

CHAPTER IV

SHUDRAS *VERSUS* ARYANS

I

FROM what has been said before, it is clear that the Brahmanic writers do not give us any clue as to who the Shudras were and how they came to be the fourth *Varna*. It is, therefore, necessary to turn to the Western writers and to see what they have to say about the subject. The Western writers have a definite theory about the origin of the Shudras. Though all of them are not agreed upon every aspect of the theory, there are points on which there seems to be a certain amount of unity among them. They comprise the following :

(1) The people who created the Vedic literature belonged to the Aryan race.

(2) This Aryan race came from outside India and invaded India.

(3) The natives of India were known as Dasas and Dasyus who were racially different from the Aryans.

(4) The Aryans were a white race. The Dasas and Dasyus were a dark race.

(5) The Aryans conquered the Dasas and Dasyus.

(6) The Dasas and Dasyus after they were conquered and enslaved were called Shudras.

(7) The Aryans cherished colour prejudice and therefore formed the *Chaturvarnya* whereby they separated the white race from the black race such as the Dasas and the Dasyus.

These are the principal elements in the Western theory about the origin and position of the Shudras in the Indo-Aryan society. Whether it is valid or not is another matter. But this much must certainly be said about it that after reading the Brahmanic theories with their long and tedious explanations attempting to treat a social fact as a divine dispensation, one cannot but feel a certain amount of relief in having before oneself a theory, which proceeds to give

a natural explanation of a social fact. One can do nothing with the Brahmanic theories except to call them senseless ebullitions of a silly mind. They leave the problem as it is. With the modern theory, one is at least on the road to recover one's way.

To test the validity of the theory, the best thing to do is to examine it piece by piece and see how far each is supported by evidence.

The foundation on which the whole fabric of the theory rests is the proposition that there lived a people who were Aryan by race. It is in the fitness of things therefore to grapple with this question first.

What is this Aryan race? Before we consider the question of Aryan race we must be sure as to what we mean by the word "race". It is necessary to raise this question because it is not impossible to mistake a people for a race. The best illustration of such a mistake is the Jews. Most people believe that the Jews are a race. To the naked eye, they appear to be so. But what is the verdict of the experts ? This is what Prof. Ripley¹ has to say about the Jews :

"Our final conclusion, then, is this: This is paradoxical yet true, we affirm. The Jews are not a race, but only a people after all. In their faces we read its confirmation; while in respect of their other traits, we are convinced that such individuality as they possess—by no means inconsiderable—is of their own making from one generation to the next, rather than a product of an unprecedented purity of physical descent."

What is a race? A race may be defined as a body of people possessing certain typical traits which are hereditary. There was a time when it was believed that the traits which constitute a race are: (1) the form of the head, (2) the colour of the hair and eyes, (3) the colour of the skin, and (4) the stature. To-day the general view is that pigmentation and stature are traits, which vary according to climate and habitat, and consequently they must be ruled out as tests for determining the race of the people. The only stable trait is the shape of the human head—by which is meant the general proportions of length, breadth and height and that is why anthropologists and ethnologists regard it as the best available test of race.

The use of head-forms for determining the race to which an individual belongs has been developed by anthropologists into an exact science. It is called anthropometry. This science of anthropometry has devised two ways of measuring the head form: (1) cephalic index, and (2) facial index. The index is the mark of the race.

1. Ripley W. E., *The Races of Europe*, p. 400.

Cephalic index is the breadth of the head above the ears expressed in percentage of its length from forehead to back. Assuming that this length is 100, the width is expressed as a fraction of it. As the head becomes proportionately broader—that is more fully rounded, viewed from the top down—this cephalic index increases. When it rises above 80, the head is called brachycephalic. When it falls below 75, the term dolichocephalic is applied to it. Indices between 75 and 80 are characterized as mesocephalic. These are technical terms. They constantly crop up in literature dealing with questions of race and if one does not know what they denote it obviously becomes very difficult to follow the discussion intelligently. It would not therefore be without advantage if I were to stop to give their popular equivalents. The popular equivalent of mesocephalic is medium-headed, having a medium cephalic Index, the breadth of the cranium being between three-fourths and four-fifths of the length. Dolichocephalic means long-headed, having a low cephalic index, the breadth of the cranium being below four-fifths of the length.

Facial index is the correlation between the proportions of the head and the form of the face. In the majority of cases, it has been found that a relatively broad head is accompanied by a rounded face, in which the breadth back of the cheek bones is considerable as compared with the height from forehead to chin. Lack of uniformity in the mode of taking measurements has so far prevented extended observations fit for exact comparison. All the same, it has been found safe to adopt the rule, long head, oval face: short-head and round face.

Applying these measures of anthropometry, Prof. Ripley, an authority on the question of race, has come to the conclusion that the European people belong to three different races in terms of cephalic and facial index. His conclusions are summarized in the table on the next page.¹

Is there an Aryan race in the physical sense of the term? There seem to be two views on the subject. One view is in favour of the existence of the Aryan race. According to it :²

The Aryan type.. is marked by a relatively long (dolichocephalic) head; a straight finely-cut (leptorrhine) nose; a long symmetrically narrow face; well developed regular features and a high facial angle. The stature is fairly high— and the general build of the figure well-proportioned and slender rather than massive.

1. Ripley, *Races of Europe*, p. 121.

2. *Ibid* Vol. I, p. 121

EUROPEAN RACIAL TYPES

	<i>Head</i>	<i>Face</i>	<i>Hair</i>	<i>Eyes</i>	<i>Stature</i>	<i>Nose</i>
1. Teutonic	Long	Long	Very light	Blue	Tall	Narrow aquiline
2. Alpine (Celtic)	Round	Broad	Light Chestnut	Hazel Grey	Medium stocky	Variable: rather broad heavy
3. Mediterranean	Long	Long	Dark brown or black	Dark	Medium slender	Rather broad

The other view is that of Prof. Max Muller. According to him, the word is used in three different senses. This is what he, in his lectures on the *Science of Language*, says :

In *ar* or *ara*, I recognise one of the oldest names of the earth, as the ploughed land, lost in Sanskrit but preserved in Greek as (*era*) so that Arya would have conveyed originally the meaning of landholder, cultivator of the land, while Vaishya from *Vis* meant householder, *Ida* the daughter of Manu is another name of the cultivated earth and probably a modification of *Ara*.

The second sense in which it was used was to convey the idea of ploughing or tilling the soil. As to this, Prof. Max Muller makes the following observations :

I can only state that the etymological signification of Arya seems to be: One who ploughs or tills. The Aryans would seem to have chosen this name for themselves as opposed to the nomadic races, the *Turanians*, whose original name *Tura* implies the swiftness of the horsemen.

In the third sense, the word was used as a general name for the Vaishyas, i.e., the general body of the people, who formed the whole mass of the people. For this, Prof. Max Muller relies on Panini (iii. 1,103) for his authority. Then, there is the fourth sense, which the word got only towards the later period, in which sense it means 'of noble origin'.

What is however of particular importance is the opinion of Prof. Max Muller on the question of the Aryan race. This is what he says on the subject:¹

There is no Aryan race in blood; Aryan, in scientific language is utterly inapplicable to race. It means language and nothing but language; and if we speak of Aryan race at all, we should know that it means no more than... Aryan speech.

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I have declared again and again that if I say Aryas, I mean neither blood nor bones, nor hair nor skull; I mean simply those who speak an Aryan language. The same applies to Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Celts, and Slavs. When I speak of them I commit myself to no anatomical characteristics. The blue-eyed and fair-haired Scandinavians may have been conquerors or conquered, they may have adopted the language of their darker lords or their subjects, or *vice versa*. I assert nothing beyond their language, when I call them Hindus, Greeks, Romans, Germans, Celts and Slavs; and in that sense, and in that sense only, do I say that even the blackest Hindus represent an earlier stage of Aryan speech and thought than the fairest Scandinavians. This may seem strong language, but in matters of such importance we cannot be too decided in our language. To me, an ethnologist who speaks of Aryan race, Aryan blood, Aryan eyes and hair, is as great a sinner as linguist who speaks of a dolichocephalic dictionary or a

1 *Biography of Words*, pp. 89 and 120-21.

brachycephalic grammar. It is worse than a Babylonian confusion of tongues— it is down-right theft. We have made our own terminology for the classification of language; let ethnologists make their own for the classification of skulls, and hair and blood.

The value of this view of Prof. Max Muller will be appreciated by those who know that he was at one time a believer in the theory of Aryan race and was largely responsible for the propagation of it.

The two views are obviously not in harmony. According to one view, the Aryan race existed in a physiological sense with typical hereditary traits with a fixed cephalic and facial index. According to Prof. Max Muller, the Aryan race existed in a philological sense, as a people speaking a common language.

In this conflict of views one may well ask: what is the testimony of the Vedic literature? As examination of the Vedic literature shows that there occur two words in the Rig Veda—one is Arya (आर्य) with a short 'a' and the other is Arya (आर्य) with a long 'a'. The word Arya (आर्य) with a short 'a' is used in the Rig Veda¹ in 88 places. In what sense is it used? The word² is used in four different senses; as (1) enemy, (2) respectable person, (3) name for India, and (4) owner, Vaishya or citizen.

The word (आर्य) with a long 'a' is used in the Rig Veda in 31 places.³ But in none of these is the word used in the sense of race.

From the foregoing discussion, the one indisputable conclusion which follows is that the terms 'Arya' and 'Arya' which occur in the Vedas have not been used in the racial sense at all.

One may also ask: what is the evidence of anthropometry? the Aryan race is described as long-headed. This description is not enough. For as will be seen from the table given by Prof. Ripley, there are two races which are long-headed. The question which of the two is the Aryan race still remains open.

II

Let us take the next premise—namely, that the Aryans came from outside India, invaded India, and conquered the native tribes. It would be better to take these questions separately.

1. For a list of the references in the Rig Veda, see Appendix 1.

2. For a list of references showing in which place the word is used and in what sense, see Appendix II

3. For a list of references, see Appendix III.

From where did the Aryan race come into India? On the question of locating the original home of the Aryan race, there is a bewildering variety of views and options. According to Benfey, the original home of the Aryan race must be determined by reference to the common vocabulary. His views on the subject have been well summarized by Prof. Isaac Taylor¹ in the following words :

“The investigation of the vocabulary common to the whole of the Aryan languages might yield a clue to the region inhabited by the Aryans before the linguistic separation. He contended that certain animals, such as the bear and the wolf, and certain trees, such as the beech and the birch with which the primitive Aryans must have been acquainted, are all indigenous to the temperate zone, and above all, to Europe, whereas the characteristic animals and trees of Southern Asia, such as the lion, the tiger and the palm were known only to the Indians and the Iranians. He urged that the absence from the primitive Aryan vocabulary of common names for the two great Asiatic beasts of prey, the lion and the tiger, or for the chief Asiatic beast of transport, the camel, is difficult to explain on the theory of the migration of the Aryans from the region eastward of the Caspian. That the Greeks called the lion by its Semitic name, and the Indians by a name which cannot be referred to any Aryan root, argues that the lion was unknown in the common home of Greeks and Indians.

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Benfey's declaration speedily bore fruit, and Geiger forthwith ranged himself in the same camp, but placing the cradle of the Aryans, not as Benfey had done in the region to the North of the Black Sea, but more to the north-west, in Central and Western Germany. Geiger's contribution to the argument was not without its value. He bases his conclusions largely on the tree names which belong to the primitive Aryan vocabulary. In addition to the fir, the willow, the ash, the alder, and the hazel, he thinks the names of the birch, the beech and the oak are specially decisive. Since the Greek (phegos) which denotes the oak is the linguistic equivalent of the Teutonic *beech* and of the Latin *fagus* he draws the conclusion that the Greeks migrated from a land of beeches to a land of oaks, transferring the name which denoted the tree with 'edible' fruit from the one tree to the other.”

Another school holds that the original home of the Aryan race was in Caucasia, because the Caucasians like the Aryans are blonds, have a straight, a sharp nose and a handsome face. On this point, the view of Prof. Ripley is worth quoting. This is what Prof. Ripley² has to say on the subject :

The utter absurdity of the misnomer Caucasian, as applied to the blue-eyed and fair-headed 'Aryan' (?) race of Western Europe, is revealed by two indisputable facts. In the first place, this ideal blond type does not occur within many hundred miles of Caucasia; and, secondly, nowhere along the great Caucasian chain is there a single native tribe making use of a purely inflectional or Aryan language.

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1 Issac Taylor, *The Origin of the Aryans*, pp. 24-26.

2 Ripley : *Races of Europe*, pp. 436-437.

Even the Ossetes, whose language alone is possibly inflectional, have not had their claims to the honour of Aryan made positively clear as yet. And even if Ossetian be Aryan, there is every reason to regard the people as immigrants from the direction of Iran, not indigenous Caucasians at all. Their head form, together with their occupation of territory along the only highway—the Pass of Darriell—across the chain from the South, give tenability to the hypothesis. At all events, whether the Ossetes be Aryan or not, they little deserve pre-eminence among the other peoples about them. They are lacking both in the physical beauty for which this region is justly famous, and in courage as well, if we may judge by their reputation in yielding abjectly and without shadow of resistance to the Russians.

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It is not true that any of these Caucasians are even ‘somewhat typical’. As a matter of fact they could never be typical of anything. The name covers nearly every physical type and family of language of the Eur-Asian continent except, as we have said, that blond, tall, ‘Aryan’ speaking one to which the name has been specifically applied. It is all false; not only improbable but absurd. The Caucasus is not a cradle—it is rather a grave—of peoples, of languages, of customs and of physical types. Let us be assured of that point at the outset. Nowhere else in the world probably is so heterogeneous a lot of people, languages and religions gathered together in one place as along the chain of the Caucasus mountains.”

Mr. Tilak has suggested that the original home of the Aryan race was in the Arctic region. His theory may be summarized in his own words. He begins by taking note of the astronomical and climatic phenomenon in the region round about the North Pole. He finds¹ that there are :

“Two sets of characteristics, or *differentia*; one for an observer stationed exactly at the terrestrial North Pole, and the other for an observer located in the Circum-Polar regions, or tracts of land between the North Pole and the Arctic circle.”

Mr. Tilak calls these two sets of *differentia*; as Polar and CircumPolar, and sums them up as follows :

I. The Polar Characteristics

(1) The sun rises in the south.

(2) The stars do not rise and set; but *revolve* or spin round and round, in horizontal planes, completing one round in 24 hours. The northern celestia hemisphere is alone overhead and visible during the whole year; and the souther or lower celestial world is always invisible.

(3) The year consists only of one long day and one long night of six months each.

(4) There is only one morning and one evening, or the sun rises and sets only once a year. But the *twilight*, whether of the morning or of the evening, lasts continuously for about *two months*, or 60 periods of 24 hours each. The ruddy light

1 Tilak B. G., *The Arctic Home in the Vedas*, 58-60.

of the morn, or the evening twilight, is not again confined to a particular part of the horizon (eastern or western) as with us; but moves, like the stars at the place, round and round along the horizon, like a potter's wheel, completing one round in every 24 hours. These rounds of the morning light continue to take place, until the orb of the sun comes above the horizon; and then the sun follows the same course for six months, that is, moves, without setting, round and round the observer, completing one round every 24 hours.

II. The Circum-Polar Characteristics

(1) The sun will always be to the south of the zenith of the observer, but as this happens even in the case of an observer stationed in the temperate zone, it cannot be regarded as a special characteristic.

(2) A large number of stars are *circum-polar*, that is, they are above the horizon during the entire period of their revolution and hence always visible. The remaining stars rise and set as in the temperate zone, but revolve in more oblique circles.

(3) The year is made up of three parts: (i) one long continuous night, occurring at the time of the winter solstice, and lasting for a period, greater than 24 hours and less than six months, according to the latitude of the place; (ii) one long continuous day to match, occurring at the time of the summer solstice; and (iii) a succession of ordinary days and nights during the rest of the year, a nycthemeron, or a day and a night together, never exceeding a period of 24 hours. The day, after the long continuous night, is at first shorter than the night, but goes on increasing until it develops into the long continuous day. At the end of the long day, the night is, at first, shorter than the day, but, in its turn, it begins to gain over the day, until the commencement of the long continuous night, with which the year ends.

(4) The dawn, at the close of the long continuous night, lasts for several days, but its duration and magnificence is proportionally less than at the North Pole, according to the latitude of the place. For places, within a few degrees of the North Pole, the phenomenon of revolving morning light will still be observable during the greater part of the duration of the dawn. The other dawns viz., those between ordinary days and nights, will, like the dawns in the temperate zone, only last for a few hours. The sun, when he is above the horizon during the continuous day, will be seen revolving, without setting, round the observer, as at the Pole, but in oblique and not horizontal circles, and during the long night he will be entirely below the horizon, while during the rest of the year he will rise and set, remaining above the horizon for a part of 24 hours, varying according to the position of the sun in the ecliptic.

Summing up the position as analysed by him, Mr. Tilak concludes by saying :

“Here we have two distinct sets of *differentiae* or special characteristics of the Polar and *Circum-Polar* regions—characteristics which are not found anywhere else on the surface of the globe. Again as the Poles of the earth are the same to-day as they were millions of years ago, the above astronomical characteristics will hold good for all times, though the Polar climate may have undergone violent changes in the Pleistocene period.”

Having noted the phenomenon in the Arctic region, Mr. Tilak proceeds to argue that :

“If a Vedic description or tradition discloses any of the characteristics mentioned above, we may safely infer that the tradition is Polar or Circumi-Polar in origin, and the phenomenon, if not actually witnessed by the poet, was at least known to him by tradition faithfully handed down from generation to generation. Fortunately there are many such passages or references in the Vedic literature, and, for convenience, these may be divided into two parts; the first comprising those passages which directly describe or refer to the long night, or the long dawn; and the second consisting of myths and legends which corroborate and indirectly support the first.”

Mr. Tilak is satisfied that the description of natural phenomenon and the myths and legends contained in the Vedas tally with the natural phenomenon as it exists near the North Pole and concludes that the Vedic poets i.e., the Vedic Aryans must have had the Arctic region as their home.

This is of course a very original theory. There is only one point which seems to have been overlooked. The horse is a favourite animal of the Vedic Aryans. It was most intimately connected with their life and their religion. That the queens vied with one another to copulate with the horse in the *Ashvamedha Yajna*¹ shows what place the horse had acquired in the life of the Vedic Aryans. Question is : was the horse to be found in the Arctic region? If the answer is in the negative, the Arctic home theory becomes very precarious.

III

What evidence is there of the invasion of India by the Aryan race and the subjugation by it of the native tribes? So far as the *Rig Veda* is concerned, there is not a particle of evidence suggesting the invasion of India by the Aryans from outside India. As Mr. P. T. Srinivasa Iyengar² points out:

“A careful examination of the *Mantras* where the words Arya, Dasa and Dasyu occur, indicates that they refer not to race but to cult. These words occur mostly in *Rig Veda Samhita* where Arya occurs about 33 times in *mantras* which contain 153,972 words on the whole. The rare occurrence is itself a proof that the tribes that called themselves Aryas were not invaders that conquered the country and exterminated the people. For an invading tribe would naturally boast of its achievements constantly.”

So far the testimony of the Vedic literature is concerned, it is against the theory that the original home of the Aryans was outside India. The language in which reference to the seven rivers is made in

1 See *Yajur Veda* with Madhavachiya's Bhashya.

2 *Life in Ancient India in the Age of the Mantras*, pp. 11-12.

the *Rig Veda* (x.75.5) is very significant. As Prof. D. S. Triveda says¹—the rivers are addressed as ‘my Ganges, my Yamuna, my Saraswati’ and so on. No foreigner would ever address a river in such familiar and endearing terms unless by long association he had developed an emotion about it.

As to the question of conquest and subjugation, references can undoubtedly be found in the *Rig Veda* where Dasas and Dasyus are described as enemies of the Aryas and there are many hymns in which the Vedic *rishis* have invited their gods to kill and annihilate them. But before drawing any conclusion from it in favour of conquest and subjugation by the Aryans, the following points must be taken into consideration.

First is the paucity of references in the *Rig Veda* to wars between the Aryans on the one hand and the Dasas or Dasyus on the other. Out of the 33 places in which the word occurs in the *Rig Veda* only in 8 places is it used in opposition to Dasas and only in 7 places is it used in opposition to the word Dasyus. This may show the occurrence of sporadic riots between the two. It is certainly not evidence of a conquest or subjugation.

The second point about the Dasas is that whatever conflict there was between them and the Aryans, the two seem to have arrived at a mutual settlement, based on peace with honour. This is borne out by references in the *Rig Veda* showing how the Dasas and Aryans have stood as one united people against a common enemy. Note the following verses from the *Rig Veda* :

Rig Veda — vi. 33.3;
 vii. 83.1;
 viii 51.9;
 X 102.3.

The third point to note is that whatever the degree of conflict, it was not a conflict of race. It was a conflict which had arisen on account of difference of religions. That this conflict was religious and not racial is evidenced by the *Rig Veda* itself. Speaking of the Dasyus, it² says :

“They are *avrata*, without (the Arya) rites (R.V., i. 51.8, 9; i.132. 4; iv.41. 2; vi. 14, 3); *apavrata* (R.V., v.42,2), *anyavrata* of different rites (R.V., viii.59, 11; x.22, 8), *Anagnitra* fireless (R.V., v. 189, 3), *ayajyu*, *ayajvan*, non-sacrifices (R.V., i.131, 44; i.33, 4; viii.59, 11), *abrambha*, without prayers (or also not

1 *The Original Home of the Aryans* by D. S. Triveda, Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, Vol. XX, p. 62.

2 Iyengar, *Ibid.*, p. 13.

having Brahmana priest (R.V., iv. 15,9; x.105,8). *anrichah*, without Riks (R.V., x.105, 8), *Brahmadvisha*, haters of prayer (or Brahmans) R.V., v.42,9), and *anindra*, without Indra, despisers of Indra, (R.V., i.133,1: v.2,3; vii 18; 6; x 27, 6; x.48, 7). 'They pour no milky draughts they heat no cauldron' (R.V., iii.53, 4). They give no gifts to the Brahmana (R.V., v.7, 10)."

Attention may also be drawn to the Rig Veda x.22.8 which says :

"We live in the midst of the Dasyu tribes, who do not perform sacrifices nor believe in anything. They have their own rites and are not entitled to be called men. O! thou, destroyer of enemies, annihilate them and injure the Dasas."

In the face of these statements from the *Rig Veda*, there is obviously no room for a theory of a military conquest by the Aryan race of the non-Aryan races of Dasas and Dasyus.

IV

So much about the Aryans, their invasion of India and their subjugation of the Dasas and Dasyus. The consideration so far bestowed upon the question has been from the Aryan side of the issue. It might be useful to discuss it from the side of the Dasas and the Dasyus. In what sense are the names Dasa and Dasyu used? Are they used in a racial sense?

Those who hold that the terms Dasa and Dasyu are used in the racial sense rely upon the following circumstances: (1) The use in the *Rig Veda* of the terms *Mridhravak* and *Anasa* as epithets of Dasyus. (2) The description in the *Rig Veda* of the Dasas as being of Krishna Varna

The term *Mridhravak* occurs in the following places in the *Rig Veda* :

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| (1) <i>Rig Veda</i> , | i. | 174.2; |
| (2) <i>Rig Veda</i> , | v. | 32.8; |
| (3) <i>Rig Veda</i> , | vii. | 6.3; |
| (4) <i>Rig Veda</i> , | vii. | 18.3. |

What does the adjective *Mridhravak* mean? *Mridhravak* means one who speaks crude, unpolished language. Can crude unpolished language be regarded as evidence of difference of race? It would be childish to rely upon this as a basis of consciousness of race difference.

The term *Anasa* occurs in *Rig Veda* v.29.10. What does the word mean? There are two interpretations. One is by Prof. Max Muller. The other is by Sayanacharya. According to Prof.. Max Muller, it

means 'one without nose 'or' one with a flat nose' and has as such been relied upon as a piece of evidence in support of the view that the Aryans were a separate race from the Dasyus. Sayanacharya says that it means 'mouthless,' i.e., devoid of good speech. This difference of meaning is due to difference in the correct reading of the word *Anasa..* Sayanacharya reads it as *an-asa* while Prof. Max Muller reads it as *a-nasa*. As read by Prof. Max Muller, it means without nose. Question is : which of the two readings is the correct one? There is no reason to hold that Sayana's reading is wrong. On the other hand there is every thing to suggest that it is right. In the first place, it does not make non-sense of the word. Secondly, as there is no other place where the Dasyus are described as noseless, there is no reason why the word should be read in such a manner as to give it an altogether new sense. It is only fair to read it as a synonym of *Mridhravak*. There is therefore no evidence in support of the conclusion that the Dasyus belonged to a different race.

Turning to Dasas, it is true that they are described as *Krishna Yoni*, in Rig Veda vi.47.21. But there are various points to be considered before one can accept the inference which is sought to be drawn from it. First is that this is the only place in the Rig Veda where the phrase *Krishna Yoni* is applied to the Dasas. Secondly, there is no certainty as to whether the phrase is used in the literal sense or in a figurative sense. Thirdly, we do not know whether it is a statement of fact or a word of abuse. Unless these points are clarified, it is not possible to accept the view that because the Dasas are spoken of as *Krishna Yoni*, they therefore, belonged to a dark race.

In this connection, attention may be drawn to the following verses from the Rig Veda:

1. Rig Veda, vi.22.10.—"Oh, Vajri, thou hast made Aryas of Dasas, good men out of bad by your power. Give us the same power so that with it we may overcome our enemies."
2. Rig Veda, x.49.3, (says Indra).—"I have deprived the Dasyus of the title of Aryas."
3. Rig Veda, i. 151.8—"Oh, Indra, find out who is an Arya and who is a Dasyu and separate them."

What do these verses indicate? They indicate that the distinction between the Aryans on the one hand and the Dasas and Dasyus on the other was not a racial distinction of colour or physiognomy. That is why a Dasa or Dasyu could become an Arya. That is why Indra was given the task to separate them from the Arya.

That the theory of the Aryan race set up by Western writers falls to the ground at every point, goes without saying. This is somewhat surprising since Western scholarship is usually associated with thorough research and careful analysis. Why has the theory failed? It is important to know the reasons why it has failed. Anyone who cares to scrutinize the theory will find that it suffers from a double infection. In the first place, the theory is based on nothing but pleasing assumptions and inferences based on such assumptions. In the second place, the theory is a perversion of scientific investigation. It is not allowed to evolve out of facts. On the contrary the theory is preconceived and facts are selected to prove it.

The theory of the Aryan race is just an assumption and no more. It is based on a philological proposition put forth by Dr. Bopp in his epoch-making book called *Comparative Grammar* which appeared in 1835. In this book, Dr. Bopp demonstrated that a greater number of languages of Europe and some languages of Asia must be referred to a common ancestral speech. The European languages and Asiatic languages to which Bopp's proposition applied are called Indo-Germanic. Collectively, they have come to be called the Aryan languages largely because Vedic language refer to the Aryas and is also of the same family as the Indo-Germanic. This assumption is the major premise on which the theory of the Aryan race is based.

From this assumption are drawn two inferences: (1) unity of race, and (2) that race being the Aryan race. The argument is that if the languages are descended from a common ancestral speech then there must have existed a race whose mother tongue it was and since the mother tongue was known as the Aryan tongue the race who spoke it was the Aryan race. The existence of a separate and a distinct Aryan race is thus an inference only. From this inference, is drawn another inference which is that of a common original habitat. It is argued that there could be no community of language unless people had a common habitat permitting close communion. Common original habitat is thus an inference from an inference.

The theory of invasion is an invention. This invention is necessary because of a gratuitous assumption which underlies the Western theory. The assumption is that the Indo-Germanic people are the purest of the modern representatives of the original Aryan race. Its first home is assumed to have been somewhere in Europe. These

assumptions raise a question: How could the Aryan speech have come to India: This question can be answered only by the supposition that the Aryans must have come into India from outside. Hence the necessity for inventing the theory of invasion.

The third assumption is that the Aryans were a superior race. This theory has its origin in the belief that the Aryans are a European race and as a European race it is presumed to be superior to the Asiatic races. Having assumed its superiority, the next logical step one is driven to take is to establish the fact of superiority. Knowing that nothing can prove the superiority of the Aryan race better than invasion and conquest of native races, the Western writers have proceeded to invent the story of the invasion of India by the Aryans and the conquest by them of the Dasas and Dasyus.

The fourth assumption is that the European races were white¹ and had a colour prejudice against the dark races. The Aryans being a European race, it is assumed that it must have had colour prejudice. The theory proceeds to find evidence for colour prejudice in the Aryans who came into India. This it finds in the *Chaturvarnya*—an institution by the established Indo-Aryans after they came to India and which according to these scholars is based upon *Varna* which is taken by them to mean colour.

Not one of these assumptions is borne out by facts. Take the premise about the Aryan race. The theory does not take account of the possibility that the Aryan race in the physiological sense is one thing and an Aryan race in the philological sense quite different, and that it is perfectly possible that the Aryan race, if there is one, in the physiological sense may have its habitat in one place and that the Aryan race, in the philological sense, in quite a different place. The theory of the Aryan race is based on the premise of a common language and it is supposed to be common because it has a structural affinity. The assertion that the Aryans came from outside and invaded India is not proved and the premise that the Dasas and Dasyus are aboriginal tribes² of India is demonstrably false.

Again to say that the institution of *Chaturvarnya* is a reflexion of the innate colour prejudice of the Aryans is really to assert too much. If colour is the origin of class distinction, there must be four different colours to account for the different classes which comprise *Chaturvarnya*. Nobody has said what those four colours are and who

1. For a discussion as to who the Dasas and Dasyus were, see Chapter 6.

2. For a discussion whether in their origin the European races were white or dark see the observations of Prof. Ripley, *infra*, p. 76.

were the four coloured races who were welded together in *Chaturvarnya*. As it is, the theory starts with only two opposing people, Aryas and Dasas—one assumed to be white and the other assumed to be dark.

The originators of the Aryan race theory are so eager to establish their case that they have no patience to see what absurdities they land themselves in. They start on a mission to prove what they want to prove and do not hesitate to pick such evidence from the Vedas as they think is good for them.

Prof. Michael Foster has somewhere said that ‘hypothesis is the salt of science.’ Without hypothesis there is no possibility of fruitful investigation. But it is equally true that where the desire to prove a particular hypothesis is dominant, hypothesis becomes the poison of science. The Aryan race theory of Western scholars is as good an illustration of how hypothesis can be the poison of science as one can think of.

The Aryan race theory is so absurd that it ought to have been dead long ago. But far from being dead, the theory has a considerable hold upon the people. There are two explanations which account for this phenomenon. The first explanation is to be found in the support which the theory receives from Brahmin scholars. This is a very strange phenomenon. As Hindus, they should ordinarily show a dislike for the Aryan theory with its express avowal of the superiority of the European races over the Asiatic races. But the Brahmin scholar has not only no such aversion but he most willingly hails it. The reasons are obvious. The Brahmin believes in the two-nation theory. He claims to be the representative of the Aryan race and he regards the rest of the Hindus as descendants of the non-Aryans. The theory helps him to establish his kinship with the European races and share their arrogance and their superiority. He likes particularly that part of the theory which makes the Aryan an invader and a conqueror of the non-Aryan native races. For it helps him to maintain and justify his overlordship over the non-Brahmins.

The second explanation why the Aryan race theory is not dead is because of the general insistence by European scholars that the word *Varna* means *colour* and the acceptance of that view by a majority of the Brahmin scholars. Indeed, this is the mainstay of the Aryan theory. There is no doubt that as long as this interpretation of the *Varna* continues to be accepted, the Aryan theory will continue to live. This part of the Aryan theory is therefore very important and

calls for fuller examination. It needs to be examined from three different points of view: (1) Were the European races fair or dark? (2) Were the Indo-Aryans fair? and (3) What is the original meaning of the word *Varna* ?

On the question of the colour of the earliest Europeans Prof. Ripley is quite definite that they were of dark complexion. Prof. Ripley goes on to say:¹

“We are strengthened in this assumption that the earliest Europeans were not only long-headed but also dark complexioned, by various points in our enquiry thus far. We have proved the prehistoric antiquity of the living Cro-Magnon type in Southern France; and we saw that among these peasants, the prevalence of black hair and eyes is very striking. And comparing types in the British Isles we saw that everything tended to show that the brunet populations of Wales, Ireland and Scotland constituted the most primitive stratum of population in Britain. Furthermore, in that curious spot in Garfagnana, where a survival of the ancient Ligurian population of Northern Italy is indicated, there also are the people characteristically dark. Judged, therefore, either in the light of general principles or of local details, it would seem as if this earliest race in Europe must have been very dark.... It was Mediterranean in its pigmental affinities, and not Scandinavian.”

Turning to the Vedas for any indication whether the Aryans had any colour prejudice, reference may be made to the following passages in the Rig Veda :

In Rig Veda, i. 117.8, there is a reference to *Ashvins* having brought about the marriage between *Shyavya* and *Rushati*. *Shyavya* is black and *Rushati* is fair.

In Rig Veda, i. 117.5, there is a prayer addressed to *Ashvins* for having saved Vandana who is spoken as of golden colour.

In Rig Veda, ii.3.9, there is a prayer by an Aryan invoking the Devas to bless him with a son with certain virtues but of (*pishanga*) tawny (reddish brown) complexion.

These instances show that the Vedic Aryans had no colour prejudice. How could they have? The Vedic Aryans were not of one colour. Their complexion varied; some were of copper complexion, some white, and some black. Rama the son of Dasharatha has been described as *Shyama* i.e., dark in complexion, so is Krishna the descendant of the Yadus, another Aryan clan. The Rishi Dirghatamas, who is the author of many *mantras* of the Rig Veda must have been of dark colour if his name was given to him after his complexion. Kanva is an Aryan rishi of great repute. But according to the description given in Rig Veda—x.31.11—he was of dark colour.

1 Prof. Ripley : *Races of Europe*, p. 466

To take up the third and the last point, namely, the meaning of the word *Varna*¹ Let us first see in what sense it is used in the Rig Veda. The word *Varna* is used² in the Rig Veda in 22 places. Of these, in about 17 places the word is used in reference to deities such as Ushas, Agni, Soma, etc., and means lustre, features or colour. Being used in connection with deities, it would be unsafe to use them for ascertaining what meaning the word *Varna* had in the Rig Veda when applied to human beings. There are four and at the most five places in the Rig Veda where the word is used in reference to human beings. They are :

- 1) i.104.2;
- 2) i.179.6;
- 3) ii.12.4;
- 4) iii.34.5;
- 5) ix.71.2.

Do these references prove that the word *Varna* is used in the Rig Veda in the sense of colour and complexion?

Rig veda, iii.34.5 seems to be of doubtful import. The expression 'caused Shukla Varna to increase' is capable of double interpretation. It may mean Indra made Ushas throw her light and thereby increase the white colour, or it may mean that the hymn-maker being of white complexion, people of his i.e., of white colour increased. The second meaning would be quite far-fetched for the simple reason that the expansion of the white colour is the effect and lightening of Ushas is the cause.

Rig Veda, ix.71.2 the expression 'abandons Asura Varna' is not clear, reading it in the light of the other stanzas in the *Sukta*. The *Sukta* belongs to Soma Pavamana. Bearing this in mind, the expression 'abandons Asura Varna' must be regarded as a description of Soma. The word *Varna* as used here is indicative of *roopa*. The second half of the stanza says: 'he throws away his black or dark covering and takes on lustrous covering.' From this it is clear that the word *Varna* is used as indicative of darkness.

Rig Veda, i.179.6 is very helpful. The stanza explains that Rishi Agastya cohabitated with Lopamudra in order to obtain *praja*, children and strength and says that as a result two Varnas prospered. It is not clear from the stanza, which are the two Varnas referred to in the stanzas, although the intention is to refer to Aryas and Dasas.

1 On what follows, see *Maharashtra Dnyanakosha*, Vol. III pp. 39-42.

2 See Appendix VI, p. 216.

Be that as it may, there is no doubt that the Varna in the stanza means class and not colour.

In Rig Veda, i.104.2 and Rig Veda, ii.12.4 are the two stanzas in which the word Varna is applied to Dasa. The question is: What does the word Varna mean when applied to Dasa? Does it refer to the colour and complexion of the Dasa, or does it indicate that Dasas formed a separate class? There is no way of arriving at a positive conclusion as to which of the two meanings is correct.

The evidence of the Rig Veda is quite inconclusive. In this connection, it will be of great help to know if the word occurs in the literature of the Indo-Iranians and if so, in what sense.¹

Fortunately, the word Varna does occur in the Zend Avesta. It takes the form of *Varana* or *Varena*. It is used specifically in the sense of "Faith, Religious doctrine, Choice of creed or belief." It is derived from the root *Var* which means to put faith in, to believe in. One comes across the word *Varana* or *Varena* in the Gathas about six times used in the sense of faith, doctrine, creed or belief.

It occurs in Gatha Ahunavaiti—Yasna Ha 30 Stanza 2 which when translated in English reads as follows :

"Give heed with your ears and contemplate the highest Truth I proclaim; with your illumined mind introspect. Each man for himself must determine his (Avarenao) faith. Before the Great Event, let each individually be awake to the Truth we teach."

This is one of the most famous strophes of the Gatha where Zarathushtra exhorts each one individually to use reasoning faculty and freedom of choice in the selection of his or her faith. The words occurring here are '*Avarenao vichithahya*,' *Avarenao* meaning faith, belief and *vichi- thahya* meaning 'of discriminating, of selecting of determining'.

It occurs in Gatha Ahunavati—Yasna Ha 31 Stanza 11. The word used is *Vareneng* accusative plural of *Varena* meaning 'belief, faith.' In this stanza, Zarathushtra propounds the theory of the creation of man. After speaking about man's creation being completed, in the last half line Zarathushtra says "voluntary beliefs are given (to man)"

It occurs in Gatha Ushtavaiti—Yasna Ha 45 Stanza 1 in the form of *Varena*. In the last line of this strophe, Zarathushtra says 'owing to sinful belief (or evil faith) the wicked is of evil tongue (or invested tongue)'.

1 The information relating to the meaning of the word 'Varna' in the Indo-Iranian literature, I owe to my friend Dastur Bode, who is well-versed in it.

It occurs in Gatha Ushtavaiti—Yasna Ha 45 Stanza 2 in the same form as above *Varena* in the clear sense of faith, religion, belief, etc. In this stanza, Zarathushtra is propounding his philosophy of good and evil and speaking of dual aspects of human mind. In this stanza, the two mentalities—the good mentality and the evil mentality—are speaking to each other saying “Neither in thought, word, intelligence, faith (or religion or creed) utterance, deed, conscience nor soul do we agree.”

It occurs in Gatha Spenta Mainyu,—Yasna Ha 48 Stanza 4 in the form of *Vareneng* meaning religion, faith (root *Vere* Persian *gervidan* = to have faith in). In this stanza Zarathushtra says that “Whosoever will make his mind pure and holy and thus keep his conscience pure by deed and word, such man’s desire is in accordance with his faith (religion, belief).”

It occurs in Gatha Spenta Mainyu,—Yasna Ha 49 Stanza 3 as *Varenai* in dative case meaning ‘religion’. In the same stanza occurs the word *Thaeshai* which also means religion, creed, religious law. These two words *Varenai* and *Tkaesha* occurring in the same stanza strengthens our argument, as the word *Tkaesha* clearly means religion as is found in the compound *Ahuratkaesha* meaning ‘The Ahurian religion’. This word *Tkaesha* is translated in Pahlavi as *Kish* which means religion.

In Vendidad (a book of Zarathushtrian sanitary law written in Avesta language) we come across a word *Anyo Varena*. Here *Anyo* means other and *Varena* means religion, thus a man of different religion, faith, belief is spoken of as *Anyo-Varena*. Similarly, we come across in Vendidad the word *Anyo-Tkaesha* also meaning a man of different religion.

We come across many verbal forms in the Gatha derived from this root, e.g., Ahunavaiti Gatha Yasna Ha, 31, Stanza 3. Zarathushtra declares *Ya jvanto vispeng vauraya*; here the verb *vauraya* means I may cause to induce belief, faith (in God) (in all the living ones). In Yasna Ha, 28: Stanza 5, we come across the verb *vauroimaidi*, ‘We may give faith to.’ We come across another interesting form of this word in Gatha Vahishtaish, Yasna Ha, 53, Stanza 9 *Duz-Varenaish*. It is instrumental plural. The first part *Duz* means wicked, false and *Varenai* means believer. Thus the word means “A man belonging to false or wicked religion or a false or wicked believer.”

In the Zarathushtrian Confession of Faith, which forms Yasna Ha, we come across the word *Fravarane* meaning ‘I confess my faith,

my belief in *Mazdayasno Zarathushtrish* 'Mazda worshipping Zarathushtrian Religion'. This phrase occurs in almost all the Zarathushtrian prayers. There is yet another form in the Zarathushtrian Confession Yasna, 12, *Ya-Varena*. Here *Ya* is relative pronoun meaning which and *Varena*—faith, religion. Thus, the word means 'the religion to which'. This form *Ya Varena* is used nine times in Yasna 12, and it is used in the clear sense of faith or religion. Here again the word *Varena* is placed along with the word *Tkaesha* which means religion.

A very interesting reference is found in Yasna 16 *Zarathushtrahe varenemcha tkaeshemcha yazamaide*. Here the *Varena* and *Tkaesha* of Zarathushtra is worshipped. It is quite clear from the use of these corresponding and correlative words that the faith and religion of Zarathushtra is meant. The translation of the above line is 'We worship the faith and religion of Zarathushtra.'

This evidence from the Zend Avesta as to the meaning of the word Varna leaves no doubt that it originally meant a class holding to a particular faith and it had nothing to do with colour or complexion.

The conclusions that follow from the examination of the Western theory may now be summarized. They are:

- (1) The Vedas do not know any such race as the Aryan race.
- (2) There is no evidence in the Vedas of any invasion of India by the Aryan race and its having conquered the Dasas and Dasyus supposed to be natives of India.
- (3) There is no evidence to show that the distinction between Aryans, Dasas and Dasyus was a racial distinction.
- (4) The Vedas do not support the contention that the Aryas were different in colour from the Dasas and Dasyus.