

An Interview with Michael James:

The Teachings of Ramana Maharshi Clarify the Philosophy and Practice of Advaita Vēdānta

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In this interview with Martin Dojčár, Michael James discusses the core of Śrī Ramana Maharshi's teachings, providing an overview as a kind of roadmap that includes their philosophical framework conceptualized in the terminology of Advaita Vēdānta darśana, as well as their direct implications for contemplative spiritual practice. The teachings' conceptual and spiritual aspects are addressed in terms of their textual grounding in primary literary sources.

At the age of nineteen Michael James travelled overland to India in search of something that would give a meaning and purpose to his life. After travelling around India, Nepal, and Śrī Lanka for eighteen months, walking in the Himalayas and visiting many holy places, temples, ashrams, Buddhist monasteries, and meditation centres, during which time he first heard about Śrī Ramana Maharshi (1879–1950), in September 1976 he eventually came to Tiruvannamalai (where Śrī Ramana had lived for fifty-four years) hoping to learn more about him and his teachings.

After arriving there, the first book he read was *Who am I?*, an English translation of *Nāṅ Ār?*, the most significant work written by Śrī Ramana in prose, and as soon as he read it he knew that he had found what he was looking for, because it became clear to him that more than knowing anything else, the most important thing for us to know is what we ourselves actually are. To understand more about the teachings of Śrī Ramana, particularly about how to put them into practice, Michael began to read other books, which he found interesting but not entirely satisfactory, until he read *The Path of Sri Ramana* by Sadhu Om (1922–1985), which in those days was the only English book that clearly and correctly explained the practice of *self-investigation* (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*).

Seeking further clarification, Michael began to frequently visit Sadhu Om, who was one of the foremost disciples of Śrī Ramana and a Tamil poet who had composed thousands of verses and songs on him and his teachings. Knowing that Sadhu Om had been entrusted by Muruganar, Śrī Ramana's closest disciple, to edit all his unpublished verses, and had written in Tamil prose an explanatory paraphrase of *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*, a collection of more than 1250 Tamil verses in which Muruganar had recorded many of the important oral teachings of Śrī Ramana, Michael wanted to know more about it, so Sadhu Om suggested that together they could translate it into English. Over the course of the next eight years, till the end of Sadhu Om's bodily life in March 1985, Michael assisted him in translating not only *Guru Vācaka Kōvai* but also all the original Tamil writings of Śrī Ramana and several other texts, which gave Michael the opportunity to learn classical Tamil and to gain a deep understanding of the simple but extremely profound and subtle teachings of Śrī Ramana, who is generally referred to by his devotees and followers as Bhagavan.



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.



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What is the starting point of Bhagavan's teachings? Is it a distinction between the *unnatural state* and the *natural state* of man? Could you possibly give an argument for the "advantages" of the natural state over the unnatural state that the sceptics might consider?



There are various starting points from which we can begin to explain his teachings, but each of them approaches the subject primarily from one of three angles, namely: *Sat* (Sa. "existence", "being" or "reality"), what actually exists, what actually are we, are we what we now seem to be or are we actually something else, and what is the distinction between what actually exists (and is therefore real) and what merely seems to exist (and is therefore unreal); *Cit* (Sa. "awareness", "consciousness" or "knowledge"), what is aware, how can we be aware of ourself as we actually are, what is real awareness, what is its nature, what is the distinction between transitive awareness (awareness of objects or phenomena) and intransitive awareness (pure awareness, awareness that is just aware without being aware of anything other than itself), what knowledge is correct or real and what knowledge is incorrect or illusory; and *Ānanda* (Sa. "happiness", "joy" or "satisfaction"), what is real happiness, where can it be found, can it be found in anything other than ourself or in ourself alone, why do we all love to be happy, why are happiness and love always inextricably linked, is it possible for us to experience permanent and unlimited happiness, and if so how? All these questions are of central concern in his teachings, so each of them would be a good starting point.

However, though all these questions will be of concern to anyone who thinks deeply, some of them may not be of concern to the majority of people, but the one thing that does concern all of us is happiness. Whatever we may desire, want or like, we desire it, want it or like it because we believe it will give us happiness or satisfaction. Therefore, since we all like to be happy, Bhagavan generally chose this as the most appropriate and appealing starting point of his teachings, and hence in the first

paragraph of his prose treatise *Nāṇ Ār?* (Eng. *Who am I?*) he wrote [1]:

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

Regarding your second question, namely whether the starting point of Bhagavan's teachings is a distinction between the *unnatural state* and the *natural state* of man, I would not generally begin to explain his teachings in quite these terms, but since you have asked in these terms I will reply accordingly. 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 ourself, we do not know ourself as we actually are, so what is it that prevents us being aware of ourself as we actually are? At present we are aware of ourself 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. Being aware of ourself as the one infinite, indivisible and immutable existence (Sa. *Sat*), awareness (Sa. *Cit*) and happiness (Sa. *Ānanda*) that we actually are is our natural state, whereas being aware of ourself as this bundle of "five sheaths" is an unnatural state for us, one in which we are constantly dissatisfied, because so long as we remain in it we are thereby seemingly separated from the infinite happiness and satisfaction that is our own real nature and that we are therefore constantly craving.

Regarding an argument that sceptics may consider, the focal point of Bhagavan's teachings is "self-investigation" (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*), and questions are the starting point of any

investigation, so his teachings encourage us to consider many deep and subtle questions, particularly questions about things that we generally take for granted, such as the questions I refer to above in the first paragraph of my answer to this set of questions, so these teachings are designed perfectly for those of us who are of a sceptical frame of mind. However, many sceptics are only superficially sceptical, and their scepticism is often a means by which they defend their own firmly held and dogmatic beliefs, such as belief in materialistic metaphysics, so unless such sceptics are willing to question their own beliefs and assumptions and to consider deeper and subtler questions about what we ourselves actually are and about the nature of existence, awareness and happiness, these teachings will not appeal to them, and no arguments will be sufficient to make them willing to seriously question their own dogmatic beliefs. Therefore, these teachings will appeal only to those sceptics who are genuinely open-minded, eager to learn and willing to seriously and carefully consider the very deepest and subtlest metaphysical and epistemological questions that can be asked.

Q What is the purpose of *ātma-vicāra* (self-investigation) in a broader sense, i.e., how can it help us in our daily lives? What can make it a recommended practice for contemporary man? Why is there so much emphasis on the “I” and its investigation? Could you perhaps give an argument that sceptics might consider in this regard?

A The purpose of *self-investigation* is for us to know and to be what we actually are, but this requires willingness on our part to surrender our identification with and attachment to whatever we may now take ourselves to be but is not what we actually are. Our “daily life” means the daily life of the person we now take ourselves to be, but is this person what we actually are? If this person is not what we actually are, its “daily life” is not our real life, so we should not be concerned about it, but should seek to be aware of ourselves as we actually are.

However, this is not to say that we will not experience any benefits in our daily life by practising self-investigation, because the deeper we go in this practice, the more detached we will become from the person we now take ourselves to be and therefore from all the concerns of this person’s daily life, and the more detached we thereby become, the less we will be affected by all the problems, joys and sorrows that life inevitably throws at us so long as we experience ourselves as if we were a person. This detachment occurs because to the extent to which we investigate ourselves deeply, our identification gradually shifts from whatever we mistake ourselves to be to what we actually are, namely *Sat-Cit*, *pure existence* (Sa. *Sat*), which is *pure awareness* (Sa. *Cit*), which is what always shines within us as our fundamental awareness, namely our awareness of our own existence, “I am”. Our false identification, “I am this body” or “I am this person”, will not be eradicated completely and forever until we become aware of ourselves as nothing other than *Sat-Cit*, but it will gradually be weakened and will eventually dissolve entirely by patient and persistent practice of self-investigation.

Self-investigation is therefore a practice that is recommended not only for contemporary man but for all people at all times and in all circumstances, because the root cause of all problems, limitations and suffering is ego, which is a false awareness of ourselves, namely awareness of ourselves as “I am this body”, in which the term “body” does not refer just to the physical body but to the entire person consisting of the “five sheaths” (Sa. *pañca-kōśa*) that I mentioned earlier, as Bhagavan 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] That is, whenever we rise and stand as ego, namely throughout the states of waking and dream, we always experience ourselves as “I am this body” (in which “this body” refers to whatever body we currently mistake ourselves to be, which is not the same body in both waking and dream), but we never experience ourselves as a dead body or as a sleeping body, so since it is a living body, body and *life* (Sa. *prāṇa*,

which is what manifests as breathing and all the other physiological functions that animate and give life to what would otherwise be a lifeless corpse) are always experienced in combination, and since it is a body that seems to be awake (as even the body that we experience as ourself in dream seems to be), not only body and life but also mind, intellect and will (which are the five elements known as *pañca-kōśa* or the “five sheaths”) are all experienced in combination throughout the states of waking and dream. Therefore, Bhagavan used the term “body” as a collective name to refer to all these “five sheaths”.

We rise and stand as ego only in waking and dream, because whenever we fall asleep (or go into any other similar state such as coma, general anaesthesia or *kēvala nirvikalpa samādhi*), we as ego subside and dissolve back into our source, namely *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* (Sa. “pure existence-awareness-happiness”), albeit only temporarily, because sooner or later we will rise again as ego in either waking or dream. Since we do not exist as ego in sleep or any other state of *manōlaya* (Sa. “temporary dissolution of ego and mind”), we are then perfectly happy and do not experience any problems, limitations or suffering, but as soon as we rise again as ego in waking or dream, we thereby impose limitations on ourself by experiencing ourself as “I am this body”, and hence we begin to experience all sorts of problems, dissatisfaction and suffering. Therefore, it is clear from our own experience that our rising and standing as ego is the root cause of all the limitations, problems, dissatisfaction and suffering that we experience.

Since ego is a false awareness of ourself, namely awareness of ourself as a body, which is not what we actually are, it can be eradicated only by correct awareness of ourself, meaning awareness of ourself as we actually are. Since it is only as ego that we are aware of anything other than ourself, in order to be aware of ourself as we actually are, namely as pure awareness (awareness that is aware of nothing other than itself), we need to turn our attention back towards ourself so keenly that we thereby cease to be aware of anything

other than ourself. This simple but extremely deep and subtle practice of turning our attention back towards ourself, away from all other things, and trying to hold firmly on to such self-attentiveness is what Bhagavan means by the term *ātma-vicāra* (Sa. “self-investigation”), as he makes clear in the sixteenth paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*, “*The name ‘ātma-vicāra’ is only for always keeping the mind on oneself*” [3], thereby implying that the term *ātma-vicāra* is a name for the practice of keeping our mind or attention fixed firmly on “ourself” (Sa. *ātman*), namely on our fundamental awareness, “I am”.

Regarding the final two questions in this set, namely why there is so much emphasis on “I” and its investigation, and whether I could give an argument that sceptics might consider in this regard, the answer is simple: There could not be any awareness without something that is aware, there could not be any knowledge without something that knows it, and there could not be any experience without something that experiences it, and what is aware, knows and experiences is the subject or first person, which is what is always aware of itself as “I”. In other words, the self-referential pronoun “I” (or its equivalent in any other language) is the natural name of whatever is aware, knows or experiences, because it is the name by which it naturally refers to itself. Though we often refer to the body as “I”, we do so because of our confused identification “I am this body”, but the body (and each of the “five sheaths” that comprise it) is an object known by us, so what is actually aware of itself as “I” is not the body but only ourself, the one who is aware both of ourself and of all other things.

Therefore “I” is whatever is aware, so it is the knower of all knowledge, the experienter of all experiences, the perceiver of all perceptions, the seer of all sights, the hearer of all sounds and so on. Without “I”, therefore, there could not be any awareness, any knowledge, any experience, any perception or any other such thing, so “I” is the ground or foundation of all such things. If we try to conceive or imagine the existence of anything without

“I”, we would be attempting a logically impossible task, because there could not be any conception or imagination without an “I” that is conceiving or imagining it.

Therefore, as Bhagavan asks rhetorically in verse 3 of *Āṅgma-Viddai*: “Without knowing oneself, if one knows whatever else, so what? If one has known oneself, then what exists to know?” [4]. That is, since “I” is the knower of all knowledge, if it does not know what it itself actually is, how can it know what anything else actually is? The “I” that knows all other things is ego, the first person or subject, which is what knows itself as “I am this body”, but since this body is an object known by ego, it cannot be what ego actually is, because ego is aware, whereas the body (like all other objects) is not aware. Therefore, since ego knows itself as something other than what it actually is, its knowledge of itself is incorrect, so its knowledge of all other things must be equally incorrect. Before trying to know anything else, therefore, we should first try to know ourselves as we actually are rather than as we now seem to be.

In order to know what we (this “I”) actually are, we need to investigate ourselves, so rather than investigating anything else, what we should investigate first and foremost is ourselves, because only when our knowledge or awareness of ourselves is clear, correct and certain will we be able to judge accurately the correctness and reliability of whatever other knowledge we may have.

Q Can you explain “self-investigation” in more detail? Should we think of it as a kind of technique or method similar to yoga techniques or, let’s say, clinical psychology methods? Further, what is the meaning of *aham-sphurana*, which Bhagavan mentions in this context?

A As I explained above, “self-investigation” (*Sa. ātma-vicāra*) is the simple practice of being keenly self-attentive in order to know ourselves as we actually are. In other words, metaphorically speaking, it is just keenly observing or looking at ourselves in order to see what we

actually are. Since we are not an object but only what is aware, we cannot look at or attend to ourselves as we would look at or attend to any object, but since we are always aware of ourselves as “I”, we can look at or attend to ourselves by simply turning our awareness back on itself, so to speak. No words can accurately convey what this simple practice of self-attentiveness actually is, so whatever words may be used are only pointers, and hence we need to consider such words carefully and try to understand for ourselves what they are pointing at.

We cannot learn how to ride a bicycle by reading books or listening to lectures about it, but only by getting on a bicycle and trying to ride it. At first, we will wobble and fall many times, but if we keep on trying, we will gradually get the hang of it, and eventually it will become second nature to us. Likewise, we cannot learn or understand how to be self-attentive merely by reading books or listening to lectures about it, but only by trying to be self-attentive.

However, whereas riding a bicycle is a gross physical action, being self-attentive is an extremely subtle redirecting of our awareness or attention back towards ourselves, away from all other things, so in order to attend to ourselves correctly we need to clearly understand what is the “self” or “I” that we are to attend to. Unless we understand that we are not any of the “five sheaths” (i.e., the physical body, life, mind, intellect or will) but only the awareness in which all such things appear and disappear, when we try to attend to ourselves, we will attend to whatever we take ourselves to be rather than to what we actually are. Therefore, a certain degree of understanding is necessary before we can begin to investigate ourselves, but if we investigate ourselves with that required degree of understanding, we will thereby begin to develop a much deeper and clearer understanding than we could ever gain merely by reading books or listening to explanations.

In order to see something, we need to look at it, but we would not generally call looking at something a technique or method for seeing

it, because a technique or method is necessary for doing something that is in some way difficult or complicated, so just looking at something is too simple to be called a technique or method. Likewise, though being self-attentive is an extremely subtle kind of looking or observation, it is too simple to be called a technique or method.

Looking at or observing anything other than oneself entails three things, namely oneself, the observer, whatever it is that we are observing, and the act of looking or observing, whereas looking at, observing or attending to oneself entails only one thing, namely oneself, because we are both what is observing and what is being observed, and observing oneself is not an action, because it does not entail any movement of our attention away from oneself. Since we are awareness, we can observe oneself only by being aware of oneself, and since our very nature as awareness is to be aware of oneself, we can observe oneself only by just being as we actually are without rising as ego. Therefore, in self-attentiveness the observer, the observed and the observing are one and the same thing, namely oneself as the pure awareness that we always actually are. Hence, being a state of perfect oneness, there is nothing that could possibly be simpler than just being self-attentive.

The techniques of yoga and the methods of clinical psychology are all intended to achieve some effect and bring about some outcome, whereas in self-investigation we are not seeking to achieve anything other than to be what we always actually are. As Bhagavan often used to say, there is no new knowledge that we need to achieve, because whatever is achieved anew will sooner or later be lost, so we are not seeking anything new but only what is permanent. What we seek to know in self-investigation is only oneself, which is what we always know as “I am”. However, though we always know oneself as “I am”, when we rise and stand as ego we know oneself not just as “I am” but as “I am this body”, so what we are seeking is not to achieve a new knowledge but only to remove this wrong knowledge, “I am this body”. If

we remove this wrong knowledge by being aware of oneself as we actually are, namely as the pure awareness “I am”, what will remain is only this pure awareness, which we have always known as “I am”.

Regarding the term *aham-sphuraṇa*, what Bhagavan meant by this term is simply the increased clarity of self-awareness that we experience to the extent to which we go deep in the practice of self-investigation. That is, *aham* means “I”, and in this context *sphuraṇa* means “clear shining” or “clarity”. So long as our attention is directed outwards, away from oneself towards any other thing, we are aware of oneself as “I am this body”, but when we direct our attention inwards, towards oneself alone, we begin to recognise that what we actually are is not this body or any other phenomenon but only our fundamental awareness “I am”, so instead of being aware of oneself as “I am this body”, we gradually become increasingly aware of oneself as “I am I”. This clarity of awareness of oneself as “I am I” is therefore what he called *aham-sphuraṇa*, “the clear shining of I”.

As we go deeper in the practice of self-investigation, this clarity of awareness of oneself as “I am I” becomes increasingly clear, so there are different degrees of *aham-sphuraṇa*. The degree of clarity (Sa. *sphuraṇa*) that we begin to experience when we first attend to oneself is generally very faint, but as we attend to oneself more and more keenly, it shines brighter and clearer (but only to the extent to which we attend to it), until eventually it shines so clearly that it consumes ego entirely and forever.



Is there really a difference between self-investigation and surrender? Both are considered by Bhagavan to be primary paths to liberation. But doesn't self-investigation end in surrender? And is it even possible to surrender apart from self-investigation?



We can begin to surrender even before we begin to investigate oneself, because surrender generally begins on the path of *bhakti* (Sa. “love” or “devotion”) even before we come to

understand that God is what we actually are, but we cannot even begin to investigate ourselves without thereby beginning to surrender ourselves, because as Bhagavan revealed, the nature of ego is to rise, stand and flourish by attending to things other than itself, but to subside and dissolve back into its source and substance, namely *Sat-Cit*, by attending to itself. Therefore, to the extent to which we are self-attentive we will thereby subside, and the subsidence of ourselves as ego is self-surrender.

On the path of *bhakti* our love is gradually refined and purified. Most devotees worship God and pray to him for whatever benefits they hope to thereby gain from him, whether in this life or the next, so they do not love God for his own sake but only for the sake of whatever they hope to gain from him. This is therefore not genuine love for God, but by his grace over time their love is slowly refined and purified, so they gradually come to love him for his own sake rather than for any benefit they could gain from him. Since true love seeks to give rather than to receive, the more our love for God grows, the more we will want to give ourselves entirely to him, so this is the point at which surrender begins.

In order to give ourselves wholly to God, we should want nothing for ourselves, and should be happy with whatever he chooses to give us. In other words, we should have no will of our own, but as ego it is our nature to have a will of our own, so when we want to surrender ourselves to him, the first obstacle we come across is our own will. Therefore, surrender begins with our attempts to surrender our will to his will: “Thy will be done”, “Not my will, but only your will”, or as Bhagavan expressed it beautifully in verse 2 of *Śrī Aruṇācala Padigam*, “Your will is my will; that is happiness for me” [5].

However, though we can surrender our will to some extent without surrendering ourselves, since the very nature of ourselves as ego is to have a will of our own, we cannot surrender our will entirely without surrendering ourselves. Therefore, if we sincerely try to surrender our will entirely to God, we will gradually come to understand thereby that what we need to sur-

render to him is not just our will but ourselves entirely. But how can we give ourselves entirely to God? Since the nature of ourselves as ego is to rise, stand and flourish to the extent to which we attend to anything other than ourselves, but to subside and dissolve back into our source to the extent to which we attend to ourselves alone, self-investigation (*ātma-vicāra*) is the only means by which we can surrender ourselves entirely to God, as Bhagavan implies in the first sentence of the thirteenth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*: “Being *ātma-niṣṭhāparaṇ* [note: one who is firmly fixed as oneself], giving not even the slightest room to the rising of any thought except *ātma-cintana* [note: self-attentiveness], alone is giving oneself to God” [6].

Self-surrender is therefore the culmination of the path of *bhakti*, and self-investigation is the culmination of the path of surrender, because our love for God is incomplete until we give ourselves entirely to him, and we cannot give ourselves entirely to him without investigating what we actually are. Therefore the answers to this set of questions are as follows: firstly, though surrender is different to self-investigation in its early stages, in its more advanced stages it merges and becomes one with the path of self-investigation; secondly, yes, self-investigation does end in complete surrender of ourselves as ego to God, who is ourselves as we actually are; and thirdly, though it is possible for us to surrender our will to a certain extent just by our love for God, we cannot surrender ourselves to him entirely except by means of self-investigation.



How is it possible to overcome our attachments if the investigation of the self is not intense enough? Can some preliminary means of weakening *vāsanās* be recommended, such as certain yoga techniques and methods or *japa*?



We can begin a journey only from wherever we are currently located, and we all begin the spiritual journey from the state in which we are burdened with strong *viśaya-vāsanās* (Sa. “inclinations” to seek happiness in *viśayas*, “objects” or “phenomena”), which are the seeds that sprout as likes, dislikes, desires,

aversions, attachments, hopes and fears, so these are the limitations with which we start this journey and the obstacles that will constantly confront us as we travel back inside towards our destination. The stronger our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, the slower our progress will be, but the most effective means to weaken these *vāsanās* (Sa. “inclinations”) is to patiently persevere in this practice of self-investigation.

When our *viṣaya-vāsanās* and consequent attachments are strong, they will impede our efforts to be self-attentive, but if we sincerely want to overcome all these obstacles, we will persevere in our efforts, and thereby we will gradually weaken and eventually overcome them entirely. Therefore however weak our efforts to be self-attentive may be, provided we persevere in making as much effort as we can, it is certainly possible for us thereby to overcome all our *viṣaya-vāsanās* and attachments, as Bhagavan says in the first sentence of 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 *svarūpa-dhyāna* [note: self-attentiveness] increases and increases” [7].

There are other means by which we can gradually weaken our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, and of all such means the most effective is meditation on a name or form of God with wholehearted love. However, the true “form” or *svarūpa* of God is *ātma-svarūpa*, the true “form” or real nature of ourself, so meditating on nothing other than ourself, “I”, with the understanding that God is what exists and shines within us as “I”, is the best way of meditating on him, and is not only by far and away the most effective means by which we can weaken our *viṣaya-vāsanās*, but also the only means by which we can eradicate them entirely along with their root, namely ego, as Bhagavan implies in verse 8 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*: “Rather than *anya-bhāva* [note: meditation on anything other than oneself, particularly meditation on God as if he were other than oneself], *ananya-bhāva* [note: meditation on nothing other than oneself], in which he is [note: un-

derstood to be] I, certainly is the best among all” [8].

As Bhagavan often used to say, even a little effort made in this path of self-investigation (which is what he referred to in this verse as *ananya-bhāva*, “meditation on what is not other”, is more effective in weakening our *viṣaya-vāsanās* than a huge amount of effort made in any other path, so rather than wasting our time and effort in trying to practise any other “means” (Sa. *sādhana*), it would be wise for us to devote as much time and effort as we can to trying to hold fast to self-attentiveness.



What is the meaning of the heart in the teachings of Bhagavan? How does it relate to the *pañca-kōśa* teaching? There are three *prānic granthis* that are important in the hatha yoga tradition, while Bhagavan emphasizes the *hṛdaya-granthis* (*cit-jaḍa-granthis*). What is the difference between the yoga and *jñāna* perspectives?



There are several words in Tamil that mean “heart”, and as in normal language, Bhagavan uses such words in a variety of different senses, so in each case we need to understand the sense according to the context. In normal language “heart” can mean the physical organ, the seat of emotions, affections, or the will, and in Bhagavan’s teachings it can also mean the mind, particularly the mind in the sense of ego, which is the root and core of the mind, and in its deepest sense “heart” means *ātma-svarūpa* (Sa. “real nature of ourself”), which is ourself as we actually are. “Heart” means the *core, centre or inner part* of anything, and the core of our emotions is our will, the core of our will is ego, and the core of ego is *ātma-svarūpa*, so *ātma-svarūpa* is the innermost core or heart of everything.

If we consider our experience, the heart or centre of all that we experience is ourself as ego, because as ego we are the experiencer of whatever we experience, and since ego is the adjunct-conflated awareness “I am this body”, the heart or centre of ego is *ātma-svarūpa*, which is the pure awareness “I am”, so *ātma-svarūpa* is the ultimate heart, and hence

Bhagavan often used “heart” as a synonym for *ātma-svarūpa*, which is the source and substance of ego and all other things, being alone what actually exists and is therefore real, as he says in the first sentence of the seventh paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*: “*What actually exists is only ātma-svarūpa*” [9].

As I explained earlier, the “five sheaths” (Sa. *pañca-kōśa*) constitute the body that ego mistakes itself to be, so it is only through ego that the ultimate “heart”, “I am”, is linked or related to the “five sheaths”, as Bhagavan indicates in verse 24 of *Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*: “*The insentient body does not say I; existence-awareness does not rise; in between one thing, I, rises as the extent of the body. This is ‘cit-jaḍa-granṭhi’, bondage, soul, subtle body, ego, this ‘saṁsāra’ and mind*” [10].

“*The insentient [Sa. jaḍa] body does not say I*” is a metaphorical way of saying that the body consisting of “five sheaths” (Sa. *pañca-kōśa*) is not aware of itself as “I”, because it is *jaḍa* (Sa. “insentient” or “non-aware”). “*Existence-awareness [Sa. Sat-Cit] does not rise*” means that *Sat-Cit*, which is *ātma-svarūpa*, the ultimate “heart”, does not ever come into existence, because it is eternal and immutable, so it always exists and shines as it is without ever undergoing any change of any kind whatsoever. “*In between one thing, I, rises as the extent of the body*” means that something rises as “I am this body”, thereby seemingly linking *Sat-Cit*, which is the pure awareness “I am”, to the body, which is not aware. Since this “I” that rises as something that is limited to the extent of the body is aware of itself as “I”, it is not the body, because the body is *jaḍa* and therefore not aware of itself or anything else, and since it rises and is limited to the extent of the body, it is not *Sat-Cit*, because *Sat-Cit* does not rise and can never be limited.

Therefore this “I” is neither the body nor *Sat-Cit* but a spurious entity that appears between them, so to speak, borrowing the properties of each (namely the limited form of the body and the existence and awareness of *Sat-Cit*) and thereby conflating them as if they were one. This “I” is therefore what is

called *cit-jaḍa-granṭhi*, the “knot” (Sa. *granṭhi*) formed by the seeming entanglement of “pure awareness” (Sa. *Cit*) with a body, which is “non-aware” (Sa. *jaḍa*). Pure awareness is *Sat-Cit*, which is of course never entangled with anything, but in the view of ego it seems to be entangled, because ego borrows its existence and awareness as “I am” from *Sat-Cit* and then conflates this “I am” with the body as “I am this body”.

Since this knot is what seemingly binds us to all the limitations of “embodied existence” (Sa. *saṁsāra*), Bhagavan says that it is both bondage and *saṁsāra*. It is also what is called “ego” and the “soul” (Sa. *jīva*), and it is what is called “mind” when this term is used in the sense of ego, which is the *subject* or *knowing element of the mind*, as opposed to all the other elements of the mind, which are objects known by it. It is also what is called the “subtle body” in some contexts, such as when it is said that after the death of one physical body the “subtle body” is what transmigrates to another physical body, but not in other contexts, such as when three of the “five sheaths”, namely the *life, mind* and *intellect*, are described as the “subtle body” (Sa. *sūkṣmaśarīra*).

This *cit-jaḍa-granṭhi*, which is ego, is sometimes referred to as the “heart-knot” (Sa. *hṛdaya-granṭhi*), because it is the primal knot, the knot that is the root and heart of all other knots, so though other knots are spoken about in various kinds of yoga and tantra, they need not concern us if we are following the path of self-investigation, because self-investigation is the means to sever this original knot, namely ego, and when this knot is severed all other knots will cease to exist along with it.

Regarding the difference between the *yoga* and *jñāna* perspectives, I will say a little about the difference between the *classical yoga* of Patanjali and the path of *jñāna* (Sa. “knowledge” or “awareness”) taught by Bhagavan. As Patanjali says in *Yōga Sūtra* 1.2, “*yoga is restraint of mental activity*” [11], but according to Bhagavan stopping mental activity will not eradicate ego but will result only in *manōlaya*

(Sa. “temporary dissolution of mind”). Therefore, in *Upadēśa Undiyār*, while discussing the practice of *prāṇāyāma* (Sa. “breath-restraint”), which is the principal means used in yoga to restrain and eventually stop all “mental activity” (Sa. *citta-vṛtti*), he says in *Upadēśa Undiyār* verse 13: “Dissolution is two: ‘laya’ and ‘nāśa’. What is lying down will rise. If form dies, it will not rise” [12], thereby implying that dissolution of mind is of two kinds, *laya* (Sa. “temporary dissolution”) and *nāśa* (Sa. “annihilation” or “permanent dissolution”), so if the mind is dissolved in *laya*, it will sooner or later rise again, whereas if it is dissolved in *nāśa*, it will never rise again.

Then in verse 14 he says: “Only when one sends the mind, which will become calm when one restrains the breath, on the investigating path will its form perish” [13], thereby implying that *manōnāśa* (Sa. “annihilation of mind”) can be achieved only by means of “self-investigation” (Sa. *ātma-vicāra*) and not by *prāṇāyāma* or any other techniques of yoga, as he said explicitly in the final sentence of the eighth paragraph of *Nāṇ Ār?*: “Therefore ‘prāṇāyāma’ is just an aid to restrain the mind, but will not bring about ‘manōnāśa’” [14].

The root and essence of the mind is ego, so the mind will be annihilated only when ego is eradicated, and since ego is a false awareness of oneself, it can be destroyed only by correct awareness of oneself, which means awareness of oneself as we actually are. Therefore, the aim of self-investigation, which is the path of *jñāna* (Sa. “knowledge” or “awareness”), is not merely to stop “mental activity” (Sa. *citta-vṛtti*) but is only for us to be aware of oneself as we actually are and thereby to eradicate ego.

To the extent to which we are self-attentive, our attention will thereby be withdrawn from all other things, and since no “thoughts” (Sa. *vṛttis*) can rise unless we attend to them, thinking will naturally cease to the extent to which we focus our entire attention on oneself alone. Therefore *citta-vṛtti-nirōdhaḥ* (Sa. “restraint of mental activity”) occurs automatically in self-investigation, but only as a by-product and not as its central aim.

Some spiritual aspirants who have not considered Bhagavan’s core teachings carefully and deeply enough believe that if they can stop thinking, that is self-investigation, but this is not the case. We cannot know what we actually are merely by not thinking, which means stopping all mental activity. Every day when we fall asleep, we withdraw our attention from all other things, so all “mental activity” (Sa. *citta-vṛtti*) thereby ceases, but sleep is just a state of *manōlaya*, so from sleep we will sooner or later rise again as ego. Therefore, merely withdrawing our attention from all other things, which happens as a result of tiredness in the case of sleep and as a result of *prāṇāyāma* in the case of *kēvala nirvikalpa samādhi*, is not sufficient.

In order to know what we actually are and thereby to eradicate ego, what is required is not just withdrawing our attention from all other things and thereby stopping all mental activity, but is focussing our entire attention on oneself, as Bhagavan implies in verse 16 of *Upadēśa Undiyār*: “Leaving external phenomena, the mind knowing its own form of light is alone real awareness” [15]. The mind’s “own form of light” is the light of pure awareness, “I am”, which is its real “form” or actual “nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*), and which always shines within it, giving it light to know both itself and all other things. “Leaving external phenomena” means withdrawing our attention from everything other than oneself, and the most effective means to do so is to focus our entire attention on oneself, which is what he implies by saying “the mind knowing its own form of light”, in which the verbal noun *ஓர்தல்* (Ta. *ōrdal*) can mean either “knowing” or “investigating”. Whereas “leaving external phenomena” is an adverbial clause, “the mind knowing its own form of light” is a noun phrase and the subject of the main clause of this sentence, so the central message of this verse is “the mind knowing its own form of light is alone real awareness”, and the adverbial clause “leaving external phenomena” is added to emphasise that in order for the mind to investigate and know its own form of light, it must be focused on this light so keenly that it thereby ceases to be aware of anything else whatsoever.

When the entire mind is focused on its own “real nature” (Sa. *svarūpa*), the light of pure awareness that shines as “I am”, so keenly that it thereby ceases to be aware of anything else, it will thereby dissolve forever in this light, and what will then remain is this light alone, which is the one real awareness or true knowledge, as Bhagavan implies in this verse by saying: “*the mind knowing its own form of light is alone real awareness*”.

What is Bhagavan’s contribution to the Advaita Vēdānta tradition? More specifically, what makes his teachings stand apart from previous non-duality teachings? And what does non-duality actually mean according to Bhagavan? Is it a kind of non-duality or unity of consciousness and *prāṇā*, as explained, for example, in Kashmir Śaivism (where it is represented by Śiva and Śakti), or is it rather the transcendence of the subject-object distinction in the experience of a *jñāni*?

Bhagavan’s teachings are Advaita Vēdānta in its purest, clearest, simplest, most radical and most practical form. For various reasons over the centuries since Gaudapada wrote his *Māṇḍūkya Kārikā*, classical Advaita Vēdānta has become increasingly diluted and complicated, losing sight of the practical implications of the *mahāvākyas* and other passages of the *Upaniṣads*, *Bhagavad Gītā* and *Brahma Sūtra* on which it is based, so Bhagavan clarified not only the core philosophy of Advaita Vēdānta but even more importantly the correct practice of it, because it is only by practice that its real aim, namely the eradication of ego, can be achieved. Therefore, for those of us who want to understand the simple yet deep and subtle essence of Advaita Vēdānta and how to put it into practice so that we can actually know and be what we always actually are, the contribution that Bhagavan has made is immeasurable and invaluable.

There are many aspects of his teachings that make them stand apart from classical Advaita Vēdānta, so I can only touch upon a few of them here. In classical Advaita Vēdānta the root cause of all problems and all misery is said to be *avidyā* (Sa. “ignorance”), meaning ig-

norance of our own real nature, so since ignorance can be removed only by knowledge, the solution for all problems and all misery is said to be *vidyā* (Sa. “knowledge”), meaning knowledge of our own real nature. Bhagavan clarified the meaning and practical implication of this teaching by expressing it in fresh terms, saying that the root cause of all problems and all misery is ego, which is a false awareness of oneself (meaning awareness of oneself as something other than what we actually are), so it can be removed only by correct awareness of oneself (meaning awareness of oneself as we actually are), and in order to be aware of oneself as we actually are we need to investigate oneself by being keenly self-attentive. By teaching this he implied (and sometimes he stated explicitly) that what is called *avidyā* is nothing but ego, the *false awareness* “I am this body”, and what is called *vidyā* is nothing but the *pure awareness* “I am”.

By re-expressing this classical teaching in these fresh terms, he was thereby able to clarify not only the respective natures of *avidyā* and *vidyā*, but also the practical means by which we can experience *vidyā* and thereby remove *avidyā*. That is, having pointed out that *avidyā* is ego, he then went on to explain that the nature of ego is to rise, stand and flourish by attending to anything other than itself, but to subside and dissolve back into its source by attending to itself, thereby making it clear that keenly focused self-attentiveness is the only means by which ego (and hence *avidyā*) can be eradicated.

Another important feature of his teachings that make them stand apart from classical Advaita Vēdānta is the central importance he gave to *bhakti* (“love” or “devotion”), the crucial role of which is often neglected or misunderstood in classical Advaita Vēdānta. As he often said, “*Bhakti is the mother of jñāna*”, thereby implying that we cannot investigate and know what we actually are without wholehearted and all-consuming love to surrender oneself completely. Love (Sa. *bhakti*) is therefore the key to success in self-investigation, which is the path of *jñāna*.

Not only in classical Advaita Vēdānta but also in most other schools of Vēdānta, *bhakti* and *jñāna* are generally considered to be two distinct and often opposing paths, but Bhagavan clarified that the path of *jñāna* is the culmination of the path of *bhakti* and therefore inseparable from it, so in making this clear he has made a significant and practical contribution not only to Advaita Vēdānta but to Vēdānta as a whole (and indeed to all other spiritual paths, because *bhakti* and *jñāna* are the heart and soul of any genuine spiritual path).

Regarding the question “what does non-duality actually mean according to Bhagavan?”, the central contention of Advaita Vēdānta is that what actually exists is “one only without a second” [16], namely “existence only” [17], or “beingness only” [18], as stated in the *Chāndōgya Upaniṣad* (6. 2. 1–2), and that one thing that exists without a second is ourself (meaning *ātma-svarūpa*, ourself as we actually are), as stated in the *mahāvākya* (Sa. “great statement”) of the *Chāndōgya Upaniṣad* (6. 8. 7), “*That you are*” [19]. This is exactly what Bhagavan implied when he wrote in the first sentence of the seventh paragraph of *Nāṅ Ār?*: “*What actually exists is only ātma-svarūpa*” [20]. Therefore, the meaning of non-duality (Sa. *advaita*) according to both Advaita Vēdānta and Bhagavan is that what actually exists is “one only without a second” (Sa. *ekam ēva advitīyam*).

Since nothing other than *ātma-svarūpa* actually exists, whatever else may seem to exist is just an illusory “appearance” (Sa. *vivarta*), as taught by Advaita Vēdānta. However, as Bhagavan pointed out, there cannot be an appearance without something to which (or in whose view) it appears, so when we are taught that all this multiplicity is just an unreal appearance, we should investigate to whom it appears. Since all multiplicity appears to us only in waking and dream, when we have risen as ego, and does not appear in sleep, when we remain without rising as ego, it is only in the view of ourself as ego that anything other than ourself appears. Therefore, investigating to whom all this appears is investigating ego, and since the nature of ego is to subside and

eventually dissolve forever in its source when it investigates itself, investigating to whom all this appears is the means to put an end to this entire appearance and to experience ourself as “one only without a second”, which is what we always actually are.

Though there are other systems of philosophy that claim to be non-duality, such as Kashmir Śaivism, if they take more than one thing to be real, they may be forms of monism, but they are not non-duality in the same strict sense as Advaita Vēdānta, because they do not accept that what actually exists is “one only without a second”, and that everything else is therefore just an illusory appearance.

Even to say that everything else is just an illusory appearance is a concession, because according to Bhagavan and Advaita Vēdānta the “ultimate truth” (Sa. *pāramārthika satya*) is *ajāta*, which means “unborn” and therefore implies the truth that nothing has ever appeared or come into existence. That is, whatever appears (meaning whatever does not actually exist but merely seems to exist) appears only in the view of ego, but ego is itself just an appearance that seems to exist only so long as it attends to anything other than itself. If, instead of attending to anything else, ego turns its entire attention back to face itself alone, it will see that what it actually is is just pure awareness, which always remains immutably as it is without ever rising as ego, so no such thing as ego has ever arisen, as Bhagavan implies 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*” [21].

Therefore, what is called the “eradication of ego” or “annihilation of the mind” (Sa. *manōnāśa*) is just the recognition that no such thing as ego or mind has ever existed or appeared. Since all other things seem to exist only in the view of ourself as ego or mind, when it is clearly seen that no such thing as ego or mind has ever existed or appeared, it will thereby be seen that nothing else has ever existed or appeared, so the ultimate

truth is that nothing has ever appeared. What actually exists is only *ātma-svarūpa*, which is *Sat-Cit*, pure existence-awareness, in whose clear view nothing else exists or even seems to exist. This alone is the true meaning of *advaita* or non-duality.

Therefore, the ultimate truth is that *advaita* is not even the transcendence of the subject-object distinction, because no such distinction has ever existed. However, though this is the ultimate truth, as revealed in Advaita Vēdānta and confirmed by Bhagavan, it is not to be considered as a teaching, because when ego does not exist, there is no need for any teaching and no one to be taught. Therefore, the teachings of Advaita Vēdānta and Bhagavan concede that ego does seem to exist, and since it seems to exist, in its view all this multiplicity also seems to exist, so the aim and purpose of these teachings is to show us the means by which we put an end to the illusory appearance of ego and all other things.

So long as we seem to have risen as ego, we seem to be aware of the appearance of multiplicity, so as ego we are the subject or knower, and all other things that appear in our view are objects known by us, and hence so long as we rise and stand as ego the distinction between subject and object will seem to exist. The only means to transcend this distinction, therefore, is to eradicate ego, and as Bhagavan has clarified, ego can be eradicated only by means of self-investigation, which is the practical application of the core teachings of Advaita Vēdānta.

Since *advaita* means that there is “one only without a second”, the correct practice of *advaita* can only be self-attentiveness, because this is the only practice that entails nothing other than ourself, and that (when practised keenly enough) leaves no room for the rising or appearance of any other thing. This has been made clear by Bhagavan in so many ways, so clarifying and emphasising this is one of the greatest contributions that he made to the Advaita Vēdānta tradition.

Q

What are your recommendations for further study of Bhagavan's teachings – which sources, in what order, and why?

A

To study Bhagavan's teachings in depth, the most important texts to study attentively and to consider carefully and repeatedly are his own original writings, of which the principal ones are the five hymns of *Śrī Aruṇācala Stuti Pañcakam*, namely *Śrī Aruṇācala Akṣaramaṇamālai*, *Śrī Aruṇācala Navamaṇimālai*, *Śrī Aruṇācala Padigam*, *Śrī Aruṇācala Aṣṭakam* and *Śrī Aruṇācala Pañcaratnam*; his *upadēśa* poems, namely *Upadēśa Undiyār*, *Ulladu Nārpadu*, *Ulladu Nārpadu Anubandham* (about two thirds of which are verses that he translated from other sources), *Ēkāṇma Pañcakam*, *Appala-p-Pāṭṭu*, *Āṇma-Viddai* and *Upadēśa Tanippākka!* (many of which are verses that he translated from other sources); and his prose treatise *Nāṇ Ār?*, which for the majority of us is the most useful text to study first. My translations of many of these works are available on my website or blog [22], and I am currently working towards making my translations of all the other ones available likewise, after which they will probably be published in book form.

The next most important book to study is *Guru Vācaka Kōvai*, which consists of more than 1,250 verses in which Muruganar recorded important teachings that Bhagavan had given orally, and of which an English translation by Sadhu Om and me is available both as a printed book and as a PDF on my website. Another very useful book to study is *The Path of Sri Ramana* by Sadhu Om, because in it he explains Bhagavan's teachings in detail and with great clarity, with particular emphasis on the practice. The original of this book is in Tamil, and earlier this year a revised and more complete translation of it was published.

Thank you for sharing your insights with us!

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 சபாவமான
அச 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 aṇidal vēṇḍum. aḍarḱu nāṇ
ār eṇṇum ṇāṇa-vicāram-ē mukkiya sādhaṇam.

[2] Original text in Tamil (Uḷḷadu Nārpadu, v. 5):

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

Original text transliteration: uḍal pañca kōśa uru.
adaṇāl aindum uḍal eṇṇum sollil oḍuṅgum.

[3] Original text in Tamil (Nāṇ Ār?, para. 16):

சதாகாலமும் மனத்தை
ஆத்மாவில் வைத்திருப்பதற்குத்
தான் 'ஆத்மவிசார' மென்று பெயர்.

Original text transliteration: sadā-kālam-
um maṇattai ātmāvil vaittiruppadaṇḱu-t
tāṇ 'ātma-vicāram' eṇḍru peyar.

[4] Original text in Tamil (Āṇma-Viddai, v. 3):

தன்னை அறிதல் இன்றி,
தன்னை அறிதல் இன்றி,
பின்னை எது அறிகில் என்?
தன்னை அறிந்திடில், பின்
என்னை உளது அறிய?

Original text transliteration: taṇṇai aṇidal iṇḍri, piṇṇai
edu aṇihil eṇ? taṇṇai aṇindiḍil, piṇ eṇṇai uḷadu aṇiya?

[5] Original text in Tamil (Śrī Aruṇācala Padigam, v. 2):

நின் இட்டம் என் இட்டம்;
இன்பு அது எற்கு.

Original text transliteration: niṇ
iṭṭam eṇ iṭṭam; iṇbu adu eṇḱu.

[6] Original text in Tamil (Nāṇ Ār?, para. 13):

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

Original text transliteration: āṇma-cintaṇaiyai-t
tavira vēru cintaṇai kiḷambuvadārḱu-c
caṭṭrum iḍam-koḍāmal ātma-niṣṭhāparaṇ-
āy iruppādē taṇṇai īsaṇukku aḷippadām.

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

தொன்றுதொட்டு வருகின்ற
விஷயவாசனைகள்
அளவற்றனவாய்க் கடலலைகள்
போற் றோன்றினும் அவையாவும்
சொருபத்யானம் கிளம்பக்
கிளம்ப அழிந்துவிடும்.

Original text transliteration: tonḍrutotṭu
varugiṇḍra viṣaya-vāsaṇaiḱaḷ aḷavaṭṭraṇavāy-k kaḍal-
alaḱaḷ pōl tōṇḍriṇum avai-yāvum sorūpa-
dhyāṇam kiḷamba-k kiḷamba aṇindu-viḍum.

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

அனிய பாவத்தின் அவன்
அகம் ஆகும் அனனிய பாவமே
அனைத்தினும் உத்தமம்.

Original text transliteration: aṇiya-bhāvattiṇ avan
aḱam āḱum aṇaiṇiya bhāvam-ē aṇaittiṇ-um uttamam.

[9] Original text in Tamil (Nāṇ Ār?, para. 7):

யதார்த்தமா யுள்ளது
ஆத்மசொருப மொன்றே.

Original text transliteration: yathārtham-
āy uḷḷadu ātma-sorūpam oṇḍrē.

[10] Original text in Tamil (*Uḷḷadu Nārpadu*, v. 24):

சட உடல் நான் என்னாது; சத்சித்
உதியாது; உடல் அளவா நான்
ஒன்று உதிக்கும் இடையில்.
இது சித்சடக்கிரந்தி, பந்தம்,
சீவன், நுட்ப மெய், அகந்தை,
இச் சமுசாரம், மனம்.

Original text transliteration: *jaḍa uḍal nāṅ eṇṇādu;*
sat-cit udiyādu; uḍal aḷavā nāṅ onḍru udikkum
iḍaiyil. idu cit-jaḍa-giranthi, bandham, jīvaṅ,
nuṭpa mey, ahandai, i-c-samusāram, maṅam.

[11] Original text in Sanskrit (*Yōga Sūtra* 1.2):

योगश्चित्तवृत्तिनिरोध.

Original text transliteration: *yōgaś-citta-vṛtti-nirōdhaḥ.*

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

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

Original text transliteration: *ilayamum nāsam iraṇḍu*
ām oḍukkam. ilayittu uḷadu eṛum. eṛādu uru māyndaḍēl.

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

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

Original text transliteration: *oḍukka vaḷiyai oḍuṅgum*
uḷattai viḍukka-v-ē ōr vaṛi, vīyumu adaṅ uru.

[14] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 8):

ஆகையால் பிராணாயாமம்
மனத்தை யடக்க சகாயமாகுமே
யன்றி மனோநாசஞ் செய்யாது.

Original text transliteration: *āhaiyāl*
pirāṇāyāmam maṅattai y-aḍakka sahāyam-
āhumē y-aṇḍri maṅōnāśam seyyādu.

[15] 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,*
maṅam taṅ oḷi-uru ōrdalē uṅmai uṅarcci ām.

[16] Original text in Sanskrit (*Chāndōgya Upaniṣad*,
6. 2. 1-2):

एकम् एव अद्वितीयम्

Original text transliteration: *ēkam ēva advitīyam.*

[17] Original text in Sanskrit (*Chāndōgya Upaniṣad*, 6. 2. 1):

सत् एव.

Original text transliteration: *sat ēva.*

[18] Original text in Sanskrit (*Chāndōgya Upaniṣad*, 6. 2. 2):

सत्त्व एव.

Original text transliteration: *sattva ēva.*

[19] Original text in Sanskrit (*Chāndōgya Upaniṣad*, 6. 8. 7):

तत्त्वमसि.

Original text transliteration: *tat tvam asi.*

[20] Original text in Tamil (*Nāṅ Ār?*, para. 7):

யதார்த்தமா யுள்ளது
ஆத்மசொருப மொன்றே.

Original text transliteration: *yathārtham-*
āy uḷḷadu ātma-sorūpam onḍrē.

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

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

Original text transliteration: *maṅattiṅ uruvai maṛavādu*
usāva, maṅam eṇa onḍru ilai. mārggam nēr ārkkum idu.

[22] James, Michael. Website. <https://happinessofbeing.com/>.