

SRI ARUNACHALA PANCHARATNAM

Original Verses in Sanskrit and Tamil

graciously composed by

Bhagavan Sri Ramana

Word-for-Word English Translation

by

Sri Sadhu Om and Michael James

With the Oral Commentary of

Sri Sadhu Om

Recorded in English by **Michael James**

Copyright © Michael James

PREFACE

In the early 1980s some devotees of Sri Bhagavan asked Sri Sadhu Om to explain the import of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* ('The Five Gems to Sri Arunachala', one of the Five Hymns composed by Sri Bhagavan), and they recorded on a cassette tape the spontaneous explanations that he gave them in Tamil. Later, at the request of Michael James, Sri Sadhu Om explained those recorded explanations in English. As he was doing so, Michael questioned him further, and noted down all that he explained. After completing a rough draft of his notes, Michael asked Sri Sadhu Om to check them, and this led to further discussions and more detailed explanations. Finally, after Sri Sadhu Om had approved the rough draft with all his explanations added, Michael wrote a fair copy.

This fair copy remained as a handwritten manuscript for nearly twenty years, until Sri M. Sahadevan arranged to have it copied. It was then published, without the word-for-word meanings of the Sanskrit and Tamil verses, in five installments in *The Mountain Path* from the Advent 2003 to the Advent 2004 issue.

The present version, which contains the full commentary along with the word-for-word meanings of the Sanskrit and Tamil verses, was first published on this website in January 2005, and is now being republished with several corrections and alterations.

June 2005

INTRODUCTION

Sri Bhagavan never studied any Sanskrit either at school or after coming to Tiruvannamalai. But by virtue of his firm abidance in self¹, the source of all knowledge, he was endowed with an intuitive understanding of any text he happened to read in Sanskrit. So clear was this intuitive understanding that in about the years 1903 or 1904 he was able not only to translate the whole of *Vivekachudamani* into Tamil prose, but also to bring out in his translation all the wealth of implied meaning that lay hidden in the terse Sanskrit *slokas* of Sri Adi Sankara. Later, after the great Sanskrit poet and scholar Kavyakanta Ganapati Sastri came and took refuge at his feet, by his association with him, Sri Bhagavan picked up sufficient knowledge of Sanskrit grammar and prosody to be able himself to compose *slokas* in Sanskrit.

One day in the year 1917 a devotee asked Sri Bhagavan to compose a verse in the *arya vritta* metre, which is said to be one of the most difficult metres in Sanskrit. In answer to the devotee's request, Sri Bhagavan effortlessly composed the verse "*Karunapurna sudhabdhe...*" in flawless *arya vritta*. Soon afterwards this *sloka* was brought to the notice of Kavyakanta Ganapati Sastri, who on seeing it was wonderstruck, finding that its style possessed all the grandeur and beauty which could be found only in the *slokas* of the ancient *Veda-rishis*. Therefore he at once requested Sri Bhagavan to compose another verse in the same metre. Sri Bhagavan accordingly composed the verse "*Tvayarunachala sarvam...*" On seeing this verse Ganapati Sastri asked Sri Bhagavan to compose three more *slokas* on the subject of the four *yogas* – one on *jnana yoga* (the path of knowledge), then one on *raja yoga* (the path of mind-control), and lastly one on *karma* and *bhakti yoga* (the paths of unselfish action and devotion), in order to form a poem of five verses. Thus in continuation of the ideas expressed in the first two verses, Sri Bhagavan wrote the next three verses as per the request of Ganapati Sastri².

Unlike the last three verses, which were composed on the subjects specified by Ganapati Sastri, the first two verses were composed without any subject being given to Sri Bhagavan.

¹ Contrary to the usual practice of using capital letters freely when translating or writing about the teachings of Sri Bhagavan in English, in this commentary I have deliberately kept capitalisation to a minimum, and have in particular avoided capitalising the initial letter of non-dualistic terms such as 'self', 'heart', 'consciousness' and 'being', because there is something intrinsically dualistic about attempting to distinguish between a capitalised 'Self' and a lesser 'self', when in reality there are no two selves. Fortunately in the scripts of Tamil and other Indian languages there are no capital letters, and hence no such artificial duality is forced upon a writer, and readers are left free to understand according to the given context whether a particular word denotes the reality or the appearance. Sri Sadhu Om used to say that though in English the facility to capitalise may sometimes be useful, more often than not it is actually an impediment, because as soon as we begin to capitalise a word such as 'self', we are forcing ourselves whenever we write it to define whether we mean the real self or the ego. When used by Sri Bhagavan, words such as 'self' and 'heart' are metaphysical terms that often defy definition, and are intended to defy it. For example, in the term 'self-enquiry' it is unnecessary and undesirable to define whether the word 'self' denotes the real self or the false individual self, because though we may begin believing that we are enquiring into the individual 'I' which appears to be our 'self', we will end up discovering that what exists and shines as 'I' is in fact only the one infinite 'I' which is our real 'self', just as a person may begin thinking that he is keenly scrutinising a snake but will end up discovering that what he is actually looking at is only a rope. However, though I have tried to keep capitalisation to a minimum in order to avoid imposing upon Sri Bhagavan's teachings any inappropriate duality, I have nevertheless adhered to the long-established English convention of writing 'God' and certain other such words with an initial capital letter, hoping that readers would understand that there is philosophically no more significance in doing this than in capitalising the initial letter of proper names. – MJ.

² For various accounts of the genesis of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*, refer to *At the Feet of Bhagavan* by T.K. Sundaesaiyar, p.72, *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 19-6-1946, and *The Mountain Path*, July 1982, p. 179.

The first verse is a prayer beseeching Arunachala, the light of self-consciousness, to make his heart-lotus blossom fully. In the second verse he then reveals that the word 'heart' is a name for Arunachala, the real self which ever shines in the heart as 'I'. If we deeply reflect over the meaning of these two verses, it will be clear that in both verses Sri Bhagavan is drawing our attention only to the effulgent light of self-consciousness which is ever shining within us as 'I'. From this we can understand that if Sri Bhagavan is asked to say something without being given any specific subject, he will talk only about the shining of the real consciousness 'I'. After understanding the first two verses thus, if we proceed to reflect deeply over the last three verses, it will become clear that even when Sri Bhagavan is asked to write on various specified subjects, he will connect those subjects only with the subject which alone really interests him, namely knowing the real light of self. This point we can see in more detail in the commentary on each verse.

After Sri Bhagavan composed these five verses, they were named *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*, and a devotee named Daivarata composed the verse "*Srimad Ramana Maharsher...*" as a concluding verse. Five years later, in 1922, at the request of a devotee named Aiyasami Pillai, Sri Bhagavan translated his five *slokas* into Tamil in *venba* metre, and he adapted the idea of Daivarata's verse in a concluding *venba* "*Arunagiri Ramanan...*"

In the Tamil *parayana* which was recited daily in Sri Bhagavan's Presence, as a conclusion to the programme of songs selected for each day *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* would be recited. Since Sri Bhagavan had composed this work first in Sanskrit and then in Tamil, it was the custom to recite first the Sanskrit version and then the Tamil version of each verse before proceeding to the next verse. In accordance with this custom, first the meaning of the Sanskrit version and then of the Tamil version of each verse is given here, followed by a detailed commentary on the Tamil version of each verse.

Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam

VERSE 1:

*karunāpūrna sudhābdhē
kabalitaghanaviśvarūpa kiranāvalyā
arunāchala paramātman
arunō bhava chittakañjasuvikāsāya*

karunā - grace; *āpūrna* - overflowing fullness; *sudhā* - ambrosia; *abdhē* - O ocean; *kabalita* - is swallowed; *ghana* - solid; *viśva* - universe; *rūpa* - form; *kirana* - rays; *āvalyā* by series; *arunāchala* - O Arunachala; *paramātman* - supreme spirit, supreme self; *arunah* - sun; *bhava* - be; *chitta* - mind; *kañja* - lotus; *su* - good, auspicious, well (i.e. complete or full); *vikāsāya* - for the blossoming.

O ocean of ambrosia, the overflowing fullness of grace! O Arunachala, supreme spirit, by [whose] series of rays the solid form of the universe is swallowed! Be the sun for the complete blossoming of [my] mind-lotus.

*arulnirai vāna vamudak kadalē
virikadirāl yāvum vizhungum – aruna
giriparamān māvē kilarulappu nandrāy
viripariti yāha vilungu*

arul - grace; *niraivu* - fullness; *āna* - which is; *amuda* - ambrosia (*amrita*, the nectar of immortality); *kadalē* - O ocean; *virī* - spreading; *kadirāl* - by rays; *yāvum* - all, everything; *vizhungum* - who swallow; *arunagiri* - Arunagiri; *paramānmāvē* - O supreme spirit, supreme self; *kilar* - which is swelling; *ula* - mind, heart; *pu* - flower; *nandrāy* - well (i.e. completely or fully); *virī* - which will open, unfold, untie, expand, cause to blossom; *pariti* - sun; *āha* - as; *vilungu* - shine.

O ocean of ambrosia, which is the fullness of grace! O supreme spirit Arunagiri, who swallow everything by spreading rays! Shine as the sun which will open completely [my] mind-flower, which is swelling.

Explanatory paraphrase: O ocean of *amrita* (the ambrosia of immortality), which is the fullness of grace! O Arunagiri, the supreme self (*paramatma*), who swallow everything (the entire world-appearance) by spreading rays of the light of self-knowledge! Graciously shine as the sun of self-knowledge that will cause my mind-lotus, which is swelling with love and ready to blossom, to blossom fully.

COMMENTARY

From the opening words of the verse, it is clear that as soon as Sri Bhagavan sees Arunachala, he sees it as the ‘ocean of ambrosia, which is the fullness of grace’. What does he mean by the fullness of grace? In this connection he once said, “What is the fullness of God’s grace? Is it God appearing in name and form, or is it his bestowing *moksha* (liberation from birth and death)? No, it cannot be, because he does not bestow either his *darsana* (vision) or *moksha* upon all *jivas* (souls). He bestows *moksha* only upon a few souls, because others do not want it. Since *moksha* is bestowed only upon a few souls who sincerely want it and not upon others, even the bestowal of *moksha* cannot be said to be the

fullness of grace. Only that which God is ever giving to all can be called the fullness of grace. What God is giving at all times to all *jivas* is only the shining of the light of self-consciousness as 'I, I' in the heart of each of one of them. This shining of the consciousness 'I' is bestowed upon all by the grace of God. If this light were not bestowed upon them, no *jiva* could do anything; they could not practise any devotion, nor could they attain self-knowledge. The shining of this self-light is the one great boon which is bestowed universally upon all *jivas*, not only upon human beings but also upon animals, birds, *devas* and all other sentient creatures. Since this shining of 'I' is bestowed only by his grace, and since it is bestowed equally upon all *jivas* at all times, it alone can be called the fullness of grace." Therefore, when Sri Bhagavan addresses Arunachala as 'ocean of ambrosia, which is the fullness of grace', is it not clear that he sees Arunachala as the light of self-consciousness which is even shining in the heart as 'I'.

Though Arunachala is thus by his grace ever shining in the heart of all beings as the consciousness 'I', why do not all *jivas* realise him to be the fullness of grace? Because they never turn their attention towards the shining of 'I'. If a *jiva* withdraws his attention from all second and third person objects and focuses it upon the first person³, which shines as the mere consciousness 'I', then the light of self-consciousness will shine forth with a fresh clarity in whose spreading effulgence the entire appearance of this seemingly solid world-picture will be swallowed. That is why in the second sentence of this verse Sri Bhagavan addresses Arunachala as "Arunagiri, the supreme self, who swallowed everything by spreading rays".

How is the world-appearance thus swallowed by the effulgent light of self-knowledge? If a cinema show is going on in a tent in daytime, the pictures can be seen on the screen only because of the limited light of the projector and because of the background of artificial darkness caused by the tent. If a powerful wind were to blow away the tent, the bright sunlight would flood in, the darkness would vanish and thus all the pictures on the screen would be swallowed up. Similarly, the entire picture of the world, soul and God can be seen only because of the limited light of the mind (which is a reflection of the original light of Arunachala, the real self) and because of the background of the darkness of ignorance caused by forgetfulness of self. If our attention is focused keenly on self, the light of self-knowledge (the bright light of Arunachala) will dawn, the background darkness of ignorance or *maya* will vanish, and thus the whole picture of the world, soul and God will be swallowed up and disappear. This same idea is expressed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 114 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*:

³ For the purposes of self-enquiry, the Tamil equivalents of the grammatical terms 'first person', 'second person' and 'third person' are more meaningful than their English counterparts. In Tamil grammar these 'three persons' are called the 'three places', because the first person, the subject 'I', is considered to be ever present *here*, the second person objects are considered to be those objects that are directly perceived *nearby*, while the third person objects are considered to be those objects that are thought of at a distance *elsewhere*. The actual Tamil word for the first person, '*tanmai*', etymologically means 'selfness' (that is, the sense of 'self' or 'I') and denotes the subject 'I' which exists *here* and which perceives objects *nearby* and thinks about objects *elsewhere*. The Tamil word for the second person, '*munnilai*', etymologically means 'what stands in front' and denotes those objects that, being *nearby* in time and space, are directly perceived by one or more of the five senses. And the Tamil word for the third person, '*padarkkai*', etymologically means 'what is spread out' (and also 'what is thought of') and denotes those objects *elsewhere* that, being distant in time or space, are not within the range of perception but are thought of by the mind. Therefore, when Sri Bhagavan asks us to withdraw our attention from the 'second persons' and 'third persons' and to focus it on the 'first person', what he means is that we should withdraw our attention from all objects, both those *nearby* which are directly perceived and those *elsewhere* which are thought of, and to fix it only on the sense of self, 'I', which is ever *here* and *now*. – MJ.

“If the small light [of a cinema projector] is merged and dissolved in the great light [of the sun], the picture show will vanish. Likewise, if the mind-light is merged and dissolved in the true light of consciousness, the false show of the appearance of the three entities [the soul, world and God] will be dissolved...”

Such was the experience of Sri Bhagavan. When the fear of the death arose in him, his attention was focused keenly on self, and thus the light of self-consciousness shone forth so clearly that in its bright effulgence the entire world-appearance was swallowed, and that self-consciousness alone remained shining as Arunachala, the supreme self. This experience is the true shining forth of grace described in verse 3 of *Atma Vidya Kirtanam* as “... *minnum tanul anma prakasame; arul vilasame*” (the light of self will shine within oneself; this is the shining forth of grace).

Since this experience is possible only when by his light of grace Arunachala makes the heart-lotus blossom, Sri Bhagavan concludes this verse as a prayer, “Shine as the sun [of self-knowledge] that will cause my mind-lotus, which is swelling [with love], to blossom fully”. What is meant here by the blossoming of the ‘swelling heart-lotus’ (*kilar ulap-pu*)? The mind, which functions as a knot (*granthi*) binding together as one the real self, which is consciousness (*chit*), and the body, which is insentient (*jada*), is here compared to a lotus. The state in which this knot is tightly closed, being firmly bound by the entanglement of strong worldly desires and attachments (*asa-pasa*), is compared to the state of a tightly closed immature lotus-bud. When by ripening *bhakti* this lotus-bud of the mind gradually becomes mature, the tight binding of worldly desires and attachments gradually becomes loose. This state of maturity in which the force of attachment (*abhimana-vega*) is thus weakened, is compared to the state of a lotus-bud which has swollen and is ready to blossom. The state of self-knowledge, in which the *chit-jada-granthi* is cut asunder, all its desires and attachments having been destroyed, is compared to the blossoming of the lotus.

Therefore, Sri Bhagavan makes this prayer taking the standpoint of a devotee whose heart-lotus has been well matured and ripened by devotion (*bhakti*) and is now ready to blossom fully. Just as a closed lotus-bud, however mature and ripe it may be, cannot blossom fully unless the light of the sun falls upon it, so the bud-like mind, however much maturity it may have gained by *bhakti*, cannot blossom with self-knowledge unless the light of the grace of Arunachala falls upon it. Indeed, just as the lotus-bud has been ripened to maturity only by the sunlight, so the mind has gained maturity only by means of the *bhakti* which was implanted and nurtured in it by the light of grace. From the beginning it was only the light of grace which enkindled in the mind a clarity of discrimination, and it was only by this clarity that the mind was able to give up its attachment to external objects and to gain ever-increasing love to know self. Now, by means of this great love to know self, the mind has become fully mature and ripe for the dawn of self-knowledge, so at this point all it can do is to pray to Arunachala to complete his work of grace by making it blossom with self-knowledge. When Arunachala is such a powerful sun that he can swallow the entire universe and when he has already ripened the mind-lotus to maturity, will it not be easy for him now to make the ripened lotus-bud of that mature mind blossom with self-knowledge? Hence Sri Bhagavan concludes this first verse with a prayer, the same prayer which he had earlier made in verse 27 of *Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai*:

“Arunachala, sun of bright rays which swallows everything, make my mind-lotus blossom.”

Until the heart-lotus of the devotee is thus made to blossom by Arunachala’s spreading rays of light (*virī kadir*), his mind remains tightly enclosed within the covering of the five sheaths,

and in the darkness created by this enclosure it can only see either darkness, as in sleep, or the shadow-projection of the world of names and forms, as in waking and dream. But when his heart-lotus is made to blossom by the grace of Arunachala, his mind is freed from the enclosing limitation of the five sheaths and thus it opens up to see the light of the pure 'I'-consciousness shining brightly as the sun in the all-pervasive space of the heart, and hence the darkness of *avarana* (the veiling power of *maya*) and the shadow-world projected by *vikshepa* (the diversifying power of *maya*) are both swallowed by that bright light of self-knowledge.

Thus on scrutiny it is clear that in this verse Sri Bhagavan is talking only about his own experience of the shining of the light of self-consciousness 'I'. But instead of saying directly, "Swallowing everything I alone exist", he addresses Arunachala and sings in the form of a *stotra*, "Swallowing everything, O supreme self, you alone exist". From this, is it not clear that other than Arunachala, the light of self-consciousness which ever shines in the heart as 'I', there is no separate entity as 'Sri Ramana'? Thus this first verse stands as a proof of the fact that if anyone asks Sri Bhagavan to sing something without specifying any subject, what he will sing about is only the shining of 'I', which in his experience alone exists, having swallowed everything else.

VERSE 2:

*tvayyarunāchala sarvam
bhūtvā sthivā pralīnamētacchitram
hridayahamityātmatayā
nrityasi bhōstē vadanti hridayam nāma*

tvayi - in you; *arunāchala* - O Arunachala; *sarvam* - all; *bhūtvā* - having come into existence; *sthivā* - having been sustained; *pralīnam* - is destroyed; *ētat* - this; *chitram* - picture; *hridi* - in the heart; *aham* - 'I'; *iti* - as; *ātmatayā* - as self, as spirit; *nrityasi* - you dance; *bhōh* - O [a form of address, linked to the word 'arunāchala' in the first line]; *tē* - to you; *vadanti* - they say; *hridayam* - heart; *nāma* - name.

O Arunachala! In you all this picture comes into existence, is sustained, and is destroyed. You dance in the heart as self (or spirit) as 'I', [and hence] they say 'heart' is name to you.

*chittiramā mihdellām semmalaiyē ninbālē
yuttidamāy nindrē yodungidumāl – nittiyamum
nānen dridaya nadittiduvai yālunpēr
tānidaya mendriduvar tām*

chittiram - picture; *ām* - which is; *ihdu* - this; *ellām* - all; *semmalaiyē* - O Red Hill [Arunachala]; *ninbālē* - only in you⁴; *yuttidam āy* - having risen; *nindrē* - having stood; *odungidum* - subsides; *āl* - [an expletive]; *nittiyamum* - eternally, always; *nān* - 'I'; *endru* - as; *idayam* - heart; *nadittiduvaiyāl* - since you dance; *un* - your; *pēr* - name; *tān* - itself; *idayam* - heart; *endriduvar* - say that; *tām* - they.

O Red Hill! All this, which is a picture, rises, stands and subsides only in you. Since you dance eternally [in] the heart as 'I', they say that your name itself is 'heart'.

⁴ 'pāl' = place or 'idam'; thus 'ninbāl' (*nin* + *pāl*) = 'ninnidam' (in you).

Explanatory paraphrase: O Red Hill (Arunachala)! All this world-appearance, which is a picture, rises, stands and subsides only in you. Since you dance eternally in the heart as the consciousness 'I', the real self, those who know the truth (the *jnanis*) say that your name itself is 'heart' (*hridayam*).

COMMENTARY

In the previous verse Sri Bhagavan revealed that by the all-pervasive effulgence of its grace, Arunachala swallows the entire world-appearance. In this verse, by alluding to the cinema simile by which he used to explain the appearance of the world, Sri Bhagavan gives a clue to the reason why the world-appearance is swallowed by the light of grace. Just as the appearance and disappearance of a cinema picture takes place only on the screen, so the rising (creation), the standing (sustenance) and the subsidence (destruction) of the entire world-picture takes place only in Arunachala, the real self. Without Arunachala as a base, the world-picture could not have even its seeming rising, standing and subsidence. But Arunachala is not merely the screen on which this world-picture appears and disappears.

“... The picture of names and forms, the seen, the screen and the light – all these are he, who is self.”
– *Ulladu Narpadu* verse 1

The world-picture can appear on the screen of self only when the light of self appears diffused and dim in the form of the mind-light. But when the light of self shines in all its fullness, it swallows the appearance of both the world-picture and the seer of that picture. “When the mind comes out from self, the world appears. Therefore when the world appears, self does not appear; when the self appears (shines), the world does not appear” says Sri Bhagavan in *Nan Yar?* (Who am I?). This experience of his is clearly revealed in these first two verses.

Though the world-picture, the seer of that picture, the screen on which the picture is seen, and the light which illumines the picture are all only Arunachala, who is self, Arunachala is not the active cause (*nimitta karana*) for the appearance of the world. This is made clear by Sri Bhagavan in verse 85 of *Guru Vachaka Kovai*:

“Though self itself is seen as the world of many names and forms, it is not the doer, acting as the cause which creates, sustains and destroys the world.”

This is why in this verse Sri Bhagavan says the world-picture rises, stands and subsides in you (*ninbale*) and not by you (*ninnale*). The efficient cause or *nimitta karana* of the world-appearance is only the mind, which is a dim and diffused light that seemingly comes into existence due to self-forgetfulness. When the clear and unlimited light of self-knowledge shines forth, it swallows the dim mind-light together with its effect, the world-appearance. In other words, to express it figuratively, so long as the lotus-bud of the mind remains closed, in the darkness caused by that closure the world-picture can rise and subside; but when the mind-lotus blossoms open by the grace of Arunachala, the clear light of self-consciousness floods in and pervades it entirely, thereby swallowing the world-picture.

Since Arunachala is thus the bright fire of knowledge (*jnana*) which burns all the worlds to ashes, Sri Bhagavan refers to it here as the 'red hill' (*sem-malai*). Though to the gross extroverted attention Arunachala appears as a hill of insentient rock, it is in fact the "lord who stands as a mass of *jnana* (*jnana-tiralay nindra peruman*)"⁵ ever shining in the heart as the self-luminous light of consciousness 'I'.

⁵ "*jnana-tiralay nindra peruman*" are the opening words of a song sung by Tirujnanasambandar on Arunachala.

So long as the mind is not swallowed by the bright light of Arunachala, the 'red hill', the appearance of the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world continue. However, though these seeming changes of creation, sustenance and dissolution take place only in Arunachala, Arunachala exists eternally without undergoing or being affected in the least by any of these seeming changes, dancing motionlessly in the heart and as the heart in the form of the pure and adjunctless consciousness 'I'. That is why Sri Bhagavan says in the second half of this verse, "Since you dance eternally in the heart as 'I', they say that your name itself is 'heart'". Thus Sri Bhagavan clearly reveals that the true nature of Arunachala as experienced by those whose mind-lotus has blossomed fully, is only the eternal shining of 'I' in the heart. Though this 'I', which is called by sages as the heart, is experienced in its purity and full clarity only by those whose mind-lotus has blossomed, it is in fact shining eternally, both when the mind and the world-picture appear and when they are swallowed.

Though it is said that this 'I' is shining or dancing in the heart, in truth the heart is not a place but self itself. Therefore what is called the 'heart' and the real self which shines as 'I' are not two different things, but are one and same reality. To make this truth clear, Sri Bhagavan concludes this verse by singing, "They say that your name itself is 'heart'". In this context Sri Bhagavan would sometimes refer to the *Chandogya Upanishad* 8.8.3, where it is said, "This *atman* (self or spirit) verily is in the heart...hence it is the heart...", and to the *Brahma Gitai* 6.10, where it is said, "Due to his benevolently existing and shining as the special knowledge in each heart, which appear diverse, they call God himself as the heart..." To whom does Sri Bhagavan refer here as 'they' (*tam*)? Only to those sages whose mind-lotus has blossomed. In the experience of those sages there is no 'in' or 'out', no 'time' or 'place', no 'appearance' or 'disappearance'; there is only the one non-dual reality which ever shines as 'I am' and which is known by various names such as self, God, heart and Arunachala.

Thus in this second verse also Sri Bhagavan talks only about 'I'. Therefore from these first two verses it is clear that if anyone prompts Sri Bhagavan to write something without giving any subject, the one subject which he will write about is only 'I'. Why? Because in his experience there is nothing more important than this. Leaving the subject of this 'I', he knows that there is nothing worthy to know about or write about.

"Without knowing oneself what is the use if one knows anything else? If one knows oneself, then what else will exist to be known? ..."

sings Sri Bhagavan in verse 3 of *Atma Vidya Kirtanam*.

All right, then what is the means to attain knowledge of the real nature of 'I' as a direct experience? The principal and direct means is only self-enquiry, which is the path of knowledge (*jnana*). Therefore in the next verse Sri Bhagavan takes up the subject of self-enquiry and reveals both the method of practice and the result of that practice. Thereafter in the last two verses, in accordance with the request of Ganapati Sastri, Sri Bhagavan touches upon the subjects of *yoga*, *bhakti* and *karma* (the paths of mind-control, devotion and unselfish action). But even while dealing with these subjects, he does not leave his central theme of 'I'. How? Though in the fourth verse he makes a passing mention about restraining the breath, and though he uses the words '*dhyānittu*' (meditating) and '*yogi*', he makes clear in that verse that breath-restraint is only a means to make the mind stand still, that what is then to be meditated upon by that stilled mind is only Arunesa, who is the non-objectifiable reality which shines in the heart as 'I' when attention to all external objects is given up, and that only he who thus unites his mind with self is the real *yogi*. Then in the fifth verse, in which he deals with the subjects of *bhakti* and *karma*, from the opening words "by mind surrendered to you" he makes clear that the real *bhakta* or *karma yogi* is only he who no

longer retains the mind; having thus surrendered his mind, the real *bhakta* has drowned in self as self, thereby losing completely his separate individuality. Thus the base on which Sri Bhagavan deals with all these subjects is only 'I'.

VERSE 3:

ahamiti kuta āyātī
tyanvishyāntah pravishtayātyamaladhiyā
avagamyā svamrūpam
śāmyatyarunāchala tvayi nadīvabdhou

aham - 'I'; *iti* - as; *kutah* - from where; *āyātī* - does it come; *iti* - thus; *anvishya* - having sought; *antah* - within; *pravishtayā* - having entered; *ati* - very; *amala* - blemishless; *dhiyā* - by mind; *avagamyā* - having known; *svam* - one's own; *rūpam* - form; *śāmyati* - becomes still; *arunāchala* - O Arunachala; *tvayi* - in you; *nadi* - river; *iva* - like; *abdhou* - in the ocean.

O Arunachala! By a very blemishless mind having sought thus, "From where does it come as 'I'?", having entered within, and having known one's own form, one becomes still in you, like a river in the ocean.

ahamukhamā ranta vamalamati tannāl
ahamidutā nengezhumen drāyndē – ahavuruvai
nangarindu munnīr nadipōlu mōymumē
unganaru nāchalanē yōr

aha-mukham - 'I'-facing; *ār* - which is; *anta* - that; *amala* - blemishless; *mati tannāl* - by mind; *aham* - 'I'; *idu tān* - this; *engu* - where; *ezhum* - rises; *endru* - thus; *āyndē* - having scrutinized; *aha-uruvai* - 'I'-form; *nangu* - well, clearly; *arindu* - having known; *munniīr* - the ocean; *nadi* - river; *pōlum* - like; *ōymumē* - ceases, subsides, perishes, comes to an end, comes to rest; *un-kan* - in you; *arunāchalanē* - O Arunachala; *ōr* - know.

O Arunachala! By that blemishless mind which is 'I'-facing having scrutinized thus, "Where rises this 'I'?", and having clearly known the 'I'-form, one ceases in you, like a river in the ocean. Know.

Explanatory paraphrase: O Arunachala! Having scrutinized with that pure mind which is facing selfwards (*ahamukham*) "Where does this 'I' rise?" and having thereby clearly known the form (the real nature) of 'I', one ceases to exist by merging in you like a river which merges and loses its form in the ocean. Know thus.

COMMENTARY

In the first verse Sri Bhagavan said that by the all-pervading spreading rays of its bright light of self-consciousness, Arunachala swallows the whole universe. From this it is clear how brilliant must be the self-shining clarity of consciousness which Sri Bhagavan experienced as 'I'. What is then is the means by which we can attain this clarity of self-consciousness? In this verse he answers this question.

In the first line he reveals what instrument is required to seek that clarity of self-consciousness: "By that pure mind (*amala mati*) which is facing selfward (*ahamukham*)". That is, first the mind should be pure. Attaining true clarity is not possible for a mind which is impure. What is an impure mind? It is a mind whose light is polluted and made dim by being soaked in the dirt of worldly desires and attachments. So the mind should first have become pure by the removal of all that dirt in the form of desires and attachments. That is, the mind

should be freed of the fetters of all its strong likes and dislikes, attachments and aversions. Only such a mind can be a fit instrument for self-enquiry, because only such a mind can give up its habit of always dwelling upon external objects and turn selfwards.

It is not sufficient, however, merely to make the mind pure. Having attained purity, the mind should be turned selfwards. Here the word '*ahamukham*' does not mean mere introversion or turning the mind away from external objects. Having given up attending to external objects, the mind should attend to self, the light of consciousness, which shines in the heart as 'I'. Then only can the true clarity of self-consciousness be attained.

"The mind knowing its own form of light, having given up external objects, alone is true knowledge."

– *Upadesa Undiyar* verse 16

'*Aham*' means 'I', and hence '*ahamukham*' means facing 'I' or attending to self. Only with this pure selfward-facing mind can we scrutinize and know the source from which 'I' rises. Throughout the waking and dream states the rising 'I' is engaged in so many activities, but it never turns towards itself to find out from where it arose. Here 'from where' (*engu*) means 'from what' or 'from which source'. The source of this rising 'I' is not any place but is only the being 'I' which exists and shines in all the three states, waking, dream and deep sleep.

If with the pure selfward-facing mind we scrutinize the source from which this 'I' rises, we will clearly know the form of 'I', says Sri Bhagavan in this verse. What is meant by clearly knowing the form of 'I'? It is experiencing that the real nature of 'I' is not the mind which rises, wanders about and again subsides, but is only the reality which always exists and shines as the mere being consciousness without any rising, wandering or subsiding. That is, the form of 'I' means the reality which is the true import of the word 'I'.

"That [the one reality which shines forth as 'I-I', the whole] is always the import of the word 'I', because we do not cease to exist even in sleep, which is devoid of 'I'."

– *Upadesa Undiyar*, v.21.

That is, since there is a consciousness 'I' which does not cease to exist even in sleep where there is no ego 'I', that ever-shining consciousness is the real import of the word 'I'. Therefore, experiencing the nature of that ever-shining 'I' is what Sri Bhagavan describes in this verse as clearly knowing the form of 'I'.

After thus knowing the form of 'I', what then happens to the ego 'I', which was all this time rising, engaging in activity and again subsiding? "Having clearly known the form of 'I', one ceases to exist [or one comes to rest] in you, O Arunachala, like a river in the ocean", says Sri Bhagavan in this verse. That is, just as a river attains quiescence and loses its separate existence when it merges in the ocean, so that rising 'I' or ego becomes motionless and ceases to exist as a separate entity when it merges in the being 'I', which is Arunachala.

In *Sri Ramana Sahasram* there is a prayer that the rising 'I' should merge and disappear in the being 'I', becoming that being 'I', which ever shines devoid of the rising 'I'.

"You [O Sri Ramana], who are the being 'I' which is ever devoid of the rising 'I', are the unlimited 'I' (*paripurna aham*). Bestow grace upon me, who stand weeping, worshipping you, begging and praying whole-heartedly all the time that the rising 'I' should drown in that unlimited 'I'."

– *Sri Ramana Sahasram* verse 177

Here it is said that there is a rising 'I' and an unlimited 'I'. That unlimited 'I' alone is the true 'I'. That 'I' alone shines in sleep, which is devoid of the rising 'I'. Therefore that alone is the true import of the word 'I'. Knowing the form of that 'I' alone is what Sri Bhagavan refers to in this verse as "clearly knowing the form of 'I'". Just as the river ceases to flow and comes to a standstill when it merges in the ocean, so the rising 'I' ceases to rise and attains stillness when it merges in the unlimited being 'I'. And just as the river ceases to have any separate existence after reaching the ocean, so the rising ego 'I' loses its individuality when it merges in self.

Thus in this verse Sri Bhagavan has explained clearly both the practice and the result of self-enquiry. When with the pure mind, which alone can turn selfwards, the real 'I' is clearly known, the false 'I' will disappear, merging in that real 'I' like a shadow disappearing in the light. What Sri Bhagavan then proceeds to describe in the next verse is also only this same path of self-enquiry, but presented in a slightly diluted manner in order to suit the taste of the person for whom it was written.

VERSE 4:

*tyaktvā vishayam bāhyam
ruddhaprānēna ruddhamanasāntastvām
dhyāyanpaśyati yōgī
dīdhitimarunāchala tvayi mahīyam tē*

tyaktvā - having given up; *vishayam* - objects; *bāhyam* - external; *ruddha* - restrained; *prānēna* - by the breath; *ruddha* - restrained; *manasā* - by the mind; *antah* - within; *tvām* - you; *dhyāyan* - having meditated; *paśyati* - sees; *yōgī* - yogi; *dīdhitim* - light; *arunāchala* - O Arunachala; *tvayi* - in you; *mahīyam* - are exalted; *tē* - they.

O Arunachala! Having given up external objects and having meditated upon you within by a mind restrained by the restrained breath, the yogi sees the light. They are exalted in you.

*velividayam vittu vilangumaru nēsā
valiyadakka nirkum manattāl – ulamadaniil
unnait dhiyānittu yōgi yolikānum
unnil uyarvurumī dun*

veli - external; *vidayam* - objects; *vittu* - having given up; *vilangum* - who shine; *arunēsā* - O Arunesa; *vali* - breath; *adakka* - when restraining; *nirkum* - which stands; *manattāl* - by mind; *ulam adaniil* - in the heart; *unnai* - you; *dhiyānittu* - having meditated; *yōgi* - yogi; *oli* - light; *kānum* - sees; *unnil* - in you; *uyarvu* - greatness, exaltation; *urum* - attains; *īdu* - this; *un* - know.

O Arunesa who shine! Having given up external objects and having meditated upon you in the heart by a mind which stands when restraining the breath, the yogi sees the light. He attains exaltation in you. Know this.

Explanatory paraphrase: O self-shining Arunesa! Having given up attending to external (second and third person) objects and having meditated upon you (the real self who shine as 'I') in the heart with a mind which has become still by restraining the breath, the yogi sees the light of self-knowledge and attains greatness in you (by thus uniting with you, the embodiment of all greatness). Know this.

COMMENTARY

In order to understand this verse clearly and in the correct perspective, we should carefully examine all the points of similarity and difference between this and the previous verse.

Firstly, the principal thing which Sri Bhagavan prescribed in the previous verse was what was described by him as knowing clearly the form of 'I' by scrutinizing "where does this 'I' rise?" whereas the principal thing which he prescribes in this verse is what is described by him as "seeing the light by meditating up on you, O Arunesa". These two things are in fact one and the same. How? Let us first see how "seeing the light" is the same as "knowing clearly the form of 'I'". What is the light which is to be seen? It is the light which Sri Bhagavan has been talking about in each of the previous three verses, namely the light of self-consciousness, which shines as 'I, I'. Thus seeing this light which shines as 'I' is the same as clearly knowing the form of 'I'. The means he prescribed in the previous verse to see this light was scrutinizing the rising 'I' in order to know the source from which it had risen, whereas the means he prescribes in this verse is meditating upon Arunesa. What is that Arunesa which is thus to be meditated upon?

Some devotees, who have not pondered deeply over all the words in this verse, wrongly assume that Sri Bhagavan is referring here to meditation upon the name and form of Arunachala. However, though it is true that (as revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 9 of *Sri Arunachala Patikam*) the name and form of Arunachala has a wonderful power to suppress the mischievous mental activities of any soul who has thought of it even once, to draw that soul inwards to face the one self, which is its reality, to make that soul motionless like itself, and thereby to feed upon that soul, in the present verse meditation upon the external name and form of Arunachala is not what is meant by Sri Bhagavan. Sri Bhagavan begins this verse by saying "*veli vidayam vittu vilangum arunesa*", which means "O Arunesa who shine, [the mind] having given up external objects". Therefore, since the name and form of Arunachala is an external object, it is not the *dhyana-lakshya* or object of meditation meant by Sri Bhagavan in this verse. Throughout *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*, wherever Sri Bhagavan refers to Arunachala, he is referring to that which shines when all external objects have been given up. External objects mean all second and third person objects. That which shines when all second and third person objects have been given up is only the first person. But though we call it the first person, the 'I' which then shines is truly not a person but the impersonal reality of the false first person, the ego. Therefore the real self, which shines as 'I', is alone the Arunesa who can shine in the absence of external objects. Thus meditating upon Arunesa, who ever shines self-luminously as 'I', is the same as scrutinizing "where does this 'I' rise?" Hence the principal thing prescribed in this verse is no different from that which was prescribed in the previous verse.

Secondly, the instrument mentioned by Sri Bhagavan in the previous verse was "that pure mind which is facing selfward", whereas the instrument mentioned by him in this verse is the "mind which has become still by restraining the breath". Here alone lies a significant difference between these two verses. Though the pure mind which is facing selfward is a 'mind which has become still' (*nirkum manam*), a mind which has become still by restraining the breath is not necessarily a pure mind. For a pure mind, that is, for a mind which is free of worldly desires and attachments, likes and dislikes, restraining the breath is unnecessary. By its clear power of discrimination the pure mind has already gained desirelessness (*vairagya*) towards attending to external objects and love (*bhakti*) to attend to self. Hence for such a pure mind it is easy to give up external objects and turn selfwards. Restraining the breath is prescribed as an aid only for those whose minds are impure. Since the impure mind is

clouded and agitated by the density and strength of its worldly desires and attachments, likes and dislikes, it lacks the clear power of discrimination in the absence of which it has no *vairagya* towards attending to external objects and no *bhakti* to attend to self. Hence, since such a mind has no strength of its own to give up external objects and to turn selfwards, the *yoga-sastras* have prescribed breath-restraint (*pranayama*) as an artificial aid to help the mind give up attending to external objects. By restraining the breath, the mind forcibly makes itself subside and become still, thereby temporarily giving up its habit of attending to external objects. "But so long as the *prana* (the breath or life-force) remains subsided, the mind will also remain subsided, and when the *prana* comes out, the mind will also come out and wander under the sway of *vasanas* (its deeply engrained impulses)", says Sri Bhagavan in *Nan Yar?* That is, though the mind is forced to give up attending to external objects so long as the breath is restrained, its *vishaya vasanas* or impulses to attend to external objects, which are the seeds of desire, are not destroyed or weakened by the practice of *pranayama*, and hence as soon as the restraint on the breath is released, the mind again comes under the sway of its *vasanas* and resumes its habit of attending to external objects.

In order to purify the mind, that is, to weaken the strength of its *vishaya vasanas*, the only two means are self-enquiry and *nishkamya bhakti* (devotion that is not motivated by desire for any selfish aim). For those whose minds were so impure that they lacked the strength to practise even a little self-enquiry, Sri Bhagavan used to recommend only *nishkamya bhakti* as a means of purifying the mind. But there are some aspirants whose minds are so clouded with various impure *vasanas* that they feel no attraction to the path of *bhakti*. Only for such aspirants is the method of *pranayama* prescribed. But having practiced a little *pranayama*, when they are able to still the mind to the extent of withdrawing it from attending to any external object, they should begin to make use of that calm, unagitated and one-pointed mind to attend to self. If they do not thus try to attend to self but continue to pursue still further their efforts of stilling the mind by *pranayama*, they will achieve only the dull state of *manolaya* (temporary subsidence of the mind), which will not in any way help them to weaken their *vasanas* and purify their mind. To illustrate the futility of such *manolaya* achieved by *pranayama* or other yogic practices, Sri Bhagavan used to tell the story of a *yogi* on the banks of the Ganga who, after asking his disciple to fetch drinking water, became immersed in *manolaya* and remained in that state for hundreds of years, but again asked for water as soon as he returned to body-consciousness.

Though the aspirant who practices *pranayama* may be able to still his mind to the extent of withdrawing it entirely from attending to external objects, when he makes effort to turn his attention towards self, he may at first experience difficulty due to the strength of his impure *vasanas*.

"[Like small creatures who struggle to climb out of a river, but are unable to secure a firm foothold on the bank, being repeatedly pushed back by mischievous children] some people, who are unable to stand [firmly] in the state of self, which is depicted as the riverbank, suffer being thrown by impulse-children [their outward-going impulses or *vasanas*, which act like those mischievous children] into life [the state of incessant mental activity called *samsara*], which is [like] the whirling torrent of the river."

– *Guru Vachaka Kovai*, verse 155

Impurity of the mind in the form of the strong *vasanas* of worldly desire and attachment is alone the cause which makes it appear difficult to cling firmly to self-attention. But though the aspirant repeatedly fails in his attempts to attend to self, his attempts are not in vain. Self-

attention is the best of all means to purify the mind, and even a little effort made to turn the mind selfwards will begin to enkindle in it a clarity of discrimination, by which it will gain increasing *vairagya* towards attending to external objects and *bhakti* to attend to self. The more the mind gains such *vairagya* and *bhakti*, the more the dirt in the form of its impure *vasanas* will be washed away. As the mind thus becomes more and more purified, self-attention will become easy, and the artificial aid of *pranayama* will become unnecessary. Thus only by the effort to attend to self will the “mind which has become still by restraining the breath” be transformed into “that pure mind which is facing selfward”. Only such a pure mind will be able to see the light of self-knowledge by meditating upon Arunesa, who shines in the heart as ‘I’.

“Having meditated upon you, O Arunesa, the *yogi* will see the light”, says Sri Bhagavan. Here the *yogi* is one who, by giving up attending to external objects and by fixing his mind in self, has united and become one with self, the light of true knowledge. The real *yogi* is only he who has thus become one with self, and not merely he who practices *pranayama* and other such gross yogic exercises.

Such a *yogi* alone “attains greatness in you”. What is meant here by attaining greatness in you? It means attaining greatness by merging in self like a river merging in the ocean. Having thus merged in self, the *yogi* has ceased to exist as a separate individual. “Your glory lies where you cease to exist”, says Sri Bhagavan in *Maharshi’s Gospel* (page 37). How? Having ceased to exist as an individual, one remains as self, which alone is truly worthy of being called great.

In this context there is another important meaning for the Tamil word *unnil* (in you) which is used here by Sri Bhagavan. Besides meaning ‘in you’, *unnil* can also mean ‘like you’ or ‘equal to you’. Using *unnil* in this sense is rare, but Sri Bhagavan is a master at handling such rare usages in Tamil. Thus the words “*unnil uyarvu urum*” mean not only ‘will attain greatness in you’ but also ‘will attain greatness like you’ or ‘will attain greatness equal to you’. In other words, that *yogi* will become you.

Now if we compare this verse with verse 14 of *Upadesa Undiyar*, it will be clear that the central idea of both these verses is the same. In verse 14 of *Upadesa Undiyar* Sri Bhagavan sings:

“If one makes the mind, which has subsided by restraining the breath, go on the *or vazhi*, its form will die”.

The words ‘*or vazhi*’ mean ‘the one path’, ‘the path of knowing’ and ‘the path of becoming one’, and hence they refer to the path of self-enquiry, which is the one path of knowing and uniting with self. Thus the “sending the mind on the *or vazhi*” prescribed in that verse is the same as the “meditating upon you” prescribed in this verse. When the mind is thus sent on the path of attending to self, its form will die, and the pure light of self-consciousness alone will remain shining. Thus from these two verses it is clear that Sri Bhagavan’s verdict regarding the practice of breath-restraint is that it is only an aid for restraining the impure mind from its unceasing habit of wandering, and that when the mind has thus been restrained, its attention should be turned towards self in order to know its own true form, which is the light of self-consciousness.

Here some people doubt, “When the mind is restrained from its wandering by means of breath-restraint, it is forced to give up attending to external objects. When it thus gives up attending to external objects, which are second and third persons, will not the first person alone remain shining there? Therefore by merely giving up attention to second and third

persons, will not self-attention automatically result?” This is an important doubt to clarify. Withdrawing the attention from second and third persons is called *antarmukham* or introversion, whereas focusing the attention on ‘I’ is called *ahamukham* or facing selfward. Though *ahamukham* includes in itself *antarmukham*, *antarmukham* does not necessarily include *ahamukham*. That is, though the attention is withdrawn from external objects, it is not necessarily focused keenly on the consciousness ‘I’. The state in which the attention is thus withdrawn from external objects but not fixed keenly on self is called *manolaya* (temporary subsidence of the mind), and this state is experienced by everyone daily when they go to sleep. If a person practicing *raja-yoga* withdraws his attention from external objects by means of breath-restraint and if he does not make effort to fix his attention firmly upon the consciousness ‘I’, his mind will slip into the state of *manolaya*. Though the *manolaya* which is thus achieved by the practice of *raja-yoga* is glorified by the name *nirvikalpa samadhi* (thought-free absorption of the mind), it is in fact no more helpful to spiritual progress than is the daily sleep experienced by all people.

Why is it that self-knowledge does not arise in the state of *manolaya*? The reason is that the power of *maya* functions in two forms, namely *avarana sakti* (the power of covering or concealing) and *vikshepa sakti* (the power of projection, diversification, tossing or confusion). *Avarana sakti* is the dullness or forgetfulness of one’s true nature whereas *vikshepa sakti* is the perception of multiplicity which arises when the body is taken to be ‘I’. In the various states of *manolaya* such as sleep and *kashtha nirvikalpa samadhi*, though the mind is temporarily freed from the hold of *vikshepa sakti*, it still remains enveloped by the veil of *avarana sakti*. Due to this veil of *avarana sakti*, the clear knowledge of one’s true nature is not experienced in *manolaya*, and hence in due course the mind will rise again and come under the tossing sway of *vikshepa sakti*.

By withdrawing one’s attention from external objects, one frees oneself temporarily from the sway of *vikshepa sakti*. But in order to pierce through the dark veil of *avarana sakti*, it is necessary for one to attend keenly to the consciousness ‘I’ and thereby know its true nature. That is, since self-forgetfulness is the root-cause for the rising of the veil of *avarana sakti*, self-attention alone is the medicine which will remove it. This is why Sri Bhagavan says in verse 16 of *Upadesa Undiyar*:

“Having given up external objects, the mind knowing its own form of light is alone true knowledge”.

Here Sri Bhagavan does not talk merely of giving up external objects, but also of knowing the form of light. Indeed, he puts stress only upon this aspect of ‘knowing’ (*ordale*), which is the subject of the sentence and which is emphasized by the letter ‘e’ meaning ‘alone’ or ‘itself’, whereas he places ‘giving up external objects’ as only a subsidiary clause. Why? Because giving up the attachment or desire to attend to external objects is a necessary prerequisite without which the mind will be unable to turn selfwards and know its own ‘form of light’, its real nature of self-luminous consciousness. But once the mind has great love to turn selfwards and know its own form of light, the giving up of attention to external objects will happen effortlessly and naturally. Therefore the main aim to achieve is the mind knowing its form of light, while giving up external objects is only subsidiary to this and is not by itself a complete or worthy aim.

Thus the principal truth emphasized by Sri Bhagavan in verse 16 of *Upadesa Undiyar* is that the mind knowing its own real nature, which is the light of consciousness, is alone true knowledge. What is described in that verse as “knowing its own form of light” (*tan oli uru ordale*) is what is referred to in this verse as “will see the light” (*oli kanum*). Since in both

these verses Sri Bhagavan mentions both giving up external objects and knowing the light, it is important here that we should not forget the context in which Sri Bhagavan gave that verse in *Upadesa Undiyar*. While describing which path in *Upadesa Undiyar* did Sri Bhagavan say, "Having given up external objects, the mind knowing its own form of light"? Was it while describing the *yoga-marga* (the path of mind-control)? No. He had already completed his description of the *yoga-marga* in verses 11 to 15. In verse 16 he begins to describe the path of self-enquiry, which is the true *jnana-marga*, by defining what is the state of true knowledge. Is it not clear, therefore, that the inner intention of Sri Bhagavan in this fourth verse of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* is only to describe the same path of self-enquiry?

But while thus describing the path of self-enquiry in this fourth verse, Sri Bhagavan has used the words 'meditating' and 'yogī', and he has made a passing reference to restraining the breath. Catching hold of these peripheral words and ignoring the central subject of the verse, many people have been trumpeting, "See, here Bhagavan has praised the path of *raja-yoga*; in this verse he proclaims that even by *raja-yoga* one can attain self-realisation". In order to avoid being misled by the hasty and superficial conclusions arrived at and propagated by such people, it is necessary for true devotees to analyse carefully the meaning of each word and phrase in this verse and to understand the whole verse in the light of other verses and sayings of Sri Bhagavan.

Truly speaking, only two paths are approved by Sri Bhagavan, namely the paths of *jnana* and *bhakti*. Having given pre-eminence to *jnana* in the first four verses, in the fifth verse he takes up the subject of *bhakti*.

VERSE 5:

*tvayyarpitamānasā tvām
paśyan sarvam tavākṛitayā satatam
bhajatē (a)nanya prītyā
sa jayatyarunāchala tvayi sukhē magnah*

tvayi - in you; *arpita* - surrendered; *manasā* - by mind; *tvām* - you; *paśyan* - seeing; *sarvam* - all, everything; *tava* - your; *ākṛitayā* - as form; *satatam* - always; *bhajatē* - who worships; *ananya* - otherless; *prītyā* - by love; *sah* - he; *jayati* - triumphs; *arunāchala* - O Arunachala; *tvayi* - in you; *sukhē* - in bliss; *magnah* - having drowned.

O Arunachala! Seeing you by mind surrendered in you, he who by otherless love always worships everything as your form, triumphs having drowned in bliss in you.

*unnidattil oppuvitta vullattāl eppozhudum
unnaikkan dellāmum unnuruvāy – anniyamil
anbuseyu mannōn arunācha lāvelhum
inburuvām unnilāzhn dē*

unnidattil - in you; *oppuvitta* - which has been surrendered; *vullattāl* - by mind; *eppozhudum* - always; *unnai* - you; *kandu* - having seen; *ellāmum* - all, everything; *un* - your; *uruvāy* - as form; *anniyam* - what is other, otherness; *il* - without; *anbu* - love; *seyum* - who does; *annōn* - he; *arunāchalā* - O Arunachala; *velhum* - triumphs; *inbu* - bliss; *uru* - form; *ām* - who are; *unnil* - in you; *āzhndē* - having drowned.

O Arunachala! Having seen you always by mind which has been surrendered in you, he who without otherness loves everything as your form, triumphs having drowned in you, who are the form of bliss.

Explanatory paraphrase: O Arunachala! He who, seeing you always by mind which has been surrendered to you, without a sense of otherness loves everything as your form, victoriously attains the goal of human birth, having merged his individuality in you, the real self, who are the form of bliss.

COMMENTARY

If the mind has been surrendered to Arunachala, one loses the freedom or right to use that mind to think any thought. The mind being surrendered to God means the state in which the mind has subsided completely and merged in self. So long as the mind has any separate existence of its own, it cannot be said to be a mind which is truly surrendered to God. Once the mind has been truly surrendered to God, it loses its separate individuality and abides as self alone. Abiding thus as self, the mind sees or knows nothing other than self, which is the true nature of God or Arunachala. Hence only the mind which is thus merged in self as self can be said to be the mind which is truly seeing God; so long as the mind retains a separate individuality of its own, however much it may see God (in name and form), it is not truly seeing him. Such is the truth revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 8 of *Ulladu Narpadu*.

In this fifth verse of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam* Sri Bhagavan emphasizes that God or Arunachala should be seen always. What does he mean by the word “always” (*eppozhudum*)? He means not only in waking and in dream, but also in sleep; not only in all these three states, but even after death and after *pralaya* (the dissolution of the universe); not only in the present and future, but also in the past. Seeing God in all the three times – past, present and future – and in all the various states can alone be described as “seeing him always”. Since the mind has a separate existence of its own only in the states of waking and dream, it can see God as a name and form only in these two states. But how can it see God in the state of sleep, in which it has subsided and temporarily lost its separate existence? Therefore, if the mind is to see God always, it must merge permanently in self and thereby become of the nature of self, which shines in all the three states and all the three times.

If anyone surrenders his mind to God, what remains thereafter is only self. Therefore the words ‘seeing you always by mind which has been surrendered to you’ do not mean ‘seeing you by mind’ but only ‘seeing you by self’. Though Sri Bhagavan says ‘seeing you by mind’ we should take careful note of the words he uses to qualify that mind: ‘mind which has been surrendered to you’. There is a *mantra* in Sanskrit ‘*jita kamaya namah*’, which means ‘Obeisance to the one who has conquered desire’. If we ignore the qualifying word *jita*, meaning ‘conquered’ or ‘subdued’, and take the *mantra* to mean ‘*kamaya namah*’ (obeisance to the one who has desire), we would be giving a meaning directly opposite to the real meaning of the *mantra*. Similarly, in this verse if we ignore the qualifying words ‘*unnidattil oppuvitta*’ (meaning ‘which is surrendered to you’), and take the clause to mean ‘*ullattal eppozhudum unnaik kandu*’ (meaning ‘seeing you always by mind’), we would be giving a meaning directly opposite to the real meaning intended by Sri Bhagavan. The real meaning of this first clause is that we should see God always by self, which alone remains after the mind has been entirely surrendered to God.

When the mind is surrendered to God it merges in self, the true nature of God, and loses its separate existence as ‘mind’. In that state, what was previously mistaken to be mind is realized to be nothing but self. Since objects can be seen as other than oneself only so long as the mind seems to exist as a separate entity, when the mind loses its separate existence and shines as self, in that state neither the world, the living beings nor God will be experienced as other than self. Since (as revealed by Sri Bhagavan in verse 4 of *Ulladu Narpadu*) the nature of the sight cannot be other than the nature of the eye which sees, when

the eye through which we see the world is not the mind but only self, the world will be experienced not as a collection of objects other than oneself, but only as one non-dual and undivided existence-consciousness-bliss, which is self. This alone is the state of seeing 'everything as your form'.

Seeing everything thus 'as your form' is possible only after experiencing the real nature of self, and it cannot be done by any imagination of the mind. That is why in this verse Sri Bhagavan first says 'by mind which has been surrendered to you', and then 'seeing you', and only after that does he mention 'loving without otherness everything as your form'. Therefore only the *atma-jnani* (one who knows self), who having surrendered his mind to God shines as the form of self, which is the real nature of God, can see everything as God.

But if one tries to see everything as God before realizing the true nature of self by surrendering the mind to him, all one's efforts will be a mere act of imagination by the mind. Without knowing God as he really is, how to see everything as his form? If you want to see this pen as a tiger, by an act of imagination you may do so: this end is its head, this end is its tail, here is its mouth, there are its eyes, and so on. Because you have seen a tiger, you can imagine like this. But if you have never seen a tiger and if you have no idea what a tiger is, you cannot even imagine this pen as a tiger. If you say, "I see this pen as a tiger: here are its wings, there are its wheels", and so on, is it not clear that you have never seen a tiger? Equally meaningless and laughable are the claims of those people who have not realized self but who say, "I see everything as God; I see this stone as God; I see that table as God; I see God in every object and in every person; I see God in the beggars and poor people; I love all people as myself".

The real nature of God is self, the pure existence-consciousness-bliss which shines devoid of names and forms and undivided by any kind of duality. Until we realize our own nature as the nameless and formless existence-consciousness-bliss, how can we see everything as that? The nature of the mind is to see only names and forms, and to see these names and forms as other than itself. Until thus mind is surrendered completely, how can we see our own real nameless and formless nature? And until we see that, it is certain that we cannot see everything as that.

Here some people ask, "Has not Sri Bhagavan said in verse 5 of *Upadesa Undiyar* that to worship thinking 'everything is the form of God' is good worship? Therefore should we not think everything to be God?" The word used by Sri Bhagavan in that verse is only 'thinking' and not 'seeing'. What is described as a *sadhana* (spiritual practice) in that verse is only for *sadhakas* (spiritual aspirants) who are in the very beginning stage of the successive practices of *puja* (ritual worship), *japa* (repetition of a *mantra* or name of God) and *dhyana* (meditation), each successive one of which is superior to the previous one, and it is not applicable to the highly mature souls who have attained the supreme level of devotion which is described in this last verse of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*. Trying by the mind to see the world and all the living beings in the world (that is, all the 'eight forms') as forms of God is a mere act of imagination. Though cultivating such an imagination may be helpful to some extent to purify the mind of its grosser impurities in the form of selfish desires and attachments, and though the mind purified by this practice and by other successive practices in the path of *nishkama karma* (desireless or unselfish action) and *bhakti* (devotion) will eventually be enabled to understand what is the real and direct path to liberation, it cannot be said that a person who is cultivating this imagination is actually able to see everything as God. Thinking everything to be God is an attitude of mind which is appropriate to an aspirant who is following the path of *nishkama bhakti*, but actually seeing everything as God is possible only in the state in

which the thinking mind has been surrendered and has thereby merged in the state of non-duality in which nothing is seen as other than self.

Only he who abides firmly and naturally as the non-dual self, having destroyed the mind by self-surrender, is able to see everything as self – only he is able to love everything without any sense of otherness. When it is said that he sees everything as self, what it means is that he does not see everything as ‘everything’ but only as the one, single, non-dual self. Hence there is no wonder in the fact that he naturally loves everything as himself, because his loving everything is nothing but his loving himself. Since self-love is natural, only he who sees everything as himself can show real love to all things and all creatures. So long as there is the feeling that something is other than oneself (even if that something is God), the love one experiences for it cannot be whole and undivided⁶. Therefore the words “he who loves everything without otherness as your form” refer only to the *atma-jnani* (one who knows self), who has attained non-dual union with self. That is, the *atma-jnani* alone is one who has “the mind surrendered to you”; he alone is one who “sees you always”; he alone is one who “loves everything without otherness”. Hence in this verse Sri Bhagavan declares that only the *atma-jnani* has attained the victory which is the real aim of human life, having drowned in Arunachala, the form of supreme bliss.

In this verse all the three aspects of reality, *sat* (existence or being), *chit* (consciousness) and *ananda* (happiness or bliss), are touched upon. How? When the mind has been surrendered to God, what remains thereafter is the state of self-abidance, which is *sat*. In that state of self-abidance, what shines is the eternal knowledge of self; this is “seeing you always”, which is *chit*. By thus being and knowing self, “love without otherness” (*anyamil anbu*) is experienced, which is the *ananda* aspect. Thus surrendering the mind to God, seeing him always, and loving everything without otherness as his form are not three separate things – they are all one and the same.

Similarly in the last part of this verse, “O Arunachala, he triumphs having drowned in you, who are the form of bliss”, all the three aspects of reality are again touched upon. The word *velhum* (meaning ‘triumphs’ or ‘attains victory’) here denotes attaining firmness or steadiness – that is, attaining the firm and unshakable state of self-abidance; this is the *sat* aspect. The words *unnil azhnde* (meaning ‘having drowned in you’) denote the mind drowning in the light of self-consciousness, which (as revealed in the first verse) swallows everything by its spreading rays; when the mind thus drowns in self, all its knowledge in the form of awareness of objects other than itself is swallowed in that brilliant light of self-consciousness, and the mind thus remains shining as that light alone; this drowning of the mind-knowledge in the light of self-knowledge is the *chit* aspect. The word *inburuvam* (meaning ‘who are the form of bliss’) denote that Arunachala, the light of self-knowledge, is the very form of bliss, which is the *ananda* aspect. Therefore whoever drowns in self by attaining the experience (*chit*) of the victorious state of firm self-abidance (*sat*) attains the supreme bliss (*ananda*).

Thus we have seen that throughout these five verses what Sri Bhagavan is talking about and praising is only the shining of the light of self-consciousness and the means to attain that light. The means he describes is on analysis reduced to two paths, namely self-enquiry and self-surrender. When he begins to show the path, he first clearly describes the path of self-enquiry in verse 3: “scrutinizing by that pure mind which is facing selfwards ‘where does this “I” rise?’” Then in the next verse he describes the same path of self-enquiry, using the word ‘meditating’ (*dhyanittu*) instead using the word ‘scrutinizing’ (*aynde*): “having given up

⁶ Refer to *The Path of Sri Ramana – Part Two*, pp. 150-156, where this truth is explained in more detail.

external objects ... meditating upon you in the heart with the mind which is still". Meditating upon 'I', which alone shines when all external objects have been given up, is the same as scrutinizing 'where does this "I" rise?' Scrutinizing the source of 'I' is called self-enquiry, whereas meditating upon 'I' is called self-attention, but though the words differ, in practice they are one and the same. Finally in this fifth verse he describes the path of devotion or self-surrender, but while describing this path, he describes it in just half a line: "*unnidattil oppuvitta ullatta*" – words which literally mean 'by the mind (or heart) surrendered in you'. That alone is true *bhakti* or devotion. Then in the rest of this fifth verse he describes the final state of attainment, the transcendent state of supreme devotion which shines as *prajna* or pure self-consciousness.

Though it is true that (as narrated in the introduction to this commentary) Ganapati Sastri had asked Sri Bhagavan to compose these last three verses on the subject of the four *yogas* – *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana* (the paths of unselfish action, devotion, mind-control and knowledge), Sri Bhagavan has in fact described in these three verses only the two paths which are acceptable to him, namely *jnana* and *bhakti*. But in concession to the desire of Ganapati Sastri, in the fourth verse he made a passing reference to breath-restraint (*pranayama*) as a means to make the mind still, and he used the words '*dhyannittu*' (meditating) and '*yogi*', thereby making it appear on superficial observation that he was describing the path of *raja yoga*, while in fact he was describing only meditation upon 'I', which is the path of *jnana*. However, in none of these three verses has he made any mention of the path of *karma yoga*. If at all it is to be said that he has touched upon the subject of *karma yoga*, it can only be said that in this fifth verse he has indirectly referred not to the path of *karma yoga* but to the goal of *karma yoga*. That is, just as in verse 10 of *Upadesa Undiyar* Sri Bhagavan has said that remaining subsided in self, the source from which one arose, is *karma*, *bhakti*, *yoga* and *jnana*, so he teaches in this verse that drowning in self by surrendering the mind is the most perfect form of *karma* and *bhakti*.

The ideal of the *karma yogi* is to see, to love and to worship everything as the form of God. But so long as he tries to achieve this ideal while still retaining the mind, his seeing, loving and worshipping everything as God is a mere imagination and cannot be real. Therefore in this verse Sri Bhagavan teaches that if the *karma yogi* is truly to see, to love and to worship everything as God, he must first surrender his mind to God. Only after surrendering his mind can he know God as he really is, and then only can he see and love everything as God. That is why Sri Bhagavan used to say, "An *atma-jnani* alone is a true *karma yogi*"⁷.

However, though this verse is clearly describing only the state of final attainment, which is achieved by completely surrendering the mind to God, and though the wording of this verse gives no room for it to be interpreted as describing the practice of *karma yoga*, there are people who have tried to twist the text by interpreting that in this verse Sri Bhagavan has recommended us to practise *karma yoga* by always seeing and loving everything as God. In order to establish this far-fetched interpretation, they assert that, since Sri Bhagavan has used the word *ullattal* (meaning 'by the mind'), he has confirmed that it is possible for the mind at all times to see and to love everything as God. That is, they imagine that we should first surrender the mind to God, and then retaining that mind we should use it to see everything as his form. If asked how it would be possible to use the mind thus after it has been surrendered, they argue that it must be possible because Sri Bhagavan has said that

⁷ "*atma-jnaniye unmaiyaana karma-yogium avan*" are the Tamil words spoken by Sri Bhagavan, as recorded in *Sri Maharshi Vaymozhi* p. 21, an English version of which can be found in *Maharshi's Gospel* p. 22, and *Talks* p. 44.

by the mind we are to see everything as God. And if asked how the mind can see God “always” (*eppozhudum*), that is, in all the three times and all the three states, they brush aside the question saying that it is not necessary to give so much importance to each and every word in the verse. Before such learned fools, we should not open our mouths. That is why it is said in *Sri Ramana Gitam*⁸:

“In this world which is a crowd who do not understand the guru’s words, those who have attained grace will not move their tongue.”

– *Guru Sol Puyiyak Kuttam*, refrain

Even if we know the truth, we should not tell it openly, because people are not ready to accept it. When so many great philosophers and learned people have come forward to give such wrong interpretations to the works of Sri Bhagavan, it is best for us to remain quiet. Unless anyone asks us, we should not tell anything.

Nowadays there are so many people who claim, “We are *karma yogis*. We have surrendered ourselves to God. We are able to see God in everything, and hence we love all people. Since we see all people as God, who is the form of bliss, we are doing social service to remove their sufferings! For us work is worship, and therefore we are busy building schools and establishing hospitals. If any areas are affected by floods or by drought, we have to do relief work by taking food packets to the afflicted people. Doing such activities is truly loving all people as God. Doing such social service is the best means to attain *moksha* (liberation)”. People who talk in this manner are not only cheating others but also cheating themselves. Not knowing what God is, they imagine that they are able to see God in everything. When they cheat themselves wantonly in this manner, a subtle egoism begins to grow in their mind making them feel that they are right in all their actions and even that they are spiritually more advanced than other people. Only when death comes will they receive the proper whiplash – then they will be made to feel, “We have been cheating ourselves all along. What will become of us now? Where are we going now?” Without being able to understand anything clearly, they will end their life in a state of mental confusion. If a state of clarity is to come at the time of death, now itself they should give up cheating themselves.

If anyone truly wishes to see and to love everything as God, there is only one way – that is, the mind, whose nature is to see the one reality, which is God, as the many names and forms of this world, must be given up by means of either self-surrender or self-enquiry. Until the mind is thus given up, however much *karma yoga* one may do, or whatever other kinds of wonderful efforts one may make, it is certainly impossible for one to see everything as God.

Let us now see the connection underlying all the main ideas expressed by Sri Bhagavan in these five verses: Arunachala is the real self which is ever shining in the heart as ‘I’ (verse 2); the entire world of multiplicity is a mere picture which appears and disappears only in self (verse 2); since this world-appearance seemingly conceals the real nature of self, in order to know self as it is, we should give up attending to external objects (verse 4) and, with a pure mind which is facing selfwards (verse 3), we should meditate upon the consciousness ‘I’ which shines in the heart (verse 4); by thus attending to ‘I’, we will clearly know its true nature (verse 3), which is the light of self-consciousness (verse 4), and thus the mind will cease to exist as a separate entity by merging in self like a river merging in the ocean (verse 3); when the mind is thus surrendered into the ocean of self-consciousness, which is Arunachala, it will shine as self, whose nature is to see itself always (verse 5); when by the light of the grace of Arunachala, which is the sun of self-knowledge, the mind-bud which was swelling with

⁸ *Sri Ramana Gitam* is a collection of Tamil songs in praise of Sri Bhagavan composed by Sri Sadhu Om.

devotion is thus made to blossom fully as the lotus of pure self-consciousness, the entire world-appearance which was seen by that mind will be swallowed by the brilliant light of self-knowledge, which will then be experienced as the ocean of *amrita* which is the fullness of grace (verse 1); when everything is thus swallowed by the light of self, it will be realized that what was previously seen as 'everything' is in fact nothing but self itself, and hence, since no otherness will be experienced in that state, due to its own natural self-love self will love 'everything' as itself (verse 5); since misery is experienced only because the mind sees the manifold objects of this world-appearances as other than itself, when the mind drowns in self what will remain shining is only the ocean of bliss (verse 5). Thus in these five verses, which are written in the form of a *stotra* (hymn) in praise of Arunachala, Sri Bhagavan has extolled the greatness of the blissful light of self-consciousness and has revealed the means by which we can experience the truth that that light is ever our own real nature.

CONCLUDING VERSE:

*śrīmad ramana maharshēr
darśanam arunāchalasya dēvagirā
pañchakamāryāgītau
ratnam tvidamaupanishadam hi*

śrīmad ramana maharshēr - of Srimad Ramana Maharshi; *darśanam* - revelation (literally, seeing); *arunāchalasya* - of Arunachala; *dēvagirā* - by Sanskrit; *pañchakam* - five verses; *āryāgītau* - in *arya-gīta* [a poetic metre]; *ratnam* - gems; *tu* - indeed; *idam* - these; *upanishadam* - upanishadic; *hi* - [an expletive].

These five verses [in praise] of Arunachala, [which are] a revelation (*darsanam*) of Srimad Ramana Maharshi by [means of] Sanskrit in *arya-gīta*, are indeed *upanishadic* gems.

*aruna giriramana nāriyattil kanda
varumaraiyan dakkaruttē yāhum – arunā
chalapañ chakamaniyai tandamizhven bāvāl
ulahuk kalittā nuvandu*

arunagiri ramanan - Arunagiri-Ramana; *āriyattil* - in Sanskrit; *kanda* - which [He] revealed (literally, saw); *aru* - precious; *marai-anta* - vedanta (the end or conclusion of the Vedas); *karuttē* - the import; *āhum* - which are; *arunāchala* - Arunachala; *pañchaka* - five verse; *maniyai* - gems; *tan* - pleasant; *tamizh* - Tamil; *venbāvāl* - by *venbas* [a poetic metre]; *ulahukku* - to the world; *alittān* - gave; *uvandu* - happily.

Arunagiri-Ramana happily gave to the world by pleasant Tamil *venbas* the five verse-gems to Arunachala, which are the precious import of *vedanta*, which he revealed in Sanskrit.

Explanatory paraphrase: Arunagiri-Ramana happily gave to the world through pleasant Tamil *venbas* these five verse-gems to Arunachala [*Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*], which embody the precious import of *vedanta*, and which he first revealed in Sanskrit.

Note: As explained in the introduction to this commentary, the Sanskrit version of this concluding verse was composed by a devotee named Daivarata, and the Tamil version was composed by Sri Bhagavan, who adapted the idea in Daivarata's verse to form a concluding verse suited to the Tamil version of *Sri Arunachala Pancharatnam*.