

ent members of the group is still more a matter of conjecture. Probably even before they separated, the language was no longer a unit; but as the original folk must have been numerous, no doubt dialects originated; these differences were increased from their successive and continued migrations, by which the most important nations and languages of the civilized world have arisen.

According to the best authorities, we may assume that the Indo-European race inhabited the central plateau of Asia. When they broke up from their common centre, they divided into two branches—the north-western and south-eastern. “The former marched to the home of the setting sun, till they reached that small peninsula we call Europe. The latter, the south-eastern branch, set out to discover the home of the rising sun, till they reached their earthly paradise in the valley of the land of the five rivers.”

The Indians and Iranians (the ancestors of the Persians) formed the south-eastern branch, and for a considerable space of time after separation from their cousins, now dwelling farther westward, still lived together under the common name of Aryans. Later the Indians wandered again southward, and settled in that country, now named after them. Of their place of abode at the time of the composition of the Rigveda—about 2,000 B.C.—the river names mentioned in the hymns give us accurate information. From this source we learn that the mass of Vedic people dwelt at that time in the regions through which the Sindhu (now the Indus) runs; most populous, of course, were the banks of this powerful stream, which, after receiving all its tributaries, attains such a width that boats floating upon its mid-waters are invisible from either bank. In animated outbursts the singers loudly praise its greatness

and beneficence. The songs of the Veda reveal to us other conditions of their origin and growth. No longer did the people live a nomadic life; for the movable tent of the shepherd had already been exchanged for a safer and more convenient shelter, which the climate and landscape of the Punjab (quite the same as they are to-day) demanded. In the earliest of these songs they seem to be still divided into a number of small tribes, mutually hostile, with a patriarchal form of government, which has always prevailed in the early ages of the world, and is adapted to a state of society where the people dwell together in families or tribes, and are not yet formed into a state or nation. As the father of a family acted as priest in his own house, himself kindling the sacred fire, performing the domestic ceremonies, and offering praise and prayer to the gods, so the king represented the tribe, performing the common sacrifices for his people. In some cases his title was hereditary, in others he was chosen by the united hundreds, or separate families composing the tribe, in their general assembly. His power was never absolute, but everywhere and always limited by the will of the people. No taxes were levied. The people brought voluntary gifts to their king, who was respected and obeyed as “judge and protector” in times of peace, and as their leader in battle.

Grazing and agriculture were the chief industries. The prayer for large herds of cattle repeatedly occurs, especially for cows, which to more than one singer are the embodiment of every good thing which Indra has created for enjoyment. Through the magic of the gods is the pure white milk placed ready prepared in the red cow; out of milk man makes pap and butter, “the favourite repast of gods and men.” With plough and harrow, with hoe and mattock, was the bosom