

Tantra and Veda: The Untold Story

By Roar Bjonnes

Introduction

Tantra has been described by many prominent writers on spirituality, including Ken Wilber, as one of the world's most influential and remarkable spiritual traditions. Tantra, perhaps better than no other spiritual path, epitomizes the very soul and spirit of Yoga. As my essay will show, most forms of Yoga—from Hatha Yoga to Asthanga Yoga—have their physical and spiritual roots in the ancient soil of Tantra, not in the Vedas, as most yoga scholars in the West wants us to believe. In fact, it was Tantra that first influenced the Vedas, then—during the time of the Upanishads and the Brahmanas (700 BCE and onwards)—the Tantric esprit influenced all the traditions of Indian philosophy, including Vedanta and Samkhya. All of the practices known to be Yogic in nature—*asanas* (physical yoga exercises), *pranayama* (breathing exercises), *mantra* meditation, *kundalini* awakening, *samadhi* (spiritual ecstasy), are Tantric, not Vedic. Hence, Tantra and Yoga are synonymous paths that have had great influence among the great sacred traditions of the East—from Buddhism to Zen, from Jainism to Hinduism.

This essay has also been written, in part, as a response to the growing awareness that Tantra is more than just an esoteric version of hot sex. This new awareness was even reflected in an unlikely place: in *O: Oprah Magazine*. Here, its 14 million, mostly female, readers learned that Western Tantra has been “overly sexualized.” Mistakenly characterized as solely “the yoga of sex,” this age-old path is now being re-discovered for what it truly is: “the yoga of sacredness.” For, according to Tantra, everything in life can be a sacred experience, including the sexual.

The Vedic Invasion: Truth or Myth?

In a number of popular history books on India, we are informed that India developed one of the ancient world's most sophisticated urban civilizations, namely, the Harappa and Mohenjodaro civilizations in the Indus Valley (4000 BCE). Largely inspired by Tantra and yoga, this Dravidian civilization, it is claimed, was invaded and destroyed by Vedic Aryan invaders around 1500 BCE. This mainstream version of Indian history has recently been challenged by a revisionist theory that claims there is no evidence the Aryan invasion occurred at all. In their book *In Search of the Cradle of Human Civilization*, Georg Feuerstein, David Frawley and Subash Kak assert that the Indus Valley civilization was Vedic rather than Tantric.

These eminent authors are perhaps correct in claiming there was no Aryan invasion around 1500 BCE, but are they correct in assuming it never happened at all? In this essay, I will outline a third alternative, a history of India based in part on genetic science as well as Tantric traditional and oral history. According to this alternative view, Vedic Aryan tribes did indeed migrate to India, but it occurred thousands of years earlier than most scholars claim—at the time of Shiva, around 5000 BCE, when this so-called King of Yogis systematized the spiritual tradition of Tantra, invented the octave and also the beginning of India's ancient medical system, Ayurveda. Moreover, the Indus Valley culture, which according to some archaeologists is at least 6,000 years old, was not a Vedic civilization but primarily a Tantra-based civilization.

Trying to piece together a coherent map of ancient Indian history is no easy task. There is no archaeological evidence of Shiva's existence, for example. Hence, to gain insight into the life and time of Shiva, who supposedly lived in distant pre-history, 4,500 years before Buddha, we must access both traditional and contemporary sources in literature on Tantra, oral Tantric history as presented in the books by P. R. Sarkar (aka Shrii Shrii Anandamurti), scholars on ancient Indian history, including prolific writers Daniel Danielou and N. N. Bhattacharya, archaeological and linguistics findings, and, finally, the genetic science of Dr. Spencer Wells.

Sometimes these divergent sources overlap beautifully, such as in the case of genetic science and oral Tantric history about the time of the Vedic Aryan invasion.

Indeed, P. R. Sarkar maintains that the Vedic Aryans migrated into India around the time of Shiva (5000 BCE). As you will learn in more detail soon, this traditional view of history has recently been corroborated by the genetic research of Dr. Wells. Most of the time lines and views on Tantra between Sarkar, Danileou and Bhattacharya are also compatible. The two latter scholars believed, however, that the Vedic Aryans arrived in India much later, a theory that has been contested fiercely by writers such as Georg Feuerstein and David Frawley, who claim there was no such invasion and that ancient India was fundamentally a Vedic culture. If it ever occurred, they assert, it must have been much farther back in prehistoric time. Indeed, that is exactly what Wells' genetic science has proven. The Vedic Aryans did indeed come from outside India, he asserts, bringing with them, according to Sarkar, the first portion of their vast scriptures, the Rig Veda. Hence, Indian culture eventually became a philosophical, spiritual and cultural confluence of those two mighty rivers of Tantra and Veda.

A Brief History of Tantra

In order to understand ancient Indian history, we must go to the heart of its mystical traditions, namely Tantra and Yoga. In his award-winning book, A Brief History of India, Daniel Danielou outlines in broad, colorful strokes an ancient history of India that contrasts with the one presented to most Western scholars. Danileou reminds us that yoga originated with the ancient sage Shiva and that these practices were “wholly unknown” to the early Vedas and their authors, the invading Aryans. (1)

According to multiple sources—including ancient scriptures such as the *Puranas* and the writings of Danileou and Sarkar—it was Shiva who taught the early Indians yogic spirituality, the arts and sciences. Moreover, Shiva's teachings remained the dominant culture and spiritual teachings in India, even though its adherents were often violently attacked by the early Vedic Aryans. The Tantric teachings of Shiva continued to be the religion of the people, Danielou asserts, and what we today have come to appreciate as Indian culture and religion was more influenced by Tantra than the Vedas. This assertion, however, is contrary to what most modern practitioners of yoga are taught about the history of their practice.

“It should be remembered,” Danielou writes, “that in Hinduisim, Yoga is a discipline created by Shiva...” (2) But his historical time line does conflict somewhat with Wells' genetic findings and what we can learn from traditional Tantric sources. According to traditional sources and the writings of Sarkar, the Rig Vedic Aryans seem to have arrived not only after, but also before and during Shiva's time, a timeline that has been confirmed by Dr. Wells genetic findings. Their so-called invasion was more likely a series of migrations over a long period of time. The early portions of the Rig Veda may be as old as 10,000 BCE, and was composed outside India, while the three other Vedas—the Yajur, Sama and Atharva, originated both outside and inside India. From early on, the culture and spiritual practices that originated with Shiva's Tantra also spread outside India, even as far as Europe. Writes Danielou: “Although—due to scarcity of documentation—the importance of this great fundamental religion in the formation of later religions has been largely under-estimated, it was almost universal.”(3)

If Shiva's teachings are 7,000 years old, why were Tantric wisdom and rites only written down starting as late as 500 AD, thus making most scholars and lay people believe this is when the history of Tantra began? In actuality, Tantric teachings were assimilated into Vedic and Brahmanic teachings and writings at an early age; thus one will find Tantric influences in the earliest writings in India, starting around 3000 BCE with the compilation of the Atharva Veda. All of the yogic references to breathing exercises and yoga in general in the Atharva Veda can, according to Sarkar, be traced back to the Tantra of Shiva, 2,000 years earlier. In other words, by the time of the so-called Tantric renaissance in the middle ages, when Tantric yogis further developed Hatha Yoga, Tantra had already blended with and influenced Hinduism and Buddhism to a great extent. In summary, yoga is thus not an invention of the Vedic people but rather a result of the spiritual aspirations of yogis who lived in India both prior to and after the time of Shiva, the great systematizer of Tantra, and thus, as he is called in India, the King of Yoga.

The love for Shiva and the practice of Tantra are alive and well in India and the world today. Indeed, Shiva is undoubtedly one of the most popular deities in the Hindu pantheon. Danielou maintains that Hinduism owes much more to its pre-Vedic Tantric

tradition than it does to the Vedic tradition. Noted Indologist N. N. Bhattacharyya also observes that “Tantrism as a heterogeneous set of ideas and practices characterized the religious fabric of India—ancient, medieval, and even modern.” (4) And in the words of Sarkar: “Not only in India, but in quite a large part of the world, in every sphere of life, the laws and injunctions of Shiva alone prevailed for a long time. Even today the civilization of modern India is intrinsically Tantric. On the outside only is there a Vedic stamp.”(5) This view is echoed by Swami Satyananada Saraswati, founder of the Bihar School of Yoga, who writes: “It should be remembered that present day Hinduism is almost entirely based on tantra; it is not completely based on the Vedas as so many people think.” (6) And finally, in the words of author Lalan Prasad Singh: “We observe that the Tantric tradition of ancient India, contrary to the general belief, has greatly influenced the [Vedic] Aryan civilization.” (7)

The Aryan Controversy

In order to understand the ancient history of Tantra, one needs to understand the complex relationship between Tantra and the Vedas. Indeed, one needs to learn about the complex and often contentious relationship between the Vedic Aryans and the Tantric Dravidians of ancient India.

India is a country of great ethnic diversity. In southern India, there are Austric peoples whose facial features and complexion are similar to Africans or the Australian aborigines. In the south, east and west, there are tall and dark-brown complexioned Dravidians. In the north of India, and in Nepal, the facial features reveals various ethnic backgrounds. Some appears to be Caucasian, others have light, yellowish skin and are Tibetan or Mongolian, and others have Dravidian features. Indeed, India is composed of largely four main ethnic groups—the Mongolians, Dravidians, Austriacs and Aryans. But where did these people originally come from?

It is not easy to piece together the vast tapestry of India's past. Most scholars thought for many years that Indian history started when ruthless, blue-eyed Aryans conquered the indigenous population in successive raids from 1500 BCE to 1200 BCE. Advocated by German-born Sanskrit scholar Max Muller, this theory made universal and bold claims. "The Aryan nations have become the rulers of history," he once wrote. (8) In

other words, Indian civilization was great only because of its white-skinned, Aryan origin. Later in his career, though, Max Muller retracted the idea that India owed all its greatness to the invading Aryans. The Aryans, he finally ventured, indicated a group of people speaking Indo-European languages.

So what does the word Aryan actually mean? To the Vedic people in early India, the Sanskrit word *arya* meant “noble” or “cultured.” In the ancient Vedic texts, the place between the Himalayas and the Vindhya Mountains were called *arya-varta*, or “the abode of the noble people.” A third meaning is “the people from Iran.” Aryan is also used by scholars as an ethnic or racial label for the Caucasian peoples.

Then comes the next important piece of this historical puzzle: Since Max Muller advanced his invasion theory, there have been several alternative theories about the origin of the Aryan people in India. Most scholars now agree there was a succession of Aryan migrations into India, but they disagree about whether these ancients were warlike invaders or peaceful immigrants.

Indeed, the idea that a group of noble, Vedic Aryans invaded a primitive Indian culture around 1500 BCE was overthrown in 1920 when the Indus Valley civilization was discovered. This discovery proved that the achievements of ancient India could no longer be credited to the descendants of the Aryan invaders alone. Why? Because the aboriginal Dravidians of the Indus Valley had planned cities and a standardized system of weights and bricks for at least two thousands years before the alleged invasion. Indeed, their civilization was more advanced than the nomadic tribes that supposedly conquered them.

But the controversy does not stop here. Were the people of the Indus Valley Vedic, or were they Tantric? A popular, alternative idea about Indian history today suggests the Aryan invasion theory is at worst based on a racist myth and at best on faulty scientific evidence. This idea has been promoted by some of the world's most prominent scholars on yoga, Tantra and Ayurveda. In other words, according to them, the Aryan invasion never happened. For these scholars, the only alternative appears to be that the Aryans must have been indigenous to India. In truth, they claim the Aryans are the “noble” and “cultured” people of Indian civilization, those who invented yoga, advanced spiritual philosophy, built the Indus Valley civilization and developed Ayurvedic

medicine. But is this truly what happened?

As the word *arya* indicates, the Aryans could as well have been a people who came from outside India and settled in the Himalayas. Thus, according to Sarkar, the pastoral, Caucasian nomads could at various times, have come to India through Iran from Central Asia. For scholars David Frawley and Georg Feuerstein, however, there appears to be only one possibility: the Aryans have always been indigenous to India, and they are the people from the highest, noblest castes of society, most notably the Brahmins. For these authors, the Aryans represent all that is noble and great about Indian civilization, namely the Vedic cultural heritage.

The Vedic Aryans

The *Vedas* contain some of the most sublime philosophical insights humanity has ever conceived. Yet, the same *Vedas*, like all religious scriptures, also contain many irrational dogmas and myths, including instructions for animal sacrificial rites to conciliate the gods. Moreover, the culture that advanced these texts also instituted a caste system in which millions of people to this day are treated as virtual slaves. Consequently, surgery was forbidden by early Ayurvedic doctors due to possible “contamination” by lower castes.

Women, according to many Vedic injunctions were considered too low to study and teach the scriptures. Indeed, it was only a few years ago a famous religious authority, the Shankaracharya of Sumerpeeth Kanchi, declared that women should not recite the *Vedas*. Such religious practices would be detrimental to their health and prevent them from having healthy babies, he claimed. (9) Tantric teachings, on the other hand, have always been against the caste system and have generally held women in high regard. Indeed, it is inconceivable that an authority on Tantra would ever warn women from studying the scriptures.

So where did the Aryans come from? The revisionist historians who claim that the Aryan invasion never occurred, at least not around 1500 BCE, leave the possibility open that people from outside the Indian continent might have arrived thousands of years earlier. And this is what appears to have taken place. Among most scientists, the idea of one single, violent invasion by barbarian Aryan hordes has been replaced by immigration

and acculturation over a long period of time. Recent genetic and other scientific evidence supports this historical scenario. In fact, all the various peoples of India—the Austrics, the Dravidian, the Mongolians and the Aryans—came, at some point, from somewhere else.

Genetic and Linguistic Science and Ancient Indian History

In PBS television program, *Journey of Man*, Dr. Spencer Wells offers scientific evidence for what P. R. Sarkar, Lalan Prasad Singh and many others authors had claimed—that the Aryan Vedic people migrated to India from Eastern Russia.

Indeed, the genetic discoveries by Dr. Wells confirm the oral history well known among Indian Tantrics as well as many of the stories written in the Puranas. Actually, his extensive research shows that India experienced four large migratory settlements over a period of nearly 55,000 years. By sampling DNA of people in a village close to Madurai in Tamil Nadu, he spotted a genetic mutation that had been passed on to aboriginal people in Australia--thus offering the first biological proof that African ancestors of the Australian natives passed through India on the way to their new home. His research also proved beyond a shadow of doubt that the people who later moved into India in the north were of Aryan stock. (10)

A few days after I had seen this captivating PBS program, I continued my research and located an interview with Dr. Wells in the online *Rediff* magazine. There he states emphatically that there is genetic evidence that “the Aryans came from outside India.” The Rig-Vedic Aryan peoples, he claims, emerged on the southern steppes of Russia and the Ukraine about 5-1,0000 years ago. From there, they migrated east and south through Central Asia toward India. He further emphasized that “there is clear evidence that there was a heavy migration from the steppes down toward India.” Wells maintains that he does not agree with scholars David Frawley and Georg Feuerstein, who claim the Vedic Aryans were the “original inhabitants” of India. To Wells, there is clear genetic evidence that “the Aryans came later, after the Dravidians.” In other words, Wells' genetic research clearly supports the ideas expressed in the oral teachings of

Tantra.. (11)

The research work of a team led by Michael Bamshad of the University of Utah in Salt Lake City come to similar conclusions. They compared the DNA of 265 Indian men of different castes with DNA from nearly 750 African, European, Asian and other Indian men. First, they analyzed mitochondrial DNA, which people inherit only from their mothers. When the researchers looked at specific sets of genes that tend to be inherited as a unit, they found that about 20 to 30 percent of the Indian sets resembled those in Europeans. The percentage was highest in upper-caste males, which is natural since the early Aryan settlers were by and large upper-caste Brahmins and Kshatriyas.

The genes that entered India when Aryan settlers emigrated from Central Asia and the Middle East are still there. And, according to these scientists from the University of Utah and from Andhra Pradesh University in India, they still remain entrenched at the top of the caste system. The invaders apparently subdued the local men, married many of their women and created the rigid caste system that exists even today. Their descendants are still the elite within Hindu society.

According to geneticist Lynn Jorde of the University of Utah that "a group of males" was largely responsible for the Aryan invasion. If women had accompanied the invaders, the evidence should be seen in the mitochondrial genes, but it is not evident. The research team found clear evidence that women could be upwardly mobile, in terms of caste, if they married higher-caste men. In contrast, men generally did not move higher, because women rarely married men from lower castes. Since the caste system is still in vogue today, the same practice prevails.

Thus, genetic science corresponds with the Tantric view that the Indo-Europeans, or true Aryans, indeed came from the outside and conquered the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent. The people they subdued—the Mongolians, Dravidians and the Austrians—descended from the original inhabitants who had arrived thousands of years earlier from Africa, the Middle East and other parts of Asia. (12) Finally, the People of India project of the Anthropological Survey of India assigned the entire Indian population to 4,635 ethnic communities and put together detailed information from over 25,000 individual informants from all over India. It was found that there are four major language families in India--Austrian, Dravidian, Indo-European and Sino-Tibetan. These languages

also correspond to the four main racial groups in India: the Austrics, Dravidians, Aryans and the Mongolians respectively. According to this study, it appears the Indo-European Aryans brought the Vedic language to India from Central Asia, a fact that has also been substantiated by the historical sequences and details outlined in Sarkar’s many discourses on the history of India. (13)

Fig. 2. Brief overview of the main ethnic and linguistic groups that peopled ancient India.

| Linguistic Group | Ethnicity | Arrival in India | Religion |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------|
| | | | |
| Austric | Austric (Australoid) | 60,000 BCE from Africa | Animism |
| | | | |
| Dravidian | Dravidian | 10-8000 BCE from Near East | Proto-Tantra |
| | | | |
| Sino-Tibetan | Mongolian | 10-8000 BCE from Far East | Proto-Tantra |
| | | | |

| | | | |
|---------------|-----------|------------------------------|----------|
| Indo-European | Caucasian | 6-4000 BCE from Central Asia | Rig-Veda |
|---------------|-----------|------------------------------|----------|

The Vedic Aryans and the Tantric Dravidians—A Clash and Fusion of Civilizations

Sarkar often emphasized that the early parts of the Vedas, the Rig-Veda, were composed outside of India. This occurred both long before and during the time of Shiva, at a time when these fair-skinned Aryan composers migrated into India.

Is there any proof of this? Authors like Bhattacharyya and Danielou have, for example, remarked on the lack of references to agriculture in the Rig-Veda. They think the main reason for this was that the early Aryans were pastoralists. In contrast, the Tantric Dravidians were rice-growing farmers. Moreover, you will not find any descriptions of the Indus Valley civilization in the Rig-Veda or even in the later Vedas. Nor will you find any references to the sophisticated grid pattern of streets. Nor will you find any mention of the careful engineering of the drainage systems, nor to granaries, warehouses and areas of intensive craft production, nor to the various seals found there.

(14)

Some Vedic scholars and writers on yoga argue that the Indus Civilization was purely a Vedic civilization. Popular writers on yoga, including David Frawley, Georg Feuerstein, and Deepak Chopra promote this view. This so-called cradle of human civilization, they affirm, had few or no traces of Tantra. But is this a correct assertion? Marshall, Bhattacharya, Danielou and other scholars point out that the various artifacts found in these ancient ruins are, in fact, yogic or Tantric in nature. These include proto-Tantric fertility symbols such as lingams and yonis, or Mother Goddess figurines. The

yogi Shiva, in the form of the Pashupati seal, is one of the most common figures found in these ruins. Here archaeologists have also discovered a marble statue of a yogi with eyes fixed on the tip of his nose. This marble statue displays a type of yogic gaze that I am quite familiar with. This trance-inducing gaze is actually an essential element in one of the Tantric meditation lessons I received many years ago.

These archaeological finds, according to many scholars, all point in one direction— that Tantra was widely practiced in the Indus Valley civilization. This does not mean, however, that all members of this society were meditating yogis. Much like in today's India, we can assume that only a minority of the people were practicing Tantric meditation and yoga. Like today, most people were worshipers of Tantric Gods and Goddesses, but not always practitioners of its advanced spiritual sciences. Archaeological digs have also unearthed fire pits used for Vedic rituals in these old ruins. Therefore, I think it is reasonable to conclude that the Aryan and Dravidian peoples and cultures coexisted in northern India for several millennia. Indeed, by the time of the Indus Valley civilization, they probably lived together much like people from various castes, cultural and spiritual traditions coexist in India today.

This coexistence was not always peaceful. While the *Rig-Veda* contains hymns of sublime spiritual knowledge, including a few references to yoga, many of its stories are focused on the nature-worshiping rites of pastoral warrior clans. Some also tell colorful tales about the conquest of the “dark-skinned devils,” namely the Dravidians of India. The Aryan priests made it painstakingly clear that non-aryans (Anarya) were not allowed to pollute their culture and blood. In India you will find vestiges of this racist superiority even today. In personal ads in the newspapers, you will quite often find men and women looking for a marriage partner with “wheatish complexion.”

So, what about all the symbolic references in the Vedas? Do all of them contain subtle messages of transcendental meaning? And do they therefore prove that the Vedas are the source of all Indian spirituality, including Tantra? When the Rig-Vedic people spoke of the Sun God Azura, for example, they did not describe a deep state of meditation as some contemporary Vedic writers today want us to believe? Did they describe the “spiritual Sun within”? It is more likely that the early Vedic people, who were pagans and lived during a time Wilber would characterize as archaic and mythic,

thought the Sun had magical powers. Hence, they worshiped this bright, life-giving entity in the sky directly. They literally believed the sun was a God. In other words, to the Aryans, the sun was not a symbol of a trans-rational state of meditation. Their devotion to the sun God Azura simply represented a pre-rational belief in the magical powers of that extraterrestrial and life-giving planet.

Indeed, most people at that time (10-6000 BCE) believed in a variety of nature's magical powers and spoke quite literally about those beliefs. Similarly, when the early Aryans called the dark-skinned people *devils*, they also meant it rather literally. They were not speaking of some symbolic struggle between good and evil. Their verses were often fearfully direct, and many symbolic references to higher, transcendental truths are often incorrect or were added in the much later written versions. Sarkar has pointed out that many of the Gods and Goddesses described in various Indian religious scriptures were, in fact, representations of actual historical leaders. The Godman Krishna of Hindu mythology is a prime example, for he was, according to Sarkar, both a Tantric yogi and a historical king who united India around 1500 BCE in a mighty war described in the classic epic, *Mahabharata*.

Likewise, many of the mythological Gods of the *Vedas*, such as Indra, Agni and Varuna, were actual warrior leaders. Indeed, it was warrior leaders such as these who after a few thousand years of gradual migrations and conquest finally conquered most of northern India. “It was not difficult for the healthy, martial, almost invincible Aryans to conquer northern India,” writes Sarkar. “The victorious Aryans treated the vanquished non-Aryans as slaves, trampling them underfoot to the bottom of their trivarna (three-caste) society—their society of Brahmanas (priests), Ksatriyas (soldiers) and Vaeshyas (merchants). There the non-Aryans became the fourth class, or Shudra Varna, while society became a caturvarna (four-caste) society.” (15)

While the Aryans maintained political control in northern India, the Dravidian influence in the social and cultural sphere gradually increased. According to Sarkar, “From the non-Aryans the Aryans acquired a well-knit social system, subtle insight, spiritual philosophy and Tantra *sadhana* [*meditation*].” (16)

A merger between two civilizations took place in Europe when the Romans

conquered Greece. Similarly, the so-called Indus Valley civilization eventually became a composite culture influenced by both Tantric and Vedic traditions.

Harappa, Kashi and Mehrgarh—Ancient Cities of Tantra?

The Tamil language of south India is considered one of the world's oldest living languages with its own script. An ancient Dravidian language, Tamil is more than 6,000 years old. In fact, an ancient form of Tamil, or Dravidian, is still spoken by the Brahui people today. These people's language and culture are indeed a living link back to the early dawn of Tantric history.

When the first Vedic Aryans migrated to India through the Khyber and the Bolan Passes, and mingled with the local population of the north, the north Indian proto-Dravidian languages changed to a great extent. However, in the area where the Brahui people still live, the old Dravidian language has remained virtually unchanged for millennia. The language of the Brahuis of Baluchistan, an area in Afghanistan and Pakistan, has many linguistic similarities to the Dravidian languages still spoken by the Tamils in south India today. Scholars have noted similarities in the numerals, personal pronouns, syntax and other linguistic features between Brahui and Tamil.

It is not only linguistics, however, that makes Baluchistan such an interesting historical area. This region, at the foot of the Bolan Pass, is also the site of Mehrgarh. Estimated to be more than 8,000 years old, it is regarded as the largest town of early antiquity. Covering an area of over 500 acres, Mehrgarh's population may have reached nearly 20,000 individuals. In comparison, the population of Egypt at the time was about 30,000. Living in brick houses, skilled in pottery making and the cultivation of rice, these ancient shamanic and proto-Tantric Dravidians were likely the first Indians encountered by the invading Aryans more than seven thousand years ago.

Urban culture was thus already in existence in India at the time of Shiva. Indeed, Mehrgarh had existed for almost two thousand years when Shiva was born. There is thus evidence of a continuous urban culture from Mehrgarh around 7000 BCE to the Harappan and Mohenjodaro civilizations in the Indus Valley around 4000 BCE. The current consensus is that the primary language represented by the Harappan script is related to modern Dravidian. The archaeologist Marshall was the first scientist to suggest

a linguistic link between the Harappans and Dravidians.

As mentioned elsewhere, the complex and ancient Indus Valley civilization, which stretched from Afghanistan to the River Ganges, was largely a Tantra-oriented culture. In fact, the word “*hara*” refers to Shiva, and “*appa*” means father in the local language. The city of Harappa in the Indus Valley can thus be considered a place dedicated to Shiva, who by many today is considered the father of Indian civilization.

Since Tantra existed in India before Shiva, it is very likely that the old Tantric civilization in India had its early roots in Mehrgarh, was systematized and refined during the time of Shiva, and continued to flourish for thousands of years in the Indus Valley civilizations of Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Most important, perhaps, Tantra remains alive and well in India and the rest of the world even today.

While Mehrgarh is perhaps the oldest archaeological city in the world, Kashi (today known as Benares or Varanasi) is the world’s oldest living city. In Indian mythology, Kashi is considered the “original ground” where Lord Shiva and Parvati stood at the beginning of time. Benares is the point in which the first *jyotirlinga* , the fiery pillar of light by which Shiva manifested his supremacy over other Gods, broke through the earth’s crust and flared toward the heavens. More significant than the cremation-ghats, and even the holy river Ganges, the Shivalinga in the Golden temple remains, to millions of Shiva devotees, the devotional focus of Kashi.

Once again, Indian mythology leads us to a deeper understanding of history; the historical Shiva did, according to traditional sources, spend many years in Kashi, especially during the cool winter months, when Kashi, or Benares—the “holiest” city in all of India today—was his favorite resting place.

Shiva’s and Tantra’s immeasurable contribution to humanity urges us to correct the common misconception that Tantra and yoga are relatively recent expressions of Indian spirituality. Indeed, it appears the Classical Yoga period did not actually start with the famed *Yoga Sutras* of the sage Patanjali in 200 BCE, but rather with Shiva, almost 5,000 years earlier. Most fundamental aspects of yoga—including many of the yoga exercises, breathing and meditation techniques used today—originated with the teachings of this great sage. What we today know as Hatha Yoga was consequently developed by

Tantric sages over thousands of years and finally written down in the Hatha Yoga Pardipika by the Natha yogis around 1000 CE.

Summary

Indian civilization is based on two mighty cultural rivers—the Vedic and the Tantric. Of these two ancient streams, it appears Tantra has had the most influence on the birth and growth of yoga and other mystical practices within Indian spiritual traditions. While some scholars maintain there was no Aryan invasion in India, both genetic science as well as Tantric oral history maintain that these migrations occurred in ancient pre-history (5000 BCE), during the time of Shiva, when this so-called King of Yogis systematized the mystical science of Tantric Yoga as well as Ayurvedic medicine.

Roar Bjonnes spent several years studying Tantra in India and Nepal. Currently working on a book on Tantra and Yoga, he is the co-founder of the Prama Institute, a holistic retreat center in North Carolina, USA, a newspaper columnist and contributing editor of the online New Renaissance Magazine. He can be reached at: rbjonnes@aol.com

Notes

1. Daniel Danielou, A Brief History of India, Inner Traditions, Vermont, 2003
2. Ibid
3. Ibid
4. N. N. Bhattacharya, History Of Tantric Religion, Manohar Publishers, New Delhi, 1999
5. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (a.k.a. P. R. Sarkar), Discourses on Tantra, Volume II, AM Publications, Calcutta, 1994

6. Swami Satyananda Sarawati, *A Systematic Course in the Ancient Tantric Techniques of Yoga and Kriya*, Yoga Publications Trust, Bihar, 1981
7. Prasad Lalan Singh, *Tantra: Its Mystic and Scientific Basis*, Concept Publishing Company, Delhi, 1976
8. Max Muller, "The Veda," *Chips from a German Workshop*, vol 1, New York, Charles Scribner, 1900,
9. Arvind Kumar, "Women and the Vedas: Limiting Women Limits All of Society," *India Currents*, September, 1994
10. Spencer Wells, *Journey of Man: A Genetic Odyssey*, Random House, New York, 2004.
11. Interview with Dr. Spencer Wells, www.rediff.com
<http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/nov/27inter.htm> November 27, 2002
12. Robert Cooke, "History of Aryan Conquest of India told in Genes, *San Francisco Chronicle*, 26 May, 1999
13. "Peopling Of India," Independent research paper published by Madhav Gadgil, N. V. Joshi from Indian Institute of Science; U. V. Shambu Prasad, Centre for Research in Indo-Bangladesh Relations; S. Manoharan and Suresh Patil from Anthropological Survey of India. <http://ces.iisc.ernet.in/hpg/cesmg/peopling.html#sec1>
14. Romila Thapar, "Hindutva and History," *Frontline*, Volume 17
15. Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (a.k.a. P. R. Sarkar), *Discourses on Tantra*, Volume I, AM Publications, Calcutta, 1994
16. Ibid.

