

69 Self-enquiry

- 384 Giving up the attitude of outwardly enquiring more and more, “Who are you? Who is he?”, it is best to always inwardly enquire with great interest about oneself, “Who am I?”
- 385 If one attends to the centre of oneself with a keen mind to know “Who am I?”, the identification ‘I am the body’ will die and the Reality will shine forth as ‘I-I’. Then all the illusory differences, which are like the blueness seen in the sky, will disappear.
- 386 All doubts and questions pertaining to duality and otherness will be destroyed by the question “Who am I?” This question, “Who is this ‘I’ who doubts and asks about other things?”, will itself turn out to be the *Brahmashttra*, and will destroy the appearance of all otherness, which is nothing other than dark ignorance.

Michael James: The Brahmashttra is the greatest and most powerful Divine Weapon.

- 387 By destroying the mischievous and frisky ego through the enquiry, “Who is this ‘I’ who sees the outside world through the deceitful senses?”, to remain permanently in *Mei-Jnana-Para-Nishta* is truly the means for one to attain Liberation.

Michael James: Mei-Jnana-Para-Nishta means the supreme abidance as the true knowledge.

- 388 The individual who enquires into his real nature, “Who am I?”, will die as the ‘I’-less Self.

Sadhu Om: This is like saying, “The river will die as the ocean”; i.e. the ego will die through enquiry, and That which will survive its death is the ‘I’-less Self.

- 389 Restraining the mind from going outside [through the senses], and fixing it always in its Source, Self, which is known as the Heart, so that the vain ‘I’-thought will not rise again, is the *Atma-Vichara* [Self-enquiry].

Sadhu Om: Refer to Who am I? where it is said, “... Always keeping the mind fixed in Self – that alone is Atma-Vichara ...”

- 390 To know the Supreme Thing, which shines in the heart as Existence-Consciousness, it is useless to search for It [as God] outside with great enthusiasm, instead of slowly and steadily attending to It [as It is] by remaining in solitude. [To search for It outside is] just like trying to dive within the water with a naked lamp in one’s hand, in order to find a person who has drowned in a flood.

Michael James: A naked lamp will be extinguished on coming into contact with the water and will therefore not help one to find the missing person. Similarly, if one’s attention is towards second and third persons, it will not help one to find the Supreme Thing, which is the Reality of the first person.

Refer also to Sri Arunachala Ashtakam verse 4, where searching for God outside while ignoring Arunachala, who shines as Existence-Consciousness (i.e. Self) is likened to taking a lamp to search for darkness.

- 391 Self, which shines within the five sheaths, should be attended to within the Heart. Instead of doing so, to enquire for It in the scriptures is only scriptural enquiry – how can it be Self-enquiry?

Sadhu Om: Refer to Who am I? where it is said, “...Self is within the five sheaths; but the scriptures are outside the five sheaths. Therefore seeking Self in the scriptures when It is to be found within by negating the five sheaths, is futile...”

392 When *mano-laya* is gained by restraining the breath, one should keenly enquire, using such a peaceful mind which is now condensed from the scattered five [sense-knowledges] into the one ‘I’-consciousness, and know that *Sat-Chit* which is not the body.

Michael James: See also verse 516.

Sadhu Om: *Mano-laya* is a state in which the mind knows no objects, and it is of two kinds – sleep and kevala-nirvikalpa-samadhi. In sleep the mind gets no light from Self, and in kevala-nirvikalpa-samadhi, though the mind gets light from Self, it remains merely as the ‘I’-thought, and the vasanas are neither allowed to function, nor are they destroyed. When one wakes up from either kind of *mano-laya*, the vasanas start functioning as before, and so no progress is made in *laya*, however long one may remain in it. Therefore it is said that it is not sufficient to stop with *mano-laya*, even if it is kevala-nirvikalpa-samadhi.

Laya results because the mind is restrained from dwelling upon external sense-objects, but though the mind is not wandering and is therefore peaceful in this state, one cannot progress further. Whenever the mind wakes up from *laya*, it will be quiet and peaceful [i.e. it will not be wandering towards objects], and therefore one should make use of such a peaceful mind by directing it towards Self-attention;’ because only through Self-attention can *mano-nasha* [i.e. destruction of the mind] be attained.

This verse clearly shows what Sri Bhagavan meant in Upadesa Undiyar verse 14, where He wrote that the mind which has been stilled by breath-control will be destroyed if it is engaged in “the one path” [“vazhi” in Tamil, “eka chintana” in Sanskrit]. This “one path” is nothing other than Self-enquiry, as this verse makes clear, and so we can certainly conclude that all the other interpretations which are recorded in some other books are not correct.

393 Those who take to the pure path of Self-enquiry are never derailed because, like the sun, this supremely direct path itself reveals to them its own unchallengeable clarity and uniqueness.

Sri Muruganar: Unlike karma, bhakti, yoga, etc., which critically analysed, have to yield to the other paths, changing their course and bending a bit, Self-enquiry never has to yield and change its course, because of the uniqueness of Self. Hence Sri Bhagavan calls the path of Self-enquiry the pure path and the direct one. Besides, since one has to take to at least a little Self-attention in order to reach the final Goal, even though one may have been advancing through some other path, this path is called the supreme path by Sri Bhagavan.

Since this path is compared to the sun, we should take Self to be the sun, and Self-enquiry to be its ray.

394 Since death is nothing but *pramada*, those who want to conquer death should always ward off *pramada*; and since this alone is essential, there is no rule prescribing a time or place to enquire into Self.

Michael James: *Pramada* means inadvertence, i.e. giving up on the way what has been undertaken; here *pramada* denotes slackness in Self-attention.

Like death, *pramada* may happen at any time or in any place, and therefore Self-attention should be vigilantly maintained at all times and in all places.

395 Since time, place, etc., which seem to exist, cannot have a real existence of their own apart from the undivided and perfect *Brahman*, none of them can be unsuitable for practicing Self-enquiry.

Sadhu Om: The Tamil word for 'unsuitable' [vilakku] can also mean 'target', and so the following alternative meaning can also be taken: "... nothing bound by them [i.e. time, place, etc.] should be taken as a target for meditation".

While taking this alternative meaning, "time, place etc., which seem to exist," should be understood to mean this whole universe of names and forms [which are all second and third persons]. Hence we are told in this verse that we should not take as objects of meditation any second or third person such as: (a) a place for the heart on the right-hand side of the chest; (b) any chakra or centre in the body; (c) any name or form of a God or Goddess; (d) any divine light or sound; etc. Refer also to verse 184, where the same idea is expressed.

396 One's unceasing effort to turn the mind – which is always extroverted due to the force of habit [cultivated in past births] – towards Self by the Self-enquiry "Who am I?" is [the significance of] the great war being fought between *devas* and *asuras* [which is described in the *Puranas*].

Sadhu Om: In India many stories are recorded in books known as the Puranas, which tell of the wars being fought between devas [gods] and asuras [demons]. These wars should not be regarded as mere myths or events that happened only in the distant past, they are going on even today. They are the constant battle which is always being fought in the life of a sadhaka between his liking to attend only to Self and the habitual outward-going tendencies of his mind.

397 Whenever a thought arises, instead of trying even a little either to follow it up or to fulfil it, it would be better to first enquire, "To whom did this thought arise?"

Sadhu Om: The ideas expressed in verses 397, 398 and 399 are also expressed in prose in Who am I?

398 When one thus inwardly enquires, "Is it not to me that this thought has arisen – then who am I?", the mind will return to subside in its Source, and the already arisen thought will also vanish.

399 When one daily practices in this manner, since the impurities are being removed from the mind, it will become purer and purer to such an extent that the practice will become so easy that the mind will reach the Heart as soon as the enquiry is commenced.

400 Just as the creature which come out of the bushes to save their lives, being unable to bear with the heat of the wild forest-fire, are surely burnt to death, so all the *vasanas* hiding in the Heart will be destroyed, being unable to stand before the growing and blazing fire of the strength of Self-enquiry.

401 The thought "Who am I?", after destroying all other thoughts, will itself finally die just like the stick which is used to stir the funeral pyre, and then the supreme Silence will prevail for ever.

Sadhu Om: Refer also to Who am I?

402 When the delusion which has veiled Self, the Light of Consciousness of unlimited Bliss [*Sat-Chit-Ananda*], is destroyed by the clear enquiry "Who am I?", one's own Nature will shine forth gloriously as the *Atmakasha* [i.e. Space of Self].

403 Just as an iron ball which is heated in fire will itself shine as fire, when the impure *jiva* is burnt in the fire of Self-enquiry, it will itself shine as Self.

- 404 By enquiring, “Who am I, the deluded one who suffers so much?”, the delusion will be dissolved, the Reality will be attained, *Jnana* will dawn, *Mouna* will flow forth and the Bliss of Peace will prevail.
- 405 It is only due to the delusion which is caused by not learning the Truth of Self that *jivas* are suffering. Therefore, always take to the practice of *Jnana* – the inward enquiry “Who am I that is suffering?”
- 406 By contact with the philosopher’s stone – proper and unceasing enquiry – the ghostly *jiva* will lose the rust of mental impurities and will be turned into the supreme Shiva.

Sri Muruganar and Michael James: Since enquiry is described as the philosopher’s stone and the mental impurities are described as mental rust, the jiva should be taken to be the base material and Shiva to be the gold.

- 407 If the son of God, the *jiva* who has forgotten his real Nature [i.e. Self], eagerly enquires within, “Who am I that is lamenting over the miseries of life?”, he will realise his greatness, namely that he is truly One with his Father – Self.

Michael James: This verse was given according to the doctrines of Christianity.

70 The True Tapas

Michael James: Sri Bhagavan here explained that Tapas means self-denial, and the true self-denial (ego-denial) is nothing but Self-abidance (Atma-Nishta).

- 408 The purpose of *Tapas* is to know that the supreme *Atma-Jnana* [Self-Knowledge] is graciously and naturally shining always in all creatures, and to experience It by being It; *tapas* is not to newly create or obtain *Jnana*.
- 409 “To fix the stupid and egotistical mind as One with the pure Shiva [i.e. Self], by subduing it within the Heart so that it cannot wander out through the sense-organs, is alone the best *tapas*,” say the true *Tapasvins*.
- 410 Uninterruptedly maintaining *Atmakara-vritti* [i.e. the flow of Self-attention], which swallows within itself the appearance of the universe with all its differences, is, when pondered over, the only mark of the unique *Tapas*.
- 411 Alas, because of the delusion caused by not knowing that *tapas*, which is one’s natural duty, should be done with love, people torture themselves in the fire of miserable *tapas*, in spite of the fact that the Ocean of Bliss [the true Goal of *tapas*] is always brimming over.

Sadhu Om: Tapas literally means scorching, or undergoing, self-inflicted tortures, but since these meanings seem to be inappropriate, Sri Bhagavan has given us a new definition for this word in Upadesa Undiyar verse 30. In that verse we told that Atma-Nishta [i.e. Self-abidance – which is the Ocean of Bliss] is the real Tapas.

There are some people who, in the name of tapas, torture their bodies by engaging in austerities such as panchatapagni [i.e. sitting for meditation surrounded by five fires – above and on four sides], etc. These activities can be called tapas in its literal sense, yet they are only performed for the fulfilment of desires, either in this world or in the next. Though these desires may be selfish [i.e. for one’s own individual benefit] or unselfish [i.e. for the benefit of the whole world], they are possible only so long as the ego survives. The aim of true tapas, on the other hand, is Bliss, which can only be achieved when the ego is annihilated.

Therefore, highly discriminative people should perform the true tapas of destroying the ego. The only path or tapas which will destroy the ego is Self-attention [which is often known as Self-enquiry]. Is this Self-attention a self-inflicted torture or a scorching experience? According to the divine saying 'I am the Path and the Goal', the path must be as blissful as the Goal, and since everyone knows from his own experience in sleep that the state of egolessness is blissful, it is clear that attending to Self, which is the nearest and the dearest to all of us, will also be blissful, and it will not be an experience of torture or misery. Thus, since Self-attention is to be undertaken with such love and pleasure, why should it be regarded as being tapas in its literal sense? Therefore Sri Bhagavan declares that to think of tapas as being a miserable experience is due to delusion and ignorance, and thus He introduces a revolutionary idea about tapas.

Happiness is our true Nature, but through inattention born of ignorance, we leave it, come out and suffer. Hence our natural and happy duty is to lovingly restore Self-attention and to thus abide in our true Nature.

412 Silence – which is the experience of Shiva, the supreme *chit* [*jnana*] – is the true *tapas* by which *Brahman* [*Tat* or *Sat*] is achieved.

413 Just as it is impossible to trace the path through which a bird flew in the sky and the path through which a fish swam in the water, so it is also impossible to trace the path by which *Jnanis* have reached the Self.

Michael James: *The Path by which Jnanis reach Self is Self-enquiry, which is the real Jnana-marga, but since the ego itself vanishes on this path, not only is no trace left behind, but also no one is left to find it.*

When it is said that "it is impossible to trace the path", it means that the path can neither be known or expressed because, although we are given clues to such as Self-attention, when the ego attempts through practice to know what Self-attention exactly is, the ego itself is lost. Refer also to verse 999 and note.

414 Union with the Feet of the Lord as the form of Love [*Bhakti*], in which all the ego's activities die, is the Path of *Siddhanta*. The loss of the ego by abiding in Self [*Atma-Nishta*], which is the supreme *Jnana* and Bliss, is the Path of Vedanta.

Sadhu Om: *Since the annihilation of the ego is stressed in both the paths, Siddhanta marga [i.e. Bhakti-marga] and Vedanta marga [i.e. Jnana marga] are not different but one and the same.*

415 Knowing *Para* [i.e. Self – the Supreme] through Self-enquiry, by discriminating between *Para* and *apara* [i.e. non-Self], by attaining inward dispassion towards *apara*, and by remaining where the notions 'I' and 'mine' are completely lost, is the way of life of *Jnanis*.

416 Know that the following is the right way by which the suffering *jiva* can revel in Shiva: reject God, world and soul as being false appearances in *Brahman*, just like the appearance of silver on a shell.

71 A Research on True Knowledge

Michael James: *The Tamil word for knowledge is 'arivu', which not only means true knowledge, i.e. pure consciousness (chit), but can also mean mind, the knowledge of sense-objects, the knowledge of the arts and sciences, etc; in this work it is therefore translated each time according to the particular sense in which it is used.*

- 417 Shiva shines in the golden Heart-temple of Knowledge [i.e. Consciousness] as Knowledge
Itself. Only those who know Him by the pure Eye of Knowledge are truly worshipping the
Truth, because Knowledge Itself is the true Supreme Thing.
- 418 The highest *Jnana*, which is knowing the perfect Reality is knowing the Knowledge by
Knowledge itself. Until the Knowledge is thus known by the Knowledge Itself, the mind will
have no peace.
- 419 Just as the ornaments are known to be many and different but the gold is known to be one, so
the sense-objects are known to be many and different. Here the gold signifies the one absolute
Being-Knowledge which results from the destruction of the *chittam* [i.e. the store of *vasanas*],
and which is devoid of the qualified and objective sense knowledges.
- 420 To know the sense-objects as true instead of knowing the truth of the seeing-knowledge [i.e.
the seer] is due to ignorance born of false delusion. The True Knowledge is not learning all the
arts which you want to know, but losing the imaginary relative knowledge in Self-Knowledge.

Sadhu Om: Refer to Ulladu Narpadu verse 12: “The knowledge which knows [objects] cannot be True Knowledge ...”

- 421 Only the pure Knowledge of *Sat-Chit* [i.e. the Consciousness ‘I am’] truly exists. All other
[sense or mind] knowledges, which function in It as if true, are nothing but dark and fictitious
ignorance; [hence] it is dangerous to believe them.

Sadhu Om: The plain and simple Knowledge ‘I am’, which is experienced by everyone in deep sleep, is the perfect Knowledge. Refer to Maharshi’s Gospel, Part I, Chapter I; “Sleep is not ignorance, it is one’s pure state; wakefulness is not Knowledge, it is ignorance. There is full awareness [i.e. knowledge] in sleep and total ignorance in waking...” [8th edition, 1969, p. 11].

- 422 All other knowledges are defective and petty; the experience of Silence [i.e. Self-Knowledge]
is alone Perfect Knowledge. The different objective knowledges are merely superimposed on
Self, the Pure Knowledge, and hence they are not true.
- 423 Will those Great Ones who have the pure *Jnana-drishti* [i.e. the outlook of *Jnana*] consider the
objective outlook of the petty ego to be Knowledge at all? The Knowledge is only That which
knows the Pure Knowledge, and not that which knows other things.

Sadhu Om: “...That which knows the Pure Knowledge...” is the Self-Knowledge which shines as ‘I am’.

- 424 Though one has known many subtle, rare and wonderful things, can one be a *jnani* until one
comes to know the knower of them? Know that one cannot be.

Sadhu Om: Refer to Atma-Vidya verse 3: “Without first knowing our Self, of what avail is it then to know anything else, for what else is there to know after Self is known?”

- 425 Tell me, O mind that madly rushes outwards, can there be any source from which all this
universe springs forth other than that Knowledge which is never born out of another?
- 426 Why is knowledge often said to be the only base for anything and everything? Because
Knowledge, which is the base for everything which rises [i.e. which comes into existence],
remains as the sole base even for Its own existence.

Michael James: Read verse 428 along with this verse. Refer also to Upadesa Undiyar verse 23; "...there is no Consciousness [Chit] other than Existence [Sat] Itself to know Existence ...".

427 A support [i.e. a base] is needed only for an inert thing which is *asat* [i.e. which is not real existence]. Why then does a necessity arise that WE, *Sat-Chit*, should need some other *Chit* as our support? It is because of the delusion by which we think that we are the impure *chittam* [mind].

Michael James: There are two possible versions of verse 428:

428a Because our real Nature is Itself *Sat* [Existence], unlike other things which are *asat*, know that the base for the ever-existing Consciousness is that same Self-existing Consciousness Itself.

428b Since 'I', our real nature, ever shines as Existence [*Sat*], unlike other things which are non-existent [*asat*: i.e. which seem to exist at one time and not at another time], know that 'I' [Self], which shines of itself [i.e. without any other aid], is the base for the ever-existing Consciousness [*Chit*].

429 Thus, while that Consciousness, the Reality itself, is you, instead of knowing with that Consciousness that you are Consciousness itself and remaining as It is, you know the world, which rises out of you, the Consciousness, and suffer very much. Alas, what can I say about this!

Michael James: Though the world is seen outside, it is only an apparent manifestation rising from within.

430 Those who do not know through Self-enquiry what is the truth of their natural state [Self] mistake the alien body to be 'I' and see the world as different from themselves and hence suffer in delusion. All other things except that ['I'], which shines as the one undeluded Existence-Consciousness-Bliss [*Sat-Chit-Ananda*], are seen on account of the deceitful play of *maya*.

431 To one whose attention is only upon the things known [the five sense-objects] but not even the least upon the knower – to such a lump of mud [the fleshy body] in the form of a human being, can any scripture teach true knowledge [*Jnana*]?

432 Is it not because you are knowledge [i.e. consciousness] itself that you are able to know the world? If [instead of knowing the world] you turn your attention, taking that Consciousness alone as your target, It will Itself as the Guru reveal the Truth [i.e. Reality].

Sri Muruganar: 'Turn your attention taking that Consciousness alone as one's target': This is the state in which one consciously remains, not knowing other things and not forgetting oneself. Since throughout the waking and dream states the mind was in the habit of attending to other things, the second persons [i.e. the world, which is a mental conception], it can only conceive even God, who is in truth beyond mental conception, to be an object of perception. But now, when the mind attends to Self, Self destroys this illusory habit of the mind and makes it know: 'I do not exist, only Self, the real God, truly exists'. Thus Consciousness, one's target, itself as the Guru reveals the truth.

The mind's longing to see God in the form of an object [i.e. as a second person] is due to the forgetfulness of its true nature – Existence-Consciousness – and to its acting with doership as an individual. But when, giving up the objective attention, it remains as Consciousness itself, the aforesaid doership and forgetfulness are lost and the mind now understands that Self alone is the real God and thereby attains eternal Peace.

- 433 Only the truth of Self is worthy of being scrutinized and known. Taking It alone as the target, one should keenly attend to It and know It in the heart [i.e. within]. It can be known only by the silent and clear mind which is free from agitation and activity.
- 434 All kinds of knowledge [even the knowledge of all the arts and sciences] will completely merge into the Silence – the pure knowledge of Self. All other states [as well as knowledges] appear to exist only because of the play of *Chit-Sakti* [the knowing power, i.e. the mind], which exists in Self, the supreme and natural state of Bliss.

Michael James: 'All other states' means all states of knowledge (consciousness) other than the Silence.

- 435 The natural consciousness of existence [I am], which does not rise to know other things, is the Heart. Since the truth of Self is clearly known only by this actionless Consciousness, which [merely] remains as Self, this [i.e. the Heart] alone is the supreme Knowledge.

Michael James: Actionless Consciousness is the Consciousness which does not have the action of rising and knowing other things.

Sri Muruganar: The word 'Heart' denotes Self and not a place. Being Self [Atma Nishta] is itself knowing Self [Atma Jnana]. Consciousness [Chit] knows existence [Sat] because existence is not other than consciousness.

- 436 All that is known should be known to be merely that knowledge [which knows them] and should merge into Knowledge – Self. One's very reality which shines in such an intensity of Self-abidance, utterly destroying all differences, is Liberation – the unequalled state.

Michael James: "that knowledge [which knows them]" is the mind.

- 437 Since the nature of Reality is non-dual [i.e. not two], true Knowledge cannot be the knowing of an other. Therefore, when the mind is absolutely free from delusion [i.e. does not know an other] and abides unwavering in beatitude – that is the true Knowledge.

Sadhu Om: Since the real Thing [Sat] is one and not many, the real Knowledge [Chit] must also be one: the knowledge of one's own existence, and it cannot be the knowing of many things. Hence, the Self-abidance in the form of 'I am', the feeling of mere first person singular, wherein the mind, the distorted Knowledge that many things, which everybody has now, has been put to an end, and its moving nature, i.e. knowing other things, has been stopped, alone is the true Knowledge.

- 438 Know that Knowledge is non-attachment, Knowledge is purity, Knowledge is union with God, that unforgettable Knowledge is fearlessness [*abhayam*], Knowledge is the elixir of immortality, Knowledge alone is everything.

Michael James: Here and in the following two verses Knowledge is used in the sense of pure consciousness.

Abhayam may alternatively mean: 'the place of refuge'.

- 439 The Knowing of the breadth and length, the bottom and top – the depth and height – of Knowledge is nothing but the blissful stillness of mind; it is impossible for even gods to know that state of Knowledge.

Sri Muruganar: Since Knowledge transcends all limitations and measurements, it is beyond comprehension. The merging of the mind-knowledge in the non-dual Knowledge [Kevala Arivu] and remaining there in Bliss alone is the knowing of the Knowledge.

440 Without Knowledge [Self] there is no world; without Knowledge there is no soul; without Knowledge there is no God. Therefore, the knowing of Knowledge [as defined in the previous verse] is the ultimate Goal.

72 Nirvana

Michael James: 'Nirvana' means unveiling, i.e. the shedding of the five sheaths. See also Sri Arunachala Aksharamanamalai, verse 30.

441 Just as the snake sheds its skin without any suffering, it is our worthy duty to shed the five sheaths, which cause misery on account of fast attachment to them.

442 *Jiva-nirvana* is the state in which the attachment to the five sheaths has been removed in order to enjoy fully the silent Bliss born out of the Grace of the Lord, Self, who is the Consciousness-space.

Sadhu Om: This verse can also be interpreted in the following metaphorical and mystic way: The bride [the jiva], in order to be granted the full enjoyment of her bridegroom [Self], has to shed her shyness in form of attachment to the five sheaths.

73 The Attainment of Self

443 Since it is our common experience [for one and all] that we remain bodiless and shine alone even in a state of nothingness [i.e. sleep] where the world does not exist, losing permanently our identification as 'I' with the form of five sheaths, is indeed the attainment of Self [or Self-realization]. Thus should you be sure!

Michael James: In the understanding of most aspirants, 'Self-realization' is the attainment of something – Self, which they believe they do not have as yet, while in fact 'Self-realization' is the loss of something – the ego, which is already there. "... To make room, it is enough that the lumber be removed; room is not brought in from elsewhere" says Sri Bhagavan in Maharshi's Gospel Part I, chapter 4 (see also Maha Yoga, 7th edition, page 121).

444 Since, when the ego is destroyed, the Self-sun shines as the sole Reality, putting an end to this dream, which is false, and bringing about the true awakening – the mere destruction of the ego, through Self-enquiry, is the attainment of Self [or Self-realization]. Thus should you know!

Michael James: 'The dream which is false' is this present waking state. 'the true awakening' is the state of Turiya or Jnana.

445 When 'I' and 'mine' are destroyed by the clear true Knowledge, which is free from the questionable knowledge ['I am the body'], even while living in this illusory world, that is the state in which one abides as That.

Michael James: 'free from the questionable knowledge' may also be translated as 'free from the five sense-knowledges ...'

The purpose of the two previous verses is to describe the true nature of the attainment of Self; since the Mahavakya 'I am That' denotes this state of Self-attainment (Self-realization) the destruction of the ego is also the attainment of 'I am That', as is described in this verse.

446 Since the reality, the source [of 'I', the ego], shines so very subtle in the heart as to be known only to a very subtle attention, it is impossible for those whose mind is as gross and as blunt as the head of a pestle to attain the target!

Sadhu Om: Refer to Vichara Sangraham, chapter 8: '... Just as it is impossible to separate the fibres of a silk cloth with a thick crowbar and just as it is impossible to find out the nature of minute things with the help of a lamp flickering in the wind, the experience of Self cannot be gained by a mind which is gross and wavering due to the influence of dullness [tamo-guna] and activity [rajo-guna]; because It [Self] shines very subtle and motionless...'

74 'The Conclusive Knowledge to be Obtained' or 'The Well-established Knowledge'

Michael James: The title of this chapter has two meanings:

- 1) 'The conclusive knowledge to be obtained (through reflection)', and
- 2) 'The well-established knowledge (the Jnana of the Jnani)'.

Out of the four verses in this chapter, the first three deal with the conclusion which we have to reach through reading and reflection, and the fourth verse describes the state of unshakeable Self-knowledge of a Jnani.

447 Because in the perfect Thing – Silence [Self], no thought rises, because place is merely a thought, and because the two other places [second and third persons] rise only after the rising of 'I', 'I' [the first person] is the first place.

Sadhu Om: In Tamil grammar, (1) 'I', the first person, (2) 'you', the second person, and (3) 'he, she, it, or they', the third person, are called the first place, second place and third place respectively, unlike in most other languages. Those who do deep reflection [manana] i.e. deep thinkers, can find out that this is a good clue for the spiritual quest. How? Time and place [space] are the first two conceptions [illusions] born of maya. In this verse instructions about the nature of 'place' are given, whereas in verses 747 and 748 of this work and in verses 15 and 16 of Ulladu Narpadu the nature of 'time' is well described.

Because Self is mere Being, which has no rising, it is to be known that even the first person, which has a rising, is not there. Refer also to the 14th verse of Ulladu Narpadu which says: "...When the first person ceases to exist through enquiry into the truth of that first person..."

Ego is thought identifying as 'I' a body which is bound by time and space. Therefore, time and place cannot but be found interwoven in every thought that rises from the ego. Though, at first, it may seem to be a wonder to hear that no one can make any thought without time and place, after a little reflection it will be found that it is an undeniable truth. Let us now see this verse once again in the light of this explanation.

Since out of the three places, first, second and third, 'I' is the one that rises first, Sri Bhagavan points out that 'I' is the foremost among the place conceptions. Further, it is pointed out that, since place is a mere thought, even 'I', the first place is merely a thought. Moreover, by pointing out the

logical inference: 'No thought can rise in Self, since the form of Self, the perfect thing, is Silence', Sri Bhagavan concludes that even the least rising of 'I', the ego, is not possible there.

Just as 'I', which among the three places [first, second and third places] is taken for spiritual research stands as the first and the source of all places, so also the 'present', which among the three tenses [past, present and future] is taken for spiritual research, stands as the first and source of all divisions of time. Just as 'I', the first place disappears when enquired into, the 'present', the first time, also disappears on enquiry, revealing the timeless and placeless [spaceless] nature of the supreme, Self. Since even the first time, i.e. the 'present', is merely a thought, just like the first person it cannot have a rising in Self. Thus, since Self transcends time and space, Ajata (see the note to verse 100) must be known to be the right conclusive knowledge to be obtained, and this is to be understood to be the aim of this verse.

Finally, from the three reasons given in this verse, we have to draw six conclusions:

- 1) Self is not a place
- 2) place does not exist in Self
- 3) 'I' is a thought
- 4) 'I' is the first place
- 5) Self has no rising
- 6) Self is not the first place.

448 That which rises as 'I' in the body is mind. When an attempt is made to find out wherefrom this thought 'I' rises in the body, it [the 'I'-thought, or mind, which thus searches] reaches the Heart, therefore, it is indeed from Heart [Self] that the mind rises.

Sadhu Om: These are the words of Sri Bhagavan in Who am I? When we wake up the 'I'-feeling rises from one place in the body and then spreads all over the body; what is described in this verse as 'first' is that place. However, Sri Bhagavan here gives us a clue that by so tracing the 'I'-thought, a place will not be found, but the tracing power, the one who traces, will dissolve into Self.

449 Other than thoughts there is no God, world or soul. In all thoughts, the thought 'I' is pervading. This 'I'-thought is the first of all thoughts. The source from which the 'I'-thought rises is the Heart.

Michael James: When in this verse and the previous verse Heart is said to be the source from which the mind rises, Heart should not be taken to be a place. It must be understood to be the thing from which mind emerges. The reason for asserting so is given in the next verse.

450 Those who abide firmly in Self will never know any other thing as a base [i.e. as a place] but Self. They, the really [Sat] shining [Chit] One, affording a place to all things – as does the screen [in a cinema show] – will make them shine [as if real].

Michael James: The ajnani feels that he is only the body, and therefore he experiences the universe as outside of himself. That is, he thinks that all things are existing or somewhere in space; in his view, earth or space are the base for all. The Jnani, on the other hand, does not limit Himself as a body and therefore knows that He is not in the universe but that it is in Him. That is to say, He experiences that His existence is the base on which, or place in which, all other things, including earth and space, exist. He knows that because He is, everything seems to exist, and hence they are in Him and He alone is their base.

75 The Experience of Happiness

- 451 To the extent that one dives within the Heart, to that extent one experiences that happiness which, though really shining as the unbroken nature of one's Self, is experienced interruptedly in so many different ways [by means of the sense-objects].
- 452 If you firmly fix your mind in the Heart, the true knowledge will dawn. Being then drowned in the experience of the joyous peace of *Sada Siva*, you will shine as the Sun of true knowledge with the splendour of a thousand rising suns.

Michael James: Sada Siva is the eternal supreme goodness, i.e. Self.

- 453 Whenever thoughts [desires] are satisfied, the mind reaches its source [the Heart] and experiences only the happiness of Self. This indeed happens in this life when the liked are obtained, when the dislikes are removed, and during the time of abiding in Self [*samadhi*], of swoon and of cherished sleep.

Sadhu Om: Refer to Who am I?

- 454 In this foolish life of egotistic delusion conceived by the petty mean mind, which is a contracted form of the *chittam*, is there anyone who experiences the true happiness of serene clarity which shines forth when the *chittam* remains without even the least thinking!

Michael James: Chittam is the storehouse of the knowledge and the consequent tendencies (vasanas) gathered from birth to birth.

76 Sleep

- 455 Even though people enjoy the highest happiness in deep sleep, where no other thing exists, instead of understanding that it is the true happiness and trying to achieve it in life [i.e. instead of finding the means – the Self-enquiry – to experience it uninterruptedly even in the waking state], craving to obtain other things, sense objects, as if they were the remedies for the miseries that occur, is utter foolishness.
- 456 Ignorance is concerned only with the other objects which are known to the mad ego in the two states other than sleep and swoon [i.e. waking and dream], but is not concerned with Self.

Michael James: 'the other objects' are objects other than Self.

- 457 Terming sleep as a 'sheath' [*kosha*] is only on account of the foolishness of Self-forgetfulness in which the waking state is considered to be a state of knowledge [*prajna*]. If the concept that the waking state is a worthy and true state of knowledge [*prajna*] is lost, then the very sleep will shine as the one, non-dual Reality.

Sadhu Om: Since one takes the ego-consciousness [the 'I am the body'-feeling], which exists in waking and dream, to be the real consciousness of one's existence, [one is in] a state of unconsciousness and ignorance. But if, by means of enquiry, one realises one's real state as the pure self-existent consciousness, devoid of the attachment to the body, the ego-consciousness which was experienced in waking and dream as one's existence will be found to be unreal, and the knowledge that the state which was referred to till then as sleep is the perfect, real Self-consciousness will dawn. It is only to make this clear that Sri Bhagavan said in Maharshi's Gospel: "Sleep is not ignorance, it is

one's pure state; wakefulness is not knowledge, it is ignorance. There is full knowledge in sleep, and total ignorance in waking ...”

458 That one who, not knowing his real greatness, is deluded into thinking that he was unable to see [or know] anything during sleep is only the fully fattened ego, the root, who was considering himself during the previous two states [waking and dream] to be the seer, [and it is not You, Self]!

Sadhu Om: For Self, which was shining during sleep, there was no delusion of such knowledge and ignorance. All these are only for the ego. It is only the ego, who was absent during sleep, who says after rising in the waking state that he did not know either other things or even himself.

459 When the triads [seer-seen-seeing, knower-known-knowing] disappear due to the destruction of the base, the foolish ego, and when the manyness [the states of waking and dream] is thus completely destroyed, the pure, broad Daylight [Self] that then shines like a hundred suns is the Night of Siva [Sivarathri].

Sadhu Om: Sivarathri is an auspicious night when all jivas including Brahma and Vishnu, worship Lord Siva. The beauty to be noticed here is that such a night is explained to be pure broad daylight. Why? Since no other thing is known there, it is night; and since the pure consciousness shines there, it is bright daylight.

460 When the beginningless, impure tendencies, which were the cause for waking and dream, are destroyed, then sleep, which was [considered to be] leading to bad results [i.e. *tamas*] and which was said to be a void and ridiculed as nescience, will be found to be *Turiyatitam* itself.

461 *Anandamaya* is said to be a sheath [*kosha*] because of the great desire towards the waking state of the one identifying with the *vijnanamaya kosha*. But when the strong ego identifying with *vijnanamaya* is destroyed, the *anandamaya* that survives will lose the nature of a sheath [*kosha*] and remain as the supreme Bliss.

Sadhu Om: Only because we have desires in the form of subtle tendencies to leave sleep often and to rise and make pravrittis in the vijnanamaya kosha [the intellect – buddhi], the sastras describe the blissful state of sleep as a sheath. It is only one's attachment, the desire to be active in vijnanamaya, that drags one out of the anandamaya kosha [sleep]. If this attachment is lost, the leaving of the blissful sleep will not happen. Then, the uninterrupted state of bliss [in sleep], instead of being a mere sheath, will shine as our natural, unending, true state of Bliss.

462 If one achieves the unshakeable state of Self-attention – one's Existence-Consciousness – till sleep overtakes one, one need not be heart-broken, feeling, 'Ah, the delusion of ignorant sleep, the forgetfulness, has overcome me!' [i.e. sleep will never come].

Sadhu Om: Since the knowing of the consciousness 'I am' continues even there, it will not be a sleep, but will be experienced as the state of the shining of the Self.

77 The Real Thing

463 The rope, the true knowledge [Self], into which disappears the wonderful snake, the mind-delusion – which exists so long as it is not enquired into and becomes non-existent when enquired into – alone is the real Thing.

Michael James: The whole universe, which seems to exist on account of the wonderful illusion, the mind, is not the real Thing. The real Thing is only Self-knowledge, the One, into which the whole universe disappears when mind, its root, merges. Since non-enquiry alone is the reason for the seeming existence of the mind, Self-enquiry alone is the only way to know the real Thing.

- 464 The knowledge of the supreme Bliss which shines naturally [as ‘am’], without any desire and beyond differences, in the well-established Self-abidance [*samadhi*] is the real Thing.
- 465 Since at all times and in all places the unmistakable Self [‘I am’] alone shines eternally as the one Thing, except That, all other things at all times and in all places have to be dismissed as false.

Michael James: What is called ‘time and place’ itself is false.

78 The Loss of Doership

- 466 The pure Bliss of peace will shine within only for those who have lost the sense of doership. For, this foolish sense of doership alone is the poisonous seed that brings forth all evil fruits.
- 467 Instead of going on, driven by the restless thoughts, performing actions such as ‘I should do this, I should give up that’ as if they were worthy to be done, acting according to how the Grace of God, the Lord of our soul, leads us, is the right form of truly worshipping Him.
- 468 In ancient days the chaste lady [Draupadi] had her honour saved and her sari lengthened by the Grace of Lord Krishna only when at last, letting go of her own hold on her sari, she lifted up both her hands in complete surrender to Him; and the strong wicked one [Duchasana] who was stripping her fell down abashed.

Sadhu Om: So long as Draupadi was trying to hold her sari by her own hands lest it should be stripped off and was calling Sri Krishna for help, His Grace did not begin to function. But as soon as, having complete faith in His gracious protection, she gave up holding her clothes with her own hands and lifted them above her head, her surrender became complete and hence His Grace began to function by making her sari grow unendingly and by making the wicked Duchasana, who was stripping her, fall down in a swoon. This incident is pointed out there in order to instruct us that we should give up the sense of doership and should thus surrender to God completely and unreservedly.

- 469 Those who, like a child who does not seek to know what is good for it [but leans upon its parents], purely depend upon the Mother, *Chit-Sakti*, the Grace of the Lord, reach His feet and remain naturally in His service [i.e. abide in Self], having lost all actions-done-with-doership, which are caused by the defectful delusion [*maya*] ‘I am the body’.

Sadhu Om: Rather than upon their own effort [which is only the sense of doership], devotees or aspirants always depend upon the power of the Grace of the Supreme. This power is personified here as the Mother. She is described as ‘Chit-Sakti’ because Grace shines in everyone in the form of Self-Consciousness – the sphurana ‘I-I’. Since this is purely on account of the unaccountable mercy of the Lord, such Grace of His is described here as the Mother.

The correct way of understanding Sri Bhagavan’s instruction here is that aspirants should completely and without doubting cling to the Self-consciousness ‘I-I’. Like a child which, not even trying to know what is good for itself, depends solely upon its mother, if an aspirant, not even trying to know any scriptures, trying to do any yoga, or expecting any help from outside, simply clings to the ‘I-

consciousness, that alone is sufficient and he will easily and surely be saved form all delusion and pitfalls.

Since clinging to the 'I'-consciousness is merely a 'being' and not a 'doing', neither does it need doership nor does it turn out to be action [karma] even. Thus the aspirant naturally ever abides in Self. Sri Bhagavan advises that this Self-abidance alone is the state of one's remaining in the service of the Lord.

470 The Lord who has fed you today will ever do so well. Therefore, live carefree, placing all your burden at His feet and having no thought of tomorrow or the future.

471 Know well that even performing *tapas* and yoga with the intention 'I should become an instrument in the hands of the Lord Siva' is a blemish to complete self-surrender, which is the highest form of being in His service.

Sadhu Om: Since even the thought 'I am an instrument in the Lord's hand' is a means by which the ego retains its individuality, it is directly opposed to the spirit of complete self-surrender, the 'I'-lessness. Are there not many good-natured people who engage themselves in prayers, worship, yoga and such virtuous acts with the aim of achieving power form God and doing good to the world as one divinely commissioned? It is exposed here that even such endeavours are egotistical and hence contrary to self-surrender.

472 One's thus becoming a slave to the Lord and one's remaining quiet and silent, devoid even of the egotistical thought 'I am His slave', is Self-abidance, and this is the supreme Knowledge.

Sadhu Om: How the same supreme knowledge which is obtained through the path of Jnana [Self-enquiry] is obtained even through the path of Bhakti [self-surrender] is shown in this verse.

473 Seated in the Heart of everyone as Heart, the Lord will ordain everything according to one's destiny [*prarabdha*]. Therefore, if we unswervingly abide in Self, our source, all will happen unerringly.

474 Those who have the strong faith, "He who has planted this tree will water it", will never be distressed. If he [who planted it] sees the tree drying up, let even that pathetic sight be only his burden.

Michael James: Devotees with great faith in God never feel concern for the needs of their life, because they are so sure that God will never abandon them. Even when it happens that they are not provided with their needs, they do not feel that they are afflicted; they simply endure with it patiently, feeling that it is only God who has to suffer by seeing them troubled. Hence on all occasions they are happy. This verse thus assures that for such devotees there is no misery at all in life.

475 Since God alone is the root, all that is offered to Him will go to the whole banyan tree, the world and souls which sprout out from Him, the root.

Sadhu Om: Submitting oneself to God is like watering a banyan tree at its root. If, rejecting this self-surrender, which is nothing but the state of true knowledge, one engages oneself in the world thinking that one is doing service to the world, it is just like spraying water on the leaves and branches of the banyan tree. On the other hand, if one surrenders oneself to God, truly that alone is the real service to the whole world and all the souls.

Here, some may doubt that this instruction seems to contradict the 5th verse of Upadesa Undiyar. But in truth it is not so. How? Verse 5 of Upadesa Undiyar points out that worshipping the universe by

imagining it to be God is only a thought-process [enni vazhipadal], and that its fruit is also only the purification of one's own mind [karuttai tirutti – as pointed out in verse 3]; such worship is not for the benefit of the universe. But by surrendering oneself to God, thought or imaginations stop and one attains the state of perfect knowledge. Attaining this supreme knowledge alone is truly helping or serving the world. Hence, the instruction given in verse 5 of Upadesa Undiyar is for those sadhakas who want to gain purification of mind [Chitta-suddhi], whereas the instruction given in this present verse is for those sadhakas who want truly to serve the whole world. Therefore, if we scrutinize in this way, it becomes clear that these two instructions do not contradict each other.

How is the true knowledge alone the best service to the world? Let us see. Suppose one dreams in his sleep that his friends are wounded by a tiger. Rather than his supplying medicine to his dream-friends, would not his waking up from his sleep be doing real help to them? No other efforts taken in the dream itself will be a real service to them. So also, realising Self, which is the real awakening alone will be the only proper way of serving the whole universe.

Since jumping into service of the world with a sense of doership will increase the egoism of an aspirant instead of giving him chitta-suddhi, the real benefit of karma yogi, Sri Bhagavan, with the intention of saving aspirants from such ruin, gives them proper instruction in this verse.

79 The Attainment of Actionlessness

476 Whether or not one is performing actions, if the delusion of individuality – the ego, 'I am the doer of actions' – is completely annihilated, that is the attainment of actionlessness.

Sadhu Om: People generally think that the attainment of actionlessness is a state in which one should remain still, giving up all activities. But this is wrong. Sri Bhagavan Ramana proclaims that the loss of doership alone is the right kind of actionlessness, and this alone is nishkama karma – action done without any desire for result.

80 Self-Surrender

477 To him who surrenders himself ['I' and 'mine'] to the Lord, the Lord gives Himself here and now. Only such a one who has thus lost himself [in God] and gained the knowledge of *Brahman*, remains ever in the experience of the pure supreme Bliss of Siva.

Sri Muruganar and Michael James: Surrendering oneself to God means surrendering the notions 'I' and 'mine'. The Lord's giving Himself means that, after the loss of 'I' and 'mine', Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, alone remains. To denote the nature of his shining forth as Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, Sri Bhagavan says that 'such a one gains the Knowledge [chit] and drowns in Bliss [ananda]'. Since Existence-Consciousness-Bliss, which is one's own nature, takes no time to shine forth as soon as 'I' and 'mine' are lost, it is said in this verse that the Lord gives Himself 'here and now'.

478 When scrutinized well, what results from all the efforts made in *Bhakti-marga* is that one's ego-form dissolves through the strength of intense meditation on the Feet of the Lord, and the individuality is lost at His Feet by self-surrender.

Michael James: How does the ego-form dissolve through the strength of intense meditation on the Feet of the Lord? Intense meditation on His Feet is possible only when there is intense love towards Him. Because of such intense love for Him, the aspirant does not care for his own body and its needs.

Thus he loses interest in his own individuality and hence his ego-form is dissolved. It is to be noted here, however, that mere concentration without love cannot bring forth egolessness.

479 Erase your individuality, which cannot have a stand separate from the Lord, who shines as everything. The right definition of supreme devotion, where the blissful peace prevails, is the surrender of the evil fickle ego-self.

480 “Offer the self to the Lord”, they say. Then whose else is it but His already? Therefore, it is one’s duty to repent for having stolen His possession [as ‘I’ and ‘mine’] and to restore it back to His Lotus Feet.

***Sri Muruganar:** Those who say “We should surrender ourself to the Lord” do not have an accurate insight into devotion [pra-bhakti]. Self-surrender would become an endeavour [tapas] only if there were a separate freedom for the jiva to do; is it not so? But since the so-called jivatma is ever the possession of the Lord, having no freedom of his own, his foremost duty is that being ashamed of his act of stealing by rising as an independent entity, ‘I’, he should merge back into Him once for all and should become non-existent.*

481 There will be no cause for fear for one whose mind abides by the will of the Lord praying, “O Lord, let nothing happen according to my wish; let only Thy will be done”.

482 Not giving the least room in one’s heart – which is having a great love towards attending towards Self, the true form of God – to any thought raised by *vasanas* is the right way of offering oneself to the Lord.

***Sadhu Om:** These are the words of Grace given by Sri Bhagavan in Who am I?: “Giving no room at all to the rising of thoughts other than the thought of Self [Atma-chintanai – i.e. Self-attention] and being firmly established in Self is surrendering oneself to the Lord”. Refer also to verse 1189.*

483 Giving up all one’s wishes through the attitude “Thy wish alone is mine” is the state of complete surrender, in which the evil ego, the original veiling, the first-rising one, is annihilated. Thus should you know.

484 When inwardly enquired, where can the thief exist who has with attachment and desire grabbed as ‘I’ and ‘mine’ the possessions [the soul, body, world and so on] of the supreme infinite Lord?

***Sadhu Om:** Since the mind, body and world rise from Self [God], they are described as the possessions of God.*

This verse and the next explain how Self-enquiry and self-surrender result in each other, the result being egolessness.

485 When the ego, losing all its mischievousness, dies in Self-abidance [*nishtha*] by being a prey to the power of Siva [Siva-Sakti] and becomes inert like a log, since the Bliss ending all miseries is experienced there, only then is self-surrender true.

486 Offering oneself with great devotion to the Lord, who shines as pure Self, is just like breaking the toe off the idol of Ganapathi made of sweet jaggery and offering it to the idol itself.

***Michael James:** Refer to the footnote in The Path of Sri Ramana Part II, part 93, for the story of the jaggery Ganapathi.*

Sri Muruganar and Sadhu Om: When even self-surrender, which is so much glorified in dualism as the highest and final form of devotion to God, is thus exposed by Sri Bhagavan in this Upadesa to be meaningless, we should consider of what avail all other forms of worship will be! Therefore, remaining quiet, abiding in Self, giving no room to the rising of 'I', which is the sin of usurping God's possession, is the best of all worships.

487 Unconditionally place your mind at the Feet of the Lord who has Sakti on His left. Then, since the tricky 'I' and 'mine' are dead, the glorious, blissful Supreme Self will shine triumphantly.

Michael James: 'The Lord who has Sakti on His left' is a traditional way of referring to Lord Siva.

81 The Attitude Towards Enemies

488 Good people [aspirants] should not with dejection hate enemies even a little, however bad they may be. For even hatred, like desire, is fit to be hated.

Sadhu Om: This verse gives the same upadesa given by Sri Bhagavan in Who am I?: "One should not dislike others, no matter how bad they are. It is both likes and dislikes that are to be disliked."

489 Since that [this body, and the ego, the form of which is 'I am the body'] which is rejected by an aspirant as 'not I' is the same as that which is ridiculed by his enemies, for an aspirant who wants to destroy the ego [himself], the various insults from his enemies are just like an anvil to the goldsmith.

Sadhu Om: An aspirant means one who truly wants to destroy his ego-sense. He and his ego-sense are one and the same. Through the paths of both self-surrender and Self-enquiry, what he rejects or hates is the ego or himself. Since those [his enemies] who hate or scold him are also doing the same, they are pointed out here to be great helpers in his project. This is explained by the example of a goldsmith and his anvil. Because the anvil is resisting from below each of his hammer-blows, the goldsmith is able to shape his metal properly. If the anvil is soft, all the efforts of the goldsmith will be in vain. Similarly, the more appreciation an aspirant receives, the less will be the subsidence of his ego. Thus, rather than his appreciators, his enemies are helping the aspirant in his sadhana.

490 Only that mighty one who has the great valour to conquer hatred by love is a true Sage [*muni*].

Sri Muruganar: "Hatred cannot end hatred" was the teaching of Buddha. However, even some spiritual aspirants, on seeing atrocities and thinking that it is their duty to attack the wrong-doers, jump into the matter with anger. To point out that it is not proper for them to do so, this instruction was given.

82 The Simplicity of Life

491 If some men of abundant wealth were to give up willingly a few of their luxurious modes of living, millions of pitifully suffering poor could live.

492 Since the gracious Lord produces the needful food for all creatures only in the needed quantity, if one consumes more than what is needed to sustain life, it is a sin of stealing violently other's food. Thus should you know.

Sri Muruganar: Although this verse mentions only food, it is applicable to all the necessities of life. Whatever one heaps more than necessary is nothing but heaping sins. This is well confirmed by the next verse.

83 Chapter Concerning the Crime of Excess

493 By the crime of excess, even the nectar will become poison. By the crime of excess, many are the evils. Hence one should realize the crime of excess and remove it.

Sri Muruganar: Though it is said that fasting and non-sleep are in a way an aid to spiritual progress, excess of them is certainly harmful. Bhagavad Gita points out: "For he who sleeps more or utterly restrains sleep, and for he who eats more or fasts more, there is no success in yoga." Sri Bhagavan also used to say that more than fasting, sattvic food in moderate quantities is the proper aid for sadhana.

84 Humility

494 One's greatness increases to the extent one becomes humble. The reason why God is Supreme to such an extent that the whole universe bows to Him, is His sublime state of humility in which the deluded ego never rises unknowingly.

495 For a wise aspirant who seeks to gain true greatness, it is best to pay his homage [namaskarams] to others until complete egolessness is achieved. On the other hand, it is indeed dangerous for him to accept homage from others.

Sadhu Om: The wise aspirant mentioned here is only he who aims at Self-realization. Since the ego subsides by doing namaskarams to others, it is pointed out to be 'best', and since the ego waxes by accepting namaskarams from others, it is pointed out to be 'indeed dangerous'.

496 Is it not on account of His behaving so humbly, like one willingly ever in the service of every creature, that God stands worthy of all the glorious worships ever performed by all the worlds?

497 By His seeing Himself in all, by His being humble even to His devotees who bow to everyone, and by His naturally remaining at such a pinnacle of meekness that nothing can be meeker than Himself, the state of being Supreme has come to the Lord.

Sadhu Om: Through verses 494, 496 and 497, Sri Bhagavan reveals a unique and surprising truth, that is, He explains how God stands worthy of being worshipped by all the worlds. Sri Bhagavan points out here that it is because God is naturally and lovingly humble to everyone in all His own creation. The following incident will prove that Bhagavan Sri Ramana, for this same reason, is none but God Himself.

A devotee asked Sri Bhagavan, "What is your feeling when hundreds of people come and do pranams to you?" Without hesitation, Sri Bhagavan replied: "First I do my namaskarams to each one of them as soon as they enter this room, and then only they do so. Subsiding one's ego is the right and real form of doing namaskarams. Do I not have more chances each day to do such namaskarams than anyone who comes here?"

This reply of His contains a lot of secret and deep meaning to ponder over. The essence of the instruction given here is that being ever humble, without allowing the rising of the ego, is the only way to achieve greatness.

498 Since mind itself is both the minutest [*anu*] and the biggest [*mahat*], Self, the Reality which is beyond the mind, is transcendent [*atitam*]. Besides, Self is bigger than all that is known as biggest and minuter than all that is known as minutest.

Sadhu Om: Refer to the 5th stanza of Atma Vidya Kirtanam [The Song on the Science of Self], in which Sri Bhagavan says that Self is the Space containing the mind-space [which in turn contains the physical space].

499 The hollow and flimsy straw floats high on the surface of the sea, while the heavy pearl lies low at the bottom of the sea. Likewise, though the worthless one is positioned above, he is really low, and though the great one is positioned below, he is never low.

Sadhu Om: The last two lines of this verse are verse 973 of Tirukkural, the 3rd verse in the chapter entitled 'Greatness'.

One day, some devotees contrived to send away from the presence of Sri Bhagavan a person who adamantly wanted a seat no less high than that of Sri Bhagavan. Guessing what had happened, Sri Bhagavan at once remarked, pointing his finger above his head, "Oh, you are very happy in driving him away; but what will you do with this one?" Just above the head of Sri Bhagavan, there was a monkey sitting on the branch of a tree stretching its tail towards him! The devotees felt repentant for their mistake. Is not this incident a direct and practical explanation of this verse?

85 What is Worthy to be Done

500 Worthy to be done is Self-enquiry; worthy to be gained is the glory of Self; worthy to be given up is the ego-sense; worthy to be merged into is one's own source, so that cares and anxieties dies.

501 Worthy to be achieved is true knowledge; worthy to be contemplated by the mind are the Feet of the Lord; surely worthy to be joined is the company of Sages [*satsang*]; worthy to have welling up in the heart is Bliss.

Michael James: Verse 1144 is also to be read here.