

And it will conduce to the making of what I have to say in this connexion clearer, if I draw attention at the very threshold to the fact that the Hindūs are perhaps the only nation, except the Greeks, who have investigated, independently and in a truly scientific manner, the general laws which govern the evolution of language.

The synthetical process which comes into operation in the working of those laws may be well called *samskaraṇa*, 'putting together,' by which I mean that every single word in the highest type of language (called *Samskṛita*<sup>1</sup>) is first evolved out of a primary *Dhātu*—a Sanskrit term usually translated by 'Root,' but applicable to any primordial constituent substance, whether of words, or rocks, or living organisms—and then, being so evolved, goes through a process of 'putting together' by the combination of other elementary constituents.

Furthermore, the process of 'putting together' implies, of course, the possibility of a converse process of *vyākaraṇa*, by which I mean 'undoing' or 'decomposition;' that is to say, the resolution of every root-evolved word into its component elements. So that in endeavouring to exhibit these processes of synthesis and analysis, we appear to be engaged, like a chemist, in combining elementary substances into solid forms, and again in resolving these forms into their constituent ingredients.

It seemed to me, therefore, that in deciding upon the system of lexicography best calculated to elucidate the laws of root-evolution, with all the resulting processes of verbal synthesis and analysis, which constitute so marked an idiosyncrasy of the Sanskrit language, it was important to keep prominently in view the peculiar character of a Sanskrit root—a peculiarity traceable through the whole family of so-called Āryan languages connected with Sanskrit, and separating them by a sharp line of demarcation from the other great speech-family usually called Semitic<sup>2</sup>.

And here, if I am asked a question as to what languages are to be included under the name Āryan—a question which ought certainly to be answered *in limine*, inasmuch as this Dictionary, when first published in 1872, was the first work of the kind, put forth by any English scholar, which attempted to introduce comparisons between the principal members of the Āryan family—I reply that the Āryan languages (of which Sanskrit is the eldest sister<sup>3</sup>, and English one of the youngest) proceeded from a common but nameless and unknown parent, whose very home somewhere in Central Asia cannot be fixed with absolute certainty, though the locality may conjecturally be placed somewhere in the region of Bactria (Balkh) and Sogdiana, or not far from Bokhara and the first course of the river Oxus<sup>4</sup>. From this centre radiated, as it were, eight principal lines of speech—each taking its own course and expanding in its own way—namely **the two Asiatic lines**: (A) the Indian—comprising Sanskrit, the various ancient Prākṛits, including the Prākṛit of the Inscriptions, the Pāli<sup>5</sup> of the Buddhist sacred Canon, the Ardha-Māgadhī of the Jains, and the modern Prākṛits or vernacular languages of the Hindūs, such as Hindī, Marāṭhī, Gujarātī, Bengālī, Oriya &c. (B) the Iranian—comprising the Avesta language commonly called Zand or Zend<sup>6</sup>, old Persian or Akhæmenian, Pahlavī, modern Persian, and, in connexion with these, Armenian and Pushtu; and then **the six European lines**: (A) Keltic, (B) Hellenic, (C) Italic, (D) Teutonic, (E) Slavonic, (F) Lithuanian, each branching into various sub-lines as exhibited in the present languages of Europe. It is this Asiatic and European ramification of the Āryan languages which has led to their being called Indo-European.

Now if I am asked a second question, as to what most striking feature distinguishes all these languages from the Semitic, my answer is, that the main distinction lies in the character of their roots

<sup>1</sup> Sanskrit is now too Anglicized a word to admit of its being written as it ought to be written according to the system of transliteration adopted in the present Dictionary—*Samskṛit*.

<sup>2</sup> The name Semitic or Shemitic is applied to Assyrian, Hebrew, Aramaic (or Aramæan), Arabic, and Himyaritic, because in the tenth chapter of Genesis, Shem is represented as father of the principal nations speaking these languages—e.g. Assur (Assyria), Aram (Syria), and of Arphaxad, grandfather of Eber, from whom came the Hebrews—or Trans-Euphratian race, the name Hebrew coming from *עבר*, and really meaning 'one who lives beyond (a river)'—and Joktan, the father of many of the tribes inhabiting South Arabia. It is usual, too, to reckon among Semitic races the people of Abyssinia, whose sacred and literary language is the Ethiopic or Ge'ez, while their spoken dialects are Tigré for the north and north-east, and Amharic for the centre and south, all presenting affinities with the ancient Himyaritic Arabic of South Arabia (Yaman). Hence, speaking generally, we may classify Semitic languages under the two heads of:—1. 'North Semitic,' comprising Assyrian, Hebrew,

and Aramaic; 2. 'South Semitic,' comprising Arabic, Himyaritic, and Ethiopic.

<sup>3</sup> Though the younger sisters sometimes preserve older forms.

<sup>4</sup> According to some German Theorists the cradle-land of the Āryans was in the steppes of Southern Russia. Others have fantastically placed it in Northern Europe. Most scholars hold to the old idea of 'somewhere in Central Asia,' and probably in the region of Bactria (Balkh) and Sogdiana, although there might have been a second centre of migration. I myself firmly believe that Balkh was once a chief ancient home of Āryan civilization. Its ruins are said to extend for twenty miles.

<sup>5</sup> See note 3, p. xxv, on Pāli and on the Prākṛit of the inscriptions.

<sup>6</sup> As to the Avesta, commonly called Zend (more correctly Zand), this is that ancient language of Eastern Irān in which are written the sacred books of the Zoroastrians, commonly called Zend-Avesta—books which constitute the bible and prayer-book of the Pārsīs—those fugitives from Persia who are scattered everywhere throughout India, and are now among the most energetic and loyal of our Indian fellow-subjects.