto-Indo-European language on the basis of definite phonetic rules of sound-change and development, applied to the words common to different Indo-European branches. Allowing for the fact that most linguists often tend to adopt a rigid and dogmatic approach to the subject (which, as we have already seen, leads them to indulge in hairsplitting, and to reject many obvious cognate forms, like Greek *theos*, or to only grudgingly accept some others, like Latin *canis* and modern Greek *ikkos*), and that it is often difficult to explain changes in vocabulary, which makes it necessary to be cautious in postulating original words (as has often been pointed out, as an example, all the modern Italic languages have words for “horse” derived from a Latin word *caballus*: eg. Italian *cavallo*, French *cheval*, Spanish *caballo*, Rumanian *cal*; while the actual Latin word for the horse was *equus*. If Latin had been an unrecorded language, and it had been required to reconstruct it on the basis of words common to its present day descendants, the word *equus* would never be reconstructed), the

reconstruction of the Proto-Indo-European language may generally be accepted as a reasonably valid one, with some natural limitations.

However, this reconstruction has not been treated as a purely academic exercise, but as a *means of pinpointing the geographical location of the original homeland*. There have been two main methods by which the linguists have sought to use the exercise as a means of rejecting the idea of an Indian homeland. and, since their endeavours appear to have been so successful in mesmerising all and sundry and in effectively derailing all rational inquiry into the subject, it is necessary for us to examine these two methods:

- A. Linguistic Paleontology.
- B. Archaic Dialectology.

## **VI. A. Linguistic Paleontology**

Linguistic Paleontology is a method devised by nineteenth century linguists, by which they sought to reconstruct the geographical and socio-cultural environment of the Proto-Indo-European people on the basis of words common to different Indo-European branches.

On the basis of the few names of animals, birds and plants, and words indicating climate, common to different Indo-European branches, the linguists concluded that the Proto-Indo-Europeans lived in a cold environment, and were acquainted with a few plants/trees like barley, birch, pine and oak, and animals like horses, cattle, goats, sheep, deer, bears, wolves, dogs, foxes and otters.

The names of these plants and animals do not really pinpoint a specific area, since they are all found in a large area ranging from Europe to North India, covering almost the entire Indo-European belt. But the linguists concluded that the evidence of these names clearly excluded India from being the location of the original

homeland, since the common names did not include names of plants/trees and animals which are specifically found in India (such as the elephant, etc).

However, this argument is clearly illogical: if the Indo-European languages outside India do not appear to have names for plants and animals which are found in India, but not found in the areas where these languages are spoken; then the Indoaryan languages also do not have names for plants and animals which are found in Indo-European areas outside India, but not found in India. The conclusion that can be derived from this is simply that Indo-European languages generally (but not always) retained Proto-Indo-European names only for those plants and animals which were also found in their new habitats: they generally *lost* the names for plants and animals which were found in former habitats but not in newer ones. This would naturally be the case, when we consider that the speakers of most Indo-European languages would generally be natives of their respective areas, who *adopted* the Indo-European speech from immigrant Indo-Europeans, and who would therefore be ignorant of, and unconcerned with, plants and animals native to the former habitats of the immigrants.

Therefore, linguistic paleontology stands largely discredited today as a method of reconstruction of the original geographical environment of the Indo-Europeans, or at least as a method on the negative testimony of which certain areas like India could be excluded from being the original homeland. As the eminent linguist Stefan Zimmer puts it: "The long dispute about the reliability of this 'linguistic paleontology' is not yet finished, but approaching its inevitable end - with a negative result, of course."<sup>139</sup>

But, as a matter of fact, such evidence as there is, far from disproving the Indian homeland theory, actually proves this theory.

T. Gamkrelidze and V. Ivanov,<sup>140</sup> two linguists

who are supporters of the Anatolian homeland theory, have recently examined words in the Indo-European languages which were largely ignored or missed by the linguists in general, and they have arrived at the conclusion that Proto-Indo-European names definitely existed for some more animals such as the leopard (Sanskrit *pRdAku*, Greek *pardos*, Hittite *parsana*) and the monkey (Sanskrit *kapi*, Greek *kepos*, which they also link, with k/mute alteration, with Germanic and Celtic words like Old Norse *api*, Old English *apa*, Old High German *affo*, Welsh *epa* and Irish *apa*, “ape”), and even more significantly, the camel and the elephant:

1. The camel is native to West Asia and to Central Asia. There are cognate words for the camel in Tokharian \**alpi*, Old Church Slavonic *velibadu*, Baltic (Lithuanian) *verbliudas*, and Germanic words like Old Norse *ulfaldi*, Old English *olfend*, Old High German *olbanta* and Gothic *ulbandus*. A related word in Hittite, according to C.D. Buck, is *ulupantas* or *ulpantas* which appears to be used for “ox”.<sup>141</sup>

The word is similar to the Greek word *elephas* for elephant, which is the source for all the European names for the elephant. Buck suggests that this word is “based upon... Egyptian words... to be analysed as *el-ephas*, the second part, like Lat. *ebur*, ‘ivory’, from Egypt. *Ab*, ‘elephant, ivory’, but first part disputed”.<sup>142</sup> He adds: “Hence also (though disputed by some) with shift to ‘camel’, Goth. *ulbandus*, ON *ulfaldi*, OE *olfend*, OHG *olbanta*.....”<sup>143</sup>

The evidence of the Tokharian word, however, conclusively proves that this word *cannot* be a borrowing by Greek from Egyptian. A word so borrowed could never have been transmitted to Tokharian in Central Asia by any manipulation of any known theory of Indo-European origins and migrations; and the Tocharian word is clearly a related one since it contains both the elements, the “second part” of the word as well as the “disputed” first part.

Therefore, while it is very likely that there was a “shift” from an original meaning “elephant” to a new meaning “camel”, *this shift took place in Central Asia and not in Greece*. The cognate words for camel in Tocharian, Germanic, Slavonic and Baltic (and also Hittite, where there has been a second shift in meaning to “ox”) clearly prove that all these branches shared a sojourn in the camel lands of Central Asia.

2. The Greek word *el-ephas* is exactly cognate (again, only the second part of the word) with the Rigvedic *ibhas*. As we have already seen in our chapter on the Geography of the Rigveda, *ibhas* is just one of the four purely “Aryan” names (*ibhas, sRNI, hastin and vAraNa*) for the elephant in the Rigveda. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov point out that the Latin word *ebur*, “ivory”, is also cognate to the Sanskrit *ibhas*.

We thus have the evidence of three different branches of Indo-European languages for the elephant as an animal known to the Proto-Indo-Europeans. As the Proto-Indo-Europeans were not native to Africa, African elephants (not being domesticated) could not have been directly known to them (even as an imported animal) in any other proposed homeland, and the Asiatic elephant is not native to any area north or west of India, the implications of this evidence are loud and clear.

Incidentally, it is possible that the Egyptian word *Ab* for “elephant” or “ivory” is itself derived from Sanskrit *ibhas*. We have it on the testimony of the Old Testament of the Bible (I Kings 22.10; II Chronicles 9.21) that apes, ivory and peacocks were imported from India (the peacocks confirm that the land referred to is India, or a transit port on the way from India) into Palestine, and doubtless the same was the case in Egypt as well.

The Hebrew word for “ape” in the above references is *qoph* which is derived by linguists from the Sanskrit *kapi*; and, likewise, Buck

accepts *kapi* as the “probable source of Egyptian *qephi*”.<sup>144</sup> Significantly, the words for elephant in Arabic and Hebrew, *fil* and *pil* respectively, are clearly derived from the Sanskrit word *pllu* for a male elephant, thereby indicating that it was the Indian elephant rather than the African one which was known in this region.

3. An animal whose name is common to almost all the Indo-European branches is the cow (Sanskrit *go*, Avestan *gao*, German *kuh*, Latin *bo*s, Irish *bo*, Lettish *guovs*, Greek *boûs*, Old Church Slavonic *krava*, etc), for whom the reconstructed Proto-Indo-European word is *\*g<sup>w</sup>ou*. It is clear that the cow was a very intrinsic part of the life of the Indo-Europeans, as is proved also by its dominant status in the culture, idiom and imagery of the oldest Indo-European texts, the Rigveda and the Avesta.

Significantly, different ancient civilizations (Sumerian *gu*, Ancient Chinese *gou*) appear to have borrowed the word from the Indo-Europeans. It is, therefore, quite likely that the Proto-Indo-European homeland was a primary centre of diffusion of cattle breeding.

It may be noted in this context that recent research by scientists at the Trinity College in Dublin has revolutionised ideas about the origins of the domestication of cattle. It was formerly believed that cattle domestication first took place in Anatolia, and then spread to the rest of the world; and the humped breeds of Indian cattle, known in the West as Zebu or Brahmin cattle, were believed to be descended from these Anatolian cattle.

However, the scientists “who examined the DNA of 13 breeds of modern cattle found that all the European and African cattle breeds shared the same genetic lineage. But the eastern types came from an entirely different source. By backtracking the number of mutations that must have occurred, the scientists have also deduced that the two lines split more than 200,000 years

ago; and since the two lines are still distinct, the simplest interpretation of the research was that there were two separate domestication events.”<sup>145</sup>

Thus, India, the centre of domestication of other species of bovids, like the buffalo and the gayal, was also the centre of domestication of the eastern or humped cattle.

And, to howsoever great or small an extent, this appears to strengthen the claims of India to be the location of the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages.

This is corroborated by the fact that Sanskrit retains a distinctly different root word for “milk”, which appears to be older, and closer to the original Indo-European ethos, than the common word for “milk” found in almost all the other branches of Indo-European languages.

Many of the other branches have related words for “milk”: German *milch*, Irish *mlicht*, Russian *moloko*, etc. And even where they appear to differ in the noun form, they share a common word for the verb “to milk”: Latin *mulgere*, Old High German *melchan*, Greek *amèlgo*, Old Church Slavonic *mlešti*, Lithuanian *milZti*, Albanian *mjellë*, Irish *bligim*, etc.

Only Sanskrit and Iranian stand out in not having any word related to the above. Instead, we have Sanskrit *dugdha*, “milk”, derived from the root *duh-*, “to milk”, with related verbal forms *duxtan*, *dušidan*, “to milk” in modern Persian (though not in the Avesta).

The root *duh-*, found directly only in Sanskrit, and only secondarily in Iranian, appears to have deeper roots in the Indo-European languages. According to many linguists (although many others dismiss the derivation as simplistic), the Indo-European words for “daughter” (Sanskrit *duhitar*, Persian *dukhtar*, Gothic *dauhtar*,



Lithuanian *dukte*, Old Church Slavonic *dUšti*, Greek *thugater*, etc.) are derived from the same root, so that the word basically means “milkmaid”, indicating that cattle-breeding was a primary occupation among the Proto-Indo-Europeans.

## VI.B. Archaic Dialectology

The second significant aspect of the study of the protolanguage, on the basis of which an Indian homeland was rejected by the linguists, was that Sanskrit, in some respects, represents a phonetically highly evolved form of the original Proto-Indo-European: thus, for example, to quote the most common factor cited, Sanskrit is a “Satem” language, and in fact, alongwith Avestan, the most highly palatalized of the Satem languages. The original Proto-Indo-European language was a “Kentum” language, and some branches evolved into Satem branches by a process of palatalization of original velars (k, g) into palatals (c, j) and into sibilants (s, Š). The Kentum branches thus represent an older form of Indo-European, and all the Kentum branches are found only in Europe - or so it was thought until the discovery of Tokharian in Chinese Turkestan; but this discovery was quickly sought to be absorbed into the western homeland theory by postulating an early migration of the Tokharians from the west into the east,

However, as we have already seen earlier on in this chapter, the phenomenon of palatalization, as also various other features which represent phonetic evolutions from the Indo-European original, are now accepted as innovations which took place in the heartland of the Proto-Indo-European homeland after the migrations of early branches which retained the original features.

As Winn puts it: “Linguistic innovations that take place at the core may never find their way out to peripheral areas, hence dialects spoken on the fringe tend to preserve archaic features that have long since disappeared from the mainstream.”<sup>146</sup> Therefore, the fact that Sanskrit represents a

phonetically evolved form of the Proto-Indo-European language, far from being a negative factor in respect of the idea of an Indian homeland, is a *positive* one.

In fact, there are three factors, in respect of archaisms, which add up to make a strong case for an Indian homeland:

1. Various evolved phonetic features in Sanskrit, as we have seen, particularly in the matter of palatalization of original velars, definitely point towards India as the original homeland.

2. At the same time, in respect of *vocabulary*, Sanskrit is the most archaic or representative language in the entire Indo-European family. As Griffith puts it in his preface to his translation of the Rigveda, in the language of the Rigveda “we see the roots and shoots of the languages of Greek and Latin, of Kelt, Teuton and Slavonian... the science of comparative philology could hardly have existed without the study of Sanskrit...”

As we have pointed out in some detail in our earlier book, the fact that Sanskrit has retained the largest number of Proto-Indo-European words, even when its phonetic and grammatical features continued to evolve, is strong evidence of an Indian homeland: the language of a migrating group may retain many of its original phonetic or grammatical features, even when these features are lost or evolved away in the language still spoken in the original area, but it is likely to lose or replace a substantial part of its original vocabulary (though it may retain many telltale archaic words) as compared to the language still spoken back home.

Warren Cowgill, in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, points out that this was the case with most of the ancient Indo-European languages: “In prehistoric times, most branches of Indo-European were carried into territories presumably or certainly occupied by speakers of non-Indo-European languages... it is reasonable to suppose that

these languages had some effect on the speech of the newcomers. For the lexicon, this is indeed demonstrable in Hittite and Greek, at least. It is much less clear, however, that these non-Indo-European languages affected significantly the sounds and grammar of the Indo-European languages that replaced them.”<sup>147</sup> The same was the case with the modern languages: “When Indo-European languages have been carried within historical times into areas occupied by speakers of other languages, they have generally taken over a number of loan-words... however, there has been very little effect on sounds and grammar.”<sup>148</sup>

3. Finally, and most significant of all, we have the fact that within India itself, certain isolated languages have retained archaisms already lost even in Vedic Sanskrit. There is no way in which the presence of these languages, which definitely represent remnants of extinct branches of Indo-European other than Indoaryan or even the hypothetical “Indo-Iranian”, can be incorporated into any theory of migration of the Indoaryans from South Russia to India.

There are two such languages, one of which is now accepted by the linguists as a remnant of an extinct Kentum branch of Indo-European languages, but in respect of the other, detailed research is necessary from a point of view hitherto unsuspected:

**a.** The BangANI language, spoken in the Garhwal region in the western Himalayas (in Uttar Pradesh) was brought into dramatic highlight by Clans Peter Zoller, a German linguist, in 1987 (as reported in our earlier book) when he announced the discovery of the remnants of an ancient Kentum language in the older layers of this language.

Zoller pointed out that BangANI contained three

historical layers: “The youngest and most extensive layer is where BangANI shares many similarities with the Indo-Aryan languages of Himachal Pradesh and Garhwal. The second is an older layer of Sanskrit words where one can observe a strikingly large number of words that belongs to the oldest layer of Sanskrit, the Sanskrit of the Vedas. The third and the oldest layer in BangANI is formed by words that have no connection with Sanskrit but with the Kentum branch of Indo-European languages.”<sup>149</sup>

By 1989, Zoller had presented a full-fledged case, which created a furore in linguistic circles. An immediate reaction to it was a joint project, by an Indian linguist Suhnu Ram Sharma and a Dutch linguist George van Driem, which examined Zoller’s claims. According to these scholars, “Zoller’s BangANI findings not only had far-reaching implications for our understanding of the prehistoric migrations of ancient Indo-Europeans, they also appeared to violate much of what is received knowledge in historical linguistics.”<sup>150</sup> Hence: “In 1994, we conducted fieldwork in order to verify these remarkable findings. The results of our investigation are presented here. On the basis of these results, it is our contention that no Kentum Indo-European remnants exist in the BangANI language.”<sup>151</sup>

Not only did these linguists reject Zoller’s findings, but they also levelled serious allegations regarding Zoller’s professional integrity: “In view of our findings, and in view of the manner in which Zoller presented his, the question which remains for the reader to resolve in his own mind is whether Zoller has fallen prey to the wishful etymologizing of transcriptional errors or whether he has deliberately perpetrated a hoax upon the academic community. In other words, was the joke on Zoller, or was the joke on us?”<sup>152</sup>

The above is an example of the vicious reactions evoked among scholars inimical to the Indian homeland theory, to any serious scholarly study which tends to, directly or indirectly, support, or

even appear to support, this theory.

The matter did not end there. Zoller took up the challenge and issued a strong and detailed rejoinder to the allegations of van Driem and Sharma. Even more significant was a detailed counter study by Anvita Abbi and Hans Hock which not only conclusively demolished their “refutation” of Zoller’s findings, and conclusively proved that BangANI does indeed contain the remnants of an extinct Kentum language, but also clearly showed that it was Suhnu Ram Sharma and George van Driem who had attempted to deliberately perpetrate a hoax on the academic community.

The long and short of it is that BangANI is now accepted by linguists all over the world as a language whose oldest layers contain remnants of an archaic Kentum language, a circumstance which is totally incongruous with any theory of Indoaryan immigrations into India.

**b.** The Sinhalese language of Sri Lanka is generally accepted as a regular, if long separated and isolated, member of the “Indoaryan” branch of Indo-European languages; and no linguist studying Sinhalese appears, so far, to have suggested any other status for the language.

However, apart from the fact that Sinhalese has been heavily influenced not only by Sanskrit and (due to the predominance of Buddhism in Sri Lanka) Pali, but also by Dravidian and the near-extinct Vedda, the language contains many features which are not easily explainable on the basis of Indoaryan.

Wilhelm Geiger, in his preface to his study of Sinhalese, points out that the phonology of the language “is full of intricacies... We sometimes meet with a long vowel when we expect a short one and vice versa”, <sup>153</sup> and, further: “In

morphology there are formations, chiefly in the verbal inflexion, which seem to be peculiar to Sinhalese and to have no parallels in other Indo-Aryan dialects... and I must frankly avow that I am unable to solve all the riddles arising out of the grammar of the Sinhalese language.”<sup>154</sup>

However, not having any particular reason to suspect that Sinhalese could be anything but an “Indoaryan” language descended from Sanskrit, Geiger does not carry out any detailed research to ascertain whether or not Sinhalese *is* indeed in a class with the “other Indo-Aryan dialects”. In fact, referring to an attempt by an earlier scholar, Gnana Prakasar, to connect the Sinhalese word *eLi* (light) with the Greek *hElios* (sun), Geiger rejects the suggestion as “the old practice of comparing two or more words of the most distant languages merely on the basis of similar sounds, without any consideration for chronology, for phonological principles, or for the historical development of words and forms...”<sup>155</sup>

However, there are words in Sinhalese, of which we can cite only one here, which cannot be so easily dismissed: the Sinhalese word *watura*, “water”, is not only closely cognate to the Germanic words (which includes English “water”) and Hittite *water*, but it represents a form which is impossible to explain on the basis of Sanskrit or Indoaryan etymologies. Geiger himself, elsewhere, rejects an attempt by an earlier scholar, Wickremasinghe, to derive the word from Sanskrit *vartarUka* as “improbable”; and although he accepts the suggestion of another scholar, B. Gunasekara, that the “original meaning is ‘spread, extension, flood’ (M. *vithar*)... Pk. *vitthAra*, Sk. *vistAra*,”<sup>156</sup> he notes that “vocalism *a.u.* in *vatura* is irregular, cf. *vitura*”.<sup>157</sup>

M.W.S. de Silva, in his detailed study of Sinhalese, points out that “Indo-Aryan (or Indic) research began with an effort devoted primarily to classifying Indian languages and tracing their phonological antecedents historically back to Vedic and Classical Sanskrit... Early Sinhalese

studies have followed the same tradition.”<sup>158</sup>  
However, Sinhalese “presents a linguistic make-up which, for various reasons, distinguishes itself from the related languages in North India... there are features in Sinhalese which are not known in any other Indo-Aryan language, but these features, which make the story of Sinhalese all the more exciting, had not received much attention in the earlier studies.”<sup>159</sup>

He also points out: “Another area of uncertainty is the source of the small but high-frequency segment of the Sinhalese vocabulary, especially words for parts of the body and the like: eg. *oluva* ‘head’, *bella* ‘neck’, *kakula* ‘leg’, *kalava* ‘thigh’, etc. which are neither Sanskritic nor Tamil in origin. The native grammarians of the past have recognized that there are three categories of words - (a) loanwords, (b) historically derived words and (c) indigenous words... No serious enquiry has been made into these so-called indigenous words”.<sup>160</sup>

In his preface, de Silva notes that “there is a growing awareness of the significance of Sinhalese as a test case for the prevailing linguistic theories; more than one linguist has commented on the oddities that Sinhalese presents and the fact... that Sinhalese is ‘unlike any language I have seen’.”<sup>161</sup> Further, he quotes Geiger: “It is extremely difficult, and perhaps impossible, to assign it a definite place among the modern Indo-Aryan dialects.”<sup>162</sup>

But, it does not strike de Silva, any more than Geiger, that the reason for all this confusion among linguists could be their failure to recognize the possibility that Sinhalese is not an Indoaryan language (in the sense in which the term is used) at all, but a descendant of another branch of Indo-European languages.

From the historical point of view, “a vast body of material has been gathered together by way of lithic and other records to portray the continuous

history of Sinhalese from as early as the third century BC.”<sup>163</sup> in Sri Lanka, and “attempts have been made to trace the origins of the earliest Sinhalese people and their language either to the eastern parts of North India or to the western parts”.<sup>164</sup>

But de Silva quotes Geiger as well as S. Paranavitana, and agrees with their view that “the band of immigrants who gave their name Simhala to the composite people, their language and the island, seems to have come from northwestern India... their original habitat was on the upper reaches of the Indus river... in what is now the borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan”,<sup>165</sup> and quotes Paranavitana’s summary of the evidence, and his conclusion: “All this evidence goes to establish that the original Sinhalese migrated to Gujarat from the lands of the Upper Indus, and were settled in LATa for some time before they colonised Ceylon.”<sup>166</sup>

A thorough examination, with an open mind, of the vocabulary and grammar of Sinhalese, will establish that Sinhalese represents a remnant of an archaic branch of Indo-European languages.

The evidence of BangANI and Sinhalese (the one word *watura* itself) constitutes a strong case for an Indian homeland since it clashes sharply with any theory of Indoaryan migrations into India.

Basically, the confusion that we see in respect of Sinhalese studies is also found in the study of Indoaryan languages in general. And the root of all this confusion is the general theory which maintains that:

- a. The “Indo-Iranians” represented a branch of Indo-Europeans who separated from the other branches in distant regions and migrated to Central Asia, and shared a joint “Indo-Iranian” phase there, before separating and migrating into India



and Iran respectively.

**b.** The “Indoaryans” represented that section of the “Indo-Iranians” who entered India and composed the Rigveda during the earliest period of their sojourn in the northwestern parts of India, before expanding into the rest of India and giving birth to the ancestral forms of the present-day Indoaryan languages.

The linguistic evidence (even apart from the archaic evidence of BangANI and Sinhalese) totally fails to fit in with this theory:

1. “Indoaryan” and Iranian do not constitute one branch, but at least two distinct branches: Winn points out that there are “ten ‘living branches’... Two branches, Indic (Indo-Aryan) and Iranian dominate the eastern cluster. Because of the close links between their classical forms - Sanskrit and Avestan respectively - these languages are often grouped together as a single Indo-Iranian branch”.<sup>167</sup> And he notes that these close links came about due to “a period of close contact between Indic and Iranian people (which) brought about linguistic convergence, thus making the two languages appear misleadingly similar”.<sup>168</sup>

As Meillet had long ago pointed out: “It remains quite clear, however, that Indic and Iranian developed from different Indo-European dialects, whose period of common development was not long enough to effect total fusion.”<sup>169</sup>

The evidence of comparative mythology (see Chapter 10) also disproves the common Indo-Iranian hypothesis. Rigvedic mythology is often the only connecting link between different other Indo-European mythologies, while Avestan mythology appears to have no links with any other Indo-European mythology other than that of the

Rigveda itself.

The “period of common development” which brought about the “close links between... Sanskrit and Avestan” was of course the “period of close contact between Indic and Iranian people” in the Late Period of the Rigveda, as we have already seen in the previous chapter.

2. The Indo-Iranian hypothesis is also disproved by the fact that Iranian shares at least one isogloss with Greek and Armenian (fitting in with our classification of these three branches as constituting the Anu confederation of the Early Period of the Rigveda) which is not shared by Sanskrit: “In three Indo-European languages, whose grouping is significant - Greek, Armenian and Iranian - the shift from *s* to *h* occurred, not, as in Brythonic, at a relatively recent date, but before the date of the oldest texts. Moreover, in all three, the distribution pattern is exactly the same: *h* develops from initial \**s* before a vowel, from intervocalic \**s* and from some occurrences of \**s* before and after sonants; \**s* remains before and after a stop.”<sup>170</sup>

This shift, which is universal in the three branches, is not found in Sanskrit and a majority of the Indoaryan languages, although a similar shift took place “at a relatively recent date” in some modern Indoaryan dialects of the northwest and west (Gujarati, etc.) and, significantly, in Sinhalese.

Another, minor, point where Greek, Armenian and Iranian share a common development, distinct from Sanskrit, is in “those cases in which a morphological element ends with a dental consonant and the following element begins with a *t*’.”<sup>171</sup> All the three branches show *st* while “Sanskrit regularly shows *tt*’.”<sup>172</sup>

3. There is one isogloss which is found only in the three branches referred to above (Greek, Armenian and Iranian) and in Sanskrit, and in

some modern Indoaryan dialects of the north and northwest (as far as the western dialects of Hindi), but not in the majority of modern Indoaryan languages: “the prohibitive negation \**mE* is attested only in Indo-Iranian (*mA*), Greek (*mE*) and Armenian (*mI*), elsewhere it is totally lacking... and there is no difference in this respect between the ancient and modern stages of Greek, Armenian or Persian.”<sup>173</sup>

But there is a difference in this respect between the ancient stage (Sanskrit) and a majority of the languages in the modern stage of what the linguists classify as the “Indoaryan” branch (except for modern western Hindi *mat*, etc.).

This could be because most of the Indoaryan languages lost this word; but it could also be because most of the modern Indoaryan languages are descendants of Indo-European dialects which *never* had this word, and were not directly part of the common culture developed by the P<sup>U</sup>rus (the Vedic Aryans) and the Anus (Iranians, Armenians, Greeks) in the northern and northwestern parts of North India, after the departure of the Druhyus. Their ancestral dialects were what we have (in our earlier book) called the “Inner Indo-European” dialects spoken in the interior of India.

4. This, at any rate, is certainly clearly demonstrated in the development of Indo-European / in “Indo-Iranian”: “all of Indo-Iranian tended to confuse *r* and / .... Every IE / becomes *r* in Iranian. This same occurrence is to be observed in the Northwest of India, and, consequently, in the Rigveda, which is based on idioms of the Northwest.”<sup>174</sup>

So, is this an “Indo-Iranian” phenomenon? Apparently not: “On the other hand, initial and intervocalic / was present in Indic dialects of other regions. Numerous elements of these dialects were gradually introduced into the literary language, which became fixed in Classical Sanskrit. This explains the appearance of / in

more recent parts of the Rigveda and its subsequent rise in frequency.”<sup>175</sup>

Meillet correctly observes that this is “an instance of concordance of Iranian with the Indic idioms closest to the area of Iranian and discordance with Indic idioms further to the East”.<sup>176</sup>

The concept of an “Indo-Iranian” branch is based on “the close links between their classical forms - Sanskrit and Avestan respectively”,<sup>177</sup> which is the result of a “period of common development”,<sup>178</sup> as we have already seen. This period of common development was before the separation of the Vedic and Iranian people.

But this conversion of the original Indo-European l into r is a phenomenon pertaining to this period of common development, and it is *not* shared by the ancient “Indoaryan” dialects to the east of the Rigvedic area. *These dialects, therefore, represent a pre-“Indo-Iranian” phase of Indo-European*, which is incompatible with any theory of an Indo-Iranian phase in Central Asia and Afghanistan before the separation of the Indoaryans and Iranians and the consequent migration of Indoaryans into India.

It is also incompatible with any theory of the origin of the “Indoaryan” languages from the Vedic language which forms part of this joint “Indo-Iranian” phase. Therefore, while the word “Indoaryan” may be used *in the sense of “Aryan or Indo-European languages historically native to India”*, it cannot and should not be used in the sense in which it is generally used: ie. to mean languages descended from a language (Vedic Sanskrit) which, or whose proto-form, shared a joint “Indo-Iranian” phase with Proto-Iranian.

5. The theory that the Indoaryan languages are descended from Vedic Sanskrit is not really corroborated by linguistic factors. As we have pointed out in our earlier book, S.K. Chatterji makes the following remarks about the Old,

## Middle and New phases of Indoaryan:

“The Aryan came to India, assuredly not as a single, uniform or standardised speech, but rather as a group or groups of dialects... only one of these dialects or dialect-groups has mainly been represented in the language of the Vedas - other dialects... (might) have been ultimately transformed into one or the other of the various New Indo-Aryan languages and dialects. The mutual relationship of these Old Indo-Aryan dialects, their individual traits and number as well as location, will perhaps never be settled... The true significance of the various Prakrits as preserved in literary and other records, their origin and interrelations, and their true connection with the modern languages, forms one of the most baffling problems of Indo-Aryan linguistics... and there has been admixture among the various dialects to an extent which has completely changed their original appearance, and which makes their affiliation to forms of Middle Indo-Aryan as in our records at times rather problematical.”<sup>179</sup>

Thus S.K. Chatterji unwillingly admits (although he tries to explain it within the framework of the invasion theory) that:

- a.** There were many different dialects, of which the language of the Rigveda was only one, and that the modern Indoaryan languages may well be descended from these other non-Vedic dialects.
  
- b.** The relations (within each chronological group: Old, Middle or New; as well as between different chronological groups) between Old Indoaryan (Rigvedic and Classical Sanskrit, as well as the “other” dialects or dialect groups) and Middle Indoaryan (Prakrits) and the present-day New Indoaryan languages are “baffling” and

“problematical” and “will perhaps never be settled”.

The problem will certainly “never be settled” if examined from the viewpoint of an Aryan invasion of India which treats the Indoaryan languages as descended from the languages of people who migrated into India from the northwest after an “Indo-Iranian” phase in Central Asia and an Indo-European phase in South Russia.

As per our theory, Proto-Indo-European, and its earlier forms, developed in the interior of North India. In ancient times, it developed into various dialects, many of which expanded into the northwest and Afghanistan. The divisions of these dialects can be conveniently classified in Puranic terms (howsoever unpalatable it may sound to modern ears) with the dialects of the extreme northwest (which included the ancestral forms of most of the European languages, as well as Hittite and Tocharian) being the Druhyu dialects, the dialects further to their east (mainly the ancestral forms of Iranian, as also Armenian and Greek) being the Anu dialects, and the dialects in the northern parts of North India (Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and nearby areas) being the PUru dialects (including Vedic). *In the interior were other dialects* which represented other Puranic groups: Yadus, TurvaSas, IkSvAkus, etc.

With the emigration of the Druhyus, and later the Anus, and the predominant position which the Rigvedic language came to occupy (after the Vedic cult spread all over India, incorporated all the religious systems of the land in the course of time, and became itself the elite layer of an all-inclusive Pan-Indian religious system) in India, began the phase of Indian history which the linguists and historians have interpreted as the “Indoaryan” phase.

The Rigvedic language heavily influenced all the other languages of India, including the languages descended from the remnants of the Outer dialects (Druhyu, Anu), those descended from the

Inner dialects (Yadu, TurvaSa, IkSvAku, etc), and also the Dravidian and Austric languages in the South and East.

In turn, the literary forms which developed from the Rigvedic language, Epic and Classical Sanskrit, were heavily influenced by all the other languages (Indo-European, Dravidian and Austric). As Meillet, in a different context (already referred to), puts it: “Numerous elements of these dialects were gradually introduced into the literary language which became fixed in Classical Sanskrit.”<sup>180</sup>

And finally, as Chatterji correctly puts it: “there has been admixture among the various dialects to an extent which has completely changed their original appearance.”<sup>181</sup>

To sum up the whole question of the Indo-European homeland:

1. The evidence of archaeology completely disproves, or, at the very least, completely fails to prove, the non-Indian origin of the Indo-Europeans.

2. The evidence of the oldest literary records (the Rigveda and the Avesta) proves the Indian homeland theory from three distinct angles:

**a.** The evidence of comparative mythology.

**b.** The evidence of the internal chronology and geography of the Rigveda.

**c.** The direct evidence in the Rigveda about the emigration of identifiable Indo-European groups from India.

3. The evidence of linguistics, in some matters, is

either ambiguous or neutral, and , in some others, definitely confirms the evidence of the literary records which indicate that India was the original homeland.

It is, of course, natural that entrenched scholarship, both in India and in the West, will find it hard to swallow all this evidence, and the conclusions which inevitably and unavoidably arise from it. Especially such scholars as have spent all their lives in ridiculing and rejecting the Indian homeland theory, or in “proving” or corroborating the theory of Aryan invasion or migrations into India.

And it will be particularly hard to swallow because it comes from an Indian - the type of Indian whom they would prefer to brand as a “Hindu fundamentalist”.

The following tongue-in-cheek excerpt from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s well known children’s storybook, *The Little Prince*, illustrates the situation:

“...the planet from which the little prince came is the asteroid known as B-612. This asteroid has only once been seen through a telescope. That was by a Turkish astronomer, in 1909. On making his discovery, the astronomer had presented it to the International Astronomical Congress, in a great demonstration. But he was in Turkish costume, and so nobody would believe what he said. ...Fortunately, however, for the reputation of Asteroid B-612, a Turkish dictator made a law that his subjects, under pain of death, should change to European costume. So in 1920 the astronomer gave his demonstration all over again, dressed with impressive style and elegance. And this time everybody accepted his report.”<sup>182</sup>

The type of attitude satirized by Saint-Exupéry in this imaginary incident is very much a part of world scholarly tendency even today: anyone, Indian or Western, who writes anything,



howsoever logical, in support of the Indian homeland theory, represents the “fundamentalist” in his Turkish costume, (or the odd Westerner with a misguided infatuation for this fundamentalism) who deserves only scepticism, ridicule and summary dismissal. Conversely, anyone, Western or Indian, who writes anything, howsoever incredible or ridiculous, in *opposition* to the Indian homeland theory, represents the “objective scholar” dressed “with impressive style and elegance” in European costume, who deserves a sympathetic hearing and due support.

But the case for an Indian homeland is so strong, and the case for a non-Indian homeland so weak, that, inspite of any number of academic dictators decreeing “under pain of (academic) death” that the Indian homeland theory be abandoned without serious examination, or with only perfunctory and determinedly sceptical examination, the academic world will ultimately be compelled, nevertheless, to accept the fact that the Indo-European family of languages originated in India, or, at the very least, to drastically tone down, or qualify, their strident rejection of it.

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>BAIAP, p.835.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p.853.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., pp.836-837.

<sup>5</sup>ibid., p.846.

<sup>6</sup>CCAIHO, pp.83-84.

<sup>7</sup>HHH, p.343.

[8](#)ibid., pp.349-350.

[9](#)ibid., p.343.

[10](#)ibid., p.354.

[11](#)ibid.,p.356.

[12](#)ibid.

[13](#)ibid., p.357.

[14](#)ibid., p.356.

[15](#)IASA, preface, p.x.

[16](#)ibid., preface, p.xi.

[17](#)ibid., preface, p.xiii.

[18](#)ibid., preface, p.xiv.

[19](#)ibid., preface, p.xii.

[20](#)ibid., preface, p.x.

[21](#)ibid.

[22](#)ibid., preface, p.xiii.

[23](#)ibid., preface, p.xv.

[24](#)ibid., preface, p.xiii.

[25](#)ibid.

[26](#)ibid., p.112.

[27](#)ibid., p.113.

[28](#)ibid.

[29](#) *ibid.*

[30](#) VM, p.15.

[31](#) IASA, p.108.

[32](#) *ibid.*, preface, P.xiii.

[33](#) *ibid.*, preface, p.xii.

[34](#) *ibid.*, p.104.

[35](#) *ibid.*, pp.104-105.

[36](#) *ibid.*, p.105.

[37](#) *ibid.*, p.106.

[38](#) *ibid.*, pp.106-107.

[39](#) *ibid.*, p.105.

[40](#) *ibid.*, p.106.

[41](#) *ibid.*, p. 107.

[42](#) HCIP, pp.209-210.

[43](#) HHH, p.326.

[44](#) *ibid.*, p.326.

[45](#) HHH, p.102.

[46](#) *ibid.*

[47](#) *ibid.* p.54

[48](#) *ibid.*, p.103.

[49](#)LEM, p.239.

[50](#)ibid.

[51](#)HHH, p.54.

[52](#)ADOSS, p.1344.

[53](#)AIHT, P.298.

[54](#)ibid.

[55](#)IVA, p.99.

[56](#)HCIP, p.283.

[57](#)HHH, p.349.

[58](#)HCIP, p.262.

[59](#)HHH, p.37.

[60](#)IED, p.44.

[61](#)HHH, p.37.

[62](#)ibid., p.297.

[63](#)ibid., p.323.

[64](#)ibid., p.324.

[65](#)ibid., p.298.

[66](#)IED, p.39.

[67](#)ibid.,p.131.

[68](#)ibid., p.109.

[69](#)ibid.

[70](#) *ibid.*, pp.143-144.

[71](#) *ibid.*, p.144.

[72](#) *ibid.*, p.125.

[73](#) *ibid.*, p.127.

[74](#) *ibid.*, p.129.

[75](#) *ibid.*, p.34.

[76](#) HHH, p.340.

[77](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[78](#) *ibid.*, p.38.

[79](#) IED, p.56.

[80](#) *ibid.*, p. 59.

[81](#) *ibid.*, p. 13.

[82](#) *ibid.*, p. 1 5.

[83](#) HHH, p.298.

[84](#) IED, p. 149.

[85](#) *ibid.*

[86](#) HHH, p.324.

[87](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[88](#) *ibid.*

[89](#) IED, p.101.

[90](#) *ibid.*, p.102.

[91](#) HHH, p.340.

[92](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[93](#) *ibid.*, pp.324-326.

[94](#) IED, p.167.

[95](#) HHH, p.340.

[96](#) *ibid.*, pp.341-342.

[97](#) *ibid.*, p.356.

[98](#) *ibid.*, p.357.

[99](#) *ibid.*, p.358.

[100](#) AL, p.123.

[101](#) *ibid.*, p.24.

[102](#) *ibid.*, p.137.

[103](#) *ibid.*, p.122.

[104](#) *ibid.*, pp.122-123.

[105](#) *ibid.*, p.137.

[106](#) *ibid.*, p.130.

[107](#) *ibid.*, p.138.

[108](#) *ibid.*, pp.138-139.

[109](#) *ibid.*, p.134.

[110](#) *ibid.*, p.136.

[111](#) *ibid.*, p.135.

[112](#) *ibid.*, p.138.

[113](#) *ibid.*, p.137.

[114](#) *ibid.*

[115](#) *ibid.*, p.138.

[116](#) *ibid.*, p.123.

[117](#) SPP, p.32.

[118](#) *ibid.*, p.34.

[119](#) *ibid.*, p.35.

[120](#) *ibid.*

[121](#) *ibid.*, p.36.

[122](#) *ibid.*, p.32.

[123](#) *ibid.*, p.33.

[124](#) *ibid.*, p.34.

[125](#) IE & IE, p.439.

[126](#) *ibid.*, p.431.

[127](#) HCIP, p.156.

[128](#) *ibid.*, p.150.

[129](#) ODBL, p.200.

[130](#) ADOSS, p.135.

[131](#) *ibid.*, p.528.

[132](#) *ibid.*, p.179.

[133](#) *ibid.*, p.167.

[134](#) *ibid.*, preface

[135](#) *ibid.*, p.1464.

[136](#) *ibid.*

[137](#) *ibid.*, p.179.

[138](#) *ibid.*, p.167.

[139](#) "On Indo-Europeanization" in the Journal of Indo-European Studies, Spring 1990.

[140](#) IE & THE IE.

[141](#) ADOSS, p.189.

[142](#) *ibid.*

[143](#) *ibid.*

[144](#) *ibid.*, p.188.

[145](#) The Economic Times, Mumbai, 16/10/96, news-item, "Descent of Cattle".

[146](#) HHH, p.320.

[147](#) EB, Vol.9, p.438.

[148](#) *ibid.*

[149](#) The Times of India, Mumbai, 14/6/87, news-item "Bangani older than Sanskrit".



[150](#)Indogermanische Forschungen, 101,  
Band, 1996, p. 107.

[151](#)ibid.

[152](#)ibid., p.146.

[153](#)AGSL, p.v.

[154](#)ibid., p.vi.

[155](#)ibid., p.vii,

[156](#)EGSL,p.155.

[157](#)ibid.

[158](#)SOILSA, p.13.

[159](#)ibid.

[160](#)ibid., p.16.

[161](#)ibid., p.5.

[162](#)ibid., p.17.

[163](#)ibid., p.13.

[164](#)ibid., p.14.

[165](#)ibid., p.15.

[166](#)ibid.

[167](#)HHH, p.37.

[168](#)ibid., p.385.

[169](#)IED, p.44.

[170](#) *ibid.*, p.113.

[171](#) *ibid.*, p.78,

[172](#) *ibid.*

[173](#) *ibid.*, p.39

[174](#) *ibid.*, p.47.

[175](#) *ibid.*

[176](#) *ibid.*

[177](#) HHH, p.37.

[178](#) IED, p.44.

[179](#) ODBL. pp.20-21.

[180](#) IED, p.47.

[181](#) ODBL, p.21.

[182](#) TLP, p.17.

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## Chapter 8 (Appendix 1)

### Misinterpretations of Rigvedic History

The Rigveda, as we have seen in this book, contains a veritable treasury of information which sheds light on the early history of the Vedic Aryans, and of the Indo-Europeans as a whole.

But why, inspite of the fact that the Rigveda has been a subject of historical study for nearly two centuries, was this wealth of information left untapped? Why did the scholars fail to discover all this evidence?

The answer is that scholars engaged in the historical interpretation of the Rigveda *have never really found it necessary to examine the actual information in the Rigveda*. All interpretations have been based on purely extraneous factors, and the Rigveda itself has never been required to play more than an incidental, and dispensable, role in these exercises.

To be specific, *one* extraneous factor has been responsible for *all* the misinterpretations of Rigvedic history to date: the erroneous belief that linguists have established, on the basis of comparative philology, that the original homeland of the Indo-European or Aryan family of languages was located in and around South Russia, or, at any rate, that it was located *outside* India.

This belief has influenced the interpretations not only of those scholars who claim to subscribe to it, but, as we shall see, *also of those who claim not to subscribe to it*.

It will be necessary to examine why exactly scholars, belonging to different schools of interpretation, failed to tap the basic information in the Rigveda. We will not go into details about everything said and written by these scholars:

given the facility with which many of these scholars have written out pages and pages, even tomes and tomes, of *pure drivel*, based only on an active imagination and an evident contempt both for facts and logic, as well as for the source-material, it would be an impossible as well as a fruitless task to go into all their writings in detail here. That can always be a subject for deeper analysis elsewhere.

But it will be in order to examine generally the beliefs, the concerns, the aims and motives, and the obsessions, as well as the methods, which led the scholars into analyses and conclusions so completely divorced from the facts.

But, first and foremost, we must understand why exactly the history of the Rigveda is so inextricably bound up with the history of the Indo-Europeans as a whole.

The fact is that the Rigveda represents a very pristine state of Indo-European language and religion. Griffith describes it as follows in his preface to his translation: "As in its original language we see the roots and shoots of the languages of Greek and Latin, of Kelt, Teuton and Slavonian, so the deities, the myths and the religious beliefs and practices of the Veda throw a flood of light upon the religions of all European countries before the introduction of Christianity. As the science of comparative philology could hardly have existed without the study of Sanskrit, so the comparative history of the religions of the world would have been impossible without the study of the Veda."

It would not be possible to say this of any other Indo-European text anywhere else in the world. And the implications of this for the history of the Rigvedic era are momentous: it means that the Rigvedic people were, in a manner of speaking, hot out of the Indo-European oven.

This presents us with two very specific alternatives about the geographical habitat

indicated in the Rigveda: *either* this habitat was itself the original habitat of the Indo-European people as a whole, with the Vedic Aryans remaining in it after the departure of the other Indo-European groups; *or else* this habitat was not really the habitat even of the Vedic Aryans themselves, they having *just* arrived into it from outside.

The facts do not allow any other alternative: it is either one or the other.

But the linguists are supposed to have come out with a host of arguments based on comparative philology which apparently rule out the first alternative, that the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans could be located anywhere in India.

Hence, if the linguists are not to be challenged, the second alternative has to be accepted. This, at any rate, has been the general understanding of the situation.

And if, as per this second alternative, the Vedic Aryans are newly arrived from outside India into the geographical area indicated in the Rigveda, then this must be demonstrable from the hymns. In fact, if the linguists are to be vindicated, it *must* be demonstrated from the hymns!

Hence, the major, and official, school of interpretation of the history of the Rigveda holds that the Vedic Aryans entered India somewhere around 1500 BC, and the text of the Rigveda was composed by them during the early stages of their presence in India, when they were still busy invading, conquering and establishing settlements all over the Punjab and the northwest, later to spread out all over northern India.

The historical interpretation of the Rigveda, for scholars belonging to this school, is therefore a one-point programme: to find evidence for this theory in the Rigveda.

Needless to say, this is not exactly calculated to facilitate an honest and objective interpretation or analysis of the text.

Scholars belonging to the other schools of interpretation react emotionally, rather than objectively, to this theory; and, what is more, even when ostensibly *opposed* to the theory, they often labour under a sub-conscious impression that the linguists have somehow “proved” the external (to India) origin of the Indo-Europeans on the basis of linguistics, and this sub-conscious impression influences their various reactions to it.

Needless to say, this attitude is also not calculated to facilitate an honest and objective interpretation of the text.

We will examine the concerns and methods, in brief, of the four major schools of interpretation of the Rigveda, as follows:

- I. The Invasionist School.
- II. The Hindu Invasionist School.
- III. The Quasi-invasionist School.
- IV. The Anti-invasionist School.
- V. A Much Misinterpreted Historical Theme in the Rigveda.

## I THE INVASIONIST SCHOOL

The invasionist school is the main school of interpretation of the Rigveda.

It also houses the *widest* range of scholars: from purely academic scholars to racist and casteist fringe lunatics, *and every shade in between*. And from scholars who genuinely *do* believe that linguistics has “proved” that the Indo-European languages originated in and around South Russia, or, at any rate, *somewhere* outside India, to scholars for whom there is no question of any genuine belief in anything, and to whom it is all a

matter of politics.

We will not concern ourselves here with the writings of the casteist and racist lunatics whose prolific writings on the subject contain neither logic, nor facts, nor analysis, nor even any pretence to objectivity: these are clearly cynical political writings whose only aim is to provide propaganda material for casteist and racist politics.

As to the rest, the main concern of scholars belonging to this school of interpretation is to find evidence in the Rigveda for the Aryan invasion in the form of:

1. References indicating

- a. foreign lands;
- b. migrations from these foreign lands, or, generally, movements from west to east;
- c. unfamiliarity with the local terrain.

2. References to non-Aryan aboriginal inhabitants of the land.

3. References to conflicts between Aryan invaders and non-Aryan aboriginals.

But the stark fact is that *the Rigveda itself does not contain one single reference which provides any actual evidence in respect of any of these points*. All the “evidence” lies in extraneous, inferential comments made by the invasionist scholars on words and phrases, in the text, which are basically innocent of invasionist connotations.

Nothing illustrates this better than Griffith’s translation of the Rigveda, which, inspite of its archaic language and style, is the best, most complete, and most reasonably honest English translation to this day.

Griffith is both, an honest scholar as well as a genuine and staunch believer in the Aryan invasion theory. Consequently, an examination of his complete translation of the Rigveda brings out the following facts:

1. Not a *single* invasionist meaning appears in his *translation* of any of the 10552 verses in the Rigveda: only invasionist suggestions appear in his *comments* in the footnotes.
2. Although Griffith provides footnotes to around *four thousand* or so verses, it is only in around *forty* or so of them that we find these invasionist comments.
3. These invasionist comments, as even a layman can see, are purely gratuitous and subjective, and have no basis whatsoever in anything said in the actual verses to which they refer.
4. Many of these invasionist comments are contradicted by *other* comments in Griffith's own footnotes.

The following is an almost exhaustive list of the verses in the text where Griffith's translations of specific words and phrases are innocent, while his comments on them in the footnotes are loaded:

1. I.7.9: *the five fold race*: "the expression seems to mean the Aryan settlements or tribes only, and not the indigenous inhabitants of the country."
2. 1.32.11: *DAsa*: "DAsa is a general term applied in the Veda to certain evil beings or demons... It means, also, a savage, a barbarian, one of the non-Aryan inhabitants of India."
3. I.33.4: *the ancient riteless ones*: "indigenous races who had not adopted, or were hostile to, the ritual of the Veda."
4. 1.33.4: *Dasyu*: "The Dasyus are also a class of



demons, enemies of Gods and men, and sometimes the word means a savage, a barbarian.”

5. I.51.8: *Arya*: “The Aryans are, first, the people who speak the language of the Veda, and the Dasyus are the original and hostile peoples of India.”

6. I.100.18: *Dasyus and Simyus*: “men of indigenous hostile races.”

7. I.100.18: *his fair-complexioned friends*: “explained by SAyaNa as the glittering Maruts, means probably the Aryan invaders as opposed to the dark-skinned races of the country.”

8. I.101.1: *the dusky brood*: “the dark aborigines who opposed the Aryans.”

9. I. 101.11: *guards of the camp*: “the guardians of the camp or new settlement.”

10. I.102.2: *the seven rivers*: “the chief rivers in the neighbourhood of the earliest settlements.”

11. I.103.3: *DAsas*: “or Dasyus, the non-Aryan inhabitants of the land.”

12. I.104.2: *The DAsa*: “a chief of non-Aryan race.”

13. I.104.3: *Kuyava*: “perhaps a name given by the Aryans to one of the non-Aryan chieftains.”

*But contradiction* I.103.8: *Kuyava*: “meaning, probably, ‘causing bad harvests’, is the name of another of the demons of drought.”

14. I.112.5: *Rebha and Vandana*: “Rebha and Vandana are said to have been thrown into wells by Asuras or demons... ‘In these and similar instances’, says Wilson, ‘we may probably have allusions to the dangers undergone by the first

teachers of Hinduism among the people whom they sought to civilize'.”

15. I.112.12: *RasA*: “The *RasA*, known to the Zoroastrians as the *RaNhA*, was originally the name of a real river, but when the Aryas moved away from it into the PanjAb, it assumed a mythical character, and became a kind of Okeanos, surrounding the extreme limits of the earth.”

*But contradiction* X.108.1: *RasA*: “In I.112.12 and V. 53.9, *RasA* appears to be a river of the PanjAb, probably an affluent of the Indus.”

16. I.132.4: *the lawless man*: “The lawless man is the non-Aryan inhabitant of the country, the natural enemy of the new settlers.”

17. I.175.6: *who give not*: “who offer no oblations; barbarians who do not worship the Gods of the Aryans.”

18. II.11.18: *The Dasyu*: “the barbarian, the original inhabitant of the land.”

19. II.20.6: *DAsa*: “The word is frequently applied to the foes of the Aryas, to the malignant demons of the air as well as to the barbarians and hostile inhabitants of the land.”

20. II.20.7: *The DAsa hosts who dwell in darkness*: “the words thus rendered are variously explained. It is uncertain whether the aborigines of the country are meant, or the demons of air who dwell in the dark clouds.”

21. III.12.6: *ninety forts*: “ninety is used indefinitely for a large number. The forts are the strongholds of the non-Aryan inhabitants of the country.”

*But contradiction* V.29.6: *his nine-and-ninety castles*: “the aerial castles of Sambara, the demon of drought.”

22. III.14.4: *spreading them*: “causing Aryan men to spread as the Sun spreads his rays.”

23. III.23.4: *ApayA*: “a little stream... near the earlier settlements of the Aryan immigrants.”

24. II.33: “The hymn is a dialogue between ViSvAmitra and the rivers VipAS and Sutudri... interesting as a relic of the traditions of the Aryans regarding their progress eastward in the land of the Five Rivers.”

25. III.34.1 *fort-render*: “breaker down of the cloud castles of the demons who withhold the rains as well as of the hostile non-Aryan tribes.”

26. III.53.14: *the KlkaTas*: “the non-Aryan inhabitants of a country (probably Kosala or Oudh) usually identified with South Bihar.”

27. IV.4: “This hymn is said by SAyaNa to be addressed to Agni as slayer of the RakSasas... that is, as God of the fire with which the immigrant Aryans burnt the jungle, drove back the hostile aborigines, and cleared the ground for encampment or permanent settlement.”

28. V.54.15: *a hundred winters*: “a frequently occurring expression, ‘from which we might infer’, says J. Muir, ‘that the Indians still retained some recollection of their having at one time occupied a colder country’.”

29. V.29.10: *noseless*: “that is, the flat-nosed barbarians.”

30. VI.20.10: *autumn forts*: “probably strong places on elevated ground occupied by the DAsas or original inhabitants during the rain and autumn.”

*But contradiction* I.131.4: *autumnal forts*: “the brilliant battlemounted cloud-castles, which are so often visible in the Indian sky at this period of the

year.”

31. VI.47.21: *those darksome creatures*: “the dark aborigines.”

32. VII.6.1: *fort-destroyer*: “demolisher of the cloud-castles of the demon of drought or of the strongholds of the non-Aryan tribes.”

33. VII.18.7: *Pakthas*: “the Pakthas and the rest mentioned in the first line of the stanza appear to have been non-Aryan tribes.”

34. VIII.71.12: *Agni to win the land for us*: “the fierce and rapid fire that clears the jungle for the advance of the Aryan settlers. “

35. IX.41.1: *the black skin*: “meaning apparently both the black pall or covering of night and the RAKSASAS, or dark-skinned Dasyus or hostile aboriginals.”

36. X.43.8: *the dames of worthy lords*: “that is, subjected them to the Aryans, whereas they had been the thralls of DASAS.”

The purpose of giving this almost exhaustive list of Griffith’s invasionist comments is to demonstrate that even a verse-by-verse examination of the Rigveda (which is what Griffith’s translation amounts to) fails to conjure up even the faintest picture of Aryans pouring into India from outside, and invading, conquering and occupying the land. This picture has to be produced by way of a sustained exercise in circular reasoning: words and phrases in the Rigveda are interpreted on the basis of extraneous ideas, and these extraneous ideas are “proved” on the basis of these interpretations.

This invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda forms a minor and almost incidental part of Griffith’s vast, and extremely valuable, work. But, in the case of most other invasionist scholars, it constitutes the very *raison d’être* of their work.

The interpretations cover three aspects:

- A. Movements and Migrations from the West.
- B. Aryans and non-Aryans.
- C. Conflicts between Aryans and non-Aryans.

### **I. A. Movements and Migrations from the West.**

The Rigveda contains no reference to any foreign place west of Afghanistan, and certainly no reference to any migration from west to east.

Some academic scholars have sought to prove such a migration by asserting that the Rigveda itself was composed in the west: “Brunnhofer, Hertel, Hüsing and others, argue that the scene of the *Rgveda* is laid. not in the Punjab, but in AfghAnistAn and IrAn.”<sup>1</sup>

However, this view is so absurd, and so clearly contrary to the geographical facts in the Rigveda, that it can be dismissed with a bored yawn. By and large, academic scholars have been more rational: “Max Müller, Weber, Muir, and others held that the Punjab was the main scene of the activity of the Rgveda, whereas the more recent view put forth by Hopkins and Keith is that it was composed in the country round the SarasvatI river south of modem AmbAla.”<sup>2</sup>

And most academic scholars are also agreed on the fact that “it really cannot be proved that the Vedic Aryans retained any memory of their extra-Indian associations”<sup>3</sup>, and “no tradition of an early home beyond the frontier survives in India.”<sup>4</sup>

Hence, the effort of most academic scholars is to show a movement from west to east *within* the accepted geographical horizon of the Rigveda, ie. from Afghanistan in the west to the GaNgA in the

east, by the following methods:

1. By stressing that, in the west, the Rigveda refers *frequently* to *many* of the rivers of Afghanistan (i.e. the western tributaries of the Indus): the RasA, the Krumu, the KubhA, the Gomatl, the GaurI, the Sveti, the TRSTAmA, the Susartu, the SvetyAvarI, the SuvAstu, the Mehatnu, the Sarayu, etc. But, in the east, it refers only to the GaNgA (*twice*) and the YamunA (*thrice*).

2. By interpreting various references as indicating an eastward movement, as in the case of hymn III.33, where the crossing of the SutudrI and the VipAS is interpreted as “a relic of the traditions of the Aryans regarding their progress eastwards.”

3. By interpreting common river-names in Afghanistan and India (the SarasvatI, the Sarayu, the Gomatl) as evidence of a transfer of river-names by Aryans migrating from Afghanistan to India.

The first two points, as we have seen in the course of our analysis, are totally out of line with the evidence in the Rigveda.

The third point is again clearly a case of circular reasoning: if there are common river-names in two different places, it certainly indicates a geographical transfer of river-names from one place to the other. But, the *fact* itself does not indicate the *direction* of this transfer. As our analysis of the geographical data, not only in the Rigveda but also in the Avesta, shows, the direction of migration was from east to west. Hence this was also the direction of transfer of the river-names.

As there is really no evidence of any kind in the Rigveda indicating a migration from west to east, the scholars often end up resorting to arguments and interpretations which border on the desperate and the ridiculous:

V.G. Rahurkar interprets the fact that the Gayatri *mantra* (III.62.10) is “regarded as the holiest *mantra* in the Rigveda”<sup>5</sup> as evidence that this verse (which he himself correctly translates in the religious sense in which it is composed: “We meditate upon that most illuminating lustre of God SavitR so that he may stir our intellects”<sup>6</sup>) is actually “a slogan given by ViSvAmitra to the advancing Aryans, who must have been expanding towards the east ie. the direction of the rising sun.”<sup>7</sup>

### **I.B. Aryans and Non-Aryans**

The Rigveda contains no references whatsoever to people speaking non-Indo-European languages (which is what “non-Aryans” basically means).

If the Rigveda is to be interpreted as a text composed by the Vedic Aryans during their period of invasion, conquest and settlement of a land originally occupied by non-Aryans, then this constitutes a very serious and fundamental setback to that interpretation.

This compels the scholars to resort to desperate methods of interpretation in order to produce evidence of the presence of such non-Aryan aboriginals of the land, hostile to the Vedic Aryans. And the most desperate, and most pathetic, of these methods, and one which most of the invasionist scholars ultimately fall back on, is *the interpretation of mythology as history: of mythical entities as historical entities, and of mythical events as historical events.*

For this, the scholars follow a two-tier interpretation:

At one level, the Aryans are represented as being more or less settled in the Saptasindhu region, and now engaged as much in conflict with each other as with the indigenous non-Aryans. The references to “Arya and DAsa enemies” are cited

as proof of this state of affairs.

And, at a deeper, higher and more fundamental level, the earlier conflicts of the invading Aryans with the non-Aryan natives are represented as being already converted into religious myths: “When the Aryans created a religion out of these events, they deified their leaders and arrogated to themselves the title of cosmic good... (by a) transformation of historical events into mythopoeic and symbolic.”<sup>8</sup>

The myths which are treated as transformed historical events are inevitably those involving Indra and the celestial demons of drought and darkness. Thus, Indra comes to be the sole symbol of the “Aryan invaders”, and the celestial demons become symbols of the conquered “non-Aryan natives”:

1. Indra is generally accepted by even the most conservative of invasionist scholars as a symbol of the invading Aryans: at the very least as a God invoked by them in their battles against the non-Aryans.

However, to many of the scholars, Indra is much more: he is an actual personification of the invading Aryan chieftains, or even a deification of the most prominent one among them.

For example, R.N. Dandekar devotes a large number of pages in his *Vedic Mythological Tracts*<sup>9</sup> to prove “that Indra was not originally a god, but that he was a human hero, who attained godhood by virtue of his miraculous exploits. Not only that, but he soon superseded the other gods (VII.21.7) and came to be regarded as the foremost among them (II.12.1).”<sup>10</sup>

Again, “Indra, the young, blond, bearded, handsome, well-shaped, mighty, heroic leader of the Aryans... protected the Aryans from the attacks of the Dasyus... Many were the hostile leaders conquered by Indra. Many again were



the Aryan chiefs and tribes to whom Indra is said to have rendered timely succour in several ways... It is therefore no wonder that such a leader should have soon become a national hero and then a national god of the Vedic Indians. A warring people would naturally glorify a warlike god.”<sup>11</sup>

Dandekar provides plenty of “evidence” to prove that Indra was a human being:

Firstly: “the human features in Indra’s personality... Indra’s body, head, arms and hands are very often referred to (II.16.2; VIII.96.3). He is said to be golden in colour (I.7.2; VIII.66.3). His body is gigantic, his neck mighty, and his back brawny. His arms are sleek and his hands thick and firm - both right and left - being particularly well-shaped (I.102.6: IV.21.9; VI.19.3; VIII.81.1). He has handsome cheeks (or lips) and is, therefore, often called suSipra (II.12.6; 33.5), Siprin (I.29.2; III.36.10) and tawny-bearded (X.23.4). These and several other similar descriptions of Indra’s person unmistakably produce before our mind’s eye a very life-like picture of a tall, strong, well-formed, handsome, blond Aryan.”<sup>12</sup>

Secondly: “Far more lifelike, however, are the descriptions of some peculiar physical mannerisms of that god. He agitates his jaws (VIII.76.10) or puffs out his beautiful lips (III.32.1), in a characteristic fashion, in anticipation of or after the Soma-drought. Once he is described – very realistically indeed – as shaking off the drops of Soma from his moustache (II.11.17)...”<sup>13</sup>

Thirdly: “Another peculiarity... is the fact that he is frequently referred to as having been born. Two entire hymns, namely III.48 and IV.18, deal with the subject of his birth.”<sup>14</sup>

Fourthly: “by far the most convincing proof of the essentially human character of Indra is the fact that the Vedic poets have often referred to what

may be called the 'weaknesses' of that god. One such oft-mentioned weakness is Indra's proverbial fondness for Soma. His immoderate indulgence in the intoxicating beverage is a favourite theme of the Vedic poets... Similarly Indra is represented as an expert in female lore (VIII.33.17)... Though Indra's amorous adventures are nowhere clearly mentioned in the RV, there are, in it, a few indications of that trait of his character. The latter have, indeed, been the basis of Indra's representation, in later mythology, as a romantic figure - a 'gay Lothario'."<sup>15</sup>

Fifthly: "the Vedic poets have never unnecessarily over-idealised the character of Indra which they would have done had he been primarily thought of as a god... he did not disdain deceiving his enemies or cleverly circumscribing the conditions of an agreement whenever circumstances so demanded... In I.32.14, mighty Indra is said to have been overcome with fear when, after killing VRtra, he thought that some avenger of the enemy was following him. Such a reference would be hardly understandable in relation to a god who had been conceived as a god from the beginning."<sup>16</sup>

All this reads like the naive, and even imbecile, analysis of a schoolboy who knows nothing whatsoever about mythologies in general. The Greek Gods (for example. Zeus, the Greek equivalent of Indra) are similarly described in great physical detail, their mannerisms are similarly detailed, they are also "born", they also indulge in drink and have tempestuous affairs, they also have fears and jealousies, they also cheat and quarrel among themselves.

As we shall see, an examination of other Indo-European mythologies is the one thing that the invasionist scholars dread and avoid like the plague, since it can be fatal to their childish identifications of "history" in the Vedic myths.

2. Almost the sole criterion in classifying any entity in the Rigveda as "non-Aryan" is the

criterion of *conflict*: the necessity of identifying “non-Aryans” in conflict with “Aryans” is so vital to the very survival of the Aryan invasion theory that the scholars go overboard in identifying “non-Aryans” on the basis of some “conflict” or the other.

In setting out on this exercise, the scholars virtually set out on a path of no-return: it is like jumping off a cliff - there is no going back, or stepping off, halfway. Starting with the classes of supernatural beings and the individual demons, *the scholars end up identifying nearly every entity in the Rigveda as “non-Aryan” on the basis of the sole criterion of conflict, right from the Vedic tribes to the Vedic Gods to the Vedic RSis:*

**a. *The Supernatural beings:*** The scholars accept all the classes of supernatural beings (Asuras, DAsas, Dasyus, PaNis, Daityas, DAnavas, RAkSasas, YakSas, Gandharvas, Kinnaras, PiSAcas, etc.) as non-Aryan races, and the individual demons (VRtra, SuSNa, Sambara, Vala, Pipru, NamUci, Cumuri, Dhuni, Varcin, AurNavAbha, AhISuva, Arbuda, IllbiSa, Kuyava, MRgaya, UraNa, PadgRbhi, SRbinda, DRbhlka, RauhiNa, RudhikrAs, SvaSna, etc.) as non-Aryan chieftains or heroes, defeated, conquered or killed by Indra.

This is basically like identifying the fairies, pixies, gnomes, elves, trolls, ogres, giants, goblins, hobgoblins, leprechauns, and the like, in the fairy tales and myths of Britain as the original non-Indo-European inhabitants of the British Isles.

**b. *The Vedic tribes:*** All tribes depicted as enemies of the Vedic Aryans are classified as non-Aryan tribes.

Thus, A.D. Pusalker refers to the Ajas, Sigrus and YakSas, who fight, under the leadership of Bheda, against SudAs, as “three non-Aryan tribes.”<sup>17</sup>

Likewise, Griffith, as we saw, identifies “the Pakthas and the rest”, ranged against SudAs in VII.18.7, as “non-Aryan tribes”. Rahurkar also describes the Pakthas and others as “tribes of obviously non-Aryan origin.”<sup>18</sup>

F.E. Pargiter<sup>19</sup> (who, strictly speaking, is not an invasionist scholar proper, but belongs to the quasi-invasionist school, which we will examine later) classifies the Aila tribes (the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus, Druhyus and PUrus) *alone* as Aryan, and *all the rest* (particularly the IkSvAkus, whom he classifies as Dravidians) as non-Aryan. Thus, prominent Vedic kings like Purukutsa and Trasadasyu, and prominent Puranic kings like MandhAtA, Sagara, HariScandra, Bhaglratha, DaSaratha and RAma, are non-Aryans according to him.

Malati Shendge<sup>20</sup> classifies all tribes whose names end in u (and she specifies the PUrus among them) as non-Aryan: *this includes the five Aila tribes whom alone Pargiter classifies as Aryan!*

**c. The Vedic Gods:** An overwhelming majority of the scholars hold that Rudra is a non-Aryan God borrowed by the Aryans, on the ground that Rudra “is regarded in Vedic cult and religion as an apotropaic God of aversion – to be feared but not adored.”<sup>21</sup>

Many hold VaruNa also to be non-Aryan on the ground that many verses in the Rigveda depict a rivalry between Indra and VaruNa, and hymn X.124 shows Indra abducting the leadership of the Gods from VaruNa. According to Malati Shendge, “Indra represents the conquering Aryans, VaruNa as his powerful equal represents the non-Aryans”,<sup>22</sup> and, according to R.N. Dandekar, “the mythological rivalry between asura VaruNa and Indra... (represents the rivalry) between the Assyrians of the Indus Valley and Indra of the Vedic Aryans.”<sup>23</sup>

Other Gods, also, qualify as non-Aryans: according to D.D. Kosambi, USas is a Goddess “adopted from the non-Aryans” since she “had a famous brush with Indra on the BeAs river which ended in her ox-cart being smashed.”<sup>24</sup>

Malati Shendge, in fact, decides that all the Vedic Gods, *except Indra and ViSNU*, are non-Aryans; and not even non-Aryan Gods, but non-Aryan *human beings*: “The so-called Vedic pantheon, with the exception of Indra and ViSNU, is composed of the functionaries of the government of the Asura empire having its capital in the Indus Valley.”<sup>25</sup> The various Gods were “the cabinet-members of the non-Aryan government,”<sup>26</sup> Mitra being “the exchequer-general of contracts”<sup>27</sup> Rudra “the commander of the Asura army”,<sup>28</sup> SUrya “the head of the intelligence department”,<sup>29</sup> SavitR “the head of the system of redistribution”,<sup>30</sup> PUSan “the inspector and builder of roads”,<sup>31</sup> and so on.

Shendge excepts *only* Indra and ViSNU, who, according to her, were “the leaders of the Aryans in their conflict.”<sup>32</sup> According to her, “the Aryan origin of Indra and ViSNU is beyond doubt.”<sup>33</sup>

But, according to S.K. Chatterji, ViSNU is “partly at least... of Dravidian affinity as a sky-God whose colour was of the blue sky (cf. Tamil *viN*, ‘sky’...).”<sup>34</sup> D.D. Kosambi, perhaps on the basis of ViSNU’s dark skin, goes further: among the Gods “adopted from the pre-Aryans”, according to him, is “the obscure Vishnu, who was later to find a great future in India.”<sup>35</sup>

So Indra, *alone* is a purely Aryan God. Or is he? According to R.N. Dandekar, Indra (inspite of being a “tall, strong, well-formed, handsome, blond Aryan”<sup>36</sup>), was half a non-Aryan, and, moreover, from his father’s side: “Indra belonged to the DAsas on the father’s side, and to the Gods

(Aryans) on the mother's side."<sup>37</sup>

The reasoning behind this conclusion is as follows: there is conflict between Indra and his father, and Indra is depicted as "having killed his father in order to snatch away Soma from him";<sup>38</sup> hence his father must have been a DAsa or non-Aryan!

d. *The Vedic RSis*: V.G. Rahurkar, in his *Seers of the Rigveda*, classifies the KaNvas and the Agastyas and VasiSThas as being partly at least of non-Aryan origin: according to him, the names of the RSis belonging to the KaNva family clearly show "some non-Aryan influence";<sup>39</sup> and Agastya and VasiSTha are born "from a non-Aryan mother-goddess",<sup>40</sup> whatever that means.

Three different scholars, D.D. Kosambi,<sup>41</sup> I F.E. Pargiter,<sup>42</sup> and Malati Shendge<sup>43</sup>, classify all the families of Vedic RSis, *with the sole exception of the ViSvAmitras*, as non-Aryans (Malati Shendge, among them, does not specifically except the ViSvAmitras by name, but she *does* name all the *other* families as non-Aryan). The sole criterion behind this appears to be the fact that there was conflict between ViSvAmitra and VasiSTha, and that ViSvAmitra was originally a king belonging to a Bharata dynasty.

The implications of this do not escape the attention of these scholars, since the majority of the hymns of the Rigveda, it must be remembered, are composed by these very RSis:

According to Malati Shendge, most of the hymns "were composed by the ancient sages in their own language",<sup>44</sup> and "were probably, at a later stage, either translated into Sanskrit, or, on the basis of earlier material, new hymns were composed."<sup>45</sup>

Pargiter also assures us that the fact that they

“appear in Sanskrit” does not disprove their non-Aryan origin, since “they would naturally have been Sanskritized in the course of time.”<sup>46</sup>

This whole exercise of identifying various entities in the Rigveda as “non-Aryan” ones, quite apart from the intrinsic fatuousness of most of the arguments and conclusions, suffers from *two very vital flaws*:

1. Firstly, “non-Aryan” can *only*, and *only*, mean non-Indo-European in the *linguistic* sense; and the fact is that all the entities which the scholars identify as non-Aryan, whether classes of supernatural beings, or individual demons, or tribes, or Gods, or RSis, have *purely Indo-European names*.

This is the most fundamental obstacle to identifying these entities as non-Aryan: their names not only do not have Dravidian or Austric etymologies, but they actually have *purely Indo-European* etymologies, so that they cannot even be identified with hypothetical, unrecorded and extinct non-Indo-European groups.

Some invasionist scholars have tried hard to discover non-Indo-European elements in the Rigveda, but without success. John Muir, after one such exercise, admits: “I have gone over the names of the Dasyus or Asuras, mentioned in the Rigveda, with the view of discovering whether any of them could be regarded as being of non-Aryan or indigenous origin, but I have not observed any to be of that character.”<sup>47</sup>

Likewise, Sarat Chandra Roy, in the census report of 1911, tried to identify some names in the Rigveda with Mundari (Austric) names, but even so staunch a supporter of the Aryan invasion theory as S.K. Chatterji admits: “Mr. Roy’s attempts to identify non-Aryan chiefs in the Rigveda with Munda names... are rather fanciful.”<sup>48</sup>

However, the necessity of identifying “non-Aryans” in the Rigveda is so vital to the very survival of the invasion theory that the scholars have to find means of overcoming this obstacle:

**a.** The first, and safest, method is to simply ignore the linguistic aspect altogether, and to continue classifying entities as “Aryan” and “non-Aryan” whenever occasion and convenience demands or permits.

**b.** The second method is to merely make vague statements to the effect that the names “seem” non-Aryan, without bothering to specify what exactly is intended to be meant by the term.

V.M. Macdonell, in his *Vedic Mythology*, derives the Sanskrit etymologies of the names of most of the demons of drought and darkness; but in respect of the names SRbinda and IllbiSa, he suggests that they have “an un-Aryan appearance.”<sup>49</sup>

D.D. Kosambi, in speaking of the PaNis, suggests that “the name PaNi does not seem to be Aryan.”<sup>50</sup>

V.G. Rahurkar, in suggesting that the KaNvas were influenced by non-Aryans, tells us that the names of many of the RSis belonging to this family “appear to be strange names... (which) can be accounted for by assuming some non-Aryan influence.”<sup>51</sup>

Among the names specified by Rahurkar are names like ASvasUktin and GoSUktin!

**c.** The third method is to attribute specific linguistic identities to clearly non-linguistic entities.

F.E. Pargiter,<sup>52</sup> in speaking of the different tribal groups, tells us that the Ailas (the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus, Druhyus and PUrus) were Aryans, the IkSvAkus were Dravidians, and the



eastern Saudyumna groups (named in the PurANas) were Austrics.

Malati Shendge<sup>53</sup> classifies the classes of atmospheric demons as follows: the DASas and Dasyus were Austric, the RAKSasas were Dravidians, and the Asuras were Semites.

**d.** The fourth method is to allege linguistic camouflage: ie. the names were originally non-Indo-European, but they were “Sanskritized”, so they *appear* to be Indo-European.

Malati Shendge, who classifies the Asuras as Semites, and VaruNa as their king, tells us that VaruNa is “a Sanskritized form of a Semitic name.”<sup>54</sup>

F.E. Pargiter, clearly uncomfortable with having to classify entities with purely Indo-European names as non-Aryans, tells us that “the fact that many of the names... have a Sanskrit appearance does not necessarily militate against their non-Aila origin, because they would naturally have been Sanskritized in the course of time.”<sup>55</sup> In fact, he suggests two methods of linguistic conversion: “Non-Aryan names appear to have been (either) Sanskritized or translated into Sanskrit.”<sup>56</sup>

Thus, to illustrate a hypothetical example, a person named RAjA in an ancient Sanskrit text can be classified as a Semite: his name can be claimed to originally have been either RazA (Sanskritized into RAjA) or Malik (translated into the Sanskrit equivalent word for “King”).

Needless to say, this kind of logic saves the scholars the trouble of trying to adhere to linguistic principles in classifying anyone or anything as “non-Aryan”.

2. Secondly, “non-Aryan” entities encountered by Aryan invaders in India must be found only in India; but the fact is that many of the most

important names classified by the scholars as referring to “non-Aryan natives” of India, are found in the *farthest* Indo-European mythologies:

Thus, *Asura* is found in the Iranian *Ahura*, and the Teutonic *Aesir*.

*PaNi* is found in Greek *Pan* and the Teutonic *Vanir* (see Chapter 10 = Appendix 3 of this book for further details).

*DAsa* is found in Iranian *Daha* and Slavonic *DaZ*.

*VaruNa* is found in Greek *Ouranos* and Teutonic *Woden*.

This obstacle is also basically an insurmountable one, but the scholars surmount it by four simple methods:

**a.** The first method is to simply ignore the inconvenient correspondences with other Indo-European mythologies altogether.

In some cases, this is easy because the correspondences have apparently not been noticed by any scholar so far: a case in point is the unmistakable correspondence between the *PaNis* of the Vedas, *Pan* of Greek mythology, and the *Vanir* of Teutonic mythology (see Chapter 10 of this book).

In other cases, even well-known and well established correspondences are firmly ignored by the scholars.

**b.** The second method is to note the correspondence but to argue against it.

Thus, the correspondence between *VaruNa*, *Ouranos* and *Woden* is clear not only from the similarity of the names but from the identity of many or most of the mythical traits and characteristics of the three Gods. Yet many scholars argue against the correspondence by

suggesting different etymologies for the three names.

**c.** The third method is to note, and accept, the correspondence; but to disdain to accept it as an objection to branding the entity of that name, in the Rigveda, as “non-Aryan”, by arguing that there was a transfer of meaning of the word from its original Indo-European context to a new context of conflicts with non-Aryans in India.

Thus, most scholars are aware that the words *Asura*, *DAsa* and *Dasyu* pertain to Indo-Iranian contexts; but that does not prevent them from interpreting these words as referring also to the non-Aryan natives of India.

Emile Benveniste notes that “the Avestan word for ‘country’, *dahyu* (anc-*dasyu*) has as its Sanskrit correspondent *dasyu*... (and) the connection between the sense of *dahyu/dasyu* reflects conflicts between the Indian and Iranian peoples.”<sup>57</sup> However, he suggests that although “the word at first referred to Iranian society, the name by which this enemy people called themselves collectively took on a hostile connotation and became for the Aryas of India the term for an inferior and barbarous people.”<sup>58</sup> Hence: “In Indic, *dasyu* may be taken as an ethnic”<sup>59</sup> (ie. a native of India).

**d.** The fourth method, the most brazen of them all, is to note and accept the correspondence; and then, in the very same breath, to go on classifying the entity in question as non-Aryan.

Thus, D.D. Kosambi, in one and the same breath, or at least, on the same page of his book, tells us that the Goddess USas “is related to the Greek Eos”, and also that USas belongs to a group of “peculiar Vedic gods not known elsewhere (who) had been adopted from the pre-Aryans.”<sup>60</sup>

It is clear that the whole exercise of identifying

“non-Aryans” in the Rigveda is more a case of ignoring, or arguing against, facts, than a case of citing facts as evidence.

### **I.C. Conflicts between Aryans and Non-Aryans**

As we have seen, rather than linguistic principles, it is “conflicts” in the Rigveda which are made the criteria for locating “non-Aryans” in the text.

And, as we have also seen, it is not so much the conflicts between the Vedic Aryans and their human enemies (who, in any case, have purely Indo-European names and tribal identities), which engage the attention of the scholars, as the conflicts between the elements of nature: between the thunder-God and the demons of drought, or the forces of light and the forces of darkness.

The early Western scholars who analysed the hymns of the Rigveda very clearly accepted that the conflicts between Indra and the various anthropomorphised demons were basically nature-myths pertaining to the elemental battles between light and darkness, or between the benign nature-Gods of plenty and the malignant demons of drought.

And, although these scholars tried to introduce a parallel scheme of interpretation whereby the nature-myths also functioned, on a secondary level, as allegorical depictions of actual terrestrial conflicts between Aryans and non-Aryans, they rarely lost sight of the fact that this second scheme of interpretation was secondary, and basically speculative. Griffith, for example, interprets the nature-myths as nature-myths throughout his work; and, whenever he also introduces the invasionist motif, there is an element of dilemma in his comments: commenting on “the DAsa hosts who dwell in darkness” in II.20.7, for example, he notes that it is “uncertain whether the aborigines of the country are meant, or the demons of air who dwell in dark clouds.”

But, later invasionist scholars became more and more impatient with the naturalistic scheme of interpretation. D.D. Kosambi is extremely critical of the early Western scholars for interpreting the battles of Indra as the battles between a thunder-God and the demons of drought or darkness, and attributes these interpretations to the scholars having flourished “during the nineteenth century, when nature-myths were made to account for everything, including the Homeric destruction of Troy...”<sup>61</sup>

These later invasionist scholars, therefore, interpret the two major categories of “conflicts” in the nature-myths as two categories of historical conflicts:

1. The first category of “conflicts” is the one represented by the great battle, between Indra and VRtra (or the VRtras).

Griffith, in his footnote to 1.4.8, notes: “*The VRtras, the enemies, the oppressors, or obstructors, are ‘the hostile powers in the atmosphere who malevolently shut up the watery treasures in the clouds. These demons of drought, called by a variety of names, as VRtra, Ahi, SuSNa, Namuci, Pipru, Sambara, UraNa, etc. etc., armed on their side, also, with every variety of celestial artillery, attempt, but in vain, to resist the onset of the gods’ - Muir, Original Sanskrit Texts, V, p.95.*”

Further, in his footnote to 1.31.1, he quotes Wilson: “the legend of Indra’s slaying VRtra... in the Vedas is merely an allegorical narrative of the production of rain. VRtra, sometimes also named Ahi, is nothing more than the accumulation of vapour condensed or figuratively shut up in, or obstructed by, a cloud. Indra, with his thunderbolt, or atmospheric or electrical influence, divides the aggregate mass, and vent is given to the rain which then descends upon the earth.”

VRtra is regularly depicted as a dragon or Great

Serpent, and Indra as a dragon-slayer.

However, the later invasionist scholars reason otherwise: according to D.D. Kosambi, Indra represents the Aryan invaders, and the VRtras represent the non-Aryans of the Indus Valley, who had built dams across the rivers. The Aryans destroyed these dams, thereby flooding out the non-Aryans: “the myth and metaphors give a clear account of the methods whereby the Indus agriculture was ultimately ruined.”<sup>62</sup>

According to Malati Shendge, VRtra was “an official, who, alongwith his men, referred to as VRtrANI, was guarding the dam.”<sup>63</sup> Indra, “by killing VRtra, the guard of the dam across the seven rivers, brought under his control the sluice gates which he opened in order to flood the downstream settlements, thus causing panic and damage to life and property.”<sup>64</sup>

R.N. Dandekar also reasons as above, and includes the killing of the non-Aryan VRtra or VRtras among the exploits of his blond, Aryan hero, Indra. He reasons as follows: “Indra, the national hero, was deified by the Vedic poets... And, still later, when naturalistic elements came to be superimposed upon Indra’s personality, as a result of which Indra came to be regarded as the rain-god, there was a corresponding naturalistic transformation in VRtra’s personality so that he came to be looked upon as the cloud-demon.”<sup>65</sup>

As usual, the scholars firmly avoid examining the mythologies of other Indo-European peoples. Every major Indo-European mythology records the killing of a mighty serpent by the thunder-God: the Greek Zeus kills the Great Serpent Typhoeus, and the Teutonic Thor kills the Great Serpent of Midgard.

The scholars would, of course, claim that an original nature-myth, of a thunder-God killing the serpent who withholds the rain-clouds, has merely

been superimposed on the historical exploits of a human, Aryan hero, Indra, who killed the Vṛtras of the Indus Valley.

But Hittite mythology gives the lie to this forced interpretation. The *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* relates the following prominent Hittite myth: “The Great Serpent had dared to attack the weather-God. The God demanded that he be brought to justice. Inar, (another) God,... prepared a great feast and invited the serpent with his family to eat and drink. The serpent and his children, having drunk to satiety, were unable to go back into their hole, and were exterminated.”<sup>66</sup> This weather-God “presided over tempests and beneficial rainfall.”<sup>67</sup>

Here, in this much-transformed myth, the name of the God, who kills the Great Serpent who is interfering with the rainfall, is *Inar*, clearly cognate to *Indra*. So there has clearly been no “superimposition” of any historical events onto any nature-myth: Indra’s exploits *are* indeed the exploits of a thunder-God fighting the demons of drought.

2. The second category of “conflicts” is the one represented by the hostilities between Indra and the PaNis, particularly described in hymn X.108.

As Griffith points out in his footnote to this hymn: “The hymn is a colloquy between SaramA, the messenger of the Gods or of Indra (see I.62.3, note; 72.8; III.31.6, V.45.8), and the PaNis or envious demons who have carried off the rays of light which Indra wishes to recover.”

Elsewhere, in his footnote to 1.62.3, Griffith adds: “SaramA, the hound of Indra... is said to have pursued and recovered the cows stolen by the PaNis; which has been supposed to mean that SaramA is the Dawn who recovers the rays of the Sun that have been carried away by night.”

Again, later invasionist scholars refuse to accept

this naturalistic interpretation: D.D. Kosambi points out that “the hymn says nothing about stolen cattle, but is a direct blunt demand for tribute in cattle, which the PaNis scornfully reject.

They are then warned of dire consequences.”<sup>68</sup> Kosambi therefore interprets the hymn as an illustration of the terror tactics by which the invading Aryans attacked small communities of the native non-Aryan populace: first they demanded tribute, and, when denied this tribute, they attacked and conquered the hapless community. Kosambi calls this “the standard Aryan procedure for invasion.”<sup>69</sup>

A majority of the invasionist scholars identify the PaNis as non-Aryans.

However, in this case, also, an examination of other Indo-European mythologies shows that the PaNis, as well as the particular “conflict” in which they are involved, are represented in at least two other mythologies: Greek and Teutonic. We will not go into this subject in greater detail at this point, as we will be examining it in full in a later chapter (Chapter 10 = Appendix 3).

The long and short of the whole thing is that there is no such thing as a conflict between Indo-Europeans and non-Indo-Europeans depicted anywhere in the Rigveda.

And it is because scholars belonging to the invasionist school of interpretation have expended all their energies and efforts in trying to discover *history* in the *mythology* of the Rigveda, that the wealth of historical information, which is actually present in the Rigveda, has remained totally untouched by them.

## II THE HINDU INVASIONIST SCHOOL

The Hindu invasionist school is a distinctly different school of interpretation from the standard invasionist one: it also fully accepts the idea that



the Aryans invaded, or migrated into, India from outside in the distant past; but that, perhaps, is the only point on which it agrees with the standard invasionist school. On every other point, this school represents a *particularly bizarre variety of staunch Hindu reaction to the invasion theory*, and the sole aim of this school is to present the Vedic Aryans and their civilization in as glorified a manner as possible.

The basic postulates of the standard invasion theory with which the Hindu invasionist school differs *sharply*, are:

1. The Rigveda was composed around 1200 BC, and it represents a culture and civilization which commenced and flourished *after* 1500 BC.
2. The Aryans invaded India around 1500 BC.
3. Vedic civilization is different from the original Aryan civilization, and both represent semi-civilized and semi-nomadic cultures.

We will examine what the Hindu invasionist scholars have to say, from the point of view of:

- A. The Date of the Rigveda and of Vedic Civilization.
- B. The Aryan Invasion.
- C. Vedic Civilization vis-a-vis the Original Aryan Civilization.
- D. The Original Homeland.

## **II.A. The Date of the Rigveda and of Vedic Civilization**

B.G. (Lokmanya) Tilak, the earliest scholar belonging to this school of interpretation, proved on the basis of astronomical references in the Rigveda, that the composition of the Rigveda commenced around 4500 BC or so, and the bulk of the hymns were composed between 3500 BC and 2500 BC.

However, he was not satisfied with these dates, and he tried to find earlier astronomical references, but without success: “I have, in my later researches, tried to push back this limit by searching for the older zodiacal positions of the vernal equinox in the Vedic literature, but I have not found any evidence of the same.”<sup>70</sup>

Tilak, therefore, tried to “push back” the date of the civilization represented in the Rigveda, if not of the actual Rigveda itself, by formulating his Arctic homeland theory, according to which Vedic civilization “did not originate with the Vedic bards, but was derived by them from their interglacial forefathers”<sup>71</sup> who lived in the Arctic region in the interglacial period which ended around “10000-8000 BC” with “the destruction of the original Arctic home by the last Ice Age.”<sup>72</sup>

Going even further back: “Aryans and their culture and religion cannot be supposed to have developed all of a sudden at the close of the last interglacial period, and the ultimate origin of both must, therefore, be placed in remote geological times... though Aryan race or religion can be traced back to last interglacial period, yet the ultimate origin of both is still lost in geological antiquity.”<sup>73</sup>

Latter-day scholars of this school, however, are less discreet about these dates “lost in geological antiquity”. S.D. Kulkarni tells us that “our civilization, Vedic or Hindu, has a continuity of more than 31092 years before present.”<sup>74</sup> and he pinpoints “21788 BC as the period, at least, of the origin of the Rigveda.”<sup>75</sup>

For sceptics, Kulkarni adds: “It appears that the scholars simply get awe-struck if any date for any event in the past is fixed to such remote antiquity. They forget that the creation of this universe is some 200 crores of years old if not more, and the first man has set his foot on this mother earth at least some 60 lac years ago.”<sup>76</sup>

## II.B. The Aryan Invasion.

Tilak had nothing particular to say about the date of the Aryan invasion of India, or about the actual invasion itself.

The Indus civilization had not been excavated in his time, and hence it formed no part of his considerations.

However, later scholars of this school are very careful to bring the Aryans into India *before* the period of the Indus civilization, unwilling to allow this civilization to be attributed to anyone other than the Aryans themselves. And they are strongly critical of suggestions or claims to the contrary.

Kulkarni, for example, holds “the British imperialist circles” responsible for “hatching a plot to perpetuate their rule in India by adopting the doctrine of ‘divide and rule’ .....”.<sup>77</sup> They “spread the canard that the Dravidians who peopled India, from north to south, were conquered by the Aryan barbarians sometime in 1500 BC... as a natural corollary, when the Indus Valley Civilization was discovered and its date was adjudged to be around 3000 BC, this thesis was further developed and conclusion drawn that the Aryan barbarians came from the Northwest and destroyed the locally developed civilization.”<sup>78</sup>

Kulkarni alleges that by identifying “the Indus Valley people as the Dravidians... they have sowed the seeds of schism between the North Indians and their southern counterparts”,<sup>79</sup> and he firmly insists that “the Harappa civilization was a part and parcel of the Aryan achievements.”<sup>80</sup>

It is clear that Kulkarni’s objection is not to the idea that Aryans, coming from outside, conquered the local Dravidians: he accepts the idea of this invasion and conquest, but insists that it “occured prior to 4500 BC.”<sup>81</sup> His objection is to the Aryans

being considered “barbarians” and the Dravidians “civilized”.

The Hindu invasionist interpretation, in fact, contains the seeds of even greater “schism”: while the standard invasionist theory, after the discovery of the Indus civilization, at least gives the Dravidians the credit of cultural and civilizational superiority alongwith the military inferiority which led to their alleged defeat at the hands of the invading Aryans, the Hindu invasionist theory wants the Dravidians to be considered inferior in terms of both military strength and culture.

The standard invasionist school treats the latter-day Indian or Hindu culture and civilization as an amalgam of the cultures and civilizations of the invading Aryans and the indigenous Dravidians, with more Dravidian elements than Aryan, but the Hindu invasionist school treats this culture and civilization as a wholly Aryan one imposed by a superior race on an inferior one.

This is not merely an inference drawn from their theory; it is actually stated in so many words by Tilak, who asserts that “the very fact that... (the Aryans) were able to establish their supremacy over the races they came across in their migrations from the original home, and that they succeeded, by conquest or assimilation, in Aryanising the latter in language, thought and religion under circumstances which could not be expected to be favourable to them, is enough to prove that the original Aryan civilization must have been of a type far higher than that of the non-Aryan races.”<sup>82</sup>

Tilak is very evidently proud of “the vitality and superiority of the Aryan races, as disclosed by their conquest, by ex-termination or assimilation, of the non-Aryan races with whom they came into contact in their migrations in search of new lands from the North Pole to the Equator.”<sup>83</sup>

Moreover, Tilak, and other scholars of this school,

are quite certain that they themselves are descendants of these “Aryan races” who conquered India, rather than of the “non-Aryan races” of India who were conquered: Tilak repeatedly refers to the Aryans as “the ancient worshippers and sacrificers of our race.”<sup>84</sup>

V.D. (Veer) Savarkar, who more or less accepted Tilak’s hypothesis, takes equal pride in the “achievements” of the Aryans, but is less inclined to stress the “extermination” of the inferior races, and, in fact, tries to suggest that the non-Aryans were relatively *few* in number, and that most of them welcomed the Aryan invaders with open arms.

According to Savarkar, the history of the Aryan conquest began in the westernmost part of the Saptasindhu region when “the foremost band of the intrepid Aryans made it their home and lighted the first sacrificial fire on the banks of the Sindhu... BY the time they had cut themselves aloof from their cognate and neighbouring people, especially the Persians, the Aryans had spread out to the farthest of the seven rivers, Sapta Sindhus...”<sup>85</sup>

Now, “the region of the Sapta Sindhus was, though very thinly, populated by scattered tribes. Some of them seem to have been friendly towards the newcomers, and it is almost certain that many an individual had served the Aryans as guides and introduced them to the names and nature of the new scenes to which the Aryans could not be but local strangers. The Vidyadharas, Apsaras, Yakshas, Rakshas, Gandharvas and Kinnaras were not all or altogether inimical to the Aryans as at times they are mentioned as being benevolent and good-natured folks. Thus it is probable that many names given to the great rivers by the original inhabitants of the soil may have been Sanskritised and adopted by the Aryans...”<sup>86</sup>

“The activities of so intrepid a people as the

Sindhus or Hindus could no longer be kept cooped or cabined within the narrow compass of the Panchanad or the Punjab. The vast and fertile plains farther off stood out inviting the efforts of some strong and vigorous race. Tribe after tribe of the Hindus issued forth from the land of their nursery, and, led by the consciousness of a great mission and their Sacrificial Fire that was a symbol thereof, they soon reclaimed the vast, waste and but very thinly populated lands. Forests were felled, agriculture flourished, cities rose, kingdoms thrived... As time passed on, the distances of their new colonies increased, and different peoples of other highly developed types began to be incorporated into their culture..."<sup>87</sup>

"At last the great mission which the Sindhus had undertaken of founding a nation and a country, found and reached its geographical limit when the valorous Prince of Ayodhya made a triumphant entry in Ceylon and actually brought the whole land from the Himalayas to the Seas under one sovereign sway. The day when the Horse of Victory returned unchallenged and unchallengeable, the great white Umbrella of Sovereignty was unfurled over that Imperial throne of Ramchandra, the brave, Ramchandra the good, and a loving allegiance to him was sworn, not only by the Princes of Aryan blood, but Hanuman, Sugriva, Bibhishana from the south – that day was the real birth-day of our Hindu people. It was truly our national day: for Aryans and Anaryans knitting themselves into a people were born as a nation."<sup>88</sup>

Besides accepting that "Yakshas. Rakshas, Gandharvas", and "Hanuman, Sugriva, Bibhishana" were *not* "of Aryan blood", Savarkar also accepts the linguistic and sociological (caste) implications of the invasion theory: "Further on, as the Vedic Sanskrit began to give birth to the Indian Prakrits which became the spoken tongues of the majority of the descendants of these very Sindhus as well as the assimilated and the cross-born castes, these too might have called

themselves as Hindus.”<sup>89</sup>

Kulkarni is much more graphic in his description of the Aryan invasion of India. He converts the whole thing into a veritable saga, *ostensibly on the basis of the Rigveda*:

According to him, the Vedic empire, which lay mainly to the west of the Indus, was ruled by the PRthu emperor CAyamAna, with his capital in Abhivarta, “now identified as a village near the city of Khorasan in Eastern Iran.”<sup>90</sup>

The Bharatas were one of the groups of Vedic people living within this empire. A rift developed between the Bharatas and the PRthus, and “DivodAsa, the chief of the Bharatas, was captured by VadhryaSva, the commander of the CAyamAnas.”<sup>91</sup>

Later, DivodAsa was released: “After his release, he crossed the Sindhu and the other rivers of the Punjab and settled in the region between the rivers Satudri and the GangA.”<sup>92</sup>

DivodAsa’s “son SudAs was very ambitious. He wanted to be independent of the CAyamAnas of the PRthus ruling from far-off Abhivarta in Eastern Iran”,<sup>93</sup> VasiSTha agreed to help him in his ambition, and “crossed the Sindhu and other rivers and joined SudAs”.<sup>94</sup> Together, they “gained supremacy over the region between the Sindhu and the GangA.”<sup>95</sup>

However: “The emperor CAyamAna could not tolerate this. He gave a call to all his chieftains to gather together under his command. Ten very powerful kings including Yadu, Turvasu, Anu, Druhyu - the Arya chiefs, and Sambar the Dasyu chief, joined CAyamAna. They crossed the Sindhu...”.<sup>96</sup> The resulting DASarAjña war was decisively won by SudAs: “This was the turning point in the relationship of the Vedics who stayed behind in the western region beyond the Sindhu,

and those who crossed over the rivers of the Punjab and came to settle permanently in the region east of the river Sindhu.”<sup>97</sup>

“The exodus of the Bharatas to the east of the Sindhu had started. And it gained momentum with the sage ViSvAmitra crossing the Sindhu and the other rivers of the Punjab... when ViSvAmitra left his original habitat west of the Sindhu, alongwith his followers, he is stated to be requesting the rivers Vipat and Satudri to allow passage for his people, the Bharatas (RV 3.33.11).”<sup>98</sup>

“After ViSvAmitra became the priest of SudAs, he inspired SudAs to perform a horse-sacrifice to proclaim to the Kings here that they should hereafter pay homage to him as their King Emperor (RV 3.53.11)... The horse was escorted to the east, the west and the north. It appears that SudAs had not yet penetrated the Vindhya and established his sway there in the South. But the Bharatas triumphed over all the regions north of the Vindhya. For it is stated that SudAsa’s army had humbled the Kikatas, ie. modern Bihar and the regions around it.”<sup>99</sup>

There is clearly a sleight of hand in Kulkarni’s description of the exploits of SudAs: since the geographical landmark associated with VasiSTha (ie. the ParuSNI) is to the west of the geographical landmarks associated with ViSvAmitra (ie. the VipAS and Sutudri, and KikaTa), Kulkarni places VasiSTha *before* ViSvAmitra, although the unanimous verdict of both tradition as well as modern scholarship is that ViSvAmitra preceded VasiSTha as the priest of SudAs. His only explanation for this reverse order, significantly, is that “the sequence of events appears to be queer”<sup>100</sup> (from the point of view of the invasion), if ViSvAmitra is placed before VasiSTha!

And finally, Kulkarni does what he accuses the Western scholars of doing: he sows “the seeds of



schism between the North Indians and their southern counterparts.”<sup>101</sup> He takes the invasion right into southern territory: “the expansion of the Vedic Aryans towards the south of the Vindhyas clearly belongs to the later Vedic and early post-Vedic periods. It must have been during these periods that the family of Agastya led the colonising Aryan missionaries to the south... He is the first Aryan explorer and the originator of the art of colonization... the Aryanizer of the south.”<sup>102</sup>

### **II.C. Vedic Civilization vis-a-vis the Original Aryan Civilization.**

Tilak sees the religion and culture preserved in the Rigveda as “the anti-diluvian religion and culture”<sup>103</sup> of the Aryans in their original Arctic homeland, “preserved in the form of traditions by the disciplined memory of the Rishis until it was incorporated first into crude, as contrasted with the *polished*, hymns (su-uktas) of the Rig-Veda in the Orion Period, to be collected later on in MaNDalas and finally into Samhitas; and... the subject matter of these hymns is interglacial.”<sup>104</sup>

It was “those who survived the catastrophe or their immediate descendants” who first “incorporated into hymns the religious knowledge they had inherited as a sacred trust from their forefathers”.<sup>105</sup>

If this anti-diluvian religion and culture is found preserved only in India, and to some extent in Iran, it is because “the civilization of the Aryan races that are found to have inhabited the northern parts of Europe in the beginning of the Neolithic age” suffered “a natural relapse into barbarism after the great catastrophe”;<sup>106</sup> while “the religious zeal and industry of the bards or priests of the Iranian and the Indian Aryas”<sup>107</sup> preserved this religion and culture “to be scrupulously guarded and transmitted to future generations”.<sup>108</sup>

About the language of the hymns, and therefore, indirectly, of the original Aryans, Tilak at first tries to appear non-committal: “How far the language of the hymns, as we have them at present, resembled the anti-diluvial forms of speech is a different question... we are not concerned here with the words or the syllables of the hymns, which, it is admitted, have not remained permanent.”<sup>109</sup>

But he immediately abandons this ambiguity: “the hymns have been preserved, accent for accent, according to the lowest estimate, for the last 3000 or 4000 years; and what is achieved in more recent times can certainly be held to have been done by the older bards in times when the traditions about the Arctic home and religion were still fresh in their mind.”<sup>110</sup>

In short, Tilak sees little difference between the language, religion and culture of the original Aryans, and that of the Vedic Aryans.

Kulkarni is more categorical: “the Vedas are the heritage of mankind. Even though the credit for preservation of these without adding a syllable here or a dot there is that of the Indians, the verses in these have come down to us from remotest antiquity when forefathers of all the peoples of this wide world were living together”<sup>111</sup> in the original homeland.

“Unfortunately, those who migrated from their original homeland almost totally lost their links with the ancient culture while only the Indians could preserve the Vedas and their links with their ancient Vedic civilization, making such modifications as the climes and times demanded.”<sup>112</sup>

About the language of the original Aryans, Kulkarni is even more categorical: he objects to “the language from which all these languages including Sanskrit and Zend have been derived

(being) designated as Indo-European”,<sup>113</sup> and he tells the scholars that they “should not feel shy and should consider this original language as Sanskrit itself, instead of Indo-European.”<sup>114</sup>

The Hindu invasionist scholars thus clearly see the language, religion and culture of the Rigveda as almost identical with the language, religion and culture of the Aryans in their original homeland outside India, and, in the process, they make this Vedic culture *totally alien* to India. It may be noted that even the standard invasionist scholars, except for the lunatic fringe among them, accept that while the Aryans came from outside, “the Indo-Aryans had become completely Indianized when the Rigvedic culture started on its course as a distinct product of the Indian soil about 1500 BC.”<sup>115</sup> The Hindu invasionist theory is thus far more inimical to the Indian ethos than the standard invasionist one.

The only thing with which these scholars are concerned is the glorification of the Aryan civilization in its original homeland:

Tilak insists that the Aryans had attained “a high degree of civilization in their original Arctic home,” and “there is no reason why the primitive Aryans should not be placed on an equal footing with the prehistoric inhabitants of Egypt in point of culture and civilization”.<sup>116</sup>

This, of course, means more than it actually says: the Aryan civilization apparently flourished in the Arctic region before 10000-8000 BC, while the Egyptian civilization flourished much later; so naturally the Aryan civilization must be treated as much more than merely “equal” with the Egyptian civilization!

Kulkarni, as usual, is much more reckless in his pronouncements. He starts out by asserting that “the Vedas are the compositions of a highly civilized people”,<sup>117</sup> and ends up with deriving *all* the civilizations of the world from the civilization of

the Vedic Aryans: “the Rigvedic people were the civilizers of the world in the post-glacial epoch”<sup>118</sup> since “the Aryans dispersed to different lands in Europe, North Africa, the rest of Asia, and America, and developed the ancient world civilizations in their respective regions.”<sup>119</sup>

#### **II.D. The Original Homeland**

After examining the main concerns of the Hindu invasionist scholars, we now come to the main point: the location of the original homeland according to these scholars, their real reasons behind locating the homeland in these far-off regions, and the arguments by which they try to prove these locations *on the basis of the Rigveda*.

Tilak locates the original homeland in the Arctic region from “remote geological times” till “the destruction of the original Arctic home by the last Ice Age”<sup>120</sup> in “10000-8000 BC”. The period from “8000-5000 BC” was the “age of migration from the original home. The survivors of the Aryan race roamed over the northern parts of Europe and Asia in search of new lands.”<sup>121</sup>

By 5000 BC, according to Tilak, the Aryans were divided into two groups. One group consisted of “the primitive Aryans in Europe... as represented by Swiss Lake Dwellers”, and the other group consisted of the “Asiatic Aryans... probably settled on the Jaxartes”,<sup>122</sup> still in Central Asia, on their way towards India.

Thus, the Aryan colonisation of India took place *long after* the colonisation of Europe. Far from being the original Aryan homeland, India, according to Tilak, was practically the last land to be colonised by the Aryans.

Kulkarni’s idea of the original homeland is even more peculiar than Tilak’s:

Letting his imagination run riot, Kulkarni tells us

that “the Vedic civilization covered a wide area including Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Sindha, Punjab and Kashmira”,<sup>123</sup> and “the Vedic influence was all-pervasive and it spread right from modern Turkey and Egypt, covered the region between the Caucasus mountain and the Caspian Sea down to Syria and Palestine and the Persian Gulf kingdoms of Ancient Babylon, Asur, Sumer, Akkad, Ur, Kassite, and including the modern Iran-Afghanistan, the Russian Azerbaijan, and the Southern regions of the Russian Republics, Tadjikistan, Uzbek, Turkmen and Kirghis. It extended further east to Hindukush Mountains and covered the region around Varasakh river and included the Sindhu region of modern Sindha, the Punjab and the Kashmira.”<sup>124</sup>

Now, it may appear from the above that Kulkarni includes three northwestern parts of India in the original homeland. But he is quick to disclaim this. He immediately clarifies that “this was the position in about 5000 BC. About 2000 or so years earlier, the Dasarajnya battle was fought and the Vedics... began to spread eastwards and southwards to the present day India”,<sup>125</sup> and, even after that, “these people had their settlements mostly in the regions West of the river Sindhu, and only the Punjab, Sindha and Kashmir were the regions known to them.”<sup>126</sup> Needless to say, “southern India of present day was unknown”<sup>127</sup> to them.

Now the question arises: *why* are these staunch Hindu scholars so determined to locate the original Aryan homeland far outside India?

There are two main reasons:

1. Firstly, these scholars are not concerned with the narrow national boundaries of India: their main concern is to portray Vedic civilization as the most ancient civilization in the world, and as the most likely source-point for all the other civilizations of the ancient world.

At the time Tilak wrote *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, the Indus civilization had not yet been excavated, and the oldest archaeological remains of any highly developed civilization in India did not go beyond the first millennium BC.

Hence Tilak was compelled to look elsewhere for an ancient and highly developed civilization which could be projected as the original Aryan and Vedic civilization. However, all civilizations excavated till then were already booked and accounted for. The only option left for Tilak was to postulate a hypothetical Aryan, and Vedic, civilization in the remote geological past, in an almost inexcavable part of the world like the Arctic region.

Later scholars belonging to this school have an option within India in the Indus civilization, but this option has very limited utility: it is difficult to suggest that this civilization could have been the source or inspiration for the other civilizations like the Egyptian or Mesopotamian. Hence, even though careful to suggest that the Aryans entered India before the period of the Indus civilization, they still find it necessary to look outside India for the original Aryan or Vedic civilization.

Many scholars (for example B.G. Siddharth,<sup>128</sup> Director-General of the B.M. Birla Science Centre in Hyderabad) accept Colin Renfrew's view that the original homeland was in Anatolia (Turkey), and try to identify 10,000 year old epipaleolithic agricultural and proto-agricultural sites excavated in Turkey, such as Nevali Cori in southeastern Turkey, as Rigvedic sites. Anatolia is conveniently close to the later centres of development of civilizations in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Kulkarni, as we have seen, sweepingly includes almost the whole of *Asia to the west of the Indus* in the original homeland. Consequently, he feels free to identify any and every archaeological site in West Asia, which shows signs of economic or

technological advancement, as a Vedic site: referring, among others, to Jarmo, Tell-es-Sawwan and Maghzatiah in Iraq, Beidha in Jordan, and Jericho in Israel, Kulkarni tells us that “they fit in with our picture of the developed administration in the Vedic days.”<sup>129</sup>

2. Secondly, these scholars are irked by the fact that their Hindu ancestors are portrayed, by historians in general, as a race of mild, stay-at-home namby-pambies who bowed down before every new race of invaders.

Their answer to this is to portray their Hindu ancestors, *or at least a section of Hindu ancestors whom they can claim to be their own*, as a glorious, vibrant race of daredevils who swept a large part of the world, *including India*, with their military prowess and civilizational greatness.

Their attitude is somewhat like that of a large section of Indian Muslims, who, themselves descendants of native Hindus, identify themselves with the Islamic invaders from the west, claim them as their own ancestors, and glorify the Islamic invasion of India. The difference is that there *was* an Islamic invasion of India, recorded in great detail by the invaders themselves, while the “Aryan invasion of India” is a comparatively recent, and purely hypothetical, proposition.

If the Aryan invasion theory places a question mark on the status of the ancestors of *other* sections of Hindus, it is a matter of little consequence to these scholars.

However, it is of consequence to other scholars. Dr. Ambedkar reacts sharply and critically to “the support which this theory receives from Brahmin scholars”: as he points out, “this is a very strange phenomenon. As Hindus they should ordinarily show a dislike for the Aryan theory with its expressed avowal of the superiority of the Aryan races over the Asiatic races. but the Brahmin scholar has not only no such aversion, but he most willingly hails it. The reasons are obvious.

The Brahmin... claims to be a representative of the Aryan race and he regards the rest of the Hindus as descendants of the non-Aryans. The theory helps him to establish his kinship with the European races and share their arrogance and their superiority. He likes particularly that part of the theory which makes the Aryan an invader and a conqueror of the non-Aryan races. For it helps him to maintain his overlordship over the non-Brahmins.”<sup>130</sup>

Finally, we come to the question of the methods by which these scholars try to find evidence in the Rigveda for their homeland theories. We will not go into details, but we will examine, in general, the trend of the “evidence” presented by them:

Tilak completely ignores the actual geographical data in the Rigveda, and concentrates instead on finding “memories” of the Arctic astronomy embedded in the phrases, myths and rituals in the Rigveda, and even in later texts.

According to Tilak, “the North Pole and the Arctic region possess certain astronomical characteristics which are peculiar to them,”<sup>131</sup> and these characteristics form the basis of the phrases, myths and rituals in the Rigveda. This can only mean that “the ancestors of the Vedic Rishis must have become acquainted with these characteristics when they lived in these regions”,<sup>132</sup> and, therefore, that “the home of the ancestors of the Vedic people was somewhere near the North Pole before the last Glacial epoch.”<sup>133</sup>

These astronomical characteristics are:

- a. “The spinning round of the heavenly dome over the head.”<sup>134</sup>
- b. “A Dawn continuously lasting for many days.”<sup>135</sup>



c. "The long day, the long night, the number of months of sunshine and of darkness, and the character of the year"<sup>136</sup> peculiar to the Arctic region.

Tilak finds references to these characteristics in:

1. *Words and phrases in the Rigveda*: Thus, for example, he translates II.28.9 as: "Remove far the debts (sins) incurred by me. May I not, o King! be affected by others' doings. Verily, many dawns (have) not fully (vi) flashed forth. O Varuna! direct that we may be alive during them."<sup>137</sup> After a long and involved discussion on the meaning of the phrase "many dawns", Tilak "proves" that the phrase does not mean "many days", but that it means "many day-long portions of time during which the dawn lasted".<sup>138</sup>

2. *Myths and legends in the Rigveda*: This includes the myths of Aditi and the seven Adityas, MArtANDa the eighth Aditya, the seven sages, the Navagvas and DaSagvas, the blind DIrghatamas, Trita Aptya, Satakratu Indra, VRtrahan Indra, RjrASva and the hundred sheep, Sambara and his hundred forts, ViSNU and his three steps, the ASvins and their rescue-missions at sea, etc. etc.

An examination of Tilak's voluminous book, and the single-minded way in which he interprets anything and everything in the Rigveda on the basis of the "astronomical characteristics" of the Arctic region, is a depressing experience; and it is made worse by his naive assertions, repeatedly made, that the traditions and myths in the Vedic texts "can be better explained on the Arctic theory than at present",<sup>139</sup> and that all difficulties of Vedic interpretation vanish "when we explain the legends on the Arctic theory."<sup>140</sup>

In fact, the Arctic theory apparently explains all kinds of inexplicable myths even in respect of late texts like the RAmAyana. The following

representative examples of such myths, and their Arctic explanations according to Tilak, will illustrate how this method of interpretation apparently solves all kinds of problems:

**a. *Problem:*** The fact that “RAma's adversary was con-ceived of as a ten-headed monster.”<sup>141</sup>

*Solution:* This represents “the annual fight between light and darkness as conceived by the inhabitants of a place where a summer of ten months was followed by a long winter night of two months.”<sup>142</sup>

**b. *Problem:*** The myth that “the brother of this ten-headed monster slept continuously for six months in a year.”<sup>143</sup>

*Solution:* This “indicates his Arctic origin.”<sup>144</sup>

**c. *Problem:*** The myth that “all the Gods were said to be thrown into prison by RAVana until they were released by RAma.”<sup>145</sup>

*Solution:* This indicates “the temporary ascendancy of the powers of darkness over the powers of light during the continuous night of the Arctic region.”<sup>146</sup>

**d. *Problem:*** The myth of “the birth of SItA from the earth and her final disappearance into it.”<sup>147</sup>

*Solution:* This represents “the story of the restoration of the dawn... to

man”<sup>148</sup> in the Arctic region.

### 3. Vedic rituals and sacrificial sessions (sattras):

This includes the Pravargya, GavAmayanam, AtirAtra, etc.

Thus, for example, according to Tilak,<sup>149</sup> the Taittirya SaMhitA, the Aitareya BrAhmaNa, the ASvalAyana and Apastambha Srauta S5tras, and even the Nirukta, describe a procedure to be followed in respect of the GavAmayana sacrifice, which shows that a *very long* time (so long that “all the ten MaNDalas of the Rigveda” could be comfortably recited without the sun appearing above the horizon) elapsed between the first appearance of morning light on the horizon, and the rising of the sun above the horizon, clearly indicating the long dawn of the Arctic region.

It may be noted here that according to Tilak’s own chronology,<sup>150</sup> the Arctic home was destroyed in 10,000-8000 BC, the “survivors of the Aryan race roamed over the northern parts of Europe and Asia in search of lands” between “8000-5000 BC”, and the Asiatic Aryans were settled in Central Asia by 5000 BC. “The Taittirya SamhitA and the BrAhmaNas” were produced in “3000-1400 BC”, when “the sacrificial system and the numerous details thereof found in the BrAhmaNas seem to have been developed.” And “the SUTras... made their appearance” in “1400-500 BC”.

Is it at all within the realms of possibility that the composers of the BrAhmanas who developed the sacrifices *after* 3000 BC, and the writers of the SUTras, who wrote *after* 1400 BC, could be seriously giving detailed instructions to sacrificers about the procedures to be followed when performing a sacrifice in the Arctic region which their remote ancestors had left *around 8000 BC*?

Rational thinking clearly has no role to play in Tilak’s scheme of interpretation. Anything and everything in the Rig-veda, howsoever commonplace or howsoever esoteric, somehow

refers to the “astronomical characteristics” of the Arctic region: the mere fact that the Vedic texts describe a “series of night sacrifices from two to a hundred nights”<sup>151</sup> indicates to Tilak that “a hundred continuous nights marked the maximum duration of darkness experienced by the ancient sacrificers of the race”,<sup>152</sup> and that “the duration of the long night in the ancient home varied from one night (of 24 hours) to a hundred continuous nights (of 2400 hours) according to latitude, and... the hundred nightly Soma sacrifices corresponded to the different durations of the night at different places in the ancient home.”<sup>153</sup> Tilak complacently notes that *any* number can be given a special Arctic connotation, “for the sun may then be supposed to be below the horizon for any period varying from one to a hundred nights, or even for six months.”<sup>154</sup>

But Tilak knows where to draw the line: he takes poetical or ritualistic exaggerations in the texts literally, whenever he can interpret them on the basis of the “astronomical characteristics” of the Arctic region (which, as we have seen, can mean anything); but, elsewhere, when he refers to some annual sacrifices which “are described as extending over 1000 years”, he decides that “we may pass it over as unnecessary for our purpose.”<sup>155</sup> He does not, in this case, take it as evidence of the “astronomical characteristics” of some other planet where the Aryans may have lived before migrating (by space-ship) to the Arctic region!

Kulkarni’s procedure for finding evidence in the Rigveda for *his* homeland theory is different: he merely goes on making geographical statements and assertions on a take-it-from-me basis, and these statements and assertions, apparently, constitute sufficient evidence in themselves.

Thus, Kulkarni assigns the following geographical locations to the different families of RSis:

**a.** The Atris: near “Susa, the

ancient Iranian capital.”<sup>156</sup>

**b.** The KaNvas: “somewhere in the regions of modern Persia and Afghanistan.”<sup>157</sup>

**c.** The GRtsamadas: in the “Tadzhak and Kazakh republics of the U.S.S.R.”<sup>158</sup>

**d.** The KaSyapas: in the area of the “Caspian Sea and to its north... (in) the Caucasus mountains”.<sup>159</sup>

**e.** The ANgirases and BhRgus: “somewhere in Iran”.<sup>160</sup>

**f.** The ViSvAmitras and VasiSThas: “somewhere in Iran”.<sup>161</sup>

Likewise, he tells us that the Saptasindhu region is not the Punjab, but “the land watered by Sarasvatl, Sindhu, Sharayu, Rasa, Oxus, Helmand, and one more river somewhere in the region West of the river Sindhu.”<sup>162</sup>

The Sarasvatl is “the modern river Syr Darya which now disappears in the Aral Sea.”<sup>163</sup> Kulkarni is critical of scholars for “trying to locate the river Sarasvatl within the present day boundaries of India.”<sup>164</sup>

The Rasa is, on one page, “the mighty Euphratis river”,<sup>165</sup> and on another, “that famous river Tigris.”<sup>166</sup>

AbhyAvartin CAyamAna is from “Abhivarta... a village near the city of Khorasan in Eastern Iran.”<sup>167</sup>

Likewise, “Sushna’s clan was from South

Azerbaijan and Sambara was the chief of the clan operating in North Iran along the banks of Samber, a small river.”<sup>168</sup>

Arbuda is not Mount Abu, but “the present-day Alburz mountain of North Iran.”<sup>169</sup>

KlkaTa, more generously, is either “modern Baluchistan or Baharain”<sup>170</sup> (although, on another page, it is “modern Bihar and the regions around it.”<sup>171</sup>)

To cut a long story short, the Hindu invasionist scholars are so busy internationalising the Rigveda, and transporting it into the remote past, that they really cannot be bothered with the actual historical information so richly present in the Rigveda.

### III THE QUASI-INVASIONIST SCHOOL

The quasi-invasionist school, strictly speaking, is not exactly a school of interpretation in itself, but, for want of a better name, and because the two scholars whose interpretations we will examine here cannot be properly included in any of the three other schools, we must examine it separately.

The two scholars who can be classified as quasi-invasionist scholars are F.E. Pargiter and Dr. B.R. (Babasaheb) Ambedkar, and what makes them different from other scholars is that both invasionists and anti-invasionists can try to claim them as their own on the basis of select quotations from their writings.

But what makes their writings particularly important is that they best illustrate the phenomenon which has been at the root of all the misinterpretations of Vedic and Aryan history: the phenomenon of the blind belief in the fallacy that linguists have established that the original

homeland of the Indo-European family of languages was located *outside* India.

Both Pargiter and Ambedkar, after their detailed examination of the ancient texts, find that there is absolutely no basis to the invasion theory. And they make their conclusions in this regard clear in no uncertain terms.

But, after making their views loud and clear, they suddenly seem to be assailed by apprehensions about having exceeded their brief in challenging the conclusions of established scholars belonging to a field in which they themselves cannot lay claims to any special scholarship, viz. linguistics.

So they try to backtrack by trying to give respectability to their literary analysis by somehow introducing the concept of an Aryan invasion through the back door (literally so in the case of Pargiter, as we shall see); and the ways in which they do so are so illogical, so contradictory to their own analyses, and so incongruous even with the linguistic theory itself, that the effect is ludicrous.

We will examine their writings as follows:

- A. The Anti-invasionist Conclusions.
- B. The Invasionist Second Thoughts.

### **III.A. The Anti-invasionist Conclusions**

F.E. Pargiter examines traditional Indian history as recorded in the PurANas, and he finds that this history gives absolutely no indications of any Aryan invasion of India from the northwest: “Indian tradition knows nothing of any Aila or Aryan invasion of India from Afghanistan, nor of any gradual advance from thence eastwards.”<sup>172</sup>

In fact, he finds quite the opposite: “the Aryans began at Allahabad, conquered and spread out

northwest, west and south, and had by YayAti's time occupied precisely the region known as MadhyadeSa... They expanded afterwards into the Punjab and East Afghanistan, into West India and the northwest Dekhan..."<sup>173</sup>

And then, "Indian tradition distinctly asserts that there was an Aila outflow of the Druhyus through the northwest into the countries beyond where they founded various kingdoms."<sup>174</sup>

Pargiter's examination of traditional history produces a picture which tallies perfectly with our theory. He describes<sup>175</sup> the expansion of the Aryans from the region around Allahabad into the northwest and beyond in great detail.

Other scholars, when they deign to notice the evidence in the PurANas in respect of the indigenous origin of the Aryans and their expansion outside India, tend to dismiss this evidence as irrelevant on the ground that it is allegedly contradictory to the evidence of the Rigveda.

However, Pargiter does not do that. On the contrary, he asserts about the Puranic accounts that "there is nothing in them, as far as I am aware, really inconsistent with the most ancient book we possess, namely, the Rigveda, and they throw much light thereon, and on all problems concerning ancient India."<sup>176</sup>

He notes that "the bulk of the Rigveda was composed in the great development of Brahmanism that arose under the successors of king Bharata who reigned in the upper Ganges-Jumna doab and plain;"<sup>177</sup> and, while referring to the founders of the kingdom of N. PaNcAla, who come far down in the list of kings in his detailed description of the expansion of the Aryans from an original region around Allahabad, he points out that "they and their successors play a prominent part in the Rigveda."<sup>178</sup>



All in all, he notes that “tradition... makes the earliest connexion of the Veda to be with the eastern region and not with the Punjab.”<sup>179</sup>

Pargiter’s analysis of the ancient texts thus makes him reject the two most fundamental aspects of the “evidence” for an Aryan invasion of India:

**a.** The fact that there are Indo-European languages outside India: Pargiter clearly attributes the presence of these languages to the “Aila outflow of the Druhyus through the northwest into the countries beyond where they founded various kingdoms.”<sup>180</sup>

**b.** The contention that the Rigveda depicts a “gradual advance from Afghanistan eastwards”: Pargiter rejects this contention, and points out that the movement is in the opposite direction.

Thus, Pargiter’s analysis of the ancient texts would appear to make him an anti-invasionist scholar.

Ambedkar is even more forthright and categorical in his rejection of the Aryan invasion theory: “There is not a particle of evidence suggesting the invasion of India by the Aryans from outside India... The theory of the Aryan race set up by Western writers falls to the ground at every point... the theory is based on nothing but pleasing assumptions and inferences based on such assumptions... Not one of these assumptions is borne out by facts... The assertion that the Aryans came from outside and invaded India is not proved and the premise that the Dasas and Dasyus are aboriginal tribes of India is demonstrably false... The originators of the Aryan race theory are so eager to establish their case that they have no patience to see what absurdities they land themselves in... The Aryan

race theory is so absurd that it ought to have been dead long ago.”<sup>181</sup>

He analyses the logic behind the theory as follows: “The theory of invasion is an invention. This invention is necessary because of a gratuitous assumption which underlies the Western theory. The assumption is that the Indo-Germanic (sic) people are the purest of the modern representatives of the original Aryan race. Its first home is assumed to have been somewhere in Europe. These assumptions raise a question: how could the Aryan speech have come to India? This question can be answered only by the supposition that the Aryans must have come into India from outside. Hence the necessity for inventing the theory of invasion.”<sup>182</sup>

Ambedkar likewise rejects the invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda as “a perversion of scientific investigation.”<sup>183</sup>

According to him, the Western scholars “proceeded to invent the story of the invasion of India by the Aryans and the conquest by them of the Dasas and Dasyus”,<sup>184</sup> and, in the process, “they start on a mission to prove what they want to prove, and do not hesitate to pick such evidence from the Vedas as they think is good for them.”<sup>185</sup>

These scholars assume “that the Aryans are a European race.”<sup>186</sup> But, “the European races were white and had a colour prejudice against the dark races” ;<sup>187</sup> hence these scholars try “to find evidence for colour prejudice in the Aryans who came into India.”<sup>188</sup>

But Ambedkar proves with references from the Rigveda that “the Vedic Aryans had no colour prejudice. How could they have? The Vedic Aryans were not of one colour. Their complexion varied; some were of copper complexion, some white and some black.”<sup>189</sup> He examines the word

*varNa*, which is treated as evidence that the caste-system was originally based on colour, and proves that “it originally meant a class belonging to a particular faith and it had nothing to do with colour or complexion.”<sup>190</sup>

He also examines the words *mRdhraVaka*, *anAs*, *KRSNayoni*, etc. in the Rigveda, which are construed as evidence of a dark, flat-nosed, aboriginal race of India, and concludes that “it would be childish to rely upon (them) as a basis of consciousness of race difference.”<sup>191</sup>

He further examines the word *DAsa* (or *Dasyu*) and concludes that “there is no evidence to show that the term is used in a racial sense indicative of a non-Aryan people”,<sup>192</sup> but, in fact, “it was the word of abuse used by the Indo-Aryans for the Indo-Iranians (sic)”.<sup>193</sup> He further concludes that the battles in the Rigveda were not between Aryans and non-Aryans but between “different communities of Aryas who were not only different but opposed and inimical to each other.”<sup>194</sup>

In sum, Ambedkar arrives at the following conclusions, “(1) The Vedas do not know any such race as the Aryan race. (2) There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the *Dasas* and *Dasyus* supposed to be the natives of India. (3) There is no evidence to show that the distinction between Aryas, *Dasas* and *Dasyus* was a racial distinction. (4) The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryas were different in colour from the *Dasas* and *Dasyus*.”<sup>195</sup>

Even more than Pargiter, Ambedkar’s analysis of the ancient texts would appear to make him an emphatically anti-invasionist scholar.

### **III.B. The Invasionist Second Thoughts**

Their examination of the ancient texts leaves both

Pargiter and Ambedkar, separately, with no doubts whatsoever about the untenability of the Aryan invasion theory and the invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda.

But, the moment they turn from their examination of the ancient texts, and are confronted by the claim that linguistics is supposed to have conclusively established that the Indo-European languages originated outside India, they are assailed by self-doubts, and take up a contrary position.

According to Pargiter: "We know from the evidence of language that the Aryans entered India very early, and established themselves ultimately throughout North India, and in the north-west of the Dekhan, so that the history of those times is bound up closely with the Aryan conquest."<sup>196</sup>

"The Aryans could not have established themselves in India without long and arduous warfare. Among the hostile races who possessed the country before them were not only rude tribes but also communities in a higher state of civilization... Their wars, their conquests and the founding of new kingdoms all implied that there were victorious kings, whose lineage and exploits would have been sung in many a KSatriya ballad... Their victorious career must have given rise to abundant tradition of all kinds, warlike, religious and peaceful..."<sup>197</sup>

Hence, "if we wish to discover and estimate what their position and achievements were, it is essential to study their traditions, for, as will be shown, the Puranic genealogies, and they alone, give an account how the Aila race dominated all the regions to which we assign the Aryan occupation."<sup>198</sup>

Pargiter tells us that "the genealogies give an account, how the Aryans dominated North India, and the north-west of the Dekhan, and it is the

only account to be found in the whole of Sanskrit literature of that great ethnological fact".<sup>199</sup>

But this is totally at variance with Pargiter's own analysis, which shows that the "Aryans began at Allahabad... (and) expanded afterwards into the Punjab and east Afghanistan";<sup>200</sup> and his conclusions that, rather than an immigration, "there was an outflow of people from India before the fifteenth century BC",<sup>201</sup> and that "the arguments used to prove the advance of the Aryans from Afghanistan into the Punjab might simply be reversed."<sup>202</sup>

How does Pargiter harmonize his childlike faith in the pronouncements of the linguists with his own analysis of traditional Indian history?

Simply by deciding that tradition "makes the Aila power begin at Allahabad and yet distinctly suggests that they came from outside India."<sup>203</sup>!

Now this "outside" cannot be from the northwest, since Pargiter does not want to challenge the results of his own analysis of traditional history either. So Pargiter comes up with the theory that "tradition or myth... directly indicates that the Ailas (or Aryans) entered India from the mid-Himalayan region."<sup>204</sup>

And what is this tradition? According to Pargiter: "All ancient Indian belief and veneration were directed to the mid-Himalayan region, the only original sacred outside land, and it was thither that rishis and kings turned their steps in devotion, never to the northwest."<sup>205</sup>

Incredible as it may seem, Pargiter seems to feel that the linguistic evidence simply shows that the Aryans came from "outside", period. Any "outside", apparently, will fit the bill, and harmonise his analysis of traditional history with the linguistic theory!

The notion that the Aryans came from outside India is supposed to be based on a comparative study of Sanskrit with other Indo-European languages outside India; and it is supposed to be reinforced by the evidence in the Rigveda which allegedly shows the movement of the Aryans from the northwest into the interior of India.

But Pargiter rejects both these claims, by accepting that the Indo-Europeans outside India were emigrants from India, and that the movement was from the interior of India to the northwest.

Clearly no linguist will accept that the linguistic evidence can be interpreted as showing that the Indo-Europeans originated in the mid-Himalayan region “outside” India (ie. in Tibet?), and that the speakers of these languages then passed through the whole of North India before migrating to their present habitats!

Having fallen into the trap, Pargiter now finds it necessary, like any other invasionist scholar, to discover “non-Aryans”, and “Aryan-vs-non-Aryan” conflicts, in the ancient texts: “India contained many folk of rude culture or aboriginal stock such as NiSAdas, DAsas and Pulindas. Powerful races of hostile character are often mentioned, such as DAnavas, Daityas, RAKSasas, NAGas, and Dasyus. Some of these were partly civilized, while others were rude and savage...”<sup>206</sup>

We have already seen, during our examination of the invasionist school of interpretation, Pargiter’s identification of tribes like the IkSvAkus, and of all the families of RSis (other than the ViSvAmitras), as non-Aryans; and his assertion that the names of all the non-Aryans were “Sanskritized in the course of time.”<sup>207</sup>

Here, therefore, we have a perfect example of blind belief, *without proper understanding*, in the pronouncements of scholars belonging to an unfamiliar discipline, leading an otherwise brilliant

scholar to doubt the evidence of his own research, and to make a mess of his otherwise brilliant thesis by trying to harmonise his conclusions with diametrically opposite theories.

Ambedkar's case is even stranger than Pargiter's.

To begin with, even when he is rejecting the Aryan invasion theory in sharp terms, Ambedkar is well aware of the linguistic nature of the origin of the theory: "The theory of the Aryan race is just an assumption... based on a philological proposition... that a greater number of languages of Europe and some languages of Asia must be referred to a common ancestral speech... (From this) are drawn two inferences: (1) unity of race, and (2) that race being the Aryan race. The argument is that if the languages are descended from a common ancestral speech, then there must have existed a race whose mother tongue it was... From this inference is drawn another inference, which is that of a common original habitat. It is argued that there could be no community of language unless people had a common habitat, permitting close communion."<sup>208</sup>

But, he, rather peremptorily, dismisses the logic of the idea that the Aryan languages must originally have been spoken in a common homeland as "an inference from an inference."<sup>209</sup>

Ambedkar's study of the Aryan problem is merely incidental to his study of the caste-system. And hence he is not linguistically equipped to study a matter which basically originated from a linguistic problem.

He gives many examples of his lack of linguistic sense: for example, he uses the phrase Indo-Iranian<sup>210</sup> when he means Iranian, and Indo-Germanic<sup>211</sup> when he means Germanic.

And then, after dismissing the idea of an Aryan race, he contradicts himself and complicates things by introducing a confusing distinction

between racial Aryans and linguistic Aryans: “the Aryan race in the physiological sense is one thing and an Aryan race in the philological sense quite different, and it is perfectly possible that the Aryan race, if there is one, in the physiological sense, may have its habitat in one place, and the Aryan race, in the philological sense, in quite a different place.”<sup>212</sup>

Clearly, for all his criticism of the Aryan theory, Ambedkar has a lurking apprehension that there may be truth, after all, in the assertions of the linguists.

And he capitulates to this apprehension at a most unlikely point, when he is discussing and dismissing the idea of an earlier Dravidian invasion of India mooted by another scholar in order to explain the origin of the Untouchables:

“The racial theory of Mr. Rice contains two elements: (1) That the Untouchables are non-Aryan, non-Dravidian aboriginals. (2) That they were conquered and subjugated by the Dravidians. This raises the whole question of the invasion of India by foreign invaders, the conquests made by them, and the social and cultural institutions that have resulted therefrom. According to Mr. Rice, there have been two invasions of India. First is the invasion of India by the Dravidians. They conquered the non-Dravidian aborigines, the ancestors of the Untouchables, and made them Untouchables. The second invasion is the invasion of India by the Aryans. The Aryans conquered the Dravidians. He does not say how the conquering Aryans treated the conquered Dravidians. If pressed for an answer he might say they made them Shudras. So that we get a chain. The Dravidians invaded India and conquered the aborigines and made them Untouchables. After Dravidians came the Aryans. The Aryans conquered the Dravidians and made them Shudras. The theory is too mechanical, a mere speculation, and too simple to explain a complicated set of facts relating to the origin of



the Shudras and the Untouchables.”<sup>213</sup>

In order, apparently, to counter the above theory, Ambedkar sets out to invent a new racial theory of his own with only *two* races: “What we can say about the races of India is that there have been at the most only two races in the field, the Aryans and the Nagas... The Dravidians and the Nagas are the one and the same people... Naga was a racial or cultural name and Dravida was their linguistic name.”<sup>214</sup>

Once the ball is set rolling, it is virtually unstoppable: “Tamil or Dravida was not merely the language of South India, but before the Aryans came it was the language of the whole of India, and was spoken from Kashmere to Cape Comorin. In fact it was the language of the Nagas throughout India... The Nagas in North India gave up Tamil which was their mother tongue and adopted Sanskrit in its place. The Nagas in South India retained Tamil as their mother tongue and did not adopt Sanskrit the language of the Aryans... The name Dravidian came to be applied only for the people of South India... in view of their being the only people speaking the Dravida language after the Nagas of the North had ceased to use it.”<sup>215</sup>

This incredible theory is nothing but the very Aryan invasion theory elsewhere rejected by Ambedkar in such strong terms, but in different words. And what makes the whole thing totally inexplicable and pointless in the particular context in which he postulates this racial theory - the question of the origin of the Untouchable - is that *it does nothing whatsoever to explain that origin*, since he immediately declares, after a detailed description of Dr. Ghurye’s anthropometric study of the different castes, that this study establishes “that the Brahmin and the Untouchable belong to the same race. From this it follows that if the Brahmins are Aryans, the Untouchables are also Aryans. If the Brahmins are Dravidians, the Untouchables are also Dravidians. If the Brahmins are Nagas, the Untouchables are also

Nagas.”<sup>216</sup>

Clearly, therefore, the question of invasions and racial conflicts has nothing to do with the question of the origins of Untouchability; and the only reason why Ambedkar suddenly capitulates to the Aryan invasion theory at this point is because he is assailed by doubts about the correctness of his own rejection, elsewhere, of this theory. He is seized by apprehensions of having erred in questioning the sacrosanct pronouncements of linguistic scientists, and he takes this first opportunity to redeem himself.

And now, having invented a racial theory of his own, Ambedkar is compelled to imitate the Western scholars who “do not hesitate to pick such evidence from the Vedas as they think is good for them”,<sup>217</sup> and who “are so eager to establish their case that they have no patience to see what absurdities they land themselves in.”<sup>218</sup>

And so, he suddenly discovers that “a careful study of the Vedic literature reveals a spirit of conflict, of a dualism, and a race for superiority between two distinct types of culture and thought. In the Rigveda we are first introduced to the Snake-god in the form of Ahi Vritra, the enemy of the Aryan god Indra... It is also evident, from the hymns that refer to Ahi Vritra, that he received no worship from the Aryan tribes and was only regarded as an evil Spirit of considerable power who must be fought down.”<sup>219</sup>

Further, he approvingly quotes the views of a Western scholar C.F. Oldham,<sup>220</sup> identifying not only the term Naga but also the terms Asura and Dasyu as epithets applied to the Dravidian natives of India. And, in sharp contradiction to his own strongly expressed views elsewhere, Ambedkar now insists that “the Dasas are the same as Nagas... undoubtedly they were non-Aryans,”<sup>221</sup> and that “the Dasas are the same as the Nagas and the Nagas are the same as the

Dravidians.”<sup>222</sup>

Ambedkar faces difficulties when he tries to find evidence for his Naga theory in the Vedas. He admits that the name Naga “does not appear in early Vedic literature. Even when it does for the first time in the Shatapatha Brahmana (XI. 2, 7, 12), it is not clear whether a great snake or a great elephant is meant.”<sup>223</sup>

His explanation is that the Vedic texts prefer to use the word DAsa: “The Nagas came to be called Dasa in the Vedic literature. Dasa is a Sanskritized form of the Indo-Iranian word Dahaka. Dahaka was the name of the king of the Nagas. Consequently, the Aryans called the Nagas after the name of their king Dahaka, which in its Sanskrit form became Dasa, a generic name applied to all the Nagas.”<sup>224</sup>

Thus Ambedkar contradicts his own logical analysis, of the Aryan invasion theory and the evidence of the Vedic texts, on every count (except on the matter of the alleged racial basis of the caste system).

If the quasi-invasionist scholars, after starting out sensibly and logically, fail to take their interpretations to their logical conclusions, and end up with a confused and confusing picture of Vedic history, it is because of their failure to have faith in their own analyses, and their misguided attempts to try to effect clumsy compromises with theories which they do not understand.

## VI THE ANTI-INVASIONIST SCHOOL

The anti-invasionist school is a school which outright rejects the Aryan invasion theory.

One reason why many scholars, particularly Hindus or Indians, may be impelled to reject the theory is because it goes against their grain. As Ambedkar puts it, Hindus, “as Hindus should

ordinarily show a dislike for the Aryan theory”, and the fact that some staunch Hindus actually support it strikes him as a very strange phenomenon.”<sup>225</sup>

The political misuse of the theory by leftists and casteists, in order to question the Indianness of Hinduism or to stir up caste hatreds and conflicts, a process which started with Jyotiba Phule, is the primary cause of this “dislike”.

But mere dislike for any theory, howsoever much it may be provoked by the gross misuse of that theory, is no argument against the validity of the theory.

What we are examining here is *misinterpretations* of Rig-vedic history, and it is a fact that scholars who reject the Aryan invasion theory have also been responsible for gross misinterpretations of the Rigveda.

Strictly speaking, our own book is classifiable as an anti-invasionist one, since we have also rejected the Aryan invasion theory, and conclusively proved that India was the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages; and, what is more, our research was also born out of a “dislike” for a theory which has been made a primary source for divisive and anti-national politics in India.

But the difference is that our research has fully tapped the historical, information in the Rigveda and arrived at clear conclusions *which other scholars will find extremely difficult, if not impossible, to challenge.*

Anti-invasionist scholars, in general, have failed to tap the historical information in the Rigveda, and their examinations, if any, of the text, have resulted in gross misinterpretations, for two simple reasons:

**a.** Most of these scholars resort to

negative and evasive methods of analysis, in respect of both the Aryan invasion theory as a whole as well as the Rigveda in particular.

**b.** Most of them are unable to shake off dogmatic notions regarding the Sanskrit language, Vedic culture, and Vedic literature in general.

In fact, an examination of the misinterpretations of the anti-invasionist scholars brings to the fore two points:

**a.** The scholars belonging to this school, like the scholars belonging to the other schools already examined by us, labour under a secret belief (or, in the case of *these* scholars, dread) that the external (to India) origin of the Indo-European family of languages has, perhaps, indeed been “proved” by the linguists.

**b.** In their eagerness to reject ideas and notions which they feel are supportive of the Aryan invasion theory, and due to a failure or refusal to understand the logic of the debate, these scholars often end up accepting notions which basically go *against* them, and rejecting notions which are really in their *favour*.

We will examine the methods of the scholars under the four following heads:

- A. The Rhetorical Approach.
- B. The Evasionist Approach.
- C. The Anti-linguistic Approach.
- D. The Indus-Valley Centred Approach.

#### IV.A. The Rhetorical Approach

Many of the scholars adopt a purely rhetorical approach towards the whole problem of the Aryan invasion theory and the invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda.

The Aryan invasion theory is dismissed, often with little or no examination, as a Western imposition; and various motives are attributed to the western scholars, who first mooted and developed the theory, ranging from imperialism to evangelism to anti-Semitism.

One of the earliest opponents of the Aryan invasion theory was Swami Vivekananda, who rejected the theory in strong terms:

“The Americans, English, Dutch and the Portuguese got hold of the poor Africans, and made them work hard while they lived, and their children of mixed birth were born in slavery and kept in that condition for a long period. From that wonderful example, the mind jumps back several thousand years, and fancies that the same thing happened here, and our archaeologist dreams of India being full of dark-eyed aborigines, and the bright Aryans came from - the Lord knows where. According to some, they came from Central Thibet, others will have it that they came from Central Asia... Of late, there was an attempt being made to prove that the Aryans lived on the Swiss lakes. I should not be sorry if they had been all drowned there, theory and all. Some say now that they lived at the North Pole. Lord bless the Aryans and their habitations! As for the truth of these theories, there is not one word in our Scriptures, not one, to prove that the Aryans came from anywhere outside of India, and in ancient India was included Afghanistan. There it ends.”<sup>226</sup>

“And what your European Pandits say about the Aryans swooping down from some foreign land, snatching away the lands of the aborigines and settling in India by exterminating them, is all pure

nonsense, foolish talk! Strange, that our Indian scholars, too, say amen to them: and all these monstrous lies are being taught to our boys! This is very bad indeed... In what Veda, in what Sukta, do you find that the Aryans came into India from a foreign country? Where do you get the idea that they slaughtered the wild aborigines? What do you gain by talking such wild nonsense?"<sup>227</sup>

Vivekananda's opposition was strong and unambiguous, but *restricted to rhetoric*. That he intended to go deeper into the matter is on record: "I have been talking with the Indian and European savants on the subject, and hope to raise many objections to this theory in detail, when time permits."<sup>228</sup>

No-one will deny that Vivekananda's life was too short, and his activities too multifarious, to permit him time to devote to this particular subject. But what is worthy of note is that, despite his strong rhetorical rejection of the Aryan invasion theory, a survey of his writings appears to indicate that he had actually internalised many of the basic tenets of the theory.

At one point, he tells us that "the problems in India are more complicated... Here have been the Aryan, the Dravidian, the Tartar, the Turk, the Mogul, the European - all the nations of the world, as it were, pouring their blood into this land."<sup>229</sup>

Vivekananda clearly appears to see the Aryans as a racial group which was originally a stranger to India: "(The) Aryan race... (was) a comparatively small and compact race, of the same blood and speech and the same social and religious aspirations",<sup>230</sup> and "many forms of religion and society must have been left behind in the onward march, before we find the race as depicted in the Scriptures, the Vedas... Many modern scholars are agreed that *surroundings as to climate and conditions purely Indian were not yet working on the race...* onward through several centuries... we catch a glimpse of different races -

Dravidians, Tartars and Aborigines, pouring in their quota of blood, of speech, of manners and religions - and at last a great nation emerges to our view, still keeping the type of the Aryan; stranger, broader and more organised by the assimilation... We find the central, assimilative core giving its type and character to the whole mass, clinging on with pride to its name of 'Aryan', and though willing to give other races the benefit of its civilization, it was by no means willing to admit them within the 'Aryan' pale. The Indian climate again gave a higher direction to the genius of the race."<sup>231</sup>

As if the above rhetoric is not confusing enough, here is Vivekananda's theory about the origin of caste: "A veritable ethnological museum!... The cavemen and leaf-wearers still persist. The primitive hunters living in forests are in evidence in various parts of the country. Then there are the core historical varieties - the Negrito Kolarian, the Dravidian and the Aryan. To these have been added from time to time dashes of nearly all the known races, and a great many yet unknown - various breeds of Mongoloids, Moguls, Tartars, and the so-called Aryans of the Philologists... In the midst of this madness of nature, one of the contending factions discovered a method, and through the force of its superior culture, succeeded in bringing the largest number of the Indian humanity under its sway. The superior race styled themselves the Aryans or Nobles, and their method was the VarndshramAchAra - the so-called caste."<sup>232</sup>

Vivekananda even seems to find it necessary to defend the imperialistic activities of his "superior race" by comparing them with those of the Europeans: "It was quite possible, however, that in a few places, there were occasional fights between the Aryans and the aborigines... But how long could the aborigines fight with their sticks and stones? So they were killed or chased away, and the kings returned to their capital. Well, all this may have been, but how does this prove that their lands were taken away by the



Aryans?”<sup>233</sup>

“And may I ask you, Europeans, what country you have ever raised to better conditions? Wherever you have found weaker races, you have exterminated them by the roots, as it were. You have settled on their lands and they are gone forever. What is the history of your America, your Australia and New Zealand, your Pacific Islands and South Africa? Where are those aboriginal races there today? They are all exterminated, you have killed them outright, as if they were wild beasts. It is only where you have not the power to do so, and there only, that other nations are still alive.”<sup>234</sup>

“But India has never done that. The Aryans were kind and generous, and in their hearts which were large and unbounded as the ocean, and in their brains gifted with superhuman genius, all these... beastly processes never found a place. And I ask you, fools of my own country, would there have been this institution of Varnashrama if the Aryans had exterminated the aborigines in order to settle on their lands? The object of the peoples of Europe is to exterminate all in order to live themselves. The aim of the Aryans is to raise all up to their own level, nay, even to a higher level than themselves. The means of European civilization is the sword; of the Aryans, the division into Varnas.”<sup>235</sup>

Swami Vivekananda was one of the first prominent Indian thinkers to voice his opposition to the Aryan invasion theory. However, it is difficult to know what exactly he wanted to say, and whether, in the final analysis, he actually accepted or rejected the idea of the external origins of the Aryans and of their conquest of India.

However his writings, *on this subject*, represent certain tendencies which dominate Indian anti-invasionist scholarship to this day, and which have effectively prevented any logical and objective analysis, or even understanding, of the

problem:

- a.** A tendency to depend on rhetoric rather than on analytical study.
- b.** A tendency to concentrate on criticism of the early Western scholars and their motives.
- c.** A tendency to evade the issues when dealing with invasionist arguments.
- d.** A tendency to indulge in vague and fuzzy thinking, and to fail to understand the exact nature of the issues involved.
- e.** A tendency to insist on lavish glorification and idealisation of the Vedic Aryans and their culture.

So far as the criticism of the motives of early Western scholars, who first mooted and developed the theory, is concerned, it may be noted that:

- a.** Mere motives by themselves do not invalidate any theory or interpretation.
- b.** The basic origin of the theory lay in the linguistic fact of the Indo-European family of languages, and not in any motives.
- c.** Even though the early Western scholars may have had their motives, their interpretations were, by and large, reasonably honest; and although they were often wrong, they were usually *naturally* wrong and not *deliberately* so.

Hence, while motives may be, and even *must* be noted, any approach which concentrates only on criticism of these motives is self-defeating.

But the main problem in the interpretations of the anti-invasionist Indian scholars is that they adopt a *partisan*, rather than objective, attitude in their analysis of Vedic history.

Thus, Swami Vivekananda talks about the Aryan kings killing or chasing away primitive aborigines who fought with sticks and stones; and about the Aryans bringing the Indian non-Aryans under their sway by the force of their superior culture, but refusing to admit them within the Aryan pale, and, in fact, creating the caste-system in order to keep them in check.

And yet, from all this, he concludes that the Aryans were “kind and generous”, that their hearts were “large and unbounded as the ocean” and their brains “gifted with superhuman genius”, and that their only aim was “to raise all up to their own level, nay, even to a higher level than themselves”! The logic is indeed incomprehensible.

Later scholars, however, take this attitude even further: they idealise the Vedic Aryans as a highly cultured, refined, civilized and spiritual people, *and condemn those with whom they fought*, as uncultured, crude, uncivilized or materialistic people. The battles between the Vedic Aryans and their enemies are depicted, *in a variety of ways*, as struggles between Good and Evil.

It must be noted that, apart from the fact that the Aryas of the Rigveda (the PUrus) and the DAsas (the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus Druhyus and others) were all *equally* Indian, there is *nothing* to indicate that the Aryas were more civilized and cultured than the DAsas, or that the Arya kings were more noble and idealistic than the DAsa kings, or that the priests of the Aryas were more spiritual or righteous than the priests of the DAsas. Nor that the struggles between the Aryas and DAsas

involved any noble social, moral or ethical issues.

Rigvedic history, which forms the backdrop of the Rigveda, is like the history of any ancient civilization: in ancient China (not coterminous with modern China), during the Period of the Warring States (403-221 BC), the land was divided into seven kingdoms (Chu, Chin, Chi, Yen, Chao, Han and Wei) which were constantly at war with each other. Likewise, ancient India was divided into various kingdoms, not necessarily constantly at war with each other, but certainly with often sharp political differences, rivalries and enmities.

In Chinese tradition, the soul-stirring poems of Chu Yuan, a poet, thinker and statesman of the kingdom of Chu, have survived to this day. In India, a collection of hymns composed among the PУrus has survived to this day. But this does not render all the kingdoms other than the kingdom of Chu, or all tribes other than the PУrus, as the villains of the piece.

The PУru text, of course, later became the primary text of a Pan-Indian religion which came to encompass and incorporate the religious traditions of all parts of India; and some of the non-PУru tribes, in the course of time, emigrated from India. But neither of these facts justifies a partisan attitude in the study of Rigvedic history.

Unfortunately, most Indian scholars, in their study of Rigvedic history, seem to find it necessary to concentrate all their energies on rhetoric glorifying the Vedic Aryans, and their culture, and defending them from all kinds of perceived slurs.

Naturally, therefore, they can neither afford, nor spare the time, to look too closely and objectively at the actual historical source-material in the Rigveda.

#### **IV.B. The Evasionist Approach.**

Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the founder of the

Arya Samaj, was also one of the earliest prominent Indians to reject the Aryan invasion theory.

The Arya Samaj was in the forefront of a great many activities which took Hindu society forward, but, unfortunately, it was also strongly influenced by some of the dogmas of the very ideology, and the very forces, which it sought to counter.

The Christian missionaries treated Hinduism as inferior to Christianity on various counts: namely, idol-worship, polytheism, etc.

Instead of countering these religious prejudices and pointing out that there was nothing superior to polytheism in monotheism, or superior to idol-worship in Christian forms of worship, the Arya Samaj adopted these prejudices, and sought to counter the Christian propaganda by insisting that Hinduism, in its pristine and "pure" form, as represented in the Vedas, was more monotheistic and non-idol-worshipping than Christianity itself.

This was rather like accepting and adopting the European prejudice which treats white-skinned people as superior to dark-skinned people, and then trying to show that Indian skins are whiter than European skins!

Another point of Christian superiority to Hinduism, in the eyes of the Christian missionaries, was the claim that Christianity had One Divine Book which was the revealed word of God, while the Hindus had a large and miscellaneous assortment of religious books.

The Arya Samaj sought to counter this by raising the Vedas to that status: the Vedas thus became the one and only Divine Book (the four SaMhitAs being treated as parts of one indivisible whole) revealed by God.

However, the cosmology of Hinduism, with its eternal cycle of creation and dissolution of the

Universe, was different from that of Christianity with its concept of a one-time Creation by a whimsical God. Hence, the concept of Revelation envisaged by the Arya Samaj was also different from the Biblical concept of Revelation.

According to the Arya Samaj, the Vedas are eternal, without beginning and without end, and are revealed anew to the first RSis, apparently Aditya, Agni, VAYu and ANgiras, at the beginning of each round of Creation.

Therefore, the Arya Samaj rejected the idea that the Vedas could contain anything so petty and temporal as historical events. As Devi Chand, an Arya Samaj scholar, puts it in his introduction to his translation of the Yajurveda: “Swami Dayanand does not believe in history in the Vedas. Western scholars like Griffith, Max Müller, Monier-Williams, Mac-donell, Bloomfield, and Eastern scholars like SAyaNa, Mahldhara, Ubbat and Damodar Satavalekar believe in history in the Vedas. History in the Vedas militates against its eternity and revelation from God, and reduces it to a man-made composition... Scholars, by believing in history in the Vedas, have undermined their grandeur and put a stain upon them. Rishi Dayanand, by refuting the doctrine of history in the Vedas, has established their eternity and enhanced their excellence.”<sup>236</sup>

Thus, instead of refuting the invasion theory, or at least the invasionist interpretation of the Rigveda, by presenting a rational and authentic historical analysis of the Rigveda, the Arya Samaj scholars chose to adopt an evasive and fundamentalist outlook. They rejected any and every factor, which could have helped them in an analysis of Rigvedic history, on the ground that these factors “reduced” the Rigveda to a “man-made composition”; such factors being:

**a.** The names of the individual composers of the hymns given in the AnukramaNIs.

**b.** Any chronological classification

of the Vedic hymns, placing the Rigveda prior to the other Vedas, or certain MaNDalas and hymns of the Rigveda prior to others.

**c.** Any names of historical persons mentioned within the hymns.

**d.** Any specific geographical landmark (rivers, etc.) named in the hymns.

Therefore, in translating the hymns into any other language, the Arya Samaj scholars do not treat the names of persons and places as names. They instead translate each name into its literal meaning and try to interpret it accordingly: "Pururava is not the name of a person. It is the name of a cloud which roars, thunders, and makes noise. ... Bharata is he who wants to advance and progress, being well-fed... Bharatas are disciples who are reared and looked after by their teacher..."<sup>237</sup>

But interpreting any name by its literal meaning may not yield a coherent meaning in every context where that name occurs in the text. Hence the Arya Samaj scholars are compelled to resort to arbitrary techniques of symbolic interpretation.

Thus Devi Chand tells us that the names of RSis occurring in the hymns of the Rigveda are not really the names of RSis at all. They are the names of different parts of the body: "Rishi Yajnavalkya speaks of the right ear as Gautama and the left ear as Bharadvaja. He describes the right eye as Vishwamitra and the left as Kashyap. Speech is described as Attri as food is taken by the tongue."<sup>238</sup>

Symbolic interpretation allows these scholars to assign a hundred different "meanings" to the same word in a hundred different contexts, depending on the exigencies of the verse and the

whims of the translator. Devi Chand ingenuously tells us that “Sarasvati is not the name of a river in the Veda. In the Brahman Granthas, Sarasvati has got thirteen meanings.”<sup>239</sup>

About the names of the different rivers in the Rigveda, he reiterates that “in the Veda, the names of so-called rivers do not denote any historical, temporary or transient objects. These names have got spiritual significance. Sarasvati is speech. The smell-carrying current flowing out of the nostril is the Ganges. The current flowing out of the ear is Yamuna, the organ of touch is Shatadru...”<sup>240</sup>

But, on the very next page, he gives totally different meanings: “Ganga... (is) an artery instrumental in the circulation of blood. Yamuna is the artery which guides the motion of all parts of the body. The weakening of this artery results in paralysis. Sarasvati is that artery which brings knowledge... Parushni is an artery which maintains heat in all parts of the body... Marudvridha is Pran (breath)...”<sup>241</sup>

While Arya Samaj scholarship has been responsible for some fundamental research work on the Vedas, like the *Vedic Word Concordance*, their research work pertaining to translations and interpretations of the Vedic texts are misleading rather than helpful.

The Arya Samaj school of interpretation produced an off-shoot in the writings of Sri Aurobindo. Following the lead given by the Arya Samaj, Aurobindo gives primacy to the Vedas over the later Sanskrit texts, and he also makes a liberal use of symbolic interpretations. The difference lies in his emphasis on spiritualism and mysticism, and in his less dogmatic attitude.

According to Aurobindo, the Rigveda is “the one considerable document that remains to us from the early period of human thought... when the spiritual and psychological knowledge of the race



was concealed, for reasons now difficult to determine, in a veil of concrete and material figures and symbols which protected the sense from the profane and revealed it to the initiated. One of the leading principles of the mystics was the sacredness and secrecy of self-knowledge and the true knowledge of the Gods... Hence... (the mystics) clothed their language in words and images which had, equally, a spiritual sense for the elect, and a concrete sense for the mass of ordinary worshippers.”<sup>242</sup>

There is no doubt that there are a great many mystical hymns in the Rigveda; and, in any case, no-one can object to the mystically-inclined discovering mystic secrets hidden and encoded in the Vedas, or in any other ancient texts of the world, so long as they do not preclude other less mystical analyses of the texts. And Aurobindo, it appears, was willing to allow other systems of interpretations as being *a/so* valid: “The ritual system recognised by SAyaNa may, in its externalities, stand; the naturalistic sense discovered by European scholarship may, in its general conception, be accepted; but behind them there is always the true and still hidden secret of the Veda - the secret words, *niNyA vacAMsi*, which were spoken for the purified in soul and the awakened in knowledge. To disengage this less obvious but more important sense by fixing the import of Vedic terms, the sense of Vedic symbols, and the psychological function of the Gods is thus a difficult but a necessary task.”<sup>243</sup>

But while he is willing to allow the ritualistic and naturalistic interpretations, he is less liberal towards the historical interpretation of the hymns: “the whole struggle is between the Light and the Darkness, the Truth and the Falsehood, the divine... and the undivine... historical interpretation will not do at all here.”<sup>244</sup>

About the Aryan invasion of India, Aurobindo starts out by doubting “whether the whole story of an Aryan invasion through the Punjab is not a

myth of the philologists.”<sup>245</sup> And after an interesting dissertation on the subject of the Aryan and Dravidian language-families, he goes so far as to doubt the linguistic validity of the concept of these being two distinct families: “Can we positively say that Tamil is a non-Aryan, or Greek, Latin and German Aryan tongues?”<sup>246</sup>, and to suggest that “rather than to form a conclusion by such a principle, it is better to abstain from all conclusions and turn to a more thorough and profitable initial labour.”<sup>247</sup>

However, he is willing to concede that “the bulk of the peoples now inhabiting India may have been the descendants of a new race from more northern latitudes, even perhaps, as argued by Mr. Tilak, from the Arctic regions; but there is nothing in the Veda, as there is nothing in the present ethnological features of the country, to prove that this descent took place near to the time of the Vedic hymns or was the slow penetration of a small body of fair-skinned barbarians into a civilized Dravidian peninsula.”<sup>248</sup>

Thus, he rejects the literary and the racial-casteist implications of the Aryan invasion theory, but does not deny that the Aryans may originally have come from outside India.

Strangely enough, the arguments in this respect which he seems to find most convincing or difficult to refute are those of his friend and colleague Lokmanya Tilak: “Mr. Tilak in his Arctic Home in the Vedas... has established at least a strong probability that the Aryan races descended originally from the Arctic regions in the glacial period.”<sup>249</sup>

In fact, Tilak’s interpretation strikes him as the only valid one when it comes to naturalistic interpretations: “If... we are to give a naturalistic explanation and no other to Vedic hymns, it is quite clear that the Vedic Dawn and Night cannot be the Night and Dawn of India. It is only in the Arctic regions that the attitudes of the Rishis

towards these natural circumstances, and the statements about the Angirasas, become at all intelligible.”<sup>250</sup>

And so he neatly divides up the interpretation of the Vedas between Tilak and himself: “The memories of the -Arctic home enter into the external sense of the Veda; the Arctic theory does not exclude an inner sense behind the ancient images drawn from Nature.”<sup>251</sup>

The insistence on symbolic interpretation and the avoidance of historical interpretation are, thus, only a cover-up for a lurking apprehension that the Aryans may indeed have come from outside and that a historical study of the Rigveda may indeed confirm this fact. In the case of the Arya Samaj, one strongly suspects this to be the case; in the case of Sri Aurobindo, this suspicion becomes a certainty.

#### **IV.C. The Anti-Linguistic Approach**

Linguistics, for some inexplicable reason, has been the bane of Indian anti-invasionist scholars. Most of the scholars, to whatever school they belong, as we have seen, overtly, covertly or subconsciously, seem to accept that linguists have proved that the Indo-European family of languages originated outside India. Most anti-invasionist scholars, therefore, choose to evade the linguistic debate altogether in their examination of the Aryan problem.

Many others, however, try to tackle the issue in a different way, by summarily rejecting the arguments of linguists; some of them even going so far as to question the validity of linguistics itself as a science. They reject not only the arguments, allegedly based on linguistics, which are supposed to show that the Indo-European languages originated outside India, but even some of the basic postulates of the linguistic case itself.

The two main points which they find most irksome are:

**a.** The idea that the languages of North India and the languages of Europe belong to one family, while the languages of South India belong to a different one.

**b.** The idea that the original Proto-Indo-European language was different from Vedic Sanskrit.

Thus, according to N.R. Waradpande, “the linguists have not been able to establish that the similarities in the Aryan or Indo-European languages are genetic, ie. due to their having a common ancestry. The similarities are mostly those of roots and formations which could be due to borrowing... The contention that the similarity of basic vocabulary for family relations and numbers cannot be due to borrowing is falsified by the modern Indian languages borrowing such vocabulary from English.”<sup>252</sup> At the same time, “the view that the South Indian languages have an origin different from that of the North Indian languages is based on (the) irresponsible, ignorant and motivated utterances of a missionary.”<sup>253</sup>

Elsewhere, he provides us with a linguistic criterion to test the case. Apropos his point that words for family relations and numbers are easily borrowed, as is done by the modern Indian languages from English, he admits that “there is some difficulty about pronouns. Pronouns have not been borrowed from English, and expressions like ‘he *gaya*’ and ‘she *gayi*’ are not yet heard. But then the so-called Indo-European languages also do not have the same pronouns. What are the analogues for he, she, it and they in Sanskrit? The corresponding Sanskrit pronouns are *sah*, *saa*, *tat* and *te*. The similarity of they and *te* is notable. Other English and Sanskrit pronouns are unconnected.”<sup>254</sup>

Waradpande is clearly determined to show that the languages of North India and South India belong to one family, while the languages of Europe do *not* belong to the same family as the languages of North India.

But Waradpande also provides us with a linguistic criterion: according to him, pronouns are not easily borrowed, and similar pronouns could indicate genetic relationship. And his contention is that English and Sanskrit, for example, do not have similar pronouns.

But, when we examine the pronouns of the relevant languages, we find that the case is exactly the opposite: there is a close similarity between the pronouns of English and Sanskrit, but none between the pronouns of Sanskrit and Tamil. Thus, English I, thou and she correspond to Sanskrit *ah-am*, *tv-am* and *sA* (Tamil *nAn*, *ni* and *avaL*). English we, you and they correspond to Sanskrit *vay-am*, *yUy-am* and *te* (Tamil *nAngaL*, *nIngaL*, and *avargaL*). English me and thee correspond to Sanskrit *me* and *te* (Tamil *yennai* and *unnai*). Therefore, Waradpande's own criterion proves him wrong.

The reason why Indian anti-invasionist scholars refuse to accept the language-family situation is because they feel it creates a division between the people of North India and South India, while connecting the people of North India with the people of Europe.

However, this apprehension is groundless: there is no connection between the people of North India and the people of Europe. If the languages of Europe are related to the languages of North India, it is only because there were emigrations of groups of speakers of Indo-European dialects from North India in ancient times, very much like the later emigrations of Gypsies. And the present-day speakers of these Indo-European languages are not the descendants of those ancient emigrants: they are the descendants of the natives of their respective areas, who adopted the

languages brought by those emigrants in ancient times.

On the other hand, the people of North India and South India share a common race, culture, history, religion, philosophy and way of life which is uniquely Indian. And, even from the linguistic point of view, though the languages of India belong to different families, they have developed a common phonology, syntax and grammatical structure, and have a vast mutually borrowed vocabulary in common. Even in respect of pronouns, the languages have developed a similarity of semantic form, although the words are different.

Both the Indoaryan and Dravidian languages, as well as the Austric, Sino-Tibetan, Andamanese and Burushaski languages native to India, are part of the rich linguistic heritage of the country, and any division exists only in the minds of leftist and casteist politicians and ideologues whose aim is to *create* that division. It certainly does not warrant irrational or desperate reactions.

About the position of Sanskrit, Waradpande tells us: "Even if the Indo-European languages are supposed to have a common ancestry, no sensible reason has been advanced to show why Sanskrit cannot be regarded as the common ancestor: If, at all, the Indo-European languages have a common origin, that origin is obviously in Sanskrit, because Sanskrit is the most ancient of the 'Indo-European' languages... There is no justification for postulating an imaginary language as the origin."<sup>255</sup>

Apart, perhaps, from a religious or traditional bias in favour of Sanskrit, one reason why these scholars take this position is because they feel that accepting another, hypothetical, language as the ancestral language is tantamount to accepting the extra-Indian origin of the Aryans.

But this apprehension is also groundless: if the hypothetical Proto-Indo-European language is

different from Sanskrit, it is also different from every other ancient, or modern, Indo-European language known from anywhere else in the world. And there is nothing in the basic concept of a hypothetical Proto-Indo-European language, different from Sanskrit, which, in itself, rules out the likelihood of India being the original homeland where this language was spoken in the extremely remote past.

The sooner these anti-invasionist scholars realize that linguistics is a science which cannot, and indeed need not, be wished away, and the sooner they decided to expend their energies in the study, rather than the dismissal, of this science, the better they will be able to serve their own cause.

#### **IV.D. The Indus-Valley Centred Approach**

The major preoccupation of anti-invasionist scholars today is the establishment of the Aryan (Indo-European) linguistic identity of the Indus Valley civilization.

The identification of this civilization as Aryan can go a long way in countering the invasion theory, and even a staunch invasionist scholar like B.K. Ghosh admits: "Could it be proved that the language of the prehistoric Mohenjo-daro was Sanskrit or Proto-Sanskrit, then indeed it might have been possible to argue that in spite of all evidence to the contrary India was the original home of the Aryans; for there is no evidence of any Aryan race or language previous to the age of the Mohenjo-daro culture."<sup>256</sup>

And the work done by many of these scholars in identifying the Aryan character of the Indus civilization, as well as in identifying the Indus civilization as a post-Rigvedic phenomenon, has been extremely valuable.

But the question remains: how far is this approach effective in proving that there was no Aryan

invasion of India?

Strictly speaking, what this approach achieves is that it shows that the Aryans could not have entered India from outside in the second millennium BC, but it does not in itself rule out the possibility that they may have entered India from outside in the third or fourth millennium BC or earlier. As we have seen, there *are* scholars, for example those belonging to the Hindu invasionist school, who postulate that the Aryans *did* enter India from outside in the Pre-Indus Civilization period.

Therefore, this approach shows that the Aryans were in India - or, *more precisely, in northwestern India, more or less in the territory of present-day Pakistan* - at least as far back as the third millennium BC. But, in itself, it neither rules out an Aryan movement into the northwest from outside in an earlier period, *nor an Aryan movement from the northwest into the rest of India in a later period.*

Even when these scholars specifically rule out the first possibility, and treat the Indus region as the original homeland of the Aryans, and identify the Indus Valley civilization with the civilization of the Rigveda, it *still* amounts to an invasion theory: an invasion of mainland India, presumably occupied by non-Aryans, by Aryans from the northwest - which is just one step away from the full-fledged Aryan invasion theory.

All this may appear to be a case of hair-splitting: if the Aryan homeland was in northwestern India, is that area, the Indus region, a *foreign* land, that any movement from the northwest into India should be treated as a foreign invasion? After all, the Mauryas, the Guptas, the Marathas, etc. at various points of time in our later history, started out from one corner of our country and established empires covering large parts of India.

We will not enter into a contentious debate on this point: we will only note that the northwest is not



just any part of India, it is the entry-point to India, or the exit-point from India, for migratory movements and expansions. And acceptance of an invasion from the northwest is just one step away from acceptance of an invasion from outside, especially if that invasion is assumed to have brought a completely new language, religion and culture which later engulfed the rest of India.

And this is what the anti-invasionist scholars do when they accept the idea that the northwest was the original homeland of the Aryans, that Vedic Sanskrit was the language of the Indus civilization, *and that Vedic Sanskrit was the mother of all our Indoaryan languages.*

This last is a particular obsession with most anti-invasionist scholars. Apart from those who advocate the irrational idea that Sanskrit was the mother of *all* the languages of the world, or the idea that Sanskrit was at least the original Proto-Indo-European language, nearly all the anti-invasionist scholars accept the idea that Vedic Sanskrit was the mother of all the Indoaryan languages.

And it is not only the first two ideas which are wrong, the third is also wrong, as we have seen in our discussion of Proto-linguistics in the earlier chapters.

What is most relevant to our subject here is the fact that an Indus-Valley centred approach is incompatible with any rational historical interpretation of the Vedic and other later Sanskrit texts:

The invasionist scholars in general treat the Rigveda as a collection of hymns composed by the Vedic Aryans during the period of their conquest and settlement of the Punjab and the northwest. But the more sensible among them admit that the Rigveda contains no memories of any external homeland or of any invasion, and that the Vedic Aryans appear to be more or less settled in the area (which they identify as the

Punjab).

They, therefore, postulate that some time had elapsed since the actual invasion and conquest, and it was the close *ancestors* of the composers of the hymns who had come from outside, and the composers themselves were already settled in the area. The invasion and conquest, they conclude, is not recorded in the Rigveda, since the composition of the hymns of the Rigveda commenced *after* the period of the actual invasion and conquest.

But the same argument cannot hold for a post-Rigvedic movement from the northwest into the rest of India: it is clear that a full-fledged literary tradition had certainly started with the Rigveda at least; and any post-Rigvedic movements *should* be reflected in the later texts.

But the post-Rigvedic texts contain *no reference whatsoever* to the migration of the Aryans from the Punjab to the plains and plateaus of North and Central India, or to their interaction, *or conflicts*, with the non-Aryan inhabitants of these areas, or to the *en masse* adoption by these non-Aryans of completely new and unfamiliar Aryan speech-forms.

While the idea of an Aryan influx into northwestern India from outside *can* be sought to be maintained (on extraneous grounds) in the absence of any evidence to this effect in the Rigveda, the idea of an Aryan influx into the rest of North India *cannot* be accepted in the face of the total absence of any evidence to this effect in the post-Rigvedic texts.

It is clear, therefore, that there have been no major migrations of Aryan-language speakers from the northwest of India into the interior of North India, and all the major migrations, as we have pointed out, were by groups of Aryan-language speakers from the interior of North India into the northwest.

The area of the Rigveda was *not* primarily the Punjab or the Indus Valley but Haryana and Uttar Pradesh; and the Vedic Aryans were one of many groups of Aryan-language speakers who were spread out over most of northern India, and who were part of a greater Indian milieu which included speakers of languages belonging to other families, in the south and east, all of whom were equally part of a more ancient Indian heritage.

The Vedic Aryans, the P<sub>U</sub>rus, as we have seen from our analysis of the Rigveda, moved out towards the northwest; but the people of the Punjab and the northwest, the Anus, although large sections of them migrated out of India in the course of time, continued to be the inhabitants of the area.

The Indus Valley Civilization, now more correctly designated by some as the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization, *cannot* therefore be characterized as the civilization of the Rigveda either: it was a joint civilization of the Anus (Aryans belonging to the same linguistic stock as the latter-day Iranians and some other Indo-European groups, as we have seen in the earlier chapter) and the P<sub>U</sub>rus (the *post-Rigvedic* Vedic Aryans), *even perhaps more Anu than P<sub>U</sub>ru*, at least in the case of the more well-known western sites.

An acceptance of these facts may help in a more rational and objective analysis of the history of the Indus Civilization, as well as of Vedic literature.

## V

### **A MUCH MISINTERPRETED HISTORICAL THEME IN THE RIGVEDA**

We have examined the four major schools of interpretation of the Rigveda. In the course of this examination, we have had occasion to examine the writings of many scholars who were giants in their respective fields, and whom (with the express exclusion of scholars belonging to the

invasionist school) this writer holds in the *very highest* respect and esteem.

If, therefore, we have found it necessary to point out why their writings and interpretations, *on the subject which is the topic of our present book*, were wrong, it is because these writings and interpretations have exerted, and continue to exert, a strong influence on large numbers of other scholars, and, as a result they have added to the general confusion and disorientation in the study of Rigvedic history.

We will illustrate this by concluding our examination with examples of the peculiar interpretations, by various scholars, of what we may consider the *most important*, and definitely the *most historical*, of the events recorded in the Rigveda, the DASarAjña battle between SudAs and his enemies.

Some of the invasionist scholars treat this battle principally as a conflict between the Aryan invaders (led by SudAs) and the non-Aryan natives.

Some others treat it (on the basis of VII.83.1) as a conflict between a section of Aryans led by SudAs, on the one hand, and a confederation of both Aryan and non-Aryan tribes, on the other.

Yet others treat it primarily as a conflict between two sections of Aryans: the Bharatas (led by SudAs) versus the Five Tribes (the Yadus, TurvaSas, Druhyus, Anus and PUrus). This is then further interpreted in terms of the so-called two waves of Aryan invasion: some, like V.G.

Rahurkar,<sup>257</sup> treat the Five Tribes as representing the earlier wave, and the Bharatas as representing the later wave; and others, like S.D.

Kulkarni,<sup>258</sup> reverse the order.

But so far, though biased and incorrect, these interpretations at least treat the event as a historical battle. On the other hand, many other

scholars, in keeping with their own particular obsessions or particular fields of study, interpret this historical event in a wide variety of peculiar ways which completely transform the character of the event:

1. Lokmanya Tilak, as we have seen, tries to interpret every tradition, myth and ritual in the Rigveda in terms of the meteorological or astronomical characteristics of the Arctic region.

According to him, therefore, the event is not a historical battle at all. The ten kings or tribes ranged against SudAs “represent the ten monthly sun-gods... and Indra’s helping SudAs in his fight with the ten non-worshipping kings is nothing more than the old story of the annual fight between light and darkness as conceived by the inhabitants of a place where a summer of ten months was followed by a long winter night of two months.”<sup>259</sup>

2. To Dr. Ambedkar, the study of Vedic history is incidental to his larger study of the origins, and the socio-historic dimensions, of untouchability and of the caste system.

According to him,<sup>260</sup> therefore, although the DASarAjña was indeed a historical battle, its historical importance lay solely in the fact that it represented the culmination of a struggle between “Shudra” kings and “Kshatriya” kings. SudAs and the Bharatas, according to him, were “Shudras”.

3. To the Arya Samaj scholars, as we have seen, the very idea of history in the Rigveda is sacrilegious. It is unthinkable, to them, that a historical event featuring a battle between two groups of transient human beings could possibly be recorded in divine hymns which have been in existence since the very beginnings of time.

Therefore, by a miracle of translation, they manage to convert the battle hymns (VII.18, 33,

83), which refer to the DASarAjña battle, into divine sermons on the qualities and the duties of an ideal king.

4. Bhagwan Singh is a scholar who identifies the Vedic civilization with the Indus Valley civilization on the basis of an analysis of the evidence with regard to trade, commerce and industry in the Rigveda. He rejects “the general belief that the Vedic society was pastoral and nomadic”,<sup>261</sup> and insists that it was a highly commercialized mercantile society where the merchants enjoyed “social hegemony” and “were the chief patrons of the poets and priests.”<sup>262</sup> The Rigveda, according to him, “is agog with mercantile activities undertaken by its traders against all conceivable odds.”<sup>263</sup>

His interpretation of anything and everything in the Rigveda in terms of mercantile activity is so thorough that even the Gods are not spared: “*Indra*, the supreme Vedic deity was cast in the image of the leader of the caravans and convoys, and his allies, the *Maruts* in those of the small traders joining the caravan or convoy.”<sup>264</sup>

He, therefore, rejects the idea that the DASarAjña battle “was a great war of the Vedic times”,<sup>265</sup> and concludes that “if we read the hymn with an unprejudiced mind, we come to the simple conclusion that it was an encounter with a contending rival in trade who had become jealous of SudAs’ hegemony in trade and conspired to ruin him with the help of a few others, but, thanks to *Indra*, he was saved...”<sup>266</sup>

5. K.D. Sethna is a staunch disciple of Sri Aurobindo, and also a scholar (as we have noted in our earlier book) who has done valuable work in proving the contemporaneity of the Indus Civilization with the period of the SUTras. He, however, accepts Aurobindo’s view that, in the Rigveda, “the whole struggle is between the Light and the Darkness, the Truth and the Falsehood,

the divine... and the undivine”.<sup>267</sup>

He, therefore, concludes that “the true nature of the campaign in which SudAs is engaged... (is the) conquest over supernatural agents who... stand inwardly antagonistic to the Divine light.”<sup>268</sup>

The DAsas ranged against SudAs, according to Sethna, were “supernatural deniers and destroyers of the inner and spiritual progress of spiritual initiates,”<sup>269</sup> and the Aryas ranged against him were “the lords of higher states of being and consciousness in the inner world, beyond whom the Aryan man would go and who therefore resent his progress and join hands with the DAsas/Dasyus, the obstructors in that occult dimension.”<sup>270</sup>

Clearly, all these are purely subjective interpretations of the Rigveda, in which the scholars do not find it at all necessary to examine the actual sources of historical material, such as the AnukramaNIs or the internal references within the hymns, and rely only on their predetermined biases and theories in analysing, or even denying the historicity of, historical aspects of the Rigveda.

Our own analysis of Rigvedic history, on the other hand, is based wholly on the actual sources of historical material. But no research on any subject can be carried on in a vacuum: it is necessary to know, analyse and evaluate the earlier research on the subject. And that is what we have attempted to do in this chapter.

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>HCIP, p.248.

<sup>2</sup>ibid.

<sup>3</sup>ibid., p.208.

<sup>4</sup>OHI, p.53.

<sup>5</sup>SOR, p;.35.

<sup>6</sup>ibid.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., p.36.

<sup>8</sup>CDHR, pp.3-4.

<sup>9</sup>VMT, pp.141-198

<sup>10</sup>ibid., p.162.

<sup>11</sup>ibid.,pp.,170-171.

<sup>12</sup>ibid., p.160.

<sup>13</sup>ibid.

<sup>14</sup>ibid., pp.160-161.

<sup>15</sup>ibid, pp.161-162.

<sup>16</sup>ibid., p.164.

<sup>17</sup>HCIP, p.249.

<sup>18</sup>SOR, p.121.

<sup>19</sup>AIHT, p.295.

<sup>20</sup>CDHR.p.114.

<sup>21</sup>HCIP,p.207.

<sup>22</sup>CDHR, p.295.

<sup>23</sup>VMT, p.65.



[24](#)CCAIHO, p.84.

[25](#)CDHR, p.290.

[26](#)ibid., p.5.

[27](#)ibid., P.303.

[28](#)ibid., p.306.

[29](#)ibid., p.308.

[30](#)ibuid., p.321

[31](#)ibid., p.326

[32](#)ibid., p.3.

[33](#)ibid., p.19.

[34](#)HCIP. p.165.

[35](#)CCAIHO, p.84.

[36](#)VMT, P.160.

[37](#)VMT, p.161.

[38](#)ibid.

[39](#)SOR, p.167.

[40](#)ibid., p.118.

[41](#)CCAIHO, p.83.

[42](#)AIHT, p.306.

[43](#)CDHR, pp.351-355, 375.

[44](#)ibid., p.375.

[45](#) *ibid.*, p.379.

[46](#) AIHT, p.313.

[47](#) OST, p.387.

[48](#) ODBL, p.29.

[49](#) VM, p.162.

[50](#) CCAIHO, p.80.

[51](#) SOR, p.167.

[52](#) AIHT, p.295.

[53](#) CDHR, pp.57-58.

[54](#) *ibid.*, p.301.

[55](#) AIHT, p.295.

[56](#) *ibid.* p.308.

[57](#) IELS, pp.260-261.

[58](#) *ibid.*

[59](#) *ibid.*

[60](#) CCAIHO, p.84.

[61](#) CCAIHO, p.79.

[62](#) CCAIHO, P.79.

[63](#) CDHR, P.339.

[64](#) CDHR, p.25.

[65](#)VMT, pp.175-176.

[66](#)LEM, p.85.

[67](#)ibid.

[68](#)CCAIHO, p.80.

[69](#)ibid.

[70](#)AHV, p.420.

[71](#)ibid., p.463.

[72](#)ibid., p.453.

[73](#)ibid., p.445

[74](#)BHISHMA, Vol.2, p. 14.

[75](#)BHISHMA, Vol.1., p.128

[76](#)ibid., p.129.

[77](#)ibid., p.297.

[78](#)ibid., p.298.

[79](#)ibid., p.107.

[80](#)ibid., p.299.

[81](#)ibid., p.296.

[82](#)AHV, p.440.

[83](#)ibid., p.464.

[84](#)ibid, p.150.

[85](#)HINDUTVA, p.5.

[86](#) *ibid.*, p.9.

[87](#) *ibid.*, pp.10-11.

[88](#) *ibid.*, pp.11-12.

[89](#) *ibid.*, p.8

[90](#) BHISHMA, Vol. 1, p.111.

[91](#) *ibid.*, p.114.

[92](#) *ibid.*

[93](#) *ibid.*

[94](#) *ibid.*

[95](#) *ibid.*, p.116.

[96](#) *ibid.*

[97](#) *ibid.*, p.122.

[98](#) *ibid.*, p.117.

[99](#) *ibid.*

[100](#) *ibid.*, p.118.

[101](#) *ibid.*, p.107.

[102](#) *ibid.*, p.218.

[103](#) AHV, p.455.

[104](#) *ibid.*, p.457.

[105](#) *ibid.*, p.456.

[106](#) *ibid.*, p.454.

[107](#) *ibid.*, 455.

[108](#) *ibid.*

[109](#) *ibid.*, p.456.

[110](#) *ibid.*

[111](#) BHISHMA, Vol.1, p.155.

[112](#) *ibid.*, front inner cover

[113](#) *ibid.*, p.293.

[114](#) *ibid.*, p.294.

[115](#) HCIP, p.210.

[116](#) AHV, p.464.

[117](#) BHISHMA, Vol.1, p.156.

[118](#) *ibid.*, p.299.

[119](#) *ibid.*, front inner cover.

[120](#) AHV, p.453.

[121](#) *ibid.*

[122](#) *ibid.*, p.17.

[123](#) BHISHMA, Vol. 1, introduction, p.ix.

[124](#) *ibid.*, p.147.

[125](#) *ibid.*

[126](#) *ibid.*, p.127.

[127](#) *ibid.*, p.13.

[128](#) New Findings on 'Rigveda', Article in *The Times of India*, Mumbai, 2/8/93.

[129](#) BHISHMA, Vol. 1. introduction, p.ix.

[130](#) BAWS, Volume 7, p.80.

[131](#) AHV, pp.44-45.

[132](#) *ibid.*, p.45.

[133](#) *ibid.*, p.7.

[134](#) *ibid.*, p.65.

[135](#) *ibid.*, p.93.

[136](#) *ibid.*, p.136.

[137](#) *ibid.*, p.94.

[138](#) *ibid.*, p.95.

[139](#) *ibid.*, p.351.

[140](#) *ibid.*, p.306.

[141](#) *ibid.*, p.347.

[142](#) *ibid.*, p.346.

[143](#) *ibid.*, p.348.

[144](#) *ibid.*

[145](#) *ibid.*

[146](#) *ibid.*

[147](#) *ibid.*

[148](#) *ibid.*, p.349.

[149](#) *ibid.*, pp.82-83.

[150](#) *ibid.*, pp.453-454.

[151](#) *ibid.*, p.211.

[152](#) *ibid.*, p.216.

[153](#) *ibid.*

[154](#) *ibid.*, p.306.

[155](#) *ibid.*, p.207.

[156](#) BHISHMA, Vol.1, p.187.

[157](#) *ibid.*, p.207.

[158](#) *ibid.*, p.172.

[159](#) *ibid.*, p.159.

[160](#) *ibid.*, p.213.

[161](#) *ibid.*, p.196.

[162](#) *ibid.*, p.121.

[163](#) *ibid.*, p.120.

[164](#) *ibid.*, p.139.

[165](#) *ibid.*, p.133.

[166](#) *ibid.*, p.192.

[167](#) *ibid.*, p.111.

[168](#) *ibid.*, p.123.

[169](#) *ibid.*, p.124.

[170](#) *ibid.*, p.182.

[171](#) *ibid.*, p.117.

[172](#) AIHT, p.298.

[173](#) *ibid.*, p.296.

[174](#) *ibid.*, p.298.

[175](#) *ibid.*, pp.253-286.

[176](#) *ibid.*, preface.

[177](#) *ibid.*, p.297.

[178](#) *ibid.*, p.275.

[179](#) *ibid.*, p.302.

[180](#) *ibid.*, p.298.

[181](#) BAWS, Vol.7, pp.74-80.

[182](#) *ibid.*, p.79.

[183](#) *ibid.*, p.78.

[184](#) *ibid.*, P.79.

[185](#) *ibid.*, p.80.

[186](#) *ibid.*, P.79.

[187](#) *ibid.*



[188](#) *ibid.*

[189](#) *ibid.*, p.81.

[190](#) *ibid.*, p.85.

[191](#) *ibid.*, p.76.

[192](#) *ibid.*, p.103.

[193](#) *ibid.*, p.104.

[194](#) *ibid.*, p.87.

[195](#) *ibid.*, P.85.

[196](#) AIHT, p.1.

[197](#) *ibid.*, p.3.

[198](#) *ibid.*, pp.8-9.

[199](#) *ibid.*, p. 124.

[200](#) *ibid.*, p.296.

[201](#) *ibid.*, p.300.

[202](#) *ibid.*, p. 298, footnote.

[203](#) *ibid.*, p.137.

[204](#) *ibid.*, p.299.

[205](#) *ibid.*, p.298.

[206](#) *ibid.*, p.290.

[207](#) *ibid.*, p.295, footnote.

[208](#)BAWS, Volume 7, p.78.

[209](#)ibid.

[210](#)ibid., p.104.

[211](#)ibid., p.78.

[212](#)ibid., p.79.

[213](#)ibid., pp.290-291.

[214](#)ibid., p.300.

[215](#)ibid.

[216](#)ibid., p.303.

[217](#)ibid., p.80.

[218](#)ibid.

[219](#)ibid., p.292.

[220](#)ibid., pp.296-298.

[221](#)ibid., p.292.

[222](#)ibid., 300.

[223](#)ibid., p.292.

[224](#)ibid.

[225](#)ibid., p.80.

[226](#)CWSV, Vol.3, The Future of India,  
pp.292-293.

[227](#)CWSV, Vol.5, The East and the West,  
pp.534-535,

[228](#) *ibid.*, p.535.

[229](#) CWSV, Vol.3, The Future of India, p.286.

[230](#) CWSV, Vol.6, Historical Evolution of India, p.163.

[231](#) *ibid.*, p.159.

[232](#) CWSV, Vol.4, Aryans and Tamilians, p.296.

[233](#) CWSV, Vol.5, The East and the West, p.536.

[234](#) *ibid.*, p.536-537.

[235](#) *ibid.*, p.537.

[236](#) YAJ, p.xvii-xviii,xxii.

[237](#) *ibid.*, p.xx.

[238](#) *ibid.*, p.xix.

[239](#) *ibid.*, p.xx.

[240](#) *ibid.*, p.xxi.

[241](#) *ibid.*, p.xxii.

[242](#) SA, pp.5-6.

[243](#) *ibid.*, p.6.

[244](#) *ibid.*, p.217.

[245](#) *ibid.*, p.4.

[246](#) *ibid.*, p.561.

[247](#) *ibid.*

[248](#) *ibid.*, pp.23-24.

[249](#) *ibid.*, pp.28-29.

[250](#) *ibid.*, p.122.

[251](#) *ibid.*, p.123.

[252](#) TAP, p.15.

[253](#) *ibid.*, p.17.

[254](#) AIM, p.20.

[255](#) TAP, p.15.

[256](#) HCIP, pp.206-207.

[257](#) SOR, p.70.

[258](#) BHISHMA, Vol.1, p.114.

[259](#) AHV, p.346.

[260](#) BAWS, Vol.7, p.114-131.

[261](#) TAP., p.192.

[262](#) *ibid.*

[263](#) *ibid.*

[264](#) *ibid.*

[265](#) *ibid.*, p.204.

[266](#) *ibid.*, p.205.

[267](#)PAO, p.349.

[268](#)ibid., pp.357-358.

[269](#)ibid., p.346.

[270](#)ibid., p.359.

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## **Chapter 9 (Appendix 2)**

### **Michael Witzel - An Examination of Western Vedic Scholarship**

The question of the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages is a purely academic subject, although discourse on the subject, particularly in India, has been highly politicized.

We have already examined, in Appendix I, the various aspects of this politicization.

But while the most vocal and extremist supporters of the theory (that the Indoaryan languages spoken in most parts of India were originally brought into South Asia by invaders or immigrants in the second millennium BC) are undoubtedly politically motivated, the theory is generally accepted by most academic scholars as well, purely on the ground that it represents the general consensus in the international academic world.

The question, therefore, is: how far can we rely on the objectivity and sincerity of world scholarship?

We have, in our earlier book, presented a new theory which answers the problem of the original Indo-European homeland more effectively than the generally accepted theory. In this present book, we have shown that the Rigveda confirms our theory with evidence which, at least so far as the literary aspect of the debate is concerned, is practically unanswerable.

A true scholarship would examine, and then either accept or reject, with good reason, any new theory which challenges a generally accepted theory admitted to be full of sharp anomalies.

However, this has not been the attitude of world scholarship towards our earlier book.

The general attitude has been as follows: there is a school of crank scholarship in India which is out to prove, by hook or by crook, that India was the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages; and the writers of this school deserve to be firmly put in their place.

And the best method of doing this is by tarring all scholars who support, or even appear to support, an Indian homeland theory, with one brush; and then pointing out particularly untenable propositions made by one or the other of the scholars so branded together, to prove that all the scholars so named belong to one single school of irrational scholarship.

Thus, Bernard Sergent, a French scholar, in his book *Genèse de l'Inde* (Bibliothèque Scientifique Payot, Paris, 1997) has the following (roughly translated into English by us) to say about these scholars:

“Thus D.K. Chakrabarti, George Feuerstein, Klaus Klostermaier, Richard Thompson, David Frawley, Jim Shaffer, Koenraad Elst, Paramesh Choudhury, Navaratna S. Rajaram, K.D. Sethna, S.R. Rao, Bhagwan Singh, Subhash Kak, Shrikant Talageri... It can be seen that the case is argued mainly from a nationalist Indian viewpoint, relayed also by some westerners. Above (p.155) we have been able to evaluate manipulations indulged in by one of these scholars, J. Shaffer, in order to arrive at his above conclusions: he simply argues that it is not necessary to take into account any linguistic data! Rajaram arrives at the same conclusion: Linguistics is not a science since it does not lead to the same conclusions as his own... On this subject, Bryant (1996, 8 and 11) remarks that what he calls the ‘Indigenous School’ ignores all the linguistic literature, in particular those which draw attention (by decisively demonstrating the existence) to a substratum, and only use linguistics when it happens to benefit them. As for Choudhury, he is the author of a work *entitled Indian Origin of the Chinese Nation (well, let’s see!), and of another*

*entitled The India We Have Lost: Did India Colonise and Civilise Sumeria, Egypt, Greece and Europe?: Self-service is the best service!*  
Nationalism, obviously, has no limits. In any case, these authors battle to make their beautiful 'discovery' triumph through the organisation of conferences in the United States, sending panels to other conferences, etc. This 'struggle' shows up the ideological nature of this exercise: a student of science does not need to impose his ideas through propaganda, he has arguments to furnish."<sup>1</sup>

It may be noted that a whole range of scholars, Western and Indian, are clubbed together, and then two specific points are elaborated: N.S. Rajaram's disdain for linguistics, and Paramesh Choudhury's fantastic scenarios (clearly modelled on the writings of P.N. Oak). The inference is that these two points characterize the writings of all the scholars concerned!

Let us see how far they apply to our own earlier book:

N.S. Rajaram has been a friendly supporter of the theory outlined by us in our earlier book. But he has equally been a critic of our failure to share his disdain for linguistics. Referring to our book, he specifically states: "One can have some reservations about his excessive reliance on linguistics, and his acceptance of Dravidian languages (which did not exist much before the Christian era) as constituting a separate language family."<sup>2</sup>

Paramesh Choudhury's theories about the origins of the Chinese, Sumerians and Egyptians in India can have no relevance whatsoever to our theory about the origins of the Indo-European languages in India. No Western scholar will accept that the Indians, Chinese, Sumerians and Egyptians had a common origin in one particular land; but surely they *do* accept that the different Indo-European languages *did* have a common origin in one particular land. So how does the location of the



Indo-European homeland in India fall into the same category as the location in India of a fantasy homeland of the Chinese, Sumerians and Egyptians?

Sergent's last thrust represents the unkindest cut in this whole smear campaign. It is not we who have avoided debate. It is *these* Western scholars who have chosen to conduct a spit-and-run campaign from a safe distance, while restricting their criticism of our theory (elaborated by us in our earlier book) to name-calling and label-sticking rather than to demolition of our arguments.

We would certainly have loved to joust with Sergent. However, the restraints of language prevent us from doing so. His book is in French, which is Greek to us. So we must turn to scholars more amenable to our scrutiny.

To go deeper into the unacademic attitude of Western scholarship, we will examine the writings of one particular American scholar, Michael Witzel (whom we have had occasion to refer to many times within our present volume).

We will examine, in particular, the papers presented by him during a conference on Archaeological and Linguistic Approaches to Ethnicity in Ancient South Asia, held in Toronto (Canada), 4th-6th October 1991.

This conference was held in 1991, well before the publication of our earlier book in 1993; but the papers presented at this conference were published later, in a volume entitled *The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia - Language, Material Culture and Ethnicity*, edited by George Erdosy and published by Walter de Gruyter, Berlin-New York, in 1995.

The particular paper by Witzel which we will examine in detail is *Rgvedic history: poets, chieftains and polities*.<sup>3</sup> In the course of our

examination, we will also quote from another paper by Witzel, *Early Indian history: linguistic and textual parameters*<sup>4</sup>, included in the same volume; and, occasionally, from another paper by Witzel, *On the Localisation of Vedic Texts and Schools*<sup>5</sup>, published in a separate volume.

There are two basic reasons why we will be examining Michael Witzel's papers:

1. The volume containing the above papers also contains critical references to our earlier book in its footnotes to both the editorial preface as well as the papers by Michael Witzel. These references cast strong aspersions on the scholarly value of our earlier book.

It is therefore, necessary to examine, in return, the scholarly value of Witzel's own writings.

2. Our present book contains a complete and logical historical analysis of the Rigveda. Michael Witzel's papers also purport to present a logical historical analysis of the Rigveda, and, what is more, his basic approach very closely parallels our own, as we shall see presently.

However, the conclusions he arrives at are diametrically opposed to our own: to him the Rigveda gives evidence of a migration of the Vedic Aryans from Afghanistan to India. Clearly, one of the two analyses has to be wrong. But, which one?

To arrive at an answer to this question, again, it is necessary to examine Witzel's writings in detail.

We will examine Witzel's writings under the following heads:

- I. Scientific Evaluation of Rival Theories.
- II. Basically Sound Approach to the Rigveda.
- III. Witzel's Theory, Evidence and Conclusions.
- IV. Careless Misinterpretations.
- V. The Chronology and Geography of the

MaNDalas.

VI. Geographical Misrepresentations

VII. Violation of Basic Principles.

## I

### SCIENTIFIC EVALUATION OF RIVAL THEORIES

One of the tests of true scholarship is the treatment of rival theories. There are two possible ways in which one, as a propounder or protagonist of a theory, can deal with a rival theory:

The first is to ignore the rival theory and behave as if it does not exist, and to go on propounding one's own theory in isolation.

The second is to examine the rival theory and to show how that theory is logically wrong, and one's own theory, by contrast, is correct.

Erdosy and Witzel, however, follow a third course altogether: they refer to the rival theory and condemn the propounders of that theory in very strong terms, *without bothering to examine the theory or justify this condemnation.*

The rival theory, and there is only one, is the theory of an Indian homeland.

Erdosy, in his editorial preface, describes the political implications of the Aryan invasion theory in India, and refers to "spirited opposition which has intensified recently - cf. Biswas 1990; Choudhury 1993; Telagiri 1993. Unfortunately, political motivations (usually associated with Hindu revivalism, ironic in view of Tilak's theory of an Arctic home) renders this opposition devoid of scholarly value. Assertions of the indigenous origin of Indo-Aryan languages and an insistence on a long chronology for Vedic and even Epic literature are only a few of the most prominent

tenets of this emerging lunatic fringe.”<sup>6</sup>

Witzel, referring to Biswas (1990:44): “The ulterior political motive of this ‘scientific piece’ is obvious. Cf. Choudhury 1993; Telagiri 1993, etc.”<sup>7</sup>

And: “there are also pronounced and definite South Asian biases to hold us back:... the contrary view that stresses the Indian home of the Indo-Aryans. Even Indo-Iranians, not to mention all Indo-Europeans (!), are increasingly located in South Asia, whence they are held to have migrated westward, a clearly erroneous view that has nevertheless found its way into even otherwise respectable scholarly publications (eg. Biswas, quoted above, in Ray and Mukherjee, 1990)... Such speculations further cloud the scientific evaluation of textual sources, and can only be regarded as examples of Hindu exegetical or apologetic religious writing, even if they do not always come with the requisite label warning us of their real intentions.”<sup>8</sup>

The footnote to the phrase “erroneous view” above, clarifies: “More recently propagated by Choudhury (1993), whose books also include *The Indian Origins of the Chinese Nation*, and Telagiri (1993).”<sup>9</sup>

It may be noted that in all the three references, our earlier book is firmly categorised together with the books by Paramesh Choudhury, and Choudhury’s theory about the Indian origins of the Chinese is stressed and highlighted.

And the irony of the whole exercise is that *it is very clear that the scholars concerned (George Erdosy and Michael Witzel) have not only not read our earlier book, but they have probably not even seen an actual copy of the book which they condemn so categorically.*

The references to our book consistently misspell the name as Telagiri instead of Talageri, and the

bibliography<sup>10</sup> even gives the initials as S.K. Telagiri instead of S.G. Talageri.

What is more, the bibliography lists our book as follows: “Telagiri S.K., 1993. *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*, Delhi, Aditya Prakashan.”<sup>11</sup>

Now it so happens that our earlier book was published in two editions: the one published by Aditya Prakashan was entitled *The Aryan Invasion Theory: A Reappraisal*, and the one published by Voice of India was entitled *Aryan Invasion Theory and Indian Nationalism*.

The confusion between the title and the name of the publisher originally occurred in Shri Girilal Jain’s review of the book which was published in *The Times of India* dated 17.6.93; but, in that case, the confusion was explainable: the Voice of India edition was already printed and read by Shri Jain, and formed the basis of his review, the Aditya Prakashan edition was still in print and it was to be the official edition, and Shri Girilal Jain was clearly not aware that the book still under print was to have a different title.

In the case of Erdosy and Witzel, this confusion can have no explanation, other than that their acquaintance with our book is a second-hand or third-hand one, based on some third party’s comments on Shri Girilal Jain’s review.

And it is on such acquaintance that these scholars have condemned our book in strong terms, decided that it is “devoid of scholarly value”, and consigned it to the “lunatic fringe”.

Clearly this strong condemnation of a book, unread and unseen by them, is both unacademic and unethical.

It must be noted that:

1. The theory propounded in our book, that India

was the original homeland of the Indo-European family of languages, is not a crank theory, comparable, say, to a theory that the earth is flat, or that the sun moves round the earth. It is not a theory so contrary to all scientific norms and facts that it can be condemned without trial.

In fact, far from being contrary to scientific norms, our theory, *on the testimony of the very book under discussion*, is at least as scientifically probable as their own theory:

Erdosy in his preface, tells us that on this subject there is a great “disciplinary divide... between two disciplines involved in a study of the past,”<sup>12</sup> ie. between Linguistics and Archaeology; and that the idea that the Aryans were intruders into South Asia “has recently been challenged by archaeologists who - alongwith linguists - are best qualified to evaluate its validity.”<sup>13</sup>

Further, while the book pits Witzel’s linguistic arguments against the arguments of the archaeologists and anthropologists, his linguistic arguments (as we have already seen in our chapter on The Indo-European Homeland) turn out to be self-defeating. He sets out to demonstrate “the evidence of place-names, above all hydronymy”<sup>14</sup> against the claims of the archaeologists, and ends up all but admitting that the evidence in fact supports their claims.

2. The theory of an Indian homeland is the only rival theory pertinent to the subject of their conference and their book (*The Indo-Aryans of Ancient South Asia*), and it is, in fact, the only rival theory referred to by Erdosy and Witzel.

And this rival theory has been in the running ever since the debate started on the subject two centuries ago. And it is not an old and abandoned theory, either. In the words of Erdosy and Witzel, it represents also an “emerging”<sup>15</sup> viewpoint which is being “increasingly”<sup>16</sup> propounded in recent times, and represents “a

questioning of assumptions long taken for granted and buttressed by the accumulated weight of two centuries of scholarship”.<sup>17</sup>

In these circumstances, the condemnation of our book, unread and unseen, cannot be justified on any ground.

The scholars, however, do seek to justify it on the ground that “political motivation... renders this opposition devoid of scholarly value.”<sup>18</sup>

This, again, is neither academic nor ethical. Books and theories cannot be condemned, unread and unseen, solely on the basis of one’s perceptions about the motivations behind them.

And, on this principle, Witzel’s papers themselves are “devoid of scholarly value”, since he is also “motivated” by the desire to counter the Indian homeland theory. Erdosy testifies that “the principal concern” of scholars (like Witzel) studying South Asian linguistics is to find “evidence for the external origins - and likely arrival in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC - of Indo-Aryan languages”<sup>19</sup>; and Witzel himself admits that his historical analysis of the Rigveda is motivated by the desire to counter “recent attempts (Biswas 1990, Shaffer 1984) to deny that any movement of Indo-European into South Asia has occurred.”<sup>20</sup>

However, we will not condemn Witzel’s writings on grounds of “motivation”. We will examine them in detail and leave it to the readers to judge their “scholarly value”.

Witzel, as we shall see, starts out with a basically sound approach, but follows it up with a careless attitude towards the source materials and a system of analysis based on deliberate misinterpretations, and ends up with conclusions contradictory to the facts cited by himself.

We have already examined parts of Witzel’s

writings in other parts of this present book. Here, we will examine only his analysis and interpretation of the Rigvedic source materials, and the conclusions that he arrives at from this exercise. *And the only quotations that we will cite against him will be his own.*

## II BASICALLY SOUND APPROACH TO THE RIGVEDA

Witzel's basic approach to the Rigveda closely parallels our own.

He recognizes the unique importance of the Rigveda: "apart from archaeology, our principal source for the early period must be. the Rigveda..."<sup>21</sup>

He notes that the evidence of the Rigveda is as solid as the evidence of actual inscriptions: "Right from the beginning, in Rgvedic times, elaborate steps were taken to insure the exact reproduction of the words of the ancient poets. As a result, the Rgveda still has the exact same wording in such distant regions as Kashmir, Kerala and Orissa, and even the long-extinct musical accents have been preserved. Vedic transmission is thus superior to that of the Hebrew or Greek Bible, or the Greek, Latin and Chinese classics. We can actually regard present-day Rgveda-recitation as a *tape recording* of what was first composed and recited some 3000 years ago. In addition, unlike the constantly reformulated Epics and PurANas, the Vedic texts contain contemporary materials. They can serve as snapshots of the political and cultural situation of the particular period and area in which they were composed... As they are contemporary, and faithfully preserved, these texts are equivalent to inscriptions."<sup>22</sup>

And he stresses the authority of the information in the Rigveda over the actual or assumed



information available in later texts, and deprecates the use of these texts in arriving at conclusions which would appear to contradict the information in the Rigveda: “there has been a constant misuse of Vedic sources and some historical and pseudo-historical materials, not only by nationalist politicians, but also by archaeologists and historians. Most serious is the acceptance of much later materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period.”<sup>23</sup> His reference is not only to the PurANas and Epics, but also to the Vedic literature which constitutes the “bulk of the post-Rgvedic texts”, since “the later Vedic texts contain stanzas and prose... of a later period.”<sup>24</sup>

He concedes that the historical material in the Rigveda does not consist of clear narrations, but of historical allusions: “there is no ‘logical’ development describing successive actions or the story of a myth, only disjointed allusions to facts well known to contemporary listeners... Thus the myths, the ritual and certainly the contemporary history have to be pieced together from stray references, and these, too, were addressed to people who knew the events well.”<sup>25</sup>

But he feels that scholars have been misled by this into refraining from proper utilisation of the rich historical material in the Rigveda: “the generally held view (is) that everything that can be gathered from a study of the text has already been said. The general attitude seems to be: the immigration of the Indo-Aryans is a fact that can frequently be noticed in the Rgveda; there are some rare glimpses of political history, with approximately 30 small tribes known from the text; a few names of kings can be discovered, such as Trasadasyu, DivodAsa or the famous SudAs of the 10 kings battle (RV 7.18), a sort of precursor to the MahAbhArata. But all of this is too sketchy to allow us much more than a glimpse at what actually happened in that period. One of the aims of this paper is to show that this impression is erroneous, and to give an idea of the wide range of information that can be

extracted.”<sup>26</sup>

Witzel therefore sets out to “demonstrate the richness of the available information (in the Rigveda) which has generally been overlooked by both historians and archaeologists.”<sup>27</sup>

Witzel realizes that for any “detailed analysis of the historical content of the Rigveda.”<sup>28</sup> the first requirement is a reconstruction of the “geographical and chronological framework”<sup>29</sup> of the text.

Hence: “In order to lay a firm basis for such an investigation, one has to establish... a few key parametres. In particular, we need the following grids of reference: A) The structure of the Rgveda itself, with its relative order of hymns that are already divided into ‘books’... B) The relationship of the various tribes and clans to the books of the Rgveda... C) The authors of the hymns... D) Geographical features, especially rivers and mountains.”<sup>30</sup> All this is to be “combined with a chronological grid established on the strength of a few pedigrees of chiefs and poets available from the hymns... eventually... it should be possible to construct a multi-axial grid with variables of time, space and social situation. Once that grid is plotted (and the various points support rather than contradict each other) we may begin the writing of Rgvedic history.”<sup>31</sup>

Thus, Witzel starts out with a basic approach which is unexceptionable.

### III WITZEL’S THEORY, EVIDENCE AND CONCLUSIONS

Witzel’s theory about the Aryan invasion is that “the actual movement of Indo-Iranian speakers must have involved a succession of waves,”<sup>32</sup> and that *all the historical Indoaryans*

*and Iranians*, ie. “the speakers of Rgvedic and post-Rgvedic Skt., of Median and Persian, and of the various Avestan dialects are representatives of some of the later waves that entered the Indo-Aryan area.”<sup>33</sup>

Thus, Witzel’s theory involves the old division of the Aryan invasion into two waves: an older wave of pre-Vedic Aryans, and a later wave of Vedic Aryans.

The pre-Vedic Aryans, according to him, were the four tribes, the Yadus, TurvaSas, Anus and Druhyus: “By the time of composition of most Rgvedic hymns, the Yadu-TurvaSa and the Anu-Druhyu had already been well-established in the Punjab... They retain only the dimmest recollection of their move into South Asia.”<sup>34</sup> These tribes “do not figure much in the Rgveda.”<sup>35</sup>

The Vedic Aryans proper were “the PUru, and their subtribe the Bharata, who play a major role in most books ;”<sup>36</sup> and it is “the PUru to whom (and to their dominant successors, the Bharata) the Rgveda really belongs.”<sup>37</sup>

But even here, Witzel sees two waves of invasion after the earlier settlement of the four tribes in the Punjab: “The next wave is represented by the PUru, although their movement into the subcontinent had also become a done deed by the time most Vedic hymns were composed. The PUru are thus included among the ‘Five Peoples’ whom they initially dominated. Finally, the PUru contained a subtribe, the Bharatas, who were the latest intruders and who thoroughly disturbed the status quo.”<sup>38</sup>

All these different tribes, in different waves, came into the Punjab from the northwest, according to Witzel: “Their previous home is, thus, clearly the mountainous country of Afghanistan to the west (especially along the *Haraxvaiti*-Helmand and

*Haroiu*-Herat rivers corresponding to the Vedic *Sarasvatī* and Sarayu).<sup>39</sup>

The Rigveda was composed by the priests of the Pūrus and the Bharatas, and “most of Rgveda was composed as the Pūru and the Bharata were moving into the Panjab. Portions composed before the Pūru assumed a central role in the Panjab (in about three generations) were subsequently recast in their style.”<sup>40</sup> [Here, incidentally, Witzel suggests a phenomenon roughly similar to that suggested by scholars like Pargiter and Shendge, who visualise parts of the Rigveda being already in existence in the Punjab before the arrival of the Vedic Aryans, and being revised and incorporated by the Vedic Aryans into their text. But while these parts, according to Pargiter and Shendge, were originally composed by non-Aryans in their non-Aryan language, Witzel sees them composed by non-Vedic Aryans belonging to an earlier wave of invasions.]

The corpus of the Rigveda was thus, according to Witzel, “composed primarily by the Pūrus and Bharatas, and spans the story of their immigration.”<sup>41</sup>

And here we come to the crux of Witzel’s endeavour: Witzel’s main purpose in analysing the Rigveda is to reconstruct a chronological and geographical framework out of the data in the Rigveda, which will corroborate his theory of the migration of Aryans from Afghanistan into the Punjab.

And the chronological and geographical picture he reconstructs from this data places the six Family MaNDalas in the following order: II, IV, V, VI, III, VII. Among the non-family MaNDalas, he counts MaNDala VIII among the early MaNDalas, probably after MaNDala IV or MaNDala VI, but definitely before MaNDalas III and VII.

According to him, MaNDala II, which he refers to repeatedly as “the old book 2”<sup>42</sup> is the oldest

MaNDala in the Rigveda. This MaNDala “focuses on the Northwest, in the mountains and in the passes leading into South Asia from Afghanistan.”<sup>43</sup> During this period, the Vedic Aryans were still “fighting their way through the NW mountains passes”<sup>44</sup>, and had not yet entered India proper.

The subsequent MaNDalas record “the story of the immigration: the initial stages (beginning with their stay still on the western side of the Sindhu) in books 4, 5, 6 and 8, and the final stage ( including the defection of the PUrus and the victory of the Bharatas in the battle of the ten kings) in books 3 and 7.”<sup>45</sup>

MaNDala IV, which Witzel refers to as “the comparatively old book 4”<sup>46</sup> represents the commencement of their movement into India, but “still places the Bharatas on the far western side of the Sindhu.”<sup>47</sup>

Witzel’s geographical picture of the Rigveda, with the MaNDalas arranged in his chronological order, is as tabulated in the chart on the next page.

Witzel thus concludes that he has established the immigration of the Aryans into India on the basis of an analysis of the Rigveda.

We will now proceed to examine his analysis and his conclusions.

#### **IV CARELESS MISINTERPRETATIONS**

The very first point that must be noted about Witzel’s work is his grossly careless attitude towards the basic facts about the source material in the Rigveda, manifested mainly in the form of wrong sweeping statements or identifications.

At the very beginning Witzel assures us that his analysis is based on “a few key parametres” based on “the following grids of reference: A) The structure of the Rgveda itself, with its relative order of hymns that are already divided into books... B) The relationship of the various tribes and clans to the books of the Rgveda... C) The authors of the hymns... D) Geographical features, especially rivers’ and mountains... E) This information can then be combined in a grid of places, poets and tribes... F) Finally this grid can be combined with a chronological grid established on the strength of a few pedigrees of chiefs and poets available from the hymns.”<sup>48</sup>

<b>MANDALA</b>	<b>"GEOGRAPHICAL LINKS"<sup>49</sup></b>	<b>"GEOGRAPHICAL AREAS"<sup>50</sup></b>	<b>APPENDICES A &amp; B "GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL DATA IN THE RIGVEDA"<sup>51</sup></b>
II	"Book 2 is clearly concerned with the west and with Afghanistan."	"NW, Panjab"	"West, Northwest,
IV	"Book 4 again concentrates on the west... but also knows of the Panjab"	"NW, Panjab"	"West, Northwest, Panjab"
VIII	"Book 8 concentrates on the whole of the west..."	"NW, Panjab"	"West, Northwest, Panjab, KurukSetra"
V	"Book 5, similarly, knows of the west... and of the Punjab, but also includes the east and even knows ... of the YamunA."	"NW => Panjab => YamunA"	"West, Northwest, Panjab, KurukSetra"

VI	"Book 6, again, knows of teh west... but once mentions even the GangA."	"NW, Panjab, Sarasvatl => GangA"	"West, Northwest, (Panjab), KurukSetra East"
III	"Book 3 concentrates on the Panjab and the KurukSetra area..."	"Panjab,	"Panjab, KurukSetra, Sarasvatl"
VII	"Book 7 mainly mentions the Sarasvatl, and in a late hymn retraces the entire process of immigration across the Panjab..."	"Panjab, Sarasvatl, YamunA"	"(Northwest), Panjab, KurukSetra"
IX, I, X.	"Book 9, which has authors from all the preceding family books is much more difficult to locate. The same applies to Book 10 and the various collections assmbled in Book 1"	(Not Mentioned)	(Generally Cover the entire area of the Rigveda)

Of the six parametres or grids of reference, the first four represent aspects of the basic facts of the Rigveda, and the two last ones represent their use in the reconstruction of the chronology and geography of the text. Of the first four, again, the fourth one (ie. geographical features) is vital to this reconstruction, and, therefore, will require more detailed examination.

To begin with, therefore, (ie. in this section), we will examine only his careless attitude towards the first three aspects:

- A. The Structure of the Rigveda.
- B. The Tribes and Clans.
- C. The Authors of the Hymns.

#### **IV.A. The Structure of the Rigveda**

In referring to the books (ie. MaNDalas) of the Rigveda, Witzel tells us that “books 2 to 7 (usually referred to as the ‘family books’) ... have been ordered according to the increasing number of hymns per book”.<sup>52</sup> He calls it a “very important principle in their arrangement.”<sup>53</sup>

Is this a fact? The number of hymns in books 2 to 7 are as follows: 43, 62, 58, 87, 75, 104. Clearly this is a zigzag pattern; perhaps an ascending zigzag pattern, but the books are certainly not arranged “according to the increasing number of hymns per book”.

It must be noted that this wrong statement has no bearing whatsoever on Witzel’s theory and conclusions: it does not help him to prove, or claim to prove, what he intends to prove (ie. the movement of the Aryans from west to east). In fact, it is a pointlessly wrong statement.

But it serves to show that Witzel, for whatever reason, does not deem it necessary to be too careful in making sweeping statements about the data in the Rigveda.

#### **IV. B. The Tribes and Clans**

Witzel correctly reiterates the generally accepted identification of the “Five Peoples” in the Rigveda, when he states that these five peoples “include the Yadu, TurvaSa, Anu, Druhyu and PUru”,<sup>54</sup> or that “the TurvaSa and Yadu... are frequently associated with the Anu, Druhyu and PUru, thus making up the ‘Five Peoples.’”<sup>55</sup>

But, elsewhere, he words his statements so carelessly that it results in confusion:

At one place, he refers to “the Bharata... and -



their battle with the 'Five Peoples' and the PUru",<sup>56</sup> as if the PUrus are separate from the five peoples. This is even more glaring when he refers to "the older 'Five Peoples' as well as the newcomers, the PUrus and Bharatas."<sup>57</sup> In this statement, are the PUrus counted among the "older" peoples or the "newcomers"?

The above statements, while careless, do not affect his analysis. However, another mistake made by him very much affects his historical analysis (though not in a manner calculated to prove his immigration theory):

He counts Purukutsa and Trasadasyu and their entire IkSvAku clan among the PUrus. He refers repeatedly to "the PUru king Trasadasyu"; and even draws up parallel family trees entitled "Bharata" and "PUru",<sup>58</sup> in which he depicts the lineages of the DivodAsa-SudAs clan and the Purukutsa-Trasadasyu clan respectively.

At the same time, Witzel makes another mistake: he decides that "the PUru... were the leaders in a coalition of the Five Peoples, and some other tribes, against the Bharata chief SudAs in the *dASarAjña* battle."<sup>59</sup>

The combination of these two mistakes leads him to conclude that the leader of the coalition against SudAs the Bharata, in this battle, was Trasadasyu the PUru.

Firstly, let us examine whether this identification of Purukutsa and Trasadasyu as PUrus is right:

Many scholars have identified Trasadasyu (and therefore his father Purukutsa) as a PUru on the basis of Rigveda IV. 38.1. But, in fact, this verse clearly proves that *Trasadasyu is not a PUru*: the verse refers to the help given by Trasadasyu to the PUrus (Griffith's translation: "From you two came the gifts in days aforetime *which Trasadasyu granted to the PUrus.*").

Witzel tries to drum up one more reference in the Rigveda: “In 1.63.7, Purukutsa himself is clearly related to the PUs, not to mention the Bharatas: ‘You Indra broke seven forts for Purukutsa; as you, Indra, lay down the (enemies) for SudAs like offering grass, you created for PU liberation from distress.’”<sup>60</sup>

What is one to make of this kind of careless interpretation? The two lines of the verse (Witzel *himself* separates them by a semi-colon) obviously refer to two separate cases where both Purukutsa and SudAs are described as liberators (by the grace of Indra) of the PUs; and if any one of the two is to be identified as a PU, Witzel’s own translation makes it clear that it is SudAs and not Purukutsa. Nevertheless, Witzel identifies *Purukutsa* as a PU, and SudAs as his Bharata rival.

Witzel’s misidentification of Purukutsa and Trasadasyu as PUs has two aspects:

1. While other scholars have identified Purukutsa and Trasadasyu as PUs before, there is a difference in Witzel’s identification: the other scholars either decided that these two kings were PUs *and not IkSvAkus* (and therefore that the PurANas are wrong in identifying them as IkSvAkus), or else that the Purukutsa and Trasadasyu of the Rigveda, being PUs, are different from the Purukutsa and Trasadasyu of the PurANas who were IkSvAkus.

Witzel, however, identifies these two kings in the Rigveda as PUs, even while accepting them as IkSvAkus, and therefore treats the IkSvAkus as a *whole* as a branch of the PUs.

It is clear that he himself is not confident of this identification: he places a question-mark when he makes the connection between PU and IkSvAku.<sup>61</sup>

In spite of this doubt, however, he treats his

identification as a settled fact when it comes to citing the “complete separation in the PurANas of the IkSvAku dynasty from the PUru”<sup>62</sup> as one of his criteria for dismissing the dynastic lists in the PurANas as unreliable!

2. The misidentification of Purukutsa and Trasadasyu as PUrus, and the postulation of PUrus and Bharatas as two related but rival groups led by Trasadasyu and SudAs respectively, leads to some confusion in Witzel’s interpretations.

Whenever the word PUru occurs in the Rigveda, Witzel takes it as a reference to Trasadasyu’s dynasty and tribe, when, in actual point of fact (as we have seen in the course of our analysis of the Rigveda), almost all such references are to the Bharatas themselves.

And the result is that Witzel *himself* ends up thoroughly confused: “Although book 7 is strongly pro-Bharata, it provides several, conflicting, glimpses of the PUru... (in) 7.5.3, VasiSTha himself praises Agni for vanquishing the ‘black’ enemies of the PUrus - this really ought to have been composed for the Bharatas. Inconsistencies also appear in hymn 7.19.3, which looks back on the ten kings’ battle but mentions Indra’s help for both SudAs and Trasadasyu, the son of Purukutsa, and also refers to the PUrus’ winning of land.”<sup>63</sup>

The confusion is not due to “inconsistencies” in the Rigveda, but due to a wrong identification by Witzel. But instead of seeking to find out the cause for the confusion, and correcting it, Witzel chooses to decide that the Rigveda “provides several conflicting glimpses” and contains “inconsistencies”!

How far does this fit in with Witzel’s own principle that “the writing of Rgvedic history” should be on the basis of an analysis where “the various points support rather than contradict each other”<sup>64</sup>?

## IV.C. The Authors of the Hymns

Witzel concedes that the identity of the authors (composers/Rs) of the hymns is a very important factor in the analysis of Rigvedic history.

However, his treatment of the information with regard to these authors is also casual, careless and slipshod:

1. Speaking about MaNDala VIII, he tells us: “With regard to the order of Book 8 (Oldenberg 1888: 254-264), it is not the metre but the *authors* that are more important. There are two groups, the KANva in hymns 1-66 and the Angirasa in the rest.”<sup>65</sup>

What is the actual case? The first 66 hymns of the MaNDala include five hymns by KaSyapas (27-31), four by Atris (35-38) and seven by ANgirasas (23-26, 43-44, 46); and the rest include one hymn by an Agastya (67), seven by KaNvas (76-78, 81-83, 103), three by Atris (73-74, 91), three by BhRgus (84, 100-101), and one by a KaSyapa (97).

But Witzel sweepingly declares that the first 66 are by KaNvas and the rest by ANgirasas. And that, too, while emphasising, in italics, that the identity of the *authors* is the more important aspect of the hymns in this MaNDala!

Here, again, we find an illustration of Witzel's unwritten dictum that it is not necessary to be too particular while making statements about the Rigveda: either no one will notice or no one will care!

2. Witzel is equally careless in identifying the different families of Rs in the Rigveda.

At one point, he tells us: “Most of the poets are counted among the ANgiras, only the origin of the

KuSika-GAthIn-ViSvAmitra (book 3) and of the Atri Bhauma (book 5) remains unclear.”<sup>66</sup> This appears to imply that except, perhaps, for the ViSvAmitras and Atris, all the other RSis, and groups of RSis, belong to the ANgiras family.

But, elsewhere, he tells us: “ViSvAmitra is, via his teacher GAthin, a Jamadagni, ie. a BhRgu.”<sup>67</sup>

And, in referring to MaNDala VIII, as we have seen, he divides the hymns into two groups: “the KANva in hymns 1-66 and the Angirasa in the rest.”<sup>68</sup>

These two statements would now imply that the BhRgus (whom he counts as one family with the ViSvAmitras) and the KANvas are *a/so* not ANgirasas.

In referring to the VasiSThas, Witzel tells us: “VasiSTha and his descendants... count themselves among the ANgiras. (7.42.1; 7.52.3).”<sup>69</sup> But an examination of the two verses clearly shows that the VasiSTha composers of VII.42.1; 52.3, only *refer* to ANgirasas, they do not claim that they (the composers) are themselves ANgirasas.

And when, in a like manner, the ViSvAmitras (III.53.7) and the Atris (V.11.6) also refer to ANgirasas, Witzel does not treat this as evidence that the ViSvAmitras and Atris also “count themselves among the Angiras.”

Ultimately, it is impossible to know exactly how many families of composers there are in the Rigveda according to Witzel.

The actual facts are not difficult to elucidate: the Rigveda has ten AprI-sUktas, and these clearly indicate that there are ten different families of composers in the Rigveda: the KaNvas, ANgirasas, Agastyas, GRtsamadas, ViSvAmitras, Atris, VasiSThas, KaSyapas, Bharatas and

BhRgus.

But Witzel's analysis of the text does not appear to uncover these basic facts.

His careless interpretations, naturally, lead to wrong conclusions. Having arbitrarily decided that the ViSvAmitras are BhRgus, he treats the references to BhRgus in the DASarAjña hymns as references to ViSvAmitras, and concludes: "there is even the possibility that it was ViSvAmitra who - in an act of revenge - forged the alliance against his former chief. Whatever the reason, however, the alliance failed and the PUru were completely ousted (7.8.4, etc) alongwith ViSvAmitra (=BhRgu, 7.18.6)."<sup>70</sup>

Thus SudAs' battle with an Anu-Druhyu confederation whose priests were the (non-Jamadagni) BhRgus, is interpreted by Witzel as a battle with the PUrus whose priest was ViSvAmitra!

3. The names of the authors (composers) of the hymns consist of two parts: the actual names, and the patronymics. Witzel's understanding, and use, of these names and patronymics is characterized by characteristic carelessness.

In one place, he tells us: "GArtsamada Saunaka is made a BhArgava..."<sup>71</sup>

Incidentally, a Saunaka cannot be "made" a BhArgava; Saunakas *are* (a branch of) BhArgavas. The proper description of GRtsamada in the AnukramaNIs is *GRtsamada Saunahotra ANgiras paScat Saunaka BhArgava*: ie. "GRtsamada, a Saunahotra ANgiras, *became* (or was adopted into the family of) a Saunaka BhArgava."

But, to return to the main point, Witzel refers to the *eponymous* GRtsamada as GArtsamada, ie. "Son or descendant of Grtsamada".

A RSi belonging to a particular family can be referred to either by the patronymic form, or by the name of the eponymous RSi whose name forms part of the patronymic: thus, a RSi belonging to the ViSvAmitra family can be called “a VaiSvAmitra” (ie. “son or descendant of ViSvAmitra” by patronymic) or “a ViSvAmitra” (by the name of the eponymous RSi), but the eponymous ViSvAmitra himself cannot be called VaiSvAmitra (by patronymic).

The failure on the part of Witzel to distinguish between names and patronymic forms leads him into another mistake: in referring to the genealogy of the KaNva composers of MaNDala VIII, he gives us the following lineage: “(Pras-?) KaNva/ KANva - KANva Ghora - PragAtha Ghaura – PragAtha KANva.....”<sup>72</sup>

Thus, Witzel reads the name KaNva Ghaura, “KaNva, son of Ghora” as KANva Ghora, “Ghora, son of KaNva”! He then goes on to extend the confusion to the other members of the family.

The actual lineage is as follows: “Ghora ANgiras - KaNva Ghaura - PraskaNva KANva and PragAtha KANva/Ghaura.”

Thus far, Witzel’s carelessness reflects the attitude of a person who does not feel it is necessary to be too finicky about details. His carelessness, naturally, leads to a wrong picture of the Rigveda, but it is as yet *pointless* carelessness.

Now we will examine a “key parametre” in Witzel’s analysis which is vital to his theory that the Aryans immigrated from Afghanistan to India, and point where his carelessness is definitely more calculated.

## V THE CHRONOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY OF THE MANDALAS

The fourth and most vital “key parametre” in Witzel’s analysis is “geographical features, especially rivers and mountains...”<sup>73</sup> which forms his fourth grid of reference.

On the basis of this, he purports to formulate his fifth grid of reference, “a grid of poets, places and tribes”<sup>74</sup>, and to combine it with a sixth grid, “a chronological grid established on the strength of a few pedigrees of chiefs and poets available from the hymns”<sup>75</sup>, to produce a picture of the Aryans migrating from Afghanistan into India.

The resulting chronological and geographical picture, as we have seen, is as follows:

MANDALA	"WEST"	"NORTHWEST"	"PANJAB"	"KURUKSETRA"	"EAST"
II	WEST	NORTHWEST	---	---	---
IV	WEST	NORTHWEST	PANJAB	---	---
VII	WEST	NORTHWEST	PANJAB	KURUKSETRA	---
V	WEST	NORTHWEST	PANJAB	KURUKSETRA	---
VI	WEST	NORTHWEST	(PANJAB)	KURUKSETRA	EAST
III	---	---	PANJAB	KURUKSETRA	---
VII	---	---	PANJAB	KURUKSETRA	---

The chronological order of the MaNDalas, according to Witzel, is thus: II, IV, VIII, V, VI, III and VII.

How does Witzel get a chronological order so completely different from our own (which is VI, III, VII, IV, II, V, VIII)?

The answer is very simple: although Witzel postulates the establishment of a chronological grid “on the strength of a few pedigrees of chiefs and poets available from the hymns,” *he does not establish any such grid.*

What Witzel actually does is as follows: he draws up a geographical picture for each MaNDala of



the Rigveda; and then, on the principle “the more western the geography of a MaNDala, the older the MaNDala”, he prepares a chronological grid *arranging the MaNDalas in such a way as to show a movement from west to east*. “Pedigrees of chiefs and poets” play no role at all in this chronological grid!

What is more, even the geographical picture for each MaNDala, as drawn up by Witzel, is based on the manipulation and misinterpretation of geographical data, manipulated to show this movement.

It would be futile to repeat all the evidence of the “pedigrees of chiefs and poets” in the Rigveda to show how and why Witzel’s chronological arrangement of the MaNDalas is wrong; the reader can simply turn back the pages of this (our present) book and examine the evidence for himself.

We will, instead, examine Witzel’s manipulations and misinterpretations, step by step, *on the basis of his own assertions and admissions*:

1. To begin with, Witzel’s main aim in establishing a chronological grid is to show a movement from Afghanistan to India. For this purpose, the “oldest” MaNDala must necessarily be located in Afghanistan.

Now Witzel is aware that the Family MaNDalas are generally accepted as the oldest parts of the Rigveda: “it appears that the Rgveda was composed and assembled... beginning at ‘the centre’ with books 2-7.”<sup>76</sup> Hence the “oldest” MaNDala has to be a Family MaNDala.

But four of the six Family MaNDalas refer to the eastern rivers; GaNgA (MaNDala VI), JahnAvI (MaNDala III), and YamunA (MaNDalas V and VII). That rules out these four MaNDalas, so far as Witzel is concerned.

Of the other two MaNDalas, MaNDala IV refers to a key river of Afghanistan, but it also refers to two rivers in eastern Punjab, the ParuSNI and the VipAS. MaNDala II, however, does not refer to either the GaNgA or the YamunA, or to any river of the Punjab.

Hence Witzel decides that the two oldest MaNDalas are MaNDalas II and IV, in that order.

2. Before going on, it will be necessary to clarify the position about MaNDala III. Witzel does not identify the JahnAvI with GaNgA, so why does he rule out MaNDala III from being the oldest MaNDala?

There are other factors:

**a.** One of the clearest “pedigrees” in the Rigveda is the DivodAsa-SudAs relationship. Witzel notes in his “grid of royal succession”<sup>77</sup> that DivodAsa is an ancestor of SudAs.

And he also cannot escape the fact that DivodAsa, the *ancestor*, is contemporaneous with MaNDala VI: “In book 6 of the BharadvAja, the Bharatas and their king DivodAsa play a central role.”<sup>78</sup> Nor that SudAs, the descendant, is contemporaneous with MaNDala III “Book 3... represents the time of king SudAs.”<sup>79</sup>

Hence Witzel cannot place MaNDala III earlier than MaNDala VI.

**b.** MaNDala III mentions KIkATa in Bihar, the easternmost location named in the Rigveda. Witzel, naturally, finds such an eastern location difficult to swallow, and asserts that the KIkATas are “still

frequently misplaced in Magadha (McDonnell and Keith, 1912, Schwartzberg, 1975) even though their territory is clearly described as being to the south of KurukSetra, in eastern Rajasthan or western Madhya Pradesh, and Magadha is beyond the geographical horizon of the Rigveda.”<sup>80</sup>

Here, incidentally, Witzel indulges not just in manipulation, but in outright misrepresentation: *nowhere* are the KlkaTas described, *clearly* or otherwise, as being to the south of KurukSetra.

But the point is that the westernmost location that Witzel dares to place the KlkaTas is in KurukSetra, which, in any case, he has to admit is the area of MaNDala III: “Book 3 concentrates on the Punjab and the KurukSetra area.”<sup>81</sup> He does not dare to place the KlkaTas in Afghanistan. This naturally rules out MaNDala III from being the “oldest” MaNDala.

3. MaNDala II does not refer to either the GaNgA or the YamunA, or to any river of the Punjab, and so Witzel decides that it is the oldest MaNDala in the Rigveda.

But there is a snag: MaNDala II refers to the SarasvatI, and frequently so. However, the SarasvatI does not represent such a big problem, since there is another SarasvatI (Harax<sup>v</sup>aitI) in Afghanistan, *and this leaves scope for manipulation.*

Witzel therefore suggests that the “SarasvatI in 2.3.8 probably also refers to an ancestral home in Afghanistan, being reminiscent of the Avestan river Harax<sup>v</sup>aitI rather than referring to the modern Ghaggar-Hakra in the Panjab.”<sup>82</sup>

Witzel says “probably”, and gives no reasons for his suggestion. But, thereafter, he treats the identification as an established fact, and, in his

Appendices A and B,<sup>83</sup> he locates MaNDala II exclusively in the West and Northwest. And his descriptions of Rigvedic history in the period of MaNDala II deal exclusively with the Vedic Aryans “fighting their way through the NW mountain passes.”<sup>84</sup> (ie. “the passes leading into South Asia from Afghanistan”<sup>85</sup>).

It is clear that Witzel is fully aware that he is indulging in deliberate misrepresentation:

**a.** He uses the word “probably” while making the suggestion; and in his Appendices A and B, he places a question-mark when he locates “Sarasvatl? 2. 41.6”<sup>86</sup> in the West.

And, everywhere else in the Rigveda, he accepts that Sarasvatl refers to the river of KurukSetra: “Many of the rivers can be identified... *Sarasvatl* = Sarsuti, Ghaggar-Hakra...”.<sup>87</sup> In his Appendices A and B, the Sarasvatl in MaNDalas III<sup>88</sup>, VI<sup>89</sup> and VII<sup>90</sup> is placed in KurukSetra. In respect of MaNDala VIII, Witzel strangely locates the *same* reference to the Sarasvatl twice in the West: “Sarasvatl 8.21.17-18 in Afghanistan”<sup>91</sup> and “*Citra* on Sarasvatl in Iran? 8.21.17-18”<sup>92</sup>, and once in KurukSetra: “*Citra* on Sarasvatl 8.21.17-18”<sup>93</sup>!

And he offers no argument or piece of evidence to explain why, *only* in the case of MaNDala II, he places this river squarely in Afghanistan.

**b.** The particular references given by Witzel (II.3.8; 41.6) not only give no cause for assuming that the river of Afghanistan is being referred to, but one of them in fact confirms that it is the river of KurukSetra.

II.3.8 refers to the three Goddesses of KurukSetra: BhAratl, ILA and Sarasvatl. They

are the Goddesses of the holy pilgrim centres in KurukSetra, of which two, ILAyAspada and MAnuSa, are referred to in III.23.4.

And it is clear that Witzel is not unfamiliar with this KurukSetra milieu: at one place, he refers to “MAnuSa, a location ‘in the back’ (west) of KurukSetra.”<sup>94</sup>

c. Of particular significance is the fact that Witzel concedes that the SarasvatI in MaNDala VI is the river of KurukSetra.

A “pedigree of poets” establishes that MaNDala II is definitely *later* than MaNDala VI: Grtsamada, the eponymous RSi of MaNDala II is a descendant of Sunahotra BhAradvAja, a composer in MaNDala VI.

Witzel himself is aware of this. He clearly admits as much: “Theoretically, since GArtsamada Saunaka is made a BhArgava, he could be later than Book 6.”<sup>95</sup>

However, he discreetly places this admission, ambiguously worded, in a footnote, and uses the words “theoretically... could be...” to discount its importance.

He furnishes no explanation as to why this clear pedigree is treated as “theoretical” and doubtful, and *not* used as a basis for establishing his chronological grid; nor does he furnish any alternative pedigree purporting to show the opposite case (ie. that MaNDala II is older than MaNDala VI).

Instead, he firmly ignores the whole matter throughout his analysis.

The reason for this *suppressio veri* operation is an obvious one: MaNDala VI not only refers to the SarasvatI (and even Witzel accepts that the SarasvatI in this MaNDala is the river of

KurukSetra), it also refers to the GaNgA, the easternmost river named in the Rigveda. If MaNDala VI is older than MaNDala II, then the SarasvatI of MaNDala II clearly cannot be identified with the river of Afghanistan, with the Aryans still “fighting their way through the NW passes” on the way from Afghanistan to India.

Despite (and even *because of* ) his manipulations, it is clear that Witzel’s chronological placement of MaNDala II as the oldest MaNDala in the Rigveda, *and* his geographical placement of this MaNDala in Afghanistan, are *gross misrepresentations*.

4. But MaNDala VI cannot be ignored. Witzel is clearly aware that MaNDala VI is older than MaNDala II, and MaNDala VI refers to the GaNgA in a hymn which Witzel is compelled to admit is “an unsuspecting hymn”<sup>96</sup> (by which he means “a hymn not suspected to be an addition”<sup>97</sup>). This places MaNDala VI squarely in the east, and this is fatal to Witzel’s claims about MaNDala II.

Witzel, as we have seen, tries *suppressio veri*. But he does not leave it at that. He realizes that MaNDala VI cannot be allowed to flourish in a purely eastern milieu: a bit of *suggestio falsi* is necessary to transport MaNDala VI also to the west.

YavyAvatI (V1. 27.6), which, as we have seen, is another name for the DRSadvatI river of KurukSetra, is therefore identified by him with the Zhob river, and firmly placed in the West in his Appendices A and B.<sup>98</sup> For this, he cites the testimony of some earlier scholars: “See Geldner, *ad loc* and Hillebrandt 1913:49 sqq.”<sup>99</sup>

But is this identification valid? And, equally important, *does Witzel himself really believe it is?*

This is the only river in the whole of the Rigveda which has been consistently misidentified by the traditional Western scholars. There seems no

sense at all in the identification of the YavyAvatl with the Zhob; and it would almost seem as if the earliest scholars who suggested this identification may have been led to it by a method involving nothing more than a map of the northwest, a drawing pin, a blindfold, and childhood memories of a game called “pin-the tail-on-the donkey”.

Most subsequent scholars have accepted this identification, for lack of any alternative suggestion, but nearly always with some puzzlement.

*Witzel himself* accepts it with a doubtful “may be” and a question-mark: “May be the Zhob river in N. Baluchistan?”<sup>100</sup>

However, in another context, *and another book*, he is more frank. Referring to the *only other reference* (anywhere outside this *single reference* in the Rigveda) to the YavyAvatl, in the PancaviMSa BrAhmaNa, Witzel notes: “the river *YavyAvatl* is mentioned once in the RV; it has been identified with the Zhob in E. Afghanistan. At PB 25.7.2, however, nothing points to such a W. localisation. The persons connected with it are known to have stayed in the *Vibhinduka* country, a part of the Kuru-PañcAla land.”<sup>101</sup>

It may well be asked: does anything *in MaNDala VI* “point to such a W. localisation”? The only other rivers mentioned in this MaNDala, by Witzel’s own admission, are the Sarasvatl of KurukSetra, and the GaNgA.

Clearly MaNDala VI can be located *only in the east*.

(Incidentally, although Witzel does not expressly say so, his identification of TRkSi as “the son of Trasadasyu”<sup>102</sup> would appear to constitute a pedigree showing MaNDala VI to be a late one. But, quite apart from the fact that TRkSi, as we have shown, is *not* the name of Trasadasyu’s son, but the name of their *tribe*, the relevance of

the reference to TRkSi in VI.46.8, *even if it is taken to be a reference to Trasadasyu's son*, in the determination of the chronological position of this MaNDala, is discounted by Witzel himself when he notes that "Oldenberg (1888:197 sqq) regards this hymn also as one that violates the order at the end of a series, and as one to be divided into *pragAthas*"<sup>103</sup> ie. it is one of the "hymns which clearly violate the order of arrangement and thus stand out as later additions."<sup>104</sup>)

5. Witzel intends to show that the Aryans migrated from west to east, ie. from Afghanistan to India. This migration can be shown by merely demonstrating that they were in Afghanistan in one MaNDala, in the Punjab in the next, and in the KurukSetra region in a subsequent one, thereby indicating an eastward movement. But such a scenario becomes more credible when actual movements can be seen taking place in the background of specific historical events.

Witzel sees the crossing of the Indus as a specific historical incident in the migration from Afghanistan to India, and he finds this crossing recorded in two MaNDalas: in the oldest of the seven MaNDalas, MaNDala II, at the time the first crossing actually took place; and in the latest of the seven MaNDalas, MaNDala VII, which, by virtue of being the last historical MaNDala, carries out a nostalgic and summational review of the migration of the Bharatas, the Vedic Aryans proper.

The first migration, according to Witzel, is recorded in II.15.6 when "the Sindhu is crossed."<sup>105</sup>

Later, MaNDala VII records the full migration story of the Bharatas and their priest VasiSTha who "came from across the Sindhu, ie. from eastern Iran (7.33.3)."<sup>106</sup>

As Witzel describes it : "The geography of the



battle hymn (and later summaries as in 7.33) clearly reflects a look back at the immigration of the Bharatas... The process began behind the *Sindhu*, which VasiSTha crosses in 7,33.9.\* Then came the battle of the ten kings on the ParuSNI (the modern Ravi in Pakistan), near MAnuSa, a location 'in the back' (west) of KurukSetra... Their eventual arrival on the YamunA and the defeat of the local chief Bheda are finally chronicled in 7.18.19. The whole process refers to the origins of the Bharatas and VasiSTha in eastern Iran; their move into the Subcontinent is also reflected elsewhere in book 7 (7.5.3, 6) and summed up in 7.33.3: 'thus he (Indra) transgressed with them (the Bharata) the Sindhu, thus he soon killed Bheda in (the YamunA battle), thus, he helped SudAs in the Ten Kings' Battle'... Although they reached as far east as the YamunA, however, their epi-centre was in the area around the SarasvatI, previously occupied by the now defeated PUru."<sup>107</sup>

An exciting story, which starts with the crossing of the river Indus: the crossing by earlier waves of Aryans in II.15.6; and the historical crossing by the Vedic Aryans proper, the Bharatas, in VII.33.3.

But a simple question arises: do these two verses, II.15.6 and VII.33.3, actually refer to crossings of the Indus at all, in the first place? As we have seen in our analysis of the Rigveda, MaNDalas II and VII *do not refer to the Indus river at all*.

An examination of the two verses shows that these verses not only do *not* refer to the Indus at all, but, while they do refer to *rivers*, they do not even refer to the *crossings* of these rivers!

The word *Sindhu* basically means "river", and that is what it means in both these verses.

In II.15.6, the reference is to a mythical clash between Indra and USas on the banks of a river

(Griffith's translation: "With mighty power he made the stream move upward, crushed with his thunderbolt the car of USas."). And which is this stream or river? No guesswork is required: the Rigveda refers to this myth in one more hymn, VI.30.11, as well (Griffith's translation: "So there this car of USas lay, broken to pieces, in VipAS, and she herself fled away.").

And, as to VII.33.3, Griffith translates the verse as follows: "So, verily, with these he crossed the river, in company with these he slaughtered Bheda...". About "the river", he clarifies in his footnote that it means "the YamunA", and refers also to VII.18.19: "YamunA and the TRtsu aided Indra. There he stripped Bheda bare of all his treasures."

(Incidentally, it is no wonder that Witzel's reference to Griffith is a sour one: "The fact that there has not been a new English translation since Griffith's inadequate effort of the late-19th century (Griffith 1973) has particularly hindered research in South Asian and other English-speaking academic circles."<sup>108</sup> Griffith's reasonably honest and objective translation is certainly a hindrance to scholarship of the Witzel brand.)

So here we have a case of a scholar taking a button (and an imaginary button at that) and sewing a vest onto it:

Witzel takes up two verses which clearly refer to eastern rivers, *misinterprets* them as references to the *Indus*, *further misinterprets* them as references to *crossings* of the Indus river *from west to east*, and then reconstructs an entire saga of the immigration of the Rigvedic Aryans into India on the basis of these misinterpretations. He even pinpoints the exact area "eastern Iran"<sup>109</sup> from which specific immigrants, "the Bharatas and VasiSTha"<sup>110</sup>, led this historical exodus across the Indus.

Is “gross misrepresentation” an adequate word to describe this whole exercise?

To *sum up*, Witzel’s analysis is based on manipulations and misinterpretations.

Witzel claims to arrive at his conclusions on the basis of a combination of a geographical grid and a chronological grid, but, as we have seen, *he does not prepare a chronological grid at all*: else, he would never place MaNDala II before MaNDala VI (when the very *eponymous* RSi of MaNDala II is a descendant of a composer, Sunahotra BhAradvAja, in MaNDala VI) or MaNDala VIII before MaNDala III (when the very eponymous RSi of MaNDala VIII is a descendant of a composer, Ghora ANgiras, in MaNDala III).

His sole criterion in preparing a chronological arrangement is *his own* geographical grid prepared on the basis of deliberate misinterpretations of Rigvedic geography.

Ultimately, Witzel only succeeds in deliberately doing what he accuses others of doing: his writings turn out to be very effective in “further cloud (ing) the scientific evolution of textual sources.”<sup>111</sup>

## VI GEOGRAPHICAL MISREPRESENTATIONS

The sole aim of Witzel’s papers is to show that the Aryans migrated from west to east, ie. from Afghanistan to India.

Hence everything in his writings is slanted to produce this picture before the mind’s eye of the reader, either through direct statements, insinuations, or subtle nuances of expression and description.

It is not necessary to list out every single such geographical misrepresentation on the part of

Witzel, since his papers are dotted with them. The following examples will suffice to illustrate his general method:

1. Witzel's geographical analysis is supposed to encompass "geographical features, especially rivers and mountains....."<sup>112</sup>

However, mountains figure in the Rigveda in a general, rather than a specific sense. That is, specific mountains, geographically identifiable, such as MUjavat, etc., appear only in the late MaNDalas. The Family MaNDalas do not refer to a single mountain by name.

But Witzel, far from being put off by this, finds this very convenient from the point of view of his own particular method of geographical analysis: every single, direct or indirect, reference to a mountain, or mountains, anywhere in the Rigveda, is treated by him as a reference to Afghanistan. Thus: "They have 'crossed many rivers' and 'have gone through narrow passages', which once again indicates the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan."<sup>113</sup>

Likewise, in his Appendices A and B, the following constitute some of his "Geographical Data in the Rgveda" indicating the West and Northwest:

"Mountains, 2.12.1"<sup>114</sup>

"Mountains and Plains, 6.24.8"<sup>115</sup>

"Mountains, Rivers, 8.31.10"<sup>116</sup>

"Mountains, Sea? 8.38.13"<sup>117</sup>

"Mountains, 8.88.3; 8.94.12"<sup>118</sup>

And so on. It would appear there are no mountains in India. So any reference to "mountains" can only mean Afghanistan.

Practically the only reference to "mountains" east of the Punjab (in KurukSetra) in Witzel's "Geographical Data in the Rgveda" is the

reference to “Sarasvatl from the Mountains to the Sea. 7.95.2”.<sup>119</sup> The fact that the *Harahvaiti* of Afghanistan does not flow into the sea apparently constrains him from locating these particular “mountains” (and, therefore, also this Sarasvatl) in Afghanistan, but nothing else does: we also have “River, Mountains, Sea, 8.6.28-29,”<sup>120</sup> without the Sarasvatl, and “Mountains, Rivers, 8.31.10”<sup>121</sup> and “Mountains, Sea? 8.38.13,”<sup>122</sup> located in the Northwest.

But it is not only the word “mountains” which constitutes 64 geographical data” indicating the West and Northwest. The following are some of the other “data” which also indicate these areas:

“Urjayantl 2.13.8”<sup>123</sup>  
“7 streams 2.12.12”<sup>124</sup>  
“7 streams 4.28.1”<sup>125</sup>  
“Rivers to the sea 6.17.12”<sup>126</sup>  
“Ayu clan 2.2.4; 2.20.4”<sup>127</sup>  
“5 PEOPLES 2.2.10”<sup>128</sup>  
“Turvlti, Vayya cross streams 2.13.12”<sup>129</sup>  
“USij crosses waters 2.21.5”<sup>130</sup>  
“KRIVI defeated”<sup>131</sup>  
“riding 2.32.3”<sup>132</sup>  
“Sons of BHARATA 2.36.2”<sup>133</sup>  
“DASA and ARYA enemies 6.33.3”<sup>134</sup>  
“Bharata Agni, *DivodAsa* 6.16.9”<sup>135</sup>

In this manner, Witzel manages to uncover plenty of vital “geographical data”, even in MaNDalas like MaNDalas II and VI, which clearly point to the West and Northwest!

Needless to say, Witzel himself sometimes forgets the exact geographical area indicted by “geographical data” of the above kind: thus “SuyamA” indicates the Northwest<sup>136</sup> in one place, and KurukSetra<sup>137</sup> in another.

Likewise “5 PEOPLES” indicates the Punjab<sup>138</sup> in some places, the Northwest<sup>139</sup> in some others, and the West<sup>140</sup> in yet others.

The *same* reference “Rivers, Mountains, Sea 8.6.28-29” indicates the Punjab<sup>141</sup> in one place, and the Northwest<sup>142</sup> in another!

2. Witzel’s general geographical statements are cleverly worded.

In one place, he tells us: “the world of the Rgveda contains the Punjab and its surroundings: eastern Afghanistan, the valley of the Kabul (*KubhA*, Greek *Kophen*), Kurram (*Krumu*), Gomal (*GomatI*), Swat (*SuvAstu*), and... probably Herat (*Sarayu*, Avestan *Haraiiou*) rivers; also the valley of the rivers of SistAn: the SarasvatI (*Harax<sup>v</sup>aiti/ Harahvaiti*) and the Helmand (*\*Setumant*). In the east, the *GangA* and the *YamunA* are already mentioned...”<sup>143</sup>

Elsewhere, he describes “the famous *nadistuti* of the late book 10” (X.75) as follows: “in this relatively late hymn, the Rgvedic territory covers only the area between the *GangA* and S.E. Afghanistan (Gomal and Kurram rivers) and between the Himalayas and the northern border of the modern province of Sind. Most of Afghanistan, including Bactria and Herat (Arachosia), is already out of sight.”<sup>144</sup>

Are these misleading descriptions in tune with the geographical data in the Rigveda?

Calling it “the world of the Rgveda”, Witzel practically gives a description of Afghanistan, after mentioning the Punjab in passing; and in the end, he adds: “In the east, the *GangA* and the *YamunA* are already mentioned.” And when describing the geography of a “relatively late hymn” in “the late book 10”, he tells us that, now, “most of Afghanistan, including Bactria and Herat (Arachosia) is already out of sight”.

Note the subtle use of the word “already” in both the above descriptions. The impression given is that the areas of Afghanistan constitute the core and original areas of the Rigveda, which are slowly moving *out* of its ken, while the areas of the GaNgA and the YamunA are slowly moving *into* its ken: “the newly emerging GaNgA Valley”<sup>145</sup> as he puts it elsewhere.

The GaNgA and the YamunA are certainly mentioned (not “already mentioned”): four of the six Family MaNDalas (MaNDalas III, V, VI and VII) mention them; while only two (MaNDalas IV and V) mention the rivers of Afghanistan, and about one of the two (MaNDala V), Witzel himself admits that the rivers named are not necessarily indicative of the core area of the MaNDala: “all these geographical notes belonging to diverse hymns are attributed to one and the same poet, SyAvASva, which is indicative of the poet’s travels.”<sup>146</sup>

At the same time, no part of Afghanistan is “already out of sight” in “the late book 10”. Practically every single river of Afghanistan named in any Family MaNDala is named in MaNDala X as well: Sarayu (X.64.9), RasA (X.75.6; 108.1,2; 121.4), KubhA (X.75.6) and Krumu (X.75.6); *alongwith many others not named in the Family MaNDalas*: TRSTAmA, Susartu, Sveti, Gomatl and Mehatnu (all named in X.75.6).

(Incidentally, about JahnAvI in MaNDala III, which Witzel does not identify with the GaNgA, his failure to make the identification, while it may not be deliberate, is strange, since a strong clue to this identity is the word *SimSumAra*, “dolphin”, which is found in I.116.19 in association with the word JahnAvI in I.116.18. In another context, *and another book*, Witzel immediately recognizes the geographical connotations of a reference to a dolphin in the JaiminIya BrAhmaNa: “A dolphin lying on the sands, dried out by the North wind, could refer to the Gangetic dolphin, as in fact it

does at 1.17.6 § 62”<sup>147</sup>.)

3. Witzel is not satisfied with identifying “the world of the Rgveda” with Afghanistan. He tries to take the Rigveda as far west as possible, at least in the form of “vague reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes in the Rigveda” - *even as far west as the Urals*:

“Taking a look at the data relating to the immigration Of Indo-Aryans into South Asia, one is struck by the number of vague reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes in the Rgveda, in spite of repeated assertions to the contrary in the secondary literature... Indirect references to the immigration of Indo-Aryan speakers include reminiscences of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Thus the mythical Indo-Iranian river \**RasA* corresponds to the Vedic *RasA* (RV, JB), the East Iranian *RanhA* and the North Iranian *RahA*, which is preserved in Greek as *RhA*, where it designates the river Volga. This is a good example of the migration of river-names... In the same category might fall the rather vague identification of Rgvedic *rip-* with the Rhipaeen mountains, the modern Urals (Bongard-Levin 1980)... A cosmological myth locates the primordial cows in a cave (*Vala*, cf. Iranian *Vara*) on an island in the *RasA*, where they were guarded by a group of demons referred to as *PaNis*, which reminds one of the North Iranian \**Parna* (found in Greek as *Parnoi*). Another North Iranian tribe occurs in Skt. as *DAsa*; Iranian (Latin) *Dahae*, (Greek) *Daai*. A related form is *dasyu*, Iranian *dahyu*, *dainhu* ‘foreign country, enemy’ and Vedic *dAsa* ‘slave’, Iranian *dAha(ka)*, Mycaenean Greek *doero*, Greek *doulos* ‘slave’. ... More connections are indicated, for example, by Vedic *Sindhu*, with a possible Greek cognate *Sindoi*, designating a people along the Koban River in the Caucasus... Further hydronymic evidence, also referred to in the previous paper, also points to earlier Indo-Aryan settlements in Afghanistan: *SarasvatI*, *Sarayu*, *GomatI* etc. The names, considered together, retain a vague memory of the route followed, and of the enemies encountered, by the migrating Indo-Iranian



speaking tribes... The *ParSu* may be equated with the historical Pashtuns living in the Northwest Frontier and in Afghanistan.... *DRbhika* (2.14.3) may be compared with the Iranian tribes of *Derbikes*, and the incoming *USij* (2.21.5) represents an ancient Iranian clan as well as an Indian one... An Iranian connection is also clear when camels appear (8.5.37-39) together with the Iranian name *KaSu* 'small' (Hoffman 1975), or with the suspicious name *Tirindra* and the *ParSu* (8.6.46)... They have crossed many rivers' and 'have gone through narrow passages', which once again indicates the mountainous terrain of Afghanistan. That they had to fight their way through some of these passages is suggested by numerous references to the storming of the mountain fortresses (*pur*) of Sambara (eg. 2.19.6); echoed in later history by the campaigns of Alexander in Nuristan and Swat Kohistan."<sup>148</sup>

Witzel is apparently "struck" by the number, and conclusive nature, of these "vague reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes", but the only thing they leave us "struck" by is Witzel's seeming, and convenient, credulousness (for a person who refuses to accept even the well-documented and established identification of the *KikaTas* with *Magadha*):

a. The reference to "the rather vague identification of *rip-* with the Rhipaeian mountains, the modern Urals" is intriguing. Where is the word *rip-* found in the *Rigveda*? What does it mean? In what context is it used? And what, in the name of heaven, shows that it has the faintest connection with the Rhipaeian (Ural) mountains?

And, finally, does Witzel himself really believe that this identification has the faintest credibility? Not only does he call it a "rather vague identification" here, but, elsewhere, he again refers to this word as representing "perhaps, a very faint recollection of the Rhipaeian (Ural) mountains", and adds the

wry rider “if we want to believe the Russian author G. Bongard-Levin (1980)”.<sup>149</sup> Clearly, whether Witzel really believes it or not, he certainly *wants* to believe it.

The identification, needless to say, is a spurious one. And not a well thought out one either (P.N. Oak could have taught Bongard-Levin a thing or two in such matters). What is surprising is that this kind of nonsense has “nevertheless found its way into even otherwise respectable scholarly publications.”<sup>150</sup>

**b.** Apart from *rip-*, Witzel *cannot pinpoint one single “foreign locality” named in the Rigveda*. The only names he points out are four river-names; the Sarasvatī, Sarayū, Gomati, and Rasā, which are names of rivers to the west of the Indus, but also, in the first three cases, names of other rivers within India.

So far as the Rigveda is concerned, not one of these four names represents either “reminiscences” or “foreign localities”. The Sarasvatī named in the Rigveda is the river of KurukSetra and *not* the river of Afghanistan.

The Sarayū, Gomati and Rasā named in the Rigveda are certainly western rivers, being western tributaries of the Indus (and *not*, in the first two cases, the rivers of eastern Uttar Pradesh), but they do not represent “reminiscences” either; on the contrary, they are rivers which appear relatively *late* in the Rigveda, *after* the Vedic Aryans had expanded westwards: *not one* of these three rivers is named in the three oldest Family MaNDalas (by our reckoning, not Witzel’s), while all of them are named in the late MaNDala X.

But Witzel not only treats these four names as “reminiscences”, but he decides, broad-mindedly, that they represent reminiscences not just of the

western banks of the Indus (where these rivers are located) but “of Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia.”<sup>151</sup>

c. Witzel also names some tribes:  
“PaNis... the North Iranian \**Parna*  
(found in Greek as *Parno*)...  
Another North Iranian tribe...  
*Dasa*... Iranian (Latin) *Dahae*  
(Greek) *Daai*... Vedic *Sindhu*... a  
possible Greek cognate *Sindoi*,  
designating a people along the  
Koban River in the Caucasus... The  
ParSu... *Paktha*... *DRbhlka*  
(2.14.3) may be compared with the  
Iranian tribe of *Derbhikes*, and the  
incoming *USij* (2.21.5) represent an  
ancient Iranian clan as well as an  
Indian one... the Iranian name  
*KaSu*... *Tirindra* and the *ParSu*.”<sup>152</sup>

All these names, according to Witzel, represent  
“reminiscences of their stay in Central Asia, or, at  
least, of old connections with people whom we  
know to have lived in there from old Iranian  
sources and classical authors”.<sup>153</sup>

Witzel must explain how this kind of interpretation  
constitutes a “scientific evolution of textual  
sources”:

Does one, after reading a nineteenth-century  
biography of Abraham Lincoln, conclude that  
Abraham is an American name, and that the  
name of the Biblical patriarch Abraham, in the Old  
Testament, represents (to paraphrase Witzel): “a  
reminiscence of the ancient Hebrews of their stay  
in America, or at least of old connections with  
people whom we know to have lived there from  
nineteenth-century sources.”?

According to Witzel, the Rigveda is definitely older  
than 1500 BC: “Prominent in book 7: it flows from  
the mountains to the sea (7.95.2) - which would  
put the battle of 10 kings prior to 1500 BC or so,

due to the now well documented dessication of the Sarasvatl (Yash Pal et al 1984)"<sup>154</sup>

Surely it is not Witzel's claim that the "old Iranian sources and classical authors" (ie. Greek and Roman authors) are equally old, or even older than the Rigveda?

When the Rigveda is so much older than the Persian, Greek and Roman sources cited by Witzel, and when these tribes are clearly described as being present in *eastern* areas (the PArthavas, ParSus and Pakthas are participants in a battle on the ParuSNI in the Punjab, the very battle dated by Witzel "prior to 1500 BC or so"), surely the testimony of *much later* texts which locate these tribes *at a later date* in Afghanistan, Iran or Central Asia, should be interpreted as evidence that *they* migrated from *east to west*?

What is more, the PaNi, whom he identifies with the Parnoi of northern Iran, are a mythological entity in the Rigveda, corresponding to the Vanir of Teutonic (particularly Scandinavian) mythology and Pan of Greek mythology. Our very next chapter (Appendix 3) deals with this subject in detail.

Does this also then constitute (to paraphrase Witzel) "reminiscences of the Scandinavians and Greeks of their stay in Central Asia, or, at least, of old connections with people whom we know to have lived in there from old Iranian sources and classical authors"?

Delving into the nostalgic memories of the Rigvedic Aryans does not prove very profitable for Witzel.

5. Finally, we can conclude our examination of Witzel's analysis of Rigvedic geography with a classic piece of Witzel's logic. In an incidental reference to a verse, II.11.18, which contains the phrase "on the left", Witzel tells us: "on the left... can also mean 'to the north', and indicates that

Vedic poets faced the east - their presumed goal - in contemplating the world.”<sup>155</sup>

In short, since “left” can also mean “north” in the Vedic language, it means that the Vedic people were facing the east, and therefore, that they migrated into India from the west.

At another point, Witzel seems to make the same inference when he refers to “MANuSa, a location ‘in the back’ (west) of KurukSetra.”<sup>156</sup>

If we reject conventional logic that directional words in most languages are naturally oriented towards the east (since the sun rises in the east), and accept Witzel’s superior logic, we can arrive at the following solution to the problem of the location of the original Indo-European homeland:

**a.** The Vedic Aryans had common words for “left” and “north”, and likewise common words for “right” and “south”. This proves that the direction of their migration into India was from west to east: ie. via Afghanistan.

**b.** The Irish people also have common words for “left” (tUath) and “north” (tUascert), and likewise for “right” (dess) and “south” (descert). This proves that the direction of their migration into Ireland was also from west to east: ie. across the Atlantic.

**c.** The Irish are the westernmost of the Indo-European groups. All other Indo-European groups are located to their east. If the Irish migrated into Ireland from the west, the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans as a whole must be located to the west of Ireland: ie across the Atlantic, in America!

Any takers for this kind of logic?

## VII VIOLATION OF BASIC PRINCIPLES

Witzel, as we have seen, violates every single norm and basic principle, set up by himself, in the analysis of the Rigveda. And yet, he manages to get nowhere. The Rigveda, basically, refuses to yield to his cajoling.

When examining the so-called “reminiscences” of the Vedic Aryans, Witzel tells us: “one is struck by the number of vague reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes in the Rgveda, in spite of repeated assertions to the contrary in the secondary literature”.<sup>157</sup>

The second sentence appears to imply that the authors of the secondary literature were *aware* of “reminiscences of foreign localities and tribes in the Rgveda” and were deliberately out to suppress or deny them by “repeated assertions to the contrary” - which is a serious accusation to make.

If, however, Witzel merely means that the secondary literature, unlike (according to him) the Rigveda, yields *no* evidence of memories of any foreign past, then he is, so far as the secondary literature is concerned, right: *it does not*.

Witzel is very clear in his mind about the value which is to be placed on the testimony of later texts so far as they concern the period of the Rigvedic or pre-Rigvedic past.

The Rigveda is followed, in chronological order, by the SaMhitAs of the other three Vedas: the SAmaveda, the Yajurveda, and the Atharvaveda. Next come the BrAhmaNa texts, followed by the AraNyakas, and much later the UpaniSads. Long after this come the SUtra texts (Srauta SUtras,

GRhya SUTras, Dharma SUTras).

These texts, as Witzel clearly points out, are already so remote from the events of the Rigvedic period that even so very important a Rigvedic event as the Battle of the Ten Kings appears to be a mystery to the authors of these later (ie. post-Rigvedic) texts: “it is interesting to note that later texts show confusion about the participants in the battle, notably JB 3.244 which speaks of PratRd instead of his descendant SudAs.”<sup>158</sup>

The BrAhmaNas (notably the JaiminIya BrAhmaNa) are relatively early texts in the stream of Vedic literature, and the SaMhitAs of the Yajurveda (notably the MaitrAyaNI SaMhitA and the KaTha SaMhitA) are even earlier: “However, even these relatively early texts manage to garble the evidence. Thus the JB (§ 205) calls SudAs KSatra, while KS 21.10: 50.1 has Pratardana and MS 37.7 Pratardana DaivodAsI.”<sup>159</sup>

Again, Witzel reiterates: “the shifting of the tradition (has) already (taken place) in the early YV SaMhitAs: MS 3.40.6, JB 3.244, PB 15.3.7 have substituted other names for SudAs and VasiSTha.”<sup>160</sup>

And, in consequence, Witzel sets out what may be called the principle which forms the very fundamental basis of his whole exercise of analysing the Rigveda: “In light of these problems, one could hardly expect the later, heavily inflated, Epic and Puranic traditions to be of help. Clearly, Rgvedic history will have to be reconstructed principally from the Rgveda itself.”<sup>161</sup>

But, after failing miserably in his efforts to produce any direct evidence from the Rigveda, Witzel goes scouring for evidence in later and later texts and finally claims to have struck gold in the BaudhAyana Sruta SUTra: “there is the following direct statement contained in the (admittedly much later) BSS, 18.44:397.9 sqq which has once again been over-looked, not having been

translated yet: 'Ayu went eastwards. His (people) are the Kuru-PañcAla and the KASI-Videha. This is the Ayava (migration). (His other people) stayed at home in the West. His people are the GAndhArl, ParSu and AraTTa. This is the AmAvasava (group)'.<sup>162</sup>

This incredible assertion represents the most blatant violation of the *most basic principle* laid down by Witzel himself: "there has been a constant misuse of Vedic sources and some historical and pseudo-historical materials, not only by nationalist politicians, but also by archaeologists, and historians. Most serious is the acceptance of much later materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period."<sup>163</sup>

Witzel, on the one hand, strongly indicts "the acceptance of *much later* materials as authoritative sources for the Vedic period", and, on the other, advocates the evidence of an "admittedly much later" text in overriding that of all the previous texts, including the Rigveda itself!

And what exactly is the value of this "evidence"?

1. The passage mis-translated by Witzel is as follows:

*"PrAn Ayuh Pravavraja, tasyaite Kuru-PañcAlAh KASI-VidehA iti, etad Ayavam; PratyamAvasus, tasyaite GAndhArayas ParSavorATTA iti, etad amAvAsyavam"*

The actual translation is: "Ayu went eastwards, the Kuru-PañcAlas and KASI-VidehA are (his descendants) the Ayavas; (And) AmAvasu (went) westwards, the GAndhAras, ParSus and AraTTas are (his descendants) the AmAvasyavas."

A very clear case of a division of the relevant peoples into two groups: a western group comprising the people of Afghanistan (GAndhAras), Iran (ParSus) and the Punjab (AraTTas. referring to the people of the Indus



Valley), and an eastern group comprising the people of Haryana (Kurus), western Uttar Pradesh (PañcAlas), eastern Uttar Pradesh (KASIs) and Bihar (Videhas); a neat division tallying exactly with that of the Anus (Iranians) and PUrus (Indoaryans) respectively.

The passage *very definitely does not* speak about the western group having “stayed at home in the west” in contrast with the eastern groups who “went eastwards”.

(Incidentally, Witzel, whose cognitive abilities seem to sharpen and flatten at will, does not recognize the identity of the ParSus and AraTTas: “The identity of the ParSu is unclear, and the exact habitat of the AraTTas is unknown.”<sup>164</sup>)

2. The passage is found in the BaudhAyana Sruta SUtra, which is not only a “much later” text, but whose geographical area is also located in the east. According to Witzel himself, “one would be inclined to locate it somewhere in Eastern U.P.,”<sup>165</sup> more specifically: “in the Vatsa country between the GangA and the Sarayu”<sup>166</sup> of Uttar Pradesh; and “while its author knew details of KurukSetra, his connection with the KANvas and textual correspondences with JB and SB make it probable that he belonged to the more Eastern parts of the PañcAla country.”<sup>167</sup>

And it is *this* text, according to Witzel, which gives a “direct statement” about details, *unknown to the Rigveda itself* (“only known to BSS”<sup>168</sup>, Witzel assures us), of the migration of the Vedic Aryans eastwards from Afghanistan and beyond *in the pre-Rigvedic period*; while elsewhere he admits that even as early a text as the very next SaMhitA, the Yajurveda SaMhitA, has forgotten the details of the most important historical event *of the Rigvedic period*, the battle of the ten kings!

It is up to the readers to decide *whose* motivated writings are “devoid of scholarly value” and “cloud the scientific evaluation of textual sources”.

To be fair to Witzel, although he tries to achieve his objective of countering those who “deny that any movement of Indo-European into South Asia has occurred”,<sup>169</sup> on the basis of “evidence” in the Rigveda, by manipulations, misinterpretations and misrepresentations; *nevertheless*, it is significant that we were able, throughout our entire critique of his work, to expose the falsity of his contentions without having to quote from any other scholar (apart from one or two references to Griffith’s translations) against Witzel, *except Witzel himself!* Clearly, Witzel does have a scholarly conscience which compels him to unwittingly let the truth slip out every now and then.

Then why does Witzel carry on this whole exercise in the first place?

The answer is that Witzel, *like most other Western scholars*, implicitly believes that the Indo-Europeans originated in and around South Russia, or, at any rate, that they certainly did not originate in India. His belief in this is practically equivalent to a dogma: it is as unthinkable to him that India could be the original homeland of the Indo-Europeans as it would be that the earth is flat.

In these circumstances, writers, particularly Indian ones, who stake claims for India only arouse his contempt. By and large, he would prefer to ignore this riff-raff; but when a few Western academicians also start saying the same things, it is time, in Witzel’s opinion, to put a stop to this nonsense.

In putting a stop to it, if Witzel finds that he has to stretch or bend the facts a little, or to ignore, suppress or distort them, it is all in the cause of “TRUTH”. A few in-convenient facts cannot be allowed to prevent the “TRUTH” from prevailing.

Clearly, this kind of attitude is not conducive to

any “scientific evaluation” of anything. Nor is it conducive to any academic debate.

An academic debate on any subject should concentrate on the pros and cons of the arguments presented by the two (or more) opposing sides in the debate; it should be conducted in an open and sincere atmosphere; and the natural desire (not academically wrong in itself) to win the debate should not be allowed to overpower the academic desire to arrive at the truth.

And an academic debate cannot be won by the simple expedient of name-calling and label-sticking, and consequent disqualification of the opposing side from even taking part in the debate.

Our earlier book was dismissed without a reading or debate by classifying it, among other things, as an “example of modern Hindu exegetical or apologetic religious writing”.<sup>170</sup> Hopefully, better sense will prevail next time.

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>GDI, p.477.

<sup>2</sup>VAOC, P.246.

<sup>3</sup>IASA, pp.307-352.

<sup>4</sup>ibid., pp.85-125.

<sup>5</sup>IAW, pp.173-211.

<sup>6</sup>IASA, preface, p.x, footnote.

<sup>7</sup>ibid., p.111, footnote.

<sup>8</sup>ibid., pp.116-117.

[9](#)ibid., p.116, footnote.

[10](#)ibid.,p.123.

[11](#)ibid.

[12](#)ibid., preface, p.xi.

[13](#)ibid., preface, p.x.

[14](#)ibid., preface, p.xii.

[15](#)ibid., preface, p.x,

[16](#)ibid., p.116.

[17](#)ibid., preface, p.x

[18](#)ibid.

[19](#)ibid., preface, p.xv.

[20](#)ibid., p.324.

[21](#)ibid., p.87.

[22](#)ibid., p.91.

[23](#)ibid., p.88.

[24](#)ibid., p.92.

[25](#)ibid.

[26](#)ibid., p.87.

[27](#)ibid., p.307.

[28](#)ibid., p.87.

[29](#)ibid., p.115.

[30](#) *ibid.*, pp.307-308.

[31](#) *ibid.*, p.308.

[32](#) *ibid.*, p.322.

[33](#) *ibid.*, p.323.

[34](#) *ibid.*, pp.338-339.

[35](#) *ibid.*, p.320

[36](#) *ibid.*

[37](#) *ibid.*, p.313.

[38](#) *ibid.*, p.339.

[39](#) *ibid.*

[40](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[41](#) *ibid.*, p.328.

[42](#) *ibid.*, pp.326,329.

[43](#) *ibid.*, p.327.

[44](#) *ibid.*, p.331.

[45](#) *ibid.*, p.328.

[46](#) *ibid.*, p.332.

[47](#) *ibid.*

[48](#) *ibid.*, pp.307-308.

[49](#) *ibid.*, pp.317-318.

[50](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[51](#) *ibid.*, pp.343-352.

[52](#) *ibid.*, p.309.

[53](#) *ibid.*

[54](#) *ibid.*, p.326.

[55](#) *ibid.*, p.328.

[56](#) *ibid.*, p.337.

[57](#) *ibid.*, p.327.

[58](#) *ibid.*, p.319.

[59](#) *ibid.*, p.337.

[60](#) *ibid.*, p.329.

[61](#) *ibid.*, p.319.

[62](#) *ibid.*, p.90.

[63](#) *ibid.*, p.331.

[64](#) *ibid.*, p.308.

[65](#) *ibid.*, p.310.

[66](#) *ibid.*, p.316.

[67](#) *ibid.*, p.334.

[68](#) *ibid.*, p.310.

[69](#) *ibid.*, p.334.

[70](#) *ibid.*

[71](#) *ibid.*, p.308, footnote.

[72](#) *ibid.*, p.315.

[73](#) *ibid.*, p.308.

[74](#) *ibid.*

[75](#) *ibid.*

[76](#) *ibid.*, p.309.

[77](#) *ibid.*, p.319.

[78](#) *ibid.*, pp.332-333.

[79](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[80](#) *ibid.*, p.333, footnote.

[81](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[82](#) *ibid.*, p.331.

[83](#) *ibid.*, pp.343, 346.

[84](#) *ibid.*, p.331.

[85](#) *ibid.*, p.327.

[86](#) *ibid.*, pp.343, 346.

[87](#) *ibid.*, p.318.

[88](#) *ibid.*, p.347.

[89](#) *ibid.*, p.343.

[90](#) *ibid.*, p.344.

[91](#) *ibid.*

[92](#) *ibid.*, p.350.

[93](#) *ibid.*

[94](#) *ibid.*, p.335.

[95](#) *ibid.*, p.316, footnote.

[96](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[97](#) *ibid.*

[98](#) *ibid.*, pp.343, 348.

[99](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[100](#) *ibid.*

[101](#) IAW. p.193.

[102](#) ASA, p.330.

[103](#) *ibid.*, p.330, footnote.

[104](#) *ibid.*, p.311.

[105](#) *ibid.*, p.322, footnote.

[106](#) *ibid.*, p.334.

\*misprint for 7.33. 3

[107](#) *ibid.*, p.335.

[108](#) *ibid.*, p.87.

[109](#) *ibid.*, pp.334, 335.

[110](#) *ibid.*, p.335.



[111](#) *ibid.*, p.117.

[112](#) *ibid.*, p.308.

[113](#) *ibid.*, p.322.

[114](#) *ibid.*, p.343

[115](#) *ibid.*

[116](#) *ibid.*, p.344.

[117](#) *ibid.*

[118](#) *ibid.*, p.345.

[119](#) *ibid.*, pp.344,349.

[120](#) *ibid.*, p.350.

[121](#) *ibid.*, p.344.

[122](#) *ibid.*

[123](#) *ibid.*, p.343.

[124](#) *ibid.*, pp.343, 346.

[125](#) *ibid.*, p.343.

[126](#) *ibid.*, pp343, 348.

[127](#) *ibid.*, p.346.

[128](#) *ibid.*

[129](#) *ibid.*

[130](#) *ibid.*

[131](#) *ibid.*

[132](#) *ibid.*

[133](#) *ibid.*

[134](#) *ibid.*, p.349.

[135](#) *ibid.*, p.348.

[136](#) *ibid.*, p.345.

[137](#) *ibid.*, p.352.

[138](#) *ibid.*, pp.347, 349.

[139](#) *ibid.*, p.348.

[140](#) *ibid.*, p.349.

[141](#) *ibid.*, p.344.

[142](#) *ibid.*, p.350.

[143](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[144](#) *ibid.*, p.318.

[145](#) *ibid.*, p.339.

[146](#) *ibid.*, p.317.

[147](#) IAW, p.189.

[148](#) IASA, pp.320-322.

[149](#) *ibid.*, p.110.

[150](#) *ibid.*, p.116.

[151](#) *ibid.*, p.321.

[152](#) *ibid.*, pp.321-322.

[153](#) *ibid.*, p.110.

[154](#) *ibid.*, p.335, footnote.

[155](#) *ibid.*, p.324.

[156](#) *ibid.*, p.335.

[157](#) *ibid.*, p.320.

[158](#) *ibid.*, p.335, footnote.

[159](#) *ibid.*, p.340, footnote.

[160](#) *ibid.*, p.335, footnote.

[161](#) *ibid.*, p.340, footnote.

[162](#) *ibid.*, pp.320-321.

[163](#) *ibid.*, p.88.

[164](#) IAW, p.202.

[165](#) *ibid.*, p.201.

[166](#) IASA, p.95.

[167](#) IAW, p.203.

[168](#) *ibid.*, p.201.

[169](#) *ibid.*, p.324.

[170](#) *ibid.*, 117.

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## Chapter 10 (Appendix 3)

### SaramA and the PaNis: A Mythological Theme in the Rigveda

The myth of SaramA and the PaNis is found in the Rigveda X.108.

The hymn, as Griffith notes, “is a colloquy between SaramA, the messenger of the Gods or of Indra... and the PaNis or envious demons who have carried off the cows or rays of light which Indra wishes to recover”.<sup>1</sup>

But, according to Macdonell, the hymn is about “the capture by Indra of the cows of the PaNis... (who) possess herds of cows which they keep hidden in a cave far beyond the RasA, a mythical river. SaramA, Indra’s messenger, tracks the cows and asks for them in Indra’s name, but is mocked by the PaNis.”<sup>2</sup>

Clearly, there is a basic difference in the above descriptions of the myth: Griffith’s description suggests that the cows were stolen by the PaNis, and are sought to be recovered by Indra; Macdonell’s description suggests that the cows belong to the PaNis and are coveted by Indra.

The myth is a complex one, which has developed many shades and facets in the Rigveda itself. We will examine this myth as follows:

- I. Development of the Vedic myth.
- II. The PaNis in Teutonic Mythology.
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#### I

### DEVELOPMENT OF THE VEDIC MYTH

Primitive myths came into being out of efforts to

arrive at explanations for the phenomena of nature.

One very common phenomenon in nature is the daily transition from day to night and night to day. This was conceived of in mythical terms as an eternal struggle between the forces of light and the forces of darkness: the forces of darkness, with unfailing regularity, stole away the Sun or its rays, leading to the onset of night. The forces of light, with equal regularity, rescued the Sun, or recovered its rays, leading to the onset of daytime.

The forces of light had a specific name: Devas (from *div-*, "light"). The forces of darkness, however, did not have such a clear-cut name, as darkness (being merely the absence of light) is a negative phenomenon. The action of stealing and hiding away the Sun or its rays was likened to that of the miserly traders and merchants who hoarded goods and money, hence the name PaNi, originally meaning trader or merchant, was applied to them.

In the course of time, a regular phenomenon of nature was converted into a single mythical incident: the incident involving SaramA and the PaNis.

The progressive development of the three main mythical entities in the SaramA-PaNi myth (ie. SaramA, the PaNis, and the cows) may be noted:

1. SaramA is progressively:

**a.** "the Dawn who recovers the rays of the Sun that have been carried away by night."<sup>3</sup>

**b.** "the hound of Indra and mother of the two dogs called after their mother SArameyas who are the watchdogs of Yama the God of the Dead."<sup>4</sup>

c. “the messenger of the Gods or of Indra.”<sup>5</sup>

2. The PaNis are progressively:

a. “in accordance with the original meaning of the word, merchants or traders.”<sup>6</sup>

b. “a class of envious demons watching over treasures.”<sup>7</sup>

c. “the fiends who steal cows and hide them in mountain caverns.”<sup>8</sup>

3. The cows are progressively:

a. “the rays of light carried off and concealed by the demons of darkness,”<sup>9</sup> the PaNis.

b. “the rain-clouds carried off and kept concealed by the PaNis.”<sup>10</sup>

c. “the PaNi’s hoarded wealth, the cattle and the wealth in horses and in kine.”<sup>11</sup>

The myth starts off with the idea of the PaNis, the demons of darkness, stealing the rays of light and hiding them away at night, and SaramA, the Dawn, recovering them in the morning, as a matter of daily routine.

The original concept of the rays of light is still present in early hymns (VI.20.4; VII.9.2), but these rays of light are more regularly depicted as cows.

SaramA, who searches out and recovers the rays of the Sun is soon conceived of as a kind of

hound, “the hound of Indra, who tracked the stolen cows”.<sup>12</sup>

A regular phenomenon gradually becomes a single incident: SaramA’s searching out and tracking of the cows stolen by the PaNis becomes a major incident in itself, and develops new angles. In some versions, the PaNis, merchants and boarders of wealth, now become the owners of the cows, and Indra becomes the covetous God who covets these cows. SaramA now becomes a messenger of Indra and the Gods in their quest for the cows of the PaNis. This is the myth represented in hymn X. 108.

The further development of this myth may be noted:

1. In X. 108, as D.D. Kosambi points out, “the hymn says nothing about stolen cattle, but is a direct, blunt demand for tribute in cattle, which the PaNis scornfully reject. They are then warned of dire consequences.”<sup>13</sup>

As we have seen, Macdonell notes that the PaNis “possess herds of cows which they keep hidden in a cave far beyond the RasA, a mythical river. SaramA, Indra’s messenger, tracks the cows and asks for them in Indra’s name, but is mocked by the PaNis.”<sup>14</sup>

The gist of the hymn is as follows:

- a. SaramA makes her way over long paths and over the waters of the RasA and conveys to the PaNis Indra’s demand for their “ample stores of wealth”.
- b. The PaNis refuse, and tauntingly offer to make Indra the herdsman of their cattle.
- c. SaramA warns them of dire



consequences if they refuse Indra's demand.

**d.** The PaNis express their willingness to do battle with Indra. But they offer to accept SaramA as their sister if she will stay on with them and share their cattle and wealth.

**e.** SaramA, however, rejects the offer, and issues a final warning.

Here, the hymn ends; and the battle which follows, in which Indra defeats the PaNis, is to be assumed.

2. The myth is also found in the Jaiminlya BrAhmaNa, II.440-442. Here, the cows are again clearly referred to as the cows of the Gods stolen by the PaNis. This time, the Gods first send SuparNa, the eagle or the "Sun-bird". However, the PaNis bribe him into silence, and he accepts their gifts and returns without any information. The enraged Gods strangle him, and he vomits out the curds, etc. received from the PaNis.

Then the Gods send SaramA. She crosses the RasA and approaches the PaNis. She is also offered bribes, but (as in the Rigveda) she refuses their blandishments and returns to Indra with the information that the cows are hidden inside the RasA. She and her descendants are then blessed by a grateful Indra.

3. The myth is found, finally, in the BRhaddevatA, viii 24-36.

Here, the myth develops a curious twist. The same sequence of events takes place, but this time SaramA accepts the bribe of the PaNis, and apparently transfers her loyalties to them. When she returns to Indra and refuses to disclose the hideout of the cows, Indra kicks her in a rage. She vomits out the milk received as a bribe, and

then goes back trembling to the PaNis.

Thus, as the myth develops, we find a radical transformation in the relationship between SaramA and the PaNis. From being initially hostile to each other, the two are increasingly identified with each other, and the nature of the original myth is completely lost.

A side development in this whole myth is the development of the concept of the SArameyas, the sons of SaramA, as the hounds of Yama. They are a pair of four-eyed hounds who guard the pathway leading to the Realm of the Dead, and conduct the souls of the dead to their destination.

It will also be necessary to examine the characteristics of another Vedic God, PUSan, who represents one of the forms of the Sun. PUSan is one of the older deities in the Rigveda, being more prominent in MaNDala VI than in later MaNDalas (five of the eight hymns to PUSan in the Rigveda are in MaNDala VI), and many of his characteristics later devolve onto SaramA and the PaNis in Vedic as well as in other mythologies.

The main characteristics of PUSan are:

1. PUSan is basically an Aditya or Sun-God, and it is clear that he represents the Morning Sun: “according to SAyana, PUSan’s sister is USas or Dawn.”<sup>15</sup> Moreover, in I.184.3, the ASvins are called PUSans; and the ASvins, as Griffith notes in his very first reference to them “are the earliest bringers of light in the morning sky who in their chariots hasten onward before the dawn, and prepare the way for her”.<sup>16</sup>

2. PUSan’s main function, however, is as the God of roadways, journeys and travellers: “As knower of paths, PUSan is conceived as a guardian of roads. He is besought to remove dangers, the wolf, the waylayer from the path (1.42.1-3)... He is invoked to protect from harm on his path

(6.54.9) and to grant an auspicious path (10.59.7). He is the guardian of every path (6.49.8) and lord of the road (6.53.1). He is a guide on roads (VS.22.20). So, in the SŪtras, whoever is starting on a journey makes an offering to PUSan, the road-maker, while reciting RV 6.53; and whoever loses his way turns to PUSan (AGS 3.7.8-9, SSS 3.4.9). Moreover in the morning and evening offerings to all gods and beings PUSan the road-maker receives his on the threshold of the house.”<sup>17</sup>

3. Another important function of PUSan is as the God who helps find lost objects, particularly lost animals, and especially lost cattle: “As knower of the ways, he can make hidden goods manifest and easy to find (6.48.15). He is in one passage (1.23.14-15; cp. TS 3.3.9.1) said to have found the king who was lost and hidden in secret... and asked to bring him like a lost beast. So, in the SŪtras, PUSan is sacrificed to when anything lost is sought (AGS 3.7.9). Similarly, it is characteristic of PUSan that he follows and protects cattle (6.54. 5,6,10; 58.2; cp. 10.26.3)... and drives back the lost.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, “PUSan is the only god who receives the epithet paSupA ‘protector of cattle’ (6.58.2) directly (and not in comparison).”<sup>19</sup>

Hymn VIII.29, which refers (in riddle form) to the particular characteristics of various Gods, refers to PUSan, in its sixth verse, as follows: “Another, thief like, watches well the ways, and knows the places where the treasures lie.”

4. A very distinctive characteristic of PUSan is his close association with the goat: “His car is drawn by goats (*ajASva*) instead of horses.”<sup>20</sup> This feature is emphasised throughout the R̥gveda: I.138.4; 162.2-4; VI. 55.3,4,6; 57.3; 58.2; IX.67.10; X. 26.8; etc.

5. Another very important function of PUSan is that “he conducts the dead on the far path to the Fathers..... and leads his worshippers thither in safety, showing them the way (10.17.3-5). The AV

also speaks of PUSan as conducting to the world of the righteous, the beautiful world of the gods (AV 16.9.2; 18.2.53). So PUSan's goat conducts the sacrificial horse (1.162.2-3)."<sup>21</sup>

In post-Vedic Indian mythology, all these entities more or less faded away: neither SaramA nor the PaNis nor PUSan have any important role to play in Puranic mythology.

However, the word PaNi and its variant form VaNi (found only twice in the Rigveda: I.112.11; V.45.6) persisted into later times and provided the etymological roots for a very wide range of words pertaining to trade, commerce and economics, and business activities: *paN*, "to barter, purchase, buy, risk"; *ApaNa*, "market, shop"; *ApaNika*, "mercantile"; *paNa*, "a coin *vANI/baniA*, "trader"; *vANijya*, "commerce", etc.

## II

### THE PANIS IN TEUTONIC MYTHOLOGY

The PaNis are found in Teutonic mythology as the Vanir:

1. The word *Vanir* is clearly cognate to the word *VaNi* which is a variant form of PaNi, found twice in the Rigveda (I.112.11; V.45.6) but increasingly more frequently later. As YAska points out in his Nirukta (II.17), the word VaNi is derived from the word PaNi: *paNih vaNij bhavati*.

2. The Gods (Devas) and the PaNis are two equal and opposite forces (being the forces of light and the forces of darkness in the eternal struggle between day and night). However, the Devas, since they represent the more positive and more desired phenomenon of light, are considered to be desirable and worthy of worship; while the PaNis, who represent the more negative (ie. being merely the absence of light) and less desired phenomenon of darkness, are considered to be demonic and unworthy of worship. In

I.151.9, the PaNis are depicted as hankering after the divinity (*devatvam*) of VaruNa and Mitra (who are called *Asuras* or Great Gods in the fourth verse of the hymn).

In Teutonic mythology, “besides the Aesir... there was a second race of Gods, the Vanir.”<sup>22</sup> This race was considered less divine than the Aesir (Asura), and less worthy of worship. Hence, the overriding concern of the Vanir was “that their rank should be recognised as equal to that of the Aesir so that they... would receive an equal right to the sacrifices made by the faithful.”<sup>23</sup>

The rivalry between the Aesir and the Vanir is reflected throughout Teutonic mythology, and the Aesir come out triumphant in every skirmish. This includes the struggle for the sacred mead (reflected in Indian mythology as the struggle between the Gods and demons for Soma, or for Amrita, the divine nectar): “Odin used trickery to obtain the sacred mead, source of wisdom and poetry, which he then shared with the Äsir... the message is clear: the Äsir gained wisdom, while the Vanir proved themselves incompetent.”<sup>24</sup>

The Rigveda, it must be noted, represents an analogous situation, where the Gods are the Devas or Asuras (Aesir) and the demons are the PaNis (Vanir). In later Indian mythology, the PaNis fade away, and the demons acquire the name *Asura*.

3. There is a shift in nuance between the status of the PaNis in the Rigveda and the Vanir in Teutonic mythology: while the PaNis are outright demons (the forces of darkness), the Vanir are a second, if inferior, race of Gods.

However, the field of association and operations of the Vanir is exactly the same as that of the PaNis, but in a *positive* sense:

The PaNis are associated with “the rays of light”<sup>25</sup>

and with “the rain-clouds”,<sup>26</sup> but they are associated as demons who steal these rays of light and these rain-clouds, and try to prevent mankind from receiving the benefits of these gifts of nature. At the same time, they are associated with trade and commerce, and with “hoarded wealth”<sup>27</sup>, as “demons watching over treasures”<sup>28</sup> and, again, denying mankind the benefit of this wealth and these treasures.

However, in the case of the Vanir, these negative features have become positive: “They provided the fields and pastures and forests with sunlight and life-giving rain... From them came the harvests, game, and all kinds of riches in general.”<sup>29</sup> They are also identified with traders and merchants, and with maritime activities: “the Vanir were also the protectors of commerce and navigation.”<sup>30</sup>

4. The main incident of hostilities between the Gods (Devas) and the PaNis described in the Rigveda is the SaramA incident in which a female messenger passes between the two (and which is followed by a war in which Indra and the Gods defeat the PaNis). The provocation for this incident, as depicted in X.108, is nothing but the wealth of the PaNis which is coveted by Indra and the Gods.

In Teutonic mythology also: “One Nordic tradition represents that war broke out between the belligerent Aesir and the peace-loving Vanir.”<sup>31</sup> This war is preceded by an incident involving a female messenger: “One day, the Vanir sent to the Aesir - on a mission which is not explained - a Goddess by the name of Gullveig. This Goddess was highly skilled in all the practices of sorcery, and by her art had acquired much gold. When, alone, she reached the Aesir, they were, it is supposed, tempted by her riches. They seized her and submitted her to torture.”<sup>32</sup> Later she returned to the Vanir in a battered state.

In the BRhaddevatA, SaramA has shifted loyalties

and is now close to the PaNis. In the Teutonic myth, Gullveig is already one of the Vanir. She is now a messenger from the Vanir to the Gods (rather than from the Gods to the PaNis). But she is still the key to the coveted wealth of the Vanir, and she is tortured by the Gods until she yields this wealth (as SaramA is kicked by Indra until she vomits out the milk received from the PaNis).

### III SARAMA AND THE PANIS IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

SaramA and the PaNis are found in Greek mythology as Hermes and (his son) Pan, who also represent, at the same time, PUSan and his goat.

It will be noted that all the concerned Vedic entities, SaramA, the SARameyas, the PaNis, and PUSan, are merged into the character of Hermes:

1. The word *Hermes* is an exact cognate to the word *SaramA*: the correspondence between the names (though not that between the identities or functions) has been noted by many scholars, including Max Müller; and the *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* tells us that “many etymologies have been proposed for the name Hermes. Some suggest a connection with the Vedic Sarameyas derived from SaramA.”<sup>33</sup>

The word *Pan* is clearly cognate to *PaNi*.

2. SaramA in the Rigvedic hymn is “the messenger of the Gods or of Indra”,<sup>34</sup> and specially of Indra.

Hermes is also primarily “the messenger of Zeus”,<sup>35</sup> thereby corresponding to SaramA in both name and function.

3. The SARameyas, the offspring of SaramA, are

the guides to the Realm of the Dead: their main function is “to guard the path of the departed spirit and lead it to the place of Yama”.<sup>36</sup> This is originally one of the functions of PUSan who “conducts the dead on the far path to the fathers”.<sup>37</sup>

Hermes is “concerned with the underworld”,<sup>38</sup> and consequently he is also “charged with conducting the souls of the dead to the underworld”.<sup>39</sup>

(Incidentally, the Atharvaveda 18.4.55 refers to the “harmya of Yama”<sup>40</sup>, which is taken to mean a tomb.)

4. The PaNis are basically concerned with trade and commerce: they are “in accordance with the original meaning of the word, merchants or traders”.<sup>41</sup> This original meaning of the word has survived to this day in different words pertaining to trade and commerce, as we have seen. Another “meaning of *paN* (is) to risk, to wager, to bet”.<sup>42</sup>

An important and special function of Hermes is as “the God of Commerce, the God of Profit - lawful and unlawful - and the God of games of chance”.<sup>43</sup>

This characteristic of Hermes is even more pronounced in the related South European mythology of the Romans (the Greeks and Romans shared a common pantheon, with different names for basically the same Gods), in the name of his Roman counterpart Mercury: “The name Mercury is connected with the root *merx* (merchandise) and *mercari* (to deal, trade)”, and he is “exclusively the God of merchants... preside(s) over messages and over commerce”.<sup>44</sup>

5. PUSan is first and foremost a God of travellers: as we saw, “PUSan is conceived as a guardian of



roads. He is besought to remove dangers, the wolf, the waylayer from the path... He is invoked to protect from harm on his path... and to grant an auspicious path... He is the guardian of every path... and lord of the road... So, in the SUTras, whoever is starting on a journey makes an offering to PUSan, the road-maker... and whoever loses his way turns to PUSan... Moreover in the morning and evening offerings to all gods and beings PUSan the road-maker receives his on the threshold of the house.”<sup>45</sup>

Likewise, “Hermes was above all thought of as the god of travellers, whom he guided on their perilous ways. His image was placed where country roads branched and at crossroads in towns.”<sup>46</sup>

6. SaramA is originally “the Dawn who recovers the rays of the Sun that have been carried away by night”.<sup>47</sup>

Hermes is not directly identified with the dawn - he has developed further from his roots - but traces of this origin can be seen in his attributes:

He is a “God of the twilight”.<sup>48</sup> This can mean either dawn or dusk; here it means dawn: Hermes has “the epithet *Argephontes*, a probable deformation of *Argeiphantes*, ‘he who makes the sky clear’.”<sup>49</sup>

Mercury, the Roman counterpart of Hermes, also retains traces of his origin: “among animals, the cock was especially sacred to him”.<sup>50</sup>

7. The canine motif is very prominent in the Rigvedic myth: SaramA and the SARameyas are conceived as hounds, and even the PaNis, in one place at least (VI.51.14) are conceived as wolves.

Hermes, however, is conceived as a handsome young man wearing winged sandals and a helmet, and carrying a staff with two entwined

serpents facing each other. The reason for this is simply that in Classical Greek art and iconography, all the Gods and Goddesses, unless ugliness is a specified attribute in their description, are depicted as men and women of perfect form and classic beauty.

However, the functions and characteristics of Hermes show that he must originally have been conceived as a kind of dog before the compulsions of Greek art and iconography took over:

**a.** Hermes was “particularly honoured by the shepherds... his mission was to watch over their flocks and protect their huts. From this doubtless arose the Greek habit of placing at the doors of houses a more or less crude image of this God.”<sup>51</sup>

Writing in a different context, Malati Shendge makes a point which is relevant here: “Although in Avesta no dog is associated with Yama, an indirect link may be seen in his being described as ‘a good shepherd’. To a shepherd, a dog is an important mate who helps him to look after and protect his flock.”<sup>52</sup>

**b.** Hermes, as we saw, is “charged with conducting the souls of the dead to the underworld”.<sup>53</sup>

This function is performed by dogs in most mythologies of the world: not only in the Rigveda and the Avesta, but even in Egyptian mythology where we have “*Anubis*, ancient jackal-headed Egyptian deity... His name means watcher, and guardian of the dogs. With Upuant, he presides over the abode of the dead and leads them to the judgement hall...”<sup>54</sup>

**c.** SaramA, the hound of Indra, helps track down and recover

Indra's cows stolen by the PaNis. A dog, as we shall see presently, figures in a different way in a jumbled version of this myth found in Greek mythology.

8. The main myth pertaining to SaramA and the PaNis, as we have seen, is the one represented in one whole hymn (X.108) in the Rigveda, and in other developed versions in the Jaiminlya BrAhmaNa (II.440-442) and the BRhaddevatA (viii, 24-36).

Incredibly, this myth is found in Greek mythology in *three different forms*, all of which are individually traceable to the original Vedic myth:

a. The PaNis, as per the myth, "possess herds of cows which they keep hidden in a cave beyond the RasA,"<sup>55</sup> to protect them from Indra, the thunder-God or God of rain.

*The Encyclopaedia of Classical Mythology* tells us that "in the mountains (of Greece) there were numerous 'caves of Pan' into which the cattle were herded in bad weather".<sup>56</sup> (ie. to protect them from the rain).

b. Greek mythology relates a myth in which a golden dog belonging to Zeus (the Greek thunder-God and counterpart of Indra) is stolen by a man significantly named Pandareus: "It was Hermes who, with the help of Iris, found in the abode of Tantalus the golden dog Pandareus had stolen from Zeus."<sup>57</sup>

The first point to be noted is that Zeus (like Indra) possesses a dog. This dog *itself* is stolen. It is found jointly by Hermes and Iris (who is a female "messenger of the Gods"<sup>58</sup>).

As per the original myth, Hermes should have *been* both the dog of Zeus *as well as* the female “messenger of the Gods” who finds the stolen cows of Zeus. However, Hermes has been transformed so that he is *neither* a dog *nor* a female. Hence, the original SaramA-PaNi myth is found in a jumbled form: cows are absent in this version, and Hermes *finds* the dog of Zeus *with the help of* the female “messenger of the Gods”!

c. Greek mythology relates another incident which contains motifs of the original myth which are missing in the above version, but now the original identity of the thief is missing: in the first version, as we saw, cows are herded into caves called the “caves of *Pan*,” and in the second version, the thief is *Pan*-dareus.

Here, however, Hermes, who combines in himself the characteristics of both SaramA and the PaNis, is *himself* the thief: “On the very day of his birth, Hermes... displayed his mischievous nature by stealing the cattle which had been confided to the care of Apollo... He separated fifty heifers which he drove before him under cover of the night to the banks of the Alpheus... shutting up the heifers in a cavern... (later) Zeus... instructed Hermes to return the heifers.”<sup>59</sup>

Here, we find all the distinctive motifs of the SaramA-PaNi myth: the stolen cattle of the Gods, the cave hiding place on the banks of a river, the connection of the theft with night time, etc. Hermes (in the role of the PaNis) steals the cattle; and Hermes himself (in the role of SaramA) recovers them at the instructions of Zeus.

Even without noticing the SaramA-PaNi connection, the *Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology* notes that Apollo’s heifers are “analogous to the cows of the Vedic Indra”.<sup>60</sup>

## IV MYTHOLOGY AND HISTORY

The study of the mythology of the Rigveda is definitely of great importance in the study of Indo-European history. But it is necessary to understand the exact sense in which it is important: *it is important* in the sense that a proto-Indo-European mythology can be reconstructed from a comparative study of different Indo-European mythologies, *but not in the sense that the mythology is itself an actual representation of history.*

Unfortunately, an entire academic industry has been built up on the basis of the interpretation of mythology as an actual representation of history, with mythological entities and events being interpreted as actual historical entities and events.

Thus, the *PaNis* of the Rigveda, who are identical with the *Vanir* of Teutonic mythology (as the Gods or *Asuras* of the Rigveda are with the *Aesir*) are clearly purely mythical entities, and have nothing whatsoever to do with historical entities or events either in India or in northern Europe.

Nevertheless, at the *eastern* end of the Indo-European belt, the *PaNis* of Vedic mythology are identified as the non-Aryan inhabitants of India, conquered by invading Aryans entering India *from the northwest*; and *at the same time*, at the *western* end of the Indo-European belt, the *Vanir* of Teutonic mythology are identified as the non-Aryan inhabitants of Scandinavia, conquered by invading Aryans entering Scandinavia *from the southeast!*

The *Everyman's Encyclopaedia of Non-Classical Mythology* tells us: "In Nordic myth, the *Vanir* were the culture heroes of a race which seems to have preceded the *Aesir* in Scandinavia".<sup>61</sup>

Likewise, Shan M.M. Winn tells us about Scandinavia: "we must consider the possibility

that the region was once inhabited by a people who were neither Indo-European nor patrilineal. The mythical subordination of the Vanir may echo a historical conquest, in which a matrilineal, agrarian society was disrupted and finally replaced by a new Indo-European ideology originating from elsewhere.”<sup>62</sup>

After all that we have discussed, is any comment required on this kind of “historical” interpretation of mythology?

The importance of mythology in the study of Indo-European history, it must be repeatedly emphasised, *lies in the comparative study of different Indo-European mythologies.*

As we have seen, modified or transformer versions of fragments of the SaramA-PaNi myth are found in Teutonic mythology as well as in Greek mythology.

What is crucial to our analysis is the fact that the versions of Teutonic and Greek mythology *bear absolutely no discernible similarity to each other.* If not for the common point of comparison with Vedic mythology, it would be virtually impossible to guess that the Vanir of Teutonic mythology are even remotely connected to Hermes and Pan of Greek mythology; or that the Teutonic mythical incident is in any way connected to any of the three versions in Greek mythology.

We have already made clear in our earlier book that any comparative study of the different Indo-European mythologies (Vedic, Iranian, West Asian, South European, West European, North European, East European) shows a situation where:

1. Practically *all* the elements in any reconstructed proto-Indo-European mythology are found in Vedic mythology, whereas only a *few* of them are found in any other Indo-European mythology.

2. The common elements are found in Vedic mythology in their most primitive forms, closest to the original nature-myths; while fragments of the original myths, in later developed versions, are found in the other Indo-European mythologies.

3. Each of the other Indo-European mythologies has several elements in common with Vedic mythology, but hardly any with any of the others (not counting historical borrowings, such as Greek Apollo in Roman mythology).

4. In respect of common elements, the Vedic version provides the connecting link, often the only one, between the versions in the other mythologies.

Furthermore, considering the theory that the Indo-Iranians had a common history after their separation from the other Indo-Europeans, till they separated into India and Iran respectively, Iranian mythology has *no* connection with any *other* mythology except Vedic.

This situation does not fit in with any model of Indo-European origins and dispersals which places the Indo-European homeland outside India.

In fact, the particular myth we are examining, that of the PaNi/Vanir/Pan, goes far in corroborating our case for an Indian homeland:

The Teutonic Vanir and Greek Pan are definitely derived from the Vedic PaNi, both linguistically (since VaNi is a later form of PaNi), as well as from the point of view of mythical development.

But, in the Rigveda itself, the word PaNi refers to two distinct entities: firstly, it refers to actual merchants and traders, and, secondly, it refers to the mythical PaNis or demons of darkness. So the question arises: which came first, the merchants or the demons?

The fact is that almost all the Western scholars are unanimous in placing the merchants first: Griffith tells us that “the original meaning of the word” is “merchants or traders”;<sup>63</sup> and that from first being used in reference to “a miser, a niggard, an impious man who gives little or nothing to the Gods,” the word PaNi came to be “used also as the name of a class of envious demons watching over treasures, and as an epithet of the fiends who steal cows and hide them in mountain caverns”.<sup>64</sup>

Macdonell also tells us that “the word PaNi occurs... in the sense of a ‘niggard’... from this signification it developed the mythical meaning of demons... who primarily withhold the treasures of heaven”.<sup>65</sup>

If the word PaNi in the Rigveda, which is the precursor of the Teutonic Vanir and Greek Pan, originally meant “a merchant or a trader” in the earlier part of the Rigveda, then *it certainly means that the Vedic people were already a settled and commercially prosperous people in the geographical region indicated by the Rigveda before the development of the mythical concept of the PaNis (and consequently of the Vanir and of Pan).*

#### **Footnotes:**

<sup>1</sup>HOR, fn.X.108.

<sup>2</sup>VM, p.63

<sup>3</sup>HOR, fn.I.62.3

<sup>4</sup>ibid.

<sup>5</sup>HOR, fn.X.108.

<sup>6</sup>HOR, fn.VI.45.31.



[7](#)HOR, fn.I.32.11.

[8](#)ibid.

[9](#)HOR, fn.IX.111.2.

[10](#)HOR, fn.I.121.4.

[11](#)HOR, fn.I.83.4.

[12](#)HOR, fn.IV.16.8.

[13](#)CCAIHO, p.80.

[14](#)VM, p.63.

[15](#)HOR, fn.VI.55.4.

[16](#)HOR, fn.I.3.1

[17](#)VM, pp.35-36.

[18](#)ibid., p.36.

[19](#)ibid., 37.

[20](#)ibid., p. 35.

[21](#)ibid.

[22](#)LEM, p.257.

[23](#)ibid., p.275.

[24](#)HHH, p.64.

[25](#)HOR, fn.IX.111.2, etc.

[26](#)HOR, fn.I.121.4, etc.

[27](#)HOR, fn.I.83.4.

[28](#)HOR, fn.I.32.11.

[29](#)LEM, p.275.

[30](#)ibid.

[31](#)ibid.

[32](#)ibid.

[33](#)ibid.,p.133.

[34](#)HOR, fn.X.108.

[35](#)LEM, p.133.

[36](#)CDHR, p.39.

[37](#)VM, p.35.

[38](#)LEM, P.136.

[39](#)ibid., p.133.

[40](#)VM, pp. 173-174.

[41](#)HOR, fn.VI.45.31.

[42](#)CDHR, p.46.

[43](#)LEM, p.133.

[44](#)ibid., p.220

[45](#)VM, pp.35-36.

[46](#)LEM, p.133.

[47](#)HOR, fn.I.62.3.

[48](#)LEM, p.133.

[49](#)ibid.

[50](#)ibid., p.220.

[51](#)LEM, p.133.

[52](#)CDHR, p.39.

[53](#)LEM, p.133.

[54](#)EDNCM, p.13.

[55](#)VM, p.63.

[56](#)ECM, p.110.

[57](#)LEM, p.136

[58](#)ibid., p.157.

[59](#)ibid., p.135.

[60](#)ibid., p.133,

[61](#)EDNCM, p.224.

[62](#)HHH, p.64.

[63](#)HOR, fn.VI.45.31.

[64](#)HOR, fn.I.32.11.

[65](#)VM, p.157.



