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# Self-Investigation and Self-Surrender: The Core Teachings of Bhagavan Ramana





**Michael James** is one of the most prominent contemporary promoters of the teachings of the Indian sage Śrī Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950). His approach is based on the primary sources' scholarship and experiential practice of contemplation (self-investigation). Michael's understanding of Śrī Ramana's teachings has been shaped by the direct influence of his close friendship and association with Sadhu Om (1922–1985), a Tamil jñānī, poet, writer, editor, and devotee of Ramana Maharshi. Michael can be reached by email at [mdajames@gmail.com](mailto:mdajames@gmail.com).

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**Is it possible for us to attain infinite and eternal happiness, untainted by even the least misery, and if so, how can we do so and what is the price we must be willing to pay for it? According to the teachings of Bhagavan Ramana, it is possible, and the means to attain it is to investigate and know what we actually are, for which the price to be paid is complete surrender of oneself to what alone is real, which requires wholehearted and all-consuming “love” (Sa. *bhakti*) born of and nurtured in our heart by the grace of God, who is what we actually are and what alone is real. This paper explores these teachings and their rationale as expressed by Bhagavan in his own original Tamil writings.**

## 1 Introduction

The core teachings of Bhagavan Sri Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950) are centred around the need for us to investigate what we actually are and to surrender ourselves, because he taught that knowing ourselves as we actually are and thereby giving up all that we now mistake ourselves to be is the *summum bonum*. But why is it the *summum bonum*? Why is it necessary for us to investigate and know what we actually are? Do we not already know what we actually are? If we are not what we now seem to be, then what are we? What stands in the way of our knowing ourselves as we actually are? What is the nature of self-knowledge, and how does it differ from all other kinds of knowledge? How can we know what we actually are? Is self-investigation the only means, or are there other means? Is not the grace of God required? Can we not know ourselves by means of “devotion” (Sa. *bhakti*)? What is self-surrender, and how is it related to self-investigation? How can we surrender ourselves completely to God? How can we know God as he actually is? Can we know him as he actually is without knowing ourselves as we actually are? Can we know him without surrendering ourselves completely to him? All these and many other related questions have been clearly answered by Bhagavan Ramana either explicitly or implicitly in his teachings, so this paper aims to answer these questions on the basis of his teachings and the logical reasons they provide.

However, if we want to understand what answers he provided clearly and unequivocally to all such questions, we need to consider what sources of his teachings we can confidently rely upon. The most popular sources are various books in which conversations with him were recorded in English, but such books are not the most reliable sources for a number of reasons. Firstly, though he could understand English and speak it when necessary, he seldom spoke more than a few sentences in English. He generally answered questions in Tamil, or occasionally in Telugu or Malayalam, so what has been recorded in English is not his own words. Secondly, whatever answers he gave were always tailored to suit the spiritual needs of whoever asked him questions, so the answers he gave were often not accurate representations of his core teachings. And thirdly, those who recorded his answers did so from memory, albeit often within a few hours of hearing them, so what they recorded was what they remembered of what they had understood rather than what he had actually said. If we listen to a conversation and afterwards try to record what we heard, what we record will not be verbatim but will only be our general impression of what was said, so it will have

been filtered through and therefore coloured by firstly our understanding and secondly our memory. Therefore, though such books do contain useful ideas, and though we can get a general impression of his teachings by reading them, we should not assume that everything recorded in such books is an accurate account of his core teachings.

Fortunately, however, we do not have to rely on such second-hand sources, because he wrote one original prose work and about a dozen poetic ones in which he expressed his core teachings in his own words, so these original writings of his are the primary and most reliable source from which we can understand the core principles of his teachings in a clear, coherent, systematic and unambiguous manner. Therefore in this paper I aim to discuss and explain his core teachings in the clear light of his own original writings. All the passages I cite are my own translations of these writings, in which I have endeavoured to convey their meaning as accurately as possible, and in the notes I give the original Tamil text of each of these passages.

## 2 We Like to Be Happy Because Happiness Is Our Real Nature

It is the nature of ourselves as “ego” or *jīva* (Sa. a “soul” or “sentient being”) to have likes, dislikes, wants, wishes, desires, aversions, attachments, hopes, fears and so on, and to act by mind, speech and body under the sway of such inclinations. That is, we are naturally inclined to like, love, want, desire, wish for, hope for or be attached to whatever we believe to be in some way or other conducive to our happiness or satisfaction, and to dislike, hate, be averse to or fear whatever we believe to be in some way or other detrimental to our happiness or satisfaction, so what we all ultimately like, love and want is to be happy or satisfied.

Whatever we may do by mind, speech or body, we do it in the expectation or hope that it will at least to some extent give us happiness or satisfaction, or that it will at least to some extent relieve us of our suffering or dissatisfaction, which amounts to the same. Even the kindest, most caring, most altruistic or most self-sacrificing action we may do is ultimately motivated by our fundamental love for happiness or satisfaction. We are pained when we see others suffering, so we are relieved and happy when their suffering is removed, and hence we are happy to do whatever we can to help relieve them of their suffering or to give them whatever joy we can. Our liking to be happy or satisfied and to be free of unhappiness or dissatisfaction is therefore the fundamental liking that underlies and motivates all our

other likes, dislikes, wants, wishes, desires, aversions, attachments, hopes, fears and so on, and hence all the actions that we do by mind, speech and body under the sway of these various elements of our will.

What I refer to here as “happiness or satisfaction” is what is called in Sanskrit *sukha*, which means “happiness”, “satisfaction”, “joy”, “delight”, “comfort”, “ease”, “well-being”, “pleasantness”, “relief” or “alleviation”, and what I refer to here as “unhappiness or dissatisfaction” is what is called in Sanskrit *duḥkha*, which means “unhappiness”, “dissatisfaction”, “suffering”, “misery”, “sorrow”, “grief”, “sadness”, “pain”, “anguish”, “distress”, “discomfort”, “uneasiness”, “unpleasantness”, “difficulty” or “trouble”. The relief or alleviation of *duḥkha* is therefore *sukha*, and this is what we all ultimately want and are striving for, as Bhagavan Ramana points out in the first paragraph of his prose treatise *Nāṇ Ār?* (*Who am I?*):

*Since all sentient beings [Sa. jīvas] like to be always happy [Sa. sukha] without what is called misery [Sa. duḥkha], since for everyone the greatest love is only for oneself, and since happiness [Sa. sukha] alone is the cause for love, to obtain that happiness [Sa. sukha], which is one's own nature [Sa. svabhāva], which one experiences daily in sleep [Sa. nidrā], which is devoid of mind, oneself knowing oneself is necessary. For that, awareness-investigation [Sa. jñāna-vicāra] called 'who am I' alone is the principal means. [1]*

*Nāṇ Ār?* was originally a series of questions asked by a devotee called Sivaprakasam Pillai and answers given by Bhagavan in 1901 or 1902, when he was in his early twenties, but was not published until 1923. Since it formed such a concise and accurate presentation of his core teachings, a few years later Bhagavan rearranged and rewrote it in the form of a twenty-paragraph essay, omitting most of the questions and refining the wording of some of his answers recorded by Sivaprakasam Pillai, and when doing so he added this introductory paragraph, which was not part of the answers he had originally given. This is therefore a very important paragraph and an apt introduction to his teachings.

The arguments he gives in this paragraph therefore deserve careful consideration. In the first three clauses of the first sentence he states three premises, from which he expects us to conclude that happiness is our real nature. The first premise is that we all like to be happy and free of *duḥkham* (Sa. “misery”, “unhappiness” or “dissatisfaction”), which by itself is an indication that happiness is natural to us and unhappiness is unnatural to us, because as he points out in the same context in the introduction (Ta. *avatārikai*) he

wrote for his Tamil adaptation of *Vivēkacūḍāmaṇi*, our liking to be free of unhappiness is similar to our liking to be free of disease and other conditions that are not natural to us. The second premise is that we all love ourselves more than we love any other thing (because love for oneself is our very nature, and is therefore unlimited), and herein lies the significance of the third premise, namely that happiness alone is the cause for love. That is, since we love to be happy, we naturally love whatever seems to us to be a source of happiness. Therefore, the fact that we each love ourselves above all other things is a powerful indication that we ourselves are the ultimate source of happiness, because happiness is our real nature.

Then he begins the main clause of this sentence, “to obtain that happiness, which is one's own nature, which one experiences daily in sleep, which is devoid of mind, oneself knowing oneself is necessary” (Ta. “*maṇam aṭṭra niddiraiyil diṇam aṇubhavikkum taṇ subhāvam āṇa a-c-sukhattai y-aḍaiya-t taṇṇai-t tāṇ aridal vēṇḍum*”), by giving another compelling reason why we should conclude that happiness is our real nature, namely that we experience happiness (without even the slightest trace of unhappiness) daily in dreamless sleep, which is a state devoid of mind and hence devoid of everything else except our own being, “I am”. Since nothing other than ourselves exists and shines in sleep, and since we are perfectly happy in that state in which we are aware of nothing other than our own being, it should be clear to any of us who consider our experience in sleep deeply and carefully enough that unlimited happiness is indeed our own real nature, meaning that it is what we actually are: our very being or existence.

### 3 To Experience Infinite Happiness, We Must Investigate and Know What We Actually Are

When such is the case, “to obtain that happiness, oneself knowing oneself is necessary” (Ta. “*a-c-sukhattai y-aḍaiya-t taṇṇai-t tāṇ aridal vēṇḍum*”). In other words, it is necessary for us to be aware of ourselves as we actually are, and for that, concludes Bhagavan, “**awareness-investigation called who am I alone is the principal means**” (Ta. “*nāṇ-ār eṇṇum ṇāṇa-vicāram-ē mukkiya sādhaṇam*”; in his original manuscript he underlined this clause in red ink, and hence it is generally printed in bold type).

That is, in order for us to be aware of ourselves as we actually are and thereby to experience the infinite happiness

that is our own real nature, it is necessary for us to investigate what we actually are, so “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), which is investigation of our fundamental awareness, “I am”, is the “principal means” (Sa. *mukhya sādhana*), in the same sense that a major river into which many tributaries flow is the principal means by which the water from all those tributaries is to reach the ocean. Since the ocean we are all seeking to reach is the ocean of infinite happiness, which is the state in which we are eternally and immutably aware of ourselves as we actually are, and since we cannot know what we actually are without investigating ourselves, all other spiritual practices are like tributaries that must eventually lead practitioners to the great river of self-investigation, which alone can discharge them into the ocean of infinite happiness.

## 4 Though We Always Know Ourselves, We Do Not Know Ourselves as We Actually Are

When Bhagavan says in the above passage that it is necessary for oneself to know oneself, that implies that in our present state, in which we are still seeking happiness as if it were something other than ourselves, we do not know ourselves, but what exactly does he mean by “oneself knowing oneself” (Ta. “*tannai-t t̃n̄ aridal*”)? Do we not already know ourselves? In a sense we do, because knowing ourselves is a prerequisite for knowing anything else, since whatever else we may know, we know it as “I know this”, meaning that we know ourselves as the first person or subject, “I”, the knower of all other things. In what sense, therefore, did he mean that knowing ourselves is necessary?

In this context “knowing ourselves” means being aware of ourselves, but there is never a moment when we are not aware of ourselves. That is, we are always aware of the existence of ourselves as “I am”. However, though we know *that we are*, we do not know *what we are*, because we now know ourselves as something other than what we actually are. Therefore what he means by “knowing ourselves” is not just knowing *that we are* but knowing *what we are*, and “knowing what we are” means not just knowing some factual information about our real identity such as “I am *brahman*” (in which *brahman* is a term that refers to “the one infinite, indivisible and immutable whole”, which is the ultimate reality of ourselves and all other things, and whose nature is *sat-cit-ānanda*, “being-awareness-happiness”) but actually being aware of ourselves as we actually are.

## 5 If We Are Not What We Now Seem to Be, Then What Are We?

So what is it that prevents us being aware of ourselves as we actually are? At present we are aware of ourselves as if we were a person, a bundle consisting of “five sheaths” (Sa. *pañca-kōśa*), namely a physical body, the life that animates it, and the mind, intellect and will that seem to function within it. This bundle of five sheaths that we now mistake ourselves to be is what Bhagavan generally referred to as “body”, as he points out in verse 5 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*:

*The body is a form of five sheaths. Therefore all five are included in the term body. [2]*

Throughout our states of waking and dream we are aware of ourselves as “I am this body”, so why does he say that this is a false awareness of ourselves, and the root cause of all our problems?

We cannot be anything in the absence of which we still exist, nor can we be anything that we are not aware of in any state in which we are aware of our existence. In dream we are aware of ourselves without being aware of the physical body that we now take ourselves to be, and now we are aware of ourselves without being aware of the seemingly physical body that we took ourselves to be in dream, so neither of these bodies can be what we actually are. However, the mind, intellect and will that we take ourselves to be now are the same mind, intellect and will that we take ourselves to be in dream, so are these what we actually are? They cannot be, because we are aware of our existence in sleep without being aware of any of these things, so since the only thing we are aware of in all three states, waking, dream and sleep, is our own existence, our very being, “I am”, we cannot actually be anything other than this.

Some people may object to this, arguing that we were not aware of anything in sleep, so it is not correct to say that we were aware of our existence then. It is true that we were not aware of any phenomena in sleep, not even of the passing of time, but we were nevertheless aware of our own existence, because if we were not aware of our existence while we were asleep, we would not now be so clearly aware of having been in a state in which we were not aware of anything else. That is, if we were not aware of our existence in sleep (in other words, if we were not aware of being in that state, in which we were not aware of anything else), we would not now be aware that we were ever in such a state, so what we would now be aware of ex-

perceiving would be a seemingly uninterrupted succession of alternating states of waking and dream without any gap between them. Therefore, since we are now clearly aware of having experienced frequent gaps between alternating states of waking and dream, gaps that we call sleep, in which we were not aware of anything other than ourself, we must not only have existed in such gaps but must also have been aware of existing then. In other words, if sleep were a state in which we were not aware of our existence, we would not now be aware of ever having existed in such a state.

Therefore we can logically conclude that we were certainly aware of our existence while we were asleep, and no one who considers this carefully and deeply enough can reasonably doubt this to be the case. Moreover, to the extent to which we investigate what we actually are by being self-attentive in waking or dream, it will become clear to us, no matter how faintly at first, that our own existence, “I am”, is distinct from the appearance of all phenomena, including the person we seem to be (not only the physical body of this person but also all its other components, namely life, mind, intellect and will), and to the extent that it thereby becomes clear to us that we are distinct from all phenomena, it will also become clear to us that we did exist and were aware of our existence in the absence of all phenomena in sleep.

What we actually are is therefore not any of the transitory phenomena that appear in waking and dream but disappear in sleep, but only our fundamental awareness of our own existence, “I am”, which exists and shines without a break throughout all these three states. All phenomena are objects known by us, so we are not any object, nor are we even the subject, because the subject who knows all objects is ego, which appears together with objects in waking and dream and disappears with them in sleep.

What we actually are is the pure, adjunct-free awareness “I am”, whereas ego is the adjunct-conflated awareness “I am this body”. Therefore, though we now seem to be ego, it is not what we actually are, but a conflation of what we actually are and a set of adjuncts, namely a person, a body consisting of five sheaths.

The two defining characteristics of ego are that as ego we are always aware of ourself as “I am this body”, and consequently we are aware of other phenomena. Since in sleep we are not aware of ourself as “I am this body”, nor are we aware of any phenomena, we seem to be ego only in waking and dream but not in sleep, so since we exist and

shine in sleep without ego, ego cannot be what we actually are. Therefore we are not any object or even the subject, but only pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is what always shines as “I am”, and which is therefore the sole reality that underlies and supports the seeming existence of ourself as ego.

Since all phenomena seem to exist only in the view of ourself as ego, they depend for their seeming existence upon the seeming existence of ourself as ego, and ego depends for its seeming existence upon the one real existence, namely the pure awareness “I am”. Whereas ego is a transitive awareness, meaning that it is an awareness that is always aware of objects, the one real awareness that we actually are, namely the pure awareness “I am”, is intransitive awareness, because it is never aware of anything other than itself.

However, though we can understand by carefully considering our experience of ourself in each of our three states, waking, dream and sleep, that what we actually are is not this body, mind or ego but only the fundamental awareness “I am”, we do not thereby cease to be aware of ourself as if we were this ego, which is what now experiences itself as “I am this body”, because our understanding is merely conceptual. Since ego is a mistaken awareness of ourself, being an awareness of ourself as something other than what we actually are, it can be eradicated only by correct awareness of ourself, so in order to be free of ego we need to be aware of ourself as we actually are.

## 6 Our Aim Is Not *Manōlaya* But *Manōnāśa*

So long as we are aware of anything other than ourself, we seem to be ego, because it is only in the view of ourself as ego that other things seem to exist. Therefore in order to be aware of ourself as we actually are we must cease to be aware of anything else, but merely ceasing to be aware of other things is not sufficient, because we cease to be aware of anything else every day when we fall asleep, but ego is not thereby annihilated. Sleep is just a state of *manōlaya*, a “temporary dissolution of ego and mind”, because ego and mind rise again when we wake up from sleep or begin to dream. Therefore ceasing to be aware of other things is necessary but not sufficient.

Not only must we cease to be aware of any other thing, but we must also be aware of ourself as we actually are, as Bhagavan implies in verse 16 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Leaving external phenomena, the mind knowing its own form of light is alone real awareness. [3]*

What he means here by “leaving external phenomena” (Ta. “*veḷi viḍayaṅgaḷai viṭṭu*”) is ceasing to be aware of anything other than oneself, and what he means by “the mind knowing its own form of light” (Ta. “*maṅgam taṅ oḷi-uru ṓrdal*”) is the mind knowing its own “form” or *real nature* (Sa. *svarūpa*), which is the light of pure awareness that shines eternally as our very being, “I am”. Moreover, the verbal noun *ōrdal* means not only “knowing” but also “investigating”, so in this context it implies knowing our “form of light” (Ta. *oḷi-uru*) by investigating it, and we can investigate it only by being keenly self-attentive, carefully observing this light of awareness, which shines as “I am”, to see what it actually is. Knowing oneself thus as the light of pure awareness without knowing anything else is alone “real awareness” (Ta. *uṅmai uṅarcci*).

In order to be aware of oneself as we actually are, namely as the light of pure awareness, we need to be keenly self-attentive. When we fall asleep, we thereby cease to be aware of anything other than oneself, but we fall asleep due to tiredness, not due to being keenly self-attentive, so ego is not thereby eradicated. Only when we attend to oneself so keenly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything else will ego be eradicated, because only by being so keenly self-attentive will we as ego be aware of oneself as pure awareness, namely awareness that is aware of nothing other than itself, and as soon as we are aware of oneself as such, we will thereby cease to be ego and remain eternally as pure awareness, which is what we always actually are.

Dissolution of mind, which entails dissolution of ego, since ego is the root and essence of the mind, is of two kinds, namely *manōlaya* and *manōnāśa*, and the difference between these two kinds of dissolution is that *manōlaya* is temporary whereas *manōnāśa* (Sa. “annihilation of mind”) is permanent, as Bhagavan points out in verse 13 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Dissolution is two: laya and nāśa. What is dissolved in laya will rise. If its form dies, it will not rise. [4]*

What exists and shines in sleep or in any other state of *manōlaya* (Sa. “temporary dissolution of mind”) is only oneself as pure awareness, but ego is not thereby eradicated, because it is only after the dissolution of ego in *manōlaya* that pure awareness alone remains. That is, since ego has ceased to exist in *manōlaya*, albeit only temporarily, it cannot be annihilated by the pure awareness that then remains

alone. In order to be annihilated, ego must itself experience itself as pure awareness, so it can be annihilated only in waking and dream and not in sleep or any other state of *manōlaya*.

Whereas in the case of *manōlaya* ego is first dissolved and then as a result of its dissolution pure awareness alone remains, in the case of *manōnāśa* ego is dissolved as a result of its being aware of itself as pure awareness. That is, since ego is the adjunct-conflated and therefore impure awareness that always knows itself as “I am this body” and consequently knows the appearance of other things, and since (just as the sole reality underlying the false appearance of what seems to be a snake is just a rope) the sole reality underlying the false appearance of ego is just the adjunct-free and therefore pure awareness that always knows itself as just “I am” and consequently never knows anything other than itself, as soon as ego is aware of itself as pure awareness, it will thereby cease to be ego and remain eternally as pure awareness.

Therefore what is called the “eradication of ego” or “annihilation of mind” (Sa. *manōnāśa*) is just the clear recognition that no such thing as ego or mind has ever actually existed, because what seemed to be ego or mind was actually just pure awareness, just as what seemed to be a snake was actually just a rope, as Bhagavan points out in verse 17 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*When one investigates the form of the mind without forgetting, there is not anything called ‘mind’. This is the direct path for everyone whomsoever. [5]*

Since the snake that a rope is mistaken to be does not actually exist, in the sense that it is not actually a snake but only a rope, it cannot be “killed” or “annihilated” by any means other than looking at it carefully enough to see that it is not a snake but just a rope. Likewise, since ego does not actually exist, in the sense that what seems to be ego or mind is actually only pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), it cannot be “killed” or “annihilated” by any means other than its attending to itself keenly enough to see that it is not any such thing as “ego” or “mind” but just pure awareness of being, “I am”.

Therefore, after distinguishing *manōlaya* from *manōnāśa* in verse 13 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*, in verse 14 he points out that though *manōlaya* can be achieved by the *yōga* practice of “breath-restraint” (Sa. *prāṅāyāma*), *manōnāśa* can be achieved only by “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*):

*Only when one sends the mind, which will be restrained when one restrains the breath, on the investigating path will its form perish. [6]*

This is also implied and further clarified by him in the eighth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

*For the mind to cease, except investigation [Sa. vicāraṇā] there are no other adequate means. If made to cease by other means, the mind remaining as if it had ceased, will again rise up. Even by breath-restraint [Sa. prāṇāyāma] the mind will cease; however, so long as the breath [Sa. prāṇa] remains subsided mind will also remain subsided, and when the breath emerges it will also emerge and wander about under the sway of its inclinations [Sa. vāsanās] ... Therefore prāṇāyāma is just an aid to restrain the mind, but will not bring about manōnāśa. [7]*

Two key verbs that Bhagavan uses in this passage are *aḍaṅgu*, which means both “subside” and “cease”, and *aḍakku*, which is the causative of *aḍaṅgu* and hence means “to cause to subside or cease”, so it is generally used in the sense of “subdue”, “curb”, “restrain” or “constrain”. Since subsidence can be either partial or complete, and since complete subsidence or cessation can be either temporary or permanent, whenever either *aḍaṅgu* or *aḍakku* are used, we need to understand from the context whether they are referring to either partial or complete subsidence, and if they are referring to complete subsidence, which means cessation, whether that cessation is temporary or permanent. Temporary cessation of mind is called *manōlaya*, whereas permanent cessation of it is called *manōnāśa*. In the first sentence, “*For the mind to cease, except investigation there are no other adequate means*” (Ta. “*maṇam aḍaṅguvadaṅku vicāraṇaiyai-t tavira vēru tahunda upāyaṅga[-illai]*”), “*for the mind to cease*” (Ta. “*maṇam aḍaṅguvadaṅku*”) implies for the mind to cease permanently, or in other words, for it to subside in such a way that it never rises again, whereas in the subsequent sentences (in which *aḍaṅgu* occurs four more times and *aḍakku* occurs twice) *aḍaṅgu* is used in the sense of “subsiding” or “ceasing temporarily” and *aḍakku* is likewise used in the sense of “restraining” or “causing to subside or cease temporarily”.

In the first sentence of this passage, “*for the mind to cease, except investigation there are no other adequate means*”, “*investigation*” (Sa. *vicāraṇā*) implies “*self-investigation*” (Sa. *ātma-vicāraṇā*), and the fact that there are no adequate means to make the mind cease except self-investigation is also emphasised by him in the first sentence of the sixth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*: “*Only by the investigation who am*

*I will the mind cease*” [8], in which he likewise uses the verb *aḍaṅgu* in the sense of ceasing permanently. Just as we cannot see that what seems to be a snake is actually just a rope unless we look at it carefully enough, we cannot see that we, who now seem to be ego or mind, are actually just pure awareness unless we investigate what we actually are by attending to ourself keenly enough.

In other words, since ego is a false awareness of ourself, being an awareness that knows itself as “I am this body” and that consequently knows the seeming existence of other things, it cannot be eradicated by any means other than our being aware of ourself as we actually are, namely as pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which alone is what actually exists and which is therefore never aware of anything other than itself. And we cannot be aware of ourself as we actually are by attending to anything other than ourself, but only by attending to ourself so keenly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything else whatsoever.

## 7 The Nature of Ego

The very nature of ourself as pure being-awareness is just to be as we actually are without ever rising to know anything other than ourself, whereas the very nature of ourself as ego is to rise to know other things. Therefore as ego our nature is to always attend to things other than ourself, because we cannot rise or stand as ego without attending to other things, as Bhagavan points out in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

*Grasping form it comes into existence; grasping form it stands; grasping and feeding on form it grows abundantly; leaving form, it grasps form. If sought, it will take flight. The formless demon ego. Investigate. [9]*

The penultimate sentence, “*the formless demon ego*” (Ta. “*uru-v-aṭṭa pēy ahandai*”), implies that what is described in the previous five sentences is the very nature of ego, which is a formless demon or phantom. Here “*form*” (Ta. *uru*) means not just physical forms but anything that can be distinguished in any way from any other thing, so phenomena of all kinds are forms in this sense. Ego is formless because it has no form of its own, so in its formless state it has no separate existence, meaning that it is nothing other than pure awareness, and hence it seems to have a separate existence only because it identifies itself as the form of a body consisting of five sheaths. This is therefore the first form it grasps, and without grasping such a form it could not rise or stand (that is, it could not come into existence or endure),



so in the first two sentences of this verse, “grasping form it comes into existence; grasping form it stands” (Ta. “*uru paṭri uṇḍām; uru paṭri niṛkum*”), the form referred to is the form of a body.

Having grasped the form of a body as “I am this body”, ego then grows and flourishes abundantly by grasping and feeding on other forms. Whereas it grasps a body by being aware of itself as “I am this body”, it grasps other forms by being aware of them as “I know these things”, in which “know” means to be aware of by any means whatsoever, such as seeing, hearing, perceiving, experiencing, remembering, inferring, understanding, believing and so on. Since it cannot stand or endure for a moment without grasping forms in this way, if it leaves one form, it simultaneously grasps another form. Grasping forms or phenomena is therefore the very nature of ego, and only when it subsides and dissolves back into sleep or any other state of *manōlaya* (Sa. “temporary dissolution of mind”) does it cease grasping anything.

Instead of grasping any form, if ego tries to grasp itself, it will begin to lose its hold on other things and thereby subside, and if it grasps itself firmly enough (that is, if it attends to itself so keenly that it thereby ceases to be aware of anything else whatsoever), it will dissolve back into its source and substance (namely the pure awareness “I am”) in such a way that it will never rise again, as Bhagavan implies in this verse by saying “if sought, it will take flight” (Ta. “*tēḍiṇāl oṭṭam piḍikkum*”).

Thus in this verse he reveals the profound and all-important truth that the nature of ego is to rise, stand and flourish by attending to anything other than itself (namely any form, object or phenomenon), but to subside and eventually dissolve forever back into its source by attending to itself alone. This is why “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), which is the simple practice of attending to nothing other than our own being, “I am”, is the only means by which ego can be eradicated. That is, ego will be annihilated only when it experiences itself as pure awareness (awareness that is aware of nothing other than itself), so when we as ego attend to ourself so keenly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything other than ourself, we will thereby experience ourself as pure awareness, and thus we will cease to be ego and will remain forever as pure awareness, which is what we always actually are, even when we seem to be ego. This is the state of *manōnāśa* (Sa. “annihilation or permanent dissolution of mind”), which is what is otherwise called *mukti* (Sa. “liberation”).

## 8 Can We Not Achieve *Manōnāśa* by *Bhakti*?

As we have seen above, Bhagavan taught that *manōnāśa* cannot be achieved by “breath-restraint” (Sa. *prāṇāyāma*), which is the central practice of *aṣṭāṅga yōga* (Sa. “eight-limbed yoga”), but only by “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), but what about *bhakti* (Sa. “love” or “devotion”)? Can we not achieve *manōnāśa* by *bhakti*? Yes, we can, but does that mean then that *bhakti* is an alternative means to self-investigation? Though this may superficially seem to be the case, it is not so, because *bhakti* in its deepest sense is alone what motivates us to investigate ourself deeply enough to see what we actually are and thereby eradicate ego.

To understand why this is so, we need to consider what *bhakti* actually is. *Bhakti* means “love” or “devotion”, so there are different forms and different degrees of *bhakti*. People are generally considered to be “devotees” (Sa. *bhaktas*) of God if they worship him, pray to him, sing in praise of him, repeat his name or meditate upon him, but most people who do so do so because of what they believe they can gain from God. That is, they do so because they want God to fulfil their desires (not only for things in this world but also for happiness in whatever world or state they believe they will be in after death) and to remove their difficulties. Even if they pray for the welfare of others, they do so because they desire their welfare, believing that it will make them (the one who is praying) happy. Worshipping him in this way for what we hope to gain from him is not true love for God but love for what we can get from him. We thereby make God a means to an end rather than an end in himself.

True *bhakti* or love for God begins, therefore, when we cease wanting anything from him and instead love him for his own sake. Worshipping him by mind, speech or body for the sake of anything we want to gain from him is called *kāmya bhakti* (Sa. “desirous devotion”), whereas doing so for his own sake without desire for anything else is called *niṣkāmya bhakti* (Sa. “desireless devotion”), which alone is genuine *bhakti*.

Just as *kāmya bhakti* is expressed by the devotee through actions of mind, speech or body, in the early stages of *niṣkāmya bhakti* the devotee likewise expresses their love for God through actions of mind, speech or body. However, since liberation is a state of just being and not doing, it cannot be attained by any “action” (Sa. *karma*), as Bhagavan says in verse 2 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*The fruit of action perishing, as seed causes to fall in the ocean of action. It is not giving liberation. [10]*

Action is finite, so its fruit is likewise finite. Therefore, just as a fruit such as a mango ceases to exist when it is eaten, the fruit of any action will perish when it is experienced, so liberation, which is infinite and eternal, cannot be the fruit of any action. The seeds that cause us to fall in the ocean of perpetual action are *viṣaya-vāsanās*, “inclinations” (Sa. *vāsanās*) to experience “objects” or “phenomena” (Sa. *viṣayas*), because it is under the sway of such *vāsanās* that we do actions by mind, speech and body, and the more we allow ourselves to be swayed by any particular *vāsanā*, the stronger it will become, and hence the more we will be inclined to be swayed by it. “Action” (Sa. *karma*) is therefore self-perpetuating, so it cannot be a means to liberation.

However, if we do action without desire for any fruit but just for the love of God, our mind will thereby be purified, and the purified mind will then be able to recognise that the means to liberation is not doing but just being, as Bhagavan implies in verse 3 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Desireless action [Sa. niṣkāmya karma] done for God, purifying the mind, it will show the path to liberation. [11]*

It is generally said that there are four paths that lead towards liberation, namely *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* and *jñāna*, in which *karma* means the path of “desireless action” (Sa. *niṣkāmya karma*), *bhakti* means the path of “love” or “devotion”, *yōga* means primarily the classical “eight limbs of yoga” (*aṣṭāṅga yōga*) taught by Patanjali in his *Yōga Sūtra*, though more generally it can also include other similar paths such as various forms of Buddhist meditation and *tantra* practices, and *jñāna* (Sa. “knowledge” or “awareness”) means the path of “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), which is the direct means to attain *ātma-jñāna* (“self-knowledge”, meaning “awareness of oneself as we actually are”). As Bhagavan implies in this and subsequent verses, *niṣkāmya karma* is not actually a separate path but the preliminary practices of the path of *bhakti*, because it is only by doing actions for the love of God that we can do them without desire for their fruits. Moreover, though *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* and *jñāna* are all said to be paths to liberation, the only direct path to liberation is the twin path of *bhakti* and *jñāna*, whereas *karma* and *yōga* are tributaries that lead to this main river of *bhakti* and *jñāna* and thereby indirectly to liberation.

In this verse the adjectival clause “done for God” (Ta. *karut-taṇukku ākkum*) implies “done for the love of God”, and “desireless action” (Sa. *niṣkāmya karma*) means actions done

without any desire for their fruits. Such actions done for the love of God will purify the mind, but what purifies the mind is not the actions themselves but the love and desirelessness with which they are done, because the same actions could be done with desire for their fruits instead of for the love of God, in which case they would not purify the mind.

What are the impurities in the mind that will be removed by desireless actions done for the love of God? They are *viṣaya-vāsanās* (Sa. “inclinations to seek happiness in *viṣayas*: objects or phenomena”), which are the seeds that sprout in the form of likes, dislikes, desires, attachments and so on, under whose sway we do *kāmya karmas* (Sa. “actions done with desire for their fruits”), thereby being immersed ever deeper in the great ocean of self-perpetuating action. To the extent that we do actions without desire to experience any *viṣayas* (Sa. “objects” or “phenomena”) but only for the love of God, our *viṣaya-vāsanās* (and consequently our likes, dislikes, desires, attachments and so on, which sprout from them) will thereby be weakened, and thus our mind will gradually become purer and clearer.

Since *viṣaya-vāsanās* are the dense fog that clouds our mind, thereby obscuring the clear light of pure awareness that is ever shining deep within us, when our mind is purified by the gradual thinning and dispersal of this dense fog, our inner vision will thereby become clearer, enabling us to recognise that liberation cannot be achieved by doing any “actions” (Sa. *karmas*) but only by surrendering ourselves, the doer of actions, entirely to God, which means sinking back within and dissolving in God, the light of pure awareness, “I am”, which is the source from which we have risen. This is what Bhagavan implies in this verse by saying “it will show the path to liberation” (Ta. “*aḷdu gati vaṛi kāṇbikkum*”).

The instruments by which we do actions are mind, speech and body, so actions done by these three instruments are the three types of *niṣkāmya karma* that we can do for the love of God, as Bhagavan points out in verse 4 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*This is certain: pūjā, japa and dhyāna are actions of body, speech and mind. One than one is superior. [12]*

*Pūjā* means “worship”, but in this context it does not mean just ritualistic worship but any “desireless action” (Sa. *niṣkāmya karma*) done by body for the love of God. *Japa* means “repetition”, namely repetition of a name of God, a prayer or a *mantra* (a “sacred syllable”, “word” or “group of words”, in this context one of a devotional nature). And

*dhyāna* means “meditation” or “contemplation”, in this context implying meditation on a name or form of God.

The final sentence of this verse, “*One than one is superior*” (Ta. “*uyarvu āhum onḍril onḍru*”), implies that in this order each is superior to the previous one, so *japa* is superior to *pūjā*, and *dhyāna* is superior to *japa*. In this context “superior” (Ta. *uyarvu*) implies more efficacious in purifying the mind. That is, since *niṣkāmya pūjā*, *japa* and *dhyāna* are means to focus and thereby strengthen our love for God, and since meditation is a more effective way to focus our mind on God than *japa*, and *japa* is more effective than *pūjā*, meditation done with love for God is more purifying than *japa*, and *japa* is more purifying than *pūjā*.

In the next three verses, 5 to 7, he discusses *pūjā*, *japa* and *dhyāna* each in turn, saying in verse 7 that uninterrupted meditation is superior to interrupted meditation.

## 9 Being as We Actually Are Is Supreme Devotion to God

However, the most crucial verse in this series is verse 8 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*, in which he says:

*Rather than anya-bhāva, ananya-bhāva, in which he is I, certainly is the best among all. [13]*

*Anya* means “other” and *ananya* means “not other”, so in this context *anya-bhāva* means “meditation on God as other than oneself”, whereas *ananya-bhāva* means “meditation on him as not other than oneself”. The adjectival clause “*in which he is I*” (Ta. “*avaṇ aham āhum*”) implies “*in which God is understood to be nothing other than I*”, thereby clarifying and emphasising the meaning of *ananya-bhāva*, so “otherless meditation in which he is I” (Ta. “*avaṇ aham āhum aṇṇiya-bhāvam*”) implies meditating on nothing other than oneself, “I”, with the firm conviction that God alone is what exists and shines as “I”. In other words, *ananya-bhāva* is an alternative description of “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), which is the simple practice of attending to or meditating upon nothing other than oneself, and this, says Bhagavan, is “*the best among all*” (Ta. “*aṇaittiṇ-um uttamam*”), thereby implying that it is best among all practices of *bhakti*, best among all kinds of meditation, and best among all means to purify the mind.

Whereas meditating on anything other than oneself is an “action” (Sa. *karma*), a mental activity, because it entails a movement of our mind or attention away from oneself

towards something else, meditating on nothing other than oneself is not a *karma* or mental activity but a cessation of all mental activity, because it entails no movement of our mind or attention away from oneself, and because to the extent to which our attention is focused on oneself alone, we, the meditating ego or mind, will thereby subside and eventually dissolve forever in our own being, “I am”. Therefore the result of meditating on nothing other than oneself is that, by the strength of such meditation, we will subside and remain firmly fixed in our natural state of just being, which transcends all mental activity, as Bhagavan points out in verse 9 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*By the strength of meditation, being in the state of being [Sa. sat-bhāva], which transcends meditation [Sa. bhāvanā], alone is the true state of supreme devotion [Sa. para-bhakti tattva]. [14]*

In this context “by the strength of meditation” (Ta. *bhāva balattiṇāl*) implies “by the strength of *ananya-bhāva*”, or in other words, “by the strength of self-attentiveness”, because *bhāva* refers here to *ananya-bhāva* (Sa. “meditation on what is not other”, meaning “meditation on oneself alone”), which in the previous verse was said to be “*the best among all*” (Ta. “*aṇaittiṇ-um uttamam*”). To the extent to which we attend to nothing other than oneself, we as ego will thereby subside and dissolve back into our natural “state of being” (Sa. *sat-bhāva*), so by the strength, firmness or intensity of such self-attentiveness we will be in *sat-bhāva*, which transcends all mental activity, because in this context *bhāvanā* (Sa. “meditation”) implies meditation in the sense of mental activity.

Being in *sat-bhāva* (Sa. the “state of being”) in this way is *para-bhakti tattva*, the *tattva* (Sa. the “very nature”, “reality”, “true state” or “thatness”) of *para-bhakti* (Sa. “supreme devotion”), because this is the state of complete self-surrender, in which we as ego have subsided and lost ourselves entirely in our own being, which is God himself. The “actions” (Sa. *karmas*) of *niṣkāmya pūjā*, *japa* and *dhyāna* that Bhagavan discussed in verses 3 to 7 are all preliminary practices of *bhakti*, which must sooner or later lead us to the more advanced practice of *ananya-bhāva*, meditation on nothing other than oneself alone, with the firm conviction that God alone is what exists and shines as our own being, “I am”, because it is only by the strength of such *ananya-bhāva* that we as ego will subside and be firmly established in our real “state of being” (Sa. *sat-bhāva*), thereby losing our separate individuality and being inseparably and eternally one with God.

## 10 Being as We Actually Are Is Karma, Bhakti, Yōga and Jñāna

Subsiding and thereby being in *sat-bhāva*, which is the source from which we had risen as ego, is not only the “very nature of supreme devotion” (Sa. *para-bhakti tattva*) but also the ultimate aim of all the four kinds of spiritual path, namely *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* and *jñāna*, as Bhagavan says in verse 10 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Being, subsiding in the place from which one rose: that is karma and bhakti; that is yōga and jñāna. [15]*

As we can recognise by carefully considering our experience in sleep, what exists and shines in the absence of ego in sleep is only our own being, “I am”, so the only thing that exists prior to our rising as ego is our own being, and hence our being alone is what Bhagavan refers to in this verse as “the place from which one rose” (Ta. *uditta iḍam*). Therefore this “place” or source from which we have risen is what he referred to in the previous verse as *sat-bhāva*, the “state of being”.

As soon as we rise as ego, thereby departing (albeit only seemingly) from our real state of just being, we experience ourself as “I am this body”, and by thus imposing limitations on ourself, we face problems of numerous kinds and suffer accordingly. In this situation, therefore, the only wise option is to subside back and dissolve forever in our own being, which is the source from which we rose, and this is what Bhagavan indicates in this verse by the adverbial participle *oḍuṅgi*, which means “subsiding”, “dissolving” or “ceasing”.

By thus subsiding and dissolving in our source, we remain as we always actually are, so this is what he describes here as “being, subsiding in the place from which one rose” (Ta. “*uditta iḍattil oḍuṅgi iruttal*”). This state of just being as we always actually are without ever rising as ego is itself *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* and *jñāna*, in the sense that it is the ultimate aim and fulfilment of each of these four paths.

## 11 Investigating Ego Is Fulfilling the Purpose of All Spiritual Paths

In order to be as we actually are, we need to subside and dissolve forever in our own being, which is the source from which we rose as ego, and in order to subside thus, we need to investigate ourself, the one who now seems to have risen as ego. Therefore, since we as ego will subside and dissolve forever in our source if we investigate ourself keenly enough, and since we will thereby remain as we always actually are, there will then be no need for us to practise any other spiritual path.

That is, the need to practise any spiritual path such as *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* or *jñāna* arises only because we have risen as ego, and in the absence of ego there would not only be no need to practise them but also no one to practise them. Therefore the aim of all spiritual paths will be achieved if, and only if, we investigate ourself, the “I” for whom there seems to be a need to practise them, as Bhagavan points out in verse 14 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu Anubandham*:

*Investigating for whom are suchlike, viṇai, vibhakti, viyōga and ajñāna, is itself viṇai, bhakti, yōga and jñāna. When one investigates, without 'I' they never exist. Only being permanently as oneself is what is true. [16]*

The Tamil word *viṇai* means “action”, so it is used here in place of its Sanskrit equivalent, namely *karma*. The four defects mentioned in the first line of this verse, *viṇai*, *vibhakti*, *viyōga* and *ajñāna*, are each respectively the opposites of the corresponding four paths, namely *viṇai* (Sa. *karma* in the sense of *niṣkāmya karma*, “desireless action”), *bhakti* (Sa. “devotion”), *yōga* (Sa. “joining”, “yoking” or “union”, particularly in the sense of yoking the mind to the object or target of its meditation) and *jñāna* (Sa. knowledge in the sense of “self-knowledge”, “awareness of oneself as one actually is”), so in this context the first *viṇai* means *kāmya karma*, “action motivated by desire”, *vibhakti* means “lack of devotion”, *viyōga* means “disunion” or “separation”, and *ajñāna* means “ignorance of one’s own real nature”.

If we investigate ourself, the one for whom such defects seem to exist, we as ego will begin to subside, and if we investigate ourself keenly enough, we will thereby dissolve forever back into our being, which is the source from which we had risen, whereupon both ego and all its defects will be found to be ever non-existent, as Bhagavan implies in the second sentence of this verse: “When one investigates, without 'I' they never exist” (Ta. “*āyandiḍa, ‘nāṅ’ iṇḍri avai eṇḍrum*”).

il"). When ego is thereby found to be ever non-existent, it will be clear that what actually exists and is therefore real is only oneself as we actually are, so the truth is that we permanently and imperishably exist as such, as he implies in the final sentence of this verse: "Only being permanently as oneself is what is true" (Ta. "tāṅ-āha maṅal-ē uṅmai ām").

Hence, since each of these four paths, *karma*, *bhakti*, *yōga* and *jñāna*, is intended to get rid of the defects of ego, which is itself the primary defect and the source of all other defects, and since we can therefore get rid of all the defects of ego only by getting rid of ego itself, which we can do only by investigating what it actually is, investigating ego, the one for whom alone all other defects seem to exist, is fulfilling the purpose of each of these four paths, which between them cover the full range of all spiritual practices.

## 12 We Can Give Ourselves to God Only by Being Steadfastly Self-Attentive

The pinnacle of all spiritual paths is the path of *bhakti*, the pinnacle of the path of *bhakti* is self-surrender, and the pinnacle of self-surrender is self-investigation, because *bhakti* is love for what alone is ultimately real (whether the ultimate reality is called God, *brahman*, *nirvāṇa* or whatever), so only wholehearted and all-consuming *bhakti* can free us from all desire for anything other than what is ultimately real, and the greatest love is to give oneself entirely to what we love, which we can do only by investigating what we actually are, as Bhagavan implies in the first sentence of the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*:

*Being one who is firmly fixed as oneself [Sa. ātma-niṣṭhāparaṅ], giving not even the slightest room to the rising of any other thought [Sa. cintana] except thought of oneself [Sa. ātma-cintana], alone is giving oneself to God. [17]*

"Being one who is firmly fixed as oneself" (Ta. "ātma-niṣṭhāparaṅ-āy iruppadu") means "being as we actually are", and in order to be as we actually are we must cease rising as ego, because it is only when we rise as ego that we seem to be anything other than what we actually are, namely pure "being-awareness" (Sa. *sat-cit*). So long as we attend to anything other than oneself, we thereby seem to be ego, so attending to other things is the food on which we as ego feed and nourish ourselves (as Bhagavan implies in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, cited above in section 6). Therefore in order

to cease rising as ego and thereby be as we actually are, we need to attend to oneself so keenly and steadfastly that we thereby cease attending to anything else, as he implies in the adverbial clause of this sentence, "giving not even the slightest room to the rising of any thought except thought of oneself" (Ta. "āṅma-cintaṅaiyai-t tavira vēru cintaṅai kiḷambu-vadaṅku-c caṭṭrum iḍam-koḍāmal").

Here "self-thought" or "thought of oneself" (Ta. *āṅma-cintaṅai*, which is a Tamil form of the Sanskrit term *ātma-cintana*) implies "meditation on oneself", "self-contemplation" or "self-attentiveness", because when we think of anything, we are thereby directing our attention towards it. Thinking of anything other than oneself entails allowing our attention to move away from oneself towards that other thing, so in order to give not even the slightest room to the rising of any thought about anything except oneself, we need to be so keenly self-attentive that we thereby do not allow our attention to be diverted away from oneself towards anything else. That is, since thoughts arise only in our awareness, no thought can rise unless we attend to it, so if we attend only to oneself, we will thereby give no room for any other thought to arise.

As Bhagavan implies in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* (cited above in section 6), we as ego cannot rise or stand without attending to things other than oneself, so if we attend to oneself so keenly that we do not allow our attention to be diverted away towards anything else, we will thereby subside and dissolve back into our own being, "I am", which is the source from which we had risen. Therefore, since our own being in its pristine state, devoid of ego, is God, being self-attentive is the only means by which we can surrender ourselves completely to God, as Bhagavan implies in this first sentence of the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*.

So long as we think "I need to think this, I need to do that", we cannot surrender ourselves completely to God. So long as such thoughts persist, we may be able to surrender ourselves partially, but not completely. In order to surrender ourselves completely, we need to surrender even the burden of thinking to God. If any thoughts are necessary, let him think them for us. Only if we have such firm conviction and confidence that he can and will do whatever is necessary, if at all anything is necessary, will we have the courage to cling to self-attentiveness so firmly that we thereby give not even the slightest room to the rising of any other thought. Therefore in the second sentence of this thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?* Bhagavan assures us:

*Even though one places whatever amount of burden upon God, that entire amount he will bear. [18]*

When God is effortlessly bearing the entire burden of the world and all the *jīvas* (Sa. “souls” or “living beings”) in it, why should we suppose that we have to bear any burden of our own? Therefore, as Bhagavan sings from the perspective of a devotee in verse 9 of *Śrī Aruṇācala Padigam*:

*Supreme, I am supreme among those who are destitute of the supreme wisdom to cling without attachment to your feet. Taking the burden for yourself, may you ordain my activity to cease. For you, who bear, what is a burden? Supreme, separating from you and grasping this world on my head, what I have got is enough. Arunachala, who are the Supreme, do not intend me henceforth to be separate from your feet. [19]*

What is metaphorically referred to here as “your feet” (Ta. *niṅ pādām*) is the Supreme himself, who is what appears outside in the form of the holy hill Arunachala, but who is always shining in our heart as our own being, “I am”, so “clinging without attachment to your feet” (Ta. “*niṅ pādām paṭṭu aṛa paṭṭudal*”) means being steadfastly self-attentive without attachment to anything else. By being so steadfastly self-attentive, we will remain without any activity, surrendering our entire burden to God, but since this requires all-consuming “love” (Sa. *bhakti*), it is possible only by his grace, as Bhagavan implies by praying: “*Taking the burden for yourself, may you ordain my activity to cease*” (Ta. “*bharam uṇakku eṇa, eṇ paṇi aṛa paṇiyāy*”).

Since he effortlessly bears, carries or supports everything, nothing can be a burden for him, as Bhagavan implies by asking rhetorically: “*For you, who bear, what is a burden?*” (Ta. “*bharittiḍum uṇakku edu bhāram?*”). However, though in fact he alone bears everything, by rising as ego we seemingly separate ourselves from him, and hence it seems to us that we have to bear the burden of responsibility for ourselves and others, and thus we suffer needlessly, until finally we have had enough of this foolishness and cry out to him in anguish, “*Supreme, separating from you and grasping this world on my head, what I have got is enough*” (Ta. “*parama niṅ pirindu i-vv-ulahiṇai talaiyil paṭṭi yāṇ peṭṭradu pōdum*”), and therefore pray to him, “*Arunachala, who are the Supreme, do not intend me henceforth to be separate from your feet*” (Ta. “*paramaṇ ām aruṇācala eṇai iṇi uṇ padattiṇiṇḍru odukkū uṛa pāṛē!*”), in which *uṇ padam* can mean either “your feet” or “your state”, though these two meanings amount to the same, because Arunachala, his feet and his state are all one, namely the one infinite, indivisible and immutable supreme

reality, pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is what exists and shines eternally as “I am”.

Since he is the one reality that underlies the appearance of both subject and objects, namely ego and everything known by it, he does not actually do anything, but just is as he always is. However, as Bhagavan points out in the fifteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*, though he does not do anything and therefore “*even one action* [Sa. karma] *does not adhere to him*” [20] (thereby implying that he is untouched by and therefore unaffected by any action whatsoever), everything happens “*by just the special nature of the presence of God*” [21] (thereby implying by just the special nature of his mere being, which is always just as it is without ever changing in any way whatsoever). Therefore he does everything without ever doing anything.

This is what Bhagavan implies by saying that the power of God drives all *kāryas* (whatever needs or ought to be done or to happen) in the third sentence of this thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

*Since one power of the Supreme Lord [Ta. oru paramēśvara śakti] is driving all kāryas, instead of we also yielding to that, why to be perpetually thinking, ‘it is necessary to do like this; it is necessary to do like that?’ [22]*

In this context “all *kāryas*” (Ta. “*sakala kāriyaṅgaḷai-y-um*”) means both “everything that needs or ought to happen” and “everything that needs or ought to be done by us”. Everything that happens, meaning everything that we are given to experience, is what is called *prārabdha* (Sa. “fate” or “destiny”), which is the fruit of our past actions that God has allotted for us to experience in our present life. In our past lives we have done numerous actions, both good and bad, the fruits of many of which we have not yet experienced, and the stock of such hitherto “unexperienced fruit” is called *saṁcita*, from which God selects (not by doing anything but “by just the special nature of his presence”) which fruit we are to experience as *prārabdha* in each of our lives. He selects and allots these fruit in such a way that will be most conducive to our spiritual development, so whatever we are given to experience is not only the fruit of our own past actions but is also the will of God, and whatever he wills is what is ultimately best for us.

In order for us to experience whatever God has allotted for us as *prārabdha*, certain actions of mind, speech or body are necessary on our part, so he will make our mind, speech and body do all such actions, as Bhagavan explained in the note he wrote for his mother in December 1898:

*In accordance with their-their prārabdha, he who is for that, being there-there, will cause to dance. What will never happen will not happen whatever effort one makes; what will happen will not stop whatever obstruction one does. This indeed is certain. Therefore being silent is good.* [23]

“*In accordance with their-their prārabdha*” (Ta. “*avar-avar pirārabdha-p prakāram*”) means in accordance with the *prārabdha* of each one of us; “*he who is for that*” (Ta. “*adaṛkāṇavaṇ*”) means God, who allots our *prārabdha* and makes our mind, speech and body act in accordance with it; “*being there-there*” (Ta. “*āṅgāṅgu irundu*”) means being in each place, implying not only that God is omnipresent but that he is at all times in the heart of each one of us; and “*will cause to dance*” (Ta. *āṭṭuvippaṇ*) means that he will make our mind, speech and body act in accordance with the *prārabdha* he has allotted for us. Therefore, when Bhagavan says in this third sentence of the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*: “*Since one power of the Supreme Lord is driving all kāryas*” (Ta. “*sakala kāriyaṅgaḷai-y-um oru paramēśvara śakti naḍatti-k-koṇḍirugiṛapaḍiyāl*”), what he means by “*driving all kāryas*” is not only making us experience whatever *prārabdha* he has allotted for us but also making our mind, speech and body act in accordance with it.

However, this does not mean that all the actions we do by mind, speech and body are actions that he makes us do in accordance with our *prārabdha*, because we also act under the sway of our own “inclinations” (Sa. *vāsanās*), meaning in accordance with our own will. The actions he makes us do are only those actions that are necessary in order for us to experience our *prārabdha*, but even such actions are generally actions that we do not only in accordance with our *prārabdha* but also in accordance with our own will.

Whereas “fate” (Sa. *prārabdha*) determines what we are to experience, our will determines what we want to experience and what we want not to experience, and accordingly what we try to experience and try to avoid experiencing, so fate and will each have their own jurisdiction, and neither can interfere in the jurisdiction of the other. That is, just as *prārabdha* cannot prevent us wanting and trying to experience anything or to avoid experiencing anything, our will cannot prevent us experiencing whatever *prārabdha* we have to experience. Everything that we are given to experience is our *prārabdha*, meaning that it is predetermined, so though we are free to want and to try to experience anything we want, we are not free to actually experience anything other than what we are given to experience as our *prārabdha*.

In other words, we have “freedom of will” (Sa. *icchā-svatantra*) and “freedom of action” (Sa. *kriyā-svatantra*) but no freedom of experience, because whatever we experience is *prārabdha*, which is determined by the will of God, as Bhagavan makes clear in the second, third and fourth sentences of this note he wrote for his mother: “*What will never happen will not happen whatever effort one makes; what will happen will not stop whatever obstruction one does. This indeed is certain*” (Ta. “*eṇḍrum naḍavādadu eṇ muyarçik-kiṇum naḍavādu; naḍappadu eṇ taḍai seyyiṇum nillādu. iduvē tiṇṇam*”).

Whatever actions we do by mind, speech or body under the sway of our *viśaya-vāsanās* (Sa. “inclinations to experience objects or phenomena”) are a misuse of our “freedom of will and action” (Sa. *icchā-kriyā-svatantra*), and such actions (which are called *āgāmya*) are what produce fruit, which are stored in *saṁcita* and may in a later life be allotted by God for us to experience as *prārabdha*. Since the nature of ego is to constantly attend to “phenomena” (Sa. *viśayas*) under the sway of its *viśaya-vāsanās*, so long as we rise and stand as ego we act under their sway, so the only way in which we can avoid being swayed by them is to cling to self-attentiveness so firmly that we thereby do not rise as ego. This alone is the correct use of our “freedom of will and action” (Sa. *icchā-kriyā-svatantra*), and is what Bhagavan implies in the final sentence of this note he wrote for his mother: “*Therefore being silent is good*” (Ta. “*āhaliṇ maṇamāy irukkai naṇḍru*”).

That is, “*being silent*” (Ta. “*maṇamāy irukkai*”), or more literally “*being as silence*” or “*silently being*”, means being without rising as ego, and when we do not rise as ego we do not identify the mind and body as ourself, so whatever actions God may make the mind, speech or body do in accordance with *prārabdha* are not experienced by us as actions we are doing. By rising as ego and thereby identifying the mind and body as ourself we become the doer of actions and the experiencer of their fruit, so when we are so steadfastly self-attentive that we thereby do not rise as ego, we remain silent without doing any action or experiencing any fruit.

In other words, “being silent” (Ta. “*maṇamāy irukkai*”) is surrendering ourself completely to God, so it is “good” (Ta. *naṇḍru*), as Bhagavan says in his characteristically understated fashion, thereby implying that it alone is what is truly good, because in comparison to it, all other things that we normally judge to be good pale into insignificance. It is therefore the supreme good or *summum bonum*, so it is the ultimate aim of all spiritual paths and the only real purpose of our life.

Therefore when Bhagavan says “*Since one power of the Supreme Lord is driving all kāryas*” (Ta. “*sakala kāriyaṅṅalai-y-um oru paramēśvara śakti naḍatti-k-koṇḍirugiraḍaiyāl*”), what he implies is not only that God is making everything happen as it is meant to happen, but also that in accordance with what is meant to happen he makes us do whatever we need to do or ought to do. When such is the case, “*instead of we also yielding to that, why to be perpetually thinking, ‘it is necessary to do like this; it is necessary to do like that?’*” (Ta. “*nāmum adaṅku aḍaṅgi-y-irāmal, ‘ippaḍi-c ceyya-vēṇḍum; appaḍi-c ceyya-vēṇḍum’ eṇḍru sadā cintippaḍēṅ?*”). In other words, when God is taking care of everything in this manner, making everything happen as it is meant to happen and making each of us do whatever we are meant to do, why should we rise as ego thinking that we must bear the burden of responsibility for taking care of ourself and others? Our only real responsibility is to be steadfastly self-attentive and thereby surrender ourself completely to God, knowing that he is taking perfect care of everything, including ourself and all our loved ones.

To illustrate this with a powerful analogy, in the fourth and final sentence of this thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?* he asks rhetorically:

*Though we know that the train is going bearing all the burdens, why should we who go travelling in it, instead of remaining happily leaving our small luggage placed on it, suffer bearing it on our head? [24]*

The train in which we are all travelling is the power of God’s grace, which is bearing the entire burden of our life along with all other burdens, so if we surrender all our cares and concerns to him by being so steadfastly self-attentive that we subside back into our own being without ever rising to think of anything else, we can travel happily in the lap of his grace, free of the burden of any cares and responsibilities. If instead we do not surrender all our cares and concerns to him, we will suffer unnecessarily, like a passenger on a train who insists on carrying their luggage on their head instead of placing it on the luggage rack.

## 13 Knowing Ourself Without Adjuncts Is Itself Knowing God

Since it is the nature of ourself as ego to constantly attend to things other than ourself, believing that our survival, comfort and happiness depend on our thinking of such things and speaking and acting accordingly, we cannot surrender all our cares and concerns to God without sur-

rendering ourself entirely to him. However, though we can surrender, renounce or give up everything else, we cannot give up what we actually are, so the “self” we are to surrender is not what we actually are but everything that we now mistake ourself to be.

Everything that we now mistake ourself to be is what is called *upādhi*, which is a Sanskrit word that means “something mistaken to be another thing”, a “substitute”, “fraud”, “deception”, “disguise”, “false appearance” or “limitation”, and which is generally translated as “adjunct” in the sense of something that we add to or superimpose upon ourself by identifying it as “I” or “mine”. Ego or “soul” (Sa. *jīva*) is therefore a conflation of what we actually are with a set of *upādhis* that we mistake ourself to be, namely a person or body consisting of five sheaths (the physical body, life, mind, intellect and will) and everything associated with this person, including all its actions and experiences. Bereft of all such *upādhis*, therefore, ego or *jīva* is nothing other than what we actually are, namely pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is what exists and shines eternally as “I am”, and which is what is otherwise called God or *brahman* (the one ultimate reality, which is the infinite, indivisible and immutable whole, the fullness of being), as Bhagavan implies in verse 24 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*By being-nature, God and soul are just one substance. Only adjunct-awareness is different. [25]*

“*By being-nature*” or “*because of being-nature*” (Ta. “*irukkum iyaṅkaiyāl*”) implies “because their real nature is pure being”, so “*by being-nature, God and soul are just one substance*” (Ta. “*irukkum iyaṅkaiyāl iśa-jīvargaḷ oru poruḷē āvar*”) implies that what both “God” (Sa. *iśa*) and “soul” (Sa. *jīva*) actually are is just one “substance” (Ta. *poruḷ* or Sa. *vastu*), namely pure “being” (Sa. *sat*). What makes them seemingly different, therefore, is only “adjunct-awareness” (Ta. *upādhi-uṅarvu*), but what is aware of the seeming existence of “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*) is only the *jīva* and not God, because God is just pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*) and therefore never mistakes himself to be anything other than that, so in his clear view there are no adjuncts at all, either for himself or for the *jīva*, and hence he sees the *jīva* as nothing other than himself.

Since all adjuncts are just an illusory appearance, they do not exist independent of our awareness of them, so “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*) are nothing other than “adjunct-awareness” (Ta. *upādhi-uṅarvu*), which is the false awareness “I am these adjuncts”, and which is what defines and distinguishes ego, the *jīva*, because without adjunct-awareness ego



would not be ego but only pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), “I am”. Therefore it is only our adjunct-awareness that makes us seem to be other than God, albeit only in our self-ignorant view and not in his clear self-knowing view.

Therefore to know God as he actually is, we need to know ourselves as we actually are, because he is what we actually are, and to know ourselves as we actually are, we need to know ourselves without any adjuncts, as Bhagavan says in verse 25 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Knowing oneself leaving adjuncts is itself knowing God, because of shining as oneself.* [26]

“Leaving adjuncts” or “letting go of adjuncts” (Ta. *upādhi viṭṭu*) is an idiomatic way of saying “without adjuncts”, so “knowing oneself leaving adjuncts” (Ta. “*taṅṅai upādhi viṭṭu ṛvadu*”) means “knowing oneself without adjuncts”. As ego or *jīva* we are just a conflation of pure being-awareness with a set of adjuncts, so “knowing oneself without adjuncts” means knowing oneself as we actually are, namely as pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), “I am”, and since pure being-awareness is God, “knowing oneself without adjuncts is itself knowing God” (Ta. “*taṅṅai upādhi viṭṭu ṛvadu tāṅ iṣaṅ taṅṅai uṅarvadu ām*”).

In this context “because of shining as oneself” (Ta. “*tāṅ-āy oḷirvadāl*”) implies “because God is shining as oneself”, in which “oneself” (Ta. *tāṅ*) means ourselves as we actually are. That is, because God exists and shines as pure being-awareness, “I am”, which is what we actually are, knowing ourselves without adjuncts is itself knowing God as he actually is.

## 14 Being Ourselves Alone Is Knowing Ourselves

However, though we can talk of “knowing ourselves” or “knowing God”, we should understand that such “knowing” is not knowing in the same sense as knowing anything other than ourselves, because knowing or being aware of any other thing is a mental activity, since it entails a movement of our mind or attention away from ourselves towards that other thing (which is itself just a mental impression, an appearance fabricated by our mind), whereas knowing ourselves without adjuncts, which is itself knowing God, is not a mental activity but a state of just being as we actually are, since it does not involve any movement of our mind or attention away from ourselves, its source, as Bhagavan points out in verse 26 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Being oneself alone is knowing oneself, because oneself is devoid of two. This is steadfastness as that* [Sa. *tanmaya-niṣṭhā*]. [27]

What we actually are is pure awareness, and pure awareness knows itself just by being itself. That is, the very nature of awareness is to be aware of itself, because we cannot be aware without being aware that we are aware, and we cannot be aware that we are aware without being aware that we are. As awareness, therefore, we are always aware of ourselves as “I am”. Being ourselves and knowing ourselves are therefore one and the same thing, because our very “being” (Sa. *sat*) is itself “awareness” (Sa. *cit*).

When we know anything other than ourselves, we know it by an act of knowing, but no act of knowing is needed for us to know ourselves, because “being oneself alone is knowing oneself” (Ta. “*tāṅ-āy iruttal-ē taṅṅai aṛidal ām*”), as Bhagavan says in this verse, and the reason for this is “because oneself is devoid of two” (Ta. “*tāṅ iraṅḍu aṭṭadāl*”), meaning that we are one and indivisible, so knowing ourselves is not a case of one “self” knowing another “self”. That is, when we know anything other than ourselves, we are the subject and the thing we know is an object, whereas knowing ourselves entails no such distinction, because in self-knowledge there are not two things, one as the subject or knower and the other as an object or thing known.

In this context “being oneself” or “being as oneself” (Ta. *tāṅ-āy iruttal*) means being as we actually are, and “knowing oneself” (Ta. *taṅṅai aṛidal*) likewise means knowing ourselves as we actually are, so just being what we actually are is itself knowing what we actually are, and knowing what we actually are is itself being what we actually are. What we actually are is what is called *brahman*, which is often referred to conventionally as “that” (Sa. *tat*), so knowing and being what we actually are is *tanmaya-niṣṭhā*, “steadfastness as that”. That is, *tanmaya* is a compound of *tat* and the suffix *maya*, which means “made of”, “composed of”, “consisting of” or “full of”, and *niṣṭhā* means “firmness”, “fixedness”, “steadiness”, “steadfastness” or “state”, so *tanmaya-niṣṭhā* means “steadfastness as that”, which is the state in which we are firmly and unwaveringly fixed or established as “that” (Sa. *tat*), the one infinite reality called *brahman*.

Some of the fundamental principles of classical *Advaita Vēdānta* are as follows: What we actually are is “eternally liberated” (Sa. *nitya mukta*), so we seem to be in bondage only because we do not know ourselves as we actually are. In other words, bondage is nothing other than ignorance of “our own real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*). “Action” (Sa. *karma*)

occurs only in the realm of such ignorance, so it is a product of ignorance and cannot exist without it. Therefore ignorance cannot be removed by any amount of action but only by knowledge of our own real nature.

In this verse, therefore, Bhagavan clarifies the nature of the knowledge that will remove our ignorance of our own real nature. It is not a knowledge that can be acquired by any amount of “hearing” or “studying” (Sa. *śravaṇa*), “thinking” (Sa. *manana*) or meditating on anything other than oneself, because these are all mental activities and can therefore be done only by the mind and in the realm of self-ignorance. No amount of doing of any kind can enable us to acquire knowledge of what we actually are, because this knowledge is neither an “action” (Sa. *karma*) nor the “fruit of any action” (Sa. *karma-phala*). “Knowledge” (Sa. *jñāna*) is our real nature, our own very being, so it is not a knowledge that we need to do anything to acquire. To know oneself as we actually are we just need to be as we actually are, and we can be as we actually are only by turning our entire attention back within to cling firmly and steadily to our own being, “I am”.

Since we are always oneself and never anything other than oneself, there is never a moment when we do not know oneself. However, though we always know oneself, when we rise and stand as ego we seem to know oneself as a set of “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*), which is not what we actually are. Therefore, in order to know and to be what we always actually are, we must cease rising as ego, which we can do only by being so keenly and steadfastly self-attentive that we thereby cease to be aware of anything else at all, because only then will we be aware of oneself as nothing other than pure awareness, which is what we always actually are.

That is, as Bhagavan clarified, the “ignorance” (Sa. *avidyā* or *ajñāna*) that prevents us knowing oneself as we actually are is nothing other than ego, the false awareness that always knows itself as “I am this body” and that consequently knows the appearance of other things, so no knowledge that may be acquired by ego can be the knowledge that will remove this ignorance. However, though as ego we can never know oneself as we actually are, we must try to know oneself as we actually are by turning our entire attention back within to face oneself alone, because only when we do so will we as ego subside and dissolve back into our own being in such a way that we will never rise again. What will then know oneself as we actually are is only oneself as we actually are, which always knows itself just by being itself.

## 15 When We Know Ourselves, There Is Nothing Else To Know

Nothing other than oneself actually exists, because whatever seems to be other than oneself is just an illusory appearance that seems to exist only in the view of oneself as ego, so being aware of anything other than oneself is not real “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) but just a “semblance of awareness” (Sa. *cidābhāsa*). Real awareness is only pure awareness, which is awareness that is not aware of anything other than itself. Since pure awareness alone is what actually exists, it is devoid not only of knowing but also of not knowing, because there is nothing other than itself for it either to know or to not know, as Bhagavan points out in verse 27 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Only knowledge that is devoid of knowledge and ignorance is knowledge. This is real. There is not anything for knowing. [28]*

The Tamil verb *aṛi* means “to know” or “to be aware”, so the noun *aṛivu* means both “knowledge” and “awareness”. Therefore, when Bhagavan says in the first sentence of this verse “*only knowledge that is devoid of knowledge and ignorance is knowledge*” (Ta. “*aṛivu aṛiyāmai-y-um aṭṭa aṛivē aṛivu āhum*”), what he implies is that only awareness that is devoid of both knowledge and ignorance of anything other than itself is real knowledge or awareness. In other words, only pure awareness (namely awareness that is not aware of anything other than itself) is real awareness.

“*This is real*” (Ta. “*uṇmai īdu*”) means that only such awareness is real, because it alone is what actually exists, as implied by the word *uṇmai*, the etymology of which is *uḷ-mai*, “be-ness”, “is-ness” or “am-ness”, and which therefore means “being”, “existence”, “reality”, “truth” or “veracity”. “*This is real*” (Ta. “*uṇmai īdu*”) therefore implies that nothing other than awareness that is devoid of both knowledge and ignorance of anything else is real, so knowing anything other than oneself is not knowledge but only ignorance, because knowing other things is knowing what does not actually exist as if it exists, as he also implies in the next sentence: “*There is not anything for knowing*” (Ta. “*aṛivadaṛku oṇḍru ilai*”). That is, when we know oneself as we actually are, namely as pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), nothing else will exist (or even seem to exist) for us either to know or to not know. Other things seem to exist only when we have risen and are standing as ego, as in waking and dream, and not when we do not rise as ego, as in sleep, so they seem to exist only in the view of oneself as ego, and hence

they are not real, because ego is just a false awareness of oneself, so whatever seems to exist only in its view must be as unreal as it is.

So if there is nothing else for us to know when we know ourselves as we actually are, what sort of knowledge is self-knowledge? What will we know ourselves to be when we know ourselves as we actually are? The answer to such questions is given by Bhagavan in verse 28 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*If oneself knows what the nature of oneself is, then beginningless [Sa. anādi], endless [Sa. ananta] and unbroken [Sa. akhaṇḍa] being-awareness-happiness [Sa. sat-cit-ānanda]. [29]*

“The nature of oneself” (Ta. “*taṇādu iyal*”) means ourselves as we actually are, and what we actually are is what alone actually is, so what this verse implies is that if we know what we actually are, what will then remain alone and what we will know ourselves to be is just *anādi, ananta, akhaṇḍa sat-cit-ānanda*: “beginningless, endless and unbroken being-awareness-happiness”.

When *brahman*, the ultimate reality, which is ourselves as we actually are, is described as *sat-cit-ānanda* (Sa. “being-awareness-happiness”), that does not mean that it is a compound of three things, “being” (Sa. *sat*), “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) and “happiness” (Sa. *ānanda*), because these are not three things but one and the same. Pure “being” (Sa. *sat*) is itself both pure “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) and pure “happiness” (Sa. *ānanda*), because the very nature of pure being is to be aware of itself, and its awareness of itself is infinite happiness. This is why Bhagavan describes it as *akhaṇḍa*, which means “unbroken”, “unfragmented”, “undivided”, “whole” or “complete”, and therefore implies indivisible, because *sat-cit-ānanda* is one indivisible whole.

It is also *anādi*, “beginningless”, because it exists independent of time, since like all other phenomena time seems to exist only in the view of ourselves as ego, not in the view of ourselves as we actually are, namely *sat-cit-ānanda*. That is, it is eternal, because it exists not only at all times but whether time appears or not. Since it is not limited in any way by time, space or anything else whatsoever, it is *ananta*, which means “endless”, “limitless” or “infinite”, so it is infinite, indivisible and eternal, and therefore it is by implication immutable, because change can occur only in time and therefore cannot affect what is timeless.

Therefore what we actually are is infinite being, infinite awareness and infinite happiness, which are one and indi-

visible, so in order to experience ourselves as such, we need to investigate ourselves and thereby know ourselves as we actually are. For those of us who are enamoured by the immense variety of phenomena that seem to exist in waking and dream, a state in which we are eternally aware of nothing other than ourselves may seem unappealing, but whatever happiness we seem to derive from any phenomena is an infinitesimal fraction of the infinite happiness that we actually are and that we can experience only by knowing and being what we actually are, free of all the “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*) that we now mistake ourselves to be.

## 16 How Should We Apply the Mahāvākyas in Practice?

In each of the four Vedas there is a “great statement” (Sa. *mahāvākyā*), which asserts *jīva-brahma-aikya*, the “oneness” (Sa. *aikya*) of the “soul” (Sa. *jīva*) and the “ultimate reality” (Sa. *brahman*), namely *prajñānam brahma* (Sa. “awareness is brahman”) in the *Ṛg Vēda, Aitarēya Upaniṣad* 3.3, *ahaṁ brahmāsmi* (Sa. “I am brahman”) in the *Yajur Vēda, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* 1. 4. 10, *tat tvam asi* (Sa. “that you are”) in the *Sāma Vēda, Chāndōgya Upaniṣad* 6. 8. 7, and *ayam ātmā brahma* (Sa. “this self is brahman”) in the *Atharva Vēda, Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* 2. The sense in which we as *jīva* are actually *brahman* is explained by Bhagavan in verse 24 of *Upadēśa Undiyār* (cited in section 13), namely that in our essential nature as pure “being” (Sa. *sat*), bereft of all “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*), we and “God” (Sa. *brahman*) are just “one substance” (Ta. *poru!* or Sa. *vastu*). That is, every *jīva* (Sa. “soul” or “sentient being”) is aware of its own being or existence as “I am”, and this “I am” is God or *brahman*.

But what is the practical implication of these *mahāvākyas*? How should we apply in practice the truth conveyed in them? The answer to these questions is implied by Bhagavan in verse 32 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*:

*When the Vedas proclaim ‘That is you’, instead of oneself being, knowing oneself as what, thinking ‘I am that, not this’ is due to non-existence of strength, because that alone is always seated as oneself. [30]*

“Instead of oneself being, knowing oneself as what” (Ta. “*taṇṇai edu eṇḍru tāṇ tēndu irādu*”), which more literally means “oneself not being, knowing oneself as what”, implies that when we hear the Vedas declare “*tat tvam asi*” (Sa. “that you are”), which in Tamil is expressed as “*adu nī*” (Ta. “that is you”), our response should be to investigate what am I and thereby to know and to be what we actually are. That is,

prior to being told that we are that, we took “that” (namely what is real, *brahman*, God, happiness, knowledge, liberation, salvation, *nirvāṇa* or whatever else we were seeking) to be something other than ourself, so the reason why the Vedas tell us that we ourself are that is to make us understand that what we were seeking is nothing other than ourself, so in order to find it all we need do is investigate and thereby know what we actually are.

In other words, the sole intention of the *mahāvākyas* is to turn our attention back to ourself, because we alone are “that”. So long as we take that to be something other than ourself, we will never find it, because we will be looking for it in the wrong direction, namely outside ourself. In order to find “that”, we need to look deep within ourself, because there is no “that” (God, *brahman*, reality, happiness or whatever) other than ourself. Therefore if we do not turn our attention back to ourself in order to see what we actually are, we have failed to understand the clear and obvious intention of the *mahāvākyas*.

After hearing the *mahāvākyas*, many people assume that we need to meditate “I am that, not this”, meaning “I am *brahman*, not this body consisting of five sheaths”, but Bhagavan says that meditating in this way is “*due to non-existence of strength*” (Ta. “*uraṇ inṁaiyiṅāl*”), in which “strength” (Ta. *uraṇ*) means strength of understanding. If we have clearly and firmly understood the meaning and purpose of the *mahāvākyas*, we will not meditate on any thought such as “I am *brahman*” but only on ourself, because we alone are what the words *brahman* and “that” refer to. Like all other thoughts, the thought “I am *brahman*” is something other than ourself, so we cannot know what we actually are by meditating on this or any other thought, but only by keenly and steadily attending to ourself, the fundamental awareness “I am”, which alone is *brahman*.

Therefore true *brahma-dhyāna* (Sa. “meditation on *brahman*”) is not meditation on the thought *brahman* but only “meditation on ourself” (Sa. *svarūpa-dhyāna*), because only by meditating on ourself will we as ego subside and thereby be as we actually are, namely as *brahman*, as Bhagavan implies in the first *maṅgalam* verse of *Uḷḷadu Nāṅṟpadu*:

*If what exists [Ta. uḷḷadu] were not, would existing awareness [Ta. uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu] exist? Since the existing substance [Ta. uḷḷa-poru] exists in the heart [Ta. uḷḷam] without thought, how to think of the existing substance, which is called ‘heart’? Being in the heart as it is alone is thinking. Know. [31]*

The first sentence of this verse, “*uḷḷadu aladu uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu uḷḷadō?*”, is a rhetorical question that can be interpreted in any of three ways, namely “if what exists were not, would existing awareness exist?”, “except as what exists, does existing awareness exist?” or “other than what exists, is there awareness to think?”. In the first two of these three interpretations, *uḷḷa* is an adjectival participle of the tenseless verb *uḷ*, which means “to be” or “to exist”, so *uḷḷa* means “being”, “existing”, “real” or “actual”, and hence *uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu* means “being awareness” (in the sense of “awareness that is”), “existing awareness”, “real awareness” or “awareness that actually exists”, so it refers to “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is our awareness of our own being, “I am”. Derived from the same verb, *uḷḷadu* is a participial noun that means “what is” or “what exists” and that implies what actually exists as opposed to what merely seems to exist.

Therefore the first interpretation, “*If what exists [Ta. uḷḷadu] were not, would existing awareness [Ta. uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu] exist?*”, is an argument for the existence of something that actually exists, and indirectly implies that that something is ourself, because we ourself are the awareness that knows our own existence. That is, if we did not actually exist, we could not be aware of our existence, so the fact that we are aware of our existence proves conclusively that we do actually exist. In other words, what he refers to as *uḷḷadu* (Ta. “what is” or “what exists”) is ourself, and what he refers to as *uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu* (Ta. “existing awareness” or “real awareness”) is our awareness of our own being or existence, “I am”.

The second interpretation, “*Except as what exists [Ta. uḷḷadu], does existing awareness [Ta. uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu] exist?*”, is closely aligned to the first one and corroborates it, because it implies that *uḷḷa-v-uṅṟarvu* (Ta. “real awareness”) is itself *uḷḷadu* (Ta. “what actually exists”), as Bhagavan explains in verse 23 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*:

*Because of the non-existence of other awareness to be aware of what exists, what exists [Ta. uḷḷadu] is awareness [Ta. uṅṟarvu]. Awareness alone exists as we. [32]*

That is, if “awareness” (Ta. *uṅṟarvu*) were something other than “what exists” (Ta. *uḷḷadu*), it would be a non-existent awareness, so it would neither exist nor be aware. Therefore, since there is awareness of what exists, “what exists” (Ta. *uḷḷadu*) must itself be “awareness” (Ta. *uṅṟarvu*). Moreover, since we are what is aware of what exists, we ourself are the awareness that is what exists.

In the third interpretation, “Other than what exists, is there awareness to think?”, *uḷḷa* is the infinitive of the verb

uḷḷu, which means “to think”, “meditate” or “investigate”, so in this sense uḷḷa-v-uṅarvu means “awareness to think”, “awareness to meditate” or “awareness to investigate”. Since the awareness that thinks, meditates or investigates is ego or mind, the implication of this third interpretation is that what seems to be ego or mind is actually nothing other than “what exists” (Ta. uḷḷadu), so it can never meditate upon what exists (namely *brahman*) as an object, and hence it can truly meditate on it only by subsiding back within and thereby being as it is, as Bhagavan says in the third sentence of this verse.

What he refers to in the second sentence as “the existing substance” (Ta. uḷḷa-poruḷ) is what he referred to in the first sentence as “what exists” (Ta. uḷḷadu), namely *brahman*, which is the one “existing awareness” (Ta. uḷḷa-v-uṅarvu), namely our fundamental awareness of our own existence, “I am”. In the first clause of this sentence he says, “*Since the existing substance exists in the heart without thought*” (Ta. “uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷal ara uḷḷattē uḷḷadāl”), in which “heart” (Ta. uḷḷam) means the very core or centre of ourself and all other things, but then he goes on to say “*the existing substance, which is called heart*” (Ta. “uḷḷam eṇum uḷḷa-poruḷ”), thereby indicating that it is not only in the heart but is the heart itself. What does this mean? Since “heart” means centre or innermost core, if anything other than the heart were in the heart, that other thing would be the heart of the heart, but since the “existing substance” (Ta. uḷḷa-poruḷ) is the ultimate heart, the heart of all other hearts, what is inside it is only itself and nothing else. This is why Bhagavan addresses God in the form of Arunachala in verse 2 of *Śrī Aruṅācala Pañcaratnam* saying:

*Red Hill, all this, which is a picture, arises, stands and subsides only in you. Since you dance eternally in the heart as 'I', they say your name itself is heart. [33]*

Since God alone is what exists and shines eternally in the heart as “I” (meaning “I” in its pure form, bereft of all adjuncts), “I” is the ultimate heart, so it is not only in the heart but is itself the heart, as Bhagavan implies by saying “*Since you dance eternally in the heart as I, they say your name itself is heart*” (Ta. “nittiyamum nāṅ eṇḍru idayam naḍittiduṅaiyāl, uṅ pēr tāṅ idayam eṇḍriḍuvar tām”). As the heart, God is the centre of all things, meaning that he is the ultimate reality or substance residing deep within each and every thing, but he is not only present within everything, but is also the infinite whole in which everything appears and disappears, as Bhagavan implies by saying “*Red Hill, all this, which is a picture, arises, stands and subsides only in you*” (Ta. “cittiram ām iḷḷu ellām, sem malaiyē, niṅbālē uttidamāy niṅḍrē oḍuṅḍiḍum

āl”), in which “Red Hill” (Ta. “sem malaiyē”) is a form of address to Arunachala, and “*all this, which is a picture*” (Ta. “cittiram ām iḷḷu ellām”) means this entire world-appearance, which is a mental picture, a series of images or impressions that appear and disappear in the mind.

The pure “I”, which is the “real form” (Sa. svarūpa) of both God and ourself, is not only that which exists within everything as its heart, but also that in which everything seems to exist and is therefore contained, because it is pure “being-awareness” (Sa. sat-cit), other than which nothing could exist or shine. In other words, it alone is what actually exists, and as such, therefore, it is the one “substance” (Ta. poruḷ or Sa. vastu) of which everything is composed, and hence in this first *maṅgalam* verse of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* Bhagavan refers to it as uḷḷa-poruḷ, the “existing substance” or “real substance”, which exists in the heart as the heart.

He also says that it exists “without thought” (Ta. uḷḷal ara), because “thought” or “thinking” (Ta. uḷḷal) appears only when we rise as ego, thereby going out from the heart, albeit only seemingly, and therefore disappears when we subside back into the heart. In other words, thoughts seem to exist only in the view of the outward-facing mind, so they cease to exist when we turn back to face inwards (meaning towards ourself alone) and thereby sink deep in the heart, which is the source from which we rose, so they are like waves that seem to exist only on the surface of the mind and not in the innermost depths of the heart.

Therefore in this second sentence he asks: “*Since the existing substance exists in the heart without thought, how to think of the existing substance, which is called heart?*” (Ta. “uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷal ara uḷḷattē uḷḷadāl, uḷḷam eṇum uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷal evaṅ?”), in which the final uḷḷal means “thinking”, “meditating” or “investigating” and evaṅ is both an interrogative adverb that means “how?” or “in what way?” and an interrogative pronoun that means “which person?” or “who?”. That is, so long as we are thinking or meditating, our mind is facing outwards, away from ourself, so whatever we are thinking of or meditating upon is something other than the “existing substance” (Ta. uḷḷa-poruḷ), which is what we actually are, our very being, and which therefore cannot be reached by any amount of thinking, meditating or mental activity.

If we cannot know *brahman*, the “existing substance” (Ta. uḷḷa-poruḷ), by any amount of thinking or meditating in the sense of mental activity, how can we meditate on it or investigate it in order to know it as it actually is? The answer is given in the next sentence: “*Being in the heart as it is alone is thinking*” (Ta. “uḷḷattē uḷḷapaḍi uḷḷadē uḷḷal”). That is,

the only way to metaphorically “think of”, “meditate on” or “investigate” the “existing substance” (Ta. *uḷḷa-poru!*) is just to be in the heart as it is.

But what exactly does this mean? How can we be in the heart as it is? As we have seen, what is in the heart is only the heart, which is the “existing substance” (Ta. *uḷḷa-poru!*), so “being in the heart” (Ta. *uḷḷattē uḷḷadu*) means being the existing substance, which is what we actually are, so we can be that only by not rising as ego, because though we are always actually that, when we rise and stand as ego we seem to be something other than that. The adverb *uḷḷapaḍi*, which means “as it is” or “as one is”, implies the same thing, namely that we must be as the existing substance is, which means we must be as we actually are, because the existing substance, namely *brahman*, is what we actually are.

Since the “existing substance” (Ta. *uḷḷa-poru!*) is pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is devoid of any thoughts and therefore devoid of any “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*), and since the root of all thoughts (which includes all adjuncts and all phenomena, because adjuncts and other phenomena are just thoughts) is ego, “being as it is” (Ta. *uḷḷapaḍi uḷḷadu*) means being without rising as ego and thereby without any other thoughts. In other words, it means being as we actually are, namely as pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*), which is *brahman*.

Therefore “*Being in the heart as it is alone is thinking*” (Ta. “*uḷḷattē uḷḷapaḍi uḷḷadē uḷḷal!*”) means that just being as we actually are without ever leaving the heart by rising as ego is alone *uḷḷal* (Ta. “thinking”, “meditating” or “investigating”), which is a metaphorical way of saying that this alone is true *brahma-dhyāna* (Sa. “meditation on *brahman*”) or *brahma-vicāra* (Sa. “investigation of *brahman*”). That is, since *brahman*, the “existing substance” (Ta. *uḷḷa-poru!* or Sa. *sat-vastu*), is nothing other than ourselves as we actually are, we can meditate upon it, investigate it and know it only by being as we actually are, without ever rising as ego.

In order to be as *brahman*, which is what we actually are, we need to cease rising as ego, and in order to cease rising as ego, we need to investigate ourselves, the source from which we have risen as ego, as Bhagavan points out in verse 27 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*:

*The state in which ‘I’ exists without rising is the state in which we exist as that. Without investigating the place where ‘I’ rises, how to reach the annihilation of oneself, in which ‘I’ does not rise? Without reaching, how to stand in the state of oneself, in which oneself is that? Say. [34]*

“*The state in which I exists without rising*” (Ta. “*nāṇ udiyādu uḷḷa nilai!*”) means the state in which we remain as we actually are without rising as ego, and this is “*the state in which we exist as that*” (Ta. “*nām adu-v-āy uḷḷa nilai!*”), meaning the state in which we exist as *brahman*, which is the same state that Bhagavan described in the first *maṅgalam* verse of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* as “*being in the heart as it is*” (Ta. “*uḷḷattē uḷḷapaḍi uḷḷadu!*”). This state in which “I” does not ever rise is “*the annihilation of oneself*” (Ta. “*taṅ-ṅ-irappai!*”), meaning the annihilation of ego, which we can achieve only by investigating ourselves, the source from which we have risen as “I”, as Bhagavan implies in the second sentence of this verse by asking rhetorically: “*Without investigating the place where I rises, how to reach the annihilation of oneself, in which I does not rise?*” (Ta. “*nāṇ udikkum thāṇam-adai nāḍāmal, nāṇ udiyā taṅ-ṅ-irappai sāravadu evaṅ?*”).

“*The place where I rises*” (Ta. “*nāṇ udikkum thāṇam!*”) is our own being, “I am”, and we can investigate it only by attending to ourselves in order to see what we actually are. Therefore the implication of this second sentence is that we can eradicate ego and thereby be as we actually are only by being keenly and steadfastly self-attentive.

The third sentence, “*Without reaching, how to stand in the state of oneself, in which oneself is that?*” (Ta. “*sārāmal, tāṇ adu ām taṅ nilaiyil nirpadu evaṅ?*”), implies that without achieving the annihilation of oneself as ego by investigating the source from which we have risen, we cannot remain firmly fixed in our real state, in which we are *brahman*. Therefore investigating ourselves in order to know and to be what we actually are is the correct application of what we are intended to understand after hearing and carefully considering the meaning and implication of the *mahāvākyas*: *prajñānaṁ brahma* (Sa. “awareness is *brahman*”), *ahaṁ brahmāsmi* (Sa. “I am *brahman*”), *tat tvam asi* (Sa. “that you are”) and *ayaṁ ātmā brahma* (Sa. “this self is *brahman*”).

## 17 We Cannot Know God Except by Turning Our Mind Back Within

God or *brahman* is the light of pure “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) that shines within our mind, giving it the light of “reflected awareness” (Sa. *cidābhāsa*) by which it knows all other things, so we cannot know God or *brahman* by any means other than turning our mind back within to face the light of pure awareness and thereby losing ourselves entirely in it, like the light reflected from a mirror being turned back to face the sun, its source, and thereby losing itself in the sunlight,

as Bhagavan implies by asking rhetorically in verse 22 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*:

*Except by, turning the mind back within, completely immersing it in God, who shines within that mind giving light to the mind, how to fathom God by the mind? Consider. [35]*

The light of awareness that is called “mind” or “ego” is not the original light of “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) but just an *ābhāsa* (Sa. “semblance”, “likeness” or “reflection”) of it, because the original light is pure awareness, which shines eternally without “adjuncts” (Sa. *upādhis*) as “I am” and which therefore never knows anything other than itself, whereas ego is that same light mixed and conflated with adjuncts as “I am this body” and therefore knows the seeming existence of other things. The original light of pure awareness is therefore like the pervading sunlight, whereas ego is like a limited beam of the same sunlight reflected from a mirror into a dark room. So long as the reflected beam of light is directed into the dark room, it can be used for knowing objects in that room, but if it is directed back towards the sun, its source, it will merge and be lost in the sunlight. Likewise, so long as ego directs its attention away from its source, which is always shining within it as “I am”, its adjunct-limited light of awareness can be used to know the appearance of other things, but if its attention is directed back within towards its source, “I am”, it will merge and be lost forever in the infinite light of pure awareness.

Since God or *brahman* is nothing other than our own being, “I am”, he is the sole reality of ego, so he can never be known by ego as an object, and hence ego can know him only by turning back within to face its own source and substance, “I am”, thereby subsiding and dissolving back into “I am”, as Bhagavan implied in the last sentence of the previous verse, namely verse 21 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*, “*Becoming food is seeing*” [36], meaning that it is only by being swallowed completely by God, the infinite light of pure awareness, that we can see or know him as he actually is.

## 18 The Practice of Self-Investigation

However, God will not take us as his food, meaning that he will not dissolve us back into himself, unless we are wholeheartedly willing to give ourselves entirely to him, and we can give ourselves entirely to him only by turning our mind (our power of attention) back within to face ourselves, the fundamental awareness “I am”, because only by doing so will we subside and dissolve back into the infinite light of pure

awareness in such a way that we never rise again. Only by turning back within in this way and thereby dissolving forever in our own being, “I am”, which is both the source and the substance of ego, will we see ourselves as we actually are, so the effort we make to thus turn back and keep our mind fixed firmly on ourselves is the only means by which we can investigate and know what we actually are, as Bhagavan clearly implies in the sixteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?* by defining what he means by the term *ātma-vicāra* (Sa. “self-investigation”), namely:

*The name ātma-vicāra is only for always keeping the mind on oneself. [37]*

In other words, self-investigation is the simple practice of always (or at least as constantly as possible) keeping our mind or attention fixed firmly on ourselves, in which “ourselves” (Sa. *ātmā*) means what we actually are, namely our fundamental awareness “I am”, which is our very being or existence. If we are not willing to keep our mind always fixed firmly on ourselves without ever allowing it to be diverted away towards anything else, that means that we are not yet willing to give ourselves entirely to God, thereby allowing him to dissolve us forever in himself, so we need to continue trying to keep our mind on ourselves as much as we can, because this is the only way in which we can cultivate the required willingness to do so. Patient and persistent practice of self-attentiveness is therefore essential, as Bhagavan implied in the first eight sentences of the sixth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

*Only by the investigation who am I will the mind cease; the thought who am I, destroying all other thoughts, will itself also in the end be destroyed like a corpse-burning stick. If other thoughts rise, without trying to complete them it is necessary to investigate to whom they have occurred. However many thoughts rise, so what? Vigilantly, as soon as each thought appears, if one investigates to whom it has occurred, it will be clear: to me. If one investigates who am I, the mind will return to its birthplace; the thought that had risen will also cease. When one practises and practises in this manner, for the mind the power to stand firmly established in its birthplace increases. [38]*

The reason that keeping our mind or attention fixed firmly on ourselves is called “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*) is because it is the only means by which we can know what we actually are, so we are observing or attending to ourselves in order to know who or what we actually are. For the same reason Bhagavan often referred to self-investigation as “the

investigation who am I" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇṇum vicāraṇai"), as he does in the first sentence of this paragraph: "Only by the investigation who am I will the mind cease" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇṇum vicāraṇaiyīṇāl-ē-y-ē maṇam aḍaṅgum"). As we saw earlier (in section 5), aḍaṅgu means both "subside" and "cease", so it can mean subside either partially or completely, and when it means subside completely or cease, it can mean cease either temporarily or permanently. In this case it means cease permanently, because though there are other means by which the mind can subside partially or completely but temporarily, the only means by which it can subside completely and permanently is self-investigation.

In the second sentence, "the thought who am I, destroying all other thoughts, will itself also in the end be destroyed like a corpse-burning stick" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇṇum niṇaiṇu maṭṭra niṇaiṇuḡaḷai y-ellām aṛittu-p piṇaṅ-cuḍu taḍi-pōl muḍivil tāṇ-um aṛiyum"), "the thought who am I" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇṇum niṇaiṇu") is a metaphorical description of the investigation who am I (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇṇum vicāraṇai"), because directing our attention towards anything other than ourself is a thought, meaning it is a mental activity, so directing our attention back towards ourself can be described metaphorically as a thought, even though it is actually not a mental activity but a cessation of all mental activity. In this context, therefore, "the thought who am I" implies the effort we make to keep our mind fixed firmly on ourself in order to know what we actually are, and since the mind will subside to the extent to which it is thus fixed firmly on ourself, this effort that we make to be steadfastly self-attentive will eventually destroy the mind entirely, as Bhagavan implies in the adverbial clause "destroying all other thoughts" (Ta. "maṭṭra niṇaiṇuḡaḷai y-ellām aṛittu").

When the effort we make to investigate who am I has thereby destroyed all other thoughts, it "will itself also in the end be destroyed" (Ta. "muḍivil tāṇ-um aṛiyum"), because it is only as ego that we can make such effort, so when ego, which is the first thought and the root of all other thoughts, is destroyed together with all its progeny, its effort to keep its attention fixed firmly on itself will be destroyed along with it. The analogy he uses to illustrate this, "like a corpse-burning stick" (Ta. "piṇaṅ-cuḍu taḍi-pōl"), refers to a stick that is used to stir a funeral pyre to ensure that the corpse is burnt completely, because the stirring end of such a stick will gradually be burnt, so once the stick has served its purpose it will be discarded on the pyre and will thereby be burnt entirely on the dying embers.

"If other thoughts rise" (Ta. "piṇa v-eṇṇaṅgaḷ eṇṇudāl") means if our attention is diverted away from ourself towards any-

thing else, because what he means by "thought" is a mental impression or mental phenomenon of any kind whatsoever, so since all phenomena are mental impressions, everything other than ourself is a thought in this sense. What he means by "investigating to whom" (Ta. "yārukku eṇḍru vicārip-padu") is turning our attention back towards ourself, the one to whom all other things appear, and having turned our attention back to ourself, we need to keep it fixed firmly on ourself without allowing it to be diverted away towards anything else, which is what he means by "investigating who am I" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇḍru vicārippadu").

If we thus keep our mind fixed firmly on ourself without allowing it to be diverted away towards anything else, it will thereby subside back into our own being, "I am", which is its "birthplace" (Ta. piṇappiḍam), meaning the source from which it had risen, as he implies by saying: "If one investigates who am I, the mind will return to its birthplace" (Ta. "nāṇ-ār eṇḍru vicārittāl maṇam taṇ piṇappiḍattirku-t tirumbi-ṇiḍum"). Since whatever thought had arisen will thereby be deprived of our attention, it too will subside, as he says in the next sentence: "the thought that had risen will also cease" (Ta. "eṇṇuṇḍa v-eṇṇamum aḍaṅgi-ṇiḍum").

If we patiently and persistently continue practising "self-investigation" (Sa. ātma-vicāra) in this manner, trying to keep our attention fixed firmly on ourself, and turning it back towards ourself whenever it is diverted away towards anything else whatsoever, we will thereby cultivate the power of love that is required to keep our mind fixed on ourself so firmly that it becomes less and less inclined to be diverted away towards anything else, as he implies by saying: "When one practises and practises in this manner, for the mind the power to stand firmly established in its birthplace increases" (Ta. "ippaḍi-p paṇaga-p paṇaga maṇattirku-t taṇ piṇappiḍattil taṅgi niṇḡum śakti y-adhikarikkiṇḍradu").

The reason why such patient and persistent practice is necessary is that volitional "inclinations" (Sa. vāsanās) have no strength of their own, because whatever strength they seem to have is strength that they derive from us, and they derive their strength from us to the extent to which we allow ourself to be swayed by them. That is, the more we allow ourself to be swayed by any particular inclination, the stronger it becomes, and the more we refrain from being swayed by it, the weaker it becomes. Inclinations to seek happiness in and therefore attend to anything other than ourself (namely viṣayas: "objects" or "phenomena") are called viṣaya-vāsanās, whereas the inclination to seek happiness in and therefore attend to our own "being" (Sa. sat) is called sat-vāsanā. Therefore when we attend to anything



other than ourself, we are being swayed by our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, whereas when we attend to ourself and thereby subside in our own being, we are being swayed by our *sat-vāsanā*.

The more we allow ourself to be swayed by our *sat-vāsanā*, therefore, the stronger it will thereby become, and the stronger it becomes, the more we will be inclined to be swayed by it. Moreover, to the extent to which we attend to ourself, we are thereby refraining from attending to anything else, so by being self-attentive we are not only strengthening our *sat-vāsanā* but correspondingly weakening our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, as Bhagavan implies in the tenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

*Even though viṣaya-vāsanās, which come from time immemorial, rise in countless numbers like ocean-waves, they will all be destroyed when self-attentiveness [Sa. svarūpa-dhyāna] increases and increases. Without giving room even to the doubting thought 'So many vāsanās ceasing, is it possible to be only as svarūpa?' it is necessary to cling tenaciously to self-attentiveness [Sa. svarūpa-dhyāna]. However great a sinner one may be, if instead of lamenting and weeping 'I am a sinner! How am I going to be saved?' one completely rejects the thought that one is a sinner and is steadfast in self-attentiveness [Sa. svarūpa-dhyāna], one will certainly be reformed. [39]*

Since all mental activity occurs under the sway of a vast array of *viṣaya-vāsanās*, they are constantly rising or appearing in the mind in countless numbers like waves in an ocean, as Bhagavan says here.

Etymologically *svarūpa* means “own form”, so it is generally used in the sense of “real nature”, and when it is used on its own, as in this context, it implies *ātma-svarūpa*, “the real nature of oneself”, meaning ourself as we actually are, namely pure being-awareness, “I am”. Therefore *svarūpa-dhyāna* means “meditation or contemplation on our real nature”, and since our real nature is pure being, which is what shines within us as our fundamental awareness “I am”, *svarūpa-dhyāna* in effect means “self-attentiveness”. Therefore the first sentence of this paragraph, “*Even though viṣaya-vāsanās, which come from time immemorial, rise in countless numbers like ocean-waves, they will all be destroyed when svarūpa-dhyāna increases and increases*” (Ta. “*tōṇḍrutoṭṭu varugiṇḍra viṣaya-vāsaṇaigaḷ aḷavaṭṭraṇavāy-k kaḍal-alaigaḷ pōl tōṇḍriṇum avai-yāvum sorūpa-dhyāṇam kiḷamba-k kiḷamba ariṇdu-viḍum*”), implies that to the extent to which we keep our mind or attention fixed firmly on ourself, our *viṣaya-*

*vāsanās* will thereby be weakened and will eventually be destroyed.

Therefore without giving room to the rising of any other thoughts, such as the doubt whether it is possible for us to succeed in this endeavour, “*it is necessary to cling tenaciously to self-attentiveness*” (Ta. “*sorūpa-dhyāṇattai viḍā-p-piḍiyāy-p piḍikka vēṇḍum*”), because “*if one is steadfast in self-attentiveness, one will certainly be reformed*” (Ta. “*sorūpa-dhyāṇattil ūkkam uḷḷavaṇāha v-irundāl avaṇ niścayamāy uru-p-paḍu-vāṇ*”). Such tenacity and steadfastness in this practice are necessary because time and time again, under the sway of our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, our attention will inevitably be diverted away from ourself towards other things, so whenever it is diverted we need to steadfastly turn it back towards ourself and then cling tenaciously to self-attentiveness. Tenacious perseverance in this practice is therefore necessary until all our *viṣaya-vāsanās* are destroyed without leaving a trace (meaning destroyed along with ego, their root), as Bhagavan says in the eleventh paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*:

*As long as viṣaya-vāsanās exist within the mind, so long is the investigation who am I necessary. As and when thoughts appear, then and there it is necessary to annihilate them all by investigation [Sa. vicāraṇā] in the very place from which they arise. Not attending to anything other is dispassion [Sa. vairāgya] or desirelessness [Sa. nirāśā]; not leaving oneself is awareness [Sa. jñāna]. In truth both are just one. Just as pearl-divers, tying stones to their waists and sinking, pick up pearls that are found at the bottom of the ocean, so each one, sinking deep within oneself with vairāgya, may obtain the self-pearl [Ta. ātma-muttu]. If one clings fast to uninterrupted self-remembrance [Sa. svarūpa-smaraṇa] until one attains svarūpa, that alone is sufficient. So long as enemies are within the fortress, they will be continuously coming out from it. If one is continuously cutting them all down as and when they come, the fortress will be captured. [40]*

Since ego is the root of all *viṣaya-vāsanās*, being the one whose *vāsanās* they are, and since the very nature of ego is to have *viṣaya-vāsanās*, they cannot all be destroyed until ego itself is destroyed. Therefore the first sentence of this paragraph, “*As long as viṣaya-vāsanās exist within the mind, so long is the investigation who am I necessary*” (Ta. “*maṇattinṅaṇ edu-varaiyil viṣaya-vāsaṇaigaḷ irukkiṇḍraṇavō, adu-varaiyil nāṇ-ār eṇṇum vicāraṇai-y-um vēṇḍum*”), implies that so long as we continue to rise and stand as ego, it is necessary for us to investigate and know what we actually are.

Since thoughts rise from ourself under the sway of our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, in order to annihilate all of them in the very place from which they arise, we need to cling to self-attentiveness so firmly that we thereby do not allow our attention to be diverted away from ourself towards anything else under the sway of our *viṣaya-vāsanās*. That is, *viṣaya-vāsanās* will continue trying to rise and distract our attention away towards other things even when we are self-attentive, but so long as we keep our attention fixed firmly on ourself, we thereby do not allow our attention to be distracted by them, so they gradually lose their strength.

“Not attending to anything other” (Ta. “*aṅṅiyattai nāḍādiruttal*”) means not attending to anything other than ourself, and since we attend to other things under the sway of our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, which are the seeds that give rise to likes, dislikes, desires and so on, not attending to anything other than ourself is true *vairāgya* (Sa. “dispassion” or “detachment”) or *nirāsā* (Sa. “desirelessness”). “Not leaving oneself” or “not letting go of oneself” (Ta. “*tanṅai viḍādiruttal*”) means not ever allowing our attention to be diverted away from ourself, and since by keeping our attention fixed on ourself so firmly we do not give any room to the rising of ego, this is *jñāna* (Sa. “true knowledge” or “real awareness”). Since not leaving (or letting go of) ourself means not attending to anything other than ourself, he says “*In truth both are just one*” (Ta. “*uṅmaiyl iraṇḍum oṇḍrē*”), meaning that in this sense *vairāgya* and *jñāna* are one and the same.

Desire to attend to anything other than ourself is what prevents us clinging firmly to self-attentiveness and thereby sinking into the innermost depth of our own being, so without *vairāgya* (Sa. “freedom from such desire”) we cannot sink deep enough to know what we actually are. Therefore Bhagavan compares *vairāgya* to the stones that pearl-divers tie to their waists in order to sink deep enough to pick up pearls that are found at the bottom of the ocean, saying that in this way “*each one, sinking deep within oneself with vairāgya, may obtain the self-pearl*” (Ta. “*o-vv-oruvaṇum vairāggiyattuḍaṅ taṅṅu! ḷ-ārṇdu mūrki ātma-muttai y-aḍaiyalām*”), in which “self-pearl” (Ta. *ātma-muttu*) means the pearl that is “one’s own real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*).

All we need do, therefore, is to cling firmly and uninterruptedly to self-attentiveness, as he assures us by saying “*if one clings fast to uninterrupted self-remembrance until one attains svarūpa, that alone is sufficient*” (Ta. “*oruvan tāṅ sorūpattai y-aḍaiyum varaiyil niraṅtara sorūpa-smaraṇaiyai-k kai-p-paṭṭruvāṅ-āyiṅ adu-v-oṇḍrē pōdum*”), in which “self-remembrance” (Sa. *svarūpa-smaraṇa*) means keeping our mind fixed firmly on “our real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*), namely our own being,

“I am”. Though our real nature is always shining clearly as “I am”, we generally overlook it because of our interest in attending to other things, so the remedy for such self-negligence or self-forgetfulness is constant self-remembrance.

In the final two sentences of this paragraph he gives an analogy and leaves it to us to understand what it implies: “*So long as enemies are within the fortress, they will be continuously coming out from it. If one is continuously cutting them all down as and when they come, the fortress will be captured*”. The fortress is our own heart, and the enemies within it are our *viṣaya-vāsanās*. If a fortress is being besieged, the enemies in it will not come out if they have sufficient food and water, but if they have no food and water, they will have to come out in search of them. Since *viṣaya-vāsanās* are our inclinations to attend to things other than ourself, the food and water on which they live is the attention we give to other things, so there is no food and water for them in the fortress of our heart. In order to get their food and water, therefore, they need to come out and divert our attention away from ourself towards other things, but if we cling firmly and uninterruptedly to self-attentiveness, we will thereby not allow ourself to be swayed by them, and thus we will be “*continuously cutting them all down as and when they come*” (Ta. “*vara vara avargaḷai-y-ellām veṭṭi-k-koṇḍu*”), and thereby eventually “*the fortress will be captured*” (Ta. “*kōṭṭai kaivaśa-p-paḍum*”), meaning that we will regain “our real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*), having vanquished ego and its army of *viṣaya-vāsanās*.

## 19 The essential role of grace

This path of self-investigation and self-surrender is therefore a battle being fought within our own will between our *sat-vāsanā* and our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, and both of them are vying for our support. When we are self-attentive, we are being swayed by our *sat-vāsanā* and thereby strengthening it, and when we attend to anything else, we are being swayed by our *viṣaya-vāsanās* and thereby strengthening them.

Since we cannot rise, stand or flourish as ego without grasping things other than ourself, as Bhagavan implies in verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu* (cited above in section 6), it is the very nature of ourself as ego to have *viṣaya-vāsanās* and to be constantly swayed by them. Therefore having *sat-vāsanā* and being swayed by it is contrary to the very nature of ourself as ego, so whereas *viṣaya-vāsanās* originate from ego, *sat-vāsanā* does not originate from ego but only from our own real nature, which is pure “being” (Sa. *sat*).

This is why Bhagavan said that grace is essential, because grace is our real nature, being the love that we as we actually are have for ourself as we actually are. That is, what we actually are is what is called God or *guru*, and in his clear view we are nothing other than himself, so he sees us as himself and accordingly loves us as himself. The infinite love that he has for us as himself is what we experience as his grace, and it is only from this infinite love, which is our own real nature, that *sat-vāsanā* can arise in our heart, because *sat-vāsanā* is love to attend to our own being and thereby to subside and lose ourself in it.

Therefore the grace of God or *guru* is what is working in our heart in the form of *sat-vāsanā*, so the battle being fought within our own will between our *sat-vāsanā* and our *viṣaya-vāsanās* is actually a battle being fought in our heart between grace and our ego-nature, which is why Bhagavan referred to it as “*the warfare of grace*” (Ta. “*aruḷ-pōrāṭṭam*”) in verse 74 of *Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*:

*Arunachala, in the common space devoid of going and coming show the warfare of grace. [41]*

The “*common space devoid of going and coming*” (Ta. “*pōkkum varavum il podu veli*”) is the heart, the infinite and eternally immutable space of pure awareness, which never goes (ceases to exist) or comes (begins to exist), and in which, having known it as our own real nature, we will know that we could never have gone out anywhere or come back. Since God or *guru* will never cease fighting the warfare of grace to save us until he achieves victory, destroying in us the vast army of demons, namely ego and all its *viṣaya-vāsanās*, in this verse Bhagavan prays from the perspective of a devotee to be shown this warfare, which will certainly end in victory for grace.

Therefore, when we are struggling to cling firmly to self-attentiveness and often seem to be fighting a losing battle to avoid being constantly swayed by our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, we should find courage in remembering that the all-mighty power of grace is on our side, so if we persevere in trying our best to be self-attentive, victory is assured. No matter how difficult it may seem to be, all we need do is to keep on trying to be self-attentive as much as we can, because so long as we are trying, we are thereby cooperating with grace, allowing it to do its work unimpeded. That is, grace will do everything that is required to save us from the snares of ego and its *viṣaya-vāsanās*, but we have to play our small part by yielding ourself to it, as Bhagavan assures us while also cautioning us in the twelfth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*:

*God and guru are in truth not different. Just as what has been caught in the jaws of a tiger will not return, so those who have been caught in the look of guru's grace will never be forsaken but will surely be saved by him; nevertheless, it is necessary to walk unfailingly in accordance with the path that guru has shown. [42]*

The path that *guru* has shown is the path of investigating what we actually are by keeping our mind fixed firmly on ourself and thereby surrendering ourself completely to God, as Bhagavan implies in the first sentence of the next paragraph, namely the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?* (cited above in section 11), so this is the means by which we can yield ourself to the grace of *guru*, refraining from rising as ego and thereby obstructing its work. That is, since grace has sown the seed of *sat-vāsanā* in our heart and is working within us in the form of *sat-vāsanā*, yielding ourself to grace means yielding to the inward pull of *sat-vāsanā*, so to the extent to which we attend to ourself under the sway of *sat-vāsanā*, we are thereby yielding ourself to grace.

## 20 This Path of Self-Investigation Is Exceedingly Easy

Since there is nothing in our experience that is clearer or more self-evident than our fundamental awareness of our own being, ‘I am’, there cannot be anything easier for us than to attend to this fundamental awareness, which is ourself as we actually are, as he points in verse 4 of *Āṅma-Vid-dai*:

*For the bonds beginning with action to be untied, to rise from the devastation beginning with birth, more than whatever path, this path is what is exceedingly easy. When one just is, resting without the least action of mind, speech or body, ah, in the heart the light of oneself alone. The eternal experience. Fear does not exist. The ocean of bliss alone. [43]*

“*For the bonds beginning with action to be untied*” (Ta. “*kaṅma-ādi kaṭṭu aviira*”) means for us to unravel and free ourself from the ties that bind us to “action” (Sa. *karma*) and all that results from it, namely the whole of *samsāra*, the continuous cycle of births and deaths and all that it entails. Likewise, “*to rise from the devastation beginning with birth*” (Ta. “*jeṅma-ādi naṭṭam eira*”) means for us to rise up, awaken or be resuscitated from this degraded, devastating and miserable state of embodied existence or *samsāra*, each round of which begins with birth and ends with death. For achieving such liberation, says Bhagavan, “*more than*

whatever path, this path is what is exceedingly easy” (Ta. “*e-m-mārggam-adanīnum i-m-mārggam mikku eḷidu*”), in which “this path” (Ta. “*i-m-mārggam*”) refers to the path of “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*).

Why this path of self-investigation is so much easier than any other spiritual path is that, unlike in all other kinds of spiritual practice, in this path we need not and should not rise as ego to do anything, but just need to subside and be as we actually are by keeping our mind fixed firmly on our own being, “I am”, as he implies in the second sentence of this verse, “*When one just is, resting without the least action of mind, speech or body, ah, in the heart the light of oneself alone*” (Ta. “*sol māṇada taṇuviṇ kaṇma-ādi siṛidu inḍri summā amarndu irukka, ammā, ahattil āṇma-jyōtiyē*”), in which “in the heart the light of oneself alone” (Ta. “*ahattil āṇma-jyōtiyē*”) implies that in our heart the light of pure awareness alone will shine forth as ourself. This *ātma-jyōti* (Sa. “self-light” or “light of ourself”), namely the “light of pure awareness”, which is what we actually are, is our eternal experience and the ocean of infinite happiness, in which fear never exists, as he implies in the next three phrases: “*the eternal experience*” (Ta. “*nita aṇubhūtiyē*”), “*fear does not exist*” (Ta. “*irādu bhītiyē*”) and “*the ocean of bliss alone*” (Ta. “*iṅba ambhōdhiyē*”).

## 21 Investigating Ourself Is Giving Up Everything

However, though this practice is extremely easy, for most of us it seems to be difficult, because to be keenly and steadily self-attentive requires all-consuming love to know and to be what we actually are and consequent willingness to surrender ourself as ego completely, since to the extent to which we attend to ourself we as ego will thereby subside back within and eventually dissolve forever in the infinite light of pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*). Therefore, as Bhagavan points out in verse 26 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, investigating what we actually are entails giving up everything, including ourself as ego:

*If ego comes into existence, everything comes into existence; if ego does not exist, everything does not exist. Ego itself is everything. Therefore, know that investigating what this is alone is giving up everything. [44]*

In this context “everything” means everything other than ourself, namely all forms, objects or phenomena. All such things seem to exist only in the view of ourself as ego, because they seem to exist only in waking and dream, when

we have risen and are standing as ego, and do not seem to exist at all in sleep, when we as ego have subsided and dissolved temporarily in our source. Though we assume in waking and dream that phenomena continued to exist in sleep, that is only an assumption and not our experience, and if we consider the matter carefully and deeply enough, it will be clear to us that we do not have and never can have any evidence that anything exists independent of our awareness of it, or in other words, outside the field of our awareness. Like all other ideas, even the idea that anything does or could exist outside the field of our awareness is just a transitory phenomenon that can appear and disappear only in the field of our awareness.

According to Bhagavan, all phenomena are just thoughts in the sense of mental impressions, and mental impressions cannot exist without the mind. Since the perceiving or knowing element of the mind is ego, mental impressions are known only by ego, so it is only in the view of ourself as ego that mental impressions seem to exist. This is why he says in this verse that if ego comes into existence, everything comes into existence, and if ego does not exist, nothing else (no forms, objects or phenomena) exists.

Therefore Bhagavan taught us that what we now take to be our waking state is actually just a dream, and it is reasonable for us to accept this teaching, because there is nothing that we experience in this waking state that we could not equally well experience in dream. In a dream we, the dreaming mind or ego, see ourself as all the dream phenomena, and likewise in our present state, we as ego see ourself as all these phenomena, so in this verse Bhagavan says: “*Ego itself is everything*” (Ta. “*ahandai-y-ē yāvum ām*”).

If we as ego investigate ourself keenly enough, ego will thereby cease to exist (as he implied in the previous verse, namely verse 25 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, by saying “*If sought, it will take flight*” [45]) and we will remain eternally as what we always actually are, namely pure “being-awareness” (Sa. *sat-cit*). Therefore, since ego will cease to exist when we investigate it keenly enough, and since nothing else can exist without ego, he concludes this verse by pointing out: “*Therefore, know that investigating what this is alone is giving up everything*” (Ta. “*ādalāl, yādu idu eṇḍru nāḍal-ē ōvudal yāvum eṇa ōr*”), in which “this” (Ta. *idu*) refers to ego.

Therefore, though self-investigation is actually very easy, it entails giving up everything, including ourself as ego, so unless we are wholeheartedly willing to give up everything in order to know and to be what we actually are, we will be unwilling to investigate ourself deeply enough, and hence it

will seem to us to be very difficult. If we have a sharp knife, it will be easy for us to cut the hard outer covering of a watermelon, so it should be at least as easy if not easier for us to cut the relatively soft tissues of our own throat. However, for most of us cutting our own throat would seem to be very difficult, but only because we are not willing to do so.

Self-investigation is like this sharp knife. It has been given to us by Bhagavan to use like a surgeon's scalpel to excise the cancer called ego, which is the root and foundation of all our problems and the ultimate obstacle that stands between us and our own real nature, preventing us from experiencing the infinite and eternal happiness that we actually are. However, this ego that we are to excise with the sharp scalpel of self-investigation is what we now seem to be, so in order to use this scalpel to eradicate it, we must be wholeheartedly willing to surrender ourselves completely, and we will be so willing only when we have all-consuming "love" (Sa. *bhakti*) to know and to be what we always actually are.

## 22 Subsiding Deep Within Is Alone True Goodness

So long as we still have any liking to experience or be aware of anything other than ourselves, we do not yet have to a sufficient extent the wholehearted and all-consuming love that is required for us to surrender ourselves completely, so we need to continue to patiently and persistently practise self-investigation, because the more we practise it, the more we will thereby subside back within, and the more we subside back within, the weaker our liking to rise to experience anything other than ourselves will become. Therefore this path of self-investigation and self-surrender is the path of complete subsidence, which is what is otherwise called the path of *nivṛtti* (Sa. "returning", "coming back" or "ceasing"), which means withdrawing back within and thereby abstaining from all *pravṛtti* (Sa. "outwardly directed activity").

The more we humbly subside back within instead of rising and rushing outwards as ego, the closer we thereby come to being as we actually are, as Bhagavan implies in the final paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*:

*If oneself rises, everything rises; if oneself subsides, everything subsides. To whatever extent sinking low we behave, to that extent there is goodness. If one is continuously subduing the mind, wherever one may be one can be. [46]*

*"If oneself rises, everything rises"* (Ta. "tāṅ eṛundāl sakalam-um eṛum") means that if we rise as ego, everything else (namely all forms, objects or phenomena) will rise along with us, and *"if oneself subsides, everything subsides"* (Ta. "tāṅ aḍaṅgiṅāl sakalam-um aḍaṅgum"), in which the verb *aḍaṅgu* means both "subside" and "cease", means that if we as ego subside and cease to exist, everything else will subside and cease to exist along with us. Thus what Bhagavan teaches us in these two sentences is what he also teaches us in the first two sentences of verse 26 of *Uḷḷadu Nāṅpadu*:

*If ego comes into existence, everything comes into existence; if ego does not exist, everything does not exist. [47]*

In the third sentence, *"To whatever extent sinking low we behave, to that extent there is goodness"* (Ta. "evvaḷavukke-vaḷavu tāṅdu naḍakkirōmō avvaḷavukkavvaḷavu naṅmai-y-uṅḍu"), the adverbial participle *tāṅdu* means "sinking low", "sinking deep", "descending", "diminishing", "decreasing", "bending", "bowing down" or "being subdued", so it implies "being subdued and humble by subsiding back deep within ourselves"; though the verb *naḍa* literally means "walk" or "pass by", it is often used in the sense of "behave" or "conduct oneself", so in this context *naḍakkirōm* means "we behave", "we conduct ourselves" or "we pass through this life"; and *naṅmai* literally means "goodness" but can also imply "benefit" or "virtue". Therefore what Bhagavan implies in this sentence is that to the extent to which we humbly subside deep within ourselves and live our life accordingly, to that extent there is goodness, meaning not only moral goodness but also all the happiness and other benefits that result from it, so in this context all that is good is implied in this word "goodness" (Ta. *naṅmai*). That is, our rising as ego is the root cause of all "badness" (Ta. *tīmai*), meaning not only wickedness, evil and sin but also all the suffering, misery and other bad things that result from it, so to the extent to which we rise as ego, there is badness, and hence subsiding back into the innermost depth of our own being is alone the sum total of all real goodness. The implication of this sentence is therefore the same as the implication of the final sentence of the note that he wrote for his mother, *"Therefore being silent is good"* (Ta. "āhaliṅ maṅamāy irukkai naṅḍru"), namely that true goodness lies only in subsiding back within and thereby silently being as we always actually are.

In the fourth and final sentence, *"If one is continuously subduing the mind, wherever one may be one can be"* (Ta. "maṅat-tai y-aḍakki-k-koṅḍirundāl, eṅḡē y-irundālum irukkālām"), the verb *aḍakku* is the causative of *aḍaṅgu*, which is the verb he

used in the second sentence of this paragraph, so it means “to cause to subside or cease”, or in other words, “to subdue, curb, restrain, constrain or prevent the rising of”, so *maṇattai y-aḍakki* means “subduing the mind” in the sense of curbing it by preventing its rising; in this context *koṇḍu* is an auxiliary that implies continuity, so *maṇattai y-aḍakki-k-koṇḍirundāl* means “if one is continuously subduing the mind”, thereby implying “if one continuously keeps the mind subsided by preventing it from rising”; and the final word, *irukkalām*, means both “one can be” (in the sense “it is proper to be”) and “may one be” or “let one be”. Therefore this sentence implies that if we continuously keep the mind subsided, it does not matter where we happen to be, because whatever the outward circumstances may be, inwardly we will continue to be as we always actually are, unaffected by the appearance or disappearance of anything else.

Therefore what Bhagavan emphasises in this final paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?* is the need for us to always remain subsided deep within our own being, and as he repeatedly made clear in his teachings, such as in many of the passages I have discussed here, the only adequate means by which we can be permanently subsided without ever rising again as ego is the simple practice of investigating oneself and thereby knowing oneself as we always actually are.

## 23 Conclusion

The “firmly established conclusion” (Sa. *siddhānta*) of Bhagavan’s teachings, the final end and centre towards which all their various strands are pointing us, like the spokes of a wheel all pointing towards the unmoving axle in the centre of its hub, is eternal “silence” (Sa. *mauna*), the motionless state of just being as we always actually are without ever rising as ego, so it cannot be grasped by thought or adequately expressed in words, but can only be experienced in our heart, as our heart, by our heart. In other words, this eternal silence of pure being is the heart, which is what we actually are, so we cannot know it or experience it by any means other than just being as we actually are.

However, to summarise briefly in words the conclusion of all the various pointers provided in his teachings that I have discussed in this paper, in order to subside and lose oneself forever in this eternal silence of pure being, we need to know oneself as we actually are, and in order to know oneself as we actually are we need to investigate oneself by keenly and steadily attending to our own being, “I am”. This simple practice of self-investigation, which is the only means by which we can surrender oneself completely and

forever to God or *guru*, who is what we always actually are, is therefore the very heart of Bhagavan Ramana’s teachings. It is the ultimate practice on the path of “devotion” (Sa. *bhakti*), because to the extent to which we attend to ourselves, we thereby subside back within, so only when our entire attention is fixed on oneself so firmly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything else whatsoever will we subside completely and dissolve forever in our own being, which is the “real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*) both of oneself and of God, and also because of the simple reason that attending to oneself is therefore attending to God as he actually is, as Bhagavan points out in verse 15 of *Upadēśa Tanippākaḷ*:

*Self-investigation [Sa. ātma-anusāṁdhāna] is supreme devotion to God [Sa. para īśa-bhakti], because God exists as oneself [Sa. ātman]. [48]*

Since our own “being” (Sa. *sat*) is not only pure “awareness” (Sa. *cit*) but also infinite and eternal “happiness” (Sa. *ānanda*) and “love” (Sa. *priyam*), subsiding and dissolving forever in our own being and thereby being as we always actually are is attainment of the infinite happiness that we all long for and are seeking through each and every one of our various endeavours, so this is the *summum bonum*, and it can be attained only by the grace of God, which is the infinite love that we as we actually are have for ourselves as we actually are. Such grace is always available to us, because it is our own real nature, but in order to avail ourselves of it, we need to yield ourselves to the magnetic power of its inward pull by trying constantly to turn within with heart-melting love in order to see ourselves as we actually are, as Bhagavan teaches us repeatedly in all his original writings, such as in verses 15, 16, 43 and 44 of *Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*:

*Arunachala, who can see you, who, being the eye to the eye, sees without eyes? See. [49]*

*Arunachala, like a magnet iron, forcibly seizing me, uniting without leaving, may you be with me. [50]*

*Arunachala, oneself alone, oneself alone is what is real. May you yourself show this. [51]*

*Arunachala, you said: ‘Turning back inside, see yourself daily with the inner eye; it will be known! What! [52]*

## Notes

- [1] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para. 1):

சகல ஜீவர்களும் துக்கமென்ப  
தின்றி எப்போதும் சுகமாயிருக்க  
விரும்புவதாலும், யாவருக்கும்  
தன்னிடத்திலேயே பரம பிரிய  
மிருப்பதாலும், பிரியத்திற்கு சுகமே  
காரண மாதலாலும், மனமற்ற  
நித்திரையில் தின மனுபவிக்கும் தன்  
சுபாவமான அச் சுகத்தை யடையத்  
தன்னைத் தானறிதல் வேண்டும்.  
அதற்கு நானார் என்னும் ஞான  
விசாரமே முக்கிய சாதனம்.

Original text transliteration: *sakala jīvargaḷum duḥkham eṇbadu iṇḍri eppōdum sukham-āy irukka virumbuvadālum, yāvarukkum taṇ-ṇ-iḍattil-ē-y-ē parama piriyam iruppādālum, piriyattirku sukham-ē kāraṇam ādalālum, maṇam aṭṭra niddiraiyil diṇam aṇubhavikkum taṇ subhāvam āṇa a-c-sukhattai y-aḍaiya-t taṇṇai-t tāṇ aṭṭal vēṇḍum. aḍarku nāṇ-ār eṇṇum ṇāṇa-vicāram-ē mukkiya sādhaṇam.*

- [2] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 5; first two sentences, word-separation *padacchēdam*):

உடல் பஞ்ச கோச உரு. அதனால், உடல்  
என்னும் சொல்லில் ஐந்தும் ஒடுங்கும்.

Original text transliteration: *uḍal pañca kōśa uru. aḍaṇāl, uḍal eṇṇum sollil aindum oḍuṅgum.*

- [3] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 16):

வெளி விடயங்களை விட்டு  
மனம் தன் ஒளி உரு ஓர்தலே  
உண்மை உணர்ச்சி ஆம்.

Original text transliteration: *veḷi viḍayaṅḷai viṭṭu maṇam taṇ oḷi-uru ōrdalē uṇmai uṇarcci ām.*

- [4] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 13):

இலயமும் நாசம் இரண்டு ஆம்  
ஒடுக்கம். இலயித்து உளது எழும்.  
எழாது உரு மாய்ந்ததேல்.

Original text transliteration: *ilayam-um nāsam iraṇḍu ām oḍukkam. ilayittu uḷadu eṇum. eṇādu uru māyṇdadēl.*

- [5] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 17):

மனத்தின் உருவை மறவாது  
உசாவ, மனம் என ஒன்று இலை.  
மார்க்கம் நேர் ஆர்க்கும் இது.

Original text transliteration: *maṇattin uruvai maṇavādu usāva, maṇam eṇa oṇḍru ilai. mārggam nēr ārkum idu.*

- [6] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v.1):

ஒடுக்க வளியை ஒடுங்கும் உளத்தை  
விடுக்கவே ஓர் வழி, வீயும் அதன் உரு.

Original text transliteration: *oḍukka vaḷiyai oḍuṅgum uḷattai viḍukka-v-ē ōr vaṇi, vīyum aḍaṇ uru.*

- [7] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para.8; first four and final sentences):

மனம் அடங்குவதற்கு விசாரணையைத்  
தவிர வேறு தகுந்த உபாயங்களில்லை.  
மற்ற உபாயங்களினால் அடக்கினால்  
மனம் அடங்கினாற்போ லிருந்து,  
மறுபடியும் கிளம்பிவிடும்.  
பிராணாயாமத்தாலும் மன மடங்கும்;  
ஆனால் பிராண னடங்கியிருக்கும்  
வரையில் மனமு மடங்கியிருந்து,  
பிராணன் வெளிப்படும்போது தானும்  
வெளிப்பட்டு வாசனை வயத்தா  
யலையும். [...] ஆகையால் பிராணாயாமம்  
மனத்தை யடக்க சகாயமாகுமே  
யன்றி மனோநாசஞ் செய்யாது.

Original text transliteration: *maṇam aḍaṅguvadarku vicāraṇaiyai-t tavira vēru tahunda upāyaṅḷai-illai. maṭṭra upāyaṅḷaiṇāḷ aḍakkiṇāḷ maṇam aḍaṅḷiṇāḷ-pōl irundu, maṇupaḍiyum kiḷambi-viḍum. pirāṇāyāmattāl-um maṇam aḍaṅḷum; āṇāl pirāṇaṇ aḍaṅḷi-y-irukkum varaiyil maṇam-um aḍaṅḷi-y-irundu, pirāṇaṇ veḷi-p-paḍum-bōdu tāṇ-um veḷi-p-paṭṭu vāsaṇai vayattāy alaiyum... āhaiyāl pirāṇāyāmam maṇattai y-aḍakka sahāyam-āhum-ē y-aṇḍri maṇōnāśam seyyādu.*

- [8] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para. 6; first sentence):  
நானார் என்னும் விசாரணையினாலேயே  
மன மடங்கும்.

Original text transliteration: *nāṇ-ār eṇṇum  
vicāraṇaiyiṇāl-ē-y-ē maṇam aḍaṅgum.*

- [9] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 25):

உரு பற்றி உண்டாம்; உரு பற்றி நிற்கும்;  
உரு பற்றி உண்டு மிக ஓங்கும்; உரு  
விட்டு, உரு பற்றும்; தேடினால் ஓட்டம்  
பிடிக்கும். உரு அற்ற பேய் அகந்தை. ஓர்.

Original text transliteration: *uru paṭṭi uṇḍām; uru  
paṭṭi niṅkum; uru paṭṭi uṇḍu miha oṅgum; uru viṭṭu, uru  
paṭṭum; tēḍiṇāl oṭṭam piḍikkum. uru aṭṭa pēy ahandai. ōr.*

- [10] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 2):

வினையின் விளைவு விளிவு  
உற்று வித்தாய் வினை கடல்  
வீழ்த்திடும். வீடு தரல் இலை.

Original text transliteration: *viṇaiyiṇ viḷaivu viḷivu  
uṭṭu vittāy viṇai-kaḍal vīṭṭiḍum. vīḍu taral ilai.*

- [11] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 3):

கருத்தனுக்கு ஆக்கும் நிட்காமிய  
கன்மம் கருத்தை திருத்தி, அஃது  
கதி வழி காண்பிக்கும்.

Original text transliteration: *karuttaṇukku  
ākkum niṭkāmiya kaṇmam karuttai  
tirutti, aḷḷu gati vaṛi kāṇḍikkum.*

- [12] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 4):

திடம் இது: பூசை செபமும் தியானம்  
உடல் வாக்கு உள தொழில்.  
உயர்வு ஆகும் ஒன்றில் ஒன்று.

Original text transliteration: *diḍam idu: pūjai jepam-um  
dhiyāṇam uḍal vāḷḷu uḷa toṛil. uyarvu āhum oṇḍṛil oṇḍru.*

- [13] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 8):

அனிய பாவத்தின் அவன்  
அகம் ஆகும் அனனிய பாவமே  
அனைத்தினும் உத்தமம்.

Original text transliteration: *aṇiya-bhāvattiṇ avaṇ  
aḥam āhum aṇaṇiya-bhāvam-ē aṇaittiṇ-um uttamam.*

- [14] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 9):

பாவ பலத்தினால் பாவனாதீத சத்  
பாவத்து இருத்தலே பரபத்தி தத்துவம்.

Original text transliteration: *bhāva balattiṇāl  
bhāvaṇātīta sat-bhāvattu iruttal-ē para-bhatti tattuvam.*

- [15] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 10):

உதித்த இடத்தில் ஒடுங்கி  
இருத்தல்: அது கன்மம் பத்தியும்;  
அது யோகம் ஞானமும்.

Original text transliteration: *uditta iḍattil oḍuṅgi iruttal:  
adu kaṇmam bhatti-y-um; adu yōgam ṇāṇam-um.*

- [16] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu Anubandham*, v.14):

வினையும், விபத்தி, வியோகம்,  
அஞ்ஞானம் இணையவை யார்க்கு  
என்று ஆய்ந்திடலே வினை, பத்தி,  
யோகம், உணர்வு. ஆய்ந்திட,  
'நான்' இன்றி அவை என்றும் இல்.  
தானாக மனலே உண்மை ஆம்.

Original text transliteration: *viṇai-y-um, vibhatti,  
viyōgam, aṇṇāṇam iṇaiyavai yārkkū eṇḍru āyṇḍiḍal-ē  
viṇai, bhatti, yōgam, uṇarvu. āyṇḍiḍa, 'nāṇ' iṇḍri  
avai eṇḍrum il. tāṇ-āha maṇal-ē uṇmai ām.*

- [17] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para. 13; first sentence):

ஆன்மசிந்தனையைத் தவிர வேறு  
சிந்தனை கிளம்புவதற்குச் சற்று  
மிடங்கொடாமல் ஆத்மநிஷ்டாபரணா  
யிருப்பதே தன்னை ஈசனுக் களிப்பதாம்.

Original text transliteration: *āṇma-cintaṇaiyai-t  
tavira vēru cintaṇai kiḷambuvadaṛku-c  
caṭṭum iḍam-koḍāmal ātma-niṣṭhāparaṇ-  
āy iruppadē taṇṇai īsaṇukku aliḷḷipadām.*



[18] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 13; second sentence):

ஈசன்பேரில் எவ்வளவு பாரத்தைப்  
போட்டாலும், அவ்வளவையும்  
அவர் வகித்துக்கொள்ளுகிறார்.

Original text transliteration: *īṣappēril  
e-vv-aḷavu bhāratṭai-p pōṭṭālum, a-vv-  
aḷavai-y-um avar vahittu-k-kolḷugirār.*

[19] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Padigam*, v. 9):

பரம நின் பாதம் பற்று அற பற்றும்  
பர அறி வறியரில் பரமன். பரம்  
உனக்கு என, என் பணி அற பணியாய்.  
பரித்திடும் உனக்கு எது பாரம்? பரம  
நின் பிரிந்து இவ் உலகினை தலையில்  
பற்றி யான் பெற்றது போதும். பரமன்  
ஆம் அருணாசல எனை இனி உன்  
பதத்தினின்று ஒதுக்கு உற பாரேல்.

Original text transliteration: *parama niṅ pādama  
paṭru ara paṭrum para aṟi variyaril paramaṅ. bharam  
uṅakku eṅa, eṅ paṇi ara paṇiyāy. bhariṭṭidum uṅakku  
edu bhāram? parama niṅ pirindu i-vv-ulahiṅai talaiyil  
paṭri yāṅ peṭradu pōdum. paramaṅ ām aruṅācala  
eṅai iṅi uṅ padattiṅṅṅṅru odukkū ura pārēl.*

[20] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 15; third sentence):

ஒரு கருமமு மவரை யொட்டாது.

Original text transliteration: *oru  
karumam-um avarai y-oṭṭādu.*

[21] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 15; part of the first sentence):

ஈசன் சன்னிதான விசேஷ மாத்திரத்தால்.

Original text transliteration: *īṣaṅ  
saṅṅidhāna-viśēṣa-māṭṭirattāl.*

[22] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 13; third sentence):

சகல காரியங்களையும் ஒரு பரமேச்வர  
சக்தி நடத்திக்கொண்டிருகிறபடியால்,  
நாமு மதற் கடங்கியிராமல்,  
'இப்படிச் செய்யவேண்டும்;  
அப்படிச் செய்யவேண்டு' மென்று  
ஸதா சிந்திப்பதேன்?

Original text transliteration: *sakala kāriyaṅḡaḷai-y-um  
oru paramēśvara śakti naḍatti-k-koṅḍirugirapaḍiyāl,  
nāmuṅ aḍarḡu aḍaṅgi-y-irāmal, 'ippaḍi-c ceyya-vēṅḍum;  
appaḍi-c ceyya-vēṅḍum' eṅḍru sadā cintippaḍēṅ?*

[23] Original text in Tamil (*Note Bhagavan wrote for his mother in December 1898*):

அவரவர் பிரார்ப்தப் பிரகாரம்  
அதற்கானவன் ஆங்காங்கிருந்  
தாட்டுவிப்பன். என்றும் நடவாதது  
என் முயற்சிக்கினும் நடவாது;  
நடப்ப தென்றடை செய்யினும்  
நில்லாது. இதுவே திண்ணம். ஆகலின்  
மெளனமா யிருக்கை நன்று.

Original text transliteration: *avar-avar pirārabdha-p  
prakāram aḍarḡāṅḡavaṅ āṅḡāṅḡu irundu āṭṭuvippaṅ.  
eṅḍrum naḍavādadu eṅ muyarḡcikkīṅḡum naḍavādu;  
naḍappadu eṅ taḍai seyyiṅḡum nillādu. iduvē  
tiṅṅam. āhaliṅ mauṅamāy irukkai naṅḍru.*

[24] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 13; fourth sentence):

புகை வண்டி சகல பாரங்களையும்  
தாங்கிக்கொண்டு போவது  
தெரிந்திருந்தும், அதி லேறிக்கொண்டு  
போகும் நாம் நம்முடைய சிறிய  
மூட்டையையு மதிற் போட்டுவிட்டு  
சுகமா யிராமல், அதை நமது  
தலையிற் றாங்கிக்கொண்டு  
ஏன் கஷ்டப்படவேண்டும்?

Original text transliteration: *puhai vaṅḍi sakala  
bhāraṅḡaḷaiyum tāṅgi-k-koṅḍu pōvadu terindirundum,  
aḍil ēri-k-koṅḍu pōhum nām nammuḍaiya siriya  
mūṭṭaiyaiyum aḍil pōṭṭu-viṭṭu sukhamāy irāmal, aḍai  
namadu talaiyil tāṅgi-k-koṅḍu ēṅ kaṣṭa-p-paḍa-vēṅḍum?*

[25] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 24):

இருக்கும் இயற்கையால் ஈச  
சீவர்கள் ஒரு பொருளே ஆவர்.  
உபாதி உணர்வே வேறு.

Original text transliteration: *irukkum iyarkaiyāl  
īśa-jīvargaḷ oru poruḷē āvar. upādhi-uṇarvē vēru.*

[26] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 25):

தன்னை உபாதி விட்டு ஓர்வது  
தான் ஈசன் தன்னை உணர்வது  
ஆம், தானாய் ஒளிர்வதால்.

Original text transliteration: *taṇṇai upādhi viṭṭu  
ōrvadu tāṇ īśaṇ taṇṇai uṇarvadu ām, tāṇ-āy oḷirvadāl.*

[27] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 26):

தான் ஆய் இருத்தலே தன்னை  
அறிதல் ஆம், தான் இரண்டு  
அற்றதால். தன்மய நிடை ஈது.

Original text transliteration: *tāṇ-āy iruttal-ē taṇṇai  
aridal ām, tāṇ iraṇḍu aṭradāl. taṇmaya niṭṭhai īdu.*

[28] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 27):

அறிவு அறியாமையும் அற்ற  
அறிவே அறிவு ஆகும். உண்மை  
ஈது. அறிவதற்கு ஒன்று இலை.

Original text transliteration: *aṛivu aṛiyāmai-y-um aṭṭa  
aṛivē aṛivu āhum. uṇmai īdu. aṛivadarku oṇḍru ilai.*

[29] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 28):

தனாது இயல் யாது என தான்  
தெரிகில், பின் அனாதி அனந்த  
சத்து அகண்ட சித் ஆனந்தம்.

Original text transliteration: *taṇādu iyal yādu eṇa tāṇ  
terihil, piṇ aṇādi aṇanta sattu akhaṇḍa cit āṇandam.*

[30] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 32):

‘அது நீ’ என்று அம் மறைகள்  
ஆர்த்திடவும், தன்னை எது என்று தான்  
தேர்ந்து இராது, ‘அது நான், இது அன்று’  
என்று எண்ணல் உரன் இன்மையினால்,  
என்றும் அதுவே தான் ஆய் அமர்வதால்.

Original text transliteration: *‘adu nī’ eṇḍru a-m-  
maraiḡaḷ ārttiḍavum, taṇṇai edu eṇḍru tāṇ tērndu  
irādu, ‘adu nāṇ, idu aṇḍru’ eṇḍru eṇṇal uraṇ  
iṇmaiyiṇāl, eṇḍrum aduvē tāṇ-āy amarvadāl.*

[31] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, first maṅgalam  
verse):

உள்ளது அலது உள்ள உணர்வு  
உள்ளதோ? உள்ள பொருள் உள்ளல்  
அற உள்ளத்தே உள்ளதால், உள்ளம்  
எனும் உள்ள பொருள் உள்ளல்  
எவன்? உள்ளத்தே உள்ளபடி  
உள்ளதே உள்ளல். உணர்.

Original text transliteration: *uḷḷadu aladu uḷḷa-v-uṇarvu  
uḷḷadō? uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷal ara uḷḷattē uḷḷadāl, uḷḷam eṇum  
uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷal evaṇ? uḷḷattē uḷḷapaḍi uḷḷadē uḷḷal. uṇar.*

[32] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Undiyār*, v. 23):

உள்ளது உணர் உணர்வு வேறு  
இன்மையின், உள்ளது உணர்வு  
ஆகும். உணர்வே நாமாய் உளம்.

Original text transliteration: *uḷḷadu uṇara uṇarvu vēru  
iṇmaiyiṇ, uḷḷadu uṇarvu āhum. uṇarvē nām-āy uḷam.*

[33] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Pañcaratnam*, v. 2):

சித்திரம் ஆம் இஃது எல்லாம், செம்  
மலையே, நிற்பாலே உத்திதமாய் நின்றே  
ஒடுங்கிடும் ஆல். நித்தியமும் நான்  
என்று இதயம் நடித்திடுவையால், உன்  
பேர் தான் இதயம் என்றிடுவர் தாம்.

Original text transliteration: *cittiram ām iḱdu  
ellām, sem malaiyē, niṇbālē uttidamāy niṇḍrē  
oḍuṅḡiḍum āl. nittiyamum nāṇ eṇḍru idayam  
naḍittiḍuvaivaiyāl, uṇ pēr tāṇ idayam eṇḍriḍuvar tām.*

[34] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 27):

‘நான்’ உதியாது உள்ள நிலை நாம்  
அது ஆய் உள்ள நிலை. ‘நான்’  
உதிக்கும் தானம் அதை நாடாமல்,  
‘நான்’ உதியா தன் இழப்பை சார்வது  
எவன்? சாராமல், தான் அது ஆம் தன்  
நிலையில் நிற்பது எவன்? சாற்று.

Original text transliteration: ‘*nāṅ*’ *udiyādu uḷḷa nilai*  
*nām adu-v-āy uḷḷa nilai*. ‘*nāṅ*’ *udikkum thāṅam-adai*  
*nāḍāmal*, ‘*nāṅ*’ *udiyā taṅ-ṅ-irappai sāravadu evaṅ?*  
*sārāmal*, *tāṅ adu ām taṅ nilaiyil nīrpadu evaṅ? sāṅru*.

[35] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 22):

மதிக்கு ஒளி தந்து, அம் மதிக்குள்  
ஒளிரும் மதியினை உள்ளே மடக்கி  
பதியில் பதித்திடுதல் அன்றி, பதியை  
மதியால் மதித்திடுதல் எங்ஙன்? மதி.

Original text transliteration: *matikku oḷi tandu*, *a-m-*  
*matikkuḷ oḷirum matiyiṅai uḷḷē maḍakki patiyil padittiḍudal*  
*aṅḍri*, *patiyai matiyāl madittiḍudal eṅṅaṅ? madi*.

[36] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 21; final sentence):

ஊண் ஆதல் காண்.

Original text transliteration: *ūṅ ādal kāṅ*.

[37] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 16; ninth sentence):

சதாகாலமும் மனத்தை ஆத்மாவில்  
வைத்திருப்பதற்குத் தான்  
‘ஆத்மவிசார’ மென்று பெயர்.

Original text transliteration: *sadā-kālam-*  
*um maṅattai ātmāvil vaittiruppadarḷku-t*  
*tāṅ ‘ātma-vicāram’ eṅḍru peyar*.

[38] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 6; first eight sentences):

நானார் என்னும் விசாரணையினாலேயே  
மன மடங்கும்; நானார் என்னும் நினைவு  
மற்ற நினைவுகளை யெல்லா மழித்துப்  
பிணஞ்சூடு தடிபோல் முடிவில் தானு  
மழியும். பிற வெண்ணங்க ளெழுந்தா  
லவற்றைப் பூர்த்தி பண்ணுவதற்கு  
எத்தனியாமல் அவை யாருக்  
குண்டாயின என்று விசாரிக்க வேண்டும்.  
எத்தனை எண்ணங்க ளெழினு மென்ன?  
ஜாக்கிரதையாய் ஒவ்வோ ரெண்ணமும்  
கிளம்பும்போதே இது யாருக்குண்டாயிற்று  
என்று விசாரித்தால் எனக்கென்று  
தோன்றும். நானார் என்று விசாரித்தால்  
மனம் தன் பிறப்பிடத்திற்குத்  
திரும்பிவிடும்; எழுந்த வெண்ணமு  
மடங்கிவிடும். இப்படிப் பழகப் பழக  
மனத்திற்குத் தன் பிறப்பிடத்திற் றங்கி  
நிற்கும் சக்தி யதிகரிக்கின்றது.

Original text transliteration: *nāṅ-ār eṅṅum*  
*vicāraṅaiyīṅāl-ē-y-ē maṅam aḍaṅgum*; *nāṅ-ār eṅṅum*  
*niṅaiṅvu maṅra niṅaiṅvugaḷai y-ellām aṅṅittu-p piṅaṅ-*  
*cuḍu taḍi-pōḷ muḍivil tāṅ-um aṅṅiyum*. *piṅa v-eṅṅaṅgaḷ*  
*eṅṅundāl avatṅrai-p pūrṅṅṅi paṅṅuvadarḷku ettaiṅiyāmal*  
*avai yārukku uṅḍāyīṅa eṅḍru vicārikka vēṅḍum*. *ettaiṅai*  
*eṅṅaṅgaḷ eṅṅum eṅṅa? jāḅḅirataiyāy ovvōr eṅṅamum*  
*kiḷambum-pōḍē idu yārukku uṅḍāyīṅru eṅḍru vicārittāl*  
*eṅakkeṅḍru tōṅḍrum*. *nāṅ-ār eṅḍru vicārittāl maṅam*  
*taṅ piṅappiḍattirḷku-t tirumbi-ṅiḍum*; *eṅṅunda v-eṅṅamum*  
*aḍaṅḅi-ṅiḍum*. *ippaḍi-p paṅaga-p paṅaga maṅattirḷku-t*  
*taṅ piṅappiḍattil taṅḅi niṅḅum śakti y-adhikarikkīṅḍradu*.

[39] Original text in Tamil (Nāṇ Ār?, para. 10):

தொன்றுதொட்டு வருகின்ற  
விஷயவாசனைகள் அளவற்றனவாய்க்  
கடலைகள் போற் றோன்றினும்  
அவையாவும் சொரூபத்யானம்  
கிளம்பக் கிளம்ப அழிந்துவிடும்.  
அத்தனை வாசனைகளு மொடுங்கி,  
சொரூபமாத்திரமா யிருக்க முடியுமா  
வென்னும் சந்தேக நினைவுக்கு  
மிடங்கொடாமல், சொரூபத்யானத்தை  
விடாப்பிடியாய்ப் பிடிக்க வேண்டும்.  
ஒருவன் எவ்வளவு பாபியாயிருந்தாலும்,  
'நான் பாபியா யிருக்கிறேனே!  
எப்படிக்கடைத்தேறப் போகிறே'  
என்றேங்கி யழுதுகொண்டிராமல்,  
தான் பாபி என்னு மெண்ணத்தையு  
மறவே யொழித்து சொரூபத்யானத்தி  
லூக்க முள்ளவனாக விருந்தால்  
அவன் நிச்சயமா யுருப்படுவான்.

Original text transliteration: *tonḍrutotṭu varuginḍra*  
*viṣaya-vāsaṇaigaḷ aḷavaṭṭaṇavāy-k kaḍal-alaigaḷ*  
*pōl tōṇḍriṇum avai-yāvum sorūpa-dhyāṇam*  
*kiḷamba-k kiḷamba aṇindu-vidum. attāṇai vāsaṇaigaḷum*  
*oḍuṅgi, sorūpa-māttiram-āy irukka muḍiyumā*  
*v-eṇṇum sandēha niṇaivukkum iḍam koḍāmal,*  
*sorūpa-dhyāṇattai vidā-p-piḍiyāy-p piḍikka vēṇḍum.*  
*oruvan evvaḷavu pāpiyāy irundālum, 'nāṇ pāpiyāy*  
*irukkirēṇē; eppaḍi-k kaḍaittēra-p pōgīrēṇ' endrēṅgi*  
*y-aṇḍu-koṇḍirāmal, tāṇ pāpi eṇṇum eṇṇattaiyum*  
*aṇavē y-orittu sorūpa-dhyāṇattil ūkkam uḷḷavaṇāha*  
*v-irundāl avan niścayamāy uru-p-paḍuvāṇ.*

[40] Original text in Tamil (Nāṇ Ār?, para. 11):

மனத்தின்கண் எதுவரையில்  
விஷயவாசனைக ளிருக்கின்றனவோ,  
அதுவரையில் நானா ரென்னும்  
விசாரணையும் வேண்டும். நினைவுகள்  
தோன்றத் தோன்ற அப்போதைக்கப்போதே  
அவைகளையெல்லாம்  
உற்பத்திஸ்தானத்திலேயே  
விசாரணையால் நசிப்பிக்க வேண்டும்.  
அன்னியத்தை நாடாதிருத்தல்  
வைராக்கியம் அல்லது நிராசை; தன்னை  
விடாதிருத்தல் ஞானம். உண்மையி  
லிரண்டு மொன்றே. முத்துக்குளிப்போர்  
தம்மிடையிற் கல்லைக் கட்டிக்கொண்டு  
மூழ்கிக் கடலடியிற் கிடைக்கும் முத்தை  
எப்படி எடுக்கிறார்களோ, அப்படியே  
ஒவ்வொருவனும் வைராக்கியத்துடன்  
தன்னுள் ளாழ்ந்து மூழ்கி ஆத்மமுத்தை  
யடையலாம். ஒருவன் தான்  
சொரூபத்தை யடையும் வரையில்  
நிரந்தர சொரூப ஸ்மரணையைக்  
கைப்பற்றுவானாயின் அதுவொன்றே  
போதும். கோட்டைக்குள் எதிரிக  
ளுள்ளவரையில் அதிலிருந்து வெளியே  
வந்துகொண்டே யிருப்பார்கள். வர வர  
அவர்களையெல்லாம் வெட்டிக்கொண்டே  
யிருந்தால் கோட்டை கைவசப்படும்.

Original text transliteration: *maṇattinṅaṇ edu-*  
*varaiyil viṣaya-vāsaṇaigaḷ irukkiṇḍraṇavō, adu-varaiyil*  
*nāṇ-ār eṇṇum vicāraṇai-y-um vēṇḍum. niṇaivugaḷ*  
*tōṇḍra-t tōṇḍra appōdaikkappōdē avaigaḷai-y-ellām*  
*uṭṭatti-sthāṇattilēyē vicāraṇaiyāl naṣippikka vēṇḍum.*  
*aṇṇiyattai nāḍādiruttal vairāggīyam alladu nirāśai;*  
*taṇṇai vidādiruttal ṇāṇam. uṇmaiyl iraṇḍum oṇḍrē.*  
*muttu-k-kuḷippōr tam-m-iḍaiyil kallai-k kaṭṭi-k-*  
*koṇḍu mūrki-k kaḍal-aḍiyil kiḍaikkum muttai eppaḍi*  
*eḍukkirārgaḷō, appaḍiyē o-vv-oruvanum vairāggīyattudaṇ*  
*taṇṇuḷ!-āṇḍu mūrki ātma-muttai y-aḍaiyalām. oruvan*  
*tāṇ sorūpattai y-aḍaiyum varaiyil nirantara sorūpa-*  
*smaraṇaiyai-k kai-p-paṭṭuvāṇ-āyīṇ adu-v-oṇḍrē*  
*pōdum. kōṭṭaikkuḷ edirigaḷ uḷḷa-varaiyil adilirundu vēḷiyē*  
*vandu-koṇḍē y-iruppārgaḷ. vara vara avargaḷai-y-ellām*  
*veṭṭi-k-koṇḍē y-irundāl kōṭṭai kaivaśa-p-paḍum.*

[41] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v. 74):

போக்கும் வரவும் இல் பொது  
வெளியினில் அருள் போராட்டம்  
காட்டு அருணாசலா.

Original text transliteration: *pōkkum varavum il  
podu veḷiyiṇil aruḷ-pōrāṭṭam kāṭṭu aruṇācalā.*

[42] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para. 12):

கடவுளும் குருவும் உண்மையில்  
வேறல்லர். புலிவாயிற் பட்டது  
எவ்வாறு திரும்பாதோ, அவ்வாறே  
குருவினருட்பார்வையிற் பட்டவர்கள்  
அவரால் ரக்ஷிக்கப்படுவரே யன்றி  
யொருக்காலும் கைவிடப்படார்;  
எனினும், குரு காட்டிய வழிப்படி  
தவறாது நடக்க வேண்டும்.

Original text transliteration: *kaḍavuḷ-um  
guru-v-um uṇmaiṇil vēṛallar. puli-vāyil paṭṭadu  
evvāru tirumbādō, avvāṛē guruviṇ-aruḷ-pārvaiyil  
paṭṭavargaḷ avarāl rakṣikka-p-paḍuvarē y-aṇḍri  
y-oru-k-kāl-um kaiviḍa-p-paḍār; eṇiṇum, guru  
kāṭṭiya vaiṇ-p-paḍi tavarādu naḍakka vēṇḍum.*

[43] Original text in Tamil (*Āṇma-Viddai*, v. 4):

கன்மாத்ரி கட்டு அவிழ, சென்மாத்ரி நடட்டம்  
எழ, எம் மார்க்கம் அதனினும் இம்  
மார்க்கம் மிக்கு எளிது. சொல் மானத  
தனுவின் கன்மாத்ரி சிறிது இன்றி சும்மா  
அமர்ந்து இருக்க, அம்மா, அகத்தில்  
ஆன்ம சோதியே; நித அனுபூதியே;  
இராது பீதியே; இன்ப அம்போதியே.

Original text transliteration: *kaṇma-ādi kaṭṭu aviṛa,  
jeṇma-ādi naṭṭam eṛa, e-m-mārggam-adaṇiṇum i-m-  
mārggam mikku eḷidu. sol māṇada taṇuviṇ kaṇma-ādi  
siṛidu iṇḍri summā amarndu irukka, ammā, ahattil āṇma-  
jyōtiyē; nita aṇubhūtiyē; irādu bhītiyē; iṇba ambhōdhiyē.*

[44] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*, v. 26):

அகந்தை உண்டாயின், அனைத்தும்  
உண்டாகும்; அகந்தை இன்றேல், இன்று  
அனைத்தும். அகந்தையே யாவும்  
ஆம். ஆதலால், யாது இது என்று  
நாடலே ஓவுதல் யாவும் என ஓர்.

Original text transliteration: *ahandai uṇḍāyiṇ,  
aṇaittum uṇḍāhum; ahandai iṇḍrēl, iṇḍru  
aṇaittum. ahandai-y-ē yāvum ām. ādalāl, yādu  
idu eṇḍru nāḍal-ē ōvudal yāvum eṇa ōr.*

[45] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*, v. 25; fifth sen-  
tence; see note 9 above):

தேடினால் ஓட்டம் பிடிக்கும்.

Original text transliteration: *tēḍiṇāl oṭṭam piḍikkum.*

[46] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṇ Ār?*, para. 20; final para-  
graph):

தானெழுந்தால் சகலமு மெழும்;  
தானடங்கினால் சகலமு மடங்கும்.  
எவ்வளவுக்கெவ்வளவு தாழ்ந்து  
நடக்கிறோமோ அவ்வளவுக்கவ்வளவு  
நன்மையுண்டு. மனத்தை  
யடக்கிக்கொண்டிருந்தால், எங்கே  
யிருந்தாலு மிருக்கலாம்.

Original text transliteration: *tāṇ eṛundāl sakalam-  
um eṛum; tāṇ aḍaṅgiṇāl sakalam-um aḍaṅgum.  
evvaḷavukkeṇṇaḷavu tāṇdu naḍakkirōmō  
avvaḷavukkavvaḷavu naṇmai-y-uṇḍu. maṇattai  
y-aḍakki-k-koṇḍirundāl, eṅgē y-irundālum irukkalām.*

[47] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nāṛpadu*, v. 26; first two  
sentences; see note 44 above):

அகந்தை உண்டாயின், அனைத்தும்  
உண்டாகும்; அகந்தை இன்றேல்,  
இன்று அனைத்தும்.

Original text transliteration: *ahandai uṇḍāyiṇ,  
aṇaittum uṇḍāhum; ahandai iṇḍrēl, iṇḍru aṇaittum.*

[48] Original text in Tamil (*Upadēśa Tanippākkaḷ*, v. 15):

ஆன்ம அநுசந்தானம் அஃது பரம் ஈச  
பத்தி, ஆன்மாவாய் ஈசன் உளனால.

Original text transliteration: *āṇma-anusandhānam  
akḍu param īśa-bhatti, āṇmā-v-āy īśaṇ uḷaṇāḷ.*

[49] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v. 15):

கண்ணுக்கு கண் ஆய் கண்  
இன்றி காண் உனை காணுவது  
எவர்? பார் அருணாசலா.

Original text transliteration: *kaṇṇukku kaṇ āy kaṇ  
iṇḍri kāṇ uṇai kāṇuvadu evar? pār aruṇācalā.*

[50] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v. 16):

காந்தம் இரும்பு போல் கவர்ந்து  
எனை, விடாமல் கலந்து எனோடு  
இருப்பாய் அருணாசலா.

Original text transliteration: *kāntam irumbu pōl eṇai  
kavarndu, viḍāmal kalandu eṇōḍu iruppāy aruṇācalā.*

[51] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v. 43):

தானே தானே தத்துவம். இதனை  
தானே காட்டுவாய் அருணாசலா.

Original text transliteration: *tāṇē tāṇē  
tattuvam. idaṇai tāṇē kāṭṭuvāy aruṇācalā.*

[52] Original text in Tamil (*Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, v. 44):

‘திரும்பி அகம் தனை தினம்  
அகக்கண் காண்; தெரியும்’  
என்றனை என் அருணாசலா.

Original text transliteration: *‘tirumbi aham taṇai  
diṇam aha-k-kaṇ kāṇ; ṭeriyum’ eṇḍraṇai eṇ aruṇācalā.*

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