

L. Geiger, in his "*Ursprung der Sprache*," has shown, with equal force and clearness, that the great distinguishing characteristic of these roots is infinite variability. I shall endeavour to illustrate this fact by examples, drawn partly from his work, and partly from other sources.

If any one will glance at a dictionary of Aryan roots, and the meanings attributed to them, he can scarcely fail to be struck by the fact that here confusion seems to be the order of the day; that, in fact, the state of primitive language answers, to speak with Geiger,* to Ovid's description of Chaos:

*"Prima fuit rerum confusa sine ordine moles
Unaque erant facies, sidera, terra, fretum."*

This confusion arose from two causes: 1st, that one and the same root was used to name totally different actions or objects, sometimes entirely unconnected with, sometimes remotely akin to each other; and 2nd, that the same action or object was indicated by a number of different roots; so that, in reality, any combination of sounds might be used to indicate any action or object, and conversely the same object or action might be indicated by any number of different combinations of sounds.†

The examples illustrative of these variations may be arranged under the following four categories:

- I. Variations of meaning in roots identical in sound.
- II. Variations of meaning, in different words derived from the same root, or from different roots identical in meaning.
- III. Variations of meaning in the same word (as distinguished from a root).
- IV. Various roots or words expressing the same idea.

I.—VARIATIONS OF MEANING IN ROOTS IDENTICAL IN SOUND.

On referring to Leo Meyer's *Lexicon of Indogermanic Roots* (the partial Italian translation is the only shape in which the work is accessible to me‡), I find that of the first fifty-four roots (beginning with the simplest in form) exactly one-half have two or more meanings assigned to them. Of these twenty-seven, fifteen have double mean-

* *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

† *Ibid.*, p. 89, et seqq.

‡ *Compendio di Gram. Comp. d. antico, Indiano, Greco ed Italico di A. Schleicher, e Lessico d. radici Indo-Italo-Greche di L. Meyer, recati in Italiano da D. Pezzi.* Torino e Firenze, 1869.