

and a number of theories have been advanced, most of which agree in placing them in the lowest, or Soodra Caste, while all claim for them an admixture of higher castes, among whom were the "Nauts," or minstrels, and the Indo-Persian "Luri" or "musicians to the Poor."

Driven from their homes, probably by fear of the great Mongol invasions, their route has been traced through Persia, Asia Minor, Egypt, the Islands of the Levant, into Europe. But although ancient writers have mentioned a strange people, who undoubtedly were Gipsies as being present in the Balkan peninsula as early as the sixth century, and, in a paraphrase of Genesis made by a German monk in 1122, they are described under the name of Ishmaelites, we have no definite knowledge of their later movements until in 1417 a band of 300, headed by dukes and counts, all splendidly dressed and apparently very wealthy, appeared in Luneburg in Prussia. They called themselves "Secam" and claimed to be pilgrims condemned to wander fifty years in expiation of a penance imposed on them by their bishops of "Little Egypt." From this story they received the name of Gipsies and were long regarded as Egyptians; but, when Egypt became better known it was found that they were as much strangers there as in Europe and that precisely the same story had been told in every land, varied only to suit existing conditions. For seventeen years this first band roamed over Europe, evidently spying out "the land of promise," and so crafty and diplomatic were their leaders that, when in 1434, forty thousand Gipsies poured into the country, they were granted letters of safe-conduct and commendation from the Pope and the various rulers. At first, they were everywhere well received: the romance with which they surrounded themselves, their pretended pilgrimage and, above all, the pomp and wealth which they displayed secured their welcome from Italy to Norway. The Gipsy kings and dukes were granted full authority over the tribes and many favors were shown them. In a short time however the tide began to turn: they asked nothing from any nation, but they refused to do a stroke of work so, with the disappearance of their unexplained wealth, they were compelled to