

It is next shown that engaging in these enquiries postpones the main thing, the quest of the real Self, which is the principal thing to be engaged in.

322 Enquiring into unrealities, taking them to be real, leads to forgetting the real [Self]. And there is no death other than this forgetting, because in this way the Self is almost lost to the seeker.

The urgency of seeking the Self is next pointed out.

333 If the aspirant knows the Self in this [very] life, then and only then, for him the real is real. If in this life he fails to know the Self, for him the real [Self] remains concealed by the unreal.

334 Therefore the aspirant, being firmly convinced that space and time are unreal, should give up the whole world and seek to know the substratum, the Self, through the quest of his own true nature.

The next topic dealt with is the duality of free will and fate.

335 Only he that thinks 'I am the doer of actions and the recipient of the fruits of actions' takes the distinction between the intellect [will] and fate as real. But the Self is neither the doer nor the recipient of the fruits of actions.

336 When the fruit of action is pleasant, man thinks that will is stronger than fate. But when the fruit of action is otherwise, he thinks that fate is stronger.

That this difference is unreal is then shown.

337 Fate is only action done before, and all action is done by the will. Hence the pair of will and fate is only unreal. How can their antagonism be real?

338 Since the root of [both] will and fate is the ego, this pair will cease to appear when the ego dies in the pursuit of the quest of the real Self. [Hence,] the sage is not aware of the distinction between free will and fate.

339 The sage, who is mind-free and hence free from attachments, and without a [personal] will, does not become a doer of actions, nor does he reap the fruits of actions. Therefore, he is not aware of the distinction between free will and fate.

340 Even in the case of an ignorant one, the real Self is ever enlightened, and hence does not engage in actions, nor suffer delusion. But in its presence the intellect becomes endowed with consciousness and is active according to the qualities that dominate it.

This is important. The real Self remains unaffected, being ever-free. It is only the mind (or intellect) that is ignorant and bound.

341 Therefore the aspirant must cease from thoughts of the worldly life and strive to become aware of the truth of the Self, which is the same as *Brahman*, by means of the quest of that Self.

Then the truth about the individual soul, which is called the jiva, is discussed.

342 It is in the seer of the world, called the *jiva*, that the truth of the world lies [because] when it arises, the world also appears, and when it goes into latency, the world also does the same.

343 Therefore the sage, knowing the truth of the ego by the direct experience of the real Self, becomes aware of the truth of the world. The rest, being overwhelmed by the belief that the body is the Self, entertain a false view of the world.

344 The soul is the primary form of ignorance. It is the sprout that grows into the poison-tree of worldly life. All this world is only its expanded form. The state of deliverance is just its final extinction.

345 The sage Buddha taught this truth; also the great teacher Sankara taught the same; our own Guru also tells us the same; and this is also the essence of the Vedantas.

346 The soul, who is seer of the world, is never known apart from his spectacle, the world. There is no soul in the state of deep sleep. Hence, like his spectacle [the world], he also is only a mental creation.

347 The soul is always known along with the body. Even when the body dies, one does not leave it without taking hold of another body.

348 Since thus the soul is not separable from the body, he is only part and parcel of the world. But unenlightened men, who are disciples of unenlightened gurus, ascribe immortality to this same [mythical] person.

349 Assuming, without enquiry, that this soul is the owner of the body and the real Self, they ascribe to that Self the qualities of worldliness and all else, which pertain only to this soul.

350 From this error arises various creeds concerning the real Self, which transcends all the creeds. Believing it to be bound, they follow various paths of yoga to free it from bondage!

351 The doing of actions, the reaping of their fruits, ownership of the body and the like, as well as worldliness, are the attributes of the soul. They are not attributes of the real Self, which is only pure consciousness, and is unrelated [to the world].

- 352 He that is, alas, persuaded that he is a soul has not eliminated the notion that the body is himself, [because] for him who does not know [by actual experience] that he is only consciousness, the belief in identity with the body is inescapable.
- 353 Since the blissful Self is experienced by all in the state of deep sleep, the intelligent man is able to find out, by his subtle intellect, that the Self is other than the body.
- 354 Because of this the sensible man, when he engages in discrimination, does not accept the notion that the Self is the body. But all the same, because he has not attained awareness of the truth of the real Self, he again confounds the Self with the body.
- 355 So long as the sense of being a soul does not cease, the sense, 'I am the body' does not become extinct. But it will be extinguished by attaining the supreme state, wherein the transcendent nature of the Self is experienced.
- 356 Only he is free from the notion, 'I am the soul', by becoming aware of his real Self as the Supreme Being, the one without a second. He is also free from the false notion 'I am the body.'
- 357 The *sadhaka* must [therefore] understand that the Self is not the body, not the mind and not the soul, and thereafter, by following the path taught by Ramana, strive to become aware [by experience] of the Self as pure consciousness.
- 358 If the truth of the soul is investigated with the pure mind, in the light of the teachings of the sages, it will be easily seen that this soul exists because of the ignorance [of the true Self], and [hence] does not really exist at all.
- 359 Some think that there are two selves, making a distinction between the self that is the soul, and the Self that is the Supreme Being. And they say that the Supreme Being is the Self of the soul, and the soul is the body of the Supreme Being.
- 360 The selfhood of the soul is unsteady and uncertain. The real Self is only the Supreme Being and nothing else. It has been clearly stated by our Guru that the one called the soul is unreal, and that the Supreme Being alone is the real Self.
- 361 The term 'soul' implies unreality; the term 'supreme' implies reality. The *sadhaka*, thus knowing that the soul is unreal, should strive to get rid of the notion, 'I am the soul'.
- 362 [Also,] revelation says that the Supreme Being itself entered into the bodies in the form of the soul. Hence, it is clear to us that the soul is not a distinct entity apart from the Supreme Being.

- 363 The soul appears and vanishes; the real Self neither comes into being nor vanishes. The souls are many, [but] the Supreme Being is only one. This being so, how can the soul be the real Self?
- 364 The [real] Self, being real in its own right as pure consciousness, does not become lost in deep sleep. But the soul, being an outcome of ignorance, and [hence] not real in its own right, goes into latency in deep sleep.
- 365 That Supreme Being, which is experienced by all alike as pure happiness in deep sleep, and which is the sole survivor in the supreme state, as the one without a second, is the real Self.
- 366 The Self is declared to be the true meaning of the term 'I', because it shines uninterruptedly both in the state of deep sleep in which the ego [the soul] is latent, and in the supreme state in which the ego is dead once and for all.
- 367 That one, which is *Brahman*, is itself ever shining as 'I' inside the Heart as the Self. But, because of delusion, man confounds him with this soul, who is only co-extensive with the body.
- 368 The ignorance does not hinder the awareness of 'I am'. It hinders only the awareness, 'I am pure consciousness'. Every one is aware of his own existence. But no one is aware of himself as distinct from the veiling sheaths.
- 369 That Self which is [only] consciousness, does not arise as 'I'. The inert body does not say 'I'. But between the two there arises someone, who is unreal, as 'I', having the size of the body.
- 370 By joining together the consciousness of the real Self, which has the form of 'I', with the inert body, there arises the sense 'I am the body'. This sense is itself the soul.
- 371 Since it is believed to be real by confounding the body and the real Self as one, this soul, a false appearance due to ignorance, has the name, 'The knot binding together consciousness and the inert [body]'.
- 372 But there never was a real joining of the real Self with the inert body, nor did anyone having the name 'soul' really come into existence; nor did 'the All' become changed into a soul.
- 373 One self-shining consciousness, independent of all else, which is the real Self, is alone real. There is no other consciousness. Therefore, this soul is not consciousness.

- 374 But the soul is taken as being conscious, due to the admixture of the consciousness of the real Self. Therefore *Vedantins* call this unreal soul ‘the illusory consciousness’.
- 375 Just as someone, coming in uninvited at a marriage, claiming to be a comrade of the bridegroom, obtains an honourable reception from the bride’s family, so this soul is accepted at its face value by the ignorant.
- 376 The pretend bridegroom’s comrade runs away of his own accord as soon as an enquiry is started by the bride’s party, questioning ‘Who is he? Whence did he come?’ In the same way, this soul flees of his own accord when an enquiry is made as to who he is, or whence he has come.
- 377 This soul has really no form of its own. It is like a ghost haunting a house, this body. Therefore, [our] Guru says that it [the soul] is just a ghost appointed to guard the body.
- 378 Bhagavan, our Guru, makes clear the unreality of this soul, saying that when the supreme state is won by the quest [of the Self], there is no form of this soul found surviving.
- 379 The first thought of the mind is this ego-sense. From it arise all other thoughts. Hence this soul is itself mind, the subtle body, the world, worldly life, and bondage – nothing else.
- 380 Both bondage and the bound one are only this soul. There is no other who can be said to be bound. The real Self is ever-free, and the sole reality. How can it be said that he became bound?
- 381 As soon as this one named ‘I’ is born, there is born also along with it the whole world. When it becomes latent, the world also vanishes. Hence the world is said to be its form.
- 382 Though this great being, the real Self, is dearest to all and of great splendour, it does not shine unmistakably, for its light appears to be stolen by this evil one who has the form of the ego.
- 383 Though unreal, this one named *jiva* [individual self] covers up the truth of the Self. So, the Self, being wrongly conceived through a variety of false imaginations, is as good as lost for the ignorant man.
- 384 The mass of clouds, generated by the light of the sun, conceals the form of the sun. In the same way, this *jiva*, born as it is by the light of consciousness of the Self, conceals the Self.

This explains why the real Self remains unknown.

- 385 Revelation accuses him, who by his ego-sense has stolen the real Self, and who suffers for that sin, saying: 'What sin is there that has not been committed by that thief of the Self?'
- 386 The Master says 'original sin', affirmed to be the cause of death by the Christians, is not an act done by the first man, but only the sense 'I am the body'.
- 387 This sin is said to pertain to man, but men are not men in deep sleep. The sense of being a man is due to the identification of oneself with the body. Consequently, the original sin is only this identification of oneself as the body.
- 388 All loss, all vice, and all suffering are only due to the sense of 'I'. All gain, all virtue and all happiness come from the extinction of the ego.
- 389 To the ignorant one the Self is lost on account of his ego sense. Therefore, even if he gains all things, he is still poor. On the other hand the sage, who has gained his Self by the extinction of the ego, sees nothing else to be gained.

Now the question whether there are many selves is considered.

- 390 Those who think that the body is real and consequently come to believe that the soul itself is the real Self, affirm the plurality of selves, misconceiving the meaning of the texts of the Vedanta.
- 391 Deluded men who have not heard the truth of the supreme state argue in vain, saying that if there is only one Self, then there is a dilemma: either by the deliverance of one all will be delivered, or none will attain deliverance.
- 392 There is no objection to *jivas* being conceived as many, but the view of the plurality of the real Self is unacceptable. The *jivas* are many and unreal, but the Self is real, auspicious and only one.

Some of those that affirm the manyness of the Self also say that the selves (jivas) are fractions of the Supreme Being, the Self of all. This is next dealt with.

- 393 There are no real fragments of the one supreme consciousness. The fragments appear only because of ignorance. To the sage in the supreme state, that consciousness shines as one whole, not divided into parts.

The experience of the sage is conclusive on all points. Here is given an utterance of Bhagavan on this point.

- 394 Consciousness is one, omnipresent and equal. Its unequal distribution is only an illusion. And because space is unreal, its equal distribution is also unreal.

‘One consciousness, equally distributed everywhere; you through illusion give it unequal distribution; no distribution, no everywhere’. These were the words uttered by Bhagavan to an earnest American sadhaka, Mr Hague.

It should be remembered that the supreme reality which is the Self has three unique names, namely sat, chit and ananda, and is referred to by one, or two, or all the three names together. These names, it is explained by Bhagavan, must be understood as denying their opposites, and not giving a positive description of the indescribable. Thus, sat means not asat (non-being); chit means not achit (unconsciousness); and ananda means not unhappiness.

395 It has been clearly taught by the Master that the supreme consciousness remains whole, not divided into parts. Let disciples of non-sages be deluded. How can there be delusion for us on this point?

396 Since it is settled that the one named *jiva* does not exist, how can we think of its bondage or deliverance? There is neither bondage nor deliverance for the real Self, who remains unswervingly whole and solitary.

This point will be dealt with later.

397 The soul comes to be taken as real by the failure to discriminate rightly. This occurs when there is false identification between the body, which is limited in space and time, and the Self, which is only consciousness, unlimited by space and time.

398 First one assumes that one particular body is ‘I’. Then one assumes that the body is real. Once this happens, the ignorant man sees other bodies as being real, and sees different *jivas* in them.

399 The one real Self, being really undivided, is taken as being divided into parts in many bodies, which are all unreal. The ignorant one looks upon that whole, formless Self as having form and therefore also as being many.

400 As a seer of a cinema-show, seeing a new picture every moment, thinks them all to be one, so the ignorant man seeing a new body every moment, thinks that all of them are one and the same.

In a cinema-show there is a long roll of small pictures that pass successively at a rapid rate between the light inside and the magnifying lens, about thirty-two pictures being thus projected on the screen successively each second. But the seer thinks he is seeing one single picture all the time, but one that is slowly changing. The world picture is also made up of a successive stream of separate pictures on the retina inside the eye; but people think it is all one continuous spectacle.

401 All the time, at every moment, his mind is imagining a new soul in a new body. Hence, the sages say that this soul is both momentary and unreal.

402 The man who has not experienced his own real Self, thinking 'I am this body', sees himself as 'I', the first person of grammar. He sees another person whom he calls 'you', and refers to third persons as 'he'.

Thus the one real Self becomes 'I' in one body, 'you' in another body and 'he' in a third body. It follows that these distinctions arise from the primary ignorance.

403 These three distinct persons are not real. They are seen on account of the false notion 'I am the body'. When the ego-soul is lost as a result of the quest of the real Self, only that Self, consciousness alone, will shine.

404 To one who thinks himself to be a *jiva* or a body, a plurality of *jivas* will appear. But to the sage who is freed from this ignorance, no *jiva* will appear.

This is next illustrated by the simile of the cinema show.

405 On the lighted screen there pass women and men in great number, who are only pictures. So too on the screen of consciousness, which is the real Self, there pass a great many souls, who are only mental projections.

406 The lighted screen is similar to the Self, and the pictures projected onto it are like the *jivas*. The appearance of a plurality of *jivas* does not affect the final truth of experience, the oneness of the Self.

407 A person believes in the plurality of *jivas* by believing that the *jiva* is the real Self. He does not know the experience of the real Self because he has been misled by his belief in multiplicity.

Another simile is next employed to clarify this truth, the plurality of reflections of a single object.

408 In the waters of separate vessels there appear many different images of the one moon. Similarly, in the minds that inhabit bodies there appear many *jivas*, which are only reflected images of the one real Self.

409 As the real moon is only one, so the real Self is only one. As there are many reflections of the moon, so there are seen a great many *jivas*.

Now the riddle of deliverance is solved.

410 When one reflected image of the moon is lost, the other images go on appearing as before. Similarly, when one pseudo-consciousness dies, the others continue to appear as before, even though they are unreal.

- 411 Whoever obtains awareness of the real Self, for him this worldly life comes to an end. The others continue to wander here as before, remaining without awareness of the real Self.
- 412 This illustration has been vouchsafed by sages to men of immature minds, who have false knowledge. But this discussion can have no meaning at all for those who realise the unreality of the individual soul.
- 413 In dreams a multitude of *jivas* created by mental delusion appear. In just the same way, a multitude of these *jivas* appear in the waking state.
- 414 There is not even one flawless proof on the side of those that assert the plurality of souls. [But] there is a twofold proof for the unity of the real Self, namely the experience of the sage and the argument that he has given.
- 415 Our Guru Sri Ramana says that because the Self shines in the same way as 'I', in all bodies he is one, and only one.

Now a warning is given for the benefit of immature aspirants against a misuse of the theoretical knowledge herein so far given. This is taken from Bhagavan Sri Sankaracharya's Tattvopadesa, in which it is the last verse.

- 416 One should meditate upon the truth of non-duality with effort, but should not apply this truth in his [worldly] activities. [Also] one may think of non-duality in respect of all the three worlds, but should not imagine such [non-difference] with the Guru.

The reason is that theoretical knowledge of the truth of non-duality does not avail to destroy the primary ignorance, so as to raise one to the egoless state, wherein wrong action would be impossible. So, till that state is won, the ego would be in command of actions, and this warning is therefore necessary.

Next the question is raised and dealt with as to how the physical body and the world as a whole appear to the sage.

- 417 How can the world appear to the sage in the same way as it does to the ignorant? The Guru tells us in what way the world appears to the sage.

The next verse gives the answer briefly, but also clearly.

- 418 The world, which to the ignorant appears as comprising the trinity of God, the *jivas* and the insentient objects, appears as the Self to the sage due to the liquidation of the superimposed false appearance of the world.

This is explained in detail as follows.

- 419 The sage who has attained his natural state, which is the supreme state, remains in his natural freedom. He is free from delusion and sees nothing other than the Self. How then can he see anything unreal?
- 420 Therefore the sage, established as he is in his natural state, the supreme state, would say that the body, appearing as 'his' body to others, and the world are real. But

there is a world of difference in the meaning [of what he says] because the superimposition does not appear [as real] to the sage.

Now it may be questioned whether the sage also, like us, does not need the discrimination between the real and the unreal. The answer is given below.

421 The outlook of discrimination is enjoined [only] on the aspirant for deliverance, not on him who has won deliverance. A confused outlook is possible for the former, not for the latter.

The views that the two have of the body is next explained and distinguished.

422 The ignorant one, because of his confounding of the body with the Self, thinks of himself as 'with form' and co-extensive with that body. The sage is aware of the Self as infinite, formless being; this is the distinction in the meaning of what is said by these two.

423 What is seen as 'the body' by the ignorant appears to the sage only as the Self. He refers to it as 'I', ignoring the body-form through his right awareness.

Next it is explained that the outlook of the sage towards the world is different from that of the ignorant one.

424 Also, when the two say that the world is real, there is a difference in the meaning, though the words are the same. For the ignorant one, the reality is veiled by differences, while to the sage, it appears as it really is.

425 Unaware of the substratum of the world-appearance, seeing [only] the superimposed multitude of [inert] objects, and believing that this world of objects is real in its own right, the ignorant one says, 'The world is real'.

426 [On the other hand] for the sage there shines only the substratum, which is the pure reality, nameless and formless. For him the superimposition does not appear as real. [That being the case], how can he say that the world is unreal?

The contrast here is between the substratum and the superimposed appearance. The ignorant one is unaware that there is a substratum. The sage is unaware of the superimposed appearance.

427 This world which, to the one whose eye is blinded by unawareness of his own real Self, conceals the Supreme Being, is, by [the power of] that same Supreme Being, concealed to the one whose eye is purified by the right awareness of that Self.

This is the meaning conveyed by the opening verse of the Isa Upanishad.

Supposing that the sage does see the world of names and form. It is explained that the sage's view is unclouded by ignorance.

428 Just as one who has become wise to the truth of the mirage may again see the mirage without being deluded, so too the sage, seeing this world, does not think of it as real, as does the ignorant one.

Thus there is no comparison at all between the ignorant man and the sage. This is shown next.

429 This world is not real in the sense in which it is believed to be real by the ignorant man. Ignorant ones do not understand the sense in which the world is seen [as real] by the sage.

430 That which appears to the ignorant ones as diversified by a great many differences, as 'forms' and as 'other than the Self', is, to the sage, only the Self, undifferentiated and formless.

It is then explained that the teaching about the world is two-fold, as unreal from one viewpoint and real from another viewpoint.

431 It is not taught that the world is completely unreal. It is not [unreal] like the horn of man or a horse. If it were wholly unreal, it would not appear at all. But it does appear because of its confusion with its substratum, the reality.

The two kinds of unrealities are further explained, for the sake of distinction.

432 The unreality that has no substratum, such as the son of a barren woman and the like, does not appear at all. But the unreality which appears on a substratum, like the snake seen in a rope, appears as real.

The presence or absence of a substratum makes all the difference. No one is misled into thinking that a barren woman's son has any existence, because he does not appear at all. On the other hand, the snake not only appears, but it is believed to be real because it has a substratum for its appearance. It appears and is for some time at least believed to be real. This distinction is very important for understanding the truth of the world, which is further elucidated in the succeeding verses, in which Bhagavan's teaching is given.

433 Both reality and unreality have to be stated in respect of the world, and herein there is not the least contradiction. It is real because of the reality of the substratum, and it is unreal, because of the superimposition of names and forms.

All the same, it must not be said that the world exists, as explained below:

434 Reality [of a soul] is conceded for the world, but it would not be correct to say that it exists. 'Reality' and 'existence' are quite distinct. That alone is said to be real which is real in its own right.

Thus in the language of the Vedanta the term 'reality' applies strictly only to that which is real in its own right, not to what has a borrowed reality, as explained in the next two verses.

435 They say the world is pragmatically real, that what is seen in dream is apparently real, and that the one without a second, namely *Brahman*, is the supreme reality. These grades of reality are pointless.

These three degrees of reality are spoken of in order to enable weak minds to receive the teaching in stages. But ultimately there is only one reality.

436 Reality is always of one kind; there are no varieties or degrees of reality. Hence, what is seen in dreams and what is seen in waking are both equally unreal.

The necessity for accepting this teaching is explained next.

437 The truth of the unreality of the world has here been taught to one who earnestly wants to attain the supreme state by pursuing the quest of the real Self. How can one who believes the world to be real ever become rightly aware of the supreme reality, the Self?

438 When the sun of right awareness dawns, what happens is only the cessation of the unreal appearing as real. The real Self is the sun of pure, infinite consciousness. How can ignorance exist in its presence?

439 If it is thought that ignorance exists, then there is present for the aspirant the question, 'To whom is the ignorance?' If by that question the truth of the Self is sought, then the ignorant one and the ignorance both become extinct.

440 Ignorance is accepted in the teaching only as pertaining to the individual *jiva*, who is just a figment of the imagination. It is not accepted as affecting the real Self, because it is ever enlightened by its own nature, transcending all the three states of life in the world.

441 Just as the rope is never related in any way to the unreal snake seen in it, so the real Self is never related in space, time, or causality with the world of variety, which is unreal.

442 The saying that the Supreme Being is the cause of the world is incorrect from the standpoint of the truth. The true cause of the world is *maya*, the power of the Supreme Being.

443 In the sacred lore forms of the *Brahman* are mentioned, one the seedless, and the other with seed. The seedless one is the transcendental Supreme Being; the one with seed is God having the might of *maya*.

Which of these two is the real one? The answer is as follows:

- 444 The one Self, who is motionless by nature, appears to dance because of his own power. But when that power merges into the motionless essence, there will shine the one motionless Self as the sole reality.

So, the cause of variety is the power called maya. What about this maya?

- 445 *Maya* is stated to be the cause to those who ask what is the cause of the world, which really is unreal. From the standpoint of reality, both of these, *maya* and its effect, are equally unreal.
- 446 The following sorts of questions are pointlessly asked ‘What is *maya*? What is ignorance? By whom and how was the world originally created? How did the individual soul come into being?’

These questions have no basis and need no answer. The final answer to all such questions is the awareness of the real Self in the egoless state. In that state these and other questions will not arise, because the questioner, the ego-mind, will not survive in that state.

- 447 Through the destruction of *maya* the aspirant for deliverance becomes established in his true state. Even the sage does not know its true nature because it perishes when looked at.

This is the meaning of a verse from the Yoga Vasishta. Strictly speaking, maya is the totality of samsara, consisting of the ignorance, which is the ego-sense, and its expanded form, the mind and its creation, the universe. These do not survive in the true state of the real Self.

- 448 The Supreme Being did not become mind, neither did it become the world. It remains unswerving from its true nature as pure, unmodified, consciousness, transcending time, space and the rest.
- 449 The world did not come into being, nor is it going to be destroyed. No one called ‘the individual self’ was really born. There is no one in bondage, no one who has become free, nor is there any spiritual seeker. This is the most excellent truth that has been clarified.

This is the truth of non-becoming, demonstrated by the sage Gaudapadacharya, in his Mandukya Karikas, which is strictly in agreement with the experience of all the sages. This is further explained.

- 450 Just as the supporting screen is not affected by the series of pictures passing over it, so the Supreme Being is not affected, even while the cinema of the world is being seen.

This is what Bhagavan says at the very beginning of Ulladu Narpadu (Forty Verses), where he employs the simile of the cinema show. The show begins with a lighted screen. On this is projected a series of pictures passing at great speed, so that the pictures are not seen separately. The screen does not become wet by the appearance of water, nor is it burned by an appearance of fire. At the end of the show the lighted screen alone remains. Such is the world-show. The lighted screen represents the real Self, which is both reality and consciousness.

451 This truth of non-becoming has been unmistakably stated many times by the great Guru Sankaracharya. Also, Sri Ramana, the Guru, has stated this truth clearly in a variety of ways for the benefit of aspirants.

452 Indeed it has been said by him that the so-called fourth state is alone real, and that the other three [the states of waking, dream and dreamless sleep] are always unreal. Also, it has been declared by him that the real is always only one, and that multiplicity is always unreal.

This has been set forth in detail in the very beginning. The truth of non-becoming is implicit in these teachings.

453 ‘There is nothing real apart from you. You are one alone, transcending time, space and so on. Throw off the delusion of ignorance and remain at peace.’ Thus did he teach the state of true being, the Self.

454 ‘In truth the creatures are not in me; all this is only my *maya*’ – thus did Bhagavan Krishna himself tell the truth of the non-becoming of the real Self in the *Gita*.

455 ‘The supreme reality, without losing its fullness of being, by its own *maya*, became this complete universe. To the sage it appears only as fullness.’ Thus the *Upanishad* has stated the truth on non-becoming.

Now are given the five verses of Bhagavan’s Tamil Ekatma Panchakam.⁴

456 When, forgetting the Self, one thinks that the body is oneself and goes through innumerable births and in the end remembers and becomes the Self, know this is only like awakening from a dream wherein one has wandered all over the world.

In a dream one may go on a world-tour and in the dream itself return home and lie down in one’s own bed; but when one awakes one knows that it was all a dream. In the same way all of one’s samsaric incarnations are only a long-drawn out dream, at the end of which only the Self remains, unaffected by all this. There is a difference here, because it was not the Self that dreamed, but only the ego-mind.

⁴ This is a poem that Bhagavan himself wrote in Sanskrit in the 1940s. Rather than use Lakshman Sarma’s English translation of his own Sanskrit rendering of these verses, I have taken Professor Swaminathan’s translation from *Collected Works*.

In the second verse the quest of 'Who am I?' is ridiculed, logically enough.

457 One ever is the Self. To ask oneself 'Who and whereabouts am I?' is like the drunken man enquiring, 'Who am I?' and 'Where am I?'

Here the difference is that the drunken man puts the question to others, but the sadhaka puts the question to his own ignorant, false self. The real Self remains unaffected all the time.

458 The body is within the Self. And yet one thinks one is inside the inert body, like some spectator who supposes that the screen on which the film is thrown is within the picture.

Herein the relation of supporter and the supported is turned topsy-turvy.

459 Does the ornament of gold exist apart from the gold? Can the body exist apart from the Self? The ignorant one thinks 'I am the body'. The enlightened one knows 'I am the Self'.

Here the truth is that the one Self is the substratum of all appearances. This has been explained before. In the true state there is no superimposition, only the substratum remains, but it is no longer a substratum.

460 The Self alone, the sole reality, exists forever. If of yore the first of teachers revealed it through unbroken silence, say, who can reveal it in spoken words?

So this is the rationale of the silent teaching by God as Dakshinamurti, the first Guru. Rightly to teach the Self is to be perfectly quiet. That is teaching by being only the Self, without ego and without mind. He who likewise remains as the Self, mind-free and egoless, understands this silent teaching.

Thus the truth of non-becoming is confirmed.

The knowledge thus far imparted is only preparatory to the teaching of the means of obtaining the right awareness. It is not itself that awareness.

461 Even though the truth of the Self has been stated in many ways, it remains untold, because it can be known only by actual experience. For the aspirant to deliverance, that experiential awareness of the Self is prevented by the mind, and its firmly established conviction, 'I am the body'.

462 Those minds that have been purified from worldly attachments immediately get firmly established in the natural state of the real Self merely by listening to this truth. Others need to go through some excellent process for the extinction of the ego sense.

- 463 'One should seek the Self, which is pure and free from sorrow, with a firm resolve to know it. This is the way to peace.' In such terms do the ancient revelation and the Guru describe the direct path for the experience of the truth of the real Self.
- 464 The 'resolve to know' mentioned here is the firm intention to win the experience of one's own Self. Only by having such an intention can the aspirant turn his mind inwards in the quest for his own Self.
- 465 In the ancient revelation it is mentioned that the dwelling place of the supreme one is named the Heart. Since he himself [the supreme one] is all there is, how can the Heart be designated as his dwelling place?

The explanation follows.

- 466 The real Heart is just consciousness in its native purity. The Self is also that consciousness. So, it follows that the Self is itself the Heart, and all creation is established in it.
- 467 The sages and the Vedanta teach that the one who really has no dwelling place has a dwelling place called the Heart inside the body in order to cause the inward-turning of the mind in the quest.

The necessity of this inward turning is then shown.

- 468 The organs of perception are always turned outwards, and this is the reason why the Self is covered over by the world. There is only one means to uncover it: the aspirant turning within in a quest for the Self.

This is the meaning of an upanishadic verse.

- 469 The experience of the sages has shown the difference between bondage and deliverance. The bound one suffers from the arising of the ego sense, whereas the ego sense does not arise in the case of the one who is free.
- 470 Though the great being, the Self, is ever present, dearly beloved and of great effulgence, it is as if its effulgence is dimmed by the evil one, the ego, so that it does not shine sufficiently enough to be recognised.
- 471 Ignorance is the awareness that consists of the experience 'I am the body'. How can this experiential awareness be a definitive knowledge, since it is without the experiential awareness, 'I am the pure consciousness?'

Because ignorance, which is itself bondage, consists in an experiential awareness, even though wrong, it can be extinguished only by the right awareness, which is also an experience. Mere inferential knowledge, usually called knowledge of something absent –

parokshajnanam – is wholly ineffectual for winning deliverance. The sadhana as taught by Bhagavan is the direct path to that experience. This sadhana will now be explained.

- 472 The thought that arises in the form ‘I am the body’ is itself the form in which the individual soul is experienced. The aspirant must seek the source wherefrom it arises, after separating from it the fraction of it that is real.
- 473 This individual is not altogether unreal. He is not so in the same sense as the barren woman’s son is unreal. The real Self is present as the substratum on which the sense of an individual soul is superimposed, and hence, even though unreal, he is taken to be real.

This distinction is very important, as it will be seen. Everyone knows that there is no barren woman’s son, mare’s horn, and so on, because these notions have no substratum. On the other hand, the rope-snake, the silver in the mother-of-pearl, etc., are capable of being imagined to be seen, because these have a substratum, as explained before. So the individual soul comes to be taken as existing, though he really does not exist, as taught before.

The question then is what is the substratum on which the appearance of an individual soul is superimposed. This and other pertinent questions are answered in the verses that follow.

- 474 The real element of the soul, the ‘I’, is consciousness, the nature of the real Self. By taking hold of this real element, the seeker of deliverance is enabled to engage in the quest of the Self.
- 475-7 Give up the element of unreality of this soul, the body and all the rest of it, and fix the mind on the consciousness of the Self that has the form of ‘I’. This is extremely subtle, like a ray of the real Self. The seeker should then dive into the Heart, seeking the place of birth of this ‘I’-sense by asking the question ‘Who am I?’ or ‘Whence is this “I”?’ This is the way a dog rejoins his master, seeking him by following his scent. It is like a diver diving into water to recover something that has fallen there. This is the way to attain one’s own real state.
- 478 If during this quest of one’s own Self, the mind turns outwards, due to attachment to sense objects, the seeker should turn it inwards again by merging the world in the Self.

This is explained next.

- 479 ‘Just as waves, foam, etc., are only the ocean, and as the dream-world is only the seer of the dream, and nothing else, so the whole world is only myself and nothing else.’ This view is the merging of the world in the Self.
- 480 If during the quest of one’s own Self the mind turns outwards on account of its attachment to objects of perception, the seeker should turn it inwards again. He

should bring the mind back again and again and re-engage it in the quest. There must be a resolve to become aware of the truth of oneself by means of the question, 'Who is he that has this attachment to objects of perception?'

- 481 The devotee or the seeker of the Self who becomes discouraged by the thought 'When shall I attain the natural state?' hinders progress on the path of deliverance by having such a thought.
- 482 The aspirant for deliverance must be full of enthusiasm, with his mind in the sattvic mood. He should engage in this quest, remembering the teaching that time is unreal.
- 483 Always and everywhere there are doorways for getting at the question 'Who am I?' By any one of these the seeker must again and again engage his mind in this quest.

The nature of the answer to this question is next indicated.

- 484 The answer to this question is not an intellectual conclusion. The correct answer to it is only the experience of the real Self. The supreme state arises on the death of the ego, the questioner who calls himself the individual self.
- 485 The real Self will shine as it really is only in the natural, thought-free state of the Self. In other states the real Self will not shine as it really is due to its being mixed up with intellectual views.

Another hindrance to success in the quest is now stated.

- 486 If the mind thus engaged in the quest becomes unconscious [as in deep sleep], the effort so far made becomes unfruitful. [So,] the seeker should awaken the mind from this unconsciousness and again engage it in the quest.

What is needed is not unconsciousness of the mind, but its complete extinction. This is clearly stated next, and it was also pointed out in Bhagavan's Upadesa Saram.

- 487 Mental quiescence has been explained by the Guru as being of two kinds, as latency in unconsciousness and final extinction. In hatha yoga there are many methods of attaining unconsciousness, such as suspension of the breath.

The difference between these two is then explained.

- 488 The mind, when it has gone into latency together with its habits of activity, will later become active again to produce the worldly life. The mind that has been extinguished will lose its habits of action and thus becomes like a seed that has been roasted.

As roasted seed does not sprout, so the mind that has become extinct cannot be reborn again.

489 Ignorance binds the ignorant one by means of [these] habits. If the mind remains wide-awake in the quest, then the destruction of these habits will ensue.

490 Right awareness dawns on the complete extinction of the mind, whereby all the mental habits also are lost. Deliverance is affirmed by all sages to be none other than the final and complete destruction of the mental habits.

Apart from latency there is another obstacle, craving for sense-pleasures. This is pointed out next.

491 One should overcome both desire and latency and keep the mind concentrated in the quest. In the quest for the real Self, this is like balancing on the keen edge of the razor.

The uniqueness of this method, the quest, is next explained.

492 In all the other yogas it is assumed that there is an entity called the 'soul', having defects, namely action and the rest, and the yogi makes efforts to make himself free from those defects.

493 For eradicating the defect of being an actor, there is the yoga of action; for getting rid of separateness [from God] there is the yoga of devotion; for the cure of the defect of [seeing] differences there is the yoga of mind-control; and for the eradication of ignorance there is the yoga of right awareness.

These yogas are ridiculed by pointing out the truth of the real Self.

494 While being himself the same as the Supreme Being, the ignorant man, thinking himself to be someone other than He, through delusion tries to become one with Him by various yogas! What else is there more absurd than this?

The superiority of the quest is then shown.

495 When, by taking hold of the consciousness-element of the soul, the quest is made for the Self, the root of the soul, the Self, who is free from all defects, shines alone; there the soul does not survive.

496 Hence this [quest] is named 'the great yoga'. There is no other yoga equal to this, or greater. All the yogas are included in it, and may be used as auxiliaries to this one, as may be found suitable.

497 This yoga, the quest of the source of the soul, is itself all the yogas. It is the yoga of action, the yoga of devotion, the yoga of restraining the mind and also the yoga of right awareness.

This quest of the real Self, it is next pointed out, is not to be practised as a meditation.

498 Since this quest takes the form of a question, it is not to be practised as a mode of meditation. By this question, the mind dives into the Heart, which it does not do by any series of meditations.

499 Some practise continuous meditation on the truth of one's own Self, after listening to and reflecting upon that truth. This method is different from the quest for the Self that is taught by Ramana.

The method taught by Bhagavan is not an affirmation, but a question. The threefold process is further explained.

500 In the *Chandogya Upanishad* the identity of the Supreme Being and the real Self is taught by the sentence, 'Thou art That'. This identity is confirmed by distinguishing between the literal and the intended meanings [of the terms used].

The terms 'Thou' and 'That', if taken in the literal sense, tend to show that there can be no such identity. Hence, the intended meanings are sought, so that the identity may be accepted as true. The identity is not of the apparent self, but of the real Self, with the Supreme Being. At the same time the Supreme Being is not the personal God but the impersonal being of the Upanishads. Both are of the nature of consciousness, and it is this consciousness that is the real essence of both. Thus, the identity is true.

It has been assumed by the traditional schools of Advaita Vedanta that this sentence conveys an injunction to meditate on the teaching. Actually, as Bhagavan says, the sentence states only a fact. The acceptance of it as a fact is not enough. And meditation is no better. What is needed is to verify the fact by reaching and remaining in the mind-free state, called also the natural state. What he has said is as follows:

501 Sri Ramana says that, without an enquiry into the intended meaning of the term 'That' in the sentence, one should make a quest for the truth of the real Self, who is indicated by the term 'thou'.

This quest leads up to the mind-free state in which the real Self shines unhindered by the veil of ignorance, which is the ego, the false self. Then it will be realised that there is only one entity, which is the real Self and also the impersonal Supreme Being of the Upanishads.

Bhagavan calls the quest the direct path. It bypasses the meditation mentioned before.

502 By this quest the aspirant obtains the direct experience of the real Self in the transcendental state. For him that has thus succeeded in this quest, there is no need for continuous meditation or prolonged reflection.

It is here taken for granted that the aspirant accepts the teaching of the identity as true. This acceptance arises through his faith in the Guru who has that experience, and who is therefore a competent witness of that truth.

So, there is no injunction to meditate in the sentence cited.

503 In the sentence of the ancient revelation 'You are That', no meditation has been enjoined. What is said by implication is that in the egoless state the sage has the experience that the impersonal is identical with his own real Self.

504 Since it is settled by the sentence of the Vedanta that one's own real Self, disentangled from the veiling sheaths, is the supreme reality, to attain the experience of identity between that reality and the Self, what else will work except the quest of that Self?

This is obvious, says Bhagavan. The real meaning of the text, 'Thou art That,' is next set forth according to the spirit of Bhagavan's teachings.

505 The meaning of that vedantic text [You are That] is this: the Supreme Being himself shines as the real Self. If, seeking that Self, one gives up the notion 'I am the body' and becomes aware of one's true nature, one becomes firmly fixed in the Heart and shines as That.

Has the meditation on the truth any use at all?

506 The quest of the truth of the Self is alone the direct path to the right awareness of the Self. The meditation spoken of is a preliminary aid to this quest. It is for breaking up the idea of the body as the Self.

This is what Bhagavan has said. In the way shown the meditation is useful for those who are not able to free themselves from their ego-sense, by which the body is identified as the Self.

The obstacles that may lie on the path are next dealt with.

507 Diving into the Heart in this quest of the Self does not occur in those who have weak minds. For them, the mind's strength, being subdivided among innumerable thoughts, is insignificant.

One-pointedness of the mind is needed. A mind that is one-pointed will be strong enough for this purpose. Curbing of the variety of thoughts is the expedient to be adopted.

508 The one-pointedness of the mind in the quest is itself the strength of mind that is needed, and nothing else. He who has this strength of mind is called 'valiant' because he has the skill to protect his intellect from being frittered away.

509 By the practice of meditation mental strength will be intensified. Therefore meditation is an aid to the quest. After first achieving stillness of mind by meditation, the valiant aspirant must seek the truth of his own Self.

Then the question arises, 'What is to be taken as the object of meditation?'

510 For the seeker of deliverance the best of all possible objects for meditation is the consciousness that has the form 'I', since this is the essence of the real Self. By this meditation alone, the mind will naturally dive into the Heart. Such is the teaching of our great Guru.

'I', he has pointed out, is the name of that impersonal being, the subject matter of the Vedantas. He has said that this name is even holier than the pranava [Om].

An alternative method for stilling the mind's thoughts, as recommended by Bhagavan, is stated next.

511 Alternatively, if the aspirant for deliverance stills the mind by pure *kumbhaka* [retention of breath], without *puraka* and *rechaka* [inhalation and exhalation], and thus engages in the quest, then his mind will dive into the Heart.

Ordinary pranayama consists of the three parts, breathing in (puraka), retaining the breath within (kumbhaka), and breathing out (rechaka). But here the middle part (kumbhaka) alone is recommended as a means of stilling the mind. This may be mastered by steady practice. This is called kevala kumbhaka.

The same process is prescribed in the Yoga Vasishta, as quoted below.

512 Bhagavan Vasishta has said: 'If one separates the body [from oneself] and remains at rest in one's own Self, which is consciousness, then one's ego-sense perishes.'

That is, he attains the egoless state.

What happens when the quest is thus persisted in long enough?

513 The mind, seeking the Self, gets captured by some mysterious inner power and dives into the Heart. There the mind, being consumed by the consciousness-light of the Self, ceases to exist, along with the ego.

What is this power?

514 That power is indeed the grace of God, who is the real Self in the Heart. It is of the nature of right awareness. By yielding up oneself to it, the aspirant becomes blessed.

515 In that great burning state, the sky of pure consciousness, the ever-real and auspicious real Self dances in the form of 'I', 'I'. In the fire of this right awareness, which is the sole reality, the universe, along with the ego, is destroyed.

This fire consumes the whole of creation with its root, the ego, leaving not even ashes. The real Self is said to be dancing, to indicate the bliss of that state.

So, there is no dance in the literal sense.

516 However, since that same sky of consciousness is his real nature, how can he, being formless, dance there? This metaphor shows that his form is bliss, and that the dance is motionless.

517 In that state there is no *maya*, no *avidya* [ignorance], no space, no time, and no individual called the soul. There, only the real Self, having the form of pure consciousness, exists, and nothing else.

This state of aloneness is called kaivalya.

Maya and avidya are mutually dependent. Neither can exist without the other. So both are lost in this conflagration. This has been definitely stated in one of the hymns to Sri Arunachala by Bhagavan.

518 In that transcendental state the power of God, named *maya*, whose expanded form is the whole world, is wholly lost in that motionless supreme one, along with the whole of her creation.

For him that dwells eternally in that supreme state, there is neither maya nor avidya, nor the world.

519 Therefore, in that supreme state of peace there shines, unhindered, the true form of the real Self. The one that survives in that state, abiding as his own real Self, is designated by the sages as the free one.

Bondage being due to the false identification of the body as the Self, it is lost when the ego-sense is lost. There is no more any false identification.

The mind is lost. But at the same time the pair of pleasure and pain is also lost. This is illustrated as follows:

520 Just as a woman, suffering intolerably in her father-in-law's house, obtains peace in her mother's house, so the mind, harried by samsaric suffering, wins peace by returning to its source, the real Self.

What about the unfree souls in the world? Does the free one see them, and is he anxious for them?

521 As a man awakening from a dream no longer sees any of the dream persons, so the one who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance, and who is therefore alone as the sole reality, does not see anyone as other than his own real Self.

In all persons alike, the real Self is unaffected. Ignorance and bondage are not for him, but for the mind or the ego, the imaginary individual soul, who never had any real existence.

522 How can that state, the natural state of peace, become knowable by the intellect – that state of him who dwells engrossed in the bliss of that Self, having no knowledge of others as different from himself?

Just as that state is unthinkable by the intellect, so too is the one who has won that state and dwells eternally there.

523 How can any man understand, by the unaided power of his own intellect, one who is mind-free, bodiless and worldless?

The one who is established in that state of deliverance is called a sage, or 'Prabuddha' or Buddha. He cannot be known because he has none of the attributes of an individual. He is one with the eternal subject, the supreme reality, and so cannot be made an object for anyone to know.

524 Because that one has no particular marks or features, the mind cannot think of it, nor words describe it. The words of the Vedanta teach its real nature only by negating everything as 'not That'.

The Vedantas never try to give a positive description. Even those sentences that seem to give such a description are interpreted as distinguishing it from things that can be visualised or thought of.

That unthinkable one is for that reason infinite, unlimited.

525 Whatever is describable in words or thinkable by the mind is, for that reason alone, finite. Because the real Self is beyond the reach of the mind and the intellect, those who are established in the Self call it 'the infinite'.

Only the infinite is blissful, not the finite, says the Chandogya Upanishad.

526 Whatever is said concerning the supreme reality by the sages or by Vedanta has for its purpose only the removal of the mistaken notions of the disciple.

No positive statements can be made. The ultimate teaching is by silence.

527 Just as Sita indicated Rama by negating all the other princes, so the Vedantas indicate the truth of the Self by negating all else [that could be mistakenly believed to be the Self].

528 Since the Self, shining alone as the sole existing reality, can neither be known nor taught, the teachings of the Guru do nothing for the aspirant except free him of his ignorance.

Ignorance causes him to identify something as the Self, which is not That.

Since the Self shines by its own consciousness-light, there is no need to do anything more. In the egoless state, the real Self cannot be mistaken, because there it survives alone.

The darkness (ignorance) that conceals the Self is just the visible and tangible world seen by the outward-going mind, as is shown next.

529 Since the Self, consciousness itself, is concealed by the darkness, which consists of worldly knowledge, the teachings of the Guru bless the aspirant by removing that ignorant knowledge.

530 To create an empty space in a room one only has to remove the encumbering, unwanted lumber. In the same way, to realise the Self nothing more is needed than the removal of false knowledge.

Nothing more need be done when the false notion of a serpent is removed. The real rope reveals itself. So too, when the veiling, false knowledge is removed, the Self shines by its own light of consciousness.

Another simile, given by Bhagavan, is given here.

531 How can the Self be something to be obtained? From the point of view of truth, it was never lost. The gaining of the Self that is spoken of is only the death of the ego, the appearance of which makes the Self as good as lost.

It is also said by Bhagavan that the truth is rightly taught only by silence. This is explained next.

532 Speech is fourfold, as transcendent, seeing, medium and articulate speech.⁵ That transcendent speech is only silence. And that silence is itself the true nature of the supreme reality.

533 The articulate form of speech was born of the medium speech; its mother is the seeing speech; that its mother is the transcendent speech, is well known. That same supreme speech is silence, the form of the supreme consciousness.

So, the grossest form of speech, being the great-grand daughter of the silence, cannot reach the real Self.

⁵ These terms are probably the equivalent of those described by Bhagavan in *Maharshi's Gospel*, p. 16, 1994 ed.:

Again, how does speech arise? There is abstract knowledge, whence arises the ego, which in turn gives rise to thought, and thought to the spoken word. So the word is the great grandson of the original source. If the word can produce effect, judge for yourself how much more powerful must be the preaching through silence!

- 534 True speech is only the silence of the sage, who is the eternal dweller in the transcendental state. How can gross speech, born of the belief in differences, speak of the supreme one, in which differences are lost?
- 535 Therefore the most ancient Guru [Dakshinamurti] taught the truth of the Self by silence. And by achieving silence of speech and mind, those ancient disciples became aware of that truth.

Here the reference is to the incarnation of God as Dakshinamurti, the God of right awareness, dwelling in that state of awareness. The disciples, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara attained the supreme state by being silent, just like their Guru.

- 536 Well-qualified disciples became themselves sages through the silent teaching of their Guru. Teaching by words does not work in imparting true knowledge of the real Self.

The greatness of the Guru's silence is next indicated.

- 537 The power there is in the silence of the Guru is immeasurable. Hence, teaching by silence is the highest there is. In this way alone does the aspirant's mind obtain peace.

There is the question about initiation. What is true initiation?

- 538 It is said that initiation is of three forms, namely, looking, thinking and touching with the hand. But the highest initiation consists of the Guru remaining in the supreme silence. So says our Guru.

The supreme state is called silence.

- 539 Because that state is taught by silence, and also because it is attained by remaining in silence, it is called silence. The sage is in silence always, even when he speaks.

The last statement is difficult to understand. It will be better understood when Bhagavan's teaching about the natural state (sahaja samadhi) is explained.

This enlightenment is the subject of many questions. One of these is, 'Will it remain permanent, or will it be lost later?'

- 540 That eternal state is ever shining by the light of the sun of consciousness, the real Self. After realising it, there is no possibility of swerving from that natural state of the Self due to forgetfulness.

The reason is that when right awareness dawns by following the direct path, the ego and mind merge and are once and for all lost in that Self. It is otherwise when some sort of bliss is experienced as a result of yoga. Yoga by itself does not lead up to egolessness.

Does the world survive after the egolessness is established?

- 541 The statement of the vedantic text that the Self swallows up the moving and the unmoving, means that the world, which is only darkness, is consumed by the effulgence of that Self.

The Upanishads thus clearly state that the world, being only darkness, cannot possibly survive in the presence of the light of right awareness.

The very same truth has been expressed by Bhagavan in the first verse of his Arunachala Pancharatnam, which is paraphrased here.

- 542 The essential nature of the Self has been sung by Guru Bhagavan in the following words: ‘The Supreme Self, named Arunachalesa [The Lord of Arunachala], shines alone without a second, having swallowed this solid-seeming universe by his own consciousness-light.’

This confirms the statement that creation is composed of darkness (ignorance) alone, and has no substantial reality even now, when ignorance and ego are rampant.

An inaccuracy of statement that is unavoidably made is corrected.

- 543 The statement that the Self, by attaining oneness with *Brahman*, becomes freed from the bondage of *samsara* is not true, because the Self never fell from its true state.

- 544 Just as white cloth does not acquire a new whiteness, whiteness being its nature, so the Self does not become *Brahman* because the Self is eternally *Brahman* by nature.

It is said that for creating the world Brahman itself became the Self when entering the created bodies. This only means that the Self is never other than Brahman.

Certain expressions, freely used to designate the sage, are next critically viewed.

- 545 Two names are commonly in use to designate the sage, namely ‘Knower of *Brahman*’ and ‘Knower of the Self’. Since the sage is himself *Brahman*, as well as the Self, how can they become known to the sage?

Neither of the two, which are identical with each other, can become the object of knowledge. The Self, as the eternal subject, is not an object to be known, and Brahman is therefore not an object. The unknowability of Brahman is due to its being the Self. So the terms, taken literally, are inapplicable. What then are their proper meanings?

- 546 To be free of the notion ‘I am not *Brahman*’ is itself the knowing of *Brahman*. Freedom from the notion that anything not the Self is the Self is the correct knowing of the Self.

The reason is given next.

547 When, by making the quest of one's Self, one becomes consumed, like food, by that supreme one, how can anyone survive as separate from it and still be called a sage.

The use of some word or other to designate one that has found the Self after sadhana is necessary and inevitable. But since in this case the success of the quest involves the loss of the unreal individuality of the seeker, practically all the words available are objectionable as implying something not true.

Another reason, shown next, is that the state is advaitic.

548 How can one, after experiencing the truth of non-duality [in that supreme state], remain separate from the Supreme Being? For that state has been styled, by Sri Krishna, himself, the supreme one, as merger into *Brahman*.

By this merger there is the loss of individuality.

549 In the sacred lore the sage is described in the same terms that *Brahman* itself is described. Since the true nature of *Brahman* is pure, supreme consciousness, the true nature of the sage is not different.

This is what Bhagavan has to say on this point:

550 'Since no one has two selves, it follows that the sayings "I know myself" and "I do not know myself" are both ridiculously nonsensical. The Self never becomes an object to be known.' Such is the statement made by the most holy one [Sri Ramana].

It may be asked why that state is one of non-duality. The answer is the following.

551 This state of being one's own true Self, freed from all limiting superimpositions, is called the state of non-duality, because in that state the supreme sole reality, the infinite *Brahman*, is not other than that Self.

An incidental question is whether the state of non-duality came into existence for the first time at the end of the quest, or had been existing all along?

552 The state of the non-dual, real Self, experienced by the sage who attains the supreme state, is not the fruit of the practice of *sadhana*. It is the eternal nature of that Self.

The following view, held by some, is next stated and discussed.

553 Some say that this duality will remain real as long as one is engaged in practising *sadhana*, but that when the goal is reached, non-duality will come into being by the extinction of the duality.

These thinkers seek to reconcile the dvaitic and advaitic teachings.

554 These men do not know the truth of the transcendental state beyond time, in which the world has not come into being. Non-duality has neither beginning nor end. Duality, with space and time, is unreal, always.

Here, the whole discussion about the world and the teaching of non-becoming are relevant, and also the discussion whether bondage is real, which comes later.

What then is the use of the sadhana?

555 In the sacred lore it is said, 'By the extinction of ego there is, for the aspirant to deliverance, cessation of his delusion'. What is real cannot be destroyed by right awareness, nor will anything unreal shine as real in the supreme state.

The extreme doctrine of the dvaitins is next stated and refuted.

556 The conclusion [of the *dvaitins*] that this duality is always real, that it will not cease to exist even when right awareness dawns, and that non-duality will never be achieved, is much farther away for the aspirant [than the one stated before].

What Bhagavan says on this point is next set forth.

557 Both when it is being sought by the quest 'Who am I?' and when it is realised, the Self is non-dual and ever real, just as the tenth man was there all along, even when he was being sought.

The reference here is to a parable of the loss and the finding of the tenth man in a party of ten. The ten, while travelling, crossed a river and then, one by one, they counted the members to see whether all had safely crossed over. But as each one counted only the others, leaving himself out, they believed that one, the tenth man, was lost. They were bewailing the loss when a passer-by saw them and asked them the cause of their sorrow. When he was told, he counted them and found all the ten were there. He convinced them of this truth by making them count the blows he would give all of them. There were ten blows and this convinced the men.

558 Those who have understood, as taught in *Mandukya*, the truth of the non-becoming of the supreme reality, will not be perplexed by these theories of the ignorant, because they are firmly convinced of the true nature of the Supreme Being.

The imperfections that beset life in samsara are transcended. It is shown in the supreme state reached by the sages.

559 For the sage who dwells in the state of non-duality, fear and desire do not arise as they do in an ignorant one. Desire and fear are unavoidable for those who are deluded by seeing differences.

560 The sentence, 'Fear arises from a second entity', shows that seeing duality is the cause of fear. No creature whose Self has been apparently stolen by the belief in the reality of differences is ever free from fear.

561 'The sage who is immersed in the ecstasy of the blissful real Self, who is beyond the scope of mind and speech, is not afraid of anything whatsoever.' In this way revelation teaches us that nothing moves the sage from his supreme state.

562 For him that is established in the supreme state, desires do not arise, because the desirer, the ego, has ceased to exist. The sage in that state is ever contented, as if he had obtained simultaneously enjoyment of all possible desires at a stroke.

This is from the Taittiriya Upanishad. What is meant is that all the happiness that is possible in the worldly life is contained in a minute fraction of that bliss of Brahman.

563 Since the real Self is all that is, when that Self is won, nothing remains for the sage to be won. Hence, in the sacred lore the sage is as one who has attained and enjoyed all objects of desire and is, therefore, desireless, just like God Himself.

It must be remembered that God is really impersonal, as Brahman, so that the personal God is only a modification of it.

564 *Viveka Chudamani* asks, 'How can one who has experienced the truth of his own Self identify with his body and suffer from desiring objects? Who is there left to desire?' This revelation shows that for the sage desires do not arise.

565 Only that man has desires who identifies himself with the body. But the sage has become free from the thought 'I am the body'. The sage looks upon his own body as if it were the body of another.

The first sentence in the above is a quotation from the Viveka Chudamani. Another powerful reason is that the sage is by nature eternally happy with the bliss of the real Self. This has been stated and explained before.

But the bliss of the sage does not cause bondage, as is shown next.

566 In the supreme state there is no tasting of bliss, for there the sense of being happy or miserable cannot arise. Since in that state there are no pairs of opposites, the bliss of the sage has no similarities to the pleasures and miseries of *samsara*.

The explanation is that while, in samsara, pleasures are from external objects, in the natural state the bliss is the very nature of the Self, who is identical with Parabrahman.

This difference is related to another, which is dealt with next.

567 In those who are ignorant, the real Self appears to have become circumscribed and made finite by the sheaths.⁶ The real Self, infinite like the sky and completely free from all limiting factors, is the state in which none of the sheaths remain.

*It is the sheaths that create the false sense of finiteness for the soul.
The Buddhist teaching of nirvana is next compared with this state.*

568 Guru [Ramana] has said that the state of *nirvana* that was taught by Buddha to be the state in which *samsara* and suffering are ended is the same as remaining in the supreme state, having discarded all the sheaths.

*So the Buddhist goal is the same as the state of deliverance taught in the Vedantas.
It is next shown that by the experience of the true nature of the Self, doubts become impossible.*

569 In that state doubts do not arise since the sage is ever firm in his awareness of the true Self. There he remains without affirmations and vacillations, immersed in the depths of peace, the mind having become extinct.

It is next shown that in that state death is transcended.

570 Becoming aware of the real Self, which has neither beginning nor end, the sage transcends death. Surely no one in the world transcends death without experiencing the truth of the Self as deathless.

571 That exalted one who has attained, by enquiring ‘Whence am I?’, birth in his own source, the supreme one – only he can be said to be truly born. He has been born once and for all time, and is eternally new. He is the Lord of the *Munis* [a title reserved for God].

572 He that is established in his own natural state, in perfect identity with *Brahman*, is free from disease and beyond time and space. This is the supreme state that has been taught to us by the great Guru.

The body itself is disease, says Bhagavan. So true health is to be aware that the body is not the Self. Bodily disease does not detract from the perfectly healthy state of the sage, as we all know.

The truth about birth and death is next discussed.

573 For the ignorant one in the world, birth is for dying and his death is for being reborn again. Consequently, the most holy one [Sri Ramana] has told us that this birth and this death are unreal.

⁶ The *kosas*, usually translated as ‘sheaths’, are the five forms through which the ego functions, and by doing so, cover the Self.

Each cancels the other and so samsara is without end.

574 Real death is death of the ego. Real birth is to dwell in one's natural state. In that state, in which pairs of opposites have no existence, birth and death have never become one.

Another aspect of the supreme state is next discussed.

575 How can the sage, who is forever established in the state of non-duality, become aware of differences? The world that appears to the ignorant as riddled with differences is to the sage only the undifferentiated Self.

576 Some speak of the sage as having two attributes: 'equal vision' and 'not seeing differences'. This amounts to saying that he is free from the state in which differences are seen. In the state in which one knows that the Self alone exists, nothing is seen.

577 In all persons the sage sees only that real Self who is eternally aware of the truth. He does not see anyone as separate from himself, nor does he look upon anyone as ignorant. In his sight all are sages.

This was exactly what Bhagavan was heard to say. This brings out the uniqueness of the sage. He does not look down upon anyone or anything as inferior to himself.

Now the question of the actions of sages is taken up.

578 The sage in his worldly activities may appear to be aware of worldly differences, but he is really no more aware of them than a sleepwalker who moves about, performing actions.

This point will become clear later on while dealing with the distinction between the yogic (kevala) samadhi and the natural (sahaja) samadhi of the sage.

The crucial test of the sage, by which he is distinguished from the ignorant, is next given.

579 The difference between a sage and an ignorant one can be plainly seen in respect to censure and praise. The sage does not know the difference between the two since, for him, this pair of opposites, like all others, is unreal.

580-1 There are those who have not attained the permanent abode of the natural state of the Self by following the quest for the truth. These people, who have not freed themselves from the feeling that identifies the body with the Self, are still subject to the delusion that *jivas* are different from one another. Though these people may have understood well the subtle meanings of Vedanta, even if they may have renounced the whole world as mere trash, they inevitably become a slave to the harlot named 'praise'.

This refers to an incident in the life of Sri Sadasiva Brahmendra, who for long lived in the woods, practising sadhana. Once a co-pupil of his met him in a forest and began praising him for a long time. At last Sadasiva became so elated by it that he exhibited horripilation. Noticing this, the other questioned Sadasiva how such an exalted person could be so affected. Sadasiva replied by a verse in Sanskrit to the effect that even such a one, if he had not reached the experience of the real Self, cannot help feeling pleasure from praise. This verse has been translated by Bhagavan and placed in the Supplement (Anubandham) of Ulladu Narpadu. That the sage is not so affected is shown next.

582 The sage, who does not know anyone as other than himself, and hence never swerves from his own true state, is unaffected by censure, or praise, because for him censure or praise appear to be made by himself.

This is the uniqueness of egolessness. The sage is really bodiless. Those that see his body judge him as if he were like them.

583 Though he appears as embodied, he is really bodiless, being egoless. His subtle body does not survive and go forth somewhere when the gross body falls, but undergoes disintegration here.

Adherents of sects, whose doctrines are different, have raised controversy, stating that the soul remains an individual after enlightenment, being endowed with a sort of body. On this point there are two views: one that the liberated soul has a body always, and another that he has no body, but can assume a body when he pleases. Bhagavan's teaching is that all forms are unreal, and hence neither of these two is acceptable. This is dealt with below.

584 Some believers in the reality of the world say that the sage has a body. Others say that the sage, being bodiless, can assume a body if he so pleases.

585 By the dawn of right awareness of the real Self, the ego, the root cause of the appearance of forms, has been lost. Therefore for the sage, all forms are unreal, and hence this talk of forms is foolishness.

Bhagavan has made it clear, by adopting the simile of the river mingling with the ocean, that the soul as such does not survive the dawn of right awareness. The soul has been declared to be a false appearance due to confusion of the body with the Self, which cannot survive the extinction of ignorance, its parent.

586 Since it is not proper to say that this [world] existed before [enlightenment], but was lost afterwards, and since [even in ignorance] no one has a form from the point of view of the reality, how can the sage have a form?

Forms belong to duality, but duality, it has been declared, is never real. Non-duality is true always, being unaffected by time.

587 In the case of the sage who is established in his own natural state, free of all the three bodies, how can a desire arise to have a body? This talk of forms is in vain, being merely a concession to the unenlightened.

Even in the Upanishads there are passages suggesting that in salvation there are forms, but they are interpreted as a means of enabling unripe souls to take to sadhana for salvation. The real teaching of the Upanishads appears in texts such as the following.

588 As a river reaching the ocean loses its river-form and becomes indistinguishable from it, so too the sage, losing his form as a soul, becomes non-different from that Supreme Being, to whom all else is inferior.

589 Thus revelation says that the sage in that supreme state becomes one with the Supreme Being. Even when alive, the liberated one is bodiless because he does not think of himself as having a body.

Bhagavan defines liberation as follows.

590 Bhagavan our Guru says that liberation is just the extinction of the ego, who becomes a disputant concerning the form of the sage. So, this dispute about forms is meaningless.

It is to be noted that those who raise this controversy, do so without losing their ego-sense. Can they raise this question after getting rid of their ego?

591 Therefore, on the fall of the body his subtle form does not go forth, as in the case of the ignorant; it goes back and merges into its cause, and nothing survives for going forth.

The cause of the subtle body is the unquintuplicated five bhutas (materials of creation).

There is an incidental misconception which is next dispelled.

592 The popular notion that there are many sages is also not true. All differences belong to the world. In the worldless state they do not exist.

The controversy about the plurality of selves, which has been discussed and settled before, is relevant here also.

593 He who says, 'I have today seen this sage; I shall see others also,' does not know the true nature of sages, which is reality-consciousness-bliss. This is what Bhagavan has told us on this point.

594 For him who knows not the sage who is within himself there appear many sages. For him who knows that one, which is his own Self, this plurality [of sages] is non-existent.

The absurdity of these questions is thus pointed out by Bhagavan. Questions about the egoless state cannot be decided by the ego-ridden ones.

The following is the corollary from the above discussion.

595 The first Guru [Dakshinamurti], who taught those great *munis* by silence the truth of his own supreme state, and who afterwards appeared as the great Guru, Sri Sankaracharya, is himself our Guru, Sri Ramana [Bhagavan].

This should be self-evident.

A notion prevails among the people that a sage or a perfected man must be able to perform miracles. These miracle-working powers are called siddhis. The word literally means 'gain' of something. The sages make a difference between these so-called siddhis and the real siddhi, whereby the whole of samsara is transcended, and the highest state, egolessness, is reached.

596 Our Guru, Sri Ramana, tells us that the real *siddhi* [to be striven for] is to be firmly established in the natural state of the real Self, which is ever-present in the Heart; nothing else.

And since it is in the Heart, the only thing needed is to seek it there and enjoy its bliss.

597 The notion that the Self has to be won is untrue, because really, from the point of view of truth, it was never lost. The sages therefore say that the real Self is ever-present.

This fact is illustrated by the simile of the forgotten necklace, which was diligently sought while all the time it was on the neck of the seeker.

Those that go after the vanities of the world are enamoured of the false siddhis because they do not know that the Self is the summum bonum, the greatest good.

598 Revelation teaches this truth by saying that the Self is infinite, and all else finite and trivial. He that buys the whole world by selling the real Self is just a pauper, and is to be pitied.

The so-called siddhis are of no value because they are in samsara and are therefore mere vanities, unreal, like the world. A saying of the same import is attributed to Jesus, who was a sage.

599 Therefore, says the revelation, that supreme state is freedom from poverty, and all else is only poverty. Like an emperor, the sage is above all wants [in a different way]. Even when going about begging [his daily meal] he is not cast down.

600 It is the deluded men with outward-turned minds, hankering for worldly enjoyments, who talk of these *siddhis*, namely becoming minute, etc. Revelation

mentions these *siddhis* for attracting the dull-witted ones also to the path for deliverance.

601 Since these are in the realm of ignorance, and therefore unreal like dream-gains, no discriminating person will be deluded by them. [Of course,] the sage is not deluded by these unrealities, as he has attained the supreme state, which is the state of reality.

602 Though thus it has been made clear that there is no gain equal to the gain of the Self, undiscriminating ones are afraid of the supreme state, believing that in it the Self will be lost.

That the Self is not lost there is next demonstrated by a summary of a verse from Yoga Vasishtam.

603 ‘Just as, by the oncoming of spring, great qualities such as beauty and so on come to trees, so to the sage who abides in the supreme state, come lustre, keen intelligence and strength [of all kinds].

Even a common man, without education, if he becomes somehow aware of the real Self, becomes a centre of attraction for others and is worshipped as a perfected one. Also, other perfections are seen in the sage.

604 Peace of mind and other good qualities, which aspirants to deliverance have to acquire and retain with effort, are natural to the sage. He is beyond the [three] qualities [*sattva*, *rajas* and *tamas*] and at the same time is the abode of all good qualities.

So the conclusion is as follows.

605 So, when the ego is lost, there is no real loss. The supreme state [attained on by the loss of the ego] is not one in which the Self is lost. But the Self is as good as lost due to the ego sense, and when this [ego sense] is lost, there is a loss of this loss.

It is like a creditor unexpectedly receiving payment of a debt, which he had written off as irrecoverable.

This loss of the ego is indeed an enormous gain, as shown below.

606 This complete and final loss of the ego is itself all these things [and more]: righteousness, wealth, enjoyment [of all pleasures at once], truthfulness, true renunciation, silence, *tapas*, union with God and true surrender of oneself to Him.

Innumerable gains and all manner of goodness are comprised in egolessness. The things that have the same names as the items on this list are next shown to be worthless because they are usually associated with the ego.

607 Those having the same names [which are prized greatly] are tainted and of little worth, because of association with the ego. But these are natural to the sage, who [always] dwells in the supreme state.

Another unique feature of the sage is next dealt with.

608 Two excellent qualities are stated as belonging to the sage, freedom from obligation to perform prescribed actions and at the same time being contented and happy. For the common man the absence of these is due to his ignorance.

The latter is bound by duties and never reaches the goal of action. In the sage these two rare good features are united and inseparable. Bhagavat Pada Sankaracharya has given prominence to these two unique features of the sage at the end of a long discourse that establishes the truth that illumination, unaided, confers deliverance.

609 The sage is not bound to perform actions because for him there is nothing to be gained by means of action. He for whom there is an obligation to perform actions is not free, but is bound by the fetters of delusion.

This shows up well the vast difference there is between the bound and the free. Incidentally, a question is dealt with next that shows the ignorance of the questioners.

610 Some, not knowing the truth [about sages] ask whether the sage does not need to practise meditation. By others the question is raised: ‘Should not the sage go to foreign countries and teach the people there?’⁷

611 He that practises the meditation, ‘I am That’ is not a sage, but only a *sadhaka*. If the sage meditates ‘I am That’, it would be like a man meditating ‘I am a man’.

612 It is proper for one to remember something he has forgotten. In the world, remembrance of something not forgotten cannot occur. Since the truth of the Self is never once forgotten by the sage, how can he meditate on it?

613 The true meditation on the supreme reality [the Self] is only to remain as the Self in the thought-free state. This ‘meditation’ can neither be given up, nor taken up by the sage.

This is the sense of the latter half of the first benedictory verse in Bhagavan’s ‘Forty Verses on the Real’. The experience of the Self by the sage in his natural state is not knowing, but being the Self. From this state of Being there can never be a relapse to the thought ‘I am the body’.

The answer to the question about going about lecturing or teaching the people all over the world is as follows.

⁷ The second question is not immediately answered, but it is dealt with in verse 614.

614 Even though apparently dwelling in some corner of the world, he is really like the sky. While remaining always [uninterruptedly] in his own natural state [*samadhi*], by his power he pervades the whole world.

This power of the sage is 'grace', the power to bless.

615 The sage, remaining all the time continuously in the natural state, with his mind utterly stilled, protects his own people even from a very great distance by his unthinkable power of grace.

But this protection is automatic, without effort, or even conscious knowledge of doing this work of grace.

616 Does anyone worry, after awakening, about men seen in a dream? So too, the sage who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance is not anxious about those who are still in ignorance.

From his point of view no one is really ignorant.

The actions of a sage ought not to be judged from the ordinary, human standpoint.

617 Since the sage has transcended the three grades of character, there can be no faults in him. Whatever he does in the world is surely blameless.

618 For this reason the sage transcends the sacred books that deal with human conduct, because the mind-free one is not bound by them. Those books are concerned with ignorant ones; they are subject to regulation by them because they have the sense of being performers of activities.

The conventions of samsara have no place in the state of the sage.

619 By revelation the sage's state is described as one in which the *Vedas* are not *Vedas*, and the *devas* [the gods] are not *devas*.

Incidentally, a warning is given to disciples and sadhakas.

620 Though one should act upon the teachings of the sages, one must not imitate any act done by a sage.

The teachings of a sage are the highest authority, not their actions.

A noteworthy passage in the Gita in this context is the following: 'Even if he kills all these people, he is not a killer, nor is he bound.'

Nor is the sage bound to conform to any particular mode of life.

621 In the course of life the sage, who has transcended all the yogas, being established in the supreme state, may live like a yogi, or even like a *bhogi*, but that yoga and that *bhoga* are not real.

‘Bhoga’ means enjoyment, and a bhogi is one, such as a householder, who lives for enjoyment. Some sages, like Ribhu, have been without any ashrama, which is a particular, prescribed mode of life. Such a one is called an atiasrami. The next topic concerns the pair of opposites, bondage and freedom.

622 The pair of bondage and freedom, which are spoken of in the course of instruction to disciples, does not really exist. Since it is settled that all pairs of opposites are unreal, how can this pair be real?

623 The real Self is ever free. The bound one is only the soul, the consequence of ignorance. Therefore, in truth, there is no deliverance. The thought of deliverance is due only to the belief in bondage.

How to verify this unreality?

624 ‘If one makes the quest, “Who is he for whom there is bondage?”, at the end of the quest the ever-free Self will be experienced.’ This is what the most holy one [Sri Ramana] has said.

625 Since the non-becoming of the supreme reality has been made clear by both revelation and the sages, and since it is that reality which is the real Self, how can it be said that that one became bound?

Whoever does not accept the perfect supremacy of the reality is unfit to be a disciple. He disqualifies himself by not accepting this as true.

626 If bondage were real, it would be without end. Also, having a beginning, deliverance would have an end. Thus, the unreality of bondage is irresistible.

It is an axiom of advaita Vedanta that whatever is real has neither beginning nor an end, and that what has a beginning must have an end, and is therefore unreal, as set forth already.

627 We do not hear from the sage the saying, ‘I was bound before but now I am free’. That supreme state is beyond time. How can its beginning be imagined?

What Bhagavan did say is next recorded.

628 Bhagavan, when asked, ‘When did your holiness attain deliverance?’, replied, ‘Nothing has happened to me. I am the same always, unchanged.’

To make this teaching intelligible Bhagavan used the following two similes.

629 This talk of deliverance is just like the singing, by dwellers in Pandharpur, of songs to the effect, ‘When shall we go to that place?’ and finally singing, ‘We have reached that place’.⁸

630 ‘Just as someone in his dream, after wandering abroad and returning home, goes to sleep there and, waking, finds himself in his own home, so is deliverance.’ This is what our Guru has said.⁹

So, deliverance is only a change in the understanding, as shown below.

631 Deliverance is just the clarification of the mind, the understanding: ‘I am ever in my own real nature; all other experiences are illusory.’ It is not something that has newly come about.

Another very notable feature of the sage’s being is next taken up.

632 The eternal greatness of the sage consists in this: that he neither waxes nor wanes by actions done or not done. For him there will never accrue any result from actions, whether unpleasant or pleasant.

This is a necessary corollary from the teaching that the sage, being only the real Self, is egoless, and therefore not an actor, but at the most only a witness, or not even a witness.

Some sectarians identify the real Self with the sheath of the intellect, the vijñanamaya kosha. But they are not advaitins.

⁸ Pandharpur is a famous Krishna temple in Maharashtra. The verse refers to a song and ritual that is performed by devotees of this shrine. Bhagavan referred to it in the following exchange, which is taken from *Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, letter 82, dated 27th January 1947:

Question: Where can we see the soul? How can we know it?

Bhagavan: Where can we see the soul? This question is like staying in Ramanasramam and asking ‘Where is Ramanasramam?’ The soul is at all times in you and everywhere, and to imagine that it is somewhere far off and to search for it is like performing Panduranga *bhajan*. This *bhajan* commences in the first quarter of the night with tinkling bells tied to the feet of the devotees, and with a brass lamp-stand placed in the centre of the house. The devotees go round and round the lamp-stand, dancing rhythmically to the tune, ‘Pandharpur is thus far! Pandharpur is thus far! Come on, proceed!’, but as they go round and round, they actually do not proceed even half a yard further. By the time the third quarter of the night is reached, they will begin to sing, ‘See! See! There is Pandharpur! Here is Pandharpur! See, See!’

During the first quarter of the night they were going round the same lamp as they were in the third quarter. It dawns and they sing, ‘We have arrived in Pandharpur. This is Pandharpur.’ So saying, they salute the lamp-stand and end the *bhajan*. It is the same with this also. We go round and round in search of *Atma*, saying, ‘Where is *Atma*? Where is *Atma*?’ till at last the dawn of *jnana drishti* [the vision of knowledge] is reached and we say, ‘This is *Atma*. This is me.’

⁹ This is a version of the first verse of Bhagavan’s *Ekatma Panchakam*, a translation of which has been given in verse 546.

This is explained further by Bhagavan himself.

- 633 Just as one engaged in listening to a story does not really hear it, on account of his mind having wandered far away, so the sage, though apparently doing actions, is not really an actor with a mind full of previous habitual modes of functioning.

It has been shown before that the mind is just a bundle of habits of activity, which means that when those habits have been extinguished, it ceases to bind. The actions of the sage are not due to his personal will, as will be shown later.

But the condition of one whose mental vasanas are active is different, as shown below.

- 634 But the ignorant man, because his mind is subject to *vasanas*, becomes an actor, even without actively doing any action, just as a man in his dream may fall from the cliff of a mountain, though his body is lying motionless in his bed.

The fact is, the mind is the real agent in action, not the body, which by itself is inert and actionless.

The following is from the Vasishtam:

- 635 Action is not what is done by the body alone. That alone is action which is done by the mind. The body, being insentient, cannot be an actor. The mind being sentient, can be an actor.

- 636 ‘Whatever the body, the senses, life and the mind do by the force of *prarabdha* karma, the sage is not affected by it.’ So said Bhagavan, our Guru.

This is further sustained by comparison of the sage with God in his personal aspect.

- 637 God is unaffected by his activities of creation, protection, etc. In just the same way the sage remains unaffected by his actions, since, from the standpoint of the truth, there is no real difference between them [God and the sage].

It is taught that God is not Himself the doer of all that work, the work being done in His presence by His power, called maya, as said before.

- 638 He appears to the ignorant as acting – eating, walking, talking and remembering – but in truth he is neither an actor nor a recipient of the fruits of action, because all his activity is entirely subject to God.

The following is what Bhagavan says on this topic.

639 If the Self were the actor, then the sage would receive the fruits of action. But when, by the quest of the real Self, the sense of doership is lost, at the same time all the three kinds of karma will be lost. Understand that this deliverance is eternal.¹⁰

The following also was said by Bhagavan.

640 Just as a sleepy child eats the food given by his mother, but does not know it is eating, in the same way the sage receives the fruits of actions, without being an enjoyer or sufferer.

But that is not all.

641 In truth, no one is performing actions. The difference between the knower and the non-knower of the Self is only this: the ignorant man believes himself to be the performer of actions, but to the sage the thought of being an actor does not arise at all.

Here is an incidental problem, due to a difference of views.

642 The saying, ‘The *agami* karma and *sanchita* karma are lost for the sage, so he is not reborn again; but the *prarabdha* karma remains over’ is not true from the standpoint of the supreme truth.

This Bhagavan illustrates with a simile from life.

643 Just as, when a husband dies, none of his wives remain unwidowed, so when the actor [the ego] dies, no actions remain over, which would yield result [to the sage].

Another simile is also available.

644 Just as actions done in dream do not survive on waking, so actions done during the prevalence of ignorance do not survive when the true nature of the Self is experienced.

When ignorance dies, all its products also cease to be.

But the survival of prarabdha karma is stated in the vedantic lore. The answer to this is given.

645 The statement in revelation that *prarabdha* karma survives is only in conformity with the view of the ignorant. From their point of view, those actions have results, because in their view the sage is embodied.

¹⁰ The three kinds of karma are, *sanchita*, *prarabdha* and *agami*. *Sanchita* karma is the store of karmic debts from previous births; *prarabdha* is that portion of one’s *sanchita* karma that has to be worked out in the present birth; and *agami* is the new karma that is accumulated in the present birth that is carried forward into future lives. All three karmas vanish at the moment of realisation since the person who had to experience them has just ceased to exist.

But this is only in some stray contexts. More emphatically in many places the Vedantas support the teaching of the sages.

646 The vedantic text, ‘The pleasant and unpleasant effects [of actions] do not affect the sage, who dwells bodiless as the Self,’ shows the unfruitfulness of the actions of the sage.

This is also confirmed by the following from the Yoga Vasishtam.

647 Even when a sage’s body is cut or burnt, there is no swerving from his real nature, just as jaggery [raw, brown sugar] does not lose its natural sweetness even when powdered or boiled over fire.

A practical instance of this occurred when Bhagavan, who had cancer of the left arm, finally submitted to an extensive operation, which was insisted upon by the surgeons and doctors sent for by the ashram authorities. Bhagavan did not have any anaesthetic, and the operation lasted for nearly three hours.¹¹ If he felt the pain, he did not show it. Later, when asked about the pain, he quoted the verse from the Yoga Vasishtam whose meaning has been given above.

There were other instances in his life which showed his unlimited power of endurance of pain. The Bhagavad Gita has this line: ‘Remaining wherein, he is not shaken [from his natural state] even by great pain.’

All this would suffice to show that the sage is really bodiless, that he is thus truly asanga, unattached, as the Self is said to be in the Upanishads.

This raises the question of the apparent distinction between the two kinds of deliverance spoken of: deliverance with the body and deliverance without the body, the former being supposed to be the state in which the body continues to live, and the latter after the body’s death. To this Bhagavan’s answer is given in the following verse.

648 In conformity with the beliefs of the ignorant, two kinds of deliverance are stated, one with the body [jivanmukti] and another without the body [videhamukti].¹² Really, no free one has a body. All deliverance is bodiless.

What is meant is that though the body remains alive, the sage is unattached, because his causal body, which is ignorance, has been destroyed. Without this, there is nothing to connect the real Self, which the sage is, with the subtle and the gross bodies.

Now the question of the prarabdha karma is resumed.

¹¹ It is quite widely believed that Bhagavan did not have anaesthetics during his operations, but the story is not true. The surgeon who performed one of the operations wrote in *The Mountain Path* many years ago that he administered the usual anaesthesia, but the story continues to be disseminated. Lakshman Sarma was not present in the ashram in the last years of Bhagavan’s life, so he must have picked up this story second-hand.

¹² The *jivanmukta* attains liberation while the body is still alive, and continues to live afterwards. The *videhamukta* attains liberation at the moment of his physical death. It can also be said that the *jivanmukta* attains *videhamukti* when he gives up his body.

649 The power of the *prarabdha* karma extends only to the body; it does not affect the Self. Since his body has been surrendered to *prarabdha* by the sage, how can he be affected by the karma?

650 'The sage, having given over his body to *prarabdha* karma, remains in his own state without the sense of "mineness" in the body.' Thus, the great Guru Sankara has shown the truth of this in his *Manisha Panchakam*.

The truth that the real Self is unattached is further elucidated.

651 If it is said that the subtle body of the sage survives, [the answer is that] since the causal body consisting of ignorance has been extinguished, how can there be attachment of the sage [the Self] to the subtle body?

652 Since *Brahman* is unattached, so is the sage, who also appears to be in *samsara*, like the sky. Hence, the changes in the body and in the mind do not touch the sage.

653 The sage, who is wide-awake in his own natural state [as the Self], is said to be like one soundly asleep in a carriage. The body is likened to a carriage, and the ten sense organs are likened to the horses [of the carriage].

654 The sleeper in the carriage does not know anything about the going, the stopping and the unyoking of the horses [of the carriage]. Just so, the sage who is asleep [to the world] in the carriage, the body, does not know its changing conditions.

655 But the sage, being immersed in his natural *samadhi*, is seen by the ignorant as if he were doing actions and going through various [bodily or mental] conditions. Seeing these, the indiscriminating ones are confused.

656 It appears to the ignorant that he has three distinct states, sleep, *samadhi* and bodily activities, and the ignorant one thinks that these are distinct from one another.

657 But the sage is always the same. His state is one of eternal *samadhi*. This *samadhi* [of his] is not in any way hindered in the least by actions, nor are actions hindered in the least by the *samadhi*.

Samadhi is the state of awareness of the Self alone.

If the sage remains in samadhi all the time, how can actions be performed? The answer is given in the verses that follow:

658 There are two thought-free *samadhis*. One is called *kevala*, the other is called *sahaja* [natural]. By attaining *kevala* one does not become a sage. He alone is a sage who is firmly established in *sahaja*.

These two are further distinguished and explained in the verses that follow.

659 The *kevala samadhi* mentioned here is one that comes to a yogi by the mind going into latency. For him, it is well known that there are two distinct states, *samadhi* [introvertedness] and coming back [to the common waking of *samsara*].

It has been shown before that mental quiescence is of two kinds: latency and complete and final extinction, and that the latter alone leads to sagehood. This makes all the difference, as shown below.

660 The yogi's mind, in his *samadhi*, remains latent with all its *vasanas*. After remaining for a very long time, it is brought out to *samsara* by a *vasana*.

661 When he is thrown out from the *samadhi*, he resumes *samsara* just where he left it, just as an anaesthetised person [on recovering consciousness] resumes an activity left unfinished before.

This was illustrated by Bhagavan by the story of a yogi. He had awakened from samadhi and being thirsty asked his disciple to bring water to drink. But before the water was brought he again went into samadhi and remained in it for about three centuries, during which the Muslim raj came and went and was superseded by the British raj. When he awoke, he called out, addressing his disciple who had long since died, 'Have you brought water?'

662 The yogi, returning in this way to *samsara*, again enters *samadhi* with effort. But the sage, being established in the natural state [*sahaja nirvikalpa samadhi*] neither loses it nor gets it back [but remains in it uninterruptedly].

663 The sage never comes back to *samsara*. *Samadhi* is his natural state. There is no moment when he is without *samadhi*. Hence it is called *sahaja* [natural].

This samadhi is different from the kevala of the yogi in that it does not prevent the sage being seemingly active in the world while remaining in his samadhi.

664 The sage, remaining uninterruptedly in his natural state of *samadhi*, never swerving from it as a *jivan mukta*, is able to be active in the world, just as the sages of old such as Sri Sankaracharya did.

665 The yogi, while he is immersed in his *kevala samadhi*, is unable to do any work. When he comes out of the *samadhi*, then he does work, and is subject to ignorance.

666 The yogi is not equal to the task of teaching the truth of the real Self [and the *sadhana* for realising it] to disciples. The sage alone, remaining always, unswervingly, in the supreme state, is perfectly competent to teach and guide disciples.

- 667 If this *sahaja samadhi* is not accepted, it will follow that the sacred books, such as the *Gita* etc. are false. Sacred books are authoritative for the aspirants to deliverance, since they are filled with the teachings of sages.
- 668 It is the succession of sages that preserves the correct tradition of the science of right awareness of the real Self for the benefit of the aspirants to deliverance.
- 669 The final proof is one's own experience of the truth, wherein doubts can no more arise. Until such experience is attained, the utterances of the sages are authority for the aspirants.

The difference between the two kinds of nirvikalpa [thought-free] samadhis was explained by Bhagavan as follows.

- 670 The sage [who is in *sahaja samadhi*] is like the river that has joined the ocean and become merged in it. The yogi in the *kevala* state is like a bucket let down into a well by means of a rope tied to it.
- 671 The bucket, when drawn up by the rope, comes out of the well. Just so the mind immersed in *kevala samadhi* is pulled out of it by *vasanas* back to *samsara*.
- 672 Thus it has been shown by the most holy one that the sage in the natural *samadhi* has no activity. But though by nature the sage is no actor, yet he is also a great actor, without being attached [or bound].

The sage has the whole potency of God in doing his appointed work, and hence there is no limit to his power, because, being egoless, the divine power works through his subtle and gross bodies.

The great blessing that disciples and devotees of the sage derive from associating with him is next expounded.

- 673 What is called association with the holy [satsang] is association with a sage. The term *sat* [truth, reality] means *Brahman*, and the sage is identical with that.
- 674 It must not be doubted, 'Since all alike are *Brahman*, what is there special in the sage?' In others, the real [*Brahman*] is eclipsed by the ego, but in the sage *Brahman* shines in its fullest effulgence.
- 675 In the company of sages, attachment vanishes, and with attachment, illusion. Freed from illusion, one attains stability, and thence liberation while yet alive. Seek therefore the company of sages.
- 676 Not by listening to preachers, nor by study of books, nor by meritorious deeds nor by any other means can one attain that supreme state, which is attainable only through association with the sages and the clear quest of the Self.

677 When one has learned to love the company of sages, why all these rules of discipline? When a pleasant cool southern breeze is blowing, what need is there for a fan?

678 Fever is overcome by the cool light of the moon; want by the wish-yielding tree; and sin by the holy Ganges. Those three – fever and want and sin – all flee at the august sight of the peerless sage.

679 Holy rivers, which are only water, and idols, which are made of stone and clay, are not as mighty as the sages are. For while they make one pure in the course of countless days, the sage's eye by a mere glance purifies at once.¹³

680 Bathing in the Ganges removes the sins of man, not the sinner in him. But association with a sage destroys the sinner also. There is nothing so powerful to purify the mind as association with a sage.

The sage's greatness is further set forth as follows.

681 He is the conqueror of death, of the demon of three cities, of cupid, and of the demon Naraka. He is the Self of all the great gods, and all alike worship only him.

How he is the killer of the demon Tripura and of the demon Naraka is explained next.

682 Since it is through him that the three bodies [encompassing the Self] exist, he is therefore the killer of Tripura. Because he has put an end to the ego, he is therefore also the killer of Naraka.

The three bodies are the gross, subtle and causal, already stated. Naraka is the personification of the ego.

683 Since in the *Gita* Bhagavan Krishna himself says, 'I myself am the sage,' it therefore follows that there is none equal to or greater than he. His greatness is immeasurable.

684 Since the sage is God himself, his teachings are of the highest authority. Thereafter, and by his words alone, the *Upanishads* also have authority.

685 Since the Guru, if he is a sage, is the second form of God's grace, the aspirant practising devotion to him [as to God], will reach his goal.

¹³ The preceding verses (675-9) are a translation of the first five verses of *Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham*. Bhagavan took these verses, originally composed in Sanskrit, translated them into Tamil and included them in his *Collected Works*. I have used the translations that were done for *Collected Works* by Professor Swaminathan.

Divine grace has three forms in three stages: first as God, then as Guru and finally as the real Self. The above verse is based upon this ancient teaching, and was repeated by Bhagavan.

686 In the sage's presence and even far away from him there is a mysterious power. Whoever is caught hold of by it will not be let go, but will surely be taken to the state of deliverance.

Therefore, those that are positively determined not to obtain deliverance, being greatly in love with samsara, should beware of sages!

687 The Guru has said, 'Just as a fawn caught by a tiger becomes its food, so, if a good man is caught by the gracious look of the sage, he will surely attain the state in which the sage dwells.'

688 Being outside he [the Guru] turns the mind of the *sadhaka* inwards and from inside he pulls the mind into the Heart and then fixes him, by his power, in the supreme state.

689 That supreme state of the sage transcends both words and intellect. What has been set forth here is just a little, which has been vouchsafed by the sages for the *sadhaka*.

690 Thus has been expounded the natural state of the Self, along with the means of attainment [*sadhana*]. Hereafter is set forth the essence of the teachings for reflection by *sadhakas*.

*The remainder of the work sets forth Bhagavan's own commentary on the first benedictory verse of the Forty Verses.*¹⁴

¹⁴ The verse is:

Can there be a sense of existence without something that is? Is real consciousness a thing other than That? Since that Reality dwells, thought-free, in the Heart, how can it – itself named the Heart – be meditated on? And who is there, distinct from it, to meditate on it, the Self whose nature is reality-consciousness? Know that to meditate on it is just to be at one with it in the Heart.

Verses 691-4 are based on an explanation that Bhagavan gave to Lakshman Sarma. He recorded it in prose in *Revelation*, 1991 ed., p. 48:

Everyone is aware of two things, namely himself the seer and the world which he sees; and he assumes that they are both real. But that alone is real which has a continuous existence. Judged by this test, the two, the seer and his spectacle, are both unreal. These two appear intermittently. They are apparent in the waking and dream state alone. In the state of deep sleep they cease to appear. That is, they appear when the mind is active and disappear as soon as the mind ceases to function. Therefore the two are but thoughts of the mind. There must be something from which the mind arises and into which it subsides. That something must have a continuous, uninterrupted existence. That is, it must be the reality.

- 691 Every creature is aware of its own spectacle, the world, and its seer, himself. He understands these two as real in their own right. This delusion is the cause for its *samsara*.
- 692 If the two were real in their own right, they would appear continuously. How can something that appears at some times and does not appear at other times be real?
- 693 This pair [the world appearance and the one who sees it] shines in dream and waking only by the functioning of the mind. In deep sleep both of them fail to shine. Therefore both of them are mental.
- 694 That into which the mind goes into latency and wherefrom it rises again is alone real. That one, being without settings and risings, is real in its own right, and is the home of deliverance for the aspirant.
- 695 That reality named *Brahman*, which is only one without a second and complete in itself, is the giver of existence to the whole world. It also gives the light of consciousness to the whole mind, which in itself lacks consciousness.
- 696 That itself dwells in the Heart of all creatures as one's own Self, like a witness without thoughts, unrelated to anything. But that one is concealed during the outward-turned state of the mind by the false appearance of the world, which is a manifestation of the mind.
- 697 Therefore, due to illusion, no one in the world knows this real Self. Being persuaded that the gross body is itself the Self, one wanders through innumerable lives, suffering unhappiness.
- 698 This world must be discovered to be the supreme, who is the real Self, by extinction of the mind. Then the pure real Self will shine unhindered, as he really is, as the sole reality, *Brahman*.
- 699 If and when one makes efforts for deliverance, equipped with discrimination and detachment, following the means taught by the holy Guru, one becomes free from the bondage of *samsara* by attaining birth in one's own source, *Brahman*.
- 700 By turning one's thought-free mind inwards and diving into the Heart in the quest of one's own real Self, by becoming free from delusion by the extinction of the ego-mind, one attains the state of deliverance. Such a one is a sage.

Verses 695-700 summarise Lakshman Sarma's prose explanation of the remainder of the benedictory verse to *Ulladu Narpadu*, based on what Bhagavan told him. The full prose explanation can be found on pages 48-50 of *Revelation*.

The following is the concluding verse.

701 To that supreme one, the Self in all creatures, which became our Guru, Sri Ramana, let there be thousands of *namaskarams* until there comes about the extinction of the ego.