

WHO WERE THE ARYANS?

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William Jones, Judge at East India Company's Supreme Court, learnt Sanskrit from Ramlochan, a Calcutta Pandit. Ramlochan imposed severe conditions like vegetarianism on the knowledge-thirsty *sahib*, considered himself polluted by the tuition and bathed when he returned home. He would not have spoken the *sahib's* language even if life was threatened.

William Jones the disciple excelled the guru in his admiration of Sanskrit: "More perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin", declared Jones in his 1786 address to the Royal Asiatic Society. In the same breath he continued, 'yet bearing to both of them a stronger affinity . . . than could possibly have been produced by accident, so strong indeed that no philologist could examine them all without believing them to have *sprung from some common source*, which perhaps no longer exists.'

Pandit Ramlochan would not have relished the hint. It is an irony of fact that for two centuries now, pundits have reveled in it European linguists methodically followed the trail provided by Jones. Comparative philology developed fast. The concept of language families became a powerful tool for linguists and others. Social and historical notions came to be based on these families. Indian nationalism drew a lot of sustenance from this view, equally as the Dravidian movements thrived on it.

Modern linguistic assigns to Sanskrit and 'Indo-Aryan' origin and believes that Sanskrit was the 'polished, cultivated, correct language'. Prakrit, 'the speech of the uneducated masses was the same Indo-Aryan in origin'. This view is very similar to the traditional Indian view. But it differs widely from the latter in stating that '*the originally alien idiom* has resulted in the various languages now spoken in northern and central India'. Linguistics also holds that the languages like Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada spoken in South India belong to the Dravidian family, not the Indo-Aryan.

In the development of linguistics after Jones, assumptions have been made about historical associations between peoples and languages. As a result, Prof. Burrow's eminent treatise 'The Sanskrit Language' begins thus:

"In the greater part of India today languages are spoken which are derived from *a single form of speech which was introduced into India by invaders* from the north-west more than three thousand years ago. The invading peoples were known in their own language as *ārya* – a word which is also commonly used as an adjective meaning 'noble, honorable'.

Whom did the 'aliens' invade ? Linguistics would answer, 'the Dravidians', to be sure, for, 'before the Aryan conquest, Dravidian occupied a much greater area including considerably portions of Northern India'. This contains a contradiction (which linguistics has glossed over) to 'Prakrit' the speech of the uneducated masses, which was the same Indo-Aryan in origin'. There are several other contradictions.

BURROWING THE INVASION THEORY.

In the nineteenth century, it was a scientific belief that every human activity was influenced by the 'struggle for existence'. With the then prevailing European colonial expansion, this belief was extended to languages and their spread was attributed to invasions and conquest.

Within India, the past ten centuries of percussive contact with invaders from West Asia did not make a dent in languages of the uneducated masses as distinct from the court language. Nor did three centuries of pervasive influence of the Europeans affect these languages to the core. How could the 'Aryan invaders' succeed in imposing an alien language in that remote past? They could not, if we consider examples given by Burrow himself, Iranians are assumed to have belonged to the same original stock as the Indo-Aryans. Their invasions on Slavs made little difference to Slavonic, Says Burrow:

“This absence of Iranian influence on Slavonic is surprising in view of the repeated incursions of Scythian tribes into Europe, and the prolonged occupation by them of extensive territories reaching to the Danube. Clearly at this later period the Slavs must have remained almost completely uninfluenced politically and culturally by the Iranians.

The other example, of the Aryan rule in Mitanni is equally telling:

The Aryans appear in Mitanni from 1500 B.C. as the ruling dynasty, which means they must first have entered the country as conquerors. In the first place, they did not succeed, as elsewhere, in imposing their language on the country they occupied. The native language of the people, Hurrian, remained the language of the country and was adopted by the conquerors.

These 'Aryans' were of almost the same stock as those who are assumed to have 'invaded' India. As their example contradicts the hypothesis about imposition of the alien Sanskrit, linguists assign special qualities to the Indian branch of Aryans. Thus the preceding quotation continues :

Secondly we find no trace of the implacable antagonism between Aryan and Non-Aryan which characterized the Indian and Iranian expansion.

This 'Implacable antagonism' is not a discovery based on factual data but an invention based on speculation based in turn on the concept of language – families. The antagonism is 'mythical' in all senses of the term; it is based on references in mythical literature first and last. The myth has wrought havoc in the social sphere. Even in the field of academic inquiry, it has created a closed-mind attitude on the exchange between the so-called Aryan and Dravidian families of languages.

Speakers of both language-families have held the Sanskrit Mahabharata in high esteem. Therein occurs a word '*surāṅgā*', an underground passage. Pandavas entered a '*surāṅgā*' under the lac-house, it is said. Available Sanskrit literature did not provide origins of the word. The invasion theory then become handy. Burrow has stated thus about the increase in Sanskrit vocabulary :

The Greek rule in North West India was responsible for the introduction of a few words, e.g. '*surāṅgā*' underground passage.

Underground passages bored by rodents and others are such a common phenomena that every language worth the name should have a word for them. A meaningful origin for ‘*surāṅgā*’ could therefore be looked for in the languages which ‘occupied considerable portions of North India’ before the ‘Aryan conquest’. The monumental Dravidian Etymological Dictionary (DED for Short) co-edited by Burrow himself contains the following entries:

| | | |
|----------------|-----------|---------|
| <i>curi</i> | to bore | |
| <i>cūl</i> | to scoop, | dig out |
| <i>suruṅṭu</i> | to coil, | roll up |

Add to these the Marathi word ‘*suruṅga*’ (cavernous passage) common among the rustic and elite alike. Consider that man-made caves and caverns existed in India before the Greek incursion and that the Greeks had no parallel tradition. The conclusion is obvious : the word ‘*surāṅgā*’ must be Indian, invasion or no invasion.

THE SAMMATA TRACE.

‘*surāṅgā*’ is a mere burrow in the massive wall that has been raised theoretically between Indian languages. There appears to exist a whole subterranean passage among them since ages. It has remained unexplored till this writer brought out the intimate bonds between Sanskrit Marathi and Tamil (*Sammata* for short). These writings in Marathi and English would cover over six hundred pages in print. They establish the *sammata* links on the basis of place names in Maharashtra (derivable from Tamil), words in inscriptions, total similarity of myths and Gods in ‘Aryan’ Maharashtra and ‘Dravidian’ Tamil Nadu, correspondences in vocabulary and grammar and interdisciplinary evidence in support of linguistic interpretation.

Sammata calls for no denial of the linguistics after Jones, only its extension across language- families. It stresses the primacy of the living languages of the masses for linguistic ‘reconstruction’, over a bygone language as base for etymology and derivation. What Jones said of Sanskrit, Greek and their common source in antiquity, can apply equally well for the *sammata* trio and then to the ‘Aryan’ and ‘Dravidian’ families of languages.

DOCUMENTS AND TRADITIONS.

The *sammata* conclusions may startle, but need not; they only call for a fresh look at the old ones. The mass of evidence collected for two centuries now, may be imagined to provide cast-iron case for the traditional theory. Does it? We quote Burrow on the evidence :

The language we find there (in the Rgveda) is the source from which all later developments in India have arisen. But this language itself had evolved out of a yet earlier form of speech. This earlier evolution is unrecorded by any direct documentation, *but it can be reconstructed.*

This reconstruction has been restricted to the Indo-European language family to the exclusion of, say, the Dravidian, notwithstanding its extensive presence in pre-Vedic India. Such restricted reconstruction predictably yields conclusions in conformity with the starting premises. Are the premises supported by evidence? No, as Burrow has stated :

For the Indo-Aryan invasion of India no direct evidence is available. (P.31)

... There is *some linguistic evidence* to show that the Indo-Aryan invasion took place in successive phases and not in one simultaneous movement. (p. 31)

This 'some linguistic evidence' stands refuted on the very next page :

... in the text of the Rgveda itself, although historical allusions are not uncommon, there is no *reference anywhere to the fact of the migration, nor any definite indication that it was still remembered.*

There is thus no documentary evidence to prove the importation of Sanskrit or the invasion by Aryans. It is accepted practice to probe the traditions prevalent in a people, for reconstructing their pre-historic past. For instance, Burrow records in a foot-note :

A recollection of Chorasmia as their original home is preserved in the tradition of the ancient Iranians. (p. 3)

This is given in support of the initial unity of the Indo-Iranians. There is an even more important foot-note on India that is Bharata. Burrow has not analyzed its content, which we may do on *Sammata* principles. The foot-note explains 'Bharata' as:

At an early period the most prominent of the indo-Aryan tribes, whence also the indigenous name of India *Bhārata* (-varṣa) (p.1)

The name *bhārata* could not be 'indigenous' if it was from an 'Indo-Aryan' tribe. Be that as it may, both Bharatas and Bhārata are seen to have indigenous meanings. From Burrow's DED:

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| <i>paratar</i> | inhabitants of a maritime tract, Fishing tribes. |
| <i>parattu</i> (<i>paratti</i>) | to spread |
| <i>parappu</i> | expanse, sea |

Consider these along with Marathi *bharatī* 'the flux of the ocean, the tidal flow': the correspondence is complete.

Entry 3255 of the DED giving *paratti*, gives us also

| | | |
|-------------|----------|-------|
| <i>pār</i> | expense, | earth |
| <i>pāri</i> | earth | |

These could very well explain the name *Bhārata*, which can then be called truly indigenous.

Bharata and Bhārata are related, no doubt; but not as people or king and country as the documents would like us to believe; rather as sea and earth.

CHRONO-LOGICALLY SPEAKING

Considerations of the relative age of available documents in a language have also affected linguists' thinking on the relationship in Indian languages. Burrow gives the following chronology in support of the Indo-European genealogy of Sanskrit:

Rgveda, *by rough guess work*, is placed in the region of 1000 B.C.

Greek: The literature begins with the Homeric poems c. 800 B.C.

The oldest section (of Avesta), the *Gāthās*, are attributed to Zarathustra himself, *who, in conformity with the indigenous tradition*, may be placed sometime in the region of 660 B.C.

... the language is not in any way less archaic and in some respects more so than that of the Rgveda. *Latin* is known in literature from C. 200 B.C. and there are *scanty inscriptional remains* from an earlier date. (p. 7)

When Sanskrit can be compared with languages with such varied ages of their earliest documents, nothing should prevent its comparison with Tamil. 'In the case of Tamil the literary tradition goes back for at least two thousand years' - an antiquity on par with Latin, supported by numerous inscriptions in addition. And if the *indigenous tradition* is to be believed, *Tolkāppiyam*, the earliest extant Tamil treatise could be endowed with the same antiquity and archaism as the Avesta.

But these have not cut much ice with the linguists. Established concepts of family-relationships continue to allow much doubtful pairing of words: e.g., old Slavonic *gora*, Lithuanian *giria* meaning forest, with Sanskrit *giri* mountain. What about antiquity? Burrow states:

The earliest recorded Slavonic is the old Bulgarian of the *ninth century*: Lithuanian is known only from the *sixteenth century*. (p. 7)

And the Slavs had remained 'completely uninfluenced' by the Aryans: The contradictions are obvious. They permit us to compare *giri* with

| | |
|--------------|---------------------------|
| <i>kīrai</i> | greens |
| <i>kire</i> | various species of greens |

from the 'Dravidian' stock of much greater antiquity. Similarly the correspondence of old Slavonic *vluku* 'wolf' is not called for, if we consider

(Tamil) *veruku* tom-cat, wild cat

Chronology does not go against these comparisons. Logic helps us in others. Take *vajra*, the mighty weapon of Indra. Burrow records this explanation :

For instance Skt. *vajra* Avestan *vazra* – is formed with the well-known suffix -ra (IE -ro) and can be derived from the IE root which appears in Gk. (*F*) "arvum 'break, smash'.

Indra has been acclaimed to be an exclusively Indian divinity unattested in Indo-European, And yet his specific weapon is explained from Indo-European.

Far more fittingly, vajra is explained from Tamil *vacci* the iron-wood tree, the hardest tree on Indian soil. The tree is called *anjani* in many Indian languages. Anjani is the mythical mother of Hanuman who in turn is called *vajrakāya* - possessing body as hard as *vajra*. Myth also has it that Hanuman suffered a blow of the vajra and lost his chin.

OLD MYTHS AND NEW MEANTINGS

The fire-test of any hypothesis on Indian languages is its ability to bring out cogent meanings of Rgvedic hymns. Rgveda is mythical literature. Linguistics after Jones has proposed variety of meanings within the bounds of Indo-European, *Sammata* would extend the field of reference to Dravidian as well.

The extension is not merely phonetic or linguistic. It is also cultural and holistic. It does not treat vedic culture as an Aryan mummy. It searches into the culture in India as a whole for its manifestations. Linguistically we depend on induction rather than deduction. Meanings of words are sought in their entirety; not merely through etymological deductions based on 'roots'. Traditionally, verbal roots have been considered 'building blocks' for Sanskrit in particular. We realize that they are hypothetical abstractions. Therefore, we rely equally on the 'Dravidian' system which does not make a rigid distinction between the verbal and the nominal roots and owing to its 'agglutinative' (word-sticking) nature, does not modify them much in word-formation.

Veda then comes to mean 'fire' through *vē* 'to burn' and *vētu* 'heat' – rather than 'knowledge' through *vid* 'to know'. *Jātaveda* already means 'fire' in Sanskrit. It is now explained as 'fire produced by rubbing' from *cāta* > *jāta*. A hymn in the Rgveda contains both the words :

*Jātavedase sunavāma sāmam
arātiyato ni dahāti vedah*

Traditionally *vedah* here has been given the meaning 'wealth' and not 'knowledge'; it is taken to be object of the verb '*dahāti*' burns. With *vedah* as fire, subject of the verb 'burns' and with *cuna* meaning 'juice, and oozing', the lines would mean :

For fire (produced by rubbing) we sap soma,
The Fire-God burns off enemies.

There is no forced interpretation here.

Extraction of *soma* may have been easy for the Vedic Indians. Extraction of its meaning has proved difficult for later-day scholars. It is verified from the 'un-vedic' Dravidian words which point towards a root 'co':

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| <i>cōmpu</i> | to be indolent |
| <i>cōmpal</i> | drowsiness |
| <i>jompu</i> | inebriation |
| <i>somma</i> | swoon |
| (Marathi) <i>jho(m)pa</i> | sleep |
| (Hindi) <i>sonā</i> | to sleep |

Soma is thus the inebriant so depicted in the veda. It could be extracted or drawn from a variety of sources, the palm for instance.

| | |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| <i>īntu</i> | date-palm |
| <i>iram</i> | toddy, arrack |
| <i>īndra</i> | toddy – drawer caste. |

Form *īndra* to *Indra* is a small step. It provides the linguistic link of Indra with his mythical favourite soma and the cultural link of the vedics with indigenous peoples. The present-day tribal inheritors of those non-vedic peoples preserve ‘records’ which appear to be archaisms shared in common by the ancestors.

Thus Kui a tribal language has *vṛisa* ‘to squeeze, to milk’, which has unmistakable similarity with vedic *vṛṣa* ‘bull’. The bovine concept is common, the posited linguistic relates are different. The Kui word is related to *pīri* which occurs also in Marathi in the sense of milking; the vedic word has been related to *vṛṣ* ‘to rain, shower’. This is clearly a forced etymology based on a polished language that attempts to relate *vṛṣ* also with *varṣa* – year, through the concept of rainy season. But *varṣa* is more properly a full turn of the heavens as the living languages of the ‘uncultivated’ will show:

| | | |
|---------|----------------|---------------------|
| Marathi | <i>varīsa</i> | year |
| Tamil | <i>varical</i> | regularity, turn |
| Kannada | <i>varise</i> | a turn, a time |
| Telugu | <i>varusa</i> | a turn by rotation. |

Obviously and naturally too, the language-material of the indigenous illiterate provided the base for the refined language of the literate.

But the grammarians of the refined language insisted on internal derivation for their words. So did their poets. In the lovely hymns of *uṣā* ‘the dawns’, one can discern an effort to ‘name’ them by the roots *ut* ‘up’, *ucca* ‘high above’, *uccha* ‘to banish’ (darkness), *uccha* ‘to illuminate’, *us’a* ‘to desire’ etc. These are poetic etymologies, if not after thoughts. Despite Indo-European comparisons, the meaning of *uṣā* is still shrouded in the dark of dawns; but it can be perceived clearer in primitive Dravidian light:

| | |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>uka</i> | to ascend, rise stately, soar upward. |
| Marathi <i>uga</i> – | |
| <i>uka</i> | to be glad, please |
| (Kurukh) <i>ūkhā</i> | darkness, dark |

All the meanings in the poetic etymologies are available here. We have only to admit free exchange of words and ideas and the meanings will rise as did the worthy *uṣā* from darkness : *krsnat ut asthāt aryā* .

NOT BY WORDS ALONE.

And like the worthy dawns, the confluence principles will have to reconcile contrasts between language-families. Starting with and yet giving second place to words, linguistics have always emphasized the differences in grammars of, say, Sanskrit and Tamil. But they can be reconciled.

At one time the basic difference was considered to be this : Sanskrit is inflectional, while Tamil is agglutinative. This was discounted by none less than Caldwell, who was the first to establish the distinctive features of the south Indian (or Dravidian) family of languages.

Linguists have held the cerebrals *t th d dh ṇ* (ट ठ ड ढ ण) to be essentially South-Indian and taken over from them by Sanskrit. Strangely enough, classical Tamil prohibits its cerebrals *t ṇ* from occurring at the beginning of a word. Though Sanskrit has not formalized such prohibition, the number of Sanskrit words beginning with *t th d dh* is negligible. Marathi, on the other hand, has a large stock of these words and obviously no prohibition. Probably, it is Marathi that has preserved the original indigenous tradition. *Sammata* again.

Indo-European does not have the gerund or conjunctive participle (*kritvā* having done') as in Sanskrit. Therefore, it is taken to be result of Dravidian influence. *Sammata* reconstruction with folk-speech as starting point, brings out the phonetic unity of Sanskrit – *tvā* and Tamil *-tu*. We then see 'ceytu' and 'kritvā' as variations between dialectal and refined forms. The original roots could be connected by the chain *cey-key – kai – kay – kar – kr* meaning 'to do' and relating to *kai* 'hand'.

Many kinds of meanings are given in Sanskrit by attaching prefixes like *pra* to verb-roots like *kr* to do (*prakāra* kind, sort). This is considered a specialty of Sanskrit. The prefixes show 'no signs of derivation from inflexional forms' nor do they have significant meanings of their own (in Sanskrit, we may add). But, search them in South-Indian and we find root-words similar in sound and content.

| | | | |
|-------------|----------|--------------|---|
| <i>apa</i> | away | <i>āpe</i> | yonder |
| <i>ud</i> | up, out | <i>uvap</i> | upper place |
| <i>nis</i> | out | <i>nira</i> | to be distinguished |
| <i>parā</i> | away | <i>para</i> | to spread |
| <i>pra</i> | forth | <i>pira</i> | to be born, be produced (brought forth) |
| <i>vi</i> | asunder | <i>virī</i> | burst asunder, spread out |
| <i>sam</i> | together | <i>camai</i> | to be made, constructed, formed. |

nis, *nira* may stand out. *niṣam* is 'bosom, breast' and *Gondi naram* is 'penis of animals'. The correspondence with Sanskrit *nṛ nara* man, is obvious – and we have a reasonable *sammata* etymology.

It is suggested that Sanskrit prefixes are really grammatical 'abstractions' from original whole words exactly like the abstraction called 'root' concerning words. An example from Ṛgveda will help :

yajne yajne na udava

is a prayer. Traditionally it means, 'in every yajna us thou protect'. *Udava* the verb is analysed as *ud* prefix to *ava* the verb-root. In South-Indian, *udava* would be an integral word : *utavu* to help, aid, assist. The meaning fits perfectly in the Vedic hymn. In Marathi tradition, 'udo udo' is the chant for the mother-Goddess, another aid for *Sammata*.

‘ARYAS – THE NOBLE DRAVIDAS’

Ancient Indian grammarians presumed the primacy of Sanskrit. Linguists after Jones substituted Indo-European for Sanskrit. They did something more. They picked out two obscure words used in Sanskrit in totally different contexts and used them as denominations for languages, gradually for peoples : *ārya*, *dravida*. “the invading peoples were known in their own language as *ārya* – a word which is also commonly used as an adjective meaning ‘noble, honorable’”, and it is explained further that

As a term to distinguish Indo-Aryan (sic)
from the non-Aryan language the adjective *ārya* was used in opposition to *mleccha* – ‘barbarian’.

Let it be mentioned that the word ‘barbarian’ was originally imitative of the chirping of birds. It was thus a term to denote derisively the quality of speech of a different group. There are similar terms elsewhere, *aravar* and *tikalār* for Tamils. Both signify a kind of lisp, confusion in speech. The word *mleccha* explained form South-Indian would appear to be similar :

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| Milai (-tt-) | to be bewildered |
| Malakkam | confusion of the mind. |

The Sanskrit grammarians were obviously bewildered as they could not provide its root meaning though they employed the word for others.

In that sense ‘*ārya*’ itself would be an equally *mleccha* word if we note the following from the DED

| | |
|--------------|------------------------|
| <i>ariya</i> | rare, uncommon |
| <i>ari</i> | beauty |
| <i>āra</i> | richly, satisfactorily |

These meanings would ‘satisfactorily’ explain the beautiful (*arya*) dawns or the ‘rich’ aryas and the ‘uncommon’ richness of the language common to Aryas and Mlecchas alike.

They were the Dravidas too, inhabitants of Bharat which was their conception of the earth, which they called *tiruvidam*, *dravidam* or ‘holy land’ as most peoples have called the land of their birth. The *āryas* were neither aliens, nor invaders, but by common consent, nobles among Dravidians.

----- The End -----