

Chapter 15 (Of Religion by Attaining the Supreme)

Chapter 15: Of Religion by Attaining the Supreme

Krishna. Men call the Aswattha, — the Banyan-tree, —

Which hath its boughs beneath, its roots above, —

The ever-holy tree. Yea! for its leaves

Are green and waving hymns which whisper Truth!

Who knows the Aswattha, knows Veds, and all.

Its branches shoot to heaven and sink to earth,

Even as the deeds of men, which take their birth

From qualities: its silver sprays and blooms,

And all the eager verdure of its girth,

Leap to quick life at kiss of sun and air,

As men's lives quicken to the temptings fair

Of wooing sense: its hanging rootlets seek

The soil beneath, helping to hold it there,

As actions wrought amid this world of men

Bind them by ever-tightening bonds again.

If ye knew well the teaching of the Tree,

What its shape saith; and whence it springs; and, then

How it must end, and all the ills of it,

The axe of sharp Detachment ye would whet,

And cleave the clinging snaky roots, and lay

This Aswattha of sense-life low, — to set

New growths upspringing to that happier sky, —

Which they who reach shall have no day to die,

Nor fade away, nor fall — to Him, I mean,

FATHER and FIRST, Who made the mystery

Of old Creation; for to Him come they
From passion and from dreams who break away;
Who part the bonds constraining them to flesh,
And, — Him, the Highest, worshipping alway —
No longer grow at mercy of what breeze
Of summer pleasure stirs the sleeping trees,
What blast of tempest tears them, bough and stem:
To the eternal world pass such as these!
Another Sun gleams there! another Moon!
Another Light, — not Dusk, nor Dawn, nor Noon —
Which they who once behold return no more;
They have attained My rest, life's Utmost boon!
When, in this world of manifested life,
The undying Spirit, setting forth from Me,
Taketh on form, it draweth to itself
From Being's storehouse, — which containeth all, —
Senses and intellect. The Sovereign Soul
Thus entering the flesh, or quitting it,
Gathers these up, as the wind gathers scents,
Blowing above the flower.-beds. Ear and Eye,
And Touch and Taste, and Smelling, these it takes, —
Yea, and a sentient mind; — linking itself
To sense-things so.
The unenlightened ones
Mark not that Spirit when he goes or comes,
Nor when he takes his pleasure in the form,

Conjoined with qualities; but those see plain
Who have the eyes to see. Holy souls see
Which strive thereto. Enlightened, they perceive
That Spirit in themselves; but foolish ones,
Even though they strive, discern not, having hearts
Unkindled, ill-informed!
Know, too, from Me
Shineth the gathered glory of the suns
Which lighten all the world: from Me the moons
Draw silvery beams, and fire fierce loveliness.
I penetrate the clay, and lend all shapes
Their living force; I glide into the plant —
Root, leaf, and bloom — to make the woodlands green
With springing sap. Becoming vital warmth,
I glow in glad, respiring frames, and pass,
With outward and with inward breath, to feed
The body by all meats.
For in this world
Being is twofold: the Divided, one;
The Undivided, one. All things that live
Are "the Divided." That which sits apart,
"The Undivided."
Higher still is He,
The Highest, holding all, whose Name is LORD,
The Eternal, Sovereign, First! Who fills all worlds,
Sustaining them. And — dwelling thus beyond
Divided Being and Undivided — I

Am called of men and Vedas, Life Supreme,

The PURUSHOTTAMA.

Who knows Me thus,

With mind unclouded, knoweth all, dear Prince!

And with his whole soul ever worshippeth Me.

Now is the sacred, secret Mystery

Declared to thee! Who comprehendeth this

Hath wisdom! He is quit of works in bliss!

HERE ENDETH CHAPTER XV OF THE

BHAGAVAD-GITA,

Entitled "Purushottamapraptiyog,"

Or "The Book of Religion by Attaining the Supreme."