

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ १७ ॥

uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ

But, other than these (Kṣara and Akṣara), is the Supreme Person, called the Supreme Soul, Who, as the indestructible Lord, entering the three worlds sustains all beings. 17

Comment:—

'Uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ'—The Lord, having described two kinds of persons, the perishable and the imperishable, now mentions, that other than these, is the Supreme Person.*

Here the term 'Anyah' (other), has been used for God, in order to explain, that He is not only different, from the imperishable soul, but also possesses a unique character. So the Lord, in the eighteenth verse, declares that He transcends the perishable, and is even higher, than the imperishable. The soul, in spite of being a fragment of God, is attracted towards the perishable. So God, has been called unique, and other than the soul.

'Paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ'—The term 'Paramātmā', stands for the Supreme Person, and also denotes, attributeless God, the Supreme Soul, the Soul, of all beings. In this verse, both the term 'Paramātmā', and 'Īśvara', have been used, which means that God without attributes, or with attributes, is one and the same, 'Puruṣottama'.

* (1) Brahma (the Absolute) is the Supreme Imperishable Person, superior to Brahmā, the creator; unrevealed, limitless in whom both knowledge and ignorance are established. The perishable matter is known as ignorance while the imperishable soul is known as knowledge. The Supreme Lord Who controls both knowledge and ignorance is different from both of them and is totally unique (Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 5/1).

(2) Nature is perishable while the soul, the embodiment of nectar Which enjoys Nature is imperishable. The Lord controls these two (the perishable and the imperishable) (Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 1/10).

'Yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartavyaya īśvaraḥ'—That Supreme Person permeates (enters), the three worlds equally.

Here the term 'Bibharti', means that God sustains all beings, but the soul by an error, having assumed Its affinity for the world i.e., people etc., as their own, takes responsibility upon itself that It sustains beings, and then It has to suffer in vain.*

The Lord is called 'Avyayaḥ' (a + vyayaḥ = no spending or expenditure), because in spite of sustaining, all the world He incurs no expenditure; He has no shortage. He ever remains, uniform.

The term 'īśvaraḥ', stands for God with attributes, and it means, the controller.

A Vital Fact

Though parents, sustain or nourish a child, yet the child, does not know this fact. Similarly, God nourishes all beings, yet an ignorant person (not having an eye on God), does not realize, this fact. But a devotee, who has taken refuge in Him, knows it very well, that only God sustains, all beings.

As far as sustenance of beings is concerned, God is impartial to a devotee and non-devotee, the sinner and the virtuous, the believer and the non-believer, etc., equally.† It is very well, known to all, that in the universe created by God, the sun equally provides heat and light to all beings, the earth provides space to all beings, the gastric fire, equally digests food of all beings,

* The question of sustenance arises only in the path of devotion rather than in the path of knowledge because in the former path a man (the soul) is regarded as different from God. Therefore, this topic should be regarded as the topic of devotion.

† God showers His grace equally on all beings without any distinction of caste, form, riches and age of beings and without thinking whether they deserve praise or blame.

This great cloud in the form of the innerself is the enjoyer of the inner feelings. Does a cloud while providing rain think whether the receiver is the tree Mimosa catechu or Michelia champacca (Prabodhasudhākara 252-253)?

air is equally available to all beings, for breath, food and water satisfy all beings equally and so on.

Appendix—The Lord calls the Supreme Soul as other because the perishable (world) and the imperishable (soul)—both are laukika (worldly) but ‘Puruṣottama’ (the Supreme Person) is different from the two and is unique viz., unworldly (divine). Therefore the Supreme Soul (God) is not the subject to be reflected upon but is the subject of faith and belief. In believing the existence of God; devotees, saints, exalted souls, the Vedas and the scriptures are the authority. The term ‘anya’ has been explained by the Lord in the next verse.

‘Yo lokatrayamāviśya.....’— In this expression there is the idea (gist) of the topic described from the twelfth to the fifteenth verses. A man has to perform his duty in the human world but the Lord’s field of activities comprises all the three worlds. In fact the Lord has no duty to discharge, yet He is engaged in activities for the welfare of all beings (Gītā 3/22—24).



Link:—The Lord having described His identity, with the Supreme Person, now discloses His secret, when He declares:—

यस्मात्क्षरमतीतोऽहमक्षरादपि चोत्तमः ।

अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः ॥ १८ ॥

yasmātkṣaramatīto'hamakṣarādapi cottamaḥ
ato'smi loka vede ca prathitaḥ puruṣottamaḥ

As I transcend the perishable and am above the imperishable, I am declared as Puruṣottama (Supreme Person) in the world, as well as in the Vedas. 18

Comment:—

'Yasmātkṣaramatīto'ham'—The Lord declares, that the perishable (Nature) is kaleidoscopic, while He remains the same,