ceremonies of their religion ; and the third, the distribution of the people into tribes or classes, with the duties pertain­ing to each class.

The principal precepts of morality, contained in the first part of the Shaster, are the following. That no animal be killed, because the Indians attribute souls to brute animals as well as to mankind ; that they neither hear nor speak evil, nor drink wine, nor eat flesh, nor touch any thing that is unclean ; that they observe the feasts, prayers, and wash­ings which their law prescribes ; that they tell no lies, nor be guilty of deceit in trade ; that they neither oppress nor offer violence to one another; that they celebrate the so­lemn feasts and fasts, and appropriate certain hours of or­dinary sleep to cultivate a disposition for prayer ; and that they do not steal or defraud one another.

The ceremonies, contained in the second part of the Shaster, are these. That they wash often in the rivers, thereby obtaining the pardon of their sins ; that they mark their forehead with red, in token of their relation to the Deity ; that they present offerings and prayers under cer­tain trees, set apart for this purpose ; that they pray in the temples, make oblations to their pagodas or idols, sing hymns, and make processions ; that they make pilgrimages to distant rivers, and especially to the Ganges, there to wash themselves and make offerings ; that they make vows to particular saints, according to their respective depart­ments ; that they render homage to the Deity at the first sight of the sun ; that they pay their respect to the sun and moon, which are the two eyes of the Deity ; and that they treat with particular veneration those animals that are deemed more pure than others, because the souls of men have transmigrated into these animals.

The third part of the Shaster records the distribution of the people into four classes; the first being that of the Brahmins or priests, appointed to instruct the people ; the second, that of the kutteris or nobles, who are the magis­trates ; the third, that of the shudderis or merchants ; and the fourth, that of the mechanics. Each person is required to remain in the class in which he was bom, and to pursue the occupation assigned to him by the Shaster. According to the Brahmins, the Shaster was imparted by God himself to Brahma, and by him to the Brahmins, who communicat­ed the contents of it to the people.

Modem writers have given us very different accounts of the antiquity and importance of the Shaster. Mr Hol well, who had made considerable progress in the translation of this book, apprehends that the mythology as well as the cosmogony of the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, was bor­rowed from the doctrines of the Brahmins contained in it, even to the copying of the exteriors of worship, and the distribution of their idols, though grossly mutilated and adulterated. With respect to the Vedam and Shaster, or scriptures, of the Gentoos, this writer informs us, that Ve­dam, in the Malabar language, signifies the same as Shaster in the Sanscrit ; and that the first book is followed by the Gentoos of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, and also of the island of Ceylon. The Shaster is followed by the Gentoos of the provinces of Bengal, and by all the Gentoos of the rest of India commonly called India Proper, along the course of the rivers Ganges and Jumna, to the Indus. Both these books, he says, contain the institutes of their respective religion and worship, as well as the history of their ancient rajahs and princes, often couched under alle­gory and fable. Their antiquity is contended for by the partisans of each ; but he thinks that the similitude of their names, idols, and great part of their worship, leaves little room to doubt, nay plainly evinces, that both these scrip­tures were originally one. He adds, if we compare the gτeat purity and chaste manners of the Shaster with the great absurdities and impurities of the Vedam, we need not hesitate to pronounce the latter a corruption of the former.

with regard to the high original of these scriptures, the account of the Brahmins is as follows. Brahma or the Mighty Spirit, about 4866 years ago, assumed the form of man, and the government of Hindustan. He translated the divine law, designed for the restoration of mankind, who had offended in a pre-existent state, and who are now in their last scene of probation, to the dignity from which they were degraded, out of the language of angels, into the well- known Sanscrit language, and called his translation the *Six Scriptures of Divine Words of the Mighty Spirit.* He ap­pointed the Brahmins, deriving their name from him, to preach the word of God ; and the doctrines of the Shaster were accordingly preached in their original purity a thou­sand years. About this time there was published a para­phrase on the Chartah Bhade, or Six Scriptures ; and about five hundred years afterwards a second exposition appeared, called the *Eighteen Books of Divine Words,* written in a cha­racter compounded of the common Hindustan and the Sans­crit. This innovation produced a schism among the Gen­toos ; on which occasion, it is said, those of Coromandel and Malabar formed a scripture of their own, which they pre­tended to be founded on the Chartah Bhade of Brahma, and called it the Vedam of Birmah, or *Bivine Words of the Mighty Spirit.* The original Chartah Bhade was thrown aside, and at length wholly unknown, except to a few fa­milies, who can still read and expound it in the Sanscrit character. With the establishment of the Aughtorrah Bhade and Vedam, which, according to the Gentoo ac­count, is 3366 years ago, their polytheism commenced ; and the principles of religion became so obscure, and their ceremonies so numerous, that every head of a family was obliged to keep a Brahmin as a guide both in faith and practice. Mr Holwell is of opinion that the Chartah Bhade, or original scriptures, are not copied from any other system of theology promulgated to or obtruded upon mankind. The Gentoos do not attribute them to Zoroaster ; and Mr Holwell supposes that both Zoroaster and Pythagoras vi­sited Hindustan, not to instruct, but to be instructed.

From the account of Mr Dow, we learn that the books which contain the religion and philosophy of the Hindus are distinguished by the name of *Vedas ;* that they are four in number, and, like the sacred wτitings of other nations, are said to have been penned by the Divinity. Veda he says, in the Sanscrit language, literally signifies *science;* and these books treat not only of religion and moral duties, but of every branch of philosophical knowledge. The Brahmins main­tain that the Vedas are the divine laws which Brahma, at the creation of the world, delivered for the instruction of mankind ; but they affirm that their meaning was perverted in the first age by the ignorance and wickedness of some princes, whom they represent as evil spirits, who then haunted the earth.

The first credible account we have of the Vedas is, that about the commencement of the Cal Jug, of which era the year 1768 was the 4886th year, they were written, or ra­ther collected, by a great philosopher and reputed prophet, called Beäss Muni, or Beiiss the Inspired.

The Hindus, says Mr Dow, are divided into two great religious sects : the followers of the doctrine of Bedang, which is the original Shaster or commentary upon the Ve­das ; and those who adhere to the principles of the Nea- dirsen. The original Shaster is called *Vedang,* and **is** a commentary upon the Vedas. This book, he says, is erro­neously called in Europe the *Vedam.* It is ascribed to Beäss Muni, and is said to have been revised some years after by one Serrider Swami, since which time it has been reckoned sacred, and not subject to any farther alterations.

Almost all the Hindus of the Deccan, and those of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, are of this sect. The fol­lowers of the Vedang Shaster do not allow that any physi­cal evil exists. They maintain that God created all things