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The History Of Hindostan; From The Earliest Account Of Time, To The Death Of Akbar; Translated From The Persian Of Mahummud Casim Ferishta Of Delhi

Together With A Dissertation Concerning the Religion and Philosophy of the Brahmins ; With An Appendix, Containing the History of the Mogul Empire, from its Decline in the Reign of Mahummud Shaw, to the present Times ; In Two Volumes

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A Dissertation concerning the Customs. Manners, Language, Religion and Philosophy of the Hindoos.

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A

DISSERTATION

CONCERNING THE

Customs, Manners, Language, Religion and
Philosophy of the HINDOOS.

THE learned of modern Europe have, with reason, complained that the writers of Greece and Rome did not extend their enquiries to the religion and philosophy of the Druids. Posterity will perhaps, in the same manner, find fault with the British for not investigating the learning and religious opinions, which prevail in those countries in Asia, into which either their commerce or their arms have penetrated. The Brahmins of the East possessed in antient times, some reputation for knowledge, but we have never had the curiosity to examine whether there was any truth in the reports of antiquity upon that head.

Excuses, however, may be formed for our ignorance concerning the learning, religion and philosophy of the Brahmins. Literary inquiries are by no means a capital object.



object to many of our adventurers in Asia. The few who have a turn for researches of that kind, are discouraged by the very great difficulty in acquiring that language, in which the learning of the Hindoos is contained; or by that impenetrable veil of mystery with which the Brahmins industriously cover their religious tenets and philosophy.

These circumstances combining together, have opened an ample field for fiction. Modern travellers have accordingly indulged their talent for fable, upon the mysterious religion of Hindostan. Whether the ridiculous tales they relate, proceed from that common partiality which Europeans, as well as less enlightened nations, entertain for the religion and philosophy of their own country, or from a judgment formed upon some external ceremonies of the Hindoos, is very difficult to determine; but they have prejudiced Europe against the Brahmins, and by a very unfair account, have thrown disgrace upon a system of religion and philosophy, which they did by no means investigate.

The author of this dissertation must own, that he for a long time, suffered himself to be carried down in this stream of popular prejudice. The present decline of literature in Hindostan, served to confirm him in his belief of those legends which he read in Europe, concerning the Brahmins. But conversing by accident, one day, with a noble and learned Brahmin, he was not a little surprized to find him perfectly acquainted with those opinions, which, both in ancient and modern Europe, have employed the pens of the most celebrated moralists. This circumstance did not fail to excite his curiosity, and in the course of many subsequent



sequent conversations, he found that philosophy and the sciences had, in former ages, made a very considerable progress in the East.

Having then no intention to quit India for some time, he resolved to acquire some knowledge in the Sanscrita language; the grand repository of the religion, philosophy and history of the Hindoos. With this view, he prevailed upon his noble friend the Brahmin, to procure for him a Pundit, from the university of Benaris, well versed in the Sanscrita, and master of all the knowledge of that learned body. But before he had made any considerable progress in his studies, an unexpected change of affairs in Bengal, broke off all his literary schemes. He found that the time he had to remain in India would be too short to acquire the Sanscrita. He determined therefore, through the medium of the Persian language, and through the vulgar tongue of the Hindoos, to inform himself as much as possible, concerning the mythology and philosophy of the Brahmins. He, for this purpose, procured some of the principal SHASTERS, and his Pundit explained to him, as many passages of those curious books, as served to give him a general idea of the doctrine which they contain.

It is but justice to the Brahmins to confess that the author of this dissertation is very sensible of his own inability to illustrate, with that fullness and perspicuity which it deserves, that symbolical religion, which they are at so much pains to conceal from foreigners. He however can aver, that he has not misrepresented one single circumstance or tenet, though many may have escaped his observation.

The



The books which contain the religion and philosophy of the Hindoos, are distinguished by the name of Bedas. They are four in number, and like the sacred writings of other nations, are said to have been penned by the divinity. Beda in the Sanscrita, literally signifies SCIENCE: for these books not only treat of religious and moral duties, but of every branch of philosophical knowledge.

The Bedas are, by the Brahmins, held so sacred, that they permit no other sect to read them; and such is the influence of superstition and priest-craft over the minds of the other CASTS in India, that they would deem it an unpardonable sin to satisfy their curiosity in that respect, were it even within the compass of their power. The Brahmins themselves are bound by such strong ties of religion, to confine those writings to their own tribe, that were any of them known to read them to others, he would be immediately excommunicated. This punishment is worse than even death itself among the Hindoos. The offender is not only thrown down from the noblest order to the most polluted CAST, but his posterity are rendered for ever incapable of being received into his former dignity.

All these things considered, we are not to wonder that the doctrine of the Bedas is so little known in Europe. Even the literary part of the Mahomedans of Asia, reckon it an abstruse and mysterious subject, and candidly confess, that it is covered with a veil of darkness, which they could never penetrate. Some have indeed supposed, that the learned Feizi, brother to the celebrated Abul Fazil, chief secretary to the Emperor Akbar, had read the Bedas, and discovered the religious tenets contained in them to that renowned Prince.

As



As the story of Feizi made a good deal of noise in the east, it may not be improper to give the particulars of it in this place.

Mahummud Akbar being a prince of elevated and extensive ideas, was totally divested of those prejudices for his own religion, which men of inferior parts not only imbibe with their mother's milk, but retain throughout their lives. Though bred in all the strictness of the Mahomedan faith, his great soul in his riper years, broke those chains of superstition and credulity, with which his tutors had, in his early youth, fettered his mind. With a design to chuse his own religion, or rather from curiosity, he made it his business to enquire minutely into all the systems of divinity, which prevailed among mankind. The story of his being instructed in the christian tenets, by a missionary from Portugal, is too well known in Europe to require a place in this dissertation. As almost all religions admit of proselytes, Akbar had good success in his enquiries, till he came to his own subjects the Hindoos. Contrary to the practice of all other religious sects, they admit of no converts; but they allow that every one may go to heaven his own way, though they perhaps suppose, that theirs is the most expeditious method to obtain that important end. They chuse rather to make a mystery of their religion, than impose it upon the world, like the Mahomedans, with the sword, or by means of the stake, after the manner of some pious christians.

Not all the authority of Akbar could prevail with the Brahmins to reveal the principles of their faith. He was therefore obliged to have recourse to artifice to obtain the information which he so much desired. The Emperor, for

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this



this purpose, concerted a plan with his chief secretary, Abul Fazil, to impose Feizi, then a boy, upon the Brahmins, in the character of a poor orphan of their tribe. Feizi being instructed in his part, was privately sent to Benaris, the principal seat of learning among the Hindoos. In that city the fraud was practised on a learned Brahmin, who received the boy into his house, and educated him as his own son.

When Feizi, after ten years study, had acquired the Sanscrita language, and all the knowledge of which the learned of Benaris were possessed, proper measures were taken by the Emperor to secure his safe return. Feizi it seems, during his residence with his patron the Brahmin, was smitten with the beauty of his only daughter; and indeed the ladies of the Brahmin race are the handsomest in Hindostan. The old Brahmin saw the mutual passion of the young pair with pleasure, and as he loved Feizi for his uncommon abilities, he offered him his daughter in marriage. Feizi, perplexed between love and gratitude, at length discovered himself to the good old man, fell down at his feet, and grasping his knees, solicited with tears for forgiveness, for the great crime he had committed against his indulgent benefactor. The Brahmin, struck dumb with astonishment, uttered not one word of reproach. He drew a dagger, which he always carried on his girdle, and prepared to plunge it in his own breast. Feizi seized his hand, and conjured him, that if yet any atonement could be made for the injury he had done him, he himself would swear to deny him nothing. The Brahmin, bursting into tears, told him, that if Feizi should grant him two requests, he would forgive him, and consent to live. Feizi, without any hesitation, consented, and the
Brahmin's



Brahmin's requests were, that he should never translate the Bedas, nor repeat the creed of the Hindoos.

How far Feizi was bound by his oath not to reveal the doctrine of the Bedas to Akbar is uncertain; but that neither he, nor any other person, ever translated those books, is a truth beyond any dispute. It is however well known, that the Emperor afterwards greatly favoured the Hindoo faith, and gave much offence to zealous Mahomedans, by practising some Indian customs which they thought favoured of idolatry. But the dispassionate part of mankind have always allowed, that Akbar was equally divested of all the follies of both the religious superstitions, which prevailed among his subjects.

To return from this digression, the Brahmins 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. They call those evil genii Dewtas, and tell many strange allegorical legends concerning them; such as, that the Bedas being lost, were afterwards recovered by Bisheh, in the form of a fish, who brought them up from the bottom of the ocean, into which they were thrown by a Deo, or Demon.

The first credible account we have of the Bedas, is, that about the commencement of the Cal Jug, of which era the present year 1768, is the 4886th year, they were written, or rather collected by a great philosopher, and reputed prophet, called Beäfs Muni, or Beäfs the inspired. This learned man is



otherwise called Krishen Basdeo, and is said to have lived in the reign of Judistater, in the city of Histanapore, upon the river Jumna, near the present city of Delhi.

The Brahmins do not give to Beäfs Muni the merit of being the author of the Bedas. They however acknowledge, that he reduced them into the present form, dividing them into four distinct books, after having collected the detached pieces of which they are composed, from every part of India. It is, upon the whole, probable, that they are not the work of one man, on account of their immense bulk.

The Mahomedans of Asia, as well as some of the learned of Europe, have mistaken Brimha, an allegorical person, for some philosopher of repute in India, whom they distinguish by the disfigured names of Bruma, Burma, and Bramha, whom they suppose to have been the writer of the religious books of the Hindoos. Ferishta, in the history now given to the public, affirms, that Brimha was of the race of Bang, and flourished in the reign of Krishen, first monarch of Hindostan. But the Brahmins deny, that any such person ever existed, which we have reason to believe is the truth; as Brimha in the Shanscrita language allegorically signifies wisdom, one of the principal attributes of the supreme divinity.

The four Bedas contain 100,000 ashlogues or stanzas in verse, each of which consists of four lines. The first Bada is called RUG BADA, which signifies the science of divination, concerning which it principally treats. It also contains astrology, astronomy, natural philosophy, and a very particular account of the creation of matter, and the formation of the world.



The second Bēda is distinguished by the name of *Sheham*. That word signifies piety or devotion, and this book accordingly treats of all religious and moral duties. It also contains many hymns in praise of the supreme being, as well as verses in honour of subaltern intelligences.

The third is the *Judger Bēda*, which, as the word implies, comprehends the whole science of religious rites and ceremonies; such as fasts, festivals, purifications, penances, pilgrimages, sacrifices, prayers, and offerings. They give the appellation of *Obatar Bah* to the fourth Bēda. *Obatar* signifies in the *Shanscrita*, the being, or the essence, and *Bah* good; so that the *Obatar Bah* is literally the knowledge of the good being, and accordingly this book comprehends the whole science of theology and metaphysical philosophy.

The language of the *Obatar Bah Bēda* is now become obsolete; so that very few Brahmins pretend to read it with propriety. Whether this proceeds from its great antiquity, or from its being wrote in an uncommon dialect of the *Shanscrita*, is hard to determine. We are inclined to believe that the first is the truth; for we can by no means agree with a late ingenious writer*, who affirms, that the *Obatar Bah* was written in a period posterior to the rest of the *Bēdas*.

It has been already observed, that the *Bēdas* are written in the *Shanscrita* tongue. Whether the *Shanscrita* was, in any period of antiquity, the vulgar language of Hindostan,

* Mr. Holwell: The author of the dissertation finds himself obliged to differ almost in every particular concerning the religion of the Hindoos, from that gentleman.

or



or was invented by the Brahmins, to be a mysterious repository for their religion and philosophy, is difficult to determine. All other languages, it is true, were casually invented by mankind, to express their ideas and wants ; but the astonishing formation of the Shanfcrita seems to be beyond the power of chance. In regularity of etymology and grammatical order, it far exceeds the Arabic. It, in short, bears evident marks, that it has been fixed upon rational principles, by a body of learned men, who studied regularity, harmony, and a wonderful simplicity and energy of expression.

Though the Shanfcrita is amazingly copious, a very small grammar and vocabulary serve to illustrate the principles of the whole. In a treatise of a few pages, the roots and primitives are all comprehended, and so uniform is the rules for derivations and inflections, that the etymon of every word is, with the greatest facility, at once investigated. The pronunciation is the greatest difficulty which attends the acquirement of the language to perfection. This is so quick and forcible, that a person, even before the years of puberty, must labour a long time before he can pronounce it with propriety ; but when once that is attained to perfection, it strikes the ear with amazing boldness and harmony. The alphabet of the Shanfcrita consists of fifty letters, but one half of these carry combined sounds, so that its characters in fact, do not exceed ours in number. Some small idea of the Shanfcrita may be conveyed by the annexed plate, which contains the alphabet, and the measure of the four Bedas.

Before we shall proceed to the religion and philosophy of the Brahmins, it may not be improper to premise something
concerning



concerning the most characteristical manners and customs of the Hindoos in general. The Hindoos are so called from Indoo or Hindoo, which, in the Shanfcrita language, signifies the Moon; for from that luminary, and the fun, they deduce their fabulous origin. The author of the differtation has in his poffeffion, a long lift of a dynasty of Kings, called Hindoo-buns or Chunder-buns, both of which words mean, the Children of the Moon. He alfo has a catalogue of the Surage-buns, or the Children of the Sun, from whom many of the Rajas of Hindoftan pretend to derive their blood. Hindoftan, the domeftic appellation of India, is a compofition of Hindoo, and Stan, a region; and the great river Indus takes its name from the people, and not the people from the river, as has been erroneoufly fupposed in Europe.

The Hindoos have, from all antiquity, been divided into four great tribes, each of which comprehend a variety of inferior cafts. Thefe tribes do not intermarry, eat, drink, or in any manner affociate with one another, except when they worship at the temple of Jagga-nat† in Oriffa, where it is held a crime to make any diftinction. The firft and moft noble tribe are the Brahmins, who alone can officiate in the priefthood, like the Levites among the Jews. They are not however excluded from government, trade, or agriculture, though they are ftrictly prohibited from all menial offices by their laws. They derive their name from Brimha, who they allegorically fay, produced the Brahmins from his head, when he created the world.

† Jagga nat fignifies Lord of the creation. This is one of the names of Bifhen and the Obatar, or Being, who is faid to prefide over the prefent period. He is reprefented under the figure of a fat man, fitting crofs-legged, with his arms hanging down by his fide as if they had no ftrength. This laft circumftance alludes to the imbecility of this age. His temple is in the greateft repute of any now in India.



The second in order is the Sittri tribe, who are sometimes distinguished by the name of Kittri or Koytri. They, according to their original institution, ought to be all military men; but they frequently follow other professions. Brimha is said to have produced the Kittri from his heart, as an emblem of that courage which warriors should possess.

The name of Beise or Bise is given to the third tribe. They are for the most part, merchants, bankers, and bunias or shopkeepers. These are figuratively said to have sprung from the belly of Brimha; the word Beish signifying a provider or nourisher. The fourth tribe is that of Sudder. They ought to be menial servants, and they are incapable to raise themselves to any superior rank. They are said to have proceeded from the feet of Brimha, in allusion to their low degree. But indeed it is contrary to the inviolable laws of the Hindoos, that any person should rise from an inferior cast into a higher tribe. If any therefore should be excommunicated from any of the four tribes, he and his posterity are forever shut out from society of every body in the nation, excepting that of the Harri cast, who are held in utter detestation by all the other tribes, and are employed only in the meanest and vilest offices. This circumstance renders excommunication so dreadful, that any Hindoo will suffer the torture, and even death itself, rather than deviate from one article of his faith. This severity prevented all intermixture of blood between the tribes, so that, in their appearance, they seem rather four different nations, than members of the same community.

It is, as we have already observed, a principle peculiar to the Hindoo religion, not to admit of profelytes. Instead of
being



being solicitous about gaining converts, they always make a mystery of their faith. Heaven, say they, is like a palace with many doors, and every one may enter in his own way. But this charitable disposition never encouraged other sects to settle among them, as they must have been excluded entirely from all the benefits of society.

When a child is born, some of the Brahmins are called. They pretend, from the horoscope of his nativity, to foretel his future fortune, by means of some astrological tables, of which they are possessed. When this ceremony is over, they burn incense, and make an offering according to the circumstances of the parent; and without ever consulting them, tie the zinar * round the infant's neck, and impose a name upon him, according to their own fancy.

Between the age of seven and ten, the children are, by their parents, given away in marriage. The young pair are brought together, in order to contract an intimacy with one another. But when they approach to the years of puberty, they carefully separate them, till the female produces signs of womanhood. She then is taken from her parents to cohabit with her husband: nor is she ever after permitted to visit them. It is not lawful among the Hindoos to marry nearer than the eighth degree of kindred. Polygamy is permitted, but seldom practised; for they very rationally think, that one wife is sufficient for one man.

The extraordinary custom of the women burning themselves with their deceased husbands, has, for the most part, fallen into desuetude in India; nor was it ever reckoned a

* A string which all the Hindoos wear, by way of charm or amulet.



religious duty, as has been very erroneously supposed in the West. This species of barbarity, like many others, rose originally from the foolish enthusiasm of feeble minds. In a text in the Bedas, conjugal affection and fidelity are thus figuratively inculcated: "The woman, in short, who dies with her husband, shall enjoy life eternal with him in heaven." From this source the Brahmins themselves deduce this ridiculous custom, which is a more rational solution of it, than the story which prevails in Europe; that it was a political institution, made by one of the Emperors, to prevent wives from poisoning their husbands, a practice, in those days, common in Hindostan.

People of rank and those of the higher casts, burn their dead and throw some incense into the pile. Some throw the bodies of their friends into the Ganges, while others expose them on the high ways, as a prey to vultures and wild beasts. There is one cast in the kingdom of Bengal, who barbarously expose their sick by the river's side to die there. They even sometimes choak them with mud, when they think them past hopes of recovery. They defend this inhuman custom by saying, that life is not an adequate recompence for the tortures of a lingering disease.

The Hindoos have a code of laws in the NEA SHASTER. Treason, incest, sacrilege, murder, adultery with the wife of a Brahmin, and theft, are capital crimes. Though the Brahmins were the authors of those laws, we do not find that they have exempted themselves from the punishment of death, when guilty of those crimes. This is one of those numerous fables, which modern travellers imported from the East. It is however certain, that the influence of the Brah-



Brahmins is so great, and their characters as priests so sacred, that they escape in cases where no mercy would be shewn to the other tribes.

Petty offences are punished by temporary excommunications, pilgrimages, penances and fines, according to the degree of the crime, and the wealth of the guilty person. But as the Hindoos are now, for the most part, subject to the Mahommedans, they are governed by the laws of the Koran, or by the arbitrary will of the prince.

The Senasseys are a sect of mendicant philosophers, commonly known by the name of Fakiers, which literally signifies poor people. These idle and pretended devotees, assemble sometimes in armies of ten or twelve thousand, and, under a pretext of making pilgrimages to certain temples, lay whole countries under contribution. These saints wear no clothes, are generally very robust, and convert the wives of the less holy part of mankind to their own use, upon their religious progresses. They admit any man of parts into their number, and they take great care to instruct their disciples in every branch of knowledge, to make the order the more revered among the vulgar.

When this naked army of robust saints direct their march to any temple, the men of the provinces through which their road lies, very often fly before them, notwithstanding of the sanctified character of the Fakiers. But the women are in general more resolute, and not only remain in their dwellings, but apply frequently for the prayers of those holy persons, which are found to be most effectual in cases of sterility. When a Fakier is at prayers with the lady of



the house, he leaves either his flipper or his staff at the door, which if seen by the husband, effectually prevents him from disturbing their devotion. But should he be so unfortunate as not to mind those signals, a sound drubbing is the inevitable consequence of his intrusion.

Though the Fakiers enforce with their arms, that reverence which the people of Hindostan have naturally for their order, they inflict voluntary penances of very extraordinary kinds upon themselves, to gain more respect. These fellows sometimes hold up one arm in a fixed position till it becomes stiff, and remains in that situation during the rest of their lives. Some clench their fists very hard, and keep them so till their nails grow into their palms, and appear through the back of their hands. Others turn their faces over one shoulder, and keep them in that situation, till they fix for ever their heads looking backward. Many turn their eyes to the point of their nose, till they have lost the power of looking in any other direction. These last, pretend sometimes to see what they call the sacred fire, which vision, no doubt, proceeds from some disorder arising from the distortion of the optic nerves.

It often appears to Europeans in India, a matter of some ridicule to converse with those distorted and naked philosophers; though their knowledge and external appearance, exhibit a very striking contrast. Some are really what they seem, enthusiasts; but others put on the character of sanctity, as a cloak for their pleasures. But what actually makes them a public nuisance, and the aversion of poor husbands, is, that the women think they derive some holiness to themselves, from an intimacy with a Fakier.



Many other foolish customs, besides those we have mentioned, are peculiar to those religious mendicants. But enthusiastic penances are not confined to them alone. Some of the vulgar, on the fast of Oppos, suspend themselves on iron hooks, by the flesh of the shoulder-blade, to the end of a beam. This beam turns round with great velocity, upon a pivot, on the head of a high pole. The enthusiast not only seems insensible of pain, but very often blows a trumpet as he is whirled round above, and, at certain intervals, sings a song to the gaping multitude below; who very much admire his fortitude and devotion. This ridiculous custom is kept up to commemorate the sufferings of a martyr, who was in that manner, tortured for his faith.

To dwell longer upon the characteristical customs and manners of the Hindoos, would extend this dissertation too far. Some more particulars concerning that nation, will naturally arise from an investigation of their religion and philosophy. This last was the capital design of this introductory discourse; and we hope to be able to throw a new, if not a compleat light, on a subject hitherto little understood in the West. Some writers have very lately given to the world, an unintelligible system of the Brahmin religion; and they affirm, that they derived their information from the Hindoos themselves. This may be the case, but they certainly conversed upon that subject only with the inferior tribes, or with the unlearned part of the Brahmins: and it would be as ridiculous to hope for a true state of the religion and philosophy of the Hindoos from those illiterate casts, as it would be in a Mahomedan in London, to rely upon the accounts of a parish beadle, concerning the most abstruse points of the Christian faith; or, to form his opinion



nion of the principles of the Newtonian philosophy, from a conversation with an English carman.

The Hindoos are divided into two great religious sects: the followers of the doctrine of the BEDANG; and those who adhere to the principles of the NEADIRSIN. As the first are esteemed the most orthodox, as well as the most ancient, we shall begin to explain their opinions, by extracts literally translated from the original SHASTER*, which goes by the name of Bedang.

Bedang, the title of the Shaster, or commentary upon the Bedas, concerning which we are about to treat, is a word compounded of Beda, *science*, and Ang, *body*. The name of this Shaster therefore, may be literally translated, the Body of science. This book has, in Europe, been erroneously called Vedam; and it is an exposition of the doctrine of the Bedas, by that great philosopher and prophet Beâs Muni, who, according to the Brahmins, flourished about four thousand years ago. The Bedang is said to have been revised some ages after Beâs Muni, by one Sirrider Swami, since which it has been reckoned sacred, and not subject to any further alterations. Almost all the Hindoos of the Decan, and those of the Malabar and Coromandel coasts, are of the sect of the Bedang.

* Shaster literally signifies Knowledge: but it is commonly understood to mean a book which treats of divinity and the sciences. There are many Shasters among the Hindoos; so that those writers who affirmed, that there was but one Shaster in India, which, like the Bible of the Christians, or Koran of the followers of Mahomed, contained the first principles of the Brahmin faith, have deceived themselves and the public.

This



This commentary opens with a dialogue between Brimha^b, the Wisdom of the Divinity; and Narud^c or Reason, who is represented as the son 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^d, 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^e, who is the great original essence^f, and creator of all things. Look, therefore, only upon me as the instrument of the great

^b Brimha is the genitive case of BRIMH, which is a primitive signifying God. He is called Brimha or WISDOM, the first attribute of the supreme divinity. The divine wisdom, under the name of Brimha, is figuratively represented with one head, having four faces, looking to the four quarters, alluding to his seeing all things. Upon the head of this figure is a crown, an emblem of power and dominion. He has four hands, implying, the omnipotence of divine wisdom. In the first hand he holds the four Bedas, as a symbol of knowledge; in the second a scepter, as a token of authority; and in the third a ring, or compleat circle, as an emblem of eternity. Brimha holds nothing in the fourth hand, which implies, that THE WISDOM OF GOD is always ready to lend his aid to his creatures. He is represented riding upon a goose, the emblem of simplicity among the Hindoos. The latter circumstance is intended to imply the simplicity of the operations of nature, which is but another name for the wisdom of the divinity. These explications of the insignia of Brimha, were given by the Brahmin, and are, by no means, conjectures of the author of this dissertation.

^c Narud literally signifies REASON, emphatically called the son of THE WISDOM OF GOD. He is said to be the first-born of the MUNIS, of whom hereafter.

^d Brimh. ^e The supreme divinity. ^f Pirrim-Purru; from PIR first, and PURRU essence or being.

WILL,



WILL^{*}, and a part of his being, whom he called forth to execute his eternal designs.

NARUD.

What shall we think of God?

BRIMHA.

Being immaterial^h, he is above all conception; being invifibleⁱ, he can have no form^k; but, from what we behold in his works, we may conclude that he is eternal^l, omnipotent^m, knowing all thingsⁿ, and present every where^o.

NARUD.

How did God create the world?

BRIMHA.

Affection^p, dwelt with God, from all eternity. It was of three different kinds, the creative^q, the preserving^r, and the destructive^s. This first is represented by Brimha, the second

^{*} ISH-BUR; from ISH will, and BUR great: commonly pronounced ISHUR. This is one of the thousand names of GOD, which have so much perplexed the writers of Europe. In the answer of Brimha, mention is made of the first three great deities of the Hindoos; which three, however, they by no means worship as distinct beings from God, but only as his principal attributes. ^h Nid-akar. ⁱ Oderiffa.

^k Sirba-Sirrup. ^l Nitteh. ^m Ge-itcha. ⁿ Subittera-dirfi. ^o Surba-Birfi. These are the very terms used in the Bedang, in the definition of God, which we have literally translated in the text. Whether we, who profess christianity, and call the Hindoos by the detestable names of Pagans and Idolaters, have higher ideas of the supreme divinity, we shall leave to the unprejudiced reader to determine.

^p Maiah, which signifies either affection or passion. ^q Redjo-goon, the creative quality. ^r Sittogoon, the preserving quality. ^s Timmugoon, the destructive quality.

by



by Bishen[†], and the third by Shibah[‡]. You, O Narud! are taught to worship all the three, in various shapes 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[†], which invisible element possessed the quality of conveying sound; 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

[†] The preserver; Providence is personified under the name of Bishen. [‡] Shibah, the foe of good. [§] Naat. ^{||} Bishen. [¶] Shibah. The Hindoos worship the destructive attribute of the divinity, under the name of Shibah; but they do not mean evil by Shibah, for they affirm, that there is no such thing but what proceeds from the free agency of man. [‡] Jotna. [§] Kaal. ^{||} Addaristo. [¶] Pir-kirti, from *Pir* good, and *Kirti* action. God's attribute of goodness, is worshipped as a Goddess, under the name of Pirkirti, and many other appellations, which comprehend all the virtues. It has been ridiculously supposed in Europe, that PURRUS and PIRKIRTI were the first man and woman, according to the system of the Hindoos; whereas by PURRUS is meant God, or emphatically, *the Being*; and by Pirkirti, his attribute of goodness. [‡] Mohat. In other places of the Bedang, matter is distinguished by the name of Maha-tit, *the great substance*. [§] Ahankar. The word literally signifies self-action. ^{||} Rajas. [¶] Tamas. [‡] Satig. [§] A kind of celestial element. The Bedang in another place, speaks of akash as a pure impalpable element, through which the planets move. This element, says the philosopher, makes no resistance, and therefore the planets continue their motion, from the first impulse which they received from the hand of Brimha or God; nor will they stop, says he, till he shall seize them in the midst of their course. [‡] Baiow. [§] Tege. ^{||} Joal. [¶] Prittavi.



heaven^o; 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 comprehended by God. Order rose over the universe. The seven heavens were formed^p, and the seven worlds were fixed in their places; there to remain till the great dissolution^a, when all things shall be absorbed^r into God.

God seeing the earth in full bloom, and that vegetation^r was strong from its seeds, called forth for the first time, Intellect^a, which he endued with various organs and shapes, to form a diversity of animals^w upon the earth. He endued the animals with five senses, feeling, seeing, smelling, tasting, and hearing^x. But to man he gave reflexion^r to raise him above the beasts of the field.

The creatures were created male and female^z, that they might propagate their species upon the earth. Every herb bore the seed of its kind, that the world might be clothed with verdure, and all animals provided with food.

NARUD.

What dost thou mean, O Father! by intellect?

^a Dewta; of which Surage the Sun is first in rank. ^p The names of the seven heavens are, Bu, Buba, Surg, Moha, Junnoh, Tapu, and Suttch. The seven worlds are, Omal, Bittal, Suttal, Joal, Tallattal, Rissatal, and Pattal. The author of the dissertation, by a negligence which he very much regrets, forgot to get the proper explanation of those names, or the uses to which the seven heavens were converted. ^r Mah-pirly. ^r Mucht. ^r Birgalotta. ^u Mun. ^w Jount. ^x The five senses are, Sappursina, Chowkowna, Nasiga, Rissina, Kurnowa. ^r Manus. ^z Nir and Madda signifies male and female.

BRIMHA..



BRIMHA.

It is a portion of the GREAT SOUL^a of the universe, breathed into all creatures, to animate them for a certain time.

NARUD.

What becomes of it after death?

BRIMHA.

It animates other bodies, or returns like a drop into that unbounded ocean from which it first arose.

NARUD.

Shall not then the souls of good men receive rewards? Nor the souls of the bad meet with punishment?

BRIMHA.

The souls of men are distinguished from those of other animals; for the first are endued with reason^b and with a consciousness of right and wrong. If therefore man shall adhere to the first, as far as his powers shall extend, his soul, when disengaged from the body by death, shall be absorbed into the divine essence, and shall never more re-animate flesh. But the souls of those who do evil^c, are not, at death, disengaged from all the elements. They are immediately clothed with a body of fire, air, and akash, in which they are, for a time, punished in hell^d. After the season of

^a Purmattima literally signifies the *great soul*. ^b Upiman. ^c Mund. ^d Nirick. The Hindoos reckon above eighty kinds of hells, each proportioned to the degree of the wickedness of the persons punished there. The Brahmins have no idea that all the sins that a man can commit in the short period of his life, can deserve eternal punishment; nor that all the virtues he can exercise, can merit perpetual felicity in heaven.



their grief is over, they re-animate other bodies; but till they shall arrive at a state of purity, they can never be absorbed into God.

NARUD.

What is the nature of that absorbed state* which the souls of good men enjoy after death?

BRIMHA.

It is a participation of the divine nature, where all passions are utterly unknown, and where consciousness is lost in bliss[†].

NARUD.

Thou sayst, O Father! that unless the soul is perfectly pure, it cannot be absorbed into God: Now, as the actions of the generality of men are partly good, and partly bad, whether are their spirits sent immediately after death?

BRIMHA.

They must atone for their crimes in hell, where they must remain for a space proportioned to the degree of their iniquities; then they rise to heaven to be rewarded for a time for their virtues; and from thence they will return to the world, to reanimate other bodies.

* Muchi. It is somewhat surprising, that a state of unconsciousness, which in fact is the same with annihilation, should be esteemed by the Hindoos as the supreme good; yet so it is, that they always represent the *absorbed state*, as a situation of perfect insensibility, equally destitute of pleasure and of pain. But Brimha seems here to imply, that it is a kind of delirium of joy.

NARUD.



NARUD.

What is time [?]?

BRIMHA.

Time existed from all eternity with God: but it can only be estimated since motion was produced, and only be conceived by the mind, from its own constant progress.

NARUD.

How long shall this world remain?

BRIMHA.

Until the four jugs shall have revolved. Then Ruder^b with the ten spirits of dissolution shall roll a comet under the moon, that shall involve all things in fire, and reduce the world into ashes. God shall then exist alone, for matter will be totally annihilated¹.

^a Kaal. It may not be improper, in this place, to say something concerning the Hindoo method of computing time. Their least subdivision of time is, the Nemish or twinkling of an eye. Three Nemish's make one Kaan, fifty Kaan one Ligger, ten Liggers one Dind, two Dinds one Gurry, equal to forty-five of our minutes; four Gurries one Pär, eight Päs one Dien or day, fifteen Diens one Packa, two Packas one Mäsh, two Mäshes one Ribbi, three Ribbis one Aioon or year, which only consists of 360 days, but when the odd days, hours and minutes, wanting of a solar year, amount to one revolution of the moon, an additional month is made to that year to adjust the Callendar. A year of 360 days, they reckon but one day to the Dewtas or host of Heaven; and they say, that twelve thousand of those planetary years, make one revolution of the four Jugs or periods, into which they divide the ages of the world. The Sittoh Jug or age of truth contained, according to them, four thousand planetary years. The Treta Jug, or age of three, contained three thousand years. The Duapur Jug, or age of two, contained two thousand; and the Kallé Jug, or age of pollution, consists of only one thousand. To these they add two other periods, between the dissolution and renovation of the world, which they call Sundeh, and Sundafs, each of a thousand planetary years; so that from one Maperly, or great dissolution of all things, to another, there are 3,720,000 of our years.

^b The same with Shibah, the destroying quality of God.

¹ Nisht.

Here



Here ends the first chapter of the Bedang. The second treats of providence and free will; a subject so abstruse, that it was impossible to understand it, without a compleat knowledge of the Shanscrita. The author of the Bedang, thinking perhaps, that the philosophical catechism which we have translated above, was too pure for narrow and superstitious minds, has inserted into his work, a strange allegorical account of the creation, for the purposes of vulgar theology. In this tale, the attributes of God, the human passions and faculties of the mind are personified, and introduced upon the stage. As this allegory may afford matter of some curiosity to the public, we shall here translate it.

“BRIMH existed from all eternity, in a form of infinite dimensions. When it pleased him to create the world, he said, *Rise up, O Brimha* *. Immediately a spirit of the colour of flame issued from his navel, having four heads and four hands. Brimha gazing round, and seeing nothing but the immense image, out of which he had proceeded, he travelled a thousand years, to endeavour to comprehend its dimensions. But after all his toil, he found himself as much at a loss as before.

“Lost in amazement, Brimha gave over his journey. He fell prostrate and praised what he saw, with his four mouths. The almighty, then, with a voice like ten thousand thunders, was pleased to say: Thou hast done well, O Brimha, for thou canst not comprehend me!—Go and create the world!—How can I create it?—Ask of me, and power shall be given unto thee.—O God, said Brimha, thou art almighty in power!—

* The wisdom of God.



“Brimha forthwith perceived the idea of things, as if floating before his eyes. He said, LET THEM BE, and all that he saw became real before him. Then fear struck the frame of Brimha, lest those things should be annihilated. O immortal Brimh! he cried, who shall preserve those things which I behold. In the instant a spirit of a blue colour issued from Brimha's mouth, and said aloud, I WILL. Then shall thy name be Bishen¹, because thou hast undertaken to preserve all things.

“Brimha then commanded Bishen to go and create all animals, with vegetables for their subsistence, to possess that earth which he himself had made. Bishen forthwith created all manner of beasts, fish, fowl, insects and reptiles. Trees and grass rose also beneath his hands, for Brimha had invested him with power. But man was still wanting to rule the whole: and Brimha commanded Bishen to form him. Bishen began the work, but the men he made were idiots with great bellies, for he could not inspire them with knowledge; so that in every thing but in shape, they resembled the beasts of the field. They had no passion but to satisfy their carnal appetites.

“Brimha, offended at the men, destroyed them, and produced four persons from his own breath, whom he called by four different names. The name of the first was Sinnoc^m, of the second, Sinnundaⁿ, of the third, Sonnatin^o, and of the fourth, Sonninkunar^p. These four persons were ordered by Brimha, to rule over the creatures, and to possess

¹ The providence of God.

^o Permanency.

^m Body.

ⁿ Life.

^p Intellectual existence.

for



for ever the world. But they refused to do any thing but to praise God, having nothing of the destructive quality^a in their composition.

Brimha, for this contempt of his orders, became angry, and lo! a brown spirit started from between his eyes. He sat down before Brimha, and began to weep: then lifting up his eyes, he asked him, "Who am I, and where shall be the place of my abode." Thy name shall be Rudder", said Brimha, and all nature shall be the place of thine abode. But rise up, O Rudder! and form man to govern the world.

"Rudder immediately obeyed the orders of Brimha. He began the work, but the men he made were fiercer than tigers, having nothing but the destructive quality in their compositions. They, however, soon destroyed one another, for anger was their only passion. Brimha, Bishen, and Rudder then joined their different powers. They created ten men, whose names were, Narud, Dico, Bashista, Birga, Kirku, Pulla, Pulista, Ongira, Otteri and Murichi^c: The general appellation of the whole, was the Munies^d. Brimha then produced Dirmo^e from his breast, Adirmo^f from his back, Loab^g from his lip, and Kâm^h from his heart. This last being a beautiful female, Brimha looked upon her with amorous eyes. But the Munies told him, that she was his own daughter; upon which he shrunk back, and produced a blushing virgin called Ludjaⁱ. Brimha thinking his body defiled by throwing his

^a Timmu-goon. ^b The weeper; because he was produced in tears. One of the names of Shibah, the destructive attribute of the Divinity.

^c The significations of these ten names are in order, these: Reason, Ingenuity, Emulation, Humility, Piety, Pride, Patience, Charity, Deceit, Mortality.

^d The Inspired.

^e Fortune.

^f Misfortune.

^g Appetite.

^h Love.

ⁱ Shame.

eyes



eyes upon Kâm, changed it, and produced ten women, one of which was given to each of the Munies."

In this division of the Bedang Shafter, there is a long list of the Surage Buns, or children of the sun, who, it is said, ruled the world in the first periods. But as the whole is a mere dream of imagination, and scarcely the belief of the Hindoo children and women, we shall not trespass further on the patience of the public with these allegories. The Brahmins of former ages wrote many volumes of romances upon the lives and actions of those pretended Kings, inculcating, after their manner, morality by fable. This was the grand fountain from which the religion of the vulgar in India was corrupted; if the vulgar of any country require any adventitious aid to corrupt their ideas, upon so mysterious a subject.

Upon the whole, the opinions of the author of the Bedang, upon the subject of religion, are not unphilosophical. He maintains that the world was created out of nothing by God, and that it will be again annihilated. The unity, infinity and omnipotence of the supreme divinity are inculcated by him: for though he presents us with a long list of inferior beings, it is plain that they are merely allegorical; and neither he nor the sensible part of his followers believe their actual existence. The more ignorant Hindoos, it cannot be denied, think that these subaltern divinities do exist, in the same manner, that Christians believe in Angels: but the unity of God was always a fundamental tenet of the uncorrupted faith of the more learned Brahmins.



The opinion of this philosopher, that the soul, after death, assumes a body of the purer elements, is not peculiar to the Brahmins. It descended from the Druids of Europe, to the Greeks, and was the same with the *εἶδωλον* of Homer. His idea of the manner of the transmigration of the human soul into various bodies, is peculiar to himself. As he holds it as a maxim that a portion of the GREAT SOUL or God, animates every living thing; he thinks it no ways inconsistent, that the same portion that gave life to man, should afterwards pass into the body of any other animal. This transmigration does not, in his opinion, debase the quality of the soul: for when it extricates itself from the fetters of the flesh, it reassumes its original nature.

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, however, only respects himself and society, but is of no detriment to the general system of nature. God, say they, has no passion but benevolence: and being possessed of no wrath, he never punishes the wicked, but by the pain and affliction which are the natural consequences of evil actions. The more learned Brahmins therefore affirm, that the hell which is mentioned in the Bedang, was only intended as a mere bugbear to the vulgar, to enforce upon their minds, the duties of morality: for that hell is no other than a consciousness of evil, and those bad consequences which invariably follow wicked deeds.

Before we shall proceed to the doctrine of the NEADIRSEN SHASTER, it may not be improper to give a translation of the
first



first chapter of the DIRM SHASTER, which throws a clear light upon the religious tenets, common to both the grand sects of the Hindoos. It is a dialogue between Brimha, or the wisdom of God; and Narud, or human reason.

NARUD.

* O thou first of God! Who is the greatest of all Beings?

BRIMHA.

BRIMH; who is infinite and almighty.

NARUD.

Is he exempted from death?

BRIMHA.

He is: being eternal and incorporeal.

NARUD.

Who created the world?

BRIMHA.

God, by his power.

NARUD.

Who is the giver of blifs?

BRIMHA.

KRISHEN: and whosoever worshipping him, shall enjoy heaven¹.

* Brimha, as we have already observed, is the genitive case of BRIMH; as WISDOM is, by the Brahmins, reckoned the chief attribute of God.

¹ Krishen is derived from *Krish* giving, and *Ana* joy. It is one of the thousand names of God.



A DISSERTATION, &c.

NARUD.

What is his likeness?

BRIMHA.

He hath no likeness: but to stamp some idea of him upon the minds of men, who cannot believe in an immaterial being, he is represented under various symbolical forms.

NARUD.

What image shall we conceive of him?

BRIMHA.

If your imagination cannot rise to devotion without an image; suppose with yourself, that his eyes are like the Lotos, his complexion like a cloud, his cloathing of the lightning of heaven, and that he hath four hands.

NARUD.

Why should we think of the almighty in this form?

BRIMHA.

His eyes may be compared to the Lotos, to show that they are always open, like that flower which the greatest depth of water cannot surmount. His complexion being like that of a cloud, is an emblem of that darkness with which he veils himself from mortal eyes. His cloathing is of lightning, to express that awful majesty which surrounds him: and his four hands are symbols of his strength and almighty power.

NARUD.

What things are proper to be offered unto him?

BRIMHA.

Those things which are clean, and offered with a grateful heart. But all things which by the law are reckoned impure,

or.



or have been defiled by the touch of a woman in her times ; things which have been coveted by your own soul, seized by oppression, or obtained by deceit, or that have any natural blemish, are offerings unworthy of God.

NARUD.

We are commanded then to make offerings to God of such things as are pure and without blemish, by which it would appear that God eateth and drinketh, like mortal man, or if he doth not, for what purpose are our offerings?

BRIMHA.

God neither eats nor drinks like mortal men. But if you love not God, your offerings will be unworthy of him ; for as all men covet the good things of this world, God requires a free offering of their substance, as the strongest testimony of their gratitude and inclinations towards him.

NARUD.

How is God to be worshipped?

BRIMHA.

With no selfish view ; but for love of his beauties, gratitude for his favours, and for admiration of his greatness.

NARUD.

How can the human mind fix itself upon God, being, that it is in its nature changeable, and perpetually running from one object to another?

BRIMHA.

True: The mind is stronger than an elephant, whom men have found means to subdue, though they have never been



been able entirely to subdue their own inclinations. But the ankush^a of the mind is true wisdom, which sees into the vanity of all worldly things.

NARUD.

Where shall we find true wisdom?

BRIMHA.

In the society of good and wise men.

NARUD.

But the mind, in spite of restraint, covets riches, women, and all worldly pleasures. How are these appetites to be subdued?

BRIMHA.

If they cannot be overcome by reason, let them be mortified by penance. For this purpose it will be necessary to make a public and solemn vow, lest your resolution should be shaken by the pain which attends it.

NARUD.

We see that all men are mortal, what state is there after death?

BRIMHA.

The souls of such good men as retain a small degree of worldly inclinations, will enjoy Surg^b for a time; but the souls of those who are holy, shall be absorbed into God, never more to reanimate flesh. The wicked shall be punished in Nirick^c for a certain space, and afterwards their souls are permitted to wander in search of new habitations of flesh.

^a Ankush is an iron instrument used for driving elephants.

^b Heaven.

^c Hell.

NARUD.



NARUD.

Thou, O father, dost mention God as one; yet we are told, that Râm, whom we are taught to call God, was born in the house of Jessarit: That Kishen, whom we call God, was born in the house of Basdeo, and many others in the same manner. In what light are we to take this mystery?

BRIMHA.

You are to look upon these as particular manifestations of the providence of God, for certain great ends, as in the case of the sixteen hundred women, called Gopi, when all the men of Sirendiep^a were destroyed in war. The women prayed for husbands, and they had all their desires gratified in one night, and became with child. But you are not to suppose, that God, who is in this case introduced as the actor, is liable to human passions or frailties, being in himself, pure and incorporeal. At the same time he may appear in a thousand places, by a thousand names, and in a thousand forms; yet continue the same unchangeable, in his divine nature.—

Without making any reflections upon this chapter of the DIRM SHASTER, it appears evident, that the religion of the Hindoos has hitherto been very much misrepresented in Europe. The followers of the NEADIRSEN SHASTER, differ greatly in their philosophy, from the sect of the BEDANG, though both agree about the unity of the supreme being. To give some idea of the Neadirsen philosophy, we shall, in this place, give some extracts from that Shaster.

NEADIRSEN is a compound from NEA, signifying right, and DIRSEN, to teach or explain; so that the word may be

^a The island of Ceylon.



translated an *exhibition of truth*. Though it is not reckoned so antient as the Bedang, yet it is said to have been written by a philosopher called Goutam, near four thousand years ago. The philosophy contained in this Shaster, is very abstruse and metaphysical; and therefore it is but justice to Goutam to confess, that the author of the dissertation, notwithstanding the great pains he took to have proper definitions of the terms, is by no means certain, whether he has fully attained his end. In this state of uncertainty he chose to adhere to the literal meaning of words, rather than by a free translation, to deviate perhaps from the sense of his author.

The generality of the Hindoos of Bengal, and all the northern provinces of Hindostan, esteem the NEADIRSEN a sacred Shaster; but those of the Decan, Coromandel, and Malabar, totally reject it. It consists of seven volumes. The first only came to the hands of the author of the dissertation, and he has, since his arrival in England, deposited it in the British Museum. He can say nothing for certain, concerning the contents of the subsequent volumes; only that they contain a compleat system of the theology and philosophy of the Brahmins of the Neadirsen sect.

Goutam does not begin to reason, *a priori*, like the writer of the Bedang. He considers the present state of nature, and the intellectual faculties, as far as they can be investigated by human reason; and from thence he draws all his conclusions. He reduces all things under six principal heads; substance, quality, motion, species, assimilation, and construction*. In substance, besides time, space, life,

* These are in the original Shanscrita, Dirba, Goon, Kirmo, Summania, Bisheesh, Sammabae.

and



and spirit, he comprehends earth, water, fire, air, and akash. The four grosser elements, he says, come under the immediate comprehension of our bodily senses; and akash, time, space, soul and spirit, come under mental perception.

He maintains, that all objects of perception are equally real, as we cannot comprehend the nature of a solid cubit, any more than the same extent of space. He affirms, that distance in point of time and space, are equally incomprehensible; so that if we shall admit, that space is a real existence, time must be so too. That the soul, or vital principle, is a subtle element, which pervades all things; for that intellect, which, according to experience in animals, cannot proceed from organization and vital motion only, must be a principle totally distinct from them.

"The author of the Bedang," says Goutam, "finding the impossibility of forming an idea of substance, asserts, that all nature is a mere delusion. But as imagination must be acted upon by some real existence, as we cannot conceive that it can act upon itself, we must conclude, that there is something real, otherwise philosophy is at an end."

He then proceeds to explain what he means by his second principle, or Goon, which, says he, comprehends twenty-four things; form, taste, smell, touch, sound, number, quantity, gravity, solidity, fluidity, elasticity, conjunction, separation, priority, posteriority, divisibility, indivisibility, accident, perception, ease, pain, desire, aversion, and power*.

* A system of sceptical philosophy, to which many of the Bramins adhere.

"The twenty-four things are, in the Sanscrita, in order these; Rup, Ris, Gund, Supurfa, Shubardo, Sirika, Puriman, Gurritte, Dirbitte, Sinniha, Shanskan, Sangog, Bibag, Firible, Paricca, Apporticta, Addaristo, Bud, Suc, Duc, Itcha, Desh, Joina.



Kirmo or motion is, according to him, of two kinds, direct and crooked. Sammania, or species, which is his third principle, includes all animals and natural productions. Bishesh he defines to be a tendency in matter towards productions; and Sammabae, or the last principle, is the artificial construction or formation of things, as a statue from a block of marble, a house from stones, or cloth from cotton.

Under these six heads, as we have already observed, Goutam comprehends all things which fall under our comprehension; and after having reasoned about their nature and origin, in a very philosophical manner, he concludes with asserting, that five things must of necessity be eternal. The first of these is Pirrum Attima, or the GREAT SOUL, who, says he, is immaterial, one, invisible, eternal, and indivisible, possessing omniscience, rest, will, and power^h.

The second eternal principle is the Jive Attima, or the vital soul, which he supposes is material, by giving it the following properties; number, quantity, motion, contraction, extension, divisibility, perception, pleasure, pain, desire, aversion, accident, and power. His reasons for maintaining, that the *vital soul* is different from the *great soul*, are very numerous, and it is upon this head that the followers of the Bedang and Neadirsén are principally divided. The first affirm that there is no soul in the universe but God, and the second strenuously hold that there is, as they cannot conceive, that God can be subject to such affections and passions as they feel in their own minds; or that he can possibly have a propensity to evil. Evil, according to the author of the

^h These properties of the divinity, are the following in order; Nidakaar, Akitta, Oderisa, Nitte, Appartista, Budsirba, Suck, Itcha, Jotna.

Neadirsén



Neadirfen Shafter, proceeds entirely from Jive Attima, or the vital soul. It is a selfish craving principle, never to be satisfied; whereas God remains in eternal rest, without any desire but benevolence.

Goutam's third eternal principle is time or duration, which, says he, must of necessity have existed, while any thing did exist; and is therefore infinite. The fourth principle is space or extension, without which nothing could have been; and as it comprehends all quantity, or rather is infinite, he maintains, that it is indivisible and eternal. The fifth eternal principle is Akash, a subtile and pure element, which fills up the vacuum of space, and is compounded of purmans or quantities, infinitely small, indivisible and perpetual. "God," says he, "can neither make nor annihilate these atoms, on account of the love which he bears to them, and the necessity of their existence; but they are, in other respects, totally subservient to his pleasure."

"God," says Goutam, "at a certain season, endued these atoms, as we may call them, with Bishesh or plasticity, by virtue of which they arranged themselves into four gross elements, fire, air, water, and earth. These atoms being, from the beginning, formed by God into the *seeds* of all productions, Jive Attima, or the vital soul, associated with them, so that animals, and plants of various kinds, were produced upon the face of the earth."

"The same vital soul," continues Goutam, "which before associated with the Purman of an animal, may afterwards associate with the Purman of a man." This transmi-



gration is distinguished by three names, Mirt, Mirren, and Pirra-purra-purvesh, which last literally signifies *the change of abode*. The superiority of man, according to the philosophy of the Neadirsen, consists only in the finer organization of his parts, from which proceed reason, reflexion, and memory, which the brutes only possess in an inferior degree, on account of their less refined organs.

Goutam supposes, with the author of the Bedang, that the soul after death, assumes a body of fire, air, and akash, unless in the carnal body, it has been so purified by piety and virtue, that it retains no selfish inclinations. In that case it is absorbed into the GREAT SOUL OF NATURE, never more to reanimate flesh. Such, says the philosopher, shall be the reward of all those who worship God from pure love and admiration, without any selfish views. Those that shall worship God from motives of future happiness, shall be indulged with their desires in heaven, for a certain time. But they must also expiate their crimes, by suffering adequate punishments; and afterwards their souls will return to the earth, and wander about for new habitations. Upon their return to the earth, they shall casually associate with the first organized Purman they shall meet. They shall not retain any consciousness of their former state, unless it is revealed to them by God. But those favoured persons are very few, and are distinguished by the name of Jates Summon¹.

The author of the Neadirsen teaches, for the purposes of morality, that the sins of the parents will descend to their posterity; and that, on the other hand, the virtues of the children will mitigate the punishments of the parents in

¹ The acquainted with their former state.

Nirick,



Nirick, and hasten their return to the earth. Of all sins he holds ingratitude ^b to be the greatest. Souls guilty of that black crime, says he, will remain in hell, while the sun remains in heaven, or to the general dissolution of all things.

Intellect, says Goutam, is formed by the combined action of the senses. He reckons six senses: five external ^c, and one internal. The last he calls Manus, by which he seems to mean conscience. In the latter he comprehends reason, perception ^d and memory: and he concludes, that by their means only, mankind may possibly acquire knowledge. He then proceeds to explain the manner by which these senses act.

Sight, says he, arises from the Shanskar or repulsive qualities of bodies, by which the particles of light which fall upon them, are reflected back upon the eyes from all parts of their surfaces. Thus the object is painted in a perfect manner upon the organ of seeing, whither the soul repairs to receive the image. He affirms, that, unless the soul fixes its attention upon the figure in the eye, nothing can be perceived by the mind; for a man in a profound reverie, though his eyes are open to the light, perceives nothing. Colours, says Goutam, are particular feelings in the eye, which are proportioned to the quantity of light reflected from any solid body.

Goutam defines hearing in the same manner with the European philosophers, with this difference only, that he

^b Mitterdro.

^c Onnuman, reason. Upimen, perception.

^d Chakous, Shraban, Rafan, Granap, Tawaf.



supposes, that the sound which affects the ear, is conveyed through the purer element of akash, and not by the air; an error which is not very surprizing, in a speculative philosopher. Taste, he defines to be a sensation of the tongue and palate, occasioned by the particular form of those particles which compose food. Smell, says he, proceeds from the effluvia which arise from bodies to the nostrils. The feeling, which arises from touching, is occasioned by the contact of dense bodies with the skin, which, as well as the whole body, excepting the bones, the hair and the nails, is the organ of that sense. There runs, says he, from all parts of the skin, very small nerves to a great nerve, which he distinguishes by the name of Medda. This nerve is composed of two different coats, the one sensitive, and the other insensitive. It extends from the crown of the head, down the right side of the vertebræ to the right foot¹. When the body becomes languid, the soul, fatigued with action, retires within the insensible coat, which checks the operation of the senses, and occasions sound sleep. But should there remain in the soul, a small inclination to action, it starts into the sensitive part of the nerve, and dreams immediately arise before it. These dreams, says he, invariably relate to something perceived before by the senses, though the mind may combine the ideas together at pleasure.

Manus, or conscience, is the internal feeling of the mind, when it is no way affected by external objects. Onnuman, or reason, says Goutam, is that faculty of the soul which enables us to conclude that things and circumstances exist,

¹ To save the credit of Goutam, in this place, it is necessary to observe, that anatomy is not at all known among the Hindoos, being strictly prohibited from touching a dead body, by the severest ties of religion.

from



from an analogy to things, which had before fallen under the conception of our bodily senses: For instance, when we see smoke, we conclude that it proceeds from a fire; when we see one end of a rope, we are persuaded that it must have another.

By reason, continues Goutam, men perceive the existence of God; which the Boad or Atheists deny, because his existence does not come within the comprehension of the senses. These atheists, says he, maintain, that there is no God but the universe; that there is neither good nor evil in the world; that there is no such thing as a soul; that all animals exist, by a mere mechanism of the organs, or by a fermentation of the elements; and that all natural productions are but the fortuitous concurrence of things.

The philosopher refutes these atheistical opinions, by a long train of arguments, such as have been often urged by European divines. Though superstition and custom may bias reason to different ends, in various countries, we find a surprising similarity in the arguments used by all nations, against the Boad, those common enemies of every system of religion.

“ Another sect of the Boad, says Goutam, are of opinion that all things were produced by chance.” This doctrine he thus refutes. Chance is so far from being the origin of all things, that it has but a momentary existence of its own; being alternately created and annihilated, at periods infinitely small, as it depends entirely on the action of real

▪ Addaristo.

effences.



effences. This action is not accidental, for it must inevitably proceed from some natural cause. Let the dice be rattled eternally in the box, they are determined in their motion, by certain invariable laws. What therefore we call chance, is but an effect proceeding from causes which we do not perceive.

"Perception," continues Goutam, "is that faculty by which we instantaneously know things without the help of reason. This is perceived by means of relation, or some distinguishing property in things, such as high and low, long and short, great and small, hard and soft, cold and hot, black and white."

Memory, according to Goutam, is the elasticity of the mind, and is employed in three different ways; on things present as to time, but absent as to place; on things past, and on things to come. It would appear from the latter part of the distinction, that the philosopher comprehends imagination in memory. He then proceeds to define all the original properties of matter, and all the passions and faculties of the mind. He then descants on the nature of generation.

"Generation, says he, may be divided into two kinds; Jonidge, or generation by copulation; and adjonidge, generation without copulation. All animals are produced by the first, and all plants by the latter. The purman or seed of things, was formed from the beginning, with all its parts. When it happens to be deposited in a matrix suitable to its nature, a soul associates with it; and, by assimilating
more



more matter, it gradually becomes a creature or plant; for plants, as well as animals, are possessed of a portion of the *vital soul* of the world."

Goutam, in another place, treats diffusely of providence and free will. He divides the action of man under three heads: The will of God, the power of man, and casual or accidental events. In explaining the first, he maintains a particular providence; in the second, the freedom of will in man; and in the third, the common course of things, according to the general laws of nature. With respect to providence, though he cannot deny the possibility of its existence, without divesting God of his omnipotence, he supposes that the deity never exerts that power, but that he remains in eternal rest, taking no concern, neither in human affairs, nor in the course of the operations of nature.

The author of the Neadirsén maintains, that the world is subject to successive dissolutions and renovations at certain stated periods. He divides these dissolutions into the lesser and the greater. The lesser dissolution will happen at the end of a revolution of the Jugs. The world will be then consumed by fire, and the elements shall be jumbled together, and after a certain space of time, they will again resume their former order. When a thousand of those smaller dissolutions shall have happened, a MAHPERLEY or great dissolution will take place. All the elements will then be reduced to their original Purmans or atoms, in which state they shall long remain. God will then, from his mere goodness and pleasure, restore Bisheśh or plasticity. A new creation will arise; and thus things have



revolved in fucceffion, from the beginning, and will continue to do fo to eternity.

These repeated diffolutions and renovations have furnished an ample field for the inventions of the Brahmins. Many allegorical systems of creation are upon that account contained in the Shasters. It was for this reason, that so many different accounts of the cosmogony of the Hindoos have been promulgated in Europe; some travellers adopting one system, and some another. Without deviating from the good manners due to those writers, we may venture to affirm, that their tales, upon this subject, are extreemly puerile, if not absurd. They took their accounts from any common Brahmin, with whom they chanced to meet, and never had the curiosity or industry to go to the fountain head.

In some of the renovations of the world, Brimha, or the wisdom of God, is represented in the form of an infant with his toe in his mouth, floating on a comala or water flower, or sometimes upon a leaf of that plant, upon the watery abyfs. The Brahmins mean no more by this allegory, than that at that time, the wisdom and designs of God will appear, as in their infant state. Brimha floating upon a leaf, shews the instability of things at that period. The toe which he sucks in his mouth, implies that infinite wisdom subsists of itself; and the position of Brimha's body, is an emblem of the endless circle of eternity.

We see Brimha sometimes creeping forth from a winding shell. This is an emblem of the untraceable way by which divine wisdom issues forth from the *infinite ocean of*
God.



God. He, at other times, blows up the world with a pipe, which implies, that the earth is but a bubble of vanity, which the breath of his mouth can destroy. Brimha, in one of the renovations, is represented in the form of a snake, one end of which, is upon a tortoise which floats upon the vast abyfs, and upon the other, he supports the world. The snake is the emblem of wisdom, the tortoise is a symbol of security, which figuratively signifies providence, and the vast abyfs is the eternity and infinitude of God.

What has been already said has, it is hoped, thrown a new light on the opinions of the Hindoos, upon the subject of religion and philosophical inquiry. We find that the Brahmins, contrary to the ideas formed of them in the west, invariably believe in the unity, eternity, omniscience and omnipotence of God: that the polytheism of which they have been accused, is no more than a symbolical worship of the divine attributes, which they divide into three principal 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.

This system of worship, say the Brahmins, arises from two opinions. The first is, that as God is immaterial, and consequently invisible, it is impossible to raise a proper idea of him, by any image in the human mind. The second is, that it is necessary to strike the gross ideas of man, with some emblems of God's attributes, otherwise, that all sense of religion will naturally vanish from the mind. They, for this purpose, have



made symbolical representations of the three classes of the divine attributes; but they aver, that they do not believe them to be separate intelligences. BRIMH, or the supreme divinity, has a thousand names; but the Hindoos would think it the grossest impiety to represent him under any form. "The human mind, say they, may form some conception of his attributes separately, but who can grasp the whole, within the circle of finite ideas."

That in any age or country, human reason was ever so depraved as to worship the work of hands, for the creator of the universe, we believe to be an absolute deception, which arose from the vanity of the abettors of particular systems of religion. To attentive inquirers into the human mind, it will appear, that common sense, upon the affairs of religion, is pretty equally divided among all nations. Revelation and philosophy have, it is confessed, lopped off some of those superstitious excrescences and absurdities that naturally arise in weak minds, upon a subject so mysterious: but it is much to be doubted, whether the want of those necessary purifiers of religion, ever involved any nation in gross idolatry, as many ignorant zealots have pretended.

In India, as well as in many other countries, there are two religious sects; the one look up to the divinity, through the medium of reason and philosophy; while the others receive, as an article of their belief, every holy legend and allegory which have been transmitted down from antiquity. From a fundamental article in the Hindoo faith,



faith, that God is *the soul of the world*, and is consequently diffused through all nature, the vulgar reverence all the elements, and consequently every great natural object, as containing a portion of God; nor is the infinity of the supreme being, easily comprehended by weak minds, without falling into this error. This veneration for different objects, has, no doubt, given rise among the common Indians, to an idea of subaltern intelligences; but the learned Brahmins, with one voice, deny the existence of inferior divinities; and, indeed, all their religious books of any antiquity, confirm that assertion.

END of the DISSERTATION.

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