Bhade of Bramah, and called it *the Vedam of Birmah,* or *Divine 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 Shanſcrit 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 bramin as a guide both in faith and practice. Mr Hollwell 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 Indoſtan, not to inſtruct, but to be inſtructed.

From the account of Mr Dow, we Ram, that the books which contain the religion and philoſophy of the Hindoos are diſtinguiſhed by the name of *Bedas ;* that they are four in number, and, like the ſacred writings of other nations, ſaid to be penned by the Divinity. Beda, he fays, in the Shanſcrit language, literally ſignifies *ſcience ;* and theſe books treat not only of religion and moral duties, but of every branch of philoſophic knowledge. The bramins maintain, that the Bedas are the divine laws, which Brimha, 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 Bedas 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 *Beaſs Muni,* or *Beaſs the Inspired.*

The Hindoos, 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 Bedas ; and thoſe who adhere to the princi­ples of the Neadirſen. The original Shaster is called *Bedang,* and is a commentary upon the Bedas. This book, he ſays, is erroneouſly called in Europe the V*e­dam.* It is aſcribed to Beaſs Muni, and is ſaid to have been reviſed ſome years after by one Serrider "Swami, ſince which it has been reckoned ſacred, and not ſubject to any farther alterations.

Almoſt all the Hindoos of the Decan, and thoſe of the Malabar and Coromandel coaſts, are of this ſect. The followers of the Bedang Shaster do not allow that any phyſical evil exiſts ; they maintain that God crea­ted all things perfectly good ; but that man, being a free agent, may be guilty of moral evil, which may be injurious to himſelf, but can be of no detriment to the general ſyſtem of nature. God, they ſay, being per­fectly benevolent, never puniſhed the wicked otherwiſe than by the pain and affliction which are the natural conſequences of evil actions ; and hell, therefore, is no other than a conſciouſneſs of evil.

The Neadirſen Shaſter is ſaid to have been written by a philoſopher called *Goutam,* near four thouſand years ago. The bramins, from Mr Dow’s account of their

ſacred books, appear to believe invariably in the unity, eternity, omniſcience, and omnipotence of God ; and the polytheiſm of which they have been accuſed is no more than a ſymbolical worſhip of the divine attributes, which they divide into three claſſes. Under the name of *Brimha,* they worſhip the wiſdom and creative power of God ; under the appellation of *Bishen,* his providen­tial and preſerving quality ; and under that of *Shibah,* that attribute which tends to deſtroy.

As few of our readers may have an opportunity of perusing the Shaſter, we ſhall, by way of ſpecimen, ſubjoin a paſſage from it, which, though it contains ſome metaphyſical myſteries concerning the creation, yet diſcovers views of God ſo enlightened that they would not diſgrace more refined nations. The paſſage which we ſhall quote is the firſt chapter of the Shaſter, which is a dialogue between Brimha the Wiſdom of the Divini­ty, and Narud or Reaſon, who is repreſented as the fort of Brimha. Narud deſires to be inſtructed by his fa­ther ; and for that purpoſe puts the following queſtions to him :

*. “ Narud.* O father ! thou firſt of God, thou art ſaid to have created the world, and thy ſon Narud, aſtoniſhed at what he beholds, is deſirous to be inſtructed how all theſe things were made.

*“ Brimha.* Be not deceived, my ſon ! do not imagine that I was the creator of the world, independent of the Divine Mover, who is the great original eſſence and creator of all things. Look, therefore, only upon me as the inſtrument of the great *will,* and a part of his being, whom he called forth to execute his eternal deſigns.

*“ Narud.* What ſhall we think of God ?

*ti Brimha.* Being immaterial, he is above all concep­tion ; being inviſible, he can have no form ; but, from what we behold in his works, we may conclude that he is eternal, omnipotent, knowing all things, and preſent everywhere.

*“ Narud.* How did God create the world ?

*Brimha.* Affection dwelt with God from all eter­nity. It was of three different kinds ; the creative, the preſerving, and the deſtructive. This firſt is represented by Brimha, the ſecond by Biſhen, and the third by Shibah. You, O Narud ! are taught to worſhip all the three in various ſkapes and likeneſſes, as the Crea­tor, the Preſerver, and the Deſtroyer. The affection of God then produced power, and power, at a proper con­junction of time and fate, embraced goodneſs, and pro­duced matter. The three qualities then acting upon matter, produced the univerſe in the following manner : From the oppoſite actions of the creative and deſtructive quality in matter, ſelf-motion firſt aroſe. Self- motion was of three kinds ; the firſt inclining to plaſticity, the ſecond to diſcord, and the third to rest. The diſcordant actions then produced the Akaſh ( a kind of celestial element), which inviſible element poſſeſſed the quality of conveying found ; it produced air, a palpable element ; fire, a viſible element ; water, a fluid element; and earth, a ſolid element.

“ The Akaſh diſperſed itſelf abroad. Air formed the atmoſphere ; fire, collecting itſelf, blazed forth in the hoſt of heaven ; water roſe to the ſurface of the earth, being forced from beneath by the gravity of the latter element. Thus broke forth the world from the veil of darkneſs, in which it was formerly comprehend-