

Lecture 2*

History of Hindu Dharma

Lecture 2 Title: Origin of Aryans

- *All 12 lectures are listed in Appendix*

Origin of Aryans in India

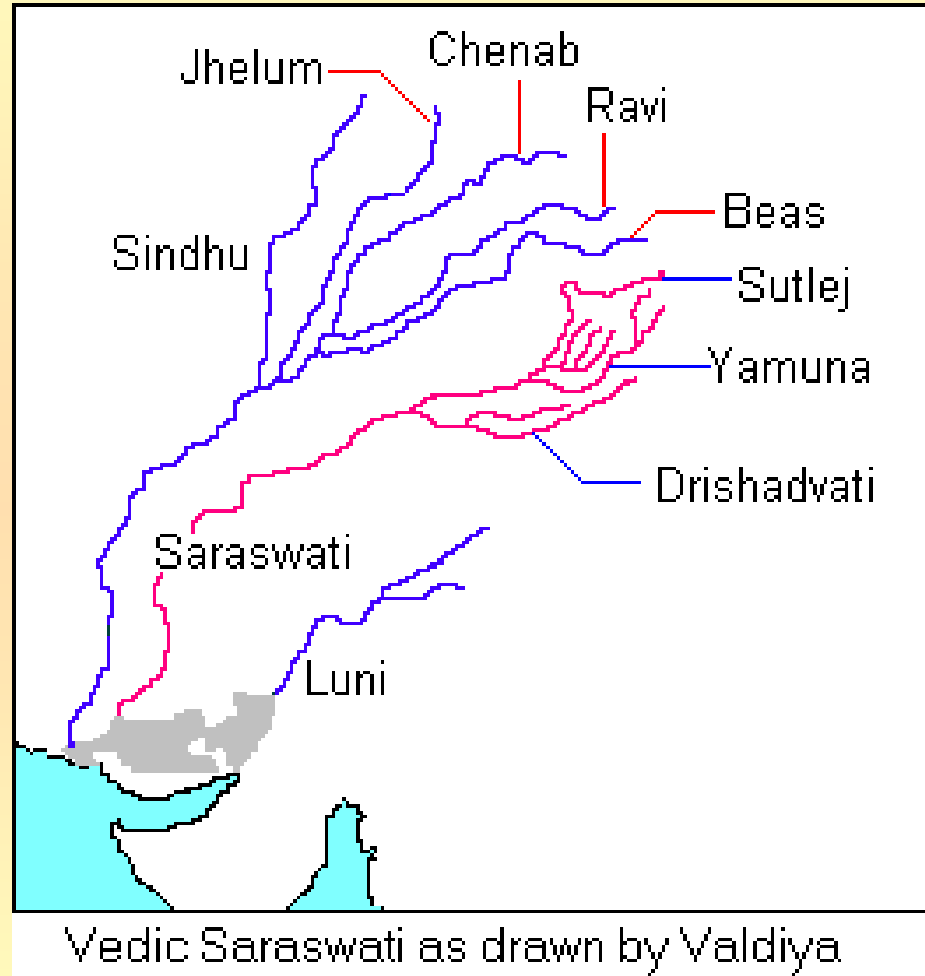
Topics:

1. Text book version and evidence for Aryans from outside India
 - Kishin Kripalani
2. Evidence for Aryans being of Indian origin
 - K.J. Sharma

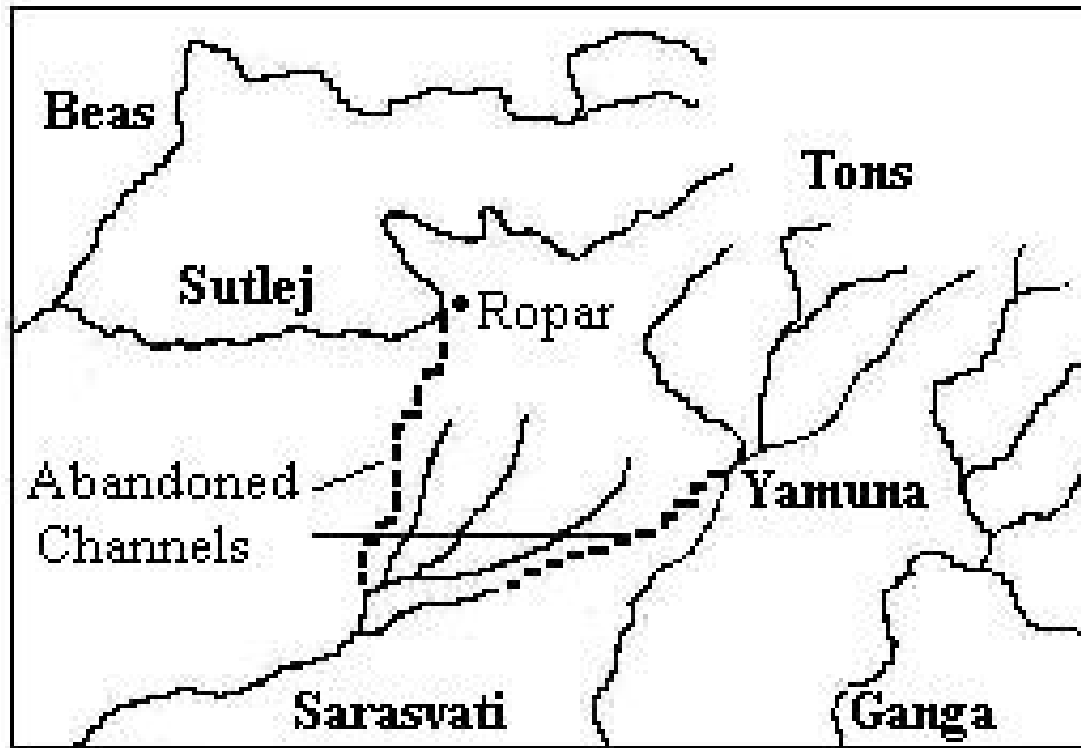
Geography of Ancient India

- Geography of ancient India has changed
- The North-West rivers of India (in particular)
- Necessary to understand this geography to understand history of Aryans in India!

NW India Rivers-Ancient

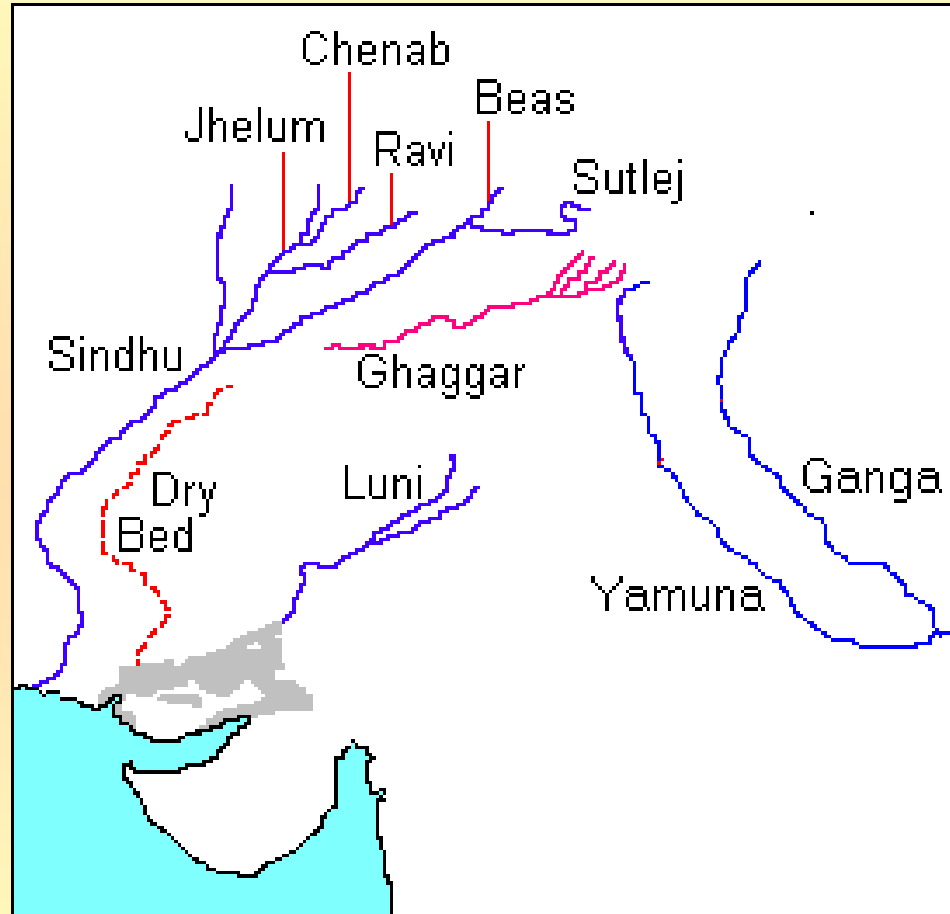


Rivers Shift



**Sutlej takes a U-Turn at Ropar.
Yamuna turns east pirating the Tons.**

NW India Rivers Today



The river courses today. 2000 AD

Origin of Aryans

- Ancient Geography of Northern India
 - Rivers of India
 - Sindhu and Saraswati
 - Saraswati dried up ~2000-1700 BCE
- Country known as Bharat
- Words Hindu and India did not exist

Origin of Aryans

- Prosperous Country
- Brought on many invaders
- Khyber Pass Invasions
- Sindhu mispronounced as Hindu

The Aryan Origin Theory

- European studies of India: Indology
 - Late 19th Century
 - Missionary purpose
- Max Muller (one of the German Scholars)
 - Rich Hindu culture and scriptures
 - Proposed proto-Indo-European language
 - No evidence for this language
 - No such alphabet

Aryan Origin Theory Migration

- Aryans lived in Steppes of Russia (Europe)
- Migrated in different directions
- One group came to India c. 1500-1200
- Brought Vedas with them

Aryan Origin Theory

Migration Becomes Invasion

Discovery of IVC in 1920's
Civilization already flourished

New version:

- Aryans invaded and destroyed IVC
- Started a new culture and wrote the Vedas

This has remained the text book version ever since

Aryan Invasion Theory Challenged

Research in the past three decades

- Raises serious doubts wrt AIT
- Current status:
 - Huge controversy
 - Heated and acrimonious debates
 - Highly politicized

Politics of the Aryan origin debate

Californian Hindu textbook case is in Superior Court

- DN Jha : Historian and President of Indian History Congress
- Sent a “crucial affidavit” to the California Court asking:
”not to fall for the 'indigenous Aryan' claim since it has led to demonisation of Muslims and Christians as foreigners and to the near denial of the contributions of non-Hindus to Indian culture”.

Aryan Invasion Theory

Opponents

- There was no Aryan invasion
- Self-serving bias of scholars
- Racially motivated to rationalize colonization

Proponents

Nationalistic pride

Hindutva (fundamentalists)

AIT Proponents

Michael Witzel: Prof. Harvard University

- There is no Aryan “Race”
 - Described it as an aberration of earlier scholars
- No Invasion but gradual influx of non-S.Asian origin
 - People have come to India since ancient times
 - Invaders, migrants
 - Nothing unusual

Some of the Arguments for Aryans from Outside

1. Disconnect between Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) and Vedic culture
 - Dating of Vedas
 - No evidence for horse in IVC
2. Linguistic evidence
 - Connection to Indo-Iranian language

IVC and Vedic Period Non-continuous

Evidence:

Dating of Rig Veda

Dating of Yajur Veda

Dating of later Vedic writings

Dating of rig Veda

In Rig Veda:

- No mention of iron

Therefore before iron age ~1400 BCE

- No mention of a city culture as in IVC

Therefore after 1900 BCE, i.e.,
after IVC

Dating of Yajur Veda (YV)

“Painted Grey Ware” (pottery of the nobility)
mentioned in YV

- This pottery appeared after 1200 BCE
- Therefore YV is after 1200 BCE (until ~800 BCE)

Dating of Last Vedic writings (e.g., Atharva Veda)

Last Vedic writings Indicate

- Emergence of cities around 450 BCE
 - Kosala Kingdom
- ~500 BCE marks end of the Vedic period

IVC and Vedic Period Disconnect

Dating of Vedic literature suggests a non-continuity between Indus Valley Civilization and Vedic Period

Non-existence of Horse in IVC

- No evidence of horse in IVC
 - No bones
 - No horse figures on seals
 - Many other animal figures appear on seals
- Vedic Period
 - Horse is evident

Points to a disconnect between IVC
and Vedic period

Linguistic Connection

Existence of an Indo Iranian Language (Iir)

- Spoken by both Indo-Aryans and Ancient Iranians
- Eastern branch of Indo-European Languages
- Underlies both Old Iranian and Vedic Sanskrit

Ancient Sacred Texts

- Vedas (Indian) and Avesta (Persian)
 - Both transmitted by oral tradition
 - Dating is difficult for both
 - Both have a common underlying language
 - In Avesta texts the sandhis are dissolved
(Sandhi in Sanskrit is joining of two words dictated by grammatical rules)

The Term Arya

- Both peoples called themselves and their language as Arya or arya
- The word Arya also appears as airiia or ariyaa in Ilr

The Term Arya

Evidence for usage of the word:

- Persian King Darius (519 BCE) wrote in “ariyaa”
- Late Vedic text Kausitaki aranyaka (8.9) defines Vedic area as one where ‘Arya vak’ (Arya speech) is heard

Sanskrit and Old Iranian

Language similarity in worship

- Sanskrit: Tam mitram yajamahe
- Old Iranian: Tam mitram yajamadhahai
- Avestan: Tam mitram yazamade

Indo-Aryans and Irano-Aryans

- Common poetry style (trishtubh-like)
- Priests conducted fire rituals in both cultures
 - Vedic: hotra, soma
 - Avesta: zaotar, haoma

Indo-Aryans and Irano-Aryans

Common Features

- Same set of Gods (Agni, Indra, Mitra, etc.)
- Similar mythology:
 - Sanskrit: Deva asura, Yama
 - Iranian: daiva, ahura, yima
 - Sanskrit: Manu descended from vivasvant
 - Iranian: Manu descended from vivanghunanant

Indo-Aryans and Irano-Aryans

Common Features

- Both had a patriarchal system of three classes
 - Nobles, chieftains
 - Priests
 - People (farmers)

Indo-Aryans and Irano-Aryans Common Features

Both had strict moral principles:

- Adherence to truth:
- satya: haithiia

*(“s” sound pronounced as “h” in Persian; e.g.,
Sindhu vs. Hindu)*

- Oral agreements between individuals:
 - arya-man: airiia-man
 - mitra:mithra

Indo-Aryans and Irano-Aryans

- Closely related languages
 - Almost like dialects of one language
- Similar Culture and Society:
 - Poetry
 - Three varnas
 - Religion

Conclusion

Origin of Aryans

Proponents of Aryan migration to India:

- Indo-Aryans and Old Iranians are offshoots of one group
- Spoke Indo-Iranian a few hundred years before the Rig Veda and the old Avestan texts
- There was gradual influx from ancient Iran and other areas
- Vedic period is post IVC

Appendix

List of Lectures

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

1. Ancient Civilization
2. Origin of Aryans
3. Vedic Period (Rishis and revelations)
4. Vedas (Content)

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

5. Period of Epics and Puranas
6. Buddhism and Jainism
7. Shankara and his Vedantic teachings
8. Ramanuja, Madhva, and their teachings

List of 12 Lectures-Segment 1

History of Hindu Religion

9. Bhakti Movement
10. Saints of India
15-16th Century
11. Influential religious leaders
17-18th Century
12. Contemporary religious leaders
19th C to present