

Links beyond boundaries

To insist that the Aryans were a distinct people is to impose present-day borders on the remote past



ROMILA THAPAR

Problems with the definition of 'Aryan' continue even though the term was first used a couple of centuries ago, writes eminent historian Romila Thapar in the foreword to Which Of Us Are Aryans: Rethinking the Concept of Our Origins. In the book, Professor Thapar and other scholars and experts critically examine the Aryan question by analysing history, genetics, early Vedic compositions, archaeology and linguistics, and challenge various myths and theories doing the rounds. Professor Thapar examines the definition of 'Aryan', its earliest use in Vedic and Iranian compositions, and the change it underwent. An extract:

In any discussion of the 'Aryan' a good place to begin with would be to set out the space and time of the subject. In terms of space we tend to think only of the geography of the Indian subcontinent and the boundaries of pre-Partition India as they existed for British India. The focus is then narrowed down to north-western India. But the geographical area of the archaeological and linguistic evidence is far more extensive. The links therefore are way beyond just the boundaries of north-west British India and involve some familiarity with more distant cultures.

In terms of archaeology, the more extensive earlier reach was that of the Harappa Culture or the Indus Civilisation. From Shortughai in the Pamirs, evidence of Harappan settlements extends all the way south to the Indus plain and further to the Arabian Sea, westwards into Baluchistan and Makran and touching the Indo-Iranian borderlands, and eastwards into Punjab and Haryana. More recently finds have been located in Oman in the Arabian peninsula, particularly in the vicinity of copper mines. The Harappans were known to have had trading relations with the Gulf and Mesopotamia. People of the ancient past did not confine themselves to one place. They travelled, migrated, traded and communicated

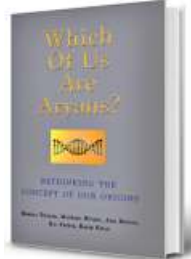


"Varieties of Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian speakers can only be given an approximate geographical location which is not as firm as that of archaeological cultures." A furnace discovered at an Indus Valley Civilisation site in Binjor, Rajasthan. • V. V. KRISHNAN

across vast distances. This would probably have been too vast an area to host a single, unified culture. We have to consider the possibility of a multiplicity of cultures and societies, some fairly isolated and others in close contact but possibly functioning under a recognised and similar sociopolitical rubric.

Covering extensive areas

Varieties of Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian speakers can only be given an approximate geographical location which is not as firm as that of archaeological cultures. The geographical area of all these languages is extensive but not all are referred to in the same text and they vary with the text. The wider geography of Proto-Indo-European takes a different direction from that of the Harappa Culture. Northern Syria and Anatolia are the locations possibly linked to Proto-Indo-Aryan, north-eastern Iran is the location for Old Iranian linked to the *Avesta*, and the speakers of Indo-Aryan as known from the *Rig Veda* are restricted to the Indo-Iranian borderlands and Punjab up to the Doab, which is geographically a small area. The history of the Indo-Aryan language has been extended backwards in time to the ancestral language of Indo-European and this brings in adjoining parts of Central Asia. The presence of Indo-Aryan in the Ganga plain is attested to in the post-Rig Vedic period.



Which Of Us Are Aryans: Rethinking the Concept of Our Origins
Romila Thapar and Others
Aleph
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Though although the focus is often only on the Punjab we should not forget that there was also a large area of West Asia and Central Asia that had a bearing on this history, even if the Indo-Aryan of the *Rig Veda* was not spoken in such a vast geographical area. The need for familiarity with the archaeology and linguistic history of other areas further complicates the problem. The geographical overlap between the Harappan sites and the place names associated with Indo-Aryan and Indo-Iranian is a limited area covering virtually only the Indo-Iranian borderlands and the Punjab. The thrust of the Harappan locations is southwards with maritime links westwards along the Persian Gulf, whereas the Indo-Aryan speakers show up overlaid and move south-eastwards to the Ganga plain.

The chronology of the two is also different. The time bracket covers many centuries. There are some dates well established among historians and archaeologists. The Harappan urban cultures, referred to as the

Mature Harappan, date from about 2600 to about 1700 BCE, after urbanism slowly peters out. The *Rig Veda* is generally dated to the period after the decline of urbanism and would therefore date from about 1500 BCE or a couple of centuries later. The subsequent Vedas – the *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* – relating also to the Ganga plain are dated to the early first millennium BCE.

Placing the Vedas

However there are those who differ and would like to date the *Rig Veda* to 3000 BCE or even earlier and identify its culture with the Harappan cities. They maintain that the Aryans are indigenous and there was therefore not even a migration of any kind, let alone any invasion as was thought in the nineteenth century. To maintain this position it is even said that the *Rig Veda* is prior to the Harappa Culture or that the authors of the Harappa Culture were Rigvedic Aryans. These views have become a matter of rather extensive controversy to say the least. This latter chronology, apart from not being able to muster firm evidence, creates huge problems for the historian. The discrepancy between Harappan urbanism and Rigvedic agro-pastoralism negates equivalence. Such an early chronology for the *Rig Veda* would, for example, create a gap of at least 1,500 years between the *Rig Veda* and the other Vedas and therefore break what is known to be the continuity between the four Vedas. Taking it back to the third millennium BCE creates major problems of parallels and correlations with archaeological evidence. It leads to a long chronological hiatus between the first and the later three Vedas – the *Samaveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Atharvaveda* – as the dating of these to the first millennium BC remains firm.

The insistence that the Aryans were a distinct people and that they were indigenous to the territory of British India is to impose present-day boundaries on the remote past, which makes the statement anachronistic. Concepts such as 'indigenous' and 'alien' have to be precisely defined, which they are not in this case, and the definition has to conform to the time context for when it is being used.

Extracted with permission from Aleph

FROM THE READERS' EDITOR

Major investigations are never stand-alone stories

It takes several reports on a topic to give us the larger picture



A.S. PANNEERSELVAN

What are the crucial journalistic takeaways from the two in-depth reports by N. Ram on L'Affaire Rafale, "Modi's decision to buy 36 Rafales shot the price of each jet up by 41%" (January 18, 2019) and "Defence Ministry protested against PMO undermining Rafale negotiations" (February 8, 2019)? When this newspaper broke the Bofors story, there were questions posed to the Congress government and Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi. But in the case of the Rafale stories, some readers, instead of questioning the government and the Prime Minister, are questioning journalists and journalism.

Rafale takeaways

First, let's understand the context in which these stories were published. The ruling government had submitted a note to the Supreme Court that said the negotiations were conducted only by the seven-member team led by the Deputy Chief of Air Staff. There was no mention of the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office. This was repeated by the Defence Minister in the Lok Sabha on January 4, 2019. The major objection to Mr. Ram's first story was that the report did not say anything new and was therefore not an exclusive one. The crucial finding of that report was that it firmly established that the cost of each aircraft went up by 41% because of distributing 'non-recurring' costs attributed to the 'design and development' of 13 India-Specific Enhancements over 36 instead of 126 aircraft. The report also established that the government did not leverage the counter offer from the Eurofighter Typhoon consortium.

One of the contributors to this newspaper, K.R.A. Narasiah, took strong exception to the February 8th report, which showed how parallel negotiations by the Prime Minister's Office weakened the Indian negotiating team's position. He wrote: "It is a pity that N. Ram, a seasoned and respected journalist, shot from the hip in his anxiety to discredit the Modi government in the Rafale deal. In fact, conveniently omitting the portion of

the note by the Defence Minister, the entire report gives a twisted meaning and has brought down the reputation of *The Hindu* by several notches."

It is important to recognise that the note from the Defence Minister does not contradict the arguments of *The Hindu's* story but, in an oblique manner, validates it.

Let's also look at the dates to understand the sequence of events. On November 24, 2015, Deputy Secretary S.K. Sharma put out a note registering protest against the parallel negotiation by the Prime Minister's Office. On December 1, the then Defence Secretary, G. Mohan Kumar, made this official notation in his own hand: "RM may pl. see. It is desirable that such discussions be avoided by the PMO as it undermines our

negotiating position seriously." To this, then Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar responded on January 19, 2016: "It appears PMO and French President office are monitoring the progress of the issue which was an outcome of the summit meeting. Para 5 appears to be an over reaction. Defence secretary (G. Mohan Kumar) may resolve the matter in consultation with principal secretary to PM."

Dribs and drabs

In a different report, "Four reasons why the attacks on *The Hindu's* Rafale story are shallow and self-implicating" (<http://bit.ly/RafaleAnalysis>), Varghese K. George explains the salient features of serious and ongoing investigative reportage. He explains how no single report on a topic is the last word on it and that investigative stories come in dribs and drabs. Mr. Parrikar was careful in his note and used the word "appears" only with reference to Para 5. Further, he did not reject the fears of his bureaucratic colleagues when it came to Para 4, which read: "The discussions between Diplomatic Adviser to the French Defence Minister and Joint Secretary to PM tantamount to parallel negotiation."

The stories gain importance because they draw our attention to the fact that both the Supreme Court and Parliament have been deliberately misled. N. Ram's relentless journalism shows how our systems are not transparent and lack accountability. It has helped to call out the deliberate lies and the weakening of our legal institutions governed by the growth of the jurisprudence of the "sealed cover".

readerseditor@thehindu.co.in

SINGLE FILE

The art of the state

In his address, Amol Palekar was only shedding light on the state's insidious takeover of institutions of culture

VAISHNA ROY



Constitutional values are undermined every time someone who is invited to speak at a government or public event is cut off because her opinion is unpalatable. Yet this is the very nadir that freedom of speech in India has now reached. First, there was the unseemly cancellation of renowned writer

Nayantara Sahgal's talk in January. This weekend, actor and director Amol Palekar's address at the opening of an exhibition in memory of artist Prabhakar Barwe at Mumbai's National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) was interrupted.

As this government completes its fifth year in power, the attempts to shut down criticism are getting stronger. The difficulty lies in reconciling this fear of public disapproval with the barrage of factoids that paint a rosy picture of the achievements of the last few years. If this were indeed so, how easy it would be to say, "Speaker, do your worst. We can prove every one of your accusations wrong."

Mr. Palekar in his speech quoted the artist Rene Magritte: "We must not fear daylight just because it almost always illuminates a miserable world." But that's exactly what the authorities seem to fear nowadays: daylight. What else was Mr. Palekar doing but shedding light on the state's insidious takeover of institutions of culture and learning? He was expressing concern that the Culture Ministry, having dissolved local committees of advisory artists, might now directly decide which artists will be allowed to exhibit at the NGMAs, when he was rudely interrupted by curator Jesal Thacker.

Anyone who imagines the government should be allowed to handle arts and culture has not met the bureaucrats regularly posted as heads of art institutions and museums. For these officials, from ministries as varied as agriculture or health, these are punishment postings. Still, the worst that the arts and culture faced under the Congress was corruption and indifference. To that is now added a system of surveillance to vet everything for ideological compliance.

In 2015, the government took over the autonomous Lalit Kala Akademi (LKA), and it took three years for a non-bureaucrat chairman to be carefully placed, while most regional LKAs still don't have full-time heads. Decisions on everything from light bulbs to wall paintings are ferried from Delhi. The two regional NGMAs in Bengaluru and Mumbai scramble similarly for permissions from Delhi. Vague accusations are made in hushed tones, and ideological backgrounds discreetly checked.

There is a general feeling among the populace, perhaps fuelled by signals from the highest offices, that any criticism of the government is tantamount to criticising the country. Interestingly, NGMA director Anita Rupavatham echoed this idea. When she took the mic after Mr. Palekar was shut down, she said, "You should appreciate that this is the NGMA, a government gallery." In other words, the silencing, if not criminalising, of criticism is now complete.

The writer is an Associate Editor at *The Hindu*



DATA POINT

Discernible shift

Assembly elections held close to the Lok Sabha polls have, with caveats, provided indications of the mood of the electorate. **Srinivasan Ramani** tallies Assembly poll results from 2017 and 2018 onto Lok Sabha seats and compares these with seat tallies in the 2014 Lok Sabha election. The BJP registers a drop in seat terms based on this exercise



Uttar Pradesh
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP+ 73, SP: 5, Cong.: 2, BSP: 0
2017 LS segments: BJP+ 71, SP: 5, BSP: 3, Cong.: 1
(extrapolated from Assembly results)

2017 Hypothetical 1: (BSP+SP+RLD alliance) BJP+ : 30, BSP+SP+RLD: 50
2017 Hypothetical 2: SP+BSP+Cong.+RLD: 64, BJP: 16



Madhya Pradesh
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP: 27, Cong.: 2
2018 LS segments: BJP: 16, Cong.: 13



Rajasthan
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP: 25, Cong.: 0
2018 LS segments: BJP: 13, Cong.: 12



Tripura
2014 Lok Sabha: CPI(M): 2, BJP: 0, Cong.: 0
2018 LS segments: CPI(M): 1, BJP: 1



Nagaland
2014 Lok Sabha: NPF: 1
2018 segment: NPF: 1



Chhattisgarh
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP: 10, Cong.: 1
2018 LS segments: Cong.: 10, BJP: 1



Gujarat
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP: 26, Cong.: 0
2017 LS segments: BJP: 21, Cong.: 5



Meghalaya
2014 Lok Sabha: Cong.: 1, NPP: 1
2017 LS segments: Cong.: 2



Mizoram
2014 Lok Sabha: Cong.: 1
2017 LS segment: MNF: 1



Karnataka
2014 Lok Sabha: BJP: 17, Congress: 9, JD(S): 2
2018 LS segments: BJP: 13, Congress: 11, JD(S): 4

2018 Hypothetical: Congress+JD(S): 23, BJP: 5



Punjab
2014 Lok Sabha: SAD+BJP: 6, AAP: 4, Congress: 3
2017 LS segment: Cong.: 12, AAP: 1



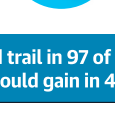
Uttarakhand
2014 LS: BJP: 5, Congress: 0
2017 LS segment: BJP: 5, Cong.: 0



Himachal Pradesh
2014 LS: BJP: 4, Congress: 0
2017 LS segment: BJP: 4, Cong.: 0



Manipur
2014 LS: Congress: 2, BJP: 0
2017 LS segment: BJP: 1, Cong.: 1



Goa
2014 LS: BJP: 2, Congress: 0
2017 LS segment: BJP: 1, Cong.: 1

If all the hypothetical situations with current alliances are considered, BJP+ would trail in 97 of the 195 Lok Sabha segments that it won in '14, Congress+ would lead in 79 segments (in '14, it won 21 seats), others would gain in 41 segments that they lost in 2014

FROM THE HINDU ARCHIVES

FIFTY YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1969

Karunanidhi's Cabinet

A seven-member Cabinet for Tamil Nadu, headed by Mr. M. Karunanidhi, was sworn in by the Governor, Sardar Ujjal Singh, at Raj Bhavan this afternoon [February 10, Madras]. All the seven Ministers were members of the previous Annadurai Cabinet. Mr. V.R. Nedunchezian, who was No. 2 in the previous Ministry and acted as Chief Minister after the passing away of Mr. Annadurai, is not in the new team. The Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, told newsmen that he was still striving his best to persuade Mr. Nedunchezian to join his Cabinet. The members of the new Cabinet are: Mr. M. Karunanidhi, Mr. K.A. Mathialagan, Mr. A. Govindaswami, Mrs. Satyavanimuthu, Mr. S. Madhavan, Mr. S.J. Sadiq Pasha and Mr. M. Muthuswami. The swearing in ceremony lasted 20 minutes. All the Ministers took the oath in Tamil.

A HUNDRED YEARS AGO FEBRUARY 11, 1919

The New Germany. Coalition Cabinet.

According to "Vossische Zeitung", the German Cabinet will be composed of sixteen members, of whom Social Democrats shall have the President and Ministers of Defence, Labour, Economy, Nutrition and Demobilisation, and Democrats shall have the Vice-President and Ministers of Interior and Finance. The centre shall have the Ministers of Justice, Treasury and Posts, while Democrats and Social Democrats shall each have one Minister without portfolio. The Foreign Ministry shall be neutralised. A message from Berlin sates that the National Assembly will discuss the Bill regarding the German Empire's constitution on February 10th and will finish three readings on February 11th, so that the election of the President of Germany can be made on February 12th. The Cabinet will be formed immediately afterwards so that a legal Government shall exist on February 12th when negotiations regarding the prolongation of armistice will commence.

CONCEPTUAL

Muscle hypertrophy

BIOLOGY

This refers to the increase in the size of the human skeletal muscles due to an increase in the size of the cells that make up these muscles. It is believed that muscle cells grow in size when they are exposed to a gradually increasing weight load that causes existing muscle cells to break down and grow into larger cells. A proper diet that is rich in protein and sufficient rest are considered necessary for damaged muscles to get repaired by the immune system and grow into cells with larger mass. The degree of muscle hypertrophy, however, may differ among individuals due to other factors like genetics which cause some people to easily gain muscle mass.

MORE ON THE WEB

Biryani as temple prasadam: an 83-year-old tradition

<http://bit.ly/BiryaniVidéo>