

## N. Kazanas - S. Talageri Correspondence 2005

As T(alageri) makes several non-factual remarks about me, I thought I should make available all our exchanges which began in late February and ended in early May. Thus, interested parties can, if they have the stamina to read through these turgid pages, decide for themselves whether or not I made “unreasonable remarks”, used “Witzellian thrusts”, “pounced” upon some point of his, “parodied” his reasoning, or I am “awake but pretend to be asleep” and so remain impervious to T’s efforts to wake me up. These are his own statements in the Preface (pp XX-XXII, XXXI) to his 2008 book, *The Rigveda and the Avesta: Final Evidence* (Delhi, Aditya). I have only just (May 2010) read these pages, not the book, having obtained a copy in April.

In 2007 I prepared a paper on ‘Indo-European Linguistics and Indo-Aryan Indigenism’ for Prof (Mrs) Angela Marcantonio (ed) *The Indo-European Language Family: Questions about its Status* (2009, JIES Monograph Series 55, Washington). In it I wrote that T “knows no Sanskrit and has no training in Archaeology or other related subjects and so goes astray constantly” (paper 9, page 46, note 8). This is a fact, however nasty one might think my action – a sad but indisputable fact. T complains that I mentioned other writers who also don’t know Sanskrit or have no Archaeology. Yes, perhaps so, but they don’t go astray the way he does. Moreover, T cites my admission that I had benefited from reading his 1993 opus as if this is a contradiction (as if a book can’t have good and bad things)! However, my 2009 statement and other strictures in our 2005 exchanges are very far from his claim that I wrote that he is not “qualified to discuss or write on the subject” (which subject?) since he doesn’t know Sanskrit (Preface XXII). Of course he is.

Actually, as Marcantonio’s book (and my paper with its negligible note 8) will not be read by many people other than highly specialised comparativists who would hardly know of T, my statement did him very little damage. His own Preface will do him more, since many more people are likely to read it. So be it.

In our exchanges I merely tried to point out tactfully that his view of the Vedics advancing westward from Haryana or the western part of the Gangetic plain is incorrect and his use of river names as one decisive criterion is not warranted by the *RV* itself – especially the collocation *sapta sindhava*, as he terms it at times, singling this out of many other phrases for ‘seven rivers’ (*nadī yahvī, srótas, avani, svásr* etc).

Here I point out just a few features from our exchanges and his insistence that I was being “illogical” and even “parodied” (!) his own reasoning, which he obviously regards as impeccable (see my letter 5/4, point 1 and T’s answer!). I have yet to come across an Indian who, not knowing Sanskrit, writes about ancient India and admits he may have errors.

1. T assured me in his first reply that all rigvedic references to Sapta Sindhu (ss for short) appear on p114 of his 2000 book. I reread this page eventually and found that one in 8.24.27 was missing. Two letters later I wrote as much and T remembered then that he had forgotten this and forgotten to insert it in the second edition of his 2000 opus. He did not mention it in his 2001 examination of Witzel's review of his book nor in his 2005 paper in Bryant & Patton which must have been written c 2002-3. Well, perhaps he did, but subsequently this acquired enormous importance for him as if he had only just discovered it.

2. I asked how much Vedic he knows "that I may phrase my writing accordingly" (1/3). He avoided replying.

3. He wrote that Hopkins "states the consensus on this issue" referring to 8.24.27 as the only place in the *RV* "where the phrase [sapta sindhu-] is used ... as the name of an area or a country" (20/3, long letter: SAPTASINDHU, point 1). I replied that apart from Hopkins, whose article I had not seen, no other Western scholar (that I knew, re: consensus) used ss as a name for N-W India. In his next letter, T did not understand "the issue here" (!) and proceeded to give me only the name of Griffith and his "Land of the Seven Rivers" (!) as if this is ss! Meanwhile I got the Hopkins paper and found to my astonishment that T had misrepresented this scholar's statement: Hopkins had only connected the phrase ss with the Iranian *haptahəndu*, no more!

4. T thinks only Purus are āryas or rigvedic peoples ignoring the fact that the hymns repeatedly mention 5 tribes (pañca kṣitī/carṣaṇī) and mention them by name (See 1.108.8 where Indra and Agni may be among any one of the five Yadus, Turvaśas, Druhyus, Anus, Purus! Also 6.45.1 where Indra led the Turvaśa and Yadu; 6.46.7-8 with Tṛkṣa Druhyu and Puru; 8.10.5 where Aśvins may be among the Druhyus, Anus, Turvaśa or Yadu; 10.49.8 where Indra glorifies with strength Turvaśa and Yadu ). The tradition has all 5 of them in the Purāṇas. All at times displayed unaryan conduct!

As a last point: See letter 3 (25/3) and after, where T insists feverishly that I "parodied" his reasoning! He obviously does not know the meaning of the verb. Moreover, in letter 2/5, he seems unable to distinguish between an assertive statement and a hypothetical one (could, might, perhaps) or a prayer. I suggested we invite our friends who support the indigenist view to judge the arguments. He refused but I wrote to three or four. Unfortunately these friends have no Vedic and generally prefer to sit on the fence.

S. Kak alone wrote to me a brief comment on all this – which I sent to T: "I am sorry about T's misunderstanding of your notes . I agree with your advice to him to refer to original texts and not consider secondary or tertiary sources as authoritative". But to do this, you have to know Vedic, of course, and follow archaeological evidence – which asserts that, although there were communities at Western Ganges, there was a gradual steady movement from Mehrgarh to Saptasindhu from c6500 to 4000 and after 2000 eastward to the Ganges.

In my book *Indo-Aryan Origins and Other Vedic Issues* (2009, Delhi, Aditya) I reproduced the paper on 'IE Linguistics and IA Indigenism' as ch 9 and removed the offending phrase about T. Another paper (ch 1) defends T against Witzel and his two books appear in my bibliography. In his 2008 book, T admits I first pointed out that the Vedics used for their chariots native woods but gives no references at all to the work concerned! In fact, despite his protestations that he respects and admires my writings, not one of them is in his bibliography! Frawley too is not in T's bibliography (perhaps because he also disagrees with the east-west movement?).

Moreover, many Indians wrote against the AIT from the end of the 19th cent to the end of the 20th. Not one of them advocated a westward movement from Ganges: they all knew Vedic. Nobody who has read the *RV* in the original can conceive of a movement westward or that the Purus are the only rigvedic Aryans, as per T.

Finally neither this nor my comments in the correspondence should be taken as a total rejection of T's work, much of which is very valuable. I don't throw out the baby with the bath-water!