

Aryanisation of India: A Review

Abstract

The term 'Ārya' in the *Ṛgveda* denotes 'noble,' while those who differed culturally were labelled as 'Non-Aryan.' The *Ṛgveda* provides numerous accounts of conflicts between these two groups. According to the text, although the Non-Aryans were as advanced as the nomadic Aryans, they were comparatively less physically robust. This disparity allowed the Aryans to seize their lands, forts, and cattle. The *Ṛgveda* records these wars, during which the Aryans gradually expanded their control over most of northern India, leaving a profound impact on the local culture. Some scholars propose that the Non-Aryans were ultimately subdued, becoming slaves and integrating into Aryan society as the lowest caste. Over time, this integration led to the emergence of mixed castes during the later Ṛgvedic period.

The process of cultural and physical dominance by the Aryans unfolded gradually over a long period. The Vedas describe the gradual Aryanisation of the indigenous populations of India. In the initial phase, the Aryans of the *Ṛgveda* focused primarily on the northwestern region, specifically the 'Sapta-Sindhu' area, employing a hostile and aggressive approach. However, as they moved into the central Doab region, their smaller population compared to the established communities prompted them to adopt fundamental changes. These changes included practices such as inter-caste marriages and the assimilation of indigenous populations into the Brāhmanical Aryan society. Political strategies also played a key role in facilitating these adjustments.

In contrast, the eastern and southern parts of India experienced only partial Aryanisation. Several factors, including the remoteness of these regions, the presence of unfamiliar and resistant communities, and logistical challenges, hindered the process. Additionally, by the time the Aryans reached these areas,

they had already established themselves in the northern Doab and Punjab regions. Consequently, the eastern and southern regions primarily experienced cultural influence rather than the physical confrontations that characterised the northwestern subcontinent.

This dissertation examines the processes of Aryan influence across the Indian subcontinent, as depicted in the Vedic and epic texts, and includes a concise introduction and conclusion.

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