

Home > Magazines > Panorama > TheTwo Waves

Magazines Panorama

## TheTwo Waves

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Tensing Rodrigues

Based on the work done by Cavalli-Sforza and others, [Cavalli-Sforza et al, 1994: The History and Geography of Human Genes] Gadgil concludes that there were most probably two major phases of migration of 'Indo-Europeans' into the Indian subcontinent from Central Asia, across the northwestern frontier: the first around 8,000 BCE and the second around 2,000 BCE; the first wave being driven by the 'technology' of the cultivation of wheat and barley and domestication of cattle, sheep, goats and pigs; the second driven by the art of domestication of horse. [Gadgil et al, 1998: Peopling Of India, in Balasubramanian & Rao, The Indian Human Heritage, 115]

Could the earlier wave of 'Indo-Europeans' be the kshatriya, and the subsequent wave the bramhana? We may not be able to answer that question with certainty; but there is sufficient ground to accept that hypothesis. Gadgil allows for that possibility; his term 'Indo-Europeans' includes both. At one place he clearly states: "the people who used horses may have been one group, though perhaps not the only group of Indo-Europeans to enter the subcontinent"; and at another place: 'there may have been many waves of Indo-European speakers into India that may have brought into the country many languages of that family'.

The idea of two separate streams of Indo-European languages entering India reinforces the distinction between two possible phases of migration we have referred to above. One stream is believed to have produced languages like Bengali, Oriya, Gujarati, Marathi (read Konkani, vide The Sanskritisation of Marathi, 07 May 17), Sindhi and Kashmiri; the second stream is believed to have produced languages like Punjabi, Hindi and Rajasthani. [Gadgil et al, 1998: 118]



Though rather weakly, this classification does support the hypothesis that the two waves could be of kshatriya and bramhana respectively. The first group of languages is located in (i) the eastern extremity of the Indo-Gangetic plain (Bengali, Oriya), (ii) Kathiyavada peninsula and western trans-Vindhya territory (Gujarati, Marathi), and (iii) the Sindhu-Sarasvati plain (Sindhi). Kashmiri does not seem to fit into this set of logic given our present understanding; but it is very much possible that the kshatriya did indeed settle in the Kashmir region, before the bramhana fled there subsequent to the drying up of the Sarasvati. As we have seen before, the eastern extremity of the Indo-Gangetic plain (Kosala, Magadha, Anga, Vanga, Kalinga) was the home of a group of kshatriya, we have called jaina; Kathiyavada was the home of the Siva worshippers, some of whom moved northwards into Sindhu-Sarasvati plain and some southwards into Deccan and Konkan coast. [Who Are Kshatriya, 12 Feb 17; Who Are The Jaina, 17 Dec 17] As against this the second group of languages is located in what the bramhana termed the Bramhavarta, the holy of holies of the Vedic culture. Manava-Dharmasastra places Bramhavarta between the old channel of Sutlej and the old course of Yamuna, which joined at the Sirsa fork to form Sarasvati. Sirsa today is a city in Haryana, bordering Punjab and Rajasthan. [Where the Black Antelope Roams Free, March 5, 2017]

The geographical distinction above does not imply that the first migrants settled in Kosala, Magadha, Anga, Vanga, Kalinga and Kathiyavada and the latter migrants settled in Bramhavarta. It only suggests that the kshatriya culture evolved in the former regions for a long time, before it was overwhelmed by the bramhana influence. Chronologically there was a long gap - about 6,000 years - between the two migrations. In the Kosala, Magadha, Anga, Vanga, Kalinga the host culture held at bay the new influence for much longer, and retained its fundamental attributes, to the extent of influencing the migrant culture. [Who Are Kshatriya, Feb 12, 2017; Who Are The Jaina, Dec 17, 2017] Kathiyavada was probably 'wealthy' enough to preserve the kshatriya hegemony - their domination of trade and commerce gave them an upper hand. [Krsna's Dvaraka, May 14 2017; The Agate Beads Of Khambat, Feb 18, 2018] As against this, the Bramhavarta was overrun by the bramhana; the kshatriya probably fled it; and historical evidence, including the invectives that the former used for the territories earlier occupied by the latter, suggests that there could have been some sort of moral degeneration in the once prosperous kshatriya homeland. [The Lost Children of Sarasvati, Feb 26, 2017] The language distinction needs to be seen in this wider socio-cultural context.



That gives a reasonably neat, and acceptable, picture of the ethnic churning of the Indian peninsula and our own roots therein. Somewhere around 8,000 BCE or before, some inhabitants of Central Asia travelled south to the Indian peninsula across the northwestern frontier, probably along the banks of the Indus river; we have called them the kshatriya. A couple of thousand years later another wave of migrants, this time from China and East Asia, entered the Indian peninsula from the north-east, probably along the banks of the Tsangpo/Brahmaputra river; we have called them the kirata. (Probably is they who brought rice into India; the kshatriya had brought wheat and barley.) The kshatriya occupied the entire Indo-Gangetic plain - from sea to sea. Over a period of time they built a symbiotic relation - culturally, economically and racially - with the kirata. But their greatest achievement was the prosperous trade they established between West Asia and Africa, on one side, and the East Asia on the other, in collaboration with the kirata; Kathiyavada was their 'karmabhumi'. At the end of the last Ice Age, or thereafter, as the rising sea levels submerged Kathiyavada, some of them moved north to the Sarasvati valley, now in full bloom from the waters of the melting snows, creating the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation. Some of them moved south, to the north and south Konkan ports, and across the Vindhya, to the prospering trading hubs of Deccan, like Vengi, Paithan and Tagara. By about 2,000 BCE, as the snow fed Sarasvati dried up, probably some moved still further north to its higher course. That probably was the beginning of the end of the kshatriya heyday. But by then a second wave of Central Asians flowed into the Indian peninsula, now riding horses and wielding iron tools. These were the bramhana. They were few, but advantaged. They not only had horses and iron, but also god, temples and elaborate liturgy. They quickly vanquished, culturally and economically, and even racially, the Indo-Gangetic plain, and then ventured across the Vindhya, into Deccan, right to the tip of the ancient Tamilakam. The rest is history.

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