

## Soviet & Central Asian Archaeology and Vedic Culture

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Central Asian Theory of Vedic Culture (CATVC) is a new proposal for investigating into the R̥gvedic culture in Central Asia and Soviet Russia. These regions have yielded good number of archaeological sites that present a glimpse of Vedic culture. The Puranic references and many Vedic allusions also go to confirm that the earliest human culture evolved from this central region, i.e. Ilāvṛtavaraṣa, the centre of Jambudvīpa. All the human movements originated from this region, not to cover only whole of Euro-Asia, which is practically one landmass, but also the New World. This hypothesis tend to solve many problems that have engrossed the modern historian since last two centuries, such as Indo-European, Aryan Invasion theory, linguistic problems like Proto-Indo-European and many others of the West Asian history. In this short outline main issues of this theory is attempted.

This thesis, as discussed below has its basis in the sciences of geology and geography and is also supported by ancient ecology. At the same time there are written records in Hindu literature, occasionally supplemented by ancient literatures of world civilizations and traditions. A number of modern scholars, European as well as others have also repeatedly favoured Central Asia for the mobilization of human tribes and races (as they call it) in different parts of Europe and Asia. Archaeologists who have worked in Soviet Central Asia (Kurgan and Andronovo cultures) and Bactria and Margiana Archaeological Complex (BMAC) also try to convince that there are Vedic elements in them. The West Asian cultures also give indications (though this never has been studied from this point of view) that there were Vedic elements in them. So far as linguistics is concerned it has become a victim of colonial politics and is used as a tool to maintain European hegemony. Linguistic studies have been limited to European context only; the other continents of the world remain untouched. In fact there is hardly any language in the known world; there may be a few exceptions, in which Vedic/Sanskrit roots/words cannot be traced.

Many Indo-Europeanists may object to these claims as chauvinistic, nationalistic or Hindu fundamentalist/revivalist etc. but we cannot help but put our ideas as academically convincing way as we can.

We may start with the identification of Purāṇic Meru or Sumeru Mountain, which was traditional centre for cradle of humanity, with Pamir Mountain in Central Asia. For them whole of Asia was Jambudvīpa and Meru (Pamir Mountain) was its nave. The Purāṇas assert that it was Meru that elevated first in the sea which is now known as the Tethys Sea. This is supported by geology also.

## Geological Background:

If we believe in the Continental Drift Theory it is most likely that north-western portion of the Indian sub-continent first collided with the Eurasian landmass giving rise first to the Pamir plateau. S.M. Mathur informs “Deep seismic soundings and seismotectonic data in the Great Himalayas-Pamir-Hindukush region has led a team of scientists in the National Geophysical Research Institute to conclude that the northern boundary of the Indian Plate does not lie along the Indus Suture Line nor along the Main Central Thrust, but falls much to the north of the combined Indo-Tibetan block. The new plate boundary is postulated to coincide with the southern margin of the Tien Shan-Nan Shan mobile fold belt, passing south of the Ordos and Shanshi blocks, turning finally north-eastward towards the south-east of Peking (Beijing).”<sup>1</sup> This confirms the puranic assertion that other mountains of Asia are connected by their filament or roots (*kesara*). These *kesara* mountains, as recorded in the Purāṇas (*VP.*, II. 227-30) are 5 each to its east, south, west and north. Beside these there are *maryādā* (boundary) mountains also. Accordingly the Jaṭhara and Devakūṭa are Boundary Mountains that are spread from north to south up to Nīla and Niṣadha mountains. Gandhamādana and *Kailāsa* lie east-west in the sea.<sup>2</sup> To the west of Meru Niṣadha and Pariyātra also are *maryādā parvatas*. In the north Triśṛṅga and Jarudhi are *varśā parvatas* (i.e. Country Mountains). Both these have their roots in the East and West Seas (*VP* II., 241-44). “The early Indo-Iranians believed that all mountains were connected by their roots to High Hara; and that all bodies of water were connected to the magical sea.”<sup>3</sup>

S.M. Mathur further asserts “The northward movement of the Indian Plate against the Central Asian landmass closed the Tethys gap. The subduction of this plate underneath the eastern Eurasian Plate pushed up the Tethyan sediments to form the Himalayan chain.”<sup>4</sup>

These Puranic descriptions (we do not condemn all Puranic descriptions as myths) are of considerable antiquity pointing to geological times. We will come to the mountains, rivers and the countries around the Meru or Pamir that can be understood only if we believe in very long time for the existence of man. Since then several geological changes have

made it impossible to identify all these mountains and rivers in their exact positions as described in the Purāṇas.

However, here we bring in Dr. S.P. Gupta who has described some geological features of Central Asia that throw light on the situation during antiquity. We are citing some excerpts from him below.<sup>5</sup>

“Thus in the beginning, some 500 million years ago, a vast sea existed from Western Europe across to China and the northern shores of India which was then separate land-mass. ... For over 100 million years the sediments brought by rivers formed huge beds of sedimentary rocks in the sea. Then some 60 million years ago, it is hypothesized, ‘the Indian land-mass collided with the Asian land-mass’. The impact crumbled the layers of sedimentary rock along the edges of the two continents, creating a line of colossal mountain ranges, among them the Pamirs, the Tien Shan and the Himalayas. The newly formed mountains trapped the sea in north, creating a huge inland basin. As the welding of India to Central Asia continued over next 25 million years, this basin was wedged up by edge of the Indian land-mass and was drained to the west - into the present-day Black Sea and the Mediterranean- leaving Turkestan with only a few large saline “puddles”, among them are the Caspian and Aral Sea.’

“Then followed the period of the creation of fresh-water rivers, such as the Amu and the Syr which, along with numerous others, now lost or merged, kept on meandering, through their own loads, deposited, cut and re-deposited and to be re-cut once again.”

This description by Gupta is valuable in understanding Purāṇic narration of ancient rivers emanating from the Central Mountain of Meru. The Purāṇas relate that in the beginning the Meru attracted atmospheric moisture, figuratively emanating from the toe of Viṣṇu and falling into the gourd of Brahmā and then, as the Purāṇas relate, it was arrested in the matted hair of Śiva (i.e. *Śivāḷaka*). This is called the ‘Descent of Gaṅgā’ (not to be confused with the river Gaṅgā of India). But this appears to be a later development connected with the Himalayas. In the Vedic period it was assumed to have been arrested on the top of Meru in the form of glaciers; only to be released by Indra after slaying the demon. The Ṛgvedic ṛṣis have variously praised the fresh water streams that were like milk to all forms of life from plants to animals. Indra is praised in hundreds of hymns. However, according to Purāṇas initially only four rivers are said to have issued from Meru in all the four directions and these are Sītā used to flow in the east, Alakanandā in the south, Cakṣu in the west and Bhadrā in the north. Gupta has noted that these rivers, ‘kept on meandering, through their own loads, deposited, cut and re-deposited and to be re-cut once again.’ This geological fact is reflected in the Vedic and Purāṇic accounts

where a good number of sets of rivers are observed. In some later layers of Purāṇic accounts (Purāṇas being history books are frequently modified from time to time; but this has been used to denounce their authority) of the descent of Gaṅgā transforms into seven streams.<sup>6</sup> Thus the incident of the 'Descent of Gaṅgā', in the beginning, from the atmospheric moisture cannot be ruled out as myth.

Similarly, the existence of Caspian Sea also has something to do with the Vedic and Purāṇic legends. Strabo wrote that "to the country of the Albanians belongs also the territory called Caspian, which was named after the Caspian tribe, as was also the sea; but the tribe, has now disappeared."<sup>7</sup> The same source equates this name with Sanskrit word Kaśyapa. Kaśyapas are one of the seven Vedic ṛṣi families who have been known as 'exclusive Soma family'.<sup>8</sup> In the Purāṇic historical tradition Kaśyapa is known as a progenitor (*prajāpati*) who married the daughters of the progenitor Dakṣa from whom all species of life are said to have originated. We have reasons to believe that Pamir was the region of Dakṣa and the Caspian of Kaśyapa. This point cannot be treated in detail for want of space in this short article.

That the Caspian Sea was landlocked long before 5.5 million years ago is attested by the fact that its salinity is approximately 2.1%, about a third the salinity of most sea water. A very large depression area around Caspian and Aral suggests that the whole region must have been submerged and also that subsequently the hydraulic system of the region must have frequently changing. Therefore, it is no wonder if geologists assert that at one point of time Oxus River (Amu Darya) used to fall in the Caspian Sea which now forms a delta in the Aral Sea. We do not have ecological data of very ancient period but Vedic and Purāṇic references indicate that this region might have been friendly to human habitat. Vedic peoples like Rṣikas,<sup>9</sup> Pāradas, Aśvakas, Uttara Madras, Uttara Kurus, etc. lived here. To this list we can add Dāsas/Dasyus and Paṇis of Vedic and Iranian literature. The Airyanem Vaejah of Avesta can be located somewhere in the Pamir region.<sup>10</sup> It was the legendary home of the Iranians; thus the Vedic Aryans and the Iranians lived together in the region for quite some time in the beginning. The Iranian mythology also holds that "it contained the first mountain created on earth, Hara Berezaiti or High Hara.... Close to the mountain was a sea, called Vourukasha in the Avesta, where the "Trees of All Seeds" grew."<sup>11</sup> Compare this sea with the Vasvaukasara in Mahābhārata cited in the foot-note 6 in this article.

It will be interesting to note that Himalaya also rose in the Tethys Sea which in the Purāṇic legends and epigraphical records of 12<sup>th</sup> century is known as North Sea. At least

two Purāṇic legends of Agastya are related with the geological events and the Himalayan orogeny. When the NW head of the Indian continent collided with Eurasian landmass the Pamir started rising, and due to a check in the speed of the Indian landmass the Vindhyan Mountain also started growing. This is figuratively related in the *Mahābhārata* wherein the gods requested Agastya to arrest its growth. The sage asked Vindhya to bow down and remain so till he returns from the South; hence the name Agastya. He was also asked to drink the water of the sea which is now the Gaṅgā plain because some demons were hiding there. That he did. But after the demons were killed he was asked to release the water but he replied that nothing can be done now because the water is consumed.<sup>12</sup> This definitely was the sea that once occupied the present Gaṅgā plains. Afterwards this depression was filled by the debris brought by the Himalayan rivers from the north and of the Vindhyan rivers from the south. That it was remembered as the North Sea (*Uttara Samudra*) and 'Calm Sea' (*Saumya Sindhu*) till at least twelfth century is attested by two copperplates from Bhtapar and Gorakhpur issued by the king Kīrttipāla and his son Rāmapāla dated in the CE 1111 and 1158 respectively.<sup>13</sup> Thereafter follows the story of bringing Gaṅgā to the plains by king Bhagīratha<sup>14</sup> and this attests the authenticity of the Agastya legends. Hence the Gaṅgā plain was a sea known to the epics and the Purāṇas. The other proof comes from the Nadi-Sūkta of the *Ṛgveda* (X.75) that sequences rivers from east to west, from Gaṅgā onwards. That means that the countries of the eastern regions were non-existent; Kosala, Kāśī and Magadha are not mentioned in the *Ṛgveda*. Thus the antiquity of Agastya legend and of the *Ṛgveda* goes to geological times; a fact that is incomprehensible to a European educated person. We can also view the Legend of Videgha Māthava in this light (*Ś.B.* 1.4.1.1-17).

### **Nine Segments of Jambūdvipa:**

The Puranic history relates that there were nine divisions of Jambudvīpa with Meru (Pamir) in the centre. The central country was known as *Ilāvṛtavaraṣa* or the country of Ilā. The countries to its immediate north were called *Ramyakavaraṣa* (i.e. Beautiful Country), *Hiraṇyamaya* (the Golden Country) and the *Uttarakuruvaraṣa* (i.e. the Country of the North Kuru People). These regions can roughly be recognized but their physical boundaries cannot precisely be defined. This also suggests that these regions were inhabited during the Vedic and Purāṇic times. Countries to the south of *Ilāvṛtavaraṣa* were *Bhāratavaraṣa*, *Kimpuruṣavaraṣa* and *Harivaraṣa*. These were South Asian countries. To the east of Meru was the country of *Bhadraśvavaraṣa* (i.e. China) and to its west was the country called *Ketumālavaraṣa* (i.e. Iran and West Asia). These were the nine divisions of Jambudvīpa, i.e. Asia.<sup>15</sup>

## **Ilāvṛtavarṣa in the *Ṛgveda* and Purāṇas:**

The *Ilāvṛtavarṣa* is mentioned in the *Ṛgveda* as ‘best place on earth’ and ‘the abode of Ilā’ where the sacred fire was established.<sup>16</sup> This is referred to in a number of hymns.<sup>17</sup> This region has also been called as ‘Centre of the Earth’ (*Nābhā Pṛthivyā*).<sup>18</sup> Many of these *mantras* speak of the sacred fire being established in the ‘Abode of Ilā’ that was the ‘Centre of the Earth’ and ‘the best place on Earth’. This recalls the Purāṇic legend when Purūravas, the son of Ilā is said to have established three Agnis (*Āhavanīya*, *Gārhapatyā* and *Dakṣiṇāgni*) in the region.<sup>19</sup>

However, the Purāṇic legend relates that Ila was the first son of Manu who later transformed into a woman, called Ilā, and bore a son named Purūravas, with Budha, the son of Candra.<sup>20</sup> That her abode was in the Meru region is attested by several references in the Purāṇas also. The *Matsyapurāṇa* asserts that Manu still lives on Meru and he retired to Mahendra Mountain after installing Ila (as Sudyumna in man form) on the throne.<sup>21</sup> The place where Śiva was amusing with Umā also was in its vicinity because Ila or Sudyumna entered there while on hunt on a horse back to find himself transformed into a female. *Matsya*<sup>22</sup> calls it Śaravana while *Vāyu*<sup>23</sup> calls this place Umāvana. The last name becomes significant when we see it in geological sequence. Meru was first to emerge and Himalayas evolved later. The mythology records that Umā or Satī was the daughter of Dakṣa Prajāpati who lived around Meru. In her next incarnation Umā was born as Pārvatī, the daughter of Himālaya.

## **Identification of Śaryāṇāvata:**

But the name Śaravana of *Matsya* is more significant that gives precise clue to geographical identification. We begin with Maujavata Mountain where Soma is said to grow.<sup>24</sup> The *Atharvaveda* relates Mūjavanta with Bāhlika (Bactria in Afghanistan) where there still exists a region called Munjan. The language of this region is called Maunjani. This we will discuss later. Here is a lake Zeravshan in the middle Sogdiana region. There is a river of this name also that loses in the deserts before reaching Oxus. This is referred as Śaryāṇāvata in the *Ṛgveda*. David Frawley notes “The main sacred Soma lands in the *Ṛgveda* are called Suśoma, Arjikiya, Śaryāṇāvata and Pastyavat.<sup>25</sup> Here we are mainly concerned with Śaryāṇāvata which can be identified with ‘Zeravshan in the middle Sogdiana’ and also with Śaravana of the *Matsya Purāṇa*. Though the *Ṛgvedic* references bracket Śaryāṇāvata with the northern regions of Afghanistan, some epic references attach this with Kurukṣetra. Some modern scholars also support the theory. But they do not appear correct in the light of following evidences.

In a hymn of *R̥gveda* (VIII 64.11), where the *devatā* is Indra, it is said that Soma, most dear to Indra, grows in Śaryāṇāvata which is in the (region of the) river Sushomā and Ārjikīyā. Śaryāṇavati is again mentioned in a hymn (VIII.6.39) where Indra is prayed to rejoice at this place.

The 113<sup>th</sup> hymn of *maṇḍala* IX of the *R̥gveda* is dedicated to Soma (as *devatā*). Its first *mantra* relates that Indra, showing great prowess, killed Vṛtra after infusing great strength in him by quaffing the Soma in Śaryāṇāvata. In another *mantra* (113. 6) of the same hymn it is said that Brahmā Pavamāna recites *chanda* (Veda) in this place. This is where Vaivasvata (Manu) is the king (113. 8). Here it may be recalled the statement of *Matsya*, already mentioned, that Manu is still residing on Meru Mountain. David Frawley's note also is important that "Sharyanavat is associated with the place where Indra defeated Vṛtra (IX.113.1), symbol of both glacier and cloud. Sharyanavat in the *R̥gveda* occurs as a great place of mountains."<sup>26</sup> For the latter sentence he gives the reference of *R̥gveda* X.35.1 (?) but actually it is the second *mantra* in which '*parvatān Śaryāṇāvata*' occurs. Sāyaṇa explains the compound as '*Śaryāṇvatī sarasaḥ sambandhinaḥ parvatān*' meaning the lake called Śaryāṇavatī on the mountain near Kurukṣetra.<sup>27</sup> This is the source of all confusions that has misled scholars. There is no mountain near Kurukṣetra where glaciers and clouds can be seen. Scholars who believed in this have tried to identify places in the vicinity of Kurukṣetra.<sup>28</sup> David Frawley has cited *Jaiminīya Brāhmaṇa* (III.64) which also mentions Śaryāṇāvata to be in Kurukṣetra.<sup>29</sup> There are many such instances where such lapses have crept in Indian literature. Hence we must proceed in our research with care.

## The Dadhyañca Legend and Archaeology

Similarly the legend of Dadhyañca was also connected with Haridvara by later scholars. The *R̥gveda* (I.84.13-14) relates that "Indra, with the bones of Dadhīci, slew ninety times nine Vṛtras. Wishing for the horse's head hidden in the mountains, he found it at Śaryāṇavatī."

Here the legend goes on that Dadhyañca (Dadhīci), the son of Atharvan, gave away his bones to Indra from which Tvaṣṭa fabricated thunderbolt for Indra to kill Vṛtra. Another story is that "Indra having taught the science called *Pravargya vidyā* and *Madhu-vidyā* to *Dadhyañca*; threatened that he would cut off his head if ever he taught them to anyone else; the Aśvins prevailed upon him, nevertheless, to teach them the prohibited knowledge, and to evade, Indra's threat, took off the head of the sage, replacing it by that of a horse; Indra, apprised of Dadhyañca's breach of faith, struck off his equine head with the thunderbolt; on which the Aśvins restored to him his own.<sup>30</sup> The referred hymn tells that the head was found hidden in the mountains at Śaryāṇavatī. *Dadhyañca* is again mentioned in the hymn

116.12 of the same *maṇḍala* which is addressed to Aśvins. This completes the story of *Dadhyañca* as regards Indra and Aśvins.

Some archaeologists see an echo of this legend in a burial in Sintashta, site on the Upper Ural river in Soviet Russia. One burial here ‘contained the corpse of a decapitated victim whose head had been replaced by that of a horse’. However, Edwin Bryant holds “Although, the context of this myth has nothing to do with burials or funeral rites, the attempt, to correlate this story with the contents of a solitary grave does give some indication of the paucity of evidence available to archaeologists in the quest for the Indo-Aryans.”<sup>31</sup> But it may be noted that though the burial reminds of the Vedic story; it cannot be related to the incident. Due to certain constraints we are not going to refer to other archaeological finds of Andronovo and Kurgan cultures and also of BMAC etc. that scholars have correlated with Vedic culture.

### **The Zeravshna in Sogdiana: Geographical situation**

The venue of the happenings was Śaryaṇāvata which was in the vicinity of some mountain. But it is not clear if it was a place, river, lake or mountain. Scholiast, however, call it a lake in near Kurukṣetra. But, however, as we have mentioned, this can be identified with Zeravshan in Central Asia. The Vedic Śaryaṇāvata/ Śaryaṇavatī may as well be a river of that name, now called the River Zeravshan.

“Zeravshan Valley (also Zarafshan or Zarafshon) is situated in northern Tajikistan, embedded between the impressive mountain ranges of the western Pamir-Alai massive. “Zeravshan” - which means “Golden River” in Tajik - is the main stream which crosses the valley and which supplies its inhabitants with a most precious resource: water. The area is famous for its unique mountain landscape and its beautiful lakes: the Alauddin lakes, the Kulikalon lakes, Iskanderkul lake, the seven lakes of Shing among many others. ... The Tajik ancestors -fire worshippers called Sogdians- have lived more than 1500 years along the Zeravshan valley— a history which is still visible at the Old Penjikent archaeological site and the remote Yangob valley.” From the Columbia Encyclopedia: Zeravshan. “Zeravshan, river, c. 460 mi (740 km) long, rising in Turkistan Range of Pamir-Alai mountain system, in Tajikistan. It flows westward through the agricultural Zeravshan valley, then into Uzbekistan, past Samarkand and Bokhara, and disappears in the desert near the Amu Darya, N of Charjew. The valley, irrigated by the Katta-Kurgan reservoir, is one of the chief oases of Central Asia and is on the site of the ancient Sogdian. The Zeravshan Mountains, forming the southern watershed of the river, rise to c.18,480 ft (5,630 m). ... It rises at 39°35'E/ 39.5°N 70.583°E on the fringes of the Pamirs in Tajikistan, flowing due west for some 300 km, passing Penjikent before entering Uzbekistan at 39°32'N 67°27' /

395330N 67.450E, where it turns west-to-north-west, flowing past the legendary city of Samarkand, which is entirely dependent on the oasis thus created, until it bends left again to the west north of Navoiy and further to the southwest, passing Bukhara before it loses itself in the desert beyond the city Karakul, not quite reaching the Amu Darya, of which it was formerly a tributary. The Zeravshan range (or Zeravshan mountains) rises to the south of the river. The range extends over 370 km in the east-west direction along the south of Sughd Province in Tajikistan, reaching the highest point of 5,489 m (Chimtarga peak) in its central part. ... Zerafshan is also a city in Uzbekistan's Navoiy Province, called "the gold capital of Uzbakistan".<sup>32</sup>

Thus, if our identification of Śaravana of the Purāṇas with Śaryaṇāvata of *R̥gveda*, which was in the vicinity of the mountain Maujavata, and which is none other than Zeravshan in the Pamirs, is accepted, there can be no doubt that this region was the place where these hymns of the Vedas were created by ṛ̥ṣis. Then it was the mountains of Meru (i.e. Pamir) and Śaryaṇāvata where the Vedic god Indra killed Vṛtra and found the horse-head of Dadhyañca.

## Linguistic Evidence

Now we can turn to the linguistic evidence. Indian scholars are not only suspicious of linguistic studies of Vedic and Sanskrit languages by Indo-Europeanists but also feel anguish about the tyrannical application of it. Bhagwan Singh is one among these. He observes:

"The Indo-European problem is predominantly a linguistic one, but the field of Indo-European studies is the slaughter house of linguistic theories. It may appear strange, but it is true that the problem was never discussed linguistically. There can be two approaches to a study— scientific and pseudo-scientific. The first relies on hard data and verifiable laws and ends with findings which enjoy sanctity for what they are. The second arises from a *priori* assumptions, proceeds with pretensions of real quest, rejects the 'unwanted' results, and ends with equally fragile conjectures. The Indo-European problem starts with assumed Proto-Indo-European, Proto-Indo-Iranian and Proto-Indo-Aryan languages reconstructed on the basis of dubious phonetic laws are hostile to the hard linguistic data, and ends with a linguistic quagmire full of tricky jargons."<sup>33</sup> Another eminent scholar, Makkhan Lal writes: "Quite often, these practitioners of philology were so illogical, so incoherent, so absurd, so adamant and arrogant, and indeed their impact has been so devastating that it has aptly been termed as 'linguistic tyranny' by Jim Shaffer, an American archaeologist."<sup>34</sup>

However, there are clinching linguistic evidences to show that Ilāvṛtavara in Central

Asia was a Sanskrit speaking region where a number of Sanskrit related languages are still being spoken, although there are Iranian influences as well. This is not something unnatural because Iranian dominance in the area is known for quite some time. Also, languages cannot flourish in isolation; like water, they are liable to gather influences from neighbouring regions. The European savants have deliberately avoided acknowledging any Sanskrit effect on the languages of the region. But Sanskrit sources reveal the truth.

Yāska, in his *Nirukta*, says that people of Kamboja,<sup>35</sup> i.e. Pamir region use the roots in their original sense while those in the Ārya countries, i.e. in 'Āryāvarta' they use derivatives.

He gives the example of the Sanskrit word 'śava' which means a 'dead body' in Sanskrit language. But this is not the meaning of the original root. Yāska, elaborating the *prakṛti* (original) and the *vikṛti* (derivative) uses of the roots, notes that the Kambojas use the word 'śavatiḥ' in its original sense 'going' (*śavatirgatikarmā kambojeśveva bhāṣyante*). And then after citing an example of *vikāra* of the root 'śavati', i.e. 'going', he mentions that here, in the Ārya *janapadas*, its derivative meaning is in use in the sense of a dead body from which the life has gone.<sup>36</sup> The *Kauṣītakī Brāhmaṇa* is more specific on the point. It says that the "The language in the north is pronounced with intelligence; people go to north to learn language, and whosoever comes from there people assemble to listen him."<sup>37</sup> It is interesting to note that during Pāṇini's time also the language of this region, which was none other than the Vedic one, was considered standard.<sup>38</sup> But some scholars still insist on Iranian influence on the language of regions within erstwhile British India.<sup>39</sup>

Now we can examine languages of this region which is known as the Galcha group of languages. "Linguistic evidence, combined with literary and inscriptional evidence, has led many scholars of note to conclude that ancient Kambojas originally belonged to the Ghalcha-speaking area of Central Asia. For example, Yāska's *Nirukta* (II.2) attests that the verb *śavati* in the sense "to go" was used by only the Kambojas. It is now proved that the modern Ghalcha dialects, Valkhi, Shigali, Sirqoli, Jebaka (also called Sanglichi or Ishkashmi), Munjani, Yidga and Yagnobi, mainly spoken in Pamirs and countries on the headwaters of Oxus, still use terms derived from ancient Kamboja *śavati* in the sense "to go". The Yagnobi dialect spoken in Yagnobi around the headwaters of Zeravshan (identified with Ṛgvedic Śaryāṇavata river by us) in middle Sogdiana, also still contains a relic "Su" from ancient Kamboja *śavati* in the sense "to go." Further, according to Sir G. Grierson, the speech of Badakshan was a Ghalcha till about three centuries ago when it was supplanted by a form of Persian."<sup>40</sup>

It is well aknowleged that Old Persian of Avesta was a *prākṛta* of Vedic Sanskrit,

and, it is no wonder that, during Persian dominance in later periods, languages of this region have influenced these languages. But, however, the Europeanists have used this as a tool to their colonial interests. They gave an opposite view on the issue. The authors of the *Vedic Index* write “Yāska, in his *Nirukta*, refers to the speech of the Kambojas as differing from that of the other Āryas.”<sup>41</sup> Perhaps it was Sir Grierson who initiated this wrong assumption and his faulty inference was cited by all who followed him. This amounted to propaganda against India in favour of Iranian which suited their Aryan Invasion Theory. This propaganda is still continuing that Indo-Iranians were a branch of Indo-Europeans from where Indo-Aryans emerged and invaded India.

We have dealt elsewhere with Vedic roots of the Kambojas in some detail.<sup>42</sup>

Vāhlika and Mūjavanta (also Mūjavat) are mentioned in the *Atharvaveda*<sup>43</sup> where the languages like Valkhi and Maunjani are still spoken. The word Ghalcha or Galacā certainly was derived from Skt. “*galda*” (=speech).<sup>44</sup> In Sanskrit 'gala', for throat and speech is in use in modern Punjabi and many other languages in Afghanistan. Even in Hindi 'galā miṭhā hai / galā baiṭha gayā hai' etc. are common usage. The English words like 'glottal' and 'polyglot' also contain this element. This has hoary antiquity because the ancient Celts/Kelts and Druids were also known as 'Galls' which was earlier name of France; thus they might have their origin from this region in *Pamirs*.<sup>45</sup>

## Concluding Notes:

This rather sketchy outline of Central Asian Thesis of Vedic Civilization (CATVC) is a preliminary note and is part of a comprehensive research. Many details have been left out that are being taken care of there. It goes to explain many events of world history like dispersal and movements of people from that region to different parts of the world. It is said in *Mahābhārata* that “Meru stands in the middle where all were born”.<sup>46</sup> Another verse from Vālmiki's *Rāmāyaṇa* claims that “all people were created by me, i.e. Brahmā, and all were of a single *varṇa*, similar in form and spoke similar language.”<sup>47</sup> This is in accordance with biblical belief about the origin of man and language. In the light of Vedic and Purāṇic details the biblical narrations appear to be caricatures by the vulgar people who derived their knowledge from hearsay.

This thesis reverses the Indo-European myth that people and tribes moved from west to east. Now it is possible to trace the origins the peoples like Celts, Greeks, Scythians etc. that all emanated from Vedic population in Central Asia. For example we can relate the Celts or Gals with Ghalcha speaking people, whose priests, the Druids, maintained high standards of Vedic learning of 20 years course of study. In fact most of the European and

Russian people claim to be the descendants of Danu.<sup>48</sup> Under the aegis of this theory it is also possible to explain as to how the Mitanni and other Indo-Aryan people could bypass the Iranians and retain Vedic religion and deities like Nāsatyas (Aśvinikumāras) in Mesopotamia. About Ilā David Frawley observes “The Persians call their homeland Ila. Elam, an ancient kingdom in southwest Iran, may be related term and is a very ancient kingdom comparable to Sumeria. The Tamilians call their kingdom Ilā or Eelam. The Semitic term for god as Il, as in Elohim, Allah (Al illah) may also be related to Vedic Ila or Il as Agni (the burning bush of Moses). The Phoenicians also worshipped Il. Their God Baal is ba-il. The term Ila, therefore, contains some of humanity’s oldest and most enduring ideas of divinity. It suggests Ila-Varta as the original homeland of humanity, particularly as a place of spiritual origins and guidance.”<sup>49</sup> Also the Mitanni used the term 'Ilu' or 'Ilani' prefixed to Vedic gods Mitra, Varuṇa, Nāsatyas and Indra. The name of Ila had assumed many forms like En etc. to denote a god or goddess.

Before concluding it must be explained as to how the gravity of Vedic culture shifted southwards in the Indian subcontinent. In fact Afghanistan, including Ilāvṛtavaraṣa at Meru or Pamir region, later called Kamboja, was known as Hind and culturally remind within the fold of Vedic civilization till about eleventh century, when the Islamic forces overpowered it. A continuous series of records is available to show that whole country was culturally one unit and was known as Bhāratavarṣa i.e. the land of the Bhārata people. The Vedas recognize Ilāvṛtavaraṣa on Meru as the navel or the centre of the earth where the first Agni was established for worship. This was the prime region where Indra is said to have killed the demon Vṛtra and released waters from the mountains, which for the Vedic ṛṣis was as precious as milk for all sorts of life. The famous Aila or Lunar and the Solar *varṁśas* (families) sprang there and spread all over. In *Varṁśa Brāhmaṇa* there is a long list of the Vedic teachers including Kamboja Aupamanyava who flourished in the region. This Vedic teacher also finds mention in the *Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa* at the top of the list. The *Varṁśa Brāhmaṇa* belongs to the *Sāmaveda*, dedicated to Soma that used to grow at Maujavat Mountain. Again, the northern most out-post of the Harappan civilization is located at Shortughai in northern Afghanistan. In the sixth century BCE Kamboja and Gandhāra were included among the sixteen Mahājanapadas of India. Aśoka also speaks of Yona and Kambojas within his empire. During the Kushan period we find epigraphical references about ‘the Lord of Wakhana (*Vakanapati*).<sup>50</sup> We also hear of Bhikṣu Budharakṣita from a *saṅgha* from Badakhshan (*Vadakṣasya*) near Pamir.<sup>51</sup> There was a Tokharī ṭilā near Mathura from where statues of Kushana kings were recovered.<sup>52</sup> This suggests that the Kushans were the Tukharas.<sup>53</sup> The Mehrauli Iron Pillar near Delhi records that king Chandra had conquered Bahlika having crossed the seven mouths the river Sindhu.<sup>54</sup>

In the tenth century one Khotanese king (now in China) calls him 'Gaustana bala cakravarti-rājeśvara' (supreme king of Khotan), the 'ekachatra of Jambudvīpa' (sovereign king of Jambudvīpa). He again informs in this inscription, written in Kharoṣṭhī script, that in this continent of Jambudvīpa there are sixteen countries, the cities on the continent of Jambudvīpa are eighty-six thousands.<sup>55</sup> Then Khotan was known as Gaustana. One of the earlier Khotanese king is named Vijitta Saṅgrāma, and another calls himself 'srī viṣa sūra mistaye rruṁda' (His majesty Viśa Sūra, the great king.) He also calls him 'hedava cakravatta rraḍa viś sūra, i.e. Hindu chakravarti king Viśa Sūra.'<sup>56</sup> It is interesting to note that Indian scholars, following the footsteps of their foreign brethren, have avoided identifying the places beyond the boundaries of the erstwhile British Empire. This was a taboo.

The present author has treated the subject elsewhere in some detail.<sup>57</sup>

It is regrettable that since about two centuries Indians are told that the British India was the limit of their country; and we have accepted it. Any inclination to peep beyond the western frontiers of British India was sneered upon. To some extent this tradition still continues.

We are aware that some of our Indian fellow scholars also may not like the idea that there was a time when the language of the Kamboja was nearer to the Vedic original and that here in Āryāvarta we are using derivatives of the roots. According to an eminent scholar 'Due to Śakas and Yavanas the Bāhlika and Gandhāra regions were cut off for some time from the political boundaries of Bhāratavarṣa and cultural ties with them was slacked. And therefore Patañjali has kept the country of the Śakas and Yavanas out of the Āryāvarta and also out of the realm of śiṣṭa Sanskrit.'<sup>58</sup> But we cannot accept that language is something that can be kept in abeyance for a few centuries for political reasons. With all reverence to him we cannot blame him for this because this was the academic trend of his time. We do not treat Śakas, Yavanas and Kuṣāṇas etc. as invaders. In India they showed all reverence for social and religious practices like any Hindu ruler. Ujjayini, under the Kārdamaka Śakas, remained the cultural capital of India for more than two centuries. These so-called foreign invaders never showed any disrespect to the established religious and cultural norms of the country. In the light of the Khotanes king, Visha Dharma (C.E. 978-82), quoted above, we cannot believe in the colonial myth of Śaka-Yavana invasions (?) from Afghanistan and Central Asia. In fact, there seems a rush among these tribes to reach India and follow the rule of *dharma*.

Now, thus the thesis that Central Asia was the centre of Vedic civilization has made the question of Āryan Invasion Theory irrelevant and at the same time it suggests satisfactory

solutions for many Indo-European problems like Proto-Indo-European language and quest for the original home.

## References and Notes

1. M.S. Mathur, *Physical Geology of India*, 2003, New Delhi, p. 190.
2. Probably by that time these two mountains could not emerge from the sea water. Now these are parts of the Himalayas.
3. <http://rbedrosian.com/Imyth.htm>.
4. M.S. Mathur, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
5. S.P. Gupta, *Soviet Central Asia Borderlands*, Vol. I, 1979, p. 9-10.
6. "According to one *Paurāṇika* legend, the *Gaṅgā* divided on its descent into seven streams, termed the *Nalini*; *Pāvanī*, and *Hlādinī*, going to the east; the *Cakṣu*, *Sītā* and *Sindhu*, to the west; and the *Bhāgīrathī* or Ganges proper to the south. In one place in the *Mahābhārata*, the seven rivers are termed *Vasvaukasara*, *Nalinī*, *Pāvanī*, *Gaṅgā*, *Sītā*, and *Jambunadī*, in another, *Gaṅgā*, *Yamunā*, *Plakṣgā*, *Rathasthā*, *Śarayū*, *Gomatī* and *Gaṇḍakī*. In a text quoted and commented on by Yāska, we have ten rivers, named *Gaṅgā*, *Yamunā*, *Sarasvatī*, *Śatudrī*, *Paruṣṇī*, *Asiknī*, *Marudvṛdhā*, *Vitastā*, *Ārjikīyā* and *Suṣomā*; of these, the *Paruṣṇī* is identified with the *Irāvātī*, the *Ārjikīyā* with the *Vipāśā*, and the *Suṣomā* with the *Sindhu*." *Ṛgveda Samhitā*, Vol. I [Maṇḍala I] H.H. Wilson and Bhāṣya of Sāyaṇācārya, ed. by Ravi Prakash Arya and K.L. Joshi, 1997, Delhi, pp. 82-83. Obviously these names cannot be attributed to any single period. The Purāṇas are history books revised from time to time and record facts of their period; but seldom expunge old records. The skeptics have used/abused this for their ulterior motif.
7. Caspian Sea, Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.
8. Shrikant G. Talageri, *The Rigveda A Historical Analysis*, 2004, 134 and 148.
9. It will be interesting to note that the Russians called their land "ruska zemlya" (with *ruska* alternatively spelled *rouska*, *ruska*, *rus'ka*, and *russka*), which might be translated as "Land of Rus". Here all alternatives of 'ruska' are derivable from the Vedic tribe Rṣika and the term 'zemlya' is a corrupt form of the Sanskrit term *kṣamā* i.e. earth or land. ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rus\\_\(name\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rus_(name))).
10. T.P. Verma, "Kambojas: the Vedic People who moved all over World" *Itihas Darpan*, Vol. 14(1), 2009, p. 4.
11. Iranian Mythology, <http://rbedrosian.com/Imyth.htm>.
12. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva, chapters 103-05.
13. T.P. Verma, *Inscriptions of the Gahadavalas and their Times*, volume 2, New Delhi, 2011, pp. 765-66.
14. *Mahābhārata*, Vanaparva chapter 106 and ff.
15. *Viṣṇupurāṇa*, 2, chapter 2.
16. *Ṛgveda* III. 23.4.

17. *Ṛgveda* I.28.1; II.101; III.23.4, 29.9; VI.1.6, 70.1, 91.1 & 4, 191.1 etc.
18. *Ṛgveda* I.143.4; II.3.7; III.5.9, 29.4; IX.72.7; X.1.6.
19. *Bhāgvata Purāṇa* IX. 14. 46
20. The European scholars have refused to accept the legend of Ilā. Authors of the *Vedic Index* did not enter Ilā in their work. But recently an American named Thomas Beatie, originally a woman, changed her sex, but later decided to have a child and gave birth to a girl. Since then a good number of transgender cases have come out in the media. Thus we see no reason to denounce the legend of Ilā as a myth. She certainly was a historical personality from whom many tribes have emerged, including the Achaemenians who were Kuru-Kambojas; refer to names Cyrus and Cambyses of these kings.
21. *Matsya Purāṇa* 11.38.
22. *Ibid.*, 11. 44, 45, 47 etc.
23. *Vayu.*, 85. 27.
24. *Ṛv.* X. 34.1.
25. David Frawley, *The Ṛgveda and the History of India*, New Delhi, 2003, p. 144. He cites RV I.84.14; VIII. 6.39; VIII. 7.29; VIII 64.11; IX.65.22-23; IX.113.1-2; X.35.2 and X.75.75.5.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 145.
27. *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā* of *Sāyaṇācārya*, edited by Ramagovinda Tripathi, Varanasi, 2007, pp. 538-39.
28. See S.G. Talageri, p. 115 ff and, David Frawley, *op. cit.* p. 145-46.
29. David Frawley, *op. cit.* p. 145.
30. *Ṛgveda Saṁhitā*, H.H. Wilson and *Bhāṣya* of Sayanacharya, ed. by R.P. Arya and K.L. Joshi, Vol. 1, 1997, p. 289.
31. Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins: Vedic Culture; The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*, Oxford, 2001, p. 205.
32. <http://wikitravel.org/en/Zeravshan>.
33. Bhagwan Singh, *The Vedic Harappans*, 1995, New Delhi, p. 320.
34. Makkhan Lal, *Eterna/India*, July 2009, p. 55.
35. That Kambojas of Pamir and Yavanas of Bactria were provinces within the kingdom of Aśoka is attested by his RE XIII where 'Yona-Kambojas' are mentioned as provinces of his own kingdom 'hida raja-vishavaspi'.
36. *Nriuktam of Yāska. Durgacharya*, with comments by Mukundarajasarmanah, 2002, Varanasi, pp. 61-62.
37. KB 7.6.
38. V.S. Agrawala, *India as Known to Panini*, p. 39.
39. See S.R. Goyal, in his article 'Problem of Orality and Literacy in the Vedic and Early Buddhist Society' in *Itihas Darpan*, Volume XVI (i) , 2011, pp. 34-35.
40. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kambojas>

41. *Vedic Index*, Vol. I, p. 138.
42. T.P. Verma, Kambojas: The Vedic People who Moved All over World” *Itihas Darpan*, Vol. 14(1), 2009, pp. 1-15.
43. *Atharvaveda* V.22.5, 7 etc.
44. Monier Williams *Sanskrit English Dictionary*, p. 350: col. I.
45. Vide my article on the Kelts and Druids (unpublished).
46. *Vaidika Sampatti* by Raghunandan Śarma. p. 256-57.
47. *Vālmikīya Rāmāyaṇa* VII. 30. 19.
48. David Frawley, *op. cit.*, p. 235 ff.
49. *Op. cit.*, p. 29.
50. D.C. Sircar *Select Inscriptions*, I, 1965, p. 152, fn. 9 for Wakhan (37N, 74E) in Central Asia.
51. Heinrich Luders, *Mathura Inscriptions*, 1961, Gottingen, p.75-76.
52. *Ibid.*, p. 131.
53. A.K. Narain, ‘Tokharians: The First Indo-Europeans’ *Itihas Darpan*, volume XV (I), 2010, p. 23 ff.
54. D.C. Sircar, *Op. cit.*, p. 283-84.
55. H.W. Baily in *Bhāratī, Bulletin of the College of Indology*, Central Asia Number, edited by A.K. Narain, 1966-68, Nos. X & XI, pp. 12-13.
56. H. W. Bailey, *Khotanese Texts*, IV, Cambridge, digitally printed version, 2009, p. 5.
57. T. P. Verma, 'Madhya Asia evam Bhārata: Aitihāsika evam Sāṁskritika Sambandhon kī Gāthā', *Itihas Darpan*, volume 15 (I) 2010, p. 27-41.
58. V.S. Agrawala, *Patañjalikālīna Bhāratavarṣa*, 1996, Varanasi, p. 42.