

**Research Paper On
“History of: The Aryans”**

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❖ **People: The Aryan**

THE word arya in Sanskrit, and from that language in most Indian tongues, means 'free-born', or 'of noble character', or a member of the three higher castes. The word, like so many others, changed its meaning through the centuries. Though used in later days as the equivalent of the formal term of respect 'Sir', it designated some special tribe or tribes as an ethnic group at the earliest stage. Most histories of India begin with these ancient Aryans. Some writers still maintain that the Indus people must have been Aryans, from the prejudice that every peak of Indian cultural achievement must have been Aryan. The hideous racial implication given to 'Aryan' by the late Nazi regime and its official philosophy has increased the confusion. There is, naturally, some doubt as to whether there were really any Aryans at all, and if so what sort of people they may have been.

The outstanding Aryan feature, the one characteristic that justifies the name for a large group of people, is a common family of languages. These important languages spread right across the Eurasian continent. Sanskrit, Latin, Greek were the classical Aryan languages. From Latin developed the Romance language group (Italian, Spanish, French, Rumanian, etc.) in southern Europe. In addition, the Teutonic (German, English, Swedish, etc.), the Slavic (Russian, Polish, etc.) are also sub-groups of the Aryan linguistic group. This is proved by comparison of words for many different objects as against the same terms in non-Aryan languages. Finnish, Hungarian, and Basque in Europe do not belong to the Aryan languages.

Hebrew and Arabic, though they may be derived from ancient cultures going back to Sumeria, are Semitic languages, not Aryan. A third considerable non-Aryan set is the Sino-Mongolian, which covers Chinese, Japanese, Tibetan, Mongolian, and many others; this group is culturally and historically most important, though not for India as such. The Indo Aryan languages are descended from Sanskrit. The earlier tongues thus derived were Pali, called also Magadhi from being spoken in Magadha, and various others generically called Prakrits. From them came the modern Hindi, Panjabi, Bengali, Maiithi, etc. However, there is a considerable and culturally important group of non-Aryan tongues in India of which the Dravidian languages include Tamil, Telugu, Kanarese, Malayalam, and Tulu; besides these there are the numerous but small tribal idioms which tell us a great deal about the primitive stages of Indian speech. They were sometimes grouped together as 'Austic', but the term is now recognised as meaningless, in view of the differences between Mundari, Oraon, Toda, etc. The main question is: Does the

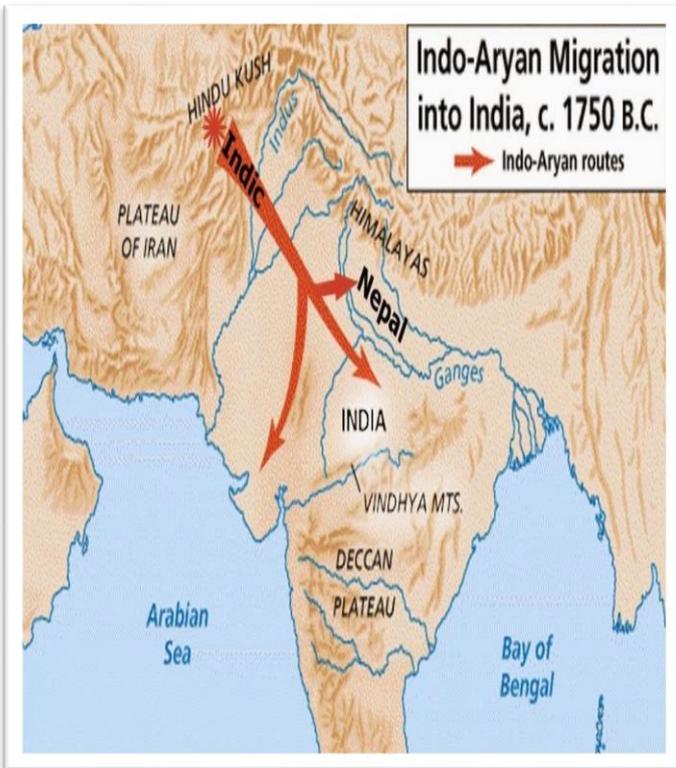
community of language or a common origin for the group of languages justify the conclusion that there was an Aryan race or an Aryan people?



Figure: - The Rivers of Punjab and the upper reach of the Yamuna and the Ganges.

❖ Way of Life: The Aryans

It may be stated as a general principle that a language cannot impose itself upon a large number of people who had a different speech, unless accompanied by a superior form of production. The Aryans could not have been a vast horde of invaders, because the land from which they came could not support a greater population than most of the civilised and cultivated regions they invaded. How did they impose themselves and their languages upon others? What was their main contribution to culture in the wider sense of the word? It is possible to say a great deal about the Aryans who afflicted India. The name Aryan is definitely justified for the Indo-Iranian people from the second millennium B.C. onwards by documentary and linguistic evidence. Their main source of food and measure of wealth was cattle, which they pastured across vast stretches of the continent. The horse, harnessed rather inefficiently to the chariot, gave them speed in tactical manoeuvre and superiority in battle. The structure of the Aryan tribe was patriarchal, the male being the dominant figure and holder of property in the tribe. The Aryan gods are overwhelmingly male too, but some goddesses were taken over from older, times or older people.



Taking the Rigveda as it stands, for lack of anything better, we have at least confirmation of the negative action, the ruin of the Indus cities. The principal Vedic god is Agni, the god of fire; more hymns are dedicated to him than to any other. Indra smashed the enemies of the Aryans, looted the 'treasure-houses of the godless'. The demons he killed are named: Sambara, Pipru, Arsananas, Sushna (who may be a personification of the drought), and Namuci among others; many of these names sound un-Aryan. It is always difficult to separate Vedic myth from possible historic reality; rhetorical praise may or may not represent some military success on the battlefield. Were the women in Namuci's 'army' human or mother goddesses? Did the demon have two wives or does he represent the local god of two rivers seen so often on Mesopotamian seals? The Aryans had destroyed other urban cultures before coming to India. Indra wiped out the remnants of the Varasikhas at Hariyupiya on behalf of Abhyavartin Cayamana, an Aryan chief. The tribe destroyed was that of the Vricivats, whose front line of 130 panoplied warriors was shattered like an earthen pot by Indra on the Yavyavati (Ravi) river, the whole opposing army being ripped apart 'like old clothes'; the rest fled in terror. Such vigorous language describes some actual fight at Harappa, whether between two Aryan groups or between Aryans and non-Aryans. The pre-Aryans did have many stockades and fortified places, some seasonal ('for the autumn'), others strong enough to

be called 'brazen'. The enemies were dark (krishna, black) and short-nosed (anasas = noseless). Some of the teeming strong-places shattered by Indra are figuratively described as 'pregnant with black embryos'.

❖ **Life after Rigveda: The Aryans**

Not all Aryans moved to the east, nor was the advance steady. It was not a simple matter of more Aryans entering India to push their predecessors farther ahead. As has been said, the Purus maintained them in the Punjab till the end of the fourth century B.C., though they had to send out colonies and branches; their original territory could support only a limited number of pastoral tribesmen. The southward expansion was restricted by desert. To the east, near the Yamuna, lay increasingly heavy jungle which could not profitably be cleared without iron, except for a narrow strip on the low watershed between the Punjab and the Gangetic basin and another along the Himalayan foothills where lire could clear the shallow soil fairly well. Copper might be available from Rajasthan, but iron ores lie much farther away, at least the ores of grade high enough to be worked at profit. Mere knowledge of metallurgy and metals would not suffice; the main problem was to get at the mineral deposits.

The Yajurveda helps us draw some conclusions for the period 100-800 B.C.; the attached book, the Satapatha Brahmana, extends the information to, say, 600 B.C. No firm dates are known; we can only guess at the endless social and tribal variety.

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