

The “Mainstream Model”

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“Mainstream model (or paradigm), “received wisdom”, “established doctrine” and similar phrases are terms used to denote the prevalent, established idea accepted by academics in any field of study. Once established and having acquired the status of mainstream view and the inevitable respectability that cloaks it, this is very difficult to be dislodged. In this paper I examine the mode whereby any idea becomes the mainstream view.

In Indology, particularly in the area of (proto-)History, the mainstream model has been dominated for almost a century and a half by the AIT (= Aryan Invasion/ Immigration Theory). Now, for the last 10 years I have been publishing papers refuting this theory. Of course I am not the only one nor the first one. In modern times others did the same several years before me and continue to do so (e.g. Frawley 1991, 2001; Sethna 1992; Elst 1993, 1999; Talageri 1993, 2000; Danino 2006a, 2006b; etc). One difference is that I managed to have my papers published in accredited academic Journals, some of which are refereed (e.g. *Journal of Indo-European Studies* or *Indian Linguistics*) and so forced academics to attend to this problem once again.

Be that as it may, one scholar, A.B. Marathe, wrote in his review of a book in the *Annals of B.O.R.I.* (2001, vol 82): “[T]he changing perception of the chronology of the Indian proto-history (see ‘The R̥gveda and the Indo-Europeans’ vol 80 by Nicholas Kazanas, *ABORI* vol 80, 1999 pp 15-42) has not been taken into account. If it gets well-established, a fresh thinking on this subject may be necessary” (p 287). One hears and reads such remarks very often.

How does an idea (or whatever) get well-established?

First, I would suggest that “fresh thinking” on all matters of Indian proto-history is absolutely necessary. It is high time indologists (archaeologists, proto-historians, sanskritists, *et al*) in academia stopped parroting mechanically the inherited views that somehow attained the status of mainstream orthodoxy. A scholar must, if he/she is to perform this noble function, constantly examine and reexamine the views and assumptions entertained by himself/herself and others. If one is content with mere repetition and citation of sources (without a reasonable examination of these sources) then one becomes a mere pedant. The “noble function” of scholarship is to discover, defend and promote the truth of a subject, not to perpetuate partisan/patriotic views and pet theories.

Most academics, indoeuropeanists, indologists, sanskritists, historians et al, with the notable exception of archaeologists-experts in the Indus-Sarasvati Civilization, adhere to the AIT (=Aryan Invasion/Immigration Theory) as regards India, not because they have actually examined the data and arguments for it but because it is easier to repeat mechanically what “authorities” like Gimbutas, Mallory, Parpola, Witzel et al, say or have said. In fact, the AIT has no data at all to support it and not one argument in its favour will hold water. This has been demonstrated very adequately by E. Bryant in his 2001 publication: for every piece of evidence supposedly supporting the AIT he presents counter-evidence that shows the former to be fictional. The course by which this Theory (started as a mere proposition by M. Müller) has been established as the mainstream view has been examined at length by Mallory (1973) and J. Day (1994).

How does an idea or view really become well-established?... It may be, and usually is, assumed that this depends on its factual truth. This of course is not true. An idea/view becomes “established” as the mainstream orthodoxy only because a number of people (and this need not be large) who hold a key-position – authoritative and therefore decisive – accept it and promote it. Such a view may be utterly wrong yet it may hold sway for decades and centuries.

It may be thought that such a mishap occurs only in fields where the subjective factor, as distinct from objective, measurable data, is predominant as happens in the arts or humanities (literary criticism, history etc). Not so. Wrong views have become mainstream orthodoxy even

in the hard positive sciences like biology, chemistry and physics (Pert 1997, Cohen 1985, Kuhn 1970).

Let us look at some well-known cases.

First, before archaeology came to its own late in the 19th century, hellenists (=scholars dealing with the Greek culture) thought Homer's world in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* was imaginary, totally mythological. It was H. Schliemann, a retired German merchant with little learning but much faith in Homer and enough funds, who dug in north-eastern Peloponnese (Greece) and brought to the astonished eyes of the world the Mycenaean monuments (from c 1600 BC), the fortified palace and the vaulted graves with all the bronze and gold treasures they contained. Then followed Tiryns and other excavations (Taylour 1990).

A little before, in 1865 Gregor Mendel presented the accumulated results of his researchers in heredity and experiments with peas to the Brünn Society for the Study of Natural Science. Brünn, now called Brno, was then the capital of Moravia, a region straddling parts of Czechoslovakia, Poland and Germany. Although the scientist-members of the Society did not understand Mendel's paper, nonetheless it was published along with the rest of the Proceedings for that year. As a matter of routine, copies of that publication were sent to over 100 learned institutions in London, Paris, Vienna, Rome, Petersburg, Upsala etc. Few people read it: they did not understand the significance of those invisible and undetectable "factors" or "particles" (today we call them "genes") which were responsible for heredity. Mendel died in 1884. Sixteen years later his paper was rediscovered together with its contents that had in 1900 been confirmed by H. De Vries in the Netherlands and C. Correne in Germany. Biologists (botanists, geneticists, et al) rushed to the library-shelves to read Mendel's paper (published in 1866) and most of them discovered that those pages in the Proceedings of the Brünn Society had not even been cut! Earlier the idea dominant in that field had been that of an "egg" containing the miniature of the creature (human being, hen, oak or whatever): this began to recede in the 1870s and 1880s. (For details see Iltis 1932; Gribbin 1985.)

We could examine many more instances where a wrong idea was dominant and impeded true knowledge and/or progress. I shall refer only to another well-known case – from Astronomy.

The geocentric model of the cosmos dominated European thinking for 18 centuries. It was Copernicus (N Koppelnigk: 1473-1543) who wrote of the *Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres (De Revolutionibus... 1543)* demonstrating the heliocentric arrangement of our solar system. 50-60 years later Kepler and Galileo supported and developed further this system. Did the mainstreamers of those days clap "bravo" and shout for joy at this? No, far from it. Galileo was made by the mainstream orthodoxy (the eminent scholars and churchmen of the time) to renounce the heliocentric view *twice* – first in 1615 and then in 1633, even though by now the Florentine Inquisition had sanctioned his work, and he was confined to a villa for the next 19 years of his life. Kepler's popularization work was condemned by the Church in 1622, printers would not publish anything of his and he lost job and income for a period. Giordano Bruno, who also advocated the Copernican system, the plurality of worlds and the circulation of blood (ideas that would become common after 50 years), was burnt at the stake in Rome in February 1600. Copernicus himself escaped persecution because he had the sagacity to publish his book even as he was dying (in 1543) and dedicated it to the exceptionally liberal Pope Paul III admitting in the Preface that his ideas might be wrong. Nonetheless, the book was placed on the Index (ie it should not be read by devout Catholics) 33 years after its publication.

In the last 50 years of the 16th century Copernicus's *De Revolutionibus...* had only one reprint whereas in the same period the books of mainstream orthodoxy (Clavin's *Treatise...*, Melachthon's *Doctrine of Physics*, attempting to refute Copernicus, Paucer's textbook on geocentric Astronomy, Ptolemy's *Almagest* and Peurbach's *Planetary Theory*) had altogether about 100 reprints (Koestler 1964: 194).

The odd thing about this story is that the heliocentric view was known in Europe long before Copernicus but, for various reasons, was totally ignored by the "established" dogma.

Leonardo Da Vinci, the famous artist, engineer and naturalist (1452-1512), stated in his Notes that “The sun does not move” (Gombrich, 1995: 294). So this information was known in Italy – unofficially – before Copernicus, who studied in Bologna, Padua and Ferrara 1495-1503 and could well have imbibed the basic idea from those centres of learning, although there is no hard proof for this. In fact, much much earlier, *Aristarchos of Samos had given a heliocentric model in the 3rd century BC, ie 1700 years before Copernicus*, but none of the savants of his day (including the great Archimedes), believed it or bothered to verify it and **for the next 18 centuries mainstream orthodoxy was the geocentric view**: this was formulated by Apollonius of Perga (also 3rd century BC), who followed Aristotle’s world-picture of the Prime Mover and “intelligences” moving the concentric celestial spheres, then was developed by Hipparchus of Rhodes and completed by Ptolemy of Alexandria in the 2nd cent CE (hence, the Ptolemaic system). Thereafter all kinds of absurdities were written about the heavens, the celestial spheres, the sub- and supra-lunar worlds, the fixed stars, the Empyrean, the Prime Mover and so on, which constituted the “established” view. And all the time the real knowledge was there and all those schoolmen, could, with some practical observation and sensible application of Mathematics, have found out that the Ptolemaic system was not true. But they did not: they preferred to argue about such weighty matters as how many angels could sit on the point of a pin or how the world was created by God from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*)! (There were exceptions, of course). Even when the proofs were presented to them in black and white, hard and irrefutable mathematical demonstrations, they still rejected them preferring the comforts of the “established” dogma. Theology (and Church interests) decided what was acceptable.

I am not claiming to be another Copernicus or Mendel or Schliemann. What I am saying is that a wrong idea can be the mainstream orthodoxy for many decades or centuries and that scholars should neither accept mainstream doctrines nor dismiss new, controversial ideas all too readily. I myself adhered to and taught the AIT for some 18 years having imbibed it in my University years and not having bothered to study the evidence because I was not then interested in Indian protohistory. It was not easy to give up a view I had entertained for so long, but once the evidence was examined (and because I was not afraid of losing reputation, job and income) I felt I had little choice but to abandon the AIT and accept indigenism and a *Rgveda* of 3000+BC.

How does a view get “well-established? And I answer – only by acceptance.

The question facing sanskritists and proto-historians is, really, whether, by circumventing their own inertia, the comfortable security of repeating the mainstream dogma and any facile emotional reactions in favour or against, they can bestir themselves and actually examine, or re-examine, the factual evidence and decide for themselves. Let me explain further.

The AIT (now turned into “immigration”) has been the established mainstream view, only because a decisive number of academics in key position accepted it in the last quarter of the 19th century. Until about then it was thought that N-W India or a neighbouring area had been the locus of IE expansion (Mallory 1973: 26-29). Even after this date there were many dissenting scholars who continued to doubt the AIT or some of its aspects like late chronologies (Winternitz vol I, 270-288; Day 1994 *passim*). I have discussed these issues at length elsewhere (Kazanas 1999, 2002, 2007) and so have others (Bryant 2001). Apart from the ethnic or racist prejudices involved (Bryant 2001; Trautmann 1997; Shaffer 1984), two other considerations were instrumental in establishing the AIT. I shall use the words of two Western academics: a) Edmund Leach wrote: “Because of their commitment to a unilateral segmented history of language development that needed to be mapped onto the ground, the philologists took it for granted that proto-Indo-Iranian was a language that had originated outside India or Iran... From this we derived the myth of the Aryan invasions” (1990). b) Lord Renfrew wrote (1989: 182) of the AIT: “this comes rather from a historical assumption about the ‘coming’ of the Indo-Europeans”. These are the two legs of clay upon which the AIT and its variants stand. Be it noted that neither “leg” furnishes any data for an entry. The entry and

its date c 1500 BC are purely conjectural affairs. Yet this unhistorical theory has bedevilled Indology for some 120 years.

It has become very obvious to me that adherents of the AIT continue to argue mechanically, blindly, unreasonably simply to maintain their (untenable) position. Instead of looking at the data that have been presented in various publications since the mid-1980's, they ignore them wholly and continue to repeat the dogma or they resort to various irrelevant remarks. Thus at a Vedic Conference in Ujjain (Jan 2006) I met with two eminent professors from the USA and was drawn into heated discussions on Indoaryans origins and the *RV* composition date. One of them mentioned the palatalization of certain Proto-Indo-European consonants in Sanskrit – e.g. *ca* against Greek *kai* and Latin *que*- and refused to see that this, even if it were a historical actuality (which is by no means incontrovertible), did not provide dates since it could have happened in the 4th, 5th, 6th or 7th millennium BC. The other adduced three arguments. a) No remains of horses and chariots were found in N-W India before 1700 – refusing to accept the numerous publications in India reporting remains of domesticated horse. (Remains of chariot were not discovered even from 600 BC!) b) One entry into N-W India is more credible than many out-flows from it – even though it has been repeatedly stressed (e.g. Hock 1996, etc) that at least three times in the historical period Indoaryan languages are known to have travelled north-westward out of India and one of them, the Gypsy or Romani idiom reached the United Kingdom. c) A few entrants into N-W India could have brought in the Vedic idiom – even though Vedic is an extremely difficult language and the toponymics (names of mountains, plains, lakes and rivers) are clearly Sanskritic and do not belong to another language (e.g. Dravidian) as we would expect for some of them if Vedic was an intruder and not native. All such arguments are expressive of prejudice and desperately try to maintain the mainstream dogma.

I am not denying that the Indoaryans may have come to India from some other location at an earlier period. Indeed, at c 6000-4500 BC there is a break in the skeletal record of the region (Elst 1999: 233; Witzel 2001: 9). If – and I repeat “if” – the Indoaryans did immigrate at, say 6000 – 4500 then, surely, by 1500 BC they have every right to be regarded as indigenous, and since the *Rgveda* knows nothing at all of the Indus-Sarasvatī Civilization which began to emerge c 3000, then it (or the large bulk of it) can have been composed only before that date (Kazanas 2002, 2007).

To say that the ISC (= Indus-Sarasvati Culture) is an expression of the Vedic tradition beginning with the *RV* and that the continuity flows on in historical times (albeit with some changes, loans and losses) is reasonable. To say that the *RV* reflects the ISC is to ignore many facts – and chiefly the fact that the *RV* does not know urban structures or ruins, bricks (*iṣṭakā*), fixed fire-hearths/altars, etc, i.e. elements prominent in the ISC and post-rigvedic texts. To say that the *RV* is post-ISC is to put the proverbial cart before the horse.

If Shri Marathe and others like him (after due consideration of the matter) accept “the changing perception of the chronology of the Indian proto-history”, then this will get “well-established”. If (again after due consideration) they don't accept it, then it will not get established. It is no good saying “if” and “when”, wait for others to accept it and then get on the band-wagon.

Leach, Master of King's College (Cambridge, UK), went further in his critique of the AIT writing in the same study that after the unearthing of the ISC in the 1920's – “Indo-European scholars should have scrapped all their historical reconstructions and started again from scratch. But this is not what happened. Vested interests and academic posts were involved.” And here this distinguished anthropologist (he was knighted) touches a crucial spot and I agree. Personal interests played – and continue to play – an important role in keeping alive this utterly defective and deforming doctrine. Hopefully more and more indologists will re-examine this matter and their own psychological state. Indian scholars should stop denigrating their own proto-history, the depth and significance of its antiquity.

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