

CHAPTER 15

|| THE SUPREME PERSON ||

Now I shall make my heart the square stool (*Chouranga*) and install on it the wooden slippers (*Paduka*) of my Master. Then I shall fill the hollow formed by joining my palms in the form of unity, with flower buds in the form of my sense organs and offer a floral oblation (*arghya*) at his feet. With my little finger I shall smear his forehead with the sandal paste in the form of desire, purified by the sentiment of exclusive devotion. I shall adorn the tender feet of my Master with the gold anklets in the form of Self-knowledge. I shall adorn his toes with rings in the form of single-minded and steady devotion (1-5). I shall place at his feet a fully blown lotus consisting of eight petals in the form of eight (*Sattvic*) sentiments, fragrant with joy. I shall burn before him, the incense in the form of self-conceit and wave the light in the form of humility. I shall embrace him with the feeling of complete identity with him and shall make him wear a pair of wooden slippers in the form of my body and life-breath. I shall wave before him, sensuous enjoyment and liberation. I shall then become fit to render service at his feet, which secures for one the four aims of human life. Let my knowledge grow in excellence, until I get rest in the abode of *Brahman*. Let my speech become the stream of nectar-like words (6-10). Let its utterances become so sweet and eloquent, that one may feel like waving around it numerous full moons. Like the East, which, with the rising sun, bestows the empire of light on the entire universe, let the speech make it a festival of lamps, in the form of knowledge to the hearers. If by good luck, one secures the pollen from the lotus-like feet of the revered *Guru*, one's speech pours forth such words that even the Divine resonant sound pales before it and even liberation cannot stand comparison with it. It is because of this good fortune, that the creeper in the form of speech grows so lavishly that the entire universe enjoys the lovely scenery of the spring season under the bower, in the form of hearing. Because of this good luck, that speech, which was unable to fathom *Brahman* and had to beat a retreat disappointed along with the mind, could now easily expound it (11-15). It is because of this good luck, that words were able to hold *Brahman*, which was unintelligible to knowledge and inaccessible to meditation. This good fortune has only come to my share, and no one else has it, so said *Shri Jnanadeva*. I am an infant, the only child of my preceptor, so that I am the sole recipient of his favour. Like the cloud, which sends rain for a *Chataka* bird, my Master has showered his kindness on me (16-20). So whatever I said with my uncultivated tongue, gave expression to the secret message of the *Gita*. If luck is favourable, sand is transformed into gems, and even an assassin becomes friendly, if one is blessed with long life. If God so wills, even pebbles, when boiled, turn into sweet cooked rice. In the same way, if the revered Master calls anyone his own, even his mundane existence conduces to liberation. Did Lord Krishna, the incarnation of *Narayana*, the Primeval Person revered by all, leave the *Pandavas* in want (21-25)? In the same way, *Shri Nivrittinatha* has raised my ignorance to the level of knowledge. But by talking like this, only my affection for my master increases, but where can I get the wisdom to describe adequately the greatness of my Master? Through his grace, I shall now explain to you the meaning of the *Gita* and render service, O saints, at your feet.

At the end of the fourteenth chapter, the Lord declared that only the man of knowledge attains liberation. Just as one who performs hundred sacrifices goes to heaven (26-30) or one who performs the religious duties prescribed for a *Brahmin*, in hundred births attains the status of god *Brahma*, or the sun's light becomes available to a person who has sight, so the bliss of liberation is attained only by a man of knowledge. If one looks around to find such a person who is qualified to attain such knowledge, one comes across almost one such person. Only a person born with his feet foremost can see a treasure buried underground by putting *collyrium* in his eyes. In the same way, there is no doubt that liberation is attained through knowledge. But the mind must become pure to be able to retain this knowledge (31-35). The Lord has therefore, laid down, after careful consideration that knowledge can be retained only through indifference to worldly life. The omniscient *Lord Hari* has also thought out what this indifference to the world is and how it can be cultivated. When a person, who sits down for a meal, comes to know that the food cooked is mixed with poison, he leaves the plate without eating. In the same way, if a person comes to know that the mundane existence is ephemeral, he becomes indifferent to the world. The transitory nature of the worldly life is explained in this fifteenth chapter through the simile of a tree (36-40). If ordinary trees are uprooted, they wither away. But this tree in the form of worldly existence is not like that. The Lord has skillfully suggested a way of deliverance to men from the cycle of birth and death by the use of this simile of a tree. The main purport of the *Gita* is to demonstrate the unreality of the world and to impart the knowledge of the real nature of the Self. This will be explained in great detail, very beautifully, in the fifteenth chapter, so please pay your attention. So spoke, the King of *Dwarka*, the ocean of great bliss and fuller than the full moon (41-45).

The blessed Lord said:

1. *With roots above and branches below, the Asvattha tree, they say, is indestructible, it's leaves are the Vedic hymns; he, who knows it, is the knower of the Vedas.*

O Arjuna, that which obstructs the way leading to the abode of the Supreme Self is not this panorama of the world, but this great tree of mundane existence. But it is not like other trees, which has roots below and branches above. It is because of this, that no one can fathom it. Even if its base is burnt or cut with an axe, it does not get destroyed; instead it shoots up rapidly. If the other trees are cut at the base, they become uprooted along with their branches. It is not so with this tree, which is not an ordinary tree (46-50). Curiously this is an extraordinary tree which has its growth downwards. No one knows the height of the sun, but its rays spread downwards. In the same way this tree of mundane existence, grows downwards in a curious manner. Whatever things exist in this world, are pervaded by this tree. Just as the entire sky is pervaded by water at the time of deluge, or the night is flooded with darkness at sunset, so this entire universe is pervaded by this tree. This tree has neither any fruit, which can be tasted, nor any flower, which can be smelled; what exists is the lone tree (51-55). Its roots grow up at the top, and so it cannot be uprooted. For this reason it is evergreen. Though it is said to have roots at the top, it has also numerous roots downwards. This tree has shot up rapidly all around like the holy Indian fig tree, and its shoots have also put forth branches. So, O Arjuna, it is not that this tree has branches only downwards, but its numerous branches have spread upwards also (56-60). It looks as though the sky has put forth foliage or the wind has taken the form of this tree or the three states of creation, sustenance and dissolution have become incarnate in the form of this tree. In this way this top-rooted tree has grown thick

in the form of the universe. Now you may ask, who is at the top of this tree, what is its origin, what are its characteristics, why this tree spreads downwards, what are its branches, what are the branches of its downward roots and how do they grow, why it is called *Asvattha* and what purport has been found in all this, by the knowers of Self (61-65). All these queries I shall explain in such a way, that you will realise them fully. Oh lucky Arjuna, you alone are fit to enquire into all this, so gather all your sense organs in the ears and hear. Hearing these words of the *Yadava* hero brimful with affection, Arjuna became all attention. As if all the ten quarters wanted to embrace the sky, the longing to hear the Lord's words grew in him to such an extent, that he felt the Lord's discourse to be too short. Just as the sage *Agastya* had sipped the ocean, Arjuna wanted to sip the words of the Lord in a single draught (66-70). The Lord became very happy to see this limitless longing of Arjuna to hear him and waved his satisfaction over him.

Then the Lord said to Arjuna: O winner of wealth, this tree has become top-rooted because of *Brahman*, which is at the top. Really speaking, there is no such thing as the middle, top or bottom in the case of *Brahman*, which is non-dual and one. It is the inarticulate sound, which precedes all sounds, the fragrance that is the origin of all scents, and the bliss experienced without sexual intercourse. It is here and beyond, in front and behind, it sees everything but is itself invisible (71-75). When it comes into contact with the limiting conditions, it becomes the universe with name and form. It is knowledge without a knower and the object of knowledge and it has pervaded the universe in a subtle form. It is neither the effect nor the cause; it is neither dual nor single, it exists in full consciousness of itself. This pure *Brahman* is the top root of this tree and the shoots, which come forth from this root, are as follows. This universe is well known as *Maya*, which has no existence like the progeny of a barren woman (76-80). One cannot say that it is, or that it is not. Though not susceptible to reason, it is said to be without beginning. It is the chest full of diverse powers. It is the support of the world, as the sky is the support of the clouds and it is the folded cloth in the form of universe. It is the seed of the world tree, the source of mundane existence, and it contains within it in a massive form, the dim light of false knowledge. This *Maya* takes shelter in the Supreme *Brahman* and becomes manifest through its power. She is like a sleepy person who feels dull or like the dim light of a lamp covered with soot (81-85) or like a young woman who, dreaming that she is asleep beside her husband, wakes him up with an embrace (in a dream) and rouses his passion. So, O winner of wealth, this *Maya* that is the creature of *Brahman*, makes it forget its pristine nature, and this is the origin of the world-tree. This forgetfulness of its essential nature, on the part of *Brahman* is the original top-root of this tree and is well known in *Vedanta* by the term, seed-form (*Bija-bhava*). The sound slumber in the form of deep ignorance, is called the seedling form (*Bij-ankura-bhava*) and from this arise the states of waking and sleep, which are known as the fruit-form (*Phalabhava*) of deep slumber. These are the terms used in the discourses on *Vedanta*. But this apart, ignorance is the root-cause of this world-tree (86-90).

This spotless Self at the top gives out roots up and down. And they grow strong in the cavity at the base of the tree in the form of *Maya*. Then in the middle of those roots four kinds of sprouts shoot downwards. In this way, the root of the world-tree gains its strength from the Supreme Self and bears tufts of sprouts downwards. This conscious Self first produces

a tender leaf, known as the Great Principle (*mahat*). Then is produced downward what is known as egoism, with three leaves in the form of the three qualities, *sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas* (91-95). This egoism produces a second sprout in the form of intellect, which fosters the notion of distinctions. Then this gives moisture to the twig, in the form of mind and makes it fresh. When the root becomes strong, it gives rise to four tender shoots of the mind, full of the juice of ignorance. Then from them straight twigs, in the form of five gross elements sky, wind, fire, water and earth, issue with great rapidity.

From the twigs in the form of gross elements, arise fresh and tender variegated foliage in the form of the sense organs, such as ears and their objects. When the sprout in the form of sound grows, the organs of hearing grow in strength, giving rise to the sprouts of desire (96-100). Then the creeper in the form of the body, produces foliage in the form of skin, from which springs the sprout of touch, giving rise to novel kinds of passions in profusion. Then is produced the foliage of form, with sprouts in the form of eyes to view with, giving rise to infatuation. This is followed by foliage in the form of taste, giving rise to numerous desires for the tongue. Similarly, there comes a sprout of smell, intensifying the desires of the organ of smell and giving rise to fondness. In this way, the eightfold *Prakriti* consisting of *mahat*, egoism, intellect, mind and the five gross elements makes this world-tree to shoot up rapidly (101-105). But just as when the mother-of-pearl appears as silver, the silver takes on the same form as the mother-of-pearl, or the expanse of the waves is proportionate to the wide surface of the sea, so the *Brahman* itself becomes the tree in the form of mundane existence arising from ignorance. Just as a person, though single, becomes his retinue in the dream, so this entire universe is the growth and expanse of the Supreme Self. In this way, this curious tree grows and produces shoots in the form of *mahat* and other principles.

I shall now tell you, why people call this tree *Ashvattha* (106-110). *Ashva* means the morrow, this tree does not remain the same even until the morrow. Just as the hues of the cloud change every moment or the lightning does not last in its entirety even for a short while, or the water on a quivering lotus leaf or the mind of man in distress does not remain steady, so is the condition of this world-tree which perishes every moment. In popular parlance, the people call this the holy fig tree, but *Shri Hari* does not use this word in this sense (111-115). However, I had understood the true meaning, when this tree was called the *Ashvattha*. Now we need not be concerned with the popular sense of this word and so I proceed with this narration. In short, this tree is called *Ashvattha*, as it is transient. But this tree is also known as indestructible i.e. everlasting, its implied meaning is this. The sea evaporates to form the clouds and is replenished by the rivers, flooded by the showers of rain and so remains full, so long as the above process continues (116-120). In the same way, the modifications in the tree take place so rapidly, that people hardly perceive them. It is for this reason the people call it indestructible. Just as a munificent person gathers merit by giving his money to charity, so this world tree, undergoing decay every moment, still remains everlasting. Just as when the chariot moves very fast, its wheels seem to have no movement, so no sooner a branch of the world tree in the form of creatures withers up, in course of time, than it is replaced by numerous fresh sprouts. But no one knows when the branch drops down and when the numerous branches shoot up; in the same way, as one does not know which clouds in the month of July come in the sky and which disappear (121-125). The branches of the world-

tree fall off at the time of world-dissolution but they grow in abundance, like a thick forest at the time of creation. The barks of the tree get peeled off by the stormy winds at the time of world- dissolution, but they appear in tufts at the beginning of an epoch. Then one epoch (*Manvantara*) follows another, the solar and lunar dynasties expand in the same way as the sugarcane grows through its joints. At the end of the *kali-yuga*, all the barks which the world-tree had grown in the four *yugas* drop down, but it grows one and half times at the commencement of the *krita-yuga*. Just as the current year ends and ushers in a new year, and one does not know when a day passes away, giving place to a new one (126-130), or one does not perceive the joints of breezes when they flow continuously, so one does not know how many branches grow on this tree and fall off. No sooner than a young shoot in the form of a body falls off, than hundreds of such shoots grow on this tree. As a result, the world tree appears to be everlasting. As the water of the river current flows away very fast, it is followed by another, so that the river appears to have a continuous flow, so this universe, though impermanent, appears to be permanent. Numerous ripples appear and disappear in the sea in a twinkling of the eye, and so they appear to be permanent. The crow with only one common eye-ball, moves it from one eye to the other so fast, that it gives an erroneous impression that it has two eyes (131-135). When the top rotates very fast, its rapid motion gives the false impression that it is stationary and stuck to the ground. Why go far, if the firebrand is moved very fast round and round in darkness, it appears circular in shape. In the same way, the decomposition and growth of this world-tree takes place so fast, simultaneously, that the ordinary people do not perceive it and call it everlasting. But he, who realises, that this world-tree is momentary, that it grows and withers continuously in a moment and is false being rooted in ignorance (136-140), such a man, O Arjuna, is all knowing, the knower of *Vedanta* doctrine and is the object of my adoration. He alone, attains the fruit of Yoga and enlivens knowledge. Enough of this description. In this way, who can describe a person who knows that this world-tree is transitory?

2. *Up and down its branches spread, thriving on the gunas with sense-objects as its shoots; its routings spread downwards, resulting in actions in the human world.*

When the branches of this world-tree extend downwards and go into the ground, plenty of branches also shoot straight upwards. Those branches that go into the ground, take root and produce creepers with foliage (141-145). What I told you in the beginning, I shall explain to you in clear terms for your easy comprehension. This world-tree is rooted in ignorance and from it has originated the eightfold *prakriti*, consisting of *mahat* etc. producing thick woods of *Vedic* knowledge. Then four shoots come out from the bottom of the tree, consisting of the four orders of living beings, born from sweat (*Svedaja*), from womb (*jaraja*), from the soil (*Udbhija*) and from eggs (*Andaja*). From each of these branches, spring eighty-four lakhs of species, each giving rise to an unlimited number of twigs in the form of beings. Those straight branches, which give rise to zigzag twigs, represent the different sub-species of beings (146-150). These beings are then distinguished as male, female and neuter and they come across one another, under the pressure of their changeful natures. Just as clouds crowd in the sky in the rainy season, so beings belonging to many species, come to birth due to ignorance. Then the branches, bent down by the weight of their overgrowth, get entangled into one another and the winds in the form of the excitement of the qualities (*gunas*) begin to blow

violently. As a result of the weird blasts of winds, in the form of those excited *gunas*; the world-tree, with roots up, splits into three parts. When the wind of *rajas* quality starts blowing violently, the branch representing the human order begins to grow rapidly (151-155). This shoot does not produce branches upwards or downwards, but gives rise to four branches in the middle i. e. in the mortal world. The branches bear fresh foliage of *Vedic* dicta and leaves, in the form of *Vedic* injunctions and prohibitions. Then the two aims of human life, viz. the acquisition of riches and desire spread out, giving rise to sprouts of transient happiness in this world. Thereafter, countless sprouts of good and bad actions issue forth to promote human activity. With the expiation of the former *Karma*, the withered branches in the form of bodies fall down, and then new branches spring up, in the form of new bodies (156-160). And then there issues a continuous crop of fresh foliage, in the form of speech etc. glittering in their natural and beautiful colours. Thus when the strong wind of *rajas* quality begins to blow, the branch in the form of the human order, begins to grow fast, and so the human world becomes properly established.

When the wind in the form of *rajas* quality subsides, then the stormy wind in the form of the *tamas* begins to blow forcibly. Then the foliage of wicked desires issues forth, from the branches in the form of the human order, giving rise to twigs of evil actions. Then rough branches in the form of immoral ways begin to grow, producing twigs and leaves in the form of heedlessness (161-165). Thereafter the branches in the form of precepts and prohibitions in the *Rigveda*, *Yajurveda* and *Samaveda* give rise to foliage at their tips. Then the branch puts forth a leaf, in the form of the scripture, which lays down black magic, causing great harm to others, on which thrives the creeper of desires. As the roots of the evil actions get strengthened, then the branches in the form of rebirths multiply fast. Thereafter the world-tree produces a big branch in the form of low castes, in which those who are lured by the evil actions become lax in the performance of their religious duties. Then many oblique branches issue forth, in the form of animals such as beasts, birds, pigs, tigers, scorpions and serpents (166-170). Thus fresh branches are produced, *O Pandava*, from every part of this world-tree and they bear fruits of hellish sufferings. The sensual pleasures also involve violence and they bear a branch in the form of evil actions. On its top grow similar sprouts, which give rise to branches such as trees, grass, iron, earth and stones and these branches too bear similar fruits. *O Arjuna*, bear in mind, that all branches from human beings to inanimate things have only a downward growth.

Therefore, the branch of the human order is the origin of all these branches spreading downwards and from it grows this tree of mundane existence (171-175). If you wish to know the source of the branches going up, you will find that this branch in the form of human order, is midway between the branches going up and down. The branches in the form of evil and virtuous actions arising from the *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattva* spread downwards and upwards. *O Arjuna*, the leaves in the form of the three *Vedas*, does not apply to anyone except the human order. So even though this branch in the form of human order has sprung from the top root, the resolve to perform actions arises from this branch. All other trees grow in such a way, that when their branches spread, their roots go deep and vice versa (176-180). The same is the case of this human body. As long as actions are performed, the human body lasts, and as long as the body is there, there is no end to actions. So the human body is the fruit of

the branches in the form of actions and there is no pause in this, so said the Lord of the world.

(The Lord further added): when the hurricane of the *tamas* quality subsides, then the stormy wind of the *sattva* quality begins to blow. Then this root in the form of the human order produces sprouts in the form of good desires and shoots of knowledge. Then with the growth of this knowledge, spring twigs in the form of sharp intelligence and they expand in the twinkling of the eye (181-185). When this twig in the form of intelligence spreads, it gains through the strength of inspiration, the power of discrimination. Then there issue fourth beautiful leaves, in the form of faith, full of the juice of acute intelligence, giving rise to straight sprouts of good manners and *Vedic* chants. Then they bear many leaves in the form of behaviour, according to *Vedic* precepts and many kinds of sacrificial rites. From these spring the branches, in the form of austerities which bear bunches of self-control and restraint of the senses and beautiful tender twigs, in the form of non-attachment (186-190). The shoots of special kinds of vows come forth, from the sharp sprout of fortitude and spread rapidly upward. So long as the stormy wind of the *sattva* quality blows, twigs in the form of lore's, spring from the thick foliage of the *Vedas*. Then a straight twig in the form of duty (*dharma*) spreads and produces a cross-branch, which yields the fruit of sojourn in heaven etc. A red branch, in the form of non-attachment produces fresh foliage in the form of liberation. Then the side shoots, in the form of planets such as the sun and the moon, and the abodes of manes, seers, semi-divine *vidyadharas* (learned demi-gods) begin to sprout (191-195). Higher than these another branch springs up, bearing fruits like the heaven of *Indra*. This branch produces high twigs, in the form of *Marichi*, *Kashyapa* etc., who are foremost in austerities and knowledge. So these branches spread one over the other, laden with abundant fruits, so that the tree is slender at the bottom and heavy at the top. On the top of these branches other sprouts spring, in the form of the world of god *Brahma* and *Kailasa* the world of *Lord Shiva*. Then with the weight of their fruits, the higher branches fold over and rest on the roots (196-200). as in the case of ordinary trees. Similarly, O Arjuna, with the growth of knowledge, this world-tree rests on its roots. There is, therefore, no scope of further growth of beings, beyond regions of god *Brahma* and *Lord Shiva* and there is only *Brahman*, beyond these heights. But apart from this, the branches of god *Brahma* etc. cannot compare with the world-tree. Higher than these are the branches in the form of sages *Saunaka* etc. treading the path of renunciation, which are without fruits and roots and so have become one with *Brahman* (201-205). In this manner, the branches in the form of *Brahmaloka*, have gone higher up from the branches of the human order. They have sprung from the branches of the human order, which form their roots. In this way, I have described this marvelous tree in the form of mundane existence, which has roots at the top (i.e. *Brahman*) and has its spread both upwards and downwards. I have also explained in detail, the roots of this world tree, which are down below. I shall now tell you, how this tree can be uprooted, listen.

3. *Its form as such is not known here, nor its end nor its source nor its foundation. Cutting down this deep-rooted Ashvattha tree, with the mighty sword of non-attachment,*

O Partha, a doubt may arise in your mind whether there is any means by which such a huge tree could be uprooted (206-210)? What would be able to fell such a vast and strong tree, of which the top branches have spread upto the world of god *Brahma*, of which the roots

are in the formless *Brahman*, of which the branches at the base, have gone deep into the earth and of which the branches in the middle have formed the human life? Do not entertain any such doubt. You will have no trouble in cutting down this tree. Is it necessary to drive away the goblin in order to remove the child's fright? Does it become necessary to pull down the forts formed by the clouds or to break the horn of a hare or pluck the flower of the sky (211-215)? In the same way, O Arjuna, this world-tree is unreal, so why does one need boldness to eradicate it? The description of the roots and branches of this tree, is like saying that a barren woman has given birth to many children. Could a talk in a dream be of any use in the waking state? The story of this tree is as superfluous as such a dream-talk. Had the roots of this tree been as strong as I had described it, which mother's son could have uprooted it? Can anyone scatter the sky by puffing at it (216-220)? The world-tree as described by me, is all an illusion like the ghee prepared from the tortoise's (non-existent) milk. O dear friend, lakes of mirage water are fit to be seen only from a distance; can anyone grow rice or bananas on that water? Where the ignorance itself is unreal, how could its effect be real? Truly speaking, this world tree is a mere illusion.

This tree is said to be endless, and in one sense it is true. Can there be an end to sleep so long as one does not wake up or could there be a dawn, until the night is over (221-225)? In the same way, O Partha, so long as knowledge does not dawn upon one, there could be no end to this world-tree. The waves on the sea do not cease, so long as the wind does not stop blowing. The mirage disappears, only after the sun sets or the light vanishes when the lamp is extinguished. In the same way, this world tree, which is rooted in ignorance, does not vanish until the dawn of knowledge. So when it is said that this world has no beginning, it is not a false imputation, but is a fact, which accords with its nature (226-230). For, if the world-tree is not real, how could it have a beginning? It would be reasonable to ascribe origin to a thing, which is produced; but how could there be a beginning for a thing which has no existence at all? Who could be the mother of an unborn child? In the same way, the world tree is said to be beginningless, as it has no existence. How could there be a horoscope of a child of a barren woman? How could one imagine the existence of blue colour in the sky? Could anyone break the stalk of the flower of the sky? So how could the world-tree have a beginning, when it does not exist (231-235)? The earthen pitcher has no existence before it is made, so is this entire world-tree, without beginning.

This is how, O Arjuna, this tree has neither beginning nor end and its intermediate state is also illusory. Though (like the river *Godavari*) it starts from the *Brahmagiri*, (mountain of *Brahman*) it does not join the sea, but is like a mirage in the middle. So it has neither a beginning nor an end nor is it real in any state. But see how marvelous it is! Although unreal, it seems real. Like a multicoloured rainbow, this world-tree appears charming, to an ignorant person (236-240). The world-tree, by its illusory appearance, deludes the vision of an ignorant person, like a skilful actor who attracts the minds of people, by assuming different roles. The sky appears to be blue although it is devoid of colour, but the colour appears blue for a moment, and then vanishes. If the unreal things seen in a dream are held to be real, is it possible to maintain oneself on them? In the same way this world appearance is momentary and without real substance. Though it appears as real, one cannot grasp it, just as a monkey, which sees its reflection in the water, cannot catch hold of it. The world comes into being and perishes so fast, that it surpasses the quick movements of the ripples in the sea or of the lightning

in the sky (241-245). Just as one does not know, whether the last winds in the summer blow from the front or the rear, so is the state of this unreal world-tree. Does one need to make strenuous efforts to uproot this tree, which is without beginning, end, continuity or form? Did not this tree become strong, because of man's ignorance of his true Self? One should therefore, fell it by means of Self-knowledge. If you make use of remedies other than this knowledge, you will become more and more entangled in this tree. How long can you go up and down the branches of this tree? So cut down the branches of this tree and cut down its root, which is ignorance, by true knowledge of the Self (246-250). Otherwise it would be like gathering sticks to kill the (illusory) serpent, imagined in a rope or getting drowned in a real forest stream, while running in search of a boat, to cross the mirage. Oh warrior, while one devises means for destroying this world-tree, one deprived of Self-knowledge becomes possessed of the notion, that the world affairs are real. O winner of wealth, just as the waking state is the only way to get rid of a wound caused in a dream, so one needs the sword of knowledge to cut the root of world-tree, which is ignorance. In order to wield this sword of knowledge without effort, the intelligence needs the constant support of non-attachment (251-255). When this non-attachment becomes firm, it goes beyond righteousness, acquisition of riches and passion, in the way a dog vomits foul food consumed by it. O Arjuna, when one forms a loathing for every object, this non-attachment grows strong. Then one should take out the sword of knowledge from its sheath, in the form of body-consciousness and hold it firmly in the hand, in the form of intellect, which is looking inwards. Then after rubbing this sword on the whetstone of discrimination, it should be sharpened and cleaned, on the notion 'I am Brahman'. Then holding this sword in one's firm grip of resolve, one should brandish it once or twice and then balance it in his hand on the strength of reflection (256-260). When the wielder of the weapon becomes one with the weapon, there is nothing in the world which can withstand its onslaught. That sword of the Self-knowledge, will then, by means of its splendour of non-dualism, not allow the world-tree to exist anywhere. Just as at the start of autumn, the wind clears the sky of all clouds or as the rising sun destroys all darkness, or as the waking state ends the confused state of the mind in a dream, so the sharpened edge of the sword of knowledge, does its work. Then as the mirage disappears in the moon-light, the upper and lower roots of the world-tree and the expansion of its branches cease to exist (261-265). Therefore, O best of warriors, you should cut down this top-rooted *Ashvattha* tree by means of the sword of Self-knowledge.

4. *Then they seek that abode, by reaching which they do not return. I seek refuge in that Primeval Person, from whom has sprung this ancient world-process.*

Then they should realise the Self which cannot be referred to as 'this' or 'that' and which destroys the ego. But you should refrain from the notion of duality, which the fools entertain by looking into the mirror. You should view this Self, in such a way, as the water springs remain intact, even when the well is filled up or as the sun's reflection returns to the original disc, when the water in which it is reflected dries up, or as the space in the earthen pot merges in the sky when the pot breaks (266-270) or as the fire becomes extinguished, when the fuel is burnt up. One should scrutinize one's Self, as the tongue tastes itself or the eye sees its eye-ball. Just as splendour merges in itself, as the sky rolls on itself, or the water remains in water, I declare that one should view oneself with a non-dual vision. That primeval abode,

which is to be seen without seeing or known without knowing, is known as the Primeval Person (271-275). The *Vedas* describe him with the help of limiting conditions (*upadhis*) and raise a noisy clamour in vain, that he has name and form. But those who are tired of heavenly and worldly pleasures, take a vow that they would never return to this world and resort to Yoga and knowledge. Then, becoming indifferent to the world, they lay a wager to turn their back on mundane existence and even go beyond the abode of god *Brahma*, which is attainable through the way of action (276-280). Then, after getting rid of egoism, they obtain an extra pass for entering their original home. As the snow freezes itself, one should view the essential nature of one's Self, because of which, the world sequence is expanding like the vain hope of a luckless person. Without knowing this, one views the world appearance with a false notion of duality, in the form of 'You' and 'I'. O winner of wealth, there is another sign by which one can recognise it. It is this, that after the realisation of the Self, they are not reborn in this world. It is only those who are completely saturated with the knowledge of the Self, as the world is brimful with water at the time of the deluge, attain to the Supreme Self.

5. *Without pride and delusion, triumphant over the flaw of attachment, immersed in the Self after becoming freed from desires and the pairs of opposites, viz., pleasure and pain, they, undeluded, attain to that eternal abode.*

Just as clouds clear out of the sky at the close of the rainy season, so delusion and egoism leave such persons (281-285). Just as relations get tired of a poor and cruel person and desert him, they do not get into the clutches of emotions. Just as a plantain tree topples down after bearing bananas, so with the realisation of the Self, their activities slowly come to a stop. Just as birds fly away from a tree, which has caught fire, all fancies leave them and go away. They do not even become aware of the notion of duality, which produces sprouts of grass, in the form of shortcomings in the Field. Just as darkness disappears with dawn, their body-consciousness leaves them along with ignorance (286-290). Just as the body drops down with the expiry of the life span, so the notion of duality, which causes infatuation leaves them. Just as a philosopher's stone cannot acquire iron or the sun cannot come across darkness, so there is total absence of the sense of duality in them. The pair of opposites viz., pleasures and pain, which is seen in connection with the body, does not affect them. Just as the acquisition of a kingdom or meeting with death in a dream do not cause delight or sorrow in the waking state, or the eagle is never caught by a serpent, so the pair of pleasure and pain which give rise to merit and sin does not affect them (291-295). These thoughtful persons are like swans, that consume the milk of Self-knowledge, after separating it from the water, in the form of not-Self. Just as the sun sends showers of rain to the earth and absorbs it through his rays (by the process of evaporation), so the Supreme Self, which had seemingly become scattered into different directions, becomes consolidated into the vision of Self. Their thoughts become firmly grounded in the Supreme Self, as the flow of the river Ganga becomes merged in the sea. Just as the sky does not shift from one place to another, so when these men of wisdom become one with the Supreme Self, they do not entertain any desires (296-300). Like the seeds which do not grow on a volcano, passions do not arise in their minds. Just as the *Sea of Milk* became calm, after the churning rod in the form of *Mandara* was removed from it, so the ripples of desire do not agitate their minds. Like the full moon, which remains complete in all its sixteen phases, lacking nothing, they are not troubled by hope. How much more

can I describe to you, such incomparable things about them? Just as the particles of earth cannot stand a (stormy) wind, so they do not like the sense-objects even mentioned before them. Those who have sacrificed the sense-objects in the fire of knowledge merge in that abode, as purified gold unites with pure gold (301-305). If you ask what is that abode in which they merge, it is that abode which never perishes, and which is not an object to be seen or known or in any way particularised.

6. *The sun does not illumine it, nor the moon, nor the fire; after going where men return not; that is My supreme abode.*

This abode is not such that it can be seen in the light of the lamp or of the moon or even of the sun. When the Supreme *Brahman* hides itself, the world appearance becomes manifest. So long as the knowledge of the shell remains deficient, the shell appears in the form of silver or when the knowledge of the rope ceases, its serpent form becomes more apparent (306-310). So it is only when the light of the Supreme Self is concealed, that the luminaries such as the sun and the moon illumine the world, with their brilliant splendour. This Supreme *Brahman* is so effulgent and all-pervasive, that it lends its light to the sun and the moon, so much so, that the light of the sun and moon seems to be its reflected light. The essential nature of this Supreme Self, is such that it bestows its splendour on all luminous things. The whole universe along with the sun and the moon vanishes in the light of that Supreme Being. Just as the moon and the stars disappear on the rising of the sun, or the scenes in the dream disappear on waking up or the mirage vanishes when the evening sets in (311-315), so in that supreme abode of mine, the world appearance does not survive. Those who reach My abode never return, like the river which has joined the sea. Just as the salt statuette of a female elephant, immersed in the sea, never returns or the flames which rise up in the sky, do not come down, or the water sprinkled on the red hot iron dries up without leaving a trace, they become one with Me on the strength of pure knowledge and do not come to birth again (316-320).

Then Arjuna, the prince of knowledge, said, "Oh Lord, you have indeed bestowed your grace on me. But I have a request to make, please give it due consideration. As for those who become merged in the Supreme Being, never to return to this mortal world, were they originally distinct from him or were they non-different from him? If they were distinct from time without beginning, then to say that they do not return, strikes me as inconsistent. How can the bees which go to sip the honey in the flowers become themselves flowers at any time? Similarly, the arrows after hitting the targets drop down and so come back. If on the other they were always non-different from you, then who meets whom? For how can a weapon pierce itself (321-325)? If the individual selves are not different from you, then one cannot talk about their union with you or separation from you, in the same way as one cannot talk about the body being different from its organs. If they are all different from you, they can never become one with you. Is it not therefore, futile to raise the question whether they return to this world or not? Therefore, enlighten me, O Omni faced God, as to how they do not come back after attaining you."

Hearing this query of Arjuna, the omniscient Lord became pleased, seeing that Arjuna had attained full wisdom. Then the Lord said, those who attain to Me and do not return to this

world can be said to be both distinct and non-distinct from Me (326-330). If you think deeply, you will realise, that they are one with me; but outwardly they seem to be distinct from Me. The ripples on the water appear distinct from it, but they are nothing but water. The gold ornaments appear different from gold; yet if you consider them properly they are all gold. In that way, O Arjuna, if you view it with the vision of wisdom, they have become one with Me; but they appear to be distinct, due to ignorance. If you think of Me as the Supreme Self, how can you entertain notions of distinction and non-disjunction from Me, who am single (331-335)? If the sun's disc were to pervade the whole sky, where can it have its reflection and where can it send its rays? O winner of wealth, can there be anything like ebb and tide, when the whole world is covered with water at the time of deluge? How could there be parts in Me, who am one and immutable? But because of its currents, the water though straight, appears curved. Or when the sun is reflected in water, there seem to be two suns. How can you say that the space is square or round in form, but it appears to be so when it is enclosed in the earthen pot or a *Matha* (hermitage). When man dreams that he is a king, does he not constitute the entire world in the dream and pervade it (336-340)? When an alloy is mixed with gold, the combination is known as gold of different carats; so even though I am pure, I appear to be distinct as Self and God due to the limiting factor (*upadhi*) of *Maya*. Then only ignorance spreads all round and the doubt arises in the form of 'Who am I?' and after a good deal of (confused) thought, one thinks, 'I am the body'.

7. *A part of Myself becomes the eternal Self in the world of beings and draws (to itself) the (five) senses with the mind as the sixth, abiding in the prakriti.*

In this way, the knowledge of Self gets solely confined to the body and because of its smallness, it appears as a part of Myself. When a ripple is formed on the sea as a result of a breeze, it appears to be a part of the sea. In the same way, though I give consciousness and egoism to the inert body, I appear as the individual Self in this body (341-345). The activity that appears to go round due to the intellect of the embodied Self, is known as the world of the living (*jivaloka*). Where birth and death are regarded as real, I call that the world of the living or mundane existence. Just as the moon, though different from water, is reflected in the water, so I exist in this world of the living. If a crystal is placed on red powder it appears red, but in reality it is not so. In the same way, My original nature as beginningless and inactive remains unaffected.

If I appear to be the doer and the experience, know that it is due to delusion (346-350). In short, this pure Self coming into conjunction with the *prakriti* attributes its properties to himself. Then he regards the mind and the senses, which are the products of the *prakriti*, as his own and becomes involved in worldly affairs. Just as a monk becomes his own family in a dream and, becoming infatuated, exerts himself to maintain it, so the Self, forgetting his essential nature, takes himself to be the body, and dances attendance on it. Then he rides in the chariot of the mind and passing out through the ears, he enters the woods of speech (351-355). When he holds on to the apron of *prakriti*, he goes through the door of skin into the thick forest, in the form of touch. Sometimes he comes out through the door of the eyes, and roams freely on the mountain of form. O warrior, he passes out through the passage of the tongue and wanders in the valley of taste. Or when this part of myself comes out through the exit of the nose, he roves in the dense forest of smell. In this way, taking the help of the mind, the

embodied Self, who is the Lord of the body and the senses, enjoys the sense-objects such as the sound (356-360).

8. *When the Lord (the Self) acquires a body and also when he abandons it, he departs taking these with him as the wind (carries) fragrance from its source.*

When this embodied Self enters the body, he thinks that he is the doer and experiencer. Just as, O winner of wealth, a rich and pleasure-loving person is recognized, when he settles down in the capital city, so when the embodied Self takes on his body, his ego gains strength and his senses and their objects become turbulent. Or when he departs from the body, he takes along with him the retinue of the senses. Just as a dishonoured guest carries with him the merit of his host, or with the snapping of the string, the movements of the puppets cease (361-365), or when the sun sets, he takes away the vision of the people or when the wind blows it carries away the fragrance, so, O *Dhananjaya*, when the embodied Self discards the body, he takes with himself, the five organs of knowledge and the sixth organ, the mind.

9. *Presiding over the organs of hearing, sight, touch, taste and smell and the mind, this (embodied Self) enjoys the objects of the senses.*

Whether he remains in this world or goes to the next world after assuming a body, he takes with him this group of senses including the mind. O Arjuna, when a lamp is extinguished, it takes away the light, but when it is re-lit, it brings back the light and spreads it; the ignorant think that this is what happens in the case of the embodied Self (366-370). They think that the Self really entered the body and left after enjoying the sense-objects. But coming and going, doing and enjoying are all the properties of *Prakriti*; but men ascribe them to the Self.

10. *The deluded do not see him departing or staying (in the body) or enjoying, as he is endowed with gunas; but those with the eye of wisdom see him.*

11. *The yogis, exerting themselves, see him existing in themselves; but the thoughtless do not see him, being of unformed minds, even if they try very hard.*

When the embodied Self begins his movements, then we say that the Self has entered his body and that he is born. When the senses, through their association with the embodied Self, savour the sense-objects, this is called his experience. When the child grows old and the body becomes emaciated and lifeless, then the people lament that the Self has departed (371-375). Should one understand that the wind blows only if a tree is fluttering and that it does not exist where there is no tree? Should a person think that he exists, only when he sees his reflection in the mirror and not before? And when the mirror is set aside and the reflection is gone, should he decide that he has ceased to exist? Even though the sound is a property of the *akasha*, people ascribe the thunder of lightning to the clouds or they attribute the movement of the cloud to the moon. So persons blinded by infatuation, superpose the birth and death of the body upon the Self (376-380). But there are some persons, who know that the Self abides in the body and witnesses only the functions of the body. They regard the body with the eye of wisdom, as the mere sheath of the Self and not get entangled in it. Such men of knowledge, in whom the discrimination has spread like the scorching rays of the sun in the summer, are enlightened as regards the essential nature of the Self. When the sky studded with stars, becomes reflected in the sea, then surely it has not dropped down into the sea.

The sky remains where it is and its reflection in the sea is a mere illusion. So that which abides in the body is the Self only (381-385). Though the reflection of the moonlight, oscillates in the roaring currents of water and gives the impression of a being divided into parts, the light remains in the moon all the same. The sun's reflection appears in the puddle and disappears when it becomes dry; yet the sun remains unaffected where it is. In the same way, men of knowledge, know that the Self abides, when the body remains or ceases to exist. Even when an earthen pot and a hermitage are constructed and destroyed, the space in it remains as it is; in the same way, the Self remains changeless. The enlightened men know that the bodies conceived through ignorance, come into being and perish. The Self does not increase or diminish, he does not do work nor gets it done. In this way, the men of knowledge know Me truly.

But, even if a man attains this knowledge and possesses keen intellect, to penetrate through atom and becomes proficient in all lores, but is lacking in non-attachment, he will not attain to Me, the all-pervading one. Even if he talks glibly about discrimination, but at the same time entertains thoughts of sense-objects in his mind, he will definitely not attain to Me. By repeating in sleep, the texts read by him, will he be able to break the bonds of worldly existence? Can one be said to have read a book, if he merely touches it? Or if one's eyes are bandaged, will one be able to assess the worth of a set of pearls, by putting it to one's nose (391-395)? In that way, even if one has all the scriptures at the tip of one's tongue, one will never attain to Me, so long as one's heart is full of egoism. Now, I shall explain how, though single, I pervade the whole universe.

12. *That light pertaining to the sun, which illumines the entire world, and that which is in the moon and in the fire, know that the light is Mine.*

Know that all that light which illumines the world, inclusive of the sun's, belongs to Me and remains with Me from the beginning to the end of the world. When the sun dries up the world (through the process of evaporation), the moon-light that provides moisture to the world, is also Mine. And the intense heat in the fire, which burns and cooks etc., also belongs to Me (396-400).

13. *Entering the earth, I sustain all beings with My power and I nourish all the herbs, becoming soma (moon) full of juices.*

I permeate the earth, so that even though it is a mass of clay, it does not dissolve in the waters of the ocean. I also enter the earth and uphold the countless beings, both animate and inanimate, sustained by it. I have become the moving lake of nectar, in the form of the moon in the sky. And when the moon-beams come down from the sky, I turn them into channels of nectar and nourish the plants. In this way, by providing food crops in abundance, I sustain the life of all beings (401- 405). Even after the food is produced, it has to be digested, otherwise how could the living being get satisfaction after eating it?

14. *Having become the abdominal fire, I live in the bodies of all creatures; and united with the inward and outward breaths, I digest the four kinds of food.*

Therefore, O Arjuna, I become the digestive fire, which is kindled at the region of the navel. By blowing the bellows in the form of inward and outward breath, I consume unlimited quantities of food. I digest four kinds of food viz., dry, oily, cooked and half-cooked. In this

way, I am the entire world of beings, also the food which sustains them and I am also the fire, which is the principal means of digestion (406-410). How much more can I describe to you the novelty of My pervasion? There is nothing in this world without Me and I have pervaded the whole of it.

Now you will ask Me, why some beings in this world, are happy and some are afflicted with misery. If the lamps in a town are lit by one and the same lamp, will it happen that some of them give light and some not? If you entertain such doubts, I shall clear them completely. See I am everywhere and there is nothing without Me. But I appear different to living beings according to their discerning power (411-415). Even if sound is the quality of the sky, we hear different tunes from different musical instruments. The sun rises and helps the people to go about their different occupations. The seeds with different properties grow into different trees. In the same way, my essential nature is transformed into differing beings. If an ignorant and a wise person both see a double-braided necklace of sapphires, the ignorant one takes it to be a serpent, while the wise one feels happy with the knowledge that it is a necklace. The raindrop turns into a pearl when it falls into an oyster under the asterism of *Swati*, but it becomes poison, when it falls into the mouth of a serpent. In the same way, I become the cause of happiness to the wise, but the cause of misery to the ignorant (416-420).

15. *I dwell in the hearts of all; from Me spring memory, knowledge and reason. I alone am the object of knowledge of all the Vedas; I am the author of Vedanta and also the knower of the Vedas.*

The consciousness that 'I am somebody' which throbs day and night in the heart of everyone is Myself. But, when his ignorance is removed, by the company of saints, the pursuit of Yoga and knowledge, and the service of the preceptor with non-attachment, his egoism becomes merged in the Self. Such a person comes to know Me thoroughly and becomes happy with that knowledge. What other reason can he have except Myself in attaining that state? O *Dhananjaya*, just as the sun can be perceived only when the sun rises, so I am Myself the cause of My own knowledge (421-425). On the other hand, those who are engrossed in pampering the body and in hearing the praise of worldly affairs, and whose egoism is, therefore, bound with the body, they pursue the path of action, in order to attain happiness here, as also in heaven and have misery as their lot. But, O Arjuna, I am also the cause of this state of theirs, just as what we see in the wakeful state becomes the cause of dreams in the state of sleep. Just as the cloudy sky, which makes the light dim, is also seen in that light, so the diversion of their attention to the sense objects on account of their ignorance of Me, also arises from Me. O winner of wealth, as ignorance is the cause of the wakeful state and sleep, so I am the root cause of the knowledge and ignorance of living beings (426- 430). Just as the rope is the cause of its illusory appearance as the serpent or its true knowledge, so I am the root cause of knowledge and ignorance, which is the basis of worldly existence. Therefore, O *Dhananjaya*, not knowing My essential nature, the *Vedas* made an attempt to know Me, giving rise to a number of different schools. Yet they all impart knowledge in regard to Myself, as all rivers going East or West ultimately join the sea. Just as the fragrant breeze stops in the sky, so the *Vedas* are reduced to nonplus, when they come across the great utterance, 'I am myself the great *Brahman*'. In this way, when the scriptures become dumb out of shame, I help them to reveal the nature of *Brahman* (431-435).

I am the knower of that pure knowledge, in which the world along with the scriptures becomes merged. Just as when a person wakes up from sleep, he knows that all things which he saw in a dream were not different from him, but that he himself had become them, so I know My non-dual nature, which is free from the limiting conditions of the world and I am Myself the cause of its realisation. O Arjuna, when the camphor gets burnt, it leaves neither soot nor fire, so the knowledge after destroying ignorance ceases and no one can definitely say that it exists or ceases (436-440). Who can trace the thief and where, who takes away the universe without leaving any trail? Then what remains is the state, which is Myself. In this way, while describing how he had pervaded the animate and inanimate world, the Lord, the giver of salvation, preached his pure state, which is free from limiting conditions. Just as on the rise of the moon in the sky, its full reflection appears in the sea, so the teaching of the Lord became impressed on the mind of Arjuna. As the picture on a wall becomes reflected in the opposite wall, which has been polished and made glossy, so the knowledge, which was imparted by Lord Krishna, penetrated the mind of Arjuna. It is a wonder that the more one attains knowledge of the Supreme Self, the more he feels attracted to it (441-445).

Then Arjuna, the prince among those who have realised the Self, said, "O Lord, please repeat fully, whatever description you gave of the formless Supreme in the course of explaining your pervasive nature." Then the king of *Dwarka* said, "You have asked a pertinent question. O Arjuna, I also like to speak on this subject, but what can I do? One seldom comes across someone who asks questions like this. But you questioned Me on this point freely. So you have fulfilled My desire and brought Me happiness arising from the experience of non-dualism (446-450). I have found in you as a good conversationalist as Myself, like seeing My own form reflected in the mirror. O dear Arjuna, you never ask a question in ignorance so that I shall explain this thing in a way, which will convince you." Saying this, the Lord embraced Arjuna and viewing him with favour said, "Although there are two lips, the speech which comes out of them is the same. Although there are two feet, yet the act of walking is the same. Of the same type is your question to Me and My reply to you. In fact, both of us should have the same purpose, as both of us, one who asks and one who replies are one and the same (451-455)." While speaking this, the Lord became infatuated with affection and clasping Arjuna to his heart remained still. Then with some trepidation he said to himself, "Such an affection on my part is not proper. While preparing jaggery from sugarcane juice, salt is added to it to prevent it from being spoiled, so if I do not maintain this distinction between us, then we shall miss this pleasure of conversation. As it is, there is no distinction between us, as we were formerly *Nara* and *Narayana* and so I must allow this effusion of affection to subside". Thinking thus, he asked, "O Arjuna, what did you ask me?" Hearing these words, Arjuna, who was on the point of merging his personality into that of the Lord, regained his consciousness and became ready to hear his reply (456-460). With a choked throat (through an excess of emotion), he said, "O Lord, tell me about your attributeless form."

The Lord began his reply by describing two kinds of limiting conditions (*upadhis*). You may wonder as to why the Lord talked about the limiting conditions, when he was requested to explain the attributeless form. It is like this. One cannot recover butter without separating the butter-milk from milk, or get pure gold without burning its alloy. One cannot reach pure water without setting aside the moss or get a clear sky without the scattering away of clouds

(461-465). Is there any difficulty in recovering the grain once the husk is removed? In the same way, it hardly needs telling that what remains after removing the limiting conditions, is the attributeless form of the Self. Just as a lady from a good family indicates by keeping quiet that the name uttered by a person is the name of her husband, so where the scriptures remain mute, that is the indescribable pure form of the Supreme Self. In order to indicate that this form is inexpressible, the Lord of goddess *Lakshmi* has started with a description of the limiting conditions. Just as one has to point out the tiny moon's arc on the first day after the new moon night against the background of a branch of a tree, one has to discuss the limiting conditions in order to explain the attributeless form of the Supreme Self (466-470).

16. *There are two purusha in the world, the perishable and the imperishable. The perishable comprises all creatures, the changeless is the imperishable (Self).*

Then the Lord said, O ambidextrous Arjuna, the population of this town in the form of mundane existence consists of only two *purushas*. Both these live in the capital of the world, as both light and darkness dwell in the sky. There is also a third *purusha*, but he does not tolerate these two and when he arrives he immediately devours both of them along with the world. Leave this for the time being. First, hear about those two who have come to dwell in this town in the form of worldly existence. One of them is blind, crazy and lame, and the other has all his organs fully developed. They come into close association with one another, as they dwell in the same city (471-475). One of them is known as 'perishable' and other is 'imperishable'. The worldly existence is entirely filled by these two. Now, I shall explain to you what this 'perishable' entity is and what the characteristics are of the 'imperishable'. O winner of wealth, that which is great and small, right from the Great Principle to the blade of grass, which is animate and the inanimate, which is comprehended by the mind and the body, which springs from the five gross elements and takes on name and form, which issues from the mint of the three *gunas* (476-480), which is the metal from which the coins in the form of beings are minted, which is the money with which the Time (Kala) gambles, which is known through false knowledge, which comes into being and becomes dissolved every moment, which enters the forest of delusion and produces the form of creation, in short, that is known as the 'World'. This has been described as the eightfold *prakriti* (in the Seventh Chapter) and as the Field (in the Thirteenth Chapter), made up of thirty-six principles. What is the sense in repeating what has already been stated? I have now described it to you in the form of a tree (481-485). Conscious Self regards this world as its dwelling place and takes on its form. Just as a lion after seeing his reflection in the well, mistakes it for another lion and leaps into the well in anger, or the sky, remaining where it is, throws its reflection in water, so this conscious Self although non-dual, becomes enveloped by dualism. In this way, the conscious Self takes a fancy for this city in the form of the world and forgetful of its original nature, goes to sleep therein. Just as one sees a bed and sleeps on it in a dream, so the Self goes to sleep in that city (486-490). Then he says while snoring, that he is happy or miserable and raves about with words such as 'me' and 'mine'. He says, 'this is my father, this my mother, I am fair, I am dark, I am perfect; this son, riches and wife, are they not mine'? When the Self, dreams like this and roams in the forest of the earth and heaven, he is known as the perishable *purusha*. Now when the one who is called as the owner of the Field (*Kshetrajna*) remains in the state

of the embodied Self (*jiva*) and forgetting his essential nature as Self, behaves like other beings, he is known as the perishable *purusha* (491-495). For since his Selfhood is not affected (by his assumption of the body), he gets properly the name of *purusha*. As he abides in the body (which is like a town i.e. *pura*) he is called *purusha* and since he becomes associated with the limiting conditions (*upadhi*), he is falsely accused of being non-eternal. Just as the moon appears to be moving when reflected in the ripples of water, so the Self appears to be perishable because of his association with the limiting conditions. But when that water dries up, the reflection of the moon disappears and in the same way with the destruction of the limiting conditions, the Self remains in his pristine form. It is because of his association with the transitory limiting conditions, he got the name *kshara* i.e. perishable (496-500). In this way, all embodied Selves should be called 'perishable'.

Now, I shall disclose to you the characteristics of the imperishable Self. O Arjuna, this other imperishable Self is situated in the middle and does not get involved in either knowledge or ignorance, as the *Meru* mountain stands perpetually in the three worlds, the earth, the nether world and heaven. True knowledge does not affect his unity nor does he suffer dualism because of false knowledge. The state of unknowing which is in between these two states, is his nature. When the particles of earth change into a lump of wet clay, it ceases to be earth, but has not yet assumed the form of a pitcher, pot etc; so this imperishable *purusha* stands midway like this wet lump (501-505). O Partha, know that his nature is like the formless state of the sea, which becomes dried and has neither waves nor water or like the drowsy state which is in between the wakeful and dreamy states. This state of unknowing which is midway between the disappearance of the illusory world and the dawn of the knowledge of the Self is called the imperishable *purusha*. There is total absence of knowledge in this state, like the moon which is stripped of all its phases on the New Moon night. With the ripening of the fruit, the tree is contained in it in the seed form (506-510); in the same way when all the limiting conditions are destroyed, that state in which the embodied Self along with his limiting conditions becomes merged, is known as the 'Unmanifest' (*avyakta*). In the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*), there is total ignorance and so this state is known as the seed-state (*bija-bhava*) and the states of wakefulness and dream are known as the fruit-state (*bija-phala-bhava*). That which is known as the seed-state in *Vedanta* is the abode of that imperishable *purusha*. It produces false knowledge, which giving rise to wakeful and dream states, roams in the forest of many fancies. O Arjuna, that state from which consciousness creates the entire world and where its *manifest* and *unmanifest* states meet, is the imperishable Self (511-515). The perishable Self assumes a body and experiences the states of wakeful and dreaming states. That from which these two states originate, is the state full of ignorance known as the state of deep sleep (*sushupti*), which is only lacking in the knowledge of *Brahman*. O great warrior, if this state of deep sleep had not given rise to the wakeful state and dream, then it would have been designated as the state of *Brahman*. But two clouds in the form of *prakriti* and *purusha* come in the sky in the form of deep sleep, which witnesses the Field and the knower of the Field in the state of dream. This imperishable Self is the root cause of this expanding tree in the form of this mundane existence (516-520). But why is this perfect Self known as *purusha*? Because he goes to sleep in the city of *Maya*. That state of his, in which, one does not experience the whirls of emotions, which are forms of ignorance, is the state of deep sleep. That is why this imperishable *purusha* does not perish except through knowledge.

Therefore, it is well-known in the philosophy of *Vedanta*, as the doctrine of the imperishable *purusha*. In this way, the form of the embodied Self, which is assumed by consciousness through the limiting condition of *Maya* is the imperishable Self (521-525).

17. *But different from these two is the Supreme Person called the Supreme Self, the immutable Lord who sustains these worlds after pervading them.*

In this way the states of wakefulness and dream, which spring from false knowledge, become dissolved in ignorance. Like fire which is extinguished after burning firewood, this knowledge, after destroying ignorance, experiences the Supreme Self and vanishes. That which remains behind after knowledge ceases to exist, is the Supreme Person. This is the third *purusha* different from the other two *purushas*. This is the ultimate truth of the doctrine of *purusha*. O Arjuna, just as the wakeful state, which gives knowledge of the world, is entirely different from the states of deep sleep and dream (526-530) or the sun's disc is different from the sun's rays and mirage, so this Supreme Person, is distinct from the two *purushas*. Just as the fire latent in firewood, is different from it, this Supreme Person is distinct from the perishable and imperishable *purushas*. In a deluge, the oceans transgress their limits and the whole world becomes a mass of water, leaving no trace of the separate existence of rivers and rivulets; in the same way, the states of dream, deep sleep and wakefulness, cease to exist. Just as the conflagration at the time of world-dissolution consumes day and night, all empirical knowledge, along with monism and dualism, ceases to exist and one does not know whether there is existence or non-existence (531-535). Know this state to be the supreme *purusha*, who is also known in this world as the Supreme Self. Speech, which returns without touching him, is possible only while one remains in the state of embodied existence. Just as standing safe on the bank of a river, one can talk about a person getting drowned, so the *Vedas* talk about matters relating to this or the yonder shore. The *Vedas* think of the perishable and imperishable *purusha* on this shore as inferior and speak of the *purusha* who is on a higher plane, as the Supreme Self. Please know, O Partha, that the term Supreme Self, suggests this Supreme Person (536-540). That state where not to talk is to talk, not to know is to know, nothing happening is happening, is the Supreme Self. In that state, even the notion 'I am *Brahman*' ceases, the teller becomes what is told, and the seer vanishes along with object to be seen. Can we say that the light ceases to exist, when the sun's disc and its reflection in water ceases to exist? We cannot say that the fragrance does not exist, because the fragrance standing between the flower and nostril cannot be perceived. In the same way, can one ask, 'What is it that remains, when both the person who sees and the object to be seen, cease to exist'? Whatever comes to be experienced in that state, is its form (541-545). That which illumines in the absence of the object to be illumined, which regulates in the absence of the thing to be regulated, abides in his pristine stage. It is he, who is the inarticulate sound, which gives the power of hearing sound, the original flavour, which gives the power of taste, the bliss which gives the power of enjoyment. It is he who is the Supreme Person among the *purushas*, the acme of perfection, the resting place of rest, the joy of happiness, the splendour of the splendid and the great void in the void. He is beyond the expansion or the dissolution of the world, and is the greatest among all great things (546-550). As the mother-of-pearl, even without becoming silver, seems like silver to the ignorant or the gold assumes the form of the ornament without ceasing to be gold, so he supports the universe without assuming the form

of the universe. Just as there is no distinction between water and the wave, so the universe is not different from the Supreme Self. O great warrior, he is the cause of the contraction and the expansion of the world, as the moon is the cause of the contraction and expansion of its reflection in water. He does not undergo any change when he assumes the form of the universe and does not disappear when the universe disappears. Just as the sun does not assume two different forms during the day and the night (551-555), so he does not perish in any state. He can be compared only with himself.

18. *Since I transcend the perishable and am also superior to the imperishable (Self), therefore, I am, in the world and the Veda, renowned as the Supreme Person.*

O winner of wealth, I am that Self free from limiting conditions, who illumines Himself and is free from duality. Since, I am single and alone, superior to the perishable and imperishable *purusha*, the World and the *Vedas* proclaim Me as the Supreme Person.

19. *He, who knows Me thus as the Supreme Person, knows all and worships Me with his whole heart, O Bharata.*

O Arjuna, the sun of knowledge dawns upon him, who knows Me as the Supreme Person. Just as the dream disappears after one wakes up, so with the dawn of knowledge the whole world appears to him as senseless (556-560). When one takes the wreath in his hand, he gets rid of the false imputation of a snake upon it, so when he attains to My knowledge, he is not deceived by the false appearance of the world. He who knows that the ornament is really gold, knows that the ornament is only a false imputation on gold. Therefore, when he comes to know My real nature, he becomes free from all notions of distinctions. Then he knows, that I am the self-evident Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, pervading everywhere and does not entertain the idea that he is different from Me. To say that he knows all, does not do him full justice, because the notion of duality does not exist in him. So he alone is fit for my devotion, as the sky is fit to hug itself (561-565). Just as the *Ocean of Milk* should be given the feast of milk or a thing which becomes like nectar should be mixed with nectar, or as when pure gold is mixed with pure gold, the mixture also becomes pure, so when a person becomes one with Me, he offers Me true devotion. If the river *Ganga* were entirely different from the sea, how could it have joined the sea? So there is mutual connection between unity with Me and devotion for Me. Just as the waves of the sea are not different from it, so there is no duality between Me and My devotee. Just as the sun and his splendour are intimately related, so is the relation between Me and My devotee (566-570).

20. *Thus this most secret scripture has been told by Me, O sinless one. By knowing this, one becomes an enlightened man with his work accomplished, O Bharata.*

In this way from the beginning of this Chapter, the doctrine of the *Gita* was culled from the scriptures like fragrance from lotus petals. The *Gita* is the essence churned out of the *Vedas* by the talent of the great Sage *Vyasa*. It is the *Ganga* of *ambrosial* knowledge or the seventeenth phase of the moon in the form of bliss or goddess of wealth churned out of the *Sea of Milk* in the form of right thinking. The *Gita*, therefore, does not hold anything dear except Myself, in words, letter and interpretation. Though the perishable and imperishable *purusha* had stood before her, the *Gita* rejected them and surrendered her body and soul to Me, the

Supreme Person (571-575). So this *Gita*, which you heard, is My devoted spouse. The *Gita* is not like a scripture, which could be explained through spoken words. It is verily a weapon to conquer worldly existence. The words of the *Gita* are so many incantations (*mantras*), conducive to self-realisation. In this discourse on the *Gita*, I have taken out and laid before you, My secret treasure. You have become a second sage *Gautama* to draw out the *Ganga* in the form of *Gita*, from the matted hair of *Lord Shankara*, in the form of Myself as consciousness. O winner of wealth, you have indeed become a mirror, in which I could see My essential nature (576-580). Just as the sea brings down the stormy vault to its bosom, in the form of reflection, you have given Me, together with the *Gita*, a place in your heart. By sweeping out from your heart the dirt of the three *gunas*, you have made your heart a fit abode for Myself and the *Gita*. This *Gita*, to say the least, is the creeping plant of knowledge, and whoever knows it, becomes free from delusion. When a person takes a sip of nectar, he becomes immune to disease and immortal. Is there any wonder then, that one who attains full knowledge of the *Gita*, gets rid of delusion? Through this knowledge of Self, one attains union with the Supreme Self (581-585) and all activity comes to a stop, knowing that its life's work is fulfilled. O great warrior, just as with the recovery of the missing article, the search comes to an end, so when the dome of knowledge is built on the temple of activity, all actions cease. So said Lord Krishna, friend of the forlorn.

So this *ambrosial* discourse of Lord Krishna which filled the heart of Partha, became available to *Sanjaya*, through the grace of *Sage Vyasa*. *Sanjaya* offered it to *Dhritarashtra*, so that the king ceased to feel that life was a burden (586-590). Even though a person may be considered unqualified to hear the teaching of the *Gita*, he attains spiritual progress in the end. If a person pours milk at the foot of a vine, it seems such a waste, but he reaps in the end an abundant crop of grapes. So when *Sanjaya* narrated the teaching of Lord Krishna to *Dhritarashtra* with great respect, the king became happy. I have recounted to you this tale in a clumsy way, according to my limited ability. One who lacks an aesthetic sense, does not appreciate the chrysanthemum flower, and yet a connoisseur like a black bee carries away its fragrance (591-595). So you may kindly accept whatever appeals to you and return to me whatever is not good enough. Ignorance is a common trait of a child, but the parents, seeing it, fondle it with happiness, which overflows their heart. You are like my parents, and so I am lisping these fond words, in the form of the *Gita* to you. *Jnanadeva* says, may my omniform Master, *Shri Nivrittinatha*, be pleased with this homage of mine (596-599).

