

To friends.
 Did you think then you knew me?
 Did you think that talking and the laughter of me, represented
 me?⁶⁴¹

"Place then thy heart on me. . . . Fix thy mind on me. . . . Follow me," asks Krishna.⁶⁴² "For your life adhere to me," proclaims Whitman in "Starting from Paumanok," section 15. "I am Time, the destroyer. . . ." says Krishna.⁶⁴³ As the first side of the "Square Deific," Whitman declares:

..... I am Time, old, modern as any,
 Unpersuadable, relentless. . . .

Being the Supreme Spirit, Krishna describes himself thus: "The great *Brahm* is my womb. In it I place my faetus; and from it is the production of all nature. The great *Brahm* is the womb of all those various forms which are conceived in every natural womb, and I am the father who soweth the seed."⁶⁴⁴ Whitman appears to have struck a rich vein in this mine, for this metaphysical notion is obviously what he converts into his sexual lyricism:

On women fit for conception I start bigger and nimbler babes,
 (This day I am jetting the stuff of far more arrogant republics.)⁶⁴⁵

And the role of the father he plays in the section of "Children of Adam," where he would "pour the stuff to start sons and daughters fit for these states"⁶⁴⁶ (having "sworn" "the oath of procreation"), "toss[ing] it carelessly to fall where it may,"⁶⁴⁷ is a liberal imitation of Krishna who "soweth the seed" into the womb of all nature.

To return now to the remaining chapters of the *Bhagvat-Geeta*: Krishna opens Lecture 15 with a description of "Poorooshottama," or the Supreme Soul, which "incorruptible being is likened unto the tree *Aswattha*, whose root is above and whose branches are below, and whose leaves are the *Veds*." The many instances so far

seen of Whitman's fanciful treatment of the material of his reading, support the probability that the thought of this description may have suggested the poem about the "live-oak growing" in "Louisiana," which "with its look, rude, unbending, lusty, made [him] think of [himself]."⁶⁴⁸ The image of the *Veds*, books of divine knowledge, as the "leaves" of the Tree of God, he freely uses all over his songs, calling his poems his "leaves." "Here the frailest leaves of me and yet of my strongest lasting."⁶⁴⁹ Even the "live-oak" of "Louisiana" "could utter joyous leaves." And Whitman cuts "a twig" of that "live-oak" "with a certain number of leaves upon it," and brings "it away." Not supposing that he was reporting an actual event, one wonders if, in poetic fantasy, whatever the new meanings he gave to it as a symbol, he was only echoing Krishna, who said: "When a man hath cut down this *Aswattha*, whose root is so firmly fixed, with the strong ax of disinterest, from that time [eternal absorption is to be sought]." The "lesser shoots" of the tree are described by Krishna as "the objects of the organs of sense"; and it is an interesting speculation if in cutting "a twig with a certain number of leaves upon it," Whitman is reducing his "own dear friends," that the twig reminds him of, to "objects of the organs of sense." For, after all, "it remains to [him] a curious token, it makes [him] think of manly love."

Lecture 16 of the *Gita* explains "the two kinds of destiny prevailing in the world" and the "qualities" with which men "born" with "divine" or good, and men with "evil," destiny, are "endued." Whitman patently does not agree with Krishna's definition of goodness and wickedness, but, all the same, he borrows the law under which men are born, which incidentally is the result of the "principles" of their nature. So he says in section 8 of "To Think of Time":

Of and in all these things,
 I have dream'd that we are not to be changed so much, nor the
 law of us changed,
 I have dream'd that heroes and good-doers shall be under the
 present and past law,
 And that murderers, drunkards, liars, shall be under the present
 and past law,
 For I have dream'd that the law they are under now is enough.