

became still more inquisitive on the *physical* wonder, now disclosed by Márcandeya. Birds endowed with the power of articulation and with the wisdom of learned sages ! In his eagerness to explain this wonder, Márcandeya forgot for a moment the call of his religious rites, and, without any more complaint on the score of time, entered into a long explanation from which it appeared that certain Brahmins had in a previous state of life, incurred the wrath of their father, and were now passing their days as *birds* under parental malediction, tempered, however, by the merciful allowance of articulation, and a large addition of transcendental knowledge.

Jaimini went to these learned birds and proposed his questions. The winged Rishis, after an eloquent salutation to the Supreme Vāsudeva, to Brahmá, and to I'sá-na, proceeded to resolve his doubts. The salutation itself contains ideas and sentiments which appear to be foreign to the portion we have supposed to be the original Márcandeya Purána. The first question, the most difficult of the four, the very question on which Sankaráchárya and others have written volumes, is, by an adroit evasion, summarily disposed of in a few words, but apparently to the querist's satisfaction. "Nara means "water, as has been said by sages conversant with truth ; "it was originally his receptacle ; hence he is called Ná-ráyaṇa. The illustrious lord, the divine Náráyaṇa, pervading every thing, lives, O Bráhmaṇa, permeant in a "quadruple form. He is possessed, as well as devoid, of "attributes. His first form is inscrutable ; the wise (alone) "see it in its fairness. It is enclosed in a blaze of light, "and is the supreme object of contemplation with devotees. "It is far, and it is near, and is known to be beyond the