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To: Instructional Quality Commission
c/o Thomas Adams, Executive Director
1430 N Street, Suite 3207
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Expert Input from Dr. Dilip Chakrabarti

Enclosed is a letter from Dr. Dilip Chakrabarti a noted Indian archaeologist and professor of South Asian archaeology at Cambridge University. He is known for his studies on the early use of iron in India and the archaeology of Eastern India. He has a large number of research books to his credit and is co-editor of the highly regarded 11 volume *History of Ancient India*.

At our request, he has addressed five key historical points which relate to Uberoi edits one to four: 1) plausibility of Aryan Migration theory; 2) date of the Vedic literature; 3) Indo-European speakers passing through Iran to India; 4) plausibility of Dravidian language in the Indus region; and 5) plausibility of Indo-European languages being indigenous to India.

With kind regards,

Prof. Shiva G. Bajpai, Ph.D. (SOAS, London)
Professor Emeritus of History
Former Director, Asian Studies,
California State University, Northridge

Acharya Arumuganathaswami
Managing Editor
Hinduism Today Magazine

To

Dr Tom Adams

Instructional Quality Commission

Subject : Observations on the paragraph : p.211 – “Indian history then entered the Vedic period (ca 1500-500 BC) ... minority position”

Dear Dr Adams,

I have carefully read the above-mentioned paragraph and am constrained to make the following observations.

This model of a crucial phase of ancient Indian history has been known for well over a century. It is not that the paragraph contains anything with which we have not been familiar. The problem is : do we still continue with this model or can we put something else in its place ? My argument is that for all sorts of reasons this model is unacceptable and must be replaced by something which satisfies the modern days' questions and historical thoughts.

My objections to this model are grounded in the following historical realities.

Let me begin by highlighting that an acceptable language history of India is impossible to reconstruct because the language of the Indus Civilization still remains unknown and whatever has been claimed about it is purely conjectural and should not get into any educational text-book. The idea that the language current in the Indus Civilization was a Dravidian language is purely nebulous and reflects nothing more serious than a particularly unpleasant alley-way of linguistic scholarship. I would state the same about the claim that the language concerned was an Indo-European/Indo-Aryan one. Whether the particular branch of the Indo-European language was indigenous to India or not is an irrelevant historical question.

This leads me on to another related question : can we really identify the 'group' of a language by hypothetically trying to correlate a pre-literate archaeological culture to a documented language group ? Let me be very clear that there is no methodological way to do so and that the innumerable attempts to identify the Indo-European language migration and myriads of other linguistic phenomena have been nothing but scholarly obsessions.

I may also point out that such obsessions have had – and can still have – serious political consequences. If all the language-speaking groups of the Indian sub-continent begin to claim different cultural (archaeological) lineages, the result will be pure bedlam.

The sooner we give up the idea that language migrations and such other issues are important historically the better. We are all aware how the nebulous search for language groups have alienated people from one another. We are also all aware that ‘historical linguistics’ or ‘comparative philology’ of old days cannot date anything on its own and is thus irrelevant in the full glare of history.

So, is there any way of looking at the course of this particular phase of ancient India without bringing in Indo-European or Dravidian linguistics? Yes, one can easily do so by sticking to the story of archaeological development in the sub-continent. If one has to offer specific examples of such attempts, I may easily do so by citing two of my books -- *The Oxford Companion to Indian Archaeology* (Delhi 2006 : Oxford University Press) and *India – an Archaeological History* (Delhi 2009, 2nd ed.: Oxford University Press). I have also written extensively on the idea of the Aryans, etc. in the Indian context : *Colonial Indology: Sociopolitics of the Ancient Indian Past* (Delhi 1997: Munshiram Manoharlal) and *The Battle for Ancient India* (Delhi 2008 : Aryan Books International). The idea of these books is that the whole idea of Aryans is nothing but a racist concept and should forthwith be discarded. The idea does not belong to me alone, L. Poliakov’s *The Aryan Myth* being a pointer in this direction.

I may also add a note arguing that there can be no ‘Vedic period’ of Indian history, whatever a vast number of scholars may say in this matter. The reason is really simple : the Vedic literature is virtually impossible to date. Max Muller’s date which has been cited in your paragraph was contested long before it was fashionable in a particular section of academia to blame ‘Hindu nationalists’ for claiming early dates for Indian texts.

Does it mean that we put Vedic texts out of historical considerations? No, we can certainly discuss ‘India of the Vedic texts’ on the basis of the different kinds of data contained in the various layers of the Vedic texts. I made such an attempt in the third volume of a multi-volume series on the history of ancient India --- *History of Ancient India*, vol. 3 (eds D K Chakrabarti and M.Lal, Delhi 2014 : Vivekananda International Foundation and Aryan Books International).

I am aware that the early phase of ancient India is not as fully lit as many other areas of the world, but this does not mean that the history of this phase of India should be put in a frame which is not merely antiquated but also flies straight in the face of academic logic of any kind, making academic obsessions of various kinds as its capital.

The least which can be done is to add the following riders to your paragraph :

1. The Vedic literature was put between ca 1500 and 500 BC by a German Sanskritist called Max Muller, but as even other Sanskritists have pointed out, this was purely hypothetical and there is no satisfactory way of dating Vedic texts. In view of this difficulty, there can be no 'Vedic period' of Indian history.
2. The idea of different language migrations to India is also impossible to work out with any kind of tangible evidence. The Indian languages could very well have developed in the sub-continent itself. There is, in fact, no evidence that they did not ! The statement that the indigenous people of the Indus region spoke a Dravidian language is nothing more than a conjecture which nobody is bound to accept. The hypothetical reconstructions of language history should not be parts of rational history.

I would request you to kindly consider the points and the approach I have outlined here.

With kindest regards,

Yours sincerely,

Dilip K Chakrabarti