

The word *Asvattha* means that which is not today as it was yesterday. This word refers to *Samsāra* or phenomenal existence. It is imperishable but not constant and steady. This *Samsāra* has its origin in Brahman and as it branches down, it gets more and more materialized. *Asvattha* also means the peepul tree which belongs to the banyan family. The speciality of the banyan tree is that it supplies sap from above and sends the branches down into the earth. In this respect the functioning of the *Samsāra* resembles that of this tree. Both of them receive their sustenance from above and come down to earthly existence. In the unmanifest state Brahman and *Sakti* are the same. Therefore the latter is as imperishable as the former. *Sakti* is the inexhaustible source of the *Samsāra* or the Prakriti, with its innumerable modifications.

The tree is both a symbol and an entity revealing life. It aids the study of life in all its aspects all over the Prakriti. That life is self-expressive is made known to us by the leaves of the tree. *The varieties of life* are also indicated by the leaves; they enable us to distinguish one tree from another. Parallel to this are the *chandāmsi* or the hymns in the Vedas. Through these hymns the expression of life all over Nature is suggested to the seeker of knowledge. Hymns in the Vedas are the general term used for all the branches of knowledge. Organic chemistry, biology, botany, physiology, natural science, human history—all these and more are all revelations of life at various levels. The positive expression of life is upheld as virtue and the negative expression