

# PHILOSOPHY OF THE VEDAS

BY SWAMI TRIGUNATITA

FROM out the Elder East has come the Swami Trigunatita to instill into Occidental minds the olden philosophy of the Vedas and to impart to the materialistic West the thoughts of his preceptor, Sri Ramakrishna. In far Calcutta was the Swami born, and in the university there he studied until he had arrived at the standard of B. A. At the age of 15 years he met Sri Bhaktishankra, the great sage, who is the master of the renowned Swami Vivekananda, and under him for over two years he learned spiritual practices. Then he became a Sannyasin (a monk), and thereafter for many years performed asceticisms, afterward going forth on travels to distant lands, in the course of which he has come to San Francisco and is now delivering lectures promulgating the mystic lore of the Orient. These lectures are being given under the auspices of the Vedanta Society of San Francisco, which was organized three or four years ago by Swami Vivekananda. A similar society has been in existence in New York for some seven years.

The Vedantists believe in one absolute God; they believe in heaven and hell only in their relative sense, and not as everlasting; they think men are not born sinners, but through spiritual culture may make themselves as holy and happy as God himself; they believe in reincarnation and transmigration; they hold that all religions are but paths leading to one place, and they frown on such psychic powers as mesmerism as hindrances to the growth of the individual soul.

It is the opinion of Swami Trigunatita that Christianity has come down from the teachings of the Vedas. In fact, according to the belief of the Vedantist all sects and religions in the world to-day are merely branches of the old religion of the Hindus.

And of these things has the brown-faced, bright-eyed Swami come to speak. In the yellow gown and turban of his priesthood, with the soft speech and the subtle thinking of the Hindu, he is advancing again the old thoughts of the Vedas and the newer thoughts and newer wisdom of the modern Vedantism.

BY SWAMI TRIGUNATITA.

THE Vedas is the oldest religion in the world, acknowledged such by the most eminent linguists of the day. In the Vedas are mentioned the several stages of the old civilization of the world. This literature speaks of the time when there was no other country on the face of the globe known to civilized man save that part of Asiatic India which was the original seat of the very ancient forefathers of the present civilized world.

Greek travelers, passing through Asia Minor on their way to their own country, uttered some of the thoughts of the Vedas as they passed through Tibet, and these thoughts the inhabitants of that country imbibed. Some sages came at the birth of Christ. These sages did not belong to any particular and bigoted religion. They believed in the absolute existence of God, and they took their religious faith from the thoughts of the Vedas. Christ, when he grew up, came to understand that there was some great place of learning and religious culture in the far East. This made him come over to the northern part of India, there to study the Vedas and imbibe the thoughts of the Vedas. This part of Christ's life is unknown to the Christian world. But it is true, for only a few years ago a Russian gentleman discovered in a big library in Tibet a book in the Tibetan language containing a part of the history of Christ. According to this book, Christ came to Tibet and India to learn Vedic thoughts under Brahmmins, and there performed much asceticism.

At the time of the Vedas civilization reached its highest point. All men were supposed to be perfect, and society was an ideal one. There was but one religion, and God was nothing but absolute. Heaven was supposed to be nowhere else but in the hearts of men; or, in other words, there was not a particular place to be taken as heaven if the meaning of the word was properly understood. If heaven means the abode of God, and if God is omnipresent, then heaven cannot be a particular place. Any place is heaven, God being absolute, every idea in connection with him must be absolute. Heaven, consequently, must be an absolute thing in this sense. If we take heaven as a relative thing, then we may speak of such a place as hell. But if heaven is spoken of as eternal (as some Christians speak of it), then we cannot give rise to such an expression as eternal hell. Whatever is eternal is infinite. Whatever is infinite cannot be but one. And where there is no more than one, there cannot exist relative things. If there is the father, there must be the relative thing—the son; where there is birth, there must be the relative thing—death. In this sense, where there is heaven there must be hell. But if heaven is eternal and infinite, there cannot be another thing at the same time and the same place that is eternal and infinite. And in this sense we cannot have hell.

This is one of the early ideas we get from the Vedas.

The Vedas are divided into several portions. The last and best portion is called Vedanta. Later on, a high philosophy originated from the Vedanta, which is now known by the name of Vedantism. In Vedantism everything is a manifestation in some shape or other of this absolute God. God is a universal and all-pervading essence. Everything in this world is just like a temporary wave on the great ocean of that universal, all-pervading

energy. When the waves subside they take again their original forms with the ebb, and they lose all name, form and distinction.

Vedantism never makes any distinction between this thing and that thing. We know that the different things in this world are, but in different degrees of change in their course of evolution. We consequently cannot say that this man is sinful and will go to eternal hell; or that man is pious and will go to eternal heaven.

Every moment in our life is but a death. What we were the previous moment we are no more now the same thing, but quite another. If you analyze very properly, very closely, you find quite another, both mentally, physically, spiritually and every other way. And, if you go on studying that way, after seven years—in every seventh year of your life—you will find a thorough change. Even scientists admit that. A thorough change in the course of seven years, even in man. So nothing can grow all of a sudden, but by a gradual process.

If you take nature as a personal something, time is the garment of nature, the dress, the robe of nature. Nature puts on her body the garment of time. Then her body is space, spread over all this universe. All this universe is the body of nature and on that body is the garment of time. Now the life of nature is causation. The law of causation is the life and soul of nature. It is by these three factors, time, space and the law of causation, that the universe is held in order. If we get rid of this idea of time, this idea of space, this idea of the law of causation, then we are freed altogether. If we devote all our life and soul to the matter, though we may not be successful in one life, time is eternal before us.

The Vedantists know that everything is in the course of their evolution. Consequently, according to Vedantism, there cannot be one particular religion as an exclusive path to salvation. All religions lead sooner or later to this same place. As a matter of fact, from a historical point of view, all religions that are preached by real prophets have emanated from the same grand and essential religion of the Vedas. If God be in everything, then man cannot be born a sinner. In Vedantism man is very near God and in one single life, by spiritual culture, he can realize practically that he is nothing but a part of this universal intelligence. And when the individual soul passes off from the body it mixes with the one universal intelligence.

There are several theories by which we can understand that after death we continue to exist.

The agnostics say that we have simple physical connection with this world and when our body, our physical organism, ends all connection ends. Therefore, according to the agnostics, there is no such thing as a future life. We should eat, drink and be merry.

From that theory we get the next higher theory, the theory of the skeptics, or rather, say the atheists. They say that from body, from a certain accumulation of certain things in a peculiar way, is produced our consciousness, and we get our life. That is material production, and when our body dies there remains nothing

—nothing because it was the production of the body. When the tree dies it dies in every way, nothing remaining; and so when the body dies there is no life afterward.

The next higher theory is the theory of thought, transmitting thought. When we think, suppose we think of something very intensely that may happen, and afterward we find that does happen; and we come to understand that it is not

mind becomes so very fine, we can know some finer things that cannot be explained by material science. Then, when we can understand in this life regarding the future, we can understand something of the next life. In that intense love we sometimes say that we will meet again, even after death. You know that is a saying that comes out of intense love. There can be no other higher reason than love, than faith. That is the basis of

higher science, higher mathematics, although we took in the beginning something for granted, yet afterward we find that by that granting, by that simple faith, we have not lost. So with faith of religious, of spiritual things.

In the theory of Vedanta there is no death; and when we say that there is no death we should say, if we are logicians, that there is no life. Life and death are relative. Where there is death, there is understood life. So Vedantists say there is no death nor life. But they say you have eternal life—not life as relative to death; not life under limitations, under conditions, but absolute life, eternal life, and that life cannot have death. Nothing can burn that life, nothing can bury that life, nothing can finish, put an end to, that life. That life is eternal and infinite.

where there are more things than one, then there is misery. The highest aim of man and of every being is happiness. And the real happiness lies in the realization of one universal thing. In this way Vedantism teaches that every man, from any position, can rise to godhead.

As a last word: Vedanta is a system that embraces, that includes, all kinds of thought, of sect, of religion, of philosophy, of anything and everything; all kinds, whether they be materialistic or spiritual. So the Vedantists say only, be simply a little thoughtful. Think over things, think over affairs; think over things that you see, that you do, and that will lead you to your goal, your salvation, by way of natural process. Be sincere and thoughtful. Do not be deluded, do not be irrational. We cannot see our eternal life before us; we cannot see that we are gods, that we are divine powers; but we should not deny that, we should not neglect that. When some philosophers and sages say so, we may take that theory for granted, and we may continue some practice as they prescribe. And if we go through that practice, that training, then we may arrive at some stage, some state of the mind, when we can know everything and can at last realize fully that we are divinities.

We say, for instance, that a person consists of body, senses and the mind. We do not speak of the ego and the soul—they are high terms. We say, practically and materially, body and mind and senses. Now, death comes over the body. Death is material. Mind and senses being abstract something, spiritual something—in its literal sense being just like a spirit—cannot end, as body ends, in death; cannot have death—mind and senses. They are abstract something. Abstract things cannot die; only material things die. And mind and senses being abstract, they transmigrate from the body to another. All the senses and the mind. Mind is the ruler of the senses; and when they depart, they go with some treasure. That means some impression that we have obtained in this life. Some philosophers will explain that mind and senses are nothing but a collection of those impressions simply; and those impressions transmigrate and they go into another new body that will act out its temperament, its impressions. But all theories are simply general or individual, in some respects. To me some laws may be applicable; to others, some other laws. So, if I do some great things, some very high things, I may not come back to earth as a human person, but go to a higher plane, higher world, such as heaven; or some planet, higher planet than earth; or I may come to be born again as a man; or I may go to a lower animal kingdom. If we give rise to some satvic qualities in ourselves—satvic qualities, meaning righteous, virtuous things—and if in that period we die, we will go to a higher plane. And if we die while in our rahas quality—rahas meaning activity, active quality—then we may come back again as men; and if we die in the state of tamas, or when the dark qualities, the sinful things predominate, then we go to lower animals.

There are many, several kinds of death; and from these kinds of death we may get glimpse to what kingdom, to what region, the departed soul may go. If some persons die in bed, they have a good chance; but dying at night, they have not so good a chance. And then some persons who die during the northern solstice—then they go to the higher plane; and during the southern, to the lower, etc. It has some reference to the time, also. Owing to some Karma we may die in the night, or unfavorable time; but owing to other Karma, which is higher, I may supersede that law.

The idea of the absolute God in Vedantism is expressed in three little words—Sat, Chit and Ananda. Sat means absolute existence; Chit means absolute intelligence, and Ananda means absolute bliss. So the absolute God means the absolute existence of one blissful intelligence. Everything on the face of the earth is essentially nothing but an absolute existence. Apparently we see a variety of things; essentially there is no variety, but only unity in everything.

Vedantism teaches that as a matter of fact we are divine, and not mortal. Matter may be mortal in a limited sense, but spirit can never be so. It is always unlimited—that is to say, infinite—and absolute. If we try to know the real essence and the meaning of our existence by our spiritual culture we can understand that we are all eternal and one. Our bodies may perish, but our souls can never perish. When such forms as body and the other external things of this world cease to exist as such, the eternal essence remains. We are the all-pervading and ever-existing substance. Vedantism says that

Nature has two phases of character, one evolved nature and the other involved. In a more scientific way, you will understand if I call it evolution and involution; evolution, meaning expression, and involution meaning destruction. Nature by the one phase of character expresses everything on the face of the earth or in this universe. Owing to the existence of the laws of nature we have come up from the lowest animal to the human nature. We have grown up by means of the law of nature, which is called the law of evolution. First, the scientists will tell you, the life germ is in the form of a mineral, then a vegetable, then animal, then afterward, in the form of a man. It finds its highest expression in man. The life germ becomes very well expressed in man. You do not find in a beast the kind affection, the human qualities. Why don't you find them in a beast? Because the germ is not yet expressed very well. It will afterward be very well expressed when that life germ will come to be in the form of a man. In every man, even, it is not very well expressed. A man can be a beast in human form. You will not find the human qualification very well expressed in that beastly man. When will it be expressed? When that man becomes a little more moral. You will find the very life germ which you previously found in a mineral, in a vegetable, in a beast, more fully expressed in an ethical, moral life germ. In that moral man, even, you will not find it fully expressed yet. When that moral man will become spiritual, you will find a little more expressed the very life germ which you have previously found in the lowest form of beast. Now, in the spiritual man, even, it is not found in its perfection. When that spiritual man rises high above everything, every relative idea; when that spiritual man becomes a god; when humanity is transformed into divinity itself, then you will find that germ in perfection. This is the law of nature, the law of evolution. This is one phase of character in nature.

There is another phase of character to be observed in nature. That is involution, going backward; as a seed grows to a tree and again that tree becomes involved in the seed that is produced by that same tree. That seed is called the involution of the future tree, a future tree being involved in that seed. Now, when a man becomes divine, becomes God, that same principle will again come after a good many cycles, to be formed into a germ, from which again all the phases of evolution will come. It is by nature that we have become involved, and it is by the same nature that we will go back to the cause. Now, going back to the cause is not a bad thing. Do not think that is retrogression. That means going to Brahman, going to, and becoming mixed up with the absolute. From the absolute we have come and to the absolute we will go. When we come from the absolute we say we are evolved by the laws of nature; and when we say we go back to the absolute the higher scientists may say we are going to be involved again into the same primary cause.

## "Mother" Bickerdyke's Cow Review

Mrs. Mary A. Bickerdyke, a widow with two little sons, was living in Galesburg, Ill., when she went to the front, in November, 1861. After caring for the wounded at Belmont she was appointed matron of the United States hospital at Cairo. She was the authorized agent of the Chicago Sanitary Commission, with authority to draw all needed supplies, while Generals Grant and Sherman gave her passes everywhere, ordering all military roads and boats to give her free transportation.

Mrs. Bickerdyke was a practicing physician when she entered the service, and this was of great advantage to her as a nurse. Always resourceful and economical, she baked fresh bread for the hospital, and it was said, "Mother Bickerdyke could bake bread on horseback," as she often carried the set sponge in this way, baking it as soon as her portable oven could be set up when camp was reached.

At Memphis the milk and eggs were so bad that "Mother" Bickerdyke obtained a furlocher, hastened to Chicago, where she made her wants known, and soon had 100 cows and 1000 hens, donated by the patriotic people of Illinois, whose Governor had them shipped to Memphis.

General Hurlbut, commanding the department, gave her an island opposite the city, where contrabands took charge of her stock. Some of these cows traveled long distances with the army and saved many a soldier's life.

Just at the close of the war some of her boys invited her to a review. Donning her sunbonnet, she was seated on an elevated seat and was amazed to see her old cows file past, each with coats curled until they shone, horns polished and hoofs blackened and bright as patent leather. No general ever enjoyed a review of his troops more than did "Mother" Bickerdyke her "cows' review." She remained in the service until March, 1865.

"One day President Lincoln visited the hospital at Georgetown with two men carrying a basket of grapes for those who were allowed fruit," says Mrs. Harriet M. Scott, who followed her husband into

battle with the Third Vermont Infantry in 1861. "When noticing a small red dog at the foot of some of the sheds he said: 'May I ask, nurse, what those flags mean?'

"They mean low diet, sir."

"What is low diet?"

"Wine, whey, milk and water, rice gruel—always something light," I answered.

"Working with President Lincoln through the ward to the door, he said: 'Well, nurse, we often hear the remark that these are days that try men's souls—I think they try women's souls, too. I shall remember you and all the noble women of the North when this land is at peace.'"

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SWAMI TRIGUNATITA.

He is Come to Teach the Mystic Lore of the Orient.

Photo by Stanford Studio.

## Girl Wife Captive to the Sioux

ONE of the most remarkable features of the G. A. R. Encampment in San Francisco during the past week are the stories told at the many and varied reunions of old veterans of the heroism and self-sacrifice of the women during the most trying days of the great rebellion—stories the like of which have never emanated from any war before or since. Here are some of them:

Fannie Wiggins, when a child of 10 years of age, went with her family from Canada to Kansas, her father dying on the way.

When the war began her three brothers enlisted with the Kansas volunteers, one dying in service, and after caring for him in the hospital where he died the devoted sister took him home for burial.

When only 16 she married J. S. Kelly of the Ninth Kansas Volunteers, who served on the staffs of General Blunt and General Jim Lane. His health being impaired in the service, in May, 1864, they started across the plains in search of health, but in July near train was captured by the Sioux Indians and all the women and children, including a little niece of Mrs. Kelly, were murdered. She was taken prisoner and held for ten months, enduring the most terrible suffering. Her husband, who escaped, hearing of her capture, was indefatigable in his efforts to rescue her, and the United States troops made every effort in her behalf. Orders from President Lincoln to effect her rescue at any price reached the command at Fort Sully at the same time that a note from Mrs. Kelly, sent by a friendly Indian, informed them that it was the intention of the Indians to convey her to the fort, and when it opened to receive her rush in and overpower the garrison. Owing to her timely warning, however, the Indians were allowed to enter the enclosure to find themselves prisoners.

Mrs. Kelly was in a pitiable condition,

almost frozen, half-clad, and it was some time before the surgeon and kind-hearted ladies at Fort Sully nursed her back to health. Her husband made her a visit here and the reunion was a joyful one. As soon as her health permitted she enlisted as a nurse, serving until the close of the war, when her husband took her back to Kansas, where he died in 1867. For her timely information in twice saving the United States troops and property from the Indians Congress by special act gave Mrs. Kelly \$5000, and later President Grant appointed her a clerk in the Interior Department, which she resigned in 1889 to marry Captain Fitzhugh Gordon, who died in 1895.

In 1860 Mr. and Mrs. Farmer removed from Ohio to Nauvoo, Ill., where they became involved in trouble with the Mormons and Mrs. Farmer molded bullets with which her husband defended their home. They then went to New Iberia, La., Alice Carey, their only child, being reared on the beautiful Bayou Teche, the home of Evangeline.

Mr. Farmer refusing to vote for secession, was obliged in the spring of 1862 to seek safety in New Orleans, after which his family were watched and not allowed to send or receive letters. Mrs. Farmer was charged with being a spy and Dick Taylor and his men threatened to hang her. One dark night this helpless woman with her young daughter left their beautiful home and were taken aboard a steamer some miles down the river and locked in a stateroom by the friendly captain, who landed them at Brashear City. Then followed innumerable perils and hardships. Three days and nights were spent in a skiff on the river, while the Confederates were scouring the country for them, so that they dared not go ashore for food. They arrived at New Orleans June 20, 1862.

In September Mrs. Farmer and her daughter, afterward Alice Carey Risley, took up the work of nursing the sick and wounded in their own home and in the hospitals, using their own means until exhausted, when they were forced to draw rations for themselves.

But that theory, also, cannot be satisfied with the answer; and the next theory comes as a healing cure. If we love some person very intensely we can send our thought; we can read thought even from a distance. Love means sharpening some instrument that is within us—sharpening the power of the mind. And when our

all science. We take something for granted; and those postulates and axioms are nothing but faiths, and those faiths, although they are very simple, do not go for nothing. We find they have much truth in themselves, and afterward, when we are advancing in higher reason,

simply the body that lives, not simply the effect of accumulation or combination of material things that lives, but something else—it is thought, mind, higher something, that knows something of the future, that can understand, that can think. But that theory, also, cannot be satisfied