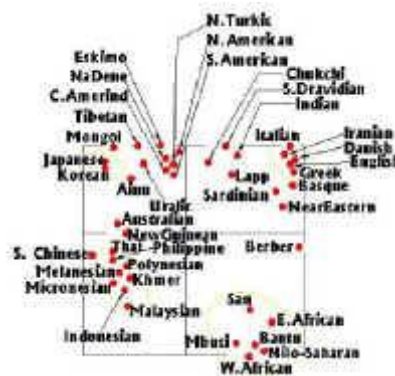


Aryans' Immigration

By: Reza Moradi Ghasabadi



Nomadic and sedentary (Imperial) Iranian Peoples in 6th century BCE



The overwhelming majority of historical sources regard the people of present Persia (Iran) descendants of Aryans who are thought to have migrated from some far northern land towards south including the present land of Persia, destroyed native people and civilizations and replaced them. The date of this great migration is speculated to be sometimes between 3000 to 5000 years ago. Similarly, speculations on the point of origin of this great history-making shift includes a vast area from west, north and center of Europe to east of Asia, Baltic Sea, Scandinavian peninsula, north plains of central Asia and Caucasus, Siberia and even the north pole. This very disagreement and lack of unquestionable evidences on the exact geographical homeland of these Aryans point to the soundlessness of such speculations. Most of contemporary historical texts end the account of the land of origin and this great migration with a few short obscure and inexact statements without giving any sound reasons for such an important move. They usually suffice to present a map with a few large arrows drawn from Siberia to Caspian Sea and central plains of Persia.

The persistence of above dubious speculations is very interesting because it is now a known historical fact that the basic underlying reason for any human migration and shift of civilization is always a quest to find 'better living conditions' and in antiquity this 'better living conditions' basically meant more water and fertile land. Therefore, if on one hand we manage to prove that natural and climatic environment of Iranian Plateau was one of the most suitable one for human settlements at that time and on the other hand show that life conditions on far northern regions of this plateau (i.e. the hypothetical origin of Aryans) were far away from what is called 'suitable environment,' then not only we can seriously question the validity of the above theories in relation to the path and direction of the above migration, but show that it most probably took place in the opposite direction, that is from Persia (Iran) to other parts of the world.

As any population increase can only occur under most suitable ecological conditions, the first urgent question is how could this occur under such harsh freezing cold conditions as Siberia to give rise to the idea of migration to a climatically more favorable environment such as Persia? More interesting is the fact that

this unsound undocumented theory is continuing to perpetuate while none of the archaeological and geological field studies carried out in the region in question (i.e. the hypothetical original land of Aryans) show traces and signs of the presence of any significant settlements there.

In this article we put forward a more documented hypothesis that Persians or Iranians did not migrate to Persia with Aryans, but it was Aryans, including native people of Persia or Iran that migrated 'in Iran' and 'from Iran' to other parts of the world.

Climatological Evidences

The last ice age on earth began approximately 14000 years ago and ended around 10000 years ago. These ice ages led to formation of huge glaciers and icebergs in poles and rainfall in mid altitudes including Persia. Sedimentations of inner craters reveal that during warm periods between ice ages, Persia witnessed intense rainfalls that resulted in the emergence of humid climate and forestation on the Iranian plateau and during the cold time of ice ages welcomed cold dry weather. Archaeo-geological evidences show that around 10000 years ago and with the termination of the last ice age, warm humid climatic started to rule Iran. They also show that with the onset of warm humid period and retraction of icebergs to the north pole, the amount of rainfall gradually increased until it reached 4 to 5 times of its present amount around 5500 to 6000 years ago. Subsequently the water level of regional seas rose and reached its highest level filling up all the hollows, deserts, valleys and waterways. This is the period that in various mythologies is referred to as Jamshid's era and Noah's Flood. An increase in rainfall and floods occurred once more around 4500 years ago, but it soon started to decline and a drought and hot dry climate started to emerge around 4000 years ago reaching its climax about 3800 years ago. This coincided with the great shift of civilization in the Iranian plateau and decline and disappearance of many of ancient settlements, cities and villages in Persia.

The warm humid climate that occurred 4000 to 1000 years ago led to emergence of lush vegetation and massive forests all over Persia and even on present dry barren deserts. In that period of tremendous forestation and regression of deserts, a green flourishing land emerged in great Persia and northern regions of present Afghanistan were covered with vast savannas and humid lush meadows. Abundant forests in north of Afghanistan and particularly its west side called Badgheys (Vaiti gaes in Avesta) is referred to in Pahlavi version of Bundahisn (primal creation or cosmology) as follows: "Vatgisan is a place full of trees." This climatic situation of north of present Afghanistan is described in historical texts of middle ages. In his *Moruj ol-zahab*, Massudi speaks of the beautiful city of Balkh (Bactria) with its lush vegetations and numerous fields. Vaez Balkhi speaks of hundred thousand trees of Balkh in his *Virtues of Balkh* and quoting Shahriyar Samanid, Nezami Arouzi regards it a superior heaven due to its flourishing green land and Farih Sayah, considers meadows of Badgheys the best in Asia. Today, large parts of Badgheys and Balkh consist of dry sand deserts. They are particularly seen around Kerman and Sistan with far greater vastness, while in historical texts of two millennia ago refer to the presence of forests and meadows in these areas. At that time, Persia possessed rich meadows and wild animals. Many ponds, marshes and lakes with sweet water which were the dwelling place of aquatic animals and birds and many vast lush forests and reedy lands existed there. According to the above data, the warm rainy climate ruled all over Persia from 4000 to 10000 years ago. In addition, the surface of the earth, rivers and their springs was lower and that of lakes and ponds higher than today. Consequently all main craters, hollows and low lands on the shores of lakes, valleys and deserts and present dry rivers were filled with abundant sweet water and Persia was entirely covered with flourishing vast meadows and possessed rich animal and plant products, thus a suitable place for human life.

Archaeological Evidences

Archaeological findings and indications also affirm the presence of warm humid climatic conditions throughout Persia from 4000 – 10000 years ago. On one hand a great part of local ancient hills and old settlements studied so far belong to the same period of 6000 years of warm rainy climate, dispersed along barren deserts, dry rivers and salt marshes which points to the existence of better climatic conditions at the time of their emergence and persistence. Establishment of these civilizations along dry salty deserts indicate that there must have been abundant amount of sweet water with present dry rivers next to those hills providing sufficient amount of drinking water for the inhabitants of nearby cities and villages. On the other hand, there is no sign of ancient hills by the shores of present seas. Ancient hills located in the south or by the shores of the Persian Gulf are separated by hundred kilometers which indicates that during the ice ages, the water level of south seas must have been lower than today and with the increase of the water level, all human settlements were sunk. Meanwhile, in between the ice ages when the water level of south seas was

higher and the surface of the earth was lower and sedimentations resulting from the three rivers, Tigris, Euphrates and Karoon were less, the Persian Gulf extended to Susa and Sumeria. Sumerian inscriptions deal with the penetration of water into Mesopotamia and refer to the city of Eridu as a city located by seashores. Ancient settlements in the north were only a few kilometers away from the shores of Caspian Sea which shows that its water level must have been higher than today. In addition, the remainders of ancient dams, including those over valleys and waterways of Khajeh Mountain in Sistan indicate the presence of higher amount of rainfall at that time. Those dams provided the required water for temples and other buildings located on top of the Khajeh Mountain. Today, not only those waterways, but also the Hamoun Lake have dried up. Recent short periods of drought in Persia showed that even a short period of decreased rainfall is enough to dry out lakes, ponds and large rivers and consequently lead to rapid destruction of animal and vegetation life. Drying out of the Arjan Lake in Fars and the Zayandeh Rud River in Esfahan are prominent examples of such threatening phenomenon. Archaeological indications and existing sedimentations prove the occurrence of numerous floods around 5500 years ago. An example is the findings derived from excavations of Qarah Tapeh by Mir Abedin Kaboli in Qomrud region carried out with the goal of recording changes resulting from those floods. On the basis of Mir Abedin Kaboli's findings, a tremendous flood occurred around 5500 years ago that led to abandonment of Qomrud region and immigration of people to higher neighboring regions.

In addition, images of gazelle, elephant, deer and aquatic birds and animals including even turtles, fish and crabs point to favorable climatic conditions in those areas at the flourishing time of corresponding civilizations. Here it is necessary to refer to a vital point. Up to now, with the exception of some dispersed scant evidences (such as collective or hill graves) found on the northern parts of the Aral Lake, scientists have found no evidence for the presence of any significant human settlement in any of those regions regarded as the original Aryan home land – that is Siberia, north of central Asia and Caucasus – during the time when favorable climatic conditions for the growth of human societies ruled over the Iranian Plateau. What has been found in those areas so far have just been cold non-inhabitable weather and icebergs remaining from ice ages and any trace of civilization found there, usually belong to later ages and as the result of migration of Iranians and other tribes to those regions.

Mythological Evidences and Old Texts

From the mythological point of view, the famous story of the great flood – found in various forms in almost all major cultures of the world - is a reminder of the existence of some actual humid rainy period on earth in the past. In Pahlavi texts, including Bundahishn, we read that Tishtar (star of rain) produced such tremendous amount of rain that later gave rise to all seas and consequent rise of water on earth led to division of dry lands into seven regions or countries.

A demon (div) called Mahrak Usha in Vidivdat (pronounced as Vandidad in Persian, old Zoroastrian text), Malkush in some Pahlavi Epistles and Malkus in Menok i Xrat (Minu-ye Kherad, heavenly reason) is a terrifying demon who brings tremendous amount of rain, snow and hail for years on earth. According to Vidivdat, Ahuramazda warns Jamshid about it and orders him to make a shelter called Var to tend a pair of all creatures of the world, from humans to birds and animals and plants and seeds, also fire and all other useful things under it until the defeat of that demon when the flood subdued and favorable life conditions started to re-appear again. Similarly, Hindus believe that Manu was caught in a great storm, but Vishnu who had turned himself into a fish with a large horn, led Manu's ship to land on northern mountains. Vishnu had warned Manu about the storm before and had ordered him to be prepared for it. When the ship safely landed on those mountains Manu ordered the seven scientists the pair of all living creatures of the earth on board leave the ship and populate the earth again. Manu had seeds of all plants with him too. The phrase 'northern mountains' often found in legends of Indians living along the shores of Sand and Punjab Rivers is a clear allusion to their migration from Pamir and Badakhshan mountains in present Afghanistan which were important regions of Persia once. Another version of the great storm is the Noah's Flood whose oldest account belongs to Sumerians. Later, it was adopted by Babylonians and Acadians and finally appeared in the Testament. The story of flood is also found in ancient Chinese texts. According to Books of Bamboo written under the reign of Yu, the founder of Shia dynasty, a great flood seized the entire Chinese empire up to highest hills. Yu competently managed to subdue it in a period of thirteen years.

References to ancient seas that no longer exist are also found in the works of famous Persian scientist, Abu Reyhan Birooni. In his book called tahdid nahayaat ol-amaaken, when writing about the construction of the

Suez Channel by Persian kings, Birooni speaks of a sea in the place of Egyptian low lands; a sea whose description is also found in Herodotus' writings. Birooni believed that this sea used to be so vast that ships not only traveled on the Nile River, but on present dry lands surrounding the Pyramids which they passed when heading for Memphis. Oral legends and stories narrated by the people living in the central dry land of Iranian plateau today, approves of the existence of a huge sea instead of the present deserts. I have listened to various stories in cities of Damghan, Saveh, Kashan, Zavvareh, Meybod, Naa-inn, and Yazd which refer to a large sea, numerous islands, seaports and harbors and even to pharos.

Finally, we should point out two other facts. The first is the account of the second fargard of Videvdat and expansion of land and population increase under the reign of Jamshid and their migration toward Nimrouz (midday) and the path of sun. To me the phrase toward Nimrouz or south is an allusion to hot midday sun and the temperature increase and not to a new dwelling land. The supplementary phrase 'the path of sun' clarifies the direction of dispersion which is from east to west. The other fact is the story of Fereydoon in Ferdosi's Shahnameh and division of kingship between his three sons, Iraj, Salm and Tur which is an allusion to Iranian migration from the heart of Persia to eastern and western lands and the subsequent war that Salm and Tur waged against their small brother is an allusion to inhabitants of eastern and western regions of Persia waging war against their original homeland.

However, after this golden age, that is around 3800 to 4000 years ago, a great drought and famine occurred and the warm humid period is followed by a hot dry age. At that time the water level lowered rapidly and smaller lakes and rivers dried out creating a great crisis for human settlements. The crisis that started with water shortage rapidly led to shortage of food, stagnation and destruction of agriculture, expansion of deserts, destruction of meadows and natural environment with numerous grave consequences. The drought drove people, who had descended from heights after the flood and brought about prosperity to their previous lands, to search for more suitable living places and migrate in spite of their will. This of course led to disputes, struggles, wars on the existing scarce resources and subsequent evident destructions and ruins proved by archaeological excavations of nearly all ancient Persian hills as 'the end of human life around 4000 years ago together with a layer of ruins and ash.' This layer of ruins and ash is not the result of Aryan attack, but the result of struggles and wars on limited human resources which lasted until 3500 years ago. This is a period that we scarcely find any traces of life in ancient hills, except in a few site situated in the western south regions and Mesopotamian cities. These years of relative silence in the history of Persia is very similar to the reign of Zahak in Ferdosi's Shahnameh.

At the end of this period and concurrently with the onset of Iron Age, that is around 3500 years ago, the weather gradually started to ameliorate and prepared the grounds for expansion and prosperity of new Persian civilizations which regained their previous favorable climatic environment around 2800 years ago.

On the basis of above facts, the theory of Aryan migration from north toward the present Persia and Asia Minor does not seem feasible. What is more probable is that Aryans are native people who lived on this land due to its most favorable living conditions since antiquity. This is supported by abundant traces of civilizations found while there is no trace of any similar settlements in any nearby places. Cultural and civil changes of the Iron Age are indeed the rational development of the Bronze Age and not the result of the arrival of another tribe to the region. These native Aryans migrated to the high lands during the intense increase in rainfall and returned to their previous lowlands after the intense decrease in rainfall. They migrated from the heart of Persia at least twice after the great flood:

1- Once after regression of seas and lakes and drying out of marshes remaining from the great flood when they descended from neighboring mountains and migrated to fertile lands and sedimentary plains which was naturally a vertical migration from high to low lands. The onset of these shifts was in the middle of the humid warm period and after the intense rainfalls known as the storm of Jamshid's reign or the Noah's Flood in 5500 years ago. Two great migrations are two examples of this kind of migration: first the Aryan Indian migration from the Hindukoush Mountains to newly dried out lands of Panjab and shores of the Sand River recorded in Rig Vedas. The second is the Elamite and Sumerian migration from western mountains of Persia to newly dried marshes of Khuzestan and Mesopotamia. There are clear references to the Sumerian migration from 'the east' to Sumeria or Shinar in the Old Testament (Genesis, chapter one). They brought the idea of establishment of a new civilization to the Nile valley and Egypt. There are also hypotheses about Phoenician migration from shores of the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean shores. On the other hand, we know Sumerians were physically very similar to present inhabitants of Baluchestan and Afghanistan and the Sand Valley. Their artistic and architectural works testify that the Sumerian civilization and the north west

Indian civilization were similar to eastern Persian civilization and perhaps undoubtedly originate from the same source. Recent excavations by Yusef Majidzadeh in Jiroft are additional proof for such hypothesis.

2- Once again, there were migrations during the drought occurring 3500 to 4000 years ago in search of more suitable dwelling places from Persia or in Sumerian words from “Sacred motherland” to other lands, abandoning living places prepared 5500 years ago and in which they lived 1500 years due to climatic unpleasant events.

3- Various tribes and peoples lived in the ancient land of great Persia; one and perhaps the general cultural name of all of them was Aryan. All present Persian tribes and people are offspring of those old tribes and people, including Aryans who migrated many times in harmony with climatic changes from high to low lands and vice versa. It is not possible to attribute the beginning of Persian history to the idea of a migration in an unknown time, from an unknown place, to an un destination and through unknown path and only regard them as the ancestors of present Persians.

4- In ancient Persian beliefs, ‘North’ or “Apakhtar” is the headquarter of Ahriman (devil), the dwelling place of div-s (demons) and evil-doers on the entrance way to Hell. If the northern lands were Persian original motherland, they would never talk about it in this way. On the basis of all the above facts discussed here briefly, it seems that Persians (Iranians) did not migrate with Aryans to Persia (Iran), but migrated ‘in Persia’ and ‘from Persia’ and moved to other places.

For further detail and bibliographical sources refer to “Aryan Migrations and the Climatic State of Ancient Persian Seas” (Sec. Edition, Tehran, 2005) by the author of this article.

Source:

http://www.cais-soas.com/CAIS/Anthropology/aryans_immigration.htm