

Sri Ramana Paravidyopanishad

The Supreme Science as of the Self as Taught by Sri Ramana

Benedictory Verse

We bow our heads to holy Ramana, the ocean of grace, the infinite, incommensurable, unborn primal divinity, Guru of all Gurus, shining in the Hearts of all creatures as 'I'.

In this verse the essence of the teaching is indicated. Devotion and self-surrender to the one real being, the real Self of all creatures, is shown to be the means of attaining the goal of life, which may be here stated as re-integration with that Being, separateness from it being the original sin and the cause of all evil.

Herein is also expressed the saving truth, the unity of the three apparently distinct entities, God, the Guru and the real Self, which was neatly expressed in an ancient work, the Manasollasa, a commentary by Sri Sureshwaracharya on the Sri Dakshinamurti Stotra by Bhagavan Sri Sankaracharya:

- 1 Homage to Sri Dakshinamurti, manifest in three forms as God, the Guru and the real Self, whose form is infinite as the sky.

Dakshinamurti was the name of God when He appeared as the primal Guru and taught the sacred mystery of the supreme state by silence to the four sages, Sanaka, Sanandana, Sanatana and Sanatkumara. Bhagavan our Master has said that these three are the three stages of divine grace: first God, then the Guru, and last the real Self. This will be explained later.

The subject of this revelation¹ is next stated.

- 2 In this work is expounded the teaching about the natural state of the real Self, known as right awareness, which was taught in the *Mandukya* and other *Upanishads*, and which has [now] been taught by that same [divine Guru], along with the means thereto, as experienced by himself.

Both the ancient Upanishads and these new Upanishads have been given out by the same teacher. For all sages and Gurus are one, being identical with the Supreme Being, the Self of all.

It is to be noted that the state of deliverance, the goal of all aspirants, is styled the 'natural state', because even now we are all in that state, our sense of being in other states being an illusion.

¹ Throughout this work Lakshman Sarma uses the term 'revelation' as a source of authority. By it he seems to mean the scriptures, such as the *Upanishads*, that record the teachings of enlightened beings who have realised the Self. The authority of 'revelation' texts comes not from their antiquity or from their presence in a canon of scriptural works, but instead is derived from the direct experience of the Self that is common to all the authors.

Bhagavan, our Master, took on a human form and even went through sadhana [means of reaching the goal] so that he could teach us by his own experience.

How one becomes a disciple is next briefly described.

- 3 Becoming keenly aware that worldly life is full of misery, because it is infested with desire and fear, one should approach a Guru, a sage who is free from those bad forces, and after doing reverence to his holy feet should question him about how to become free.

Worldly life is full of misery because of one's subjection to desires and fears that never cease but only change their forms. Only one whose attachments have been weakened by the realisation that true and lasting happiness is not to be had in this worldly life is ripe for discipleship. Such a one should seek out a competent Guru, who is free from the bondage he wants to escape from, and who is a sage who always abides in the aforesaid natural state. Reverence to the Guru is imperative, because the ego, which is the seed of all evil, has to be eliminated in due course, not pampered.

- 4 The sage will give out in reply the supreme secret, confirmed by the [uniform] experience of all sages: 'If you know yourself, there is no suffering for you. If you suffer [it only means that] you do not know yourself.'
- 5 'Since you have no suffering in deep sleep, this suffering is only falsely ascribed to your Self. Realise the truth of yourself by the resolve to know it, and thereafter remain in your own true nature, which is bliss.'

The real Self transcends the mind and is therefore unaffected by pleasure and pain. These are in and of the mind alone. The proof of this is that these are experienced only when the mind is functioning – as in waking and dream – and not when the mind is still, as in deep sleep. To be free from suffering the only means, therefore, is to become aware of one's real Self by the quest taught by Bhagavan, our Guru. The Self does not need to be made happy. It is itself happiness. This very teaching appears in brief in the Tamil Book, Kaivalya Navaneetam, and Bhagavan gave it out as the essence of his own teaching.

Is that all? What about the contents of the Upanishads and the rest of the sacred lore?

- 6 This teaching of the Guru is the very essence of all the *Upanishads*. All the texts of the latter are just commentaries on this teaching.

The teaching is given in a slightly more detailed form in the verses that follow.

- 7 In the Heart there dwells the reality that is pure consciousness, the real Self. To be in the Heart, with the mind quiescent, is knowledge [awareness] of it, and also the state of deliverance.

The state of deliverance is just the mind-free state in which the real Self, the dweller in the Heart, is realised as such.

The real Self is not the dutiful little apparent self, called the 'soul'. What then is it? The answer follows.

- 8 That pure consciousness, which is the real Self shining in the Heart, ever the same [without change], and the basic substratum – named *Brahman* – of the whole universe, are both one and the same.

That is the meaning intended to be conveyed by the sacred texts of the Upanishads, which say that the Supreme Being itself entered the body as the soul, while also giving a popular account of what is known as 'creation'. Really there was no creation, except that which will be presently explained.

- 9 The world appearance is ignorantly superimposed by the mind upon that substratum, which is the truth of the Self. It [the world appearance] conceals that reality and shines [as if it is] real so long as the ignorance persists.

Ignorance and mind are inseparable; where there is mind, there alone is ignorance; where there is no mind, there is no ignorance, since in the mind-free state the real Self is not concealed. This explains why the real Self is not known to men in general.

An analogy is next given to help to understand the above statement.

- 10 Just as, in a dim light, the snake concealing the real rope is taken as real in its own sight, so the world, concealing the Self, appears as real in its own sight. This is the state of ignorance.

The notion of the Self that develops because of this basic ignorance is described next.

- 11 Because of ignorance, the Self is believed to be limited to the body. [In that state] it enjoys and suffers, is bound by bonds of desire to the world, [and appears to be] ignorant and distinct from the Supreme Being. Really the Self is identical with it, not other.

This mistaken view of one's own Self is the starting point of all the evil, known as samsara, which means the necessity of being born and dying in an endless cycle. But all this is unreal, as explained in the very first verse of Ekatma Panchakam (The Five Verses on the One Self), where it is said that mistaking the body for the Self, the cycle of births and deaths, Self-realisation and becoming the Self, are all a dream, like a world tour in a dream.

- 12 Hence this world-wandering of the Self is just a myth. But this can be verified only in the mind-free state. 'Apart from the mind there is no ignorance; the mind itself is ignorance, which is bondage to life in the world.'

The latter half of the verse is a quotation from Viveka Chudamani of Sri Sankaracharya.

The analogy of the rope-snake is here repeated, to explain this wrong notion of the Self.

- 13 As one seeing the false snake fails to see the real rope, so, seeing the world – in which are included the personal God and the individual soul – he does not see the real Self as it really is, that is, as the supreme reality [*Brahman*].

How long will this effect of ignorance continue?

- 14 The Self will remain concealed [in this way] as long as the world is taken to be real. It will cease to be so taken when the mind is once and for all extinguished; hence one must strive towards extinguishing the mind.

The world-appearance being the obstacle to right awareness of the Self, and the mind being the cause of the world-appearance, the cure of this evil is the attainment of the mind-free state, which is done by the quest, which will now be briefly described.

- 15-16 The mind projects on the Self the illusory world appearance. He who, seeing the Self, becomes firmly established in the true state as that Self, thus uncovering that Self and dissolving the mind, which comprises ignorance and the whole world, will enjoy his own true state, which is without *samsara*, which is not covered by the vehicles, which is identical with *Brahman*, and which exists alone, without a second.

The full significance of these revelations will be understood in due course, in the course of this book.

An alternative to the quest is the path of devotion to God, culminating in self-surrender, which also leads ultimately to the same goal. This is indicated in the next two verses.

- 17 Or if, from fear of the flood of births and deaths, one takes refuge in God, then ignorance will cease by His grace alone, and then one will become established in the true state of the Self.

This self-surrender is the final stage of the practice of devotion, which is dealt with in the next verse.

- 18 The wise call by the name ‘self-surrender’ the offering of oneself to God through devotion. Hence, the seeker of deliverance must practise devotion to God, which is described as ninefold, consisting of listening and the rest.

The ninefold list comes from a list in the Bhagavatam: ‘Listening to tales of God’s glory, telling and remembering them, cleaving to His feet, worship, obeisance, acts of service, cherishing Him as a friend, and offering oneself to Him.

A few of the different names of the supreme state are given next:

- 19 That state, in which one remains immovable in one's true nature [as the real Self] is [itself called] right awareness, deliverance and the natural state. He that dwells immovably in that supreme state, free from delusion, is the 'Awakened One' [*Prabuddha*].

The significance of the last-mentioned term will appear when we come to study the contrast between the three states of life in bondage with the so-called fourth state, which is beyond. The natural state is so called because it transcends the three states, namely waking, dream and deep sleep.

The term 'Prabuddha' is the same as the term 'Buddha', which means 'a sage'.

The physical body may and often does survive the attainment of the supreme state. How this can be is explained next.

- 20 The sage who has attained the supreme state is free, even though his body survives, [because] he does not look upon it as himself nor as belonging to himself. Therefore, that sage is really bodiless.

Being embodied or bodiless is due to the attachment or non-attachment to the body. In ignorance there is the sense of 'I am the body' or of 'This body is mine', that is, the body is either 'I' or 'mine'. When this attachment ceases, bondage is at an end. This is an intricate point, which will become clearer as we proceed. This survival of the body of the sage is very important because without it he cannot fulfil his mission, which is to uplift his disciples.

'Is that state desirable?' is a question that is asked. The answer to it is now given.

- 21 The mind-free state stated above is itself complete and endless happiness, since it is the mind itself that covers up [or overpowers] the [natural] happiness [of the real Self] and unfolds suffering for every creature.

The desire for happiness, says Bhagavan, is natural, but it is not to be had in its perfection in the world, where the mind is dominant, but only in the mind-free state. It should be noted that happiness, which is natural to the real Self, is not to be confounded with pleasure, which belongs to the world-order, along with its opposite, suffering. True happiness is just peace.

The qualifications of the aspirant for the supreme state are next stated.

- 22 The lover of deliverance who is straightforward, pure, truthful, unassuming, valiant, profoundly devoted to the Guru, and endowed with the six perfections, namely serenity of mind and the rest, will attain that supreme state without delay.

The unqualified one will be hindered in his efforts to attain that state by the defects of character that are the opposites of those specified here. The qualified one will succeed in reaching that state soon and with great ease. Defects arise from the ego, while the qualifications arise by the weakening of the ego.

The term 'valiant' used in the previous verse is explained next.

- 23 The 'valour' enjoined here is just the concentration of the mind that the aspirant [*sadhaka*] achieves by restraining its vagaries in the pursuit of the quest of the Self, since no other valour is needed here.

The word 'dhira' in Sanskrit consists of the two letters 'dhi' and 'ra'. The former means the series of thoughts that arise and pass through the mind. The latter is taken as a symbol for 'raksha' (rakshanam), meaning control. Through this one achieves the mental strength necessary for pursuing the quest of the Self.

Devotion to the Guru is another qualification that needs to be clarified. In the first place, there is the question, 'What sort of person should be taken as the Guru?' This question is first answered.

- 24 The aspirant to deliverance must resort to a sage as his Guru, that is, one who has awakened from the sleep of ignorance of the Self and is therefore free from delusion. How can one who has not awakened from that sleep awaken others who are in the same state?

This will be self-evident. Here there is a pun on the word 'prabuddha', which has two meanings: it means 'a sage' and it also means 'one who has awakened'. Awakening implies a sleep from which one has to awake. Here the sleep is the ignorance of the Self in which the dream of worldly living goes on. This description of 'samsara' as a dream in the sleep of ignorance occurs in the ancient lore.

The nature of the devotion to the Guru is explained next.

- 25 Only that devotion to the Guru is good which is rendered to a sage-Guru, and which regards him as identical with God. Only by such devotion does one attain freedom from delusion. Truly the sage is not other than God.

The sage who is accepted as one's Guru must not be regarded as just a human being, a person, but as an incarnation of God Himself, because that is the truth of the sage, and because, if the Guru be so regarded, the goal will be reached soon. This point will be explained in detail later.

The six-fold endowment mentioned in verse 22 is next enumerated.

- 26 Mental calm, sense-control, withdrawal from worldly pursuits, fortitude, faith in the words of Guru, steadiness in *sadhana* – these six are prescribed for the aspirant, and through these his mind will remain firm in the quest.

These will come and ripen if the aspirant persists in efforts to make the quest. Faith, of course, must be present from the very beginning. Faith should be understood as adherence to conclusions arrived at rationally, not blindly.

*All items of this endowment, especially the first two, depend upon the practice of abstemiousness in eating, a discipline that is usually neglected. Bhagavan has said that eating the minimum of wholesome food – food of the *sattvika* quality – is necessary for *sadhakas*. The policy of living to eat was expressly condemned by him in a Tamil verse, of*

which the following is a rendering in Sanskrit. The stomach is represented as accusing the eater, the soul, as a violator of the law of fairness to the digestive organs:

You do not allow me, your stomach, rest for even one half hour; nor do you refrain from eating for even half an hour at a time; you do not care to take note of the suffering you inflict on me, which is beyond bearing. [Understand] O Unrighteous man! It will be hereafter impossible for me to live with you in this body.

Eating just enough for health is the means of maintaining vital economy, as much for the spiritual life as for the worldly. Health of mind is very much dependent upon the health of the body as a whole, and especially of the nervous system. It must be noted that in the West gluttony is listed as the worst of the seven deadly sins. Self-control will be easy for him who eats righteously, not for him who is wanting in fairness to the stomach. A contented and cheerful mind should be maintained all the time, and this will be possible only by respecting the divinely ordained laws of health, for which right eating is by no means the least important.

The truth of the natural state, to be won by the pursuit of suitable sadhana, is then indicated, not directly, but indirectly, as follows. The next verse, which is introductory, explains that no direct description of the state is possible.

27 That state is knowable only by actual experience of the truth of the real Self. It is indicated [in the sacred lore] only by negations, 'Not so, not so'. It is not described by speech or thought of by the mind. [Even] the primal Guru [Dakshinamurti] taught it only by silence.

The primal Guru was God Himself as Dakshinamurti, who taught the four sages, Sanaka and the rest, by silence alone. The real Self, Bhagavan has repeatedly said, is the eternal subject, who cannot be objectified, being the Self of him that seeks to objectify him.

This supreme state is therefore indirectly taught by contrasting it with the three states of life that are experienced in the life of the world, while subject to ignorance.

28 Since that state is changeless, worldless and calm, beyond the states of waking and the rest, it is called the fourth state. Such is the teaching of the *Mandukya Upanishad*.

This is the shortest of all the chief Upanishads, but in it is given the essence of all of them. Life in the world is a continuous cycle, consisting of three distinct states, namely, waking, dream and deep sleep.

These three states are a vicious circle, because all three are sustained by an underlying common cause, the nature of which is next explained.

29 For every creature there are three states: waking, dream and deep sleep. Sustaining these three there is another sleep, the sleep of ignorance.

This ignorance of the Self is the common factor in all the three, without which the vicious circle of the three states would come to an end. This means that for the one who has transcended the ignorance, the three states do not exist. This basic sleep explains another fact, which will be stated later.

- 30 The whole of this world is contained within this trinity of states. The reality of the fourth state, which is worldless, transcends these three states.

This is why there is no peace in the realm of ignorance. Peace prevails only in the transcendental state, which is the true state of the Self.

Among the three states there is a distinction, which is stated next.

- 31 Deep sleep is just dreamless sleep; the other two are sleep with dream. The fourth state, being without sleep and without dream, is the abode of deliverance.

Thus it is stated that, because of the underlying sleep of ignorance, the so-called waking is really a state of dream. This will be elaborated later, when the question of the reality of the world is discussed.

The fourth state is in perfect contrast with the other three, being sleepless, dreamless and therefore worldless. It is the abode of freedom. Freedom cannot be had in any of the three states. This is one of the fundamentals of the transcendental metaphysics as taught by the sages.

- 32 If that mind-free consciousness, which is at the meeting point of deep sleep and waking, somehow becomes continuous, then the state that then dawns is declared by the sages to be the state of deliverance.

Consciousness without thoughts, called pure consciousness, transcends time, and hence it persists as the substratum even when the three states prevail. At the minute point of time when one of these two states gives place to the other, consciousness is without thought. If this transitional state is sufficiently prolonged, then deliverance dawns say these sages. In the Yoga Vasishta there is the following verse: 'If one meditates keenly on the state that prevails at the end of waking and just before sleep, one attains unending happiness.'

The world-appearance, therefore, is just a dream. In fact, it often assumes the quality of a nightmare. It arises in the sleep that is ignorance of the real Self. This is stated next.

- 33 Those that are overwhelmed by this sleep of ignorance are the seers of this bad dream, the world. And so long as this ignorance does not cease by the right awareness of the real Self, the souls have to wander in this maze of the three states.

The only way to escape from this bad dream is to become fully aware of the real Self. He may be called, for the moment, 'the dweller in the supreme state'.

Thus it happens that all creatures – both men and the so-called inferior creatures – are really asleep all the time, alternately dreaming and sleeping dreamlessly. Deep, dreamless sleep is just like an oasis in a desert route.

- 34 Thus, every creature is asleep: none in this world of souls is awake. Only the sage, who, being firmly established in the fourth state, having transcended the three states, and who is free from ignorance, is awake.

Being awake here means being aware of the real Self as it really is. Because of this awakening, he [the sage] is no more troubled by the dream called the world.

This uniqueness of the sage is explained in the next two verses.

- 35 The sage is wide-awake, having become established in the true state of the Self, which is free from the darkness of ignorance. In respect of the dream-world that is being seen by those drowsy with ignorance of the Self, he is asleep.

- 36 Hence it is said that this world is as night to the sage, whereas to the ignorant the real Self is as night. For this reason the natural state, the fourth state is described by the sages as a state of waking sleep.

This distinction between the sage and the ignorant finds a place in the following verse of the Gita: 'The sage is awake in what is night to all creatures. That in which the creatures are awake is night to the sage, though he is, in fact, awake.'

This implies that from the standpoint of the sage, the world is unreal. This verse suggests a question: how the sage, whose body is still alive, can carry on his mission as a teacher of supreme wisdom. The solution to this riddle lies in the fact that the natural state of a sage does not interfere with the sage's work as a teacher. That activity goes on in a mysterious way, which is explained to the extent possible in a later context.

From all this it might appear that sagehood is something anomalous. What is anomalous is the worldly outlook, which is blind to the real and attentive to the unreal dream, the world-appearance. The worldly ones are just like intoxicated or mad people. It is the sage who is both sober and sane.

Up to now the supreme state of the sage has been called the fourth state. But this name is only a concession to novices, as is shown presently.

- 37 For those to whom the three states, waking and the rest, are real, that [supreme] state is mentioned as 'the fourth state'. But since that so-called fourth state alone is real, and these three are unreal, the term 'fourth state' is not rightly applicable to it.

The supreme state is therefore just the transcendental state. When compared to this state, the three worldly states cannot be considered to be real. Their seeming reality is no more authentic than the reality that is ascribed to a dream while it lasts. This point will be further elaborated later.

The cause of the difference between the three states and the supreme state is explained next.

- 38 In dream and waking, the mind, being active, itself creates the world. In deep sleep it goes into seed form; on awaking it again creates the world.

In deep sleep the mind is not completely lost; it goes into a latent state, out of which it can emerge and become active again as before. This is the reason for the continuance of bondage. Thus, these three states form a vicious circle that can be broken only by finally extinguishing the mind so that it cannot revive on awaking.

To reach this goal the mind-free state must be attained in the waking state itself since the other two states are useless for this purpose.

- 39 Unless and until the mind becomes utterly extinct, these three states will continue to prevail. When the mind becomes extinguished, the supreme state, in which this world once and for all ceases to appear [as real], is won.

During the prevalence of ignorance the three states conceal the supreme state. The latter cannot be experienced because of these. To be able to experience that state the mind must be destroyed so that the world-creation will also cease. To this end, the quest must be taken up and pursued until the mind-free state is established.

This is often styled the state of knowledge. But this description is misleading for the reason stated presently.

- 40 Though that state of being the real Self is called the state of knowledge, it is one in which there is none of the three: the knower, the object known, and the act of knowing. That being the case, what does one know there, by what means, and who is there to know? It must be understood that knowledge is just a name for the state of being the Self.

That state is different from anything else because it is a state of non-duality (advaita). There is no object to be known, nor is there a knower – the soul – and hence there is no knowing. So ‘knowledge’ or ‘awareness’ are just arbitrary names for this state. This will be explained later.

- 41 The upanishadic text that says: ‘Where the Self is all there is, how and what does one know there?’ makes it clear that in the supreme state the real Self is alone [as the one without a second].

A possible misconception is next pointed out and the true state clearly explained.

- 42 In that state there is not, in reality, even the difference of place and the occupant thereof. Since the Self, the all-inclusive reality, is one without a second, he, the Supreme Being, is his own place.

This is an echo of the upanishadic passage – ‘He abides in his own greatness, or rather, not even in that greatness’ – given to Narada by Guru Sanat Kumara. This means that the real Self is not in space.

Who then is the advaitin?

- 43 Since the sage has put an end to all duality by attaining the supreme state, the real state, he has therefore attained the advaitic state. Hence, he alone should be regarded as an *advaitin*.

This is important. Bhagavan has warned us against thinking of advaita as a doctrine, just like the doctrines of the sectarians. Since the advaitic state is the mind-free state, there is no room in it for doctrines. This is further explained as follows.

- 44 Duality comes to be taken as real because of taking something that is not the Self to be the Self. The sages tell us that the state of being free from this ignorance is itself the advaitic state.

This means that so long as this ignorance endures, the advaitic state is not attained.

- 45 Thus, *advaita* is not a dogma like those of the other religions. Also, because the mind does not function in it, true *advaita* is declared to be just the state of being in one's own real nature [as the real Self], free from thoughts and worldless.

It must be remembered that the world can never be without the mind. For this reason a merely theoretical – intellectual – belief in advaita is of no value whatever.

- 46 On the other hand, the advaitic state has not been attained by one who, knowing the substance of the sacred lore as a doctrine, by his intellect alone, is satisfied with it, without striving to win actual experience of the real Self.

This is explained in detail as follows:

- 47 Such a one has not dissolved the world-appearance by remaining in the true state of the Self as the supreme reality. He that knows the Self by understanding the substance of the books has not got rid of his false notion that the body is the Self!

Identification of the body as the Self is the primary ignorance, and theoretical knowledge has not the least effect on that ignorance. It survives. It ceases only by the attainment of the true state of the Self.

- 48 It has been stated by the Guru Sankara that such a one is really not different from the brute animals. Brute-hood is defined by the sages as that state in which one regards the Self as being limited to the body.

- 49 Hence, for him who just knows the sacred lore, the belief that the world is real as such [in its own sight] does not cease. Deluded by this false belief, he, like all the rest, ever wanders helplessly in *samsara*.

- 50 It is said [by Bhagavan] that the knower of the sacred lore whose mind has not subsided in the peace [of the supreme state] is just like a gramophone. It is also said

[by Bhagavan] that he is even worse off than the man without learning, because, unlike the latter, he is overwhelmed by moods of pride, and so on.

In Ulladu Narpadu Anubandham Bhagavan has stated: 'A sincere and wide-awake aspirant may even bewail the barrenness of result of his theoretical knowledge saying: "Oh! The illiterate ones are better off than I am!"'

Such lamentations abound in the writings of the great saint Thayumanavar.

Indeed, as shown below, this theoretical conviction is only belief, not knowledge.

- 51 This [theoretical] knowledge is styled 'inferential knowledge', [as of a thing absent]. But the Self is never absent. How can inferential knowledge of one that is ever-present be true knowledge?

Logicians distinguish between knowledge that is either direct or inferential. The former pertains to objects perceived by the senses and the latter to objects not so perceived, but only inferred. But for the reason stated in this verse, there can be only direct [experiential] knowledge of the Self, and hence the Self is never the subject matter of inference. Descartes' famous proposition, 'I think, therefore I am', is unsound for this reason. The Self shines by its own light of consciousness, and not by any other light.

Also, knowledge by sense perceptions is not really direct, that is, immediate, but only functions through a medium, a sense organ. The Self, being consciousness, needs no medium.

- 52 The ignorance-causing bondage is just the [mistaken] experience that takes the form 'I am the body'. How can such ignorance come to an end except by the awareness, 'I am the pure consciousness'?

Illusory experience can cease only by the illusion-free experience. That is the reason why learned men still remain in ignorance and bondage.

- 53 This theoretical knowledge is only intellectual. But the intellect has no access to the real Self. Just as evil spirits are [ironically] styled as 'good people', so this ignorance is styled 'knowledge'.

In Sanskrit literature the term 'good people' is used ironically to designate evil spirits, the asuras or rakshasas.

- 54 When a man scorched by the sun becomes cooled by bathing in a mirage, or when one succeeds in cooking food on a painting of a fire, then one may attain deliverance by theoretical knowledge.

Thus, emphatically, the notion that theoretical knowledge is knowledge is denounced.

- 55 Therefore, one who talks *advaita* without actual experience of that truth is just the same as a *dvaitin* [a dualist]. Neither speech nor mind has any access to that supreme state. He that abides in that state has no doctrine whatever.

Doctrines, more or less true, are of help to the aspirant. They do not survive in the state of deliverance (illumination). The sage does not 'know' the Self, because he is the Self.

This equation of him who has only theoretical knowledge with the dvaitin is justified as follows:

- 56 Those who think of themselves as *advaitins* say [from intellectual conviction alone] that the world is unreal, miserable and inert [unconscious]. Others [professing *dvaitins*] say otherwise. But in the result all are alike.

That is, all are in bondage and suffer the evils of samsara. They all act as if the world were real.

- 57 It is only the one supreme reality that appears as the three, namely the world, God and the soul. But asserting this [as a doctrine] is not right awareness. Right awareness is just the death of the ego.

We have seen before that right awareness – the experience, in the supreme state, of the real Self as pure consciousness – is mind-free. Now we learn that it is also egoless. The natural state is therefore also called the egoless state.

The next three verses deal with the problem of controversies, which abound so long as the ignorance is not transcended.

- 58 Indifferent to the actual experience of the real Self, the sectarians affirm their dogmas with fanatical vehemence, saying 'There is a reality', 'There is none', 'It has a form', 'It is formless', 'It is one', 'It is twofold', 'It is neither'.

This is the substance of verse 34 of Ulladu Narpadu. All the main creeds are here briefly enumerated. Among these, even the advaitic doctrine is mentioned, to show that mere adherence to a doctrine, even though it is true, is useless. The last creed, 'It is neither', seems to be an intermediate creed between the advaitic and dvaitic, which is to the effect that the soul is different from God and yet part of God. These creeds are possible because of continuing ignorance and an indifference to the quest for the real Self.

The disputants resort to logic in order to establish their own creeds as the true ones. But logic is inconclusive. This is stated in the following verse.

- 59 There is no end to logical discussions, for logic does not come to rest anywhere. The supreme transcends the world. How can it become known by the logical mind?

The truth of the supreme state is not within the scope of intellectual speculation. The sole authority for its nature and means of attainment is the actual experience of it by a

sage. Logic can proceed only through facts given by worldly experience, which is tainted because its parent is the primary ignorance. Until one attains that state by the same experience, one has to rely on the authority of a competent Guru.

The attitude of the sage to the diverse creeds is stated next:

- 60 Since the sage has no creed of his own, he never engages in [useless] discussions. All creeds are approved by him. He does not [seek to] unsettle the faith of anyone.

All creeds are like paths leading to the same goal. So, the sage does not seek to impose any faith on anybody, but helps everyone to follow the path that he chooses for himself.

It is the sadhana that is of value, not the beliefs. This is explained next.

- 61 Therefore, the aspirant should, with a mind at peace, cease from hatred of other faiths and from all disputation, and engage in *sadhana* as taught by his own faith, intent on winning deliverance.

The narrow mind, which causes one to assume that one's own religion is alone true and all others are false, is a defect of character which must be given up if one is to reach the egoless state, for all religions alike are inferior to that state. The beliefs inculcated are of no value except as inspiring zeal for the practice of the prescribed sadhana.

The earnest aspirant, says Bhagavan, does not need to come to any definite conclusion on the most vexed question, which concerns the reality or the illusory nature of the world, because the main thing is to know the truth of oneself. The first step towards that knowledge is just to cease thinking of the world altogether as an obstacle to one's quest. This is set forth in the next verse.

- 62 There are the two [diverse] creeds held, respectively, by those who say the world is real and those who say it is unreal. The earnest aspirant for deliverance can win experience of the truth of the Self without taking up a definite stand on this question.

That this seemingly important question can be by-passed by one who is intent on becoming free is explained next.

- 63 All creatures alike want [perfect] happiness that is unmixed with suffering and which will last forever. [This is not wrong because] happiness is the real nature of all creatures. So one should enquire where such happiness can be had.

That happiness is the very nature of the Self is the great discovery made by all the sages. In the 'Bhrigu Valli' of the Taittiriya Upanishad it is said that as a result of this quest for the truth he realised this truth, that the supreme reality, the Self, is bliss. He also knew at the same time that bliss is the source of all living creatures, their support during life, and the goal they have to come back to in the end. Bhagavan also used to say in answer to the question 'How to become free?': 'Go back to the source, out of which you came forth.'

Where then is that perfect happiness?

- 64 To the seeker of deliverance who has perfect non-attachment, Bhagavan tells in what state that happiness dwells and by what means it can be won.
- 65 The state of deep sleep is dear to all creatures, and it is dear because it is happy. But in that state there are no objects of enjoyment! What can be the source of this sleep-happiness?

It is supposed by all people that happiness consists of a series of pleasures that come by the contact of external objects through the senses. But deep, dreamless sleep is a state of happiness, though there are no objects of enjoyment therein. Everyone describes his sleep experience thus, 'I slept happily, but I knew nothing then'. So this poses a question, rarely asked, 'What is the cause or source of this happiness?' That this question needs to be posed and an answer obtained we learn for the first time from the Guru-sage. Only he can give us the answer, which is set forth in the next three verses.

- 66 Deep sleep and the supreme state are similar; in both the mind and the world are absent. But in both the mind and the world there is the eternal reality, the real Self. It therefore follows that [the Self] is the cause of the happiness in both of these states.

Human intelligence cannot give this answer, but when this fact is revealed by the Guru, it is at once seen to be true. That the Self does not cease to exist, but is present in deep sleep, as in the other states, is undeniable, because, as Bhagavan has pointed out, excepting the highly sophisticated but purblind scientists, no one is able to say that he did not exist in sleep. This will be dealt with in detail later. So, we learn that the real Self, the supreme state, is the source of sleep-happiness.

It is next revealed that this happiness of the Self is infinite, whereas the happiness of sleep is nothing when compared to it.

- 67 The happiness of sleep is fitful and meagre, because the mind survives there in seed form. In the supreme state there is infinite bliss, known as *ananda* in the vedantic lore.

*The happiness of the mind-free state is perfect. That of sleep is not to be compared to it. To distinguish it from the pleasures of worldly life, it is named *ananda* in the Upanishads.*

It is next shown that even worldly enjoyment, though seemingly coming by the contact with objects, really has its source in this happiness-nature of the Self.

- 68 Only by receiving a minute fraction of that supreme happiness do all the creatures enjoy life in this abode of the souls. If this source of happiness were not present, who would care to live in this world for even half a moment?

This is what is revealed in the 'Ananda Valli' of the Taittiriya Upanishad, and all the sages have confirmed this fact.

What then is the conclusion? Bhagavan, the Guru, gives the answer:

- 69 Hence it follows that to all alike the dearest of all things is the real Self that shines in the supreme state as pure bliss. Therefore, to all creatures alike the most beloved of all is that supreme state, and nothing else.

Since it is the happiness of deep sleep that all people love, not the state itself, and since that happiness has its source in the real Self of the egoless state, it would be right to conclude that what they really love is that Self, and the state in which its true nature is included, though only unknowingly. This is exactly what the Sage Yajnavalkya told his wise wife, Maitreyi, in this passage: 'Not for the sake of the husband is the husband dear, but for the sake of the Self is the husband dear; nor for the sake of the wife is the wife dear, but for the sake of the Self is the wife dear.' And on to the end of the passage: 'Not for the sake of anything is that thing dear, but for the sake of the Self is anything dear.'

It is due to ignorance of the Self that the love that we bear for the Self is mistakenly interpreted as love for something or other. So the problem of finding real happiness and escaping from suffering is solved only by becoming aware of the Self as it really is. The teaching is proved by the next passage that concludes with the declaration that the Self is all that there is.

If this teaching is accepted, what then is the use of the enquiry about the reality or unreality of the world?

- 70 For the aspirant who has thus learned from the sage-Guru that the supreme state is the home of eternal happiness, and who is therefore indifferent to this world and intent on 'winning' that State, what is the use of any enquiry concerning the world?

That is explained next.

- 71 Let the world be real or otherwise. What is there in it for this aspirant to strive for? And let the reality in the supreme state be non-dual or otherwise. It is That alone that he wants to win, naught else.

The two questions, one concerning the reality of the world, the other concerning the non-duality of the real Self, are really one. Both questions become superfluous for one who has resolved to strive for that state.

There is also another reason for this.

- 72 Only by becoming firmly established in the real Self of that supreme state can one know definitely whether that reality is non-dual or not. How can anyone become aware of that truth while still wandering confusedly in the three states?

Bhagavan gives the following analogy to impress this fact.

- 73 Just as it is proper to throw away the heap of shorn hair without scrutinising it, so it is right for the aspirant to turn away from the world, which [for him] is of no value, without enquiry concerning it.
- 74 The aspirant will naturally turn away from the world at once and, with his mind turned inwards, will strive for the goal. It is by turning the mind away from the world that the quest is made, and for that reason the world is certainly to be renounced.

The quest taught by the Master implies turning away from the world. The mind has to be turned inwards towards the Self because it dwells within. But this has been said for the fully ripe aspirant who is not attached to the world. For those who are not yet ripe for the quest, this enquiry is not useless, as will be seen presently.

- 75 But those who have not the needed strength of nonattachment, believing, as they do, that the world is real in its own right, cannot turn the mind inwards for the quest; so, for them, this enquiry is surely needful.
- 76 These, by making the enquiry on the lines indicated by the Master, would become convinced that the world is not real in its own right. Then, by reflecting on this truth, they will become able, by degrees, to turn their minds inwards.

This knowledge is therefore not a mere luxury of speculative philosophy, but is of practical value, as shown here. The necessity for guidance by the Master in making this inquest on the world is next explained.

- 77 An enquiry conducted on the basis of worldly experience [alone], by reliance on one's own [unaided] intelligence, is vain. One should resort to a Guru who is a sage and make this inquest on the world as guided by him.

No enquiry can be made in a vacuum, but only on the basis of reliable evidence. Speculative philosophers, as in the West, proceed on the false assumption that worldly experience, the offspring of the primary ignorance, is good enough to be used as evidence for coming to a conclusion on a truth that transcends the world. Also, they believe that their intelligence is equal to the task of making a dispassionate enquiry. The knowledge derived from worldly experience is ignorance. Hence, it cannot be used as evidence. If relied on, it will lead to wrong conclusions. The reason is next given briefly.

- 78 All worldly experience is rooted in ignorance. It is dream-like; it takes place in worldliness; it pertains to men ignorant [of the real Self]; and it is false. It is therefore no evidence for the seeker of deliverance in [this] discrimination between the real and the unreal.

It has been explained that the three states of life, waking, dream and sleep, take place in the profound sleep of ignorance, and hence even waking experience is dreamlike. And this enquiry involves disentangling the real from the unreal. Worldly

experience is at best suspect; its reality is itself in question. It is inseparable from the world, whose reality is in question. It must not therefore be assumed to be valid evidence. What then is valid evidence?

- 79 For the aspirant who seeks to win the supreme state by transcending the relativity [of the three states], the supreme evidence is the experience of the sage. He alone knows also the truth about the world because of his awareness of the reality [the Self] in that state.

This will become intelligible as we proceed.

- 80 The sage not only testifies to his own experience, but also furnishes flawless reasons [drawn from our own worldly experience]. But the disciple, if wise, will not go on posing questions without end, for the world of the saviour is not to be doubted by the aspirant.

The sage's own experience is for us conclusive evidence. He is the compassionate one, the saviour who has assumed human form for redeeming those who have begun to feel the illusory quality of worldly life. So, one must as a rule accept what he says without cavil. At some state the series of questions must come to an end, and the way to the verification of the truth by one's own experience must be entered upon. As the Gita says: 'The inveterate doubter does not win the goal of life.'

- 81 There will be no end to doubt until one gets established in the supreme state. Only in that state is there an end of all doubts, due to the extinction of the doubter, [the ego].

Here is a reference to the upanishadic text: 'When the one that is the truth of the high and the low is experienced, then the heart-knot is cut, all doubts are dispelled, and all his actions are liquidated.'

Doubts, we are here told, arise in the ego-ridden mind, not in the egoless state. What then must the aspirant do?

- 82 Since there is no finality in reason, the aspirant should at once give up reliance on reason. With faith in the Master's teaching, he must strive to win God on the lines taught by him.

- 83 If a doubt arises he should ask himself: 'Who is it that doubts in this way?' If by thus seeking, he attains the supreme state, then both doubt and doubter will cease to be.

The question 'Who is it that has this doubt?' is the means prescribed by Bhagavan to turn the mind away from the doubt to the doubter, the ego. The answer to this question will be 'I'. From this the question will arise, 'Who Am I?', which is the quest. In the same way, any extraneous thought that intrudes, distracting the mind from the quest, can be used as a means of returning to the quest. If the quest is persistently pursued in this way,

the ego, the doubter, becomes extinct, and no more doubts will arise because the mind-free state is then attained.

Now we come to the question, 'Is the world real?' Bhagavan's teaching on this point is given in the next seven verses.

84 The Guru, who is a sage, teaches the unreality of the world in accordance with his own experience, also giving reasons supporting it. The disciple who aspires to become free should accept this teaching with perfect faith and [with its help] strive for this goal.

85 The universe, comprising these three – the soul, God and the world of visible objects – is superimposed by the mind on the real Self, which is the sole reality of the supreme state. Hence all this [universe] is just an outcome of ignorance.

The mind is the creator of the universe. Ignorance is the primal cause of the mind. Hence it is said here that this ignorance is the cause of the universe.

86 That being so, when this ignorance is annihilated by the light of awareness of that Self, then, along with it, the consequence of it [the world] will, like the darkness that disappears before sunlight at dawn, cease to appear.

This will become more and more intelligible as we proceed. What is stated above are the actual facts of the Guru's own experience. The conclusion that follows for the disciple is given next.

87 This universe [we see] shines in the dense darkness of ignorance, but does not shine in the great splendour of the light of Self-awareness. If this universe were real, why does it not shine in the supreme state, lit as it is by the conscious, effulgent light of the real Self?

An axiomatic distinction between the real and unreal, which is implicit in vedantic metaphysics, is next enunciated.

88 That which survives in the experience of the real Self is the supreme state. [That] alone is real. All else is only unreal. This is the distinction between the real and the unreal, revealed to us by the teachings of all the sages.

By this test the world is shown to be unreal. The next verse elaborates on this.

89 Since multiplicity is experienced only in the state of ignorance, it is declared to be unreal. On the other hand, because the unity of the Self is experienced on the liquidation of ignorance, that unity is real.

It may be questioned: 'If ignorance is total darkness, how can anything be experienced in this state?' The explanation is that this ignorance is not like perfect darkness, but like a greatly diminished light. In dim light a rope is not invisible; it is

merely perceived wrongly as a snake. In the same way, in ignorance, what is real, the Self, is not invisible; it is mistakenly taken to be the world.

The reality is only that which survives in the supreme state.

- 90 'The sole reality is that peaceful Self which shines by the light of its own nature as pure consciousness in the supreme state wherein the world is lost.' Such is the teaching of our holy Guru.

Here it is shown that the state is one of peace because there is no duality there. This is what we learn from all the Upanishads.

This teaching is further confirmed by the analogy of the dream world.

- 91 As the dream world is known to be unreal for the reason that it vanishes upon waking, so this waking world is also proved to be unreal by its vanishing in the light of the real Self.

It is next pointed out that those who seek to discredit this teaching are those who do not ardently aspire to the supreme state.

- 92 But ignorant men, who are averse to winning the supreme state, put forth an endless series of arguments, [trying to refute this teaching]. The sages clear the doubts generated by these arguments so that earnest aspirants may not be deluded by them.

The teaching is addressed not to all men, but only to those who aspire to win the supreme state, because they alone are qualified to receive it.

- 93 This teaching of the unreality of the world is not addressed to those who look upon the body itself as the Self, or consider the Self to be the owner of the body. For these people the world is real, not unreal.

The teaching has to be adapted to the person being taught. The same teaching is not good for all. Here it is shown that he who believes that the Self is not the body, but the owner of it, or the dweller therein, is for this purpose in the same category as the one who believes the body itself to be the Self.

Why is it that the world is real to these people?

- 94 The teaching – that the trinity of the soul, God and the world is unreal – is indivisible. If one is convinced that one of these is real, the other two also will appear to be real.

That is, the teaching must either be accepted as a whole or rejected wholly. There is no option to split it up and accept it partially, rejecting some of it.

- 95 To those who seek deliverance, the teaching is that all these three are equally unreal. This teaching must [therefore] be accepted, exactly as it is taught, by those who are earnestly seeking to win deliverance by the extinction of ignorance.

For different aspirants there are different paths prescribed. This particular teaching is addressed only to those who believe that for them deliverance must come by right awareness.

An analogy is next given to explain the indivisibility of the teaching.

- 96 One who is wise will either accept the teaching as a whole, or reject the whole of it. Who can make use of half of a hen for cooking, reserving the other half for laying eggs?

A hen must be killed and cooked for food, or the whole hen must be allowed to live for laying eggs. The same indivisibility is characteristic of this teaching.

Now we come to a discussion of the objections of those who assert the perfect reality of the world.

On what evidence do they base their belief?

- 97 To begin with, it needs to be considered why the world is taken to be real. For the burden of proving the reality of the world lies on him that asserts it, [not on those who simply deny it].

- 98 Everyone who is ignorant [of the real Self] thinks the world is real because it is seen. This is no proof because it proves too much. The same reason would prove the reality of the mirage, the rope in the snake, etc.

Usually, the knowledge that arises from seeing is mixed up with imagination, or a false impression of what is seen. This reason is therefore inconclusive.

The question then arises: 'What does the seeing of the world prove?'

- 99 The fact of being seen is not conclusive proof that the world exists exactly as imagined [by the seer]. From the seeing it is proper to infer only that there is a substratum in which the world appears.

In the first verse of Ulladu Narpadu Bhagavan says: 'Because we see the world, it is indisputable that there exists a first cause [substratum or basic reality] which has the power to appear as many.' In the same verse he proceeds to reveal, in the light of his own experience, that that substratum is only the real Self, on which are superimposed the four elements of the world appearance, the pictures of names and forms, the seeing individual soul, the screen and the light. The seeing subject and the spectacle seen form the appearance imposed on the substratum. The lighted screen is the substratum. Here the analogy of the cinema show is suggested. The pictures, in which the seer is included, come and go, but the lighted screen exists unaffected throughout. The power by which the appearance is superimposed on the substratum is known as maya. All that is meant by calling the world 'an effect of maya' is that things are not what they seem to those who have not known the real Self as it really is.

- 100 Even scientists have proved that things are not exactly as they appear [to the seer], for they say that the solid-seeming objects are really little more than empty space.

Atomic physics now tells us that the atom is not a solid particle, but a closed space in which electrons are rotating around a nucleus, composed of protons and neutrons, etc. The electrons rotate at different distances from the nucleus. The whole atom thus resembles a solar system. That things are not what they seem is thus indisputable. On the other hand, there is no proof that things are what they seem to be. There is, in fact, an antithesis between appearance and reality. It is this that is called maya, which is the illusion by which reality appears as the world, that spectacle which resembles a cinema-show. Due to this illusion there is ignorance (avidya) which works through the mind that wrongly identifies the body as the Self. For this reason the truth about the world is a profound mystery, one that transcends the human intellect, but it is no mystery to the sage, who alone is competent to tell us the truth as it really is. The next verse points this out.

- 101 Only the sage who knows the substratum of the world appearance, the reality, by being firmly established in the supreme state, is competent to reveal the truth of the world.

By his unawareness of that truth the common man, being a victim of his ignorance, cannot know the truth about the world.

- 102 When vision is focused on the outside, who can know the truth, whether of the real Self or of the world? But, with the mind turned inwards, the sage knows the truth of both by the eye of right awareness.

It is with the knowledge of this uniqueness of the sage that the disciple has to approach him and listen to his teaching.

- 103 Bhagavan, our Guru, has said: ‘The world laughs at the ignorant man, saying, ‘How can you know me properly unless you know yourself correctly?’”

By this it is meant that the disciple must be humble, knowing the limitations of his own intelligence. Without this humility he cannot be a true disciple.

The next verse is an introduction to the detailed exposition by Bhagavan of the truth concerning the world.

- 104 Bhagavan, our Guru, being a sage, expounds the unreality of the world by showing that the perception of the world takes place in ignorance. Therefore, the objector’s argument – that the world is real because he sees it – does not avail to prove his contention.

The ignorant man’s vision of the world is vitiated by the fact of his ignorance of his own real Self. This point has been repeatedly pointed out by Bhagavan. To know the world aright, one must first know oneself aright.

The verses that follow show how the seeing of the world is affected and falsified by the primary ignorance.

105 Every creature first identifies his own Self with the body, and thereby concludes that the body is real. Then it comes to believe that all forms that are seen are also real.

Whatever is seen is a form. The initial question therefore is whether forms are real. Everyone who sees comes to the conclusion that all forms are real. But the first step in the process of coming to this conclusion is the mistaken impression that the body is the Self.

True knowledge begins with the understanding that the body is not the Self. In truth, the Self is formless, so whatever is seen is for that very reason not the Self. Though the Self is indubitably real, that reality is instead ascribed to the body. So, a part of the world is mistakenly concluded to be real. This and the succeeding verses are a commentary on the fourth verse of Ulladu Narpadu.

106 Therefore all forms are unreal. To the sage they are not real. What really exists is formless. In right awareness nothing has form.

This is further explained as follows:

107 By a single act of vision the ignorant man sees both himself and the world as forms. Since this seeing is illusory, there is no evidence to prove that the world is real.

108 One's own body and the world are one [indivisible] spectacle; either they are both seen together, or they are both not seen. Does anyone see this world without at the same time seeing the body, which is the form ascribed to the Self?

This fact, that neither the body, nor the world, is seen apart from the other, is something we have never noticed before. We come to know of it for the first time only when the fact is pointed out by Bhagavan. Since the Self is really formless, the whole spectacle is suspect, since it is indivisible.

It may be objected that we see the dream world without a body. The answer to this follows.

109 If it is said that we see the dream world without bodies, [the response is] that there is a body [for the soul] in all the three states. The soul is never bodiless.

Here it is the soul that is spoken of, not the Self. The two are not the same in Bhagavan's teachings, as will be seen in due course. This and the succeeding verses give the meaning of the fifth verse of Ulladu Narpadu.

110 Every creature has three bodies, a gross one, a subtle one and a causal one: the mind is the subtle body, and ignorance itself is called the causal body.

111 The three bodies mentioned here are also enumerated as the five sheaths. The middle three sheaths are the [same as the] subtle body, and the last sheath is stated to be the causal body.

The gross physical body is identical with the first of the five sheaths, called the food-sheath (annamaya kosa) because it is the product of food. This, being obvious, is not stated in the verse.

112 As long as the three bodies remain undissolved by the light of right awareness, the soul will be embodied. [Only] in the supreme state, wherein all the three are together lost, will there be bodilessness.

113 The mind, by its own force of ignorance, itself creates another body, and also another [dream] world. The sleeper who sees this dream world along with this dream body is not disembodied.

Thus the objection is overcome.

114 Everyone sees both his own body and the world through the eye, which is a part of that very body. How can this seeing be admissible as evidence in this enquiry about the reality of the world?

Since the body is a part of the world, its reality is also in question. It cannot be assumed without proof. But it is so assumed when the eye is appealed to as a witness to the truth of the world. The question of the reality of forms is now further pursued.

115 As is the eye, so is the spectacle, since the nature of the spectacle depends on that of the seeing eye. If that eye is a form, so will be the spectacle. But if the eye is the formless [Self], there will be no seeing of forms at all.

This is a law of nature that Bhagavan reveals for the first time. Seeing with the eye of flesh, which is a form, one sees forms. Seeing with the eye of right awareness as the Self, forms are not seen. So says Bhagavan. This proves that forms are unreal, at least for the purpose of this philosophy.

The subject is further elucidated.

116 In the state of ignorance both the world and the Self are seen as forms. [But] on the extinction of ignorance both are [found to be] formless, because in the supreme state the infinite Self is the eye.

In the true state, which is the supreme state, the Self alone is. It is described as infinite, and therefore formless. There are no objects to be seen, nor is there any real seeing. Hence, forms are unreal. If they were real, they would survive in that state.

- 117 By the vision of right awareness, the world, along with the soul, merges into the formless, real Self. The sages call that the vision of right awareness, wherein there is neither seer nor spectacle.
- 118 In that natural state [of the Self] there survives only the Self, which is consciousness, worldless, alone, and without the six modes of change, such as birth, and so on. Hence, it alone is real in its own right.

The world is not real in its own right; it has only a borrowed reality, as will become clear later on.

- 119 That Supreme Being, the Self, which is perfect as the sole reality, is styled the infinite eye. However, because for that Self in its true state there are no objects to be seen, it is not [really] an eye.
- 120 The term ‘eye’ has been used in this context by the most holy one [Bhagavan] only to ward off the misconception that it is non-consciousness, [inert]. Thus, the most holy one has conveyed the meaning that the Self is consciousness and the sole reality.
- 121 It is only by conceiving the formless Self as a form that one sees this world as consisting of forms. All this is really an ignorant superimposition on the formless, infinite reality, the Self.
- 122 It is only to him that sees himself as having a form that the names and forms appear as real. They have been fabricated by ignorance and superimposed on the nameless, formless Self, which is consciousness.
- 123 Thus it has been made plain by the Master that the seeing of the world is an effect of the primary ignorance. Thus, the claim that the world is real has been refuted by him. Also, it has been shown by him that the aloneness of the real Self in the true state is real.
- 124 Our Master confirms this teaching first by showing that the world is mental [inseparable from the mind], then by proving the unreality of the mind and the ego, and finally by teaching that even the primary ignorance is non-existent.

The next verse shows that the world does not exist apart from the mind, and is therefore mental.

- 125 The world is a totality of the five kinds of sensations, namely sounds and the rest, and nothing else. All these are only mental impressions. Hence, the world is nothing but the mind.
- 126 If the world were other than the mind, why does it not appear in deep sleep? Therein is the real Self, which is consciousness, and by whose consciousness-light the mind is mind!

The second half of the verse is an answer to the contention, which may be raised by the other side, that the non-seeing of the world in deep sleep is no argument, because it is due to the absence of the mind and the senses of perception in that state. The mind is not conscious by its own nature; its consciousness is derived from association with the real Self. Since that Self survives in deep sleep, the objection is invalid. This reason finds a place in Sri Sankaracharya's Viveka Chudamani: 'If the world is real, why then, let it be seen in deep sleep! Since it is not at all seen in it, it is therefore unreal, like a dream.'

127 Only when their minds are functioning does the world appear to men. Therefore, the world in the waking state is mental, as it is in dream.

This parallel between the waking and the dream states is elaborated in the next verse.

128 Just like the waking world, the dream world seems real during the dream. Also, just like the waking world, the dream world, in its own time, is serviceable [for the purposes of life].

The conclusion is stated in the following verse.

129 Just as the dream world is not other than the mind of the dreamer, so the world of things, seen in waking, is not other than the mind of the seer.

Objections to this conclusion are then noticed.

130 Fearing that if it is concluded that the world is mental, then its unreality will be an inescapable conclusion, ignorant [sectarians] seek to prove in a variety of ways that the world exists outside [as an independent reality].

That these disputants have no locus standi in this discussion is first shown.

131 The truth that the world is unreal is taught by the sages only to him who aspires to attain the highest state by the quest of the Self. It is not addressed to others, and hence the contentions of these objections are wholly in vain.

The uniqueness of Vedanta is that no one is coerced by threats of hell or otherwise to accept its highly elusive teachings. It is given out only to those whose minds are ripe and have become receptive to these metaphysical truths. Indeed, Vedanta advises ordinary people not to dabble in vedantic studies. Vedanta makes a distinction between those who are qualified to receive its advaitic teaching and those who are not qualified. This is called the adhikara vada.

The difficulty in accepting the vedantic standpoint is pointed out next.

- 132 No one is able to know the unreality of the dream world during the dream itself. In the same way, no one is able to know the unreality of the waking world while he is in the waking state.

The primary ignorance dominates the ego mind at all times, either while dreaming or in the waking state, and this is the cause of the inability of most men even to entertain the thought that the waking world may not be real. The disciple is in a better position because of his faith in the competence of his Guru. The Guru, who has the experience of the egoless state, can tell him the truth about the world and of the worldless, egoless state.

The flaw in the contentions of these disputants is next indicated.

- 133 There is no flawless evidence tending to prove that the world exists outside [apart from the mind of its seer]. But these partisans assume the truth of their contention, which is required to be proved, and then concoct arguments for their case.

The arguments put forward by these disputants, if carefully scrutinised, are found to be based on a subtle process of what logicians call 'begging the question'.

One such argument is stated and discussed in the following verses.

- 134 If it is said that the sense impressions of sounds and the rest arise inside the mind, while their cause, the world, lies outside, how is this division of inside and outside to be accepted as unreal?

This argument is not a proof, but a mere assertion. Its inadequacy is seen in that it assumes the reality of the distinction between inside and outside, which is an outcome of the assumption that the body is the Self. In that assumption the body is assumed to be real, without offering any proof of its reality. We have seen that since the body is a part of the world, whose reality is in dispute, this assumption is improper.

- 135 All the divisions experienced in worldly life appear as real only in relation to the body. No separate proof is offered by them to prove the reality of the body!

Another argument is noticed next.

- 136 The argument, 'The mind is small and the world is vast. How can it be within the mind?' is also mistaken. It has been taught by the sage that it is the mind that is vast [not the world].

- 137 The mind is vaster than even the sky, and in it are the five elements of creation, the outer space [sky] and the rest. Consciousness in its motionless state is *Brahman*; the same when moving is mind. Thus it has been made clear [by Bhagavan] that the mind is of the nature of *Brahman*.

Bhagavan and Vedanta recognise three skies²: the outer [physical] sky, the mind-sky and the sky of pure consciousness. This last is styled as a sky, because it contains the mind-sky, which in its turn contains the outer sky and all the worlds.

The fact that the world ceases to appear in deep sleep – wherein the exposition of the mental nature of the world is based – is sought to be countered by the following contention.

138 ‘If you doubt whether or not the world existed during your sleep, then ask those who did not sleep [during the time you slept], and know from their words that the world existed continuously [without a break].’

This is considered by the dvaitins to be an unanswerable argument. But Bhagavan himself, when this argument was stated as a difficulty to be overcome, showed that this also is a case of ‘begging the question’, as will be shown next.

139 This argument, put forward by the ignorant, takes as proved the truth of their main contention. The men who are not asleep are part and parcel of the world under enquiry.

What Bhagavan said on this point is given next.

140 We see these men who did not sleep only after we wake, not in our sleep! No separate proof is offered to prove the reality of these men who did not sleep.

The reason for not accepting the reality of the world was that it is not seen during deep sleep. That same objection holds good in respect of these men who did not sleep when we slept. Hence, this argument of the dualists fails utterly. It would be a valid argument, suggests Bhagavan, if we saw them during our dreamless sleep, which of course is impossible.

These men too have no valid argument for believing the world to be real, as is shown next.

141 Even those who remained awake [while we slept] know the world only by the mind and never otherwise. Hence, for all alike the world is only mental, both in waking and in dream.

Another argument is stated and refuted next.

142 The objectivity of the world is also asserted on the grounds that it appears the same to diverse seers. But the Master refutes the argument by asserting that the diversity of observers is unreal.

This diversity of souls is part of the world illusion. It is therefore no more real than the rest of it. The truth of this point is expounded by Bhagavan in the next verse.

² Lakshman Sarma sometimes uses the word ‘sky’ in this work to denote ‘akasa’, the fifth element that is the all-pervading space. As this verse explains, there are different levels of this ‘sky’.

- 143 Both in dream and in waking this diversity [of souls] is only a mental creation, since in deep sleep, which is mind-free, this diversity does not appear.
- 144 The mind itself creates the world in the waking state, as it does in dream. But the mind does not know, either in waking or in dream, that this is its own creation.
- 145 The mind creates the world subject to a superior power [*avidya-maya*] and therefore is unable to create it to its own liking. The mind, believing the world to be real, is deluded and suffers the woes of *samsara*.

That the mind has this anomalous power, which is also a weakness, is shown next.

- 146 This is the very nature of the mind, that it takes as real all that it creates. This is seen in day-dreaming, witnessing dramas, or listening to stories.

These instances are taken from our waking experience itself. They demonstrate this self-torturing quality of the mind, which is even worse in dreams.

The conclusion is then stated.

- 147 Creation is not other than seeing; seeing and creating are one and the same process. Annihilation is only the cessation of seeing and nothing else, for the world comes to an end by the right awareness of oneself.

The next step is the demonstration that the mind also is unreal. The next verse begins this exposition.

- 148 As it is settled that the world is mental, the world would be real if the mind were real. However, if the mind is unreal, then the world would also be unreal. Hence, it becomes necessary to enquire whether the mind is real.

But there is a preliminary question to be taken up and answered: the test or tests of reality to be applied.

- 149 First, it is necessary to enquire by what tests one can distinguish the real from the unreal, because, in [this] enquiry as to what is real, the test of reality approved of by the worldly ones is not valid.

- 150 The parrot who wishes to eat the fruit of the silk-cotton tree [at last] goes away disappointed.³ How can the beliefs of one, who thus deludes himself, be accepted as reasonable?

³ The fruits of the silk cotton tree are always green. After a long period of ripening on the tree, they break open, revealing an inner fibrous mass, not an edible fruit. There is a belief that parrots wait near these fruits, hoping that they will ripen into something tasty. The proverb that encapsulates this belief is a metaphor for pointless, ill-informed activity.

This conduct of the parrot, whether true or not, is proverbial. Man is in the same situation. He expects to reap unalloyed happiness in worldly life and is always disappointed. This demonstrates his capacity for self-deception. Philosophers would not be philosophers if they accepted the credulous views of unthinking men.

Unless used under the guidance of a perfectly competent Guru, the worldly means of knowledge are certain to prove misleading. This truth is expressed in the next verse.

151 The intellect, the sense organs, and the mind are servants of the primary ignorance. Hence, the worldly methods of seeking knowledge do not at all favour success in this enquiry.

The worldly means of knowledge, called proofs, are direct perception, inference, analogy, tradition, and so on. These are understood and practised by logicians and philosophers. In vedantic reasoning these are not to be relied upon for the reason stated, namely that they are naturally the servants of ignorance, having been created in order to protect and confirm that ignorance.

152 The test of reality that is considered good by the worldly is unreliable because it is a child of ignorance. For the *sadhakas* the reliable test for distinguishing truth from falsehood is that which the sages have stated.

That test is next set forth.

153 That which shines by its own light [of consciousness], without change, and without setting and rising, is alone real. All that is not so is unreal. So say the sages.

This is the test approved of in vedantic metaphysics, and it is that which is used in the Upanishads.

The Bhagavad Gita is next referred to.

154 ‘There is never any [real] existence for the unreal, neither is there any non-existence for the real.’ Thus Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself stated the distinction between the real and the unreal.

Thus, things that appear at certain times and disappear at other times are excluded from the category of the real.

155 What had no existence in the beginning and will not exist after some time is non-existent even in the intervening period [during which it seems to exist]. The notion that anything which appears limited in space or time [is real] is ignorance.

156 The analogy for the real is gold and the analogy for the unreal is jewellery [made of gold]. Gold is real in comparison with jewellery; the latter is unreal because it is perishable.

157 The jewellery was gold before [being made] and it is gold even in the middle [when it appears as jewellery] and also at the end, [when it is melted down]. [Thus] the unrealities appear as real on a substratum of the real, just as unreal jewellery appears as real on a substratum of gold [which is comparatively real].

This is one of the analogies employed in the Chandogya Upanishad to illustrate the truth taught here, that the one supreme reality, which is the real Self, is the substratum of the world appearance.

158 If the two, the world and the mind, are scrutinised in this way, they are found to be unreal. The process of this demonstration, as taught by the most holy one [Bhagavan], is here set forth.

159 The world that is made to shine and the light, namely the mind, which caused the world to shine, arise and set together [as one]. Since this pair does not appear uninterruptedly, the pair should be known to be unreal.

160 Whatever shines intermittently is insentient and therefore shines by the light of another. That [reality], by which all things insentient shine, is self-shining, being consciousness by nature.

Here the light meant is not that of the sun, moon, or lamps, but the light of consciousness.

In the definition of reality two conditions were set out: continuous, uninterrupted shining and the capacity for being self-shining. The two are only one, being inseparable. The first was shown to be fulfilled by the supreme reality alone. The second condition also is here shown to be fulfilled by it alone. Therefore, it alone can be vedantically real. Nothing else, neither the mind, nor the world, meets this definition.

161 We know from the words of our divine Guru that that alone is real which survives in the state of peace, which is the highest, and that all else is unreal.

Thus, by the application of the vedantic test of reality, it has been shown that the inseparable pair, the mind and the world, is unreal, and that the real Self, which is Brahman, is alone real.

Now a doubt is raised and is set at rest in the following verses:

162 'If even the mind is unreal, then it will follow that what remains is only a void, since in deep sleep there is nothing at all.' Those who raise this contention are committing the mistake of forgetting themselves!

163 How can this void be known at all if there is no one to witness it? This void is certainly not without a witness. Hence, this void is not the final reality.

- 164 This doctrine of the void has thus been clearly refuted by the most holy one. For us, there is not the least doubt on this point because [as demonstrated by Bhagavan], there is the real Self, the sole survivor, in the supreme state.
- 165 In the Heart of every living creature the self-shining real Self shines by its own light [of consciousness] as 'I'. Hence, everyone knows himself to be real. Who is there in the world of men who says, 'I do not exist!'

Thus it is made clear that the Self is self-revealed. This means that knowledge of the Self is by direct experience and not by inference. But many philosophers seem to be unaware of this.

- 166 The existence of their own Self is inferred by some from mental functioning, by the reasoning, 'I think, therefore I am'. These men are like those dull-witted ones who ignore the elephant when it goes past, and become convinced afterwards by looking at the footprints!
- 167 Indeed, everyone experiences his own existence during deep sleep, where the mind is absent. Also, the sleeper manifests remembrance of the happiness [of sleep], saying, 'I slept happily'.
- 168 How can anyone remember the happiness experienced by someone else? The happiness of sleep was surely enjoyed by oneself. Does anyone say, 'He that existed prior to sleep is not the same person as I am now'?

As Bhagavan himself has pointed out, when Johnson goes to sleep, Benson does not awake, but only Johnson.

- 169 The mind, along with the universe, merges in it [the Self] in deep sleep, and from there it rises again [along with the universe] on waking. Hence the creed of the void is untrue.
- 170 Without a supporting substratum, how can the two, the universe and the mind, appear at all? Is there anyone who sees the serpent without its basis, the rope, or one who sees silver without its basis, the oyster shell?
- 171 Surely there does exist a reality-consciousness that lends [an appearance of] existence and shining to the universe [including the mind]? How else can worldly people have the notion that this unreality exists and shines?
- 172 Because these two shine only by the light [of the Self], therefore that one is self-shining consciousness. Apart from [that] Self there is nothing else, anywhere, which is self-shining.

- 173 When the real Self shines on the dawn of right awareness, neither the sun nor the moon nor the stars shine. By its light alone do these shine here for the ignorant one, whose mind is turned outwards.
- 174 There is not the least doubt about the existence of the real Self, because that same [pure] consciousness, by which the whole world shines, and by whose light the mind becomes mind, is the Self.
- 175 Ignorance does not obstruct the awareness of ‘I am’, but only the awareness of the fact ‘I am awareness’. Everyone – with the exception of those deluded by the scientific creed – knows of his own existence.
- 176 The eternal, unchanging ever-shining Self persists continuously as the real through all the varying states. Superimposed on it, the substratum, the whole world shines.
- 177 It is by borrowing the reality of this reality, which is perfect consciousness, that this world and the mind appear as real to all those whose minds are deluded on account of their ignorance of their own selves.

Bhagavan’s own pronouncement is next quoted.

- 178 Here is the utterance of the most holy one: ‘*Brahman*, which is only one, itself shines inside [in the Heart] of all creatures as the real Self, in the form of, “I”, “I”. There is no other Self.’
- 179 He also said: ‘This same [truth] is the meaning of the utterance of the famous, heavenly voice that told Moses, “My real nature is just the consciousness, ‘I am’”.’
- 180 The sages, becoming aware of that which is *Brahman*, shining in the supreme state as the real Self, are ever contented. It is as if they have had all their desires fulfilled simultaneously.

The perfect happiness in which the sages live is inexplicable in any other way.

- 181 This pure consciousness, which is the real Self, appears to the one who does not know himself as the world. This misunderstanding of the true nature of the real Self is rooted in the ignorance of one’s own Self.
- 182 This world, the outcome of ignorance, of course conceals the truth of that [Self]. The intellect, the senses and the mind are the servants of [that] ignorance.
- 183 Hence it is that the worldly means of proof, namely direct perception, tradition and inference, serve only to deceive the creature. They do not at all serve the attainment of right awareness.

- 184 Where is the wonder that the ignorant, thinking the world to be real in its own right, also become persuaded that the real Self – which is ever blissful, desireless, unrelated to anything and alone – is in bondage to worldliness?
- 185 The unreality of the world, which has thus been expounded, is not easy to understand by the aid of the one single simile. Hence, to make this intelligible to the *sadhaka*, the holy Guru gives three similes in succession.
- 186 When it is explained that the illusory appearance of the world is like that of the serpent in the rope, a doubt occurs to the disciple, because he thinks that the simile does not apply in all cases.
- 187 The illusory notion of the serpent ceases when the rope is known [to be the truth]. The world-illusion does not cease for the aspirant [when he understands that it is unreal]. Even after the truth [of the unreality of the world] is known by the help of revelation and by arguments, still the world continues to appear [as if real].

There is an explanation of this apparent anomaly, which is given next.

- 188 The world-illusion does not come to an end by theoretical knowledge, and hence there is no room for this doubt. Yet in order to remove this doubt the Guru gives a second simile.
- 189 Even after the truth of it becomes known, there persists the vision of water in the mirage. But even when this doubt is cleared, another doubt arises [in its place].
- 190 It is objected: 'Worldly objects serve some useful purposes, but the water of the mirage does not.' To this the reply is: 'Things seen in a dream are useful [in the dream], but all the same they are unreal.'
- 191 In the same way, the objects of the world, though useful [while they appear to exist], are unreal. This state called waking is really a dream seen by the creature who is a victim of a sleep that consists of ignorance of the real Self.
- 192 As long as this sleep of ignorance does not cease by direct experience [of the truth of the Self], this dream called waking, wherein the world appears as real, will continue.

The test of reality is again repeated in this context.

- 193 It must be understood that reality is freedom from being contradicted and unreality is being subject to extinction. The Self alone is real because it never ceases to be. The world is unreal because it ceases to appear when there is awareness of the Self.

The nature of the world's unreality is next further clarified.

194 The whole universe appears as a superimposition on the real Self, the substratum, which is the reality, and hence it is not like a man's horn. But it is taught that it is not real in its own right.

This distinction is important. There are two kinds of unreality. The utterly unreal, which is never conceivable as real, is one which has no substratum, like a man's or hare's horn. The other kind is that which can and does appear as real, like the rope-snake. The world's unreality is of the latter kind. It is not real in its own right, since it owes its appearance of reality to its substratum. This point will be dealt with later.

So far the question of the reality of the world as a whole has been discussed and the conclusion has been reached as stated above. Bhagavan next deals with the same question in detail and thus confirms this conclusion.

195 This whole world appears divided up into an endless variety of parts. Our holy Guru makes it clear that all these parts also are unreal [when taken separately].

196 It is the mind that knows the difference between the individual soul and God and all other differences. It is the nature of the mind to perceive differences. In the mind-free state there are no differences.

Differences are perceived in waking and in dream, where the mind is present, not in deep sleep, nor in the supreme state, because there the mind is absent, as shown already. This appearance of differences is next traced to its root, which is stated.

197 Hence the totality of all these differences, experienced by the unwise, exists only in the mind's perception. All the mind's perceptions have their root in the perception of the difference between the Self and the non-Self.

198 This is the persuasion 'I am this body', which is the root-cause of the tree of *samsara*. And since this persuasion is declared to be ignorance, all differences are the outcome of ignorance.

199 The mind, which is named 'the soul', itself creates and perceives these differences through ignorance. There are no differences in the state of deep sleep. And in the supreme state there are no differences, specifically the difference between God and the soul and all the rest.

200 For this reason all the pairs and the triads are unreal. They are non-existent in the natural state of the Self, and the one that dwells in that state, the supreme state, is unaffected by them.

The pairs are exemplified in the next two verses.

201-2 The Master declares that all these [listed items], and any similar entities, are [unreal] like dreams because their root-cause is the ego sense: the difference of inside and outside, birth and death, the totality and the units, the creation and the

dissolution of the world, darkness and light, the Self and the not-Self, bondage and deliverance, knowledge and ignorance, the soul and God, free will and fate, pleasure and pain, bad and good qualities, and merit and sin.

These are pairs of opposites called dvandvas. The triads (triputis) are discussed next.

- 203 The knower, the objects of his knowledge, which are non-Self, and his knowledge of objects, and everything else that similarly comprises these three factors are said to be unreal, like dreams, because they are the outcome of ignorance.

The world is found on scrutiny to consist of these pairs and triads. The first pair to be dealt with is that of the soul and God.

- 204 The two, namely those named ‘the soul’ and ‘God’, which are created and projected on the real Self by ignorance, are not different from each other. This difference is perceived during the prevalence of ignorance, due to the identification with a form that is assumed to be real.

Apart from the limitation imposed by the form, the two are the same. This is explained next.

- 205 *Maya* is the body [or attribute] of God. Ignorance is that of the soul. *Maya* is subject to that Supreme One. But the soul is subject to ignorance.
- 206 *Maya* and ignorance are mentioned in the sacred lore in order to account for the difference between the soul and God. This difference, being rooted in the ignorance, is unreal, but it is [regarded as] real from the standpoint of worldly activity.

This is the explanation of diversity, also called duality. This will appear as real as long as the cause, this ignorance, prevails.

- 207 Duality will continue to appear to be real, so long as this quality of being a ‘soul’ does not cease by right awareness [of the Self]. For this reason, this difference will appear as real, just like all other differences here.
- 208 The unreality of the three – namely the world, God and the soul – is taught as a single indivisible truth. It is not possible to use one half of a hen for cooking and the other half for laying eggs.

The analogy is to impress the truth taught here that the three mentioned are real or unreal as one whole, and not separately. So the teaching of their unreality cannot be accepted in regard to one, and rejected for the other two. This will become clear later.

- 209 For the one who regards himself as the owner or dweller in the body, as being a ‘soul’, the real Self himself becomes God. Such a one should practise devotion to Him for the sake of deliverance.

This need for devotion exists even for an advaitin, a believer in non-difference, as is shown below.

- 210 Such a one who knows the truth of non-difference by the intellect alone, but is unable to achieve experience of the true nature of the real Self, must strive to attain deliverance by devotion and self-surrender to God.

There are two paths prescribed, because of a difference in qualifications. This is explained next.

- 211 Only two paths are laid down for the aspirant to deliverance: for the valiant, the quest of one's own Self, and for the fearful, self-surrender to God. In these two all the paths are included.

A great many paths are known and followed, but all come under these two. The valiant one has been already described. The other is the one who is afraid of samsara, but is unable to take to the quest taught by Bhagavan as being the direct path. On this direct path all preconceived notions are dropped, as will be seen later. Self-surrender is the final step in the practice of devotion to God, which is the only other alternative to the direct path.

- 212 This two-fold path has been taught by the most holy one, Ramana, thus: 'Either seek the root of the ego-sense [the 'I' that rises within the body] or surrender that ego-sense to God to have it destroyed [by His grace].'

The advaitin who looks down upon devotion as inferior is next censured.

- 213 That foolish man, who, considering himself as an *advaitin*, but not being valiant enough [to take to the quest as taught by Bhagavan] and who looks down upon devotion as inferior, lives in vain, without devotion to God. He is a man with a tainted mind.

The devotee is next shown to be better off than the rest of men.

- 214 In this *samsara* the devotee is like a pot let down into a well with a rope tied to it. The man without devotion is like a pot fallen into the well, without a rope being tied to it.

The meaning is that the devotee is destined to be rescued from samsara by God's grace, but not so those who have no devotion.

The path of devotion is dealt with next.

- 215 Those who are endowed with the diabolic temperament cannot have the right kind of devotion. Hence the good one should take hold of the divine temperament for practising devotion to God.

216 The power of God, well-known in the world as grace, has three forms: God, the Supreme Being; the Holy Guru; and the real Self in the supreme state.

These three are thus declared to be one. Devotion to God leads to the finding of the Guru, who is God Himself. Devotion to the Guru leads on to right awareness of the Self, which is none other than God.

217 This Grace [of God] is merely the fact that He Himself is present in the Heart as the real Self. Grace is the very nature of that supreme one, and without grace He can have no existence.

218 That grace of God is ever wide-awake; there is never a time when that grace is absent. But so long as man's ego-sense is alive, he needs effort on his part.

219 That grace of God will not desert any one; she will [surely] lead all to deliverance. Some will be delivered soon; others after a long time.

220 The devotee may think, 'I am practising devotion to God by my own efforts, but this is not true, because it is God who pursues the deluded soul, who wanders blindly in the forest of *samsara*, and takes hold of him [by His grace].

It is next shown that God's grace is immeasurable.

221 The extent of God's grace is so much, He gives Himself to devotees: for when, by His grace, the ego is destroyed, the aspirant obtains the state of not being different from Him.

This is one of the sayings of Bhagavan.

222 God is that kind of magnetic mountain which draws the souls to Himself, makes them motionless and consumes them [like food] and ever after safeguards them in the supreme state, endless bliss, which is His own state.

This truth is set forth in the 6th and 11th verses of one of Bhagavan's hymns to Sri Arunachala, Arunachala Dasakam.

All souls are destined to reach this goal by divine grace. This is described in the next verses, whose theme is taken from the eighth verse of Bhagavan's Arunachala Ashtakam.

223-4 As the river, born from the rains of the clouds that rise from the sea, returns to its source, the sea, and as the bird, wandering a long time in the sky, obtains rest by returning to [its home on] earth, so the soul, which has originated in the supreme one, after wandering in this *samsara* for an immense period of time, returns in the reverse direction and rejoins that supreme one, from where it originated.

225 Devotion is taught as being of two kinds, according to the degree of ripeness of the devotee; in the beginning it is devotion like that of the baby monkey, and afterwards devotion like that of the kitten.

The baby monkey keeps hold of its mother by its own effort, whereas the kitten makes no effort, but relies entirely on the mother cat. The unripe devotee is like the former and the ripe one is like the latter; the former has his egoism rampant; the egoism of the latter is greatly subdued, and hence he is the recipient of more abundant grace, and reaches the goal much sooner.

226 After practising devotion like that of the baby monkey through a great many lives, in the end, when his egoism is greatly reduced, he practises devotion like the kitten.

227 The devotion that is like the kitten's is the same as taking refuge at the feet of God and surrendering to Him. This devotion, becoming further purified by the refinement of the mind, becomes equal to right awareness in course of time.

228 There is the saying of the most holy one that real surrender is that which is made by he who knows the truth of himself by the quest of the Self.

Self-surrender is real and effective to the extent that the ego-sense is attenuated. Hence, so long as the ego survives, self-surrender is imperfect and incomplete. It becomes complete and fruitful only when the ego dies once for all, never to revive.

229 Devotion is also of two kinds: one with a sense of separateness and the other with a sense of non-difference. The former is prescribed for the unrefined; the latter is excellent for the well-refined ones.

The sense of difference detracts from the quality of devotion. He who is convinced that differences are not true is alone capable of the real surrender of himself; hence his devotion is superior. But, as is shown next, devotion with a sense of difference is not to be despised.

230 If one, considering Him, who is only the Self, as other than oneself, worships Him in a form and by a name, then in course of time, through the clarification of his intellect, he surely reaches the supreme state. There is no doubt about this.

Ascribing a form and a name to God is unavoidable for those who, being unable to take to the direct path, nevertheless want deliverance and wish to worship God to win His grace.

The ignorance and narrowness of those followers of religions that condemn the use of images in divine worship was well exposed by Bhagavan in a talk with some Muslims, which is reported in Maha Yoga and in Talks with Sri Ramana Maharshi. The gist of Bhagavan's reply to the Muslims was that one who thinks himself to be a form, a mortal body – while really being really formless and nameless – has no right to raise this question. During the state of ignorance it is permissible for a sincere devotee to regard

God as having a form and a name, and to use images or symbols to facilitate worship. There is another saying of Bhagavan, which is given in the next verse.

231 'If a man adores God, who is nameless and formless, he will be liberated from the bondage due to names and forms.' Such is the teaching of Sri Ramana.

Also the following.

232 The man who, being endowed with the divine temperament, meditates with devotion on God with a form, will attain that same State [of deliverance] that one attains by meditating on Him as formless.

The next verse shows that the devotee is free, for purposes of his devotion, to ascribe to God any name or form that appeals to himself as lovable.

233 One may adore that one Being by name and in any form, as one likes. Among the forms of the supreme one, the wise one, whose mind is pure, will not see any superiority or inferiority.

Thus true catholicity is the distinguishing feature of the teaching of Vedanta. Catholicity consists not in claiming that all people should give up their own faiths and embrace one's own, but in recognising that all religions are paths to God. The advaitins are expected to understand this.

Then the dictum of the great poet, Kalidasa, on this point, is quoted.

234 'There is only one God form; (but) It became divided into three; and common to all the three is superiority and inferiority [by turns].'

Among them, there is no real superiority, nor inferiority. But superiority or inferiority is allowed to be ascribed to them by devotees, to suit their needs. They are all equally forms of the formless Brahman, the real Self. These forms disappear when the real Self is experienced as it really is.

Which, of all available forms, is the best, is the next question, which is answered next.

235 Of all the forms of God, the best is the sage, who does not consider Himself as other than the Self. Indeed the sage, who is the Guru, is the second of the [three] forms of divine grace.

236 Bhagavan Sri Krishna himself says in the *Gita*: 'I myself am the sage.' Therefore to know this truth of him, as stated in the sacred lore, one should regard the sage as not different from God.

237 [Also] there is the text of the *Upanishads*, that one who wants deliverance must worship the knower of the Self. If he thinks of him [the sage, who is the Guru] as other than God, that thought will obstruct his path.

One of the prominent defects of devotees who regard God as other than the Self is next noticed.

238 Those devotees who worship God as not the Self are wanting in catholicity. In the case of a few of them, this defect ceases after a long time by a clarification of the intellect.

Narrowness of mind is a serious defect, and till it is overcome, the aspirant will not reach his goal.

The next topic is 'God-vision', on which some ignorance prevails.

239 The devotee yearns to see the form of God as conceived by himself. Sometimes he may even see that very form, but this vision is transitory and hence unreal.

The absurdity of this desire is now shown up.

240 Being himself that very Supreme Being, but regarding Him as other than the Self through ignorance, he strives through devotion to obtain a vision of Him! Is there anything more surprising than this?

Indeed this is topsy-turveydom!

241 How can the seeing of a form of the formless one be a true vision? And how can the vision as not-self, of Him that is the Self, be a true vision?

Bhagavan unties this riddle with ease.

242 All form is mental, and hence the form of the spectacle is inside the spectator. It is the truth of the seer that should be sought, since that is the truth of the Supreme Being.

The unreality of these visions is declared next.

243 'The man who, by the practice of devotion, sees God as someone other than himself, sees only a mental form' – such is the utterance of the most holy one [on this point].

What then is the reality of God?

244 That which remains over on the annihilation of the [would-be] seer, by the quest [for the truth of] the seer, is itself the truth of the Self and also the truth of the Supreme Being.

Here, the quest of the Self, the direct path taught by Bhagavan, is referred to. It will be dealt with later.

The real vision is the same.

- 245 That state, in which the mind, called the soul, is swallowed up and has become one with Him is itself both the true vision of the Self, and the right vision of God – so says the holy Guru, Sri Ramana.

The next question is about how to meditate on God.

- 246 Revelation prescribes that the aspirant should meditate on Him as one's own real Self. The revelation styles as beasts those who meditate on Him as not-the-Self.
- 247 Bhagavan Vasishtha has said that he who worships God as not-Self, turning away from the real God who is the Self, is like one who goes about seeking a precious stone, throwing away the gem named Kaustubha already in his hand!

This is a quotation from the Yoga Vasishtam. The same subject is dealt with from another point of view.

- 248 Since the most holy one has shown that the original sin [spoken of by Christians] is just the sense of 'I am the body', the sense of being separate from God, which is the outcome of this sin, is itself only sinful!
- 249 The completeness [allness] of the Supreme Being, asserted by revelation, becomes true only by His being the Self. The deluded ones are just denying this completeness of His by their notion of being separate from themselves.
- 250 But devotion practised without a sense of difference is the way of accepting this completeness of God; and Bhagavan, our Guru, says that this devotion is most excellent and highly purifying for the aspirant for deliverance.

Bhagavan also shows that devotion with sense of difference does not lead to the goal.

- 251 Also, the most holy one has shown that, like the man who pursues darkness, light in hand, the devotee who meditates on God as separate does not reach God [so long as he has this false notion].

The light in the hand is the real Self, and the darkness is the non-existent, separate God. This is said by Bhagavan in the Arunachala Ashtakam.

The superior devotion, on the other hand, leads to the goal, which is the egoless state.

- 252 Since the better devotee approaches God as the Self, knowing that the notion of difference, due to the ego, is false, for this aspirant for deliverance, the annihilation of the ego will be accomplished quickly.

Another point is this.

253 In the case of him who adores God as non-Self, the surrender of himself is a sham, just like the gift of a coconut [to a guest] is a sham in the Chola region.

The analogy given here is the custom of placing a coconut on a plate, just for form's sake, without intending to give it.

Another consequence of the sense of difference is next noted.

254 When the Supreme Being is reduced to the status of non-Self, the result is that He is not the most beloved of all. For according to both revelation and the common experience of all creatures, the Self is the dearest of all!

The concluding verse of the teaching in the Gita is a riddle. How Bhagavan, our Master, solved this riddle is shown next.

255 Bhagavan, our Guru, declared the secret of the correct meaning of the last verse of the *Gita* in the following way: 'One should make surrender of oneself to the supreme one by giving up the attributes falsely ascribed to the real Self, namely that one is a "soul" and so on.'

The word dharma in that verse of the Gita must not be taken as meaning righteous action, but as meaning 'status' or 'quality'. Thus interpreted, the verse makes good sense, not otherwise.

This brings us to the topic of self-surrender, which is now explained.

256 What is called surrender of oneself to God is the final consummation of the practice of devotion. This can be achieved by the purified mind when the might of the ego is greatly reduced.

257 Just as a small magnet becomes united to a big one by the juxtaposition of the opposite poles, so the finite soul becomes one with the Supreme Being by the conjunction of its head with His feet.

This simile of the magnet serves to bring out the need of perfect humility of the devotee. If the ego is rampant, there can be no self-surrender.

How the one that has surrendered himself to God must get through life until he attains perfect egolessness is described next.

258 The self-surrender is truly made by him who always has the feeling, 'Let all things happen according to your will. In all respects, I am bound to you.'

That is, after self-surrender, he must resign himself to the divine will, without any reservations.

259 He that has surrendered himself will be at peace, remembering that He [God] is the bearer of the world's burden. The one that bears the burden himself will be

ridiculous, like the figure on the temple-tower appearing to bear the tower on its own shoulders.

- 260 As one travelling in a carriage puts down his luggage in the carriage itself and completes his journey, so should he resign his own [samsaric] burden to God and complete his life in the world.

Those who take on themselves the task of reforming the world or of alleviating the sufferings of others are dealt with next.

- 261 The wise one should resign to God his cares concerning the good of the world, just as he resigns to Him his cares about his own body and family.
- 262 The ripe devotee must pass his time, patiently enduring whatever happens to him, whether pleasant or unpleasant or otherwise, without yielding to sorrow or joy, with his heart absorbed in Him.
- 263 When the ego dies, having been swallowed by divine grace, the devotee's self-surrender becomes true and complete.

This has been said in the language of the intellect. But the actual truth of this consummation transcends the intellect and is hence not easy to convey in words. Indeed, the notion of self-surrender is absorbed from the standpoint of the absolute truth.

- 264 As would be the offering [to Ganesa] of a portion, taken from an image of Ganesa made of jaggery, so is the surrender of one's self to God, since there is no self apart from Him.
- 265 Since the Self is the Supreme Being Himself, by whom, how and to whom is the surrender to be made? True self-surrender is only the extinction of the ego, by which the sense of being different from Him arises.
- 266 'If you desire to give yourself to God, then first seek out and know your Self. The gift of oneself to God will be accomplished in this way.' So said the most holy one.

The truth about namaskara (prostration) is the same as self-surrender. This is explained next.

- 267 The truth of *namaskara* also is only the perfect giving up of the ego-sense. Right awareness, self-surrender and *namaskara*, all these three are one and the same.

Thus it is shown that God does not become an object of vision. Neither does He become an object of knowledge. This is shown next.

268 As God does not become an object of vision, neither does He become an object of knowledge. Since He transcends the mind, the mind will know Him [if at all] only wrongly.

269 Since the real Self, which is consciousness, is the same as God, and since there is no consciousness apart from Him, [it follows that] there is no one to know Him, other than He, nor does He become an object of knowledge.

The real Self is the eternal subject, and hence He can never become an object, says Bhagavan.

270 The source of the light of consciousness that exists in the mind is just the real Self. Hence, apart from Him, there is no such thing as mind existing as something real.

271 Like the sun, the consciousness that is the Self shines in the Heart by its own light. By its light the mind – which by itself is insentient – appears as sentient, like the moon.

272 Since [mind-] consciousness is not the true nature of the mind, it goes into latency in deep sleep. [But] the real Self never goes into latency since consciousness is its very nature.

But the mind has the power of veiling the Self.

273 The mind always veils [for itself] the real nature of the Self, both in dream and in waking. Becoming latent in deep sleep and wholly extinguished in the supreme state, how can it ever know Him, who is the sole reality?

What then is 'knowing God'?

274 There is the pronouncement of the most holy one that the true knowing of God is simply the mind becoming one with Him in the natural state by seeking the source wherefrom it has come into being.

Thus the pair of God and the individual soul is resolved. The conclusion is as follows.

275 What one has to do is obtain perfect poise in unity with the Supreme Being, whether by devotion or by the quest of the real Self, with the clear understanding that God and the soul are not distinct entities in reality.

The next pair to be discussed is that of knowledge and ignorance.

276 There is a two-fold ignorance, named as knowledge and ignorance, which is experienced by those not aware of the real Self. This pair is unreal just like all else.

277 The two are inseparable. Neither exists without the other, and because both arise from ignorance of the Self, both are equally ignorance.

Worldly knowledge and worldly ignorance are both ignorance for the reason stated here. This is explained further.

278 Everyone, being ignorant of his own real Self, seeks to know what is not-Self. The relative knowledge [acquired in this way] is an outcome of this ignorance. Hence, says our Guru, it is only ignorance.

279 Whatever knowledge one acquires by the intellect and the senses, if it is acquired without first knowing the truth of the one that arises, saying 'I am the knower', is all wrong knowledge.

280 He that does not know the Self might consider the world, which is unreal, to be real, and he will look upon his own real Self, which transcends the world, as an individual soul contained in the world.

281 The intellect, the senses and the mind are only the servants of the primary ignorance. Hence, the worldly modes of 'proof' serve only to delude the creature.

282 If the ego dies by the quest, 'Whence arises the ego, the experiencer of the two, knowledge and ignorance?' with it will be extinguished this pair [knowledge and ignorance].

283 Right awareness is only dwelling in the natural state of the Self, after the extinction of the ego. In that state, which is free from duality, these two manifestations of ignorance, which belong to the worldly life, do not survive.

284 The sages [Buddhas] call that the state of right awareness. In it there is neither knowledge nor ignorance. That is the highest state, in which there is nothing, whether sentient or insentient, other than the Self.

285 The illiterate, the literate and the 'knower of the Self' are all three equally ignorant. The third one also is ignorant, because for him there is nothing knowable other than the Self.

This was what Bhagavan said. The first two are ignorant because they do not know the Self. The sage is ignorant for a different reason, which is here stated. He also said:

286 That one who has become established in his own natural state is adorable by all, whether men or angels. As he is not distinct from the Supreme Being, he is also fit to be adored [as God] by the seekers of deliverance.

A doubt raised by some disciples is next answered.

- 287 Not knowing that this worldly knowledge is only ignorance, some ask: 'Let ignorance come to an end in the supreme state, but why should knowledge also cease?'
- 288 In the supreme state there is nothing to be known, neither a knower, nor knowledge [of objects]. Just as pairs are absent in that state, so the triads also are absent.
- 289 In the supreme state that Self shines alone, free from both knowledge and ignorance. Since it is there as pure consciousness, without change, how can that state be a void?

That the state is not a void is mentioned here because some believe that there is no reality beyond the world.

- 290 There the Self shines by its own light of consciousness, as the sole reality, which is bliss. In that supreme state there is no reality to shed light on it, nor anything 'other' that could shine by its light.
- 291 That consciousness light, which is its nature, neither rises nor sets, but is ever the same [without change]. It is by borrowing a minute particle of its consciousness that the mind appears conscious.
- 292 Disciples of non-sages, fearing that in the supreme state the Self will cease to be, wish to go to some other celestial world for the sake of eternal happiness.
- 293 As this world is unreal, so the other worlds also are unreal. For the sage [who is in the supreme state] the Self is itself the world, and hence that world is real in its own right.

Hence, sages are free from all worldly attractions.

- 294 'What do we need wealth or offspring for when the Self is itself the world?' So thinking, the sages, whose desires have all subsided, care not for action, nor for inaction.
- 295 That Self, which is consciousness, is alone real. The consciousness that has the world-form is ignorance [not true knowledge]. Since the world does not exist apart from that world-consciousness, it is unreal.

The question then arises, 'Is this ignorance real?' It is answered in the following way:

- 296 This ignorance is like darkness. It cannot be said that it exists. As darkness does not bear the light, so this ignorance does not bear [the light of] right awareness.

But the question arises, in what, when it appears, does this ignorance subsist? The answer is given next.

297 This ignorance, as the world-form, appears to ignorant ones to be real. In the Supreme Being [which is consciousness] the world is like unreal jewellery that appears in the [relatively] real gold.

Here the simile of gold and jewellery is used. It is usually supposed that both are real, but here the jewellery is described as unreal. Why is it so described?

298 If it is asked, ‘How is it said that gold is real, but jewellery is unreal?’ [the answer is that] the words are used here by our Guru in order to show that the world, which is the subject of comparison, is unreal.

Can this be done, it may be asked? It is answered in the following way.

299 Since a simile is used to convey a clear knowledge of the subject of the teaching, the simile is presented so as to convey the intended meaning.

The propriety of thus presenting this simile is shown next.

300 The jewellery was [only] gold before; it is only that in the middle, and it is that in the end also. Compared to the jewellery, gold is [relatively] real, and because the jewellery-forms are transient, they are unreal.

This is in accordance with the vedantic definition of reality, which is here stated once more.

301 Here impermanence alone is the test of unreality. Permanence itself is affirmed as [the quality of] reality. Hence, [it follows] that ignorance and the world which is born of it, are unreal, exactly like the serpent seen in a rope.

*This has been discussed and settled in a previous context.
Another analogy is used next to explain the teaching.*

302 Or, as the moving pictures pass upon the unmoving lighted screen [in a cinema show], so the series of pictures, namely the world, comes and goes on [the substratum], the real [which is unmoving].

This is the simile used in ‘Forty Verses on the Real’, in the very beginning, immediately after the first two benedictory verses.

303 In the analogy of the moving pictures, the seer is distinct from them, whereas in the world pictures the seer is included. Thus the world differs [from the cinema show]. The result is that the world and its seer [the individual] are both unreal.

304 Just as the light on the screen remains clear [of the shadow pictures] when those moving pictures have ceased, so too when the series of world-pictures cease, the consciousness, which is the Self, will remain clear [as the sole reality].

The unreality of the world is further highlighted by the world-appearance being made up of a series of momentary pictures, as is shown next.

305 As at every instant of time the spectator, seeing only a new picture, assumes that what he sees is one, so the ignorant one, seeing an utterly new world every instant, assumes that what he sees is one continuous world.

This mistaken view concerns the seer's own body also. From this it follows that the seer, who is only a reflection in the three bodies, is unreal – that is, as unreal as the spectacle, the world.

The world-appearance is possible only because the real Self, which is consciousness, is present as the substratum.

306 As the succession of moving pictures shines only on the screen and by its light, so the world shines only on the real Self and by its light of consciousness.

307 Just for this reason the real Self is real in its own right. This world is not at all real in its own right. The unreality of the world and the reality of the Self, which is pure consciousness, should be understood in this way.

There is a distinction to be noted between the popular sense of the world 'real' and its use in advaitic Vedanta philosophy, which has already been expounded.

The next topic to be studied is the mental impression that time and space are objective realities. These two are inseparable from the world-appearance, and hence the world would continue to be taken as real if these two are taken to be so.

308 The mind knows all visible objects, the physical body and all the rest, equally in dream and in waking, as divided up in space and in time, and hence it is necessary to enquire whether these two are real [or not].

309 These three, namely space, time and causality, have been shown to be only mental by an occidental philosopher named Kant by means of good reasons.

310 Bhagavan, our Guru, makes it clear to the seekers of deliverance, from the experience of all men in deep sleep, and from the experiences of sages in the supreme state, that these three are unreal.

311 Because no one knows space and time in deep sleep, where the mind is latent, and in the supreme state, where the mind is lost, these two are only mental.

- 312 In the dream state as well as the waking state the mind creates these two along with the world. Without them the mind knows nothing. This is the enduring nature of the mind.
- 313 Only because of the ignorance 'I am the body' does man have the awareness 'I am in space and time'. Really, we are not in space, nor in time. If we were bodies, then [and only then] would we be in them.
- 314 We are not bodies, nor do we own them, since we never became souls. Space and time, just like all things, are created in us by the mind because of ignorance.

It may be asked when we shall be rid of this delusion of the objective reality of space and time. The answer given in the next verse is from Bhagavan, our Guru.

- 315 If the mind, by the quest of its source, attains peace in the supreme state, then these two will be swallowed up by the real Self itself, along with the ego and the world.
- 316 The whole world, which is composed of causes and effects together with space and time, is illusory. The real Self never undergoes change, whether by space or by time, or by causality.
- 317 Since the one real Self [of all], which is ever the same, never swerving from its true nature, transcending time and devoid of space, and hence infinite, is experienced by the sages, it alone is real; nothing else.

The three divisions of time, namely the past, the present and the future, are next dealt with and shown to be unreal.

- 318 Also the divisions of time, namely, past, present and future, are not at all real. The past and the future are dependent upon the present, and are themselves present in their own times.
- 319 Thus all time is only present; men make this division only by words; the eternal reality is indeed the real Self alone. Hence, it alone is present, nothing else.
- 320 The aspirant must therefore aim at the experience of the truth of that Self by attaining the supreme state. The discussion of the past and of the future is declared to be like trying to count without knowledge of the number 'one'.
- 321 Only the number 'one' exists, and none else, because all numbers are modifications of it. In the same way, the consciousness that is the Self alone exists, and the whole world is only that.
- 322 As one becomes able, by knowing the number 'one', to know all the numbers, so, after knowing the truth of themselves, the sages come to know the truth of the world also.

- 323 The Guru says that having knowledge of anything other than the Self, without first knowing the Truth of oneself, is only ignorance. Everything that one knows, without having a right awareness of the Self, is a knowledge that is contrary to truth.
- 324 When, by the quest of the Self, that Self is known, there remains nothing else to be known. To the sage all things shine only as the Self, and hence the Self is well known as 'the All' [in the Vedantas].
- 325 Therefore Bhagavan Sri Ramana says that omniscience is only the state of being the real Self. He also says that what is considered as omniscience by the ignorant is only ignorance.

How the Self is 'the All' is next stated.

- 326 This world is not other than the body; this body is not distinct from the mind; the mind does not exist apart from the real Self; therefore that Self is all the world.
- 327 'How was I in my previous birth, and how shall I be in the next birth?' – such enquiries are only [due to] ignorance, because the Self was never born.
- 328 Thinking about the totality and the distinct units [individuals] is a pointless activity for seekers of deliverance. Only the enquiry as to the source of him [the ego] who is interested in the totality and the units will lead to deliverance.
- 329 'By whom, and how, was the world created in the beginning?' 'What is *maya*?' 'What is ignorance?' 'How did the individual soul come into being?' Such pointless questions are posed by the deluded ones because they forget the main thing that needs to be enquired into.

The secret of creation is briefly stated next.

- 330 There is no creation apart from seeing; seeing and creation are one and the same. And because that seeing is due to ignorance, to cease seeing is the truth of the dissolution [of the world].

Maya is next explained.

- 331 It is the might of the Supreme Being, called *maya*, which takes the form of sense perceptions and thereby creates this varied world, which the deluded ones are persuaded is real.

Ignorance of the individual is related to the power of illusion that belongs to the Supreme Being. There is no other explanation of creation.