

Lesson 6
READ THIS STORY #1, Basic

Gypsies

Most historians believe that today's Gypsies were emigrés from northern India. They fled at the end of the Middle Ages to escape fighting between Arab and Mongolian invaders.

Many of those nomads settled in the Middle East. Gypsies often say they are descendants of ancient Egyptian kings, and the name Gypsy is thought to be a shortened form of the word Egyptian.

In some locales, these people are called Romany because they entered Europe through Romania. In fact, Gypsies originally spoke Romany, which is similar to Sanskrit.

In my naiveté, I had a romanticized concept of Gypsies. I pictured women wearing huge gold hoop earrings and colorful skirts, and men with piercing dark eyes and mustaches which gave them a certain panache. My vision of wagon caravans filled with beautiful, passionate and musical people came from the movies.

Although some Gypsies are still nomads, most have homes and regular jobs. But Gypsies tend to live apart and mostly keep to themselves. They are intent on retaining their culture and traditions. Because of this, they don't mind the romantic aura that still exists about the Gypsy life.