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ARYAN AND NON-ARYAN IN SOUTH ASIA

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The term Aryan is not often heard nowadays except in the ancient Indian context, and after its misuse by Germanic demagogues in the 1930s this is not surprising. It may have philological relationships with words in non-Indian Indo-European languages, but I understand that modern comparative philologists have recently cast some doubt on several of these (e.g., Irish *Eire*, German *Ehre*, Latin *arare*). The only relative of this Indian word whose kinship is practically certain is the Old Persian *Airiya* (Modern Persian *Īrān*). We may thus safely assert that a powerful group of Indo-Iranians in the early second millennium B.C. called themselves by something like this name. The branch which entered India were the Aryans par excellence.

The Aryans are popularly imagined as tall, upstanding, comparatively fair-skinned nomads, tough and aggressive, riding through the northwestern passes in their horse-drawn chariots and striking terror in the conservative and sedentary non-Aryans of the Indus Valley. The view propagated by the late Sir Mortimer Wheeler¹ that they destroyed the cities of the Harappa culture is now less popular since the theories of Raikes and Dales,² but still the Aryans figure in most standard histories of India as a martial, positive people, the antithesis of the priest-ridden "Dravidians" whom they overwhelmed and upon whom they imposed their culture.

The cultural history of India after the Aryan invasion has been commonly interpreted as the process of the fusion of Aryan and non-Aryan elements over a period of three thousand years. In the last century this process was sometimes interpreted as a kind of degeneration—the vigorous, extroverted invader from the steppes steadily losing his lively adventurous character under the influence of subtropical and tropical conditions and through the admixture of alien blood and the absorption of alien ideas. This picture of the history of India still sometimes appears in a rather modified form, though in the present century there has been among Indologists an increasing realization that the nineteenth century view of ancient India as a land where attention was mainly directed towards mystical gnosis and *mokṣa* ("plain living and high thinking")³ is not wholly borne out by the sum of the evidence.

The data for the earlier racial history of India, especially since the entry of the people who called themselves Aryans, is not wholly satisfactory. This is particularly the case because, owing to the Aryans' custom of cremation, which also affected the peoples whom they conquered and absorbed, skeletal remains are rare in northern India from about 1000 B.C. onwards. Nowhere have the remains of a skeleton been discovered about which it might confidently be said: "These are the bones of a member of the tribes whose priests composed the hymns of the *Rg Veda*"; and the same is largely true of later generations. Our knowledge of the early interaction of Aryan and non-Aryan in South Asia must still depend mainly on the evidence of language and literature, studied in the light of archaeology and of the present-day ethnological situation.

It is well known that the subcontinent contains three major ethnic types, which are nowadays frequently termed Proto-Australoid, Palaeo-Mediterranean, and Indo-European. The two latter are considered by modern ethnologists as branches of the widespread "Europoid" or "Caucasoid" type. It is equally well known that there are three major linguistic groups in India—Munda, Dravidian and Indo-Aryan. While a one-to-one relation between the three social types and the three language groups is obviously belied by the facts, it is tempting to link them in their origins. According to this theory, the Munda languages represent the speech of the earliest inhabitants of India, whose ancestors have been in the subcontinent perhaps since Palaeolithic times; the Dravidian languages were introduced by Palaeo-Mediterranean migrants who came to India in the Neolithic period, bringing with them the craft of agriculture; while the Indo-Aryan languages were obviously brought by the Aryans in the second millennium B.C.

Though this interpretation may be oversimplified, the evidence now seems strong enough to show with fair certainty that of the three language groups the Dravidian and the Indo-Aryan were brought to India by migrants, the former considerably earlier than the latter. Arguments in favor of the South Indian Peninsula being the original home of the Dravidian language family, very popular with Tamil scholars at one time, cannot resist the weight of the evidence, both archaeological and linguistic. The hypothesis of Caldwell, the father of Dravidian philology and linguistics, that there is a remote relationship between the Dravidian and Finno-Ugrian groups, put forward over a hundred years ago,⁴ and long discredited or ignored, was revived around the time of the Second World War by Burrow.⁵ It has since steadily gained support, and countertheories have connected Dravidian with Asianic and Basque⁶ (Lahovary) on the one hand, and Elamite (McAlpin) on the other. The last

theory, discussed by its author in the pages of this volume, is particularly convincing, and Elamite seems to be the closest relation to the Dravidian group, though the relationship established by McAlpin need not wholly invalidate those of earlier scholars. The various theories, taken together, point to a group of agglutinating languages, widespread from the Mediterranean to the borders of the Indian subcontinent in prehistoric times. Of these, the Proto-Dravidian ancestor of the modern Dravidian group was the most easterly member.

If there should be still any doubts as to the strength of this evidence, it is reinforced by the phenomenon of Brahui, a Dravidian language, in the remote northwest of the subcontinent. Brahui can only be satisfactorily explained as a linguistic fossil, the last remnant of numerous Dravidian languages spoken in protohistoric times in the area of what is now Pakistan. Moreover, though the attempts of numerous scholars to read the Harappa script have not yet produced a fully convincing interpretation, there is at least sufficient evidence, from the several analyses of the syllabary which have already been made, to show that it is more consistent with an agglutinating language than with an inflected one.

Further significant evidence of the early presence of Dravidian languages in the northwest of South Asia, and evidence of a very convincing type, emerges from recent studies of the language of the *R̥gveda*, and of other Vedic texts which form the earliest surviving literary evidence of the Aryans in India. A brief history of the theories concerning Dravidian influence on Indo-Aryan languages has been given by Kuiper, who has traced the theory that the retroflex consonants of Sanskrit are due to the influence of indigenous languages back to the heroic days of Indology, when Pott first adumbrated it in 1833.⁷ Dravidian influence on classical Sanskrit was generally admitted, but admitted only as a substratum, and its influence on Vedic was generally taken as negligible. Only a very few scholars, such as Emeneau and Burrow, who combined deep knowledge of Dravidian and Indo-Aryan languages, were willing to admit any significant influence of Dravidian on the earlier strata of Sanskrit.

A monumental lecture by Kuiper, delivered at Ann Arbor in 1965 and since published in article form,⁸ put the study of Dravidian influence on Vedic Sanskrit on a different footing. Kuiper showed that Dravidian had influenced not only the phonology and vocabulary of even the earliest stratum of the Veda, but also its very sentence structure. The work of Emeneau and Burrow, on the one hand, and that of Kuiper, on the other, has been further developed by Southworth in a very important paper in this volume; and it is to be noted that, with due caution, the last scholar even sees the possibility of

Dravidian influence on Indo-Iranian, the hypothetical language spoken by the two peoples calling themselves Aryan before they were divided into Indian and Iranian branches.

Southworth's work has been furthered by McAlpin's establishment of a relationship between Dravidian and Elamite, a theory which seems, at least to a nonspecialist, thoroughly convincing, and which, it is quite clear, brings a new dimension to the study of Dravidian origins. We have not yet heard the reaction of the other specialists to McAlpin's theory, but at least he seems to have finally given the coup de grâce to the view that Dravidian is a language family indigenous to India. Since Caldwell's day innumerable relationships have been suggested between Dravidian words and those in a variety of languages ranging from Basque and Berber, through Hungarian and Finnish, to Etruscan, Hurrian, and now Elamite. No doubt many of these equivalencies are incorrect; but if only one tenth of the total are well-founded, this is enough to prove that the Dravidian languages began outside India and found their way into the subcontinent via the northwest, as Indo-Aryan did later.

We must not, however, infer from this that all linguistic and other evidence points to a neat Aryan-Dravidian polarity in the protohistoric situation in India. There is no definite evidence that Munda languages were ever spoken in the northwest of the subcontinent, though, if we are to take the famous Mohenjo-daro dancing girl as evidence, Proto-Australoid racial elements seem to have been present there. Southworth has shown, however, that, in all probability, in addition to Indo-European and Dravidian, a third language family was present in that area and influenced the vocabulary of the other two. This hypothesis, based on lexical evidence, is strengthened by the survival of vestigial languages such as Burushaski, not clearly affiliated to any other group, in the remote valleys of the Pamirs and the Hindu Kush.

Indeed, recent research shows that the racial and linguistic situation in the northwest at the dawn of history was very complex, and over the past fifty years the simplified picture of the tall, comparatively fair, charioteering Aryans bringing civilizations to a land of insignificant dark-skinned barbarians has been completely destroyed by archaeology and linguistics. Though the distinction between *ārya-varṇa* and *dāsa-varṇa* in the *R̥gveda* is still emphasized in many books on the subject, it has also been noted that some evidence from that text points to occasional non-Aryan patronage of Vedic sacrifices or of the Brahmins who performed them.⁹ Already in this early period the term *ārya* was beginning to lose its original racial connotation, which it retained more definitely in Iran.

This does not imply, however, that it became meaningless. The invaders of

India who called themselves Aryans brought with them a great body of tradition and custom—religious, social and cultural—together with a language or group of languages which became the ancestor of almost all the languages of North India. This Aryan heritage was adopted and adapted in varying measure by all the races of India, until by the time of the Pāli canon the term *ārya* had, in common speech, come to mean something sharing the characteristics of a number of English words such as “good,” “moral,” “gentlemanly,” and “well-bred,” and seems to have lost nearly all the sense of race which went with it in the time of the *R̥gveda*.¹⁰ The polarity of *ārya* and *mleccha* in classical Sanskrit seems also to have had very little purely racial content, at least by the time of the *Mānava-dharma-sāstra*, which contains implicit provisions for the incorporation of foreigners into the Aryan community,¹¹ a process which seems to have been going on steadily since the days of the *R̥gveda*. What excluded the *mleccha* was his evil habits rather than his race.

The polarity of Aryan and Dravidian which has been made much of in recent generations seems to have meant very little in earlier times. Even in the time of Manu, Dravidians were acceptable as Aryans if they performed the necessary penances and rituals.¹² From the Pallava period onwards, if not before, it seems that, in the eyes of northerners, respectable people of Dravidian speech, if they followed the Brahminic norms, were classed as Aryans, irrespective of their pigmentation and of certain irregular customs which are taken note of and provided for in the Dharmaśāstras. Indeed the Dravidians themselves borrowed the word *ārya*, and it survives in Tamil to this day in its colloquial form (*aiyar*), as a moderately respectful term of address. Incidentally, the Prakrit form *ajja* seems to have been used similarly by the early Jainas, with little more content than the contemporary English “mister,” as a title of respectable Jaina laymen.¹³

In our study of Aryan and non-Aryan in India, we are not in search of racial survivals. There is no question here of tracing how a tall, upstanding, extroverted race of Proto-Nordics was corrupted and polluted by the blood of darker subtropical peoples to become the contemporary Indians, and I am sure none of the organizers of this conference had anything like this in mind. Rather, we are tracing the progress and development of ancient Indo-European cultural and religious traditions, already much modified in their Indo-Iranian form, under the impact of new geographical and climatic conditions and through the influence of the different, and probably more highly developed, traditions of the indigenous peoples whom the bearers of “Aryan” culture encountered as they slowly expanded from the Panjab eastward to the Ganga delta and southward to Kanyākumārī. In the very earliest stages of the

process the main agents of that cultural expansion may have been martial bands of pioneers, but for most of the last two and a half millennia they were rather Brahmins and ascetics, the latter including heterodox Buddhist and Jaina monks. And the content of the Aryanism which they propagated differed significantly from period to period, as at each stage the original Indo-European heritage became more deeply modified by other influences. In fact, in the India of the past the word *ārya* must have connoted something a little different in every century, as the "Aryans" spread further in space and time from their original base in the northwest.

The papers in this volume throw important new light on this process in many of its aspects. They form an invaluable contribution toward the clarification of one of the most persistent problems of South Asian cultural history, and I am highly honored by the privilege of being allowed to introduce them.

NOTES

1. Wheeler's theory was propounded in several books and articles, e.g., *The Indus Civilization*, supplementary volume to the Cambridge History of India, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 126-34.
2. R. L. Raikes, "The End of the Ancient Cities of the Indus," *American Anthropologist* 65(1963):655-59, 66(1964):284-99; "The Mohenjo-Daro Floods," *Antiquity* 38 (1965):196-203; *Water, Weather and Archaeology* (London: Baker, 1967); G. F. Dales, "Harappan Outposts on the Makran Coast," *Antiquity* 36(1962):86-92; "New Investigations at Mohenjo-Daro," *Archaeology* 18(1965):145-50; "The Decline of the Harappans," *Scientific American*, May 1966, pp. 93-100.
3. Radha Kumud Mookerji, *Hindu Civilization* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1950), p. 82.
4. Robert Caldwell, *A Comparative Grammar of the Dravidian or South Indian Family of Languages* (London: Harrison, 1856), pp. viii, 528; 3rd ed. rev., J. L. Wyatt and R. Pillai, eds. (London: Kegan Paul, 1913; reprint Madras, U. P., 1956), pp. xl, 640.
5. T. Burrow, "Dravidian Studies," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 9(1937-39):711-22; 10(1940-42):289-97; 11(1943-46):122-39, 328-56, 595-616; 12(1947-48):132-47, 365-96.
6. N. Lahovary, *Dravidian Origins and the West* (Calcutta: Orient Longmans, 1963), passim, especially pp. 347-74.
7. August Friedrich Pott, *Etymologische Forschungen*, I, no. 1(1833):88f., II, no. 1 (1836):19, *teste* Kuiper (in the article mentioned below), p. 82, n. 2.
8. F. B. J. Kuiper, "The Genesis of a Linguistic Area," *Indo-Iranian Journal* (The Hague) 10(1967-68):81-102.
9. The direct evidence is in fact slight. In one hymn (viii, 46, 32) the Dāsa Balbūtha and another person called Tārukṣa are said to have given a hundred unspecified gifts to a *vipra*, presumably the author of the hymn, Vaśa Aśvya. The verse is not without obscurities:

Śataṃ dāse Balbūthe vipraḥ Tārukṣa ā dade/te te
Vāyav ime janāḥ madam̐ndragopā madam̐ti devagopāḥ//

The verses preceding this one make mention of the great generosity of a certain Prthuśravas to the poet, and in this penultimate verse of the hymn his other benefactors are remembered as an afterthought. The fact that the second half of the stanza has plural verbs, and not dual or singular ones, indicates that the poet wishes to commemorate three benefactors—Prthuśravas, Balbūtha, and Tārukṣa. Balbūtha is definitely a *dāsa*, but corruption has been suggested (for references see Macdonnell and Keith, *A Vedic Index of Names and Subjects* [London: Murray, 1912; reprint Delhi: Motilal, 1958], s.v. Balbūtha). This single instance, in which Balbūtha's contribution was evidently much less than that of Prthuśravas, is hardly sufficient to base any theory on. This may well be a case of an influential non-Aryan on the way to full incorporation in the Aryan fold, under the influence of an enterprising priest. We cannot tell how far this process had already gone at the time or how many of the rājās with Aryan names were in fact wholly or partly indigenous by blood; but *varṇa*

divisions appear to have been by no means rigid during the period of the *R̥gveda*, and the Aryanization of non-Aryan chiefs is definitely attested in later periods in both India and Southeast Asia. These facts, taken in conjunction with the linguistic evidence, suggest that the blood of even the higher-class Aryans had received considerable admixture with that of the indigenous peoples at the time of the composition of the text.

A further interesting case is provided by *RV* vi, 45, 31-33. Here, appended to a lengthy hymn to Indra, occur three verses in honor of a certain *Br̥bu* who "stood as the seniormost head of the *Paṇis*" (*ādhi Br̥būh Paṇinām vāṛṣiṣṭhe mūrdhān asthāt*, v. 31). He is praised for his thousand gifts to the singer, said to be *Śamyu*, son of *Bṛhaspati* (*yāsyā... bhadrā rātth śhasrīṇī*, v. 32). The last of these three verses (v. 33) is at first sight obscure: *Tat su no vtsve aryā ā sādā gṛnaṃti kārāvaḥ Br̥būm sahasradātamaṃ sūrtm sahasrasātamaṃ*. Here with *Sāyaṇa*, we must take *aryā*, the plural of *arī* and subject of the sentence, in its rarer *R̥gvedic* meaning as 'a faithful or devoted or pious man' (Monier Williams, s.v.). All such worthy poets (*kārāvaḥ*) sing the praise of *Br̥bu*, the giver of a thousand gifts. (*Sahasrasātamaṃ* is virtually a synonym of *sahasra-dātamaṃ*.)

The nature of the *Paṇis* and their relations with the Aryans are very obscure and have been the subject of much theorizing (for references see Macdonnell and Keith, s.v.). They are referred to once each in the *R̥gveda* as *dāsas* (v.34.5-7) and *dasyus* (vii. 6.3). They were the objects of much hostility, but the evidence suggests that some of them, such as *Br̥bu*, came to terms with the invaders. Since they figure in some passages as wealthy traders, it is tempting to suggest, with D. D. Kosambi (*The Culture and Civilisation of Ancient India* [London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965], p. 80), that they were survivors of the Harappa culture.

10. "The early Buddhists had no such ideas as we cover with the words Buddhist and Indian. *Ariya* does not exactly mean either. But it often comes very near to what they would have considered the best in each." (T. W. Rhys Davids and William Stede, *The Pali Text Society's Pali-English Dictionary* [London: Pali Text Society, n.d.], s.v. *ariya*.) The enormous *Trenckner Critical Pali Dictionary* (Copenhagen: Royal Danish Academy, 1929-48), vol. 1, s.v., though it gives many valuable citations, misses this insight into the overtones of the word in Buddhism.
11. *Manu* (x. 21-23) gives lists of *vr̥tya* tribes and peoples descended from each of the three Aryan classes. Those of the brahmin and *vaiśya* groups are comparatively unimportant castes and tribes of the times, but *ṣṣatriya vr̥tyas* comprise *Jhallas*, *Mallas*, *Licchavis*, *Naṭas*, *Karaṇas*, *Khasas* and *Draviḍas*. Of these the *Mallas*, *Licchavis* and *Khasas* dwelt in the lower slopes of the Himalayas or the adjoining plain, while the *Draviḍas* were obviously in the south of the subcontinent. *Jhallas*, *Naṭas* and *Karaṇas* appear to have been professional castes, not tribes. Later (x. 43-44), *Manu* gives a further list of *ṣṣatriya* tribes who, through neglect of the priests and their rites, had fallen to the status of *Śūdras*. These are: *Paundrakas*, *Coḍas*, *Draviḍas*, *Kāmbojas*, *Yavanas*, *Śakas*, *Paradas*, *Pahlavas*, *Cīnas*, *Kirātas* and *Daradas*. This is an extension of the earlier group, probably including all the important peoples known by the author to be dwelling somewhere near the borders of *Āryāvarta*. They, too, would have been classed as *vr̥tyas*. It is well known how loosely racial names such as *Yavana* and *Śaka* came to be used. Thus, it was possible for almost any non-Aryan who had wealth and

influence to find a brahmin who would supervise the rituals and penances necessary to induct him into the Aryan order. As *patitasāvitrīka* Aryans they would, according to Manu (xi. 192), perform three *kṛcchra* penances in order to obtain the right to initiation. This penance involved nine days of partial fasting, followed by three of complete abstinence from food. (For variations see P. V. Kane, *History of Dharmasāstra* [Poona: B. O. R. I., 1953], vol. 4, pp. 132-33. In vol. 2, part 1 [1941], pp. 376-92, Kane reviews the provisions for the restoration of the *patitasāvitrīka* in other texts.)

12. See note 11, above.

13. H. T. Seth, *Pāia-sadda-mahaṇṇavo*, 2nd ed. (Vārāṇasi: Prākṛta-grantha-pariṣad, 1963), s.v. *ajja*.

