

only of organic, but of inanimate nature; of the transition from drought to tropical rain; of the appearance of the first cloud on the deep azure of the pure sky, when the long-desired Etesian winds are first heard to rustle amid the feathery foliage of the lofty palms.

The present would appear a fitting place to enter somewhat further into the domain of Indian delineations of nature. "If we suppose," writes Lassen, in his admirable work on Indian antiquity,* "that a part of the Arian race emigrated to India from their native region in the northwestern portion of the continent, they would have found themselves surrounded by a wholly unknown and marvelously luxuriant vegetation. The mildness of the climate, the fruitfulness of the soil, and its rich and spontaneous products, must have imparted a brighter coloring to the new life opened before them. Owing to the originally noble characteristics of the Arian race, and the possession of superior mental endowments, in which lay the germ of all the nobleness and greatness to which the Indians have attained, the aspect of external nature gave rise in the minds of these nations to a deep meditation on the forces of nature, which has proved the means of inducing that contemplative tendency which we find so intimately interwoven in the most ancient poetry of the Indians. The all-powerful impression thus produced on the minds of the people is most clearly manifested in the fundamental dogma of their belief—the recognition of the divine in nature. The freedom from care, and the ease of supporting existence in such a climate, were also conducive to the same contemplative tendency. Who could devote themselves with less hinderance to a profound meditation of earthly life, of the condition of man after death, and of the divine essence, than the anchorites, dwelling amid forests,† the Brahmins of India, whose ancient schools consti-

* Lassen, *Ind. Alterthumskunde*, bd. i., s. 412–415.

† Respecting the Indian forest-hermits, Vanaprestix (Sylvicolæ) and Sramâni (a name which has been altered into Sarmani and Germani), see Lassen, "*de nominibus quibus veteribus appellantur Indorum philosophi*," in the *Rhein. Museum für Philologie*, 1833, s. 178–180. Wilhelm Grimm recognizes something of Indian coloring in the description of the magic forest by a priest named Lambrecht, in the *Song of Alexander*, composed more than 1200 years ago, in immediate imitation of a French original. The hero comes to a wonderful wood, where maidens, adorned with supernatural charms, spring from large flowers. He remains so long with them that both flowers and maidens fade away. (Compare Gervinus, bd. i., s. 282, and Massmann's *Denkmäler*, bd. i., s. 16.) These are the same as the maidens of Edrisi's Eastern magic island of Vacvac, called in the Latin version of the *Masudi Chothbeddin*,