

*Ashwattha* is botanically known as *Ficus Religiosa*, popularly called the Peepal-tree, which, according to some, has gathered its name "because horses used to stand under its shade (*Ashwattha*)." According to Shankara, this tree has been chosen to represent the entire cosmos because of its derivative meaning --- *Shwa* means "tomorrow"; *Stha* means "that which remains"; therefore: A-shwattha: "that which will NOT remain the same till tomorrow." In short, the word indicates the ephemeral, the ever-changing, world of the phenomena.

It is described here that the *Ashwattha*-tree has its roots "up" (*Urdhwa*). Accepting directly the literal meaning, we have got some spiritually absurd, religiously mischievous, and aesthetically ugly 'pictures' of this Tree-of-*Samsara*, painted by some illiterate artists, and made easily available in the Indian markets. It is an insult to the mighty majesty of this scriptural picture.

According to Anandagiri, *Samsara* is represented as a tree (*Vriksha*) because of the etymological meaning of the Sanskrit term, *Vriksha*: "that which can be cut down." The experiences of change and sorrow which the world-of-plurality gives us can be totally ended through detachment. The Tree-of-Multiplicity that has seemingly sprung forth from the Infinite Consciousness Divine, can be cut down by shifting our attention from the tree to the Divine.