

[Assessing the Aryan Myth](#)

Category : [April/May/June 2006](#)

Published by Anonymous on Apr. 01, 2006

IN MY OPINION

Assessing the Aryan Myth

The only defensible stance: "We don't know!"

Rajiv Malhotra

There has been much heat generated on the topic of the migration or invasion of Aryans into India. A successful campaign to counter it must realize that the battle is long term, and is up against very heavily intellectually-armed opponents (see article on California textbooks on page 58). Hence, there must be a long-term study and discussion by serious scholars on our side, just as there has been within the other side for several decades. This is like cricket practice to make the home team stronger. In this spirit, I recommend the following three books to those wanting to understand the racist/Eurocentric origins of the Aryan theories in the West. Each of these books is from a credible author and academic publishing house, and not from anyone linked with politics of Hinduism or Indian nationalism. This is important. Yet, these books give hard facts to support our case, and each is the result of a decade of sweat and toil on the author's part.

The three books are as follows: *The Language of Paradise: Race, Religion, and Philosophy in the Nineteenth Century*, by Maurice Olender, Harvard University Press. 1992; *Aryans and British India*, by Thomas R. Trautmann, University of California Press. 1997; *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture: The Indo-Aryan Migration Debate*, by Edwin Bryant, Oxford University Press. 2004.

It could also be a good strategy to gift this set to future state education boards, as attachments to our position paper, and to quote from these in a proper manner. This would raise the barrier to counterattacks, as it would not be a simple matter to assert guilt-by-association against alleged "Hindu nationalists." One should argue

that this debate has serious contenders on both sides, and hence it is best left out of the classrooms of eleven-year-old Americans and their naive teachers.

Personally, I think it is wiser to refute the Aryan migration (yes, migration is just as harmful as invasion) theory without trying to replace it with an alternative out-of-India theory. That way you don't arm the opponents with an opportunity to attack. What matters is removing the prevailing Aryan theory, and in fact, explaining it as the result of 19th century European racism and nationalism that culminated in Nazism. For a theory to be refuted, it is not required that one must supply an alternative theory--an important point. So let's avoid over-ambition. It is okay to let it, at this stage, be moved to neutral territory, as something of a mystery for which further archeological research is required because current knowledge is simply inadequate. This is a sound agnostic position for an educator to take.

In short, my position is as follows:

1. The Aryan theory (invasion or migration) was invented by 19th century racist European intellectuals for political reasons.
2. It was never argued in proper intellectual fashion and was assumed to be true, with generation after generation adding more layers of white supremacist suppositions.
3. Archeological data, discovered in the 20th century, started to contradict this.
4. Many sound scholars, such as the authors of the above listed books, have come out to refute this old theory.
5. Many Indians came out to build alternative theories that are India/Hindu centric, and these have been attacked as counter chauvinism.

6. The hard data does not support either kind of chauvinism. The Aryan theory must not be taught as some kind of fact, while at the same time, no out-of-India alternative is ready to replace it. The gaps between textual evidence and archeological evidence have not been bridged at this stage. This is an intellectually sound and defensible position.

Rajiv Malhotra lives in Princeton, New Jersey. E-mail: rm.infinity@gmail.com