

## *Sorupa Saram*

### *(The Essence of One's Own True Nature)*

by Sorupananda

*Sorupa Saram* (also known as *Swarupa Saram* when it is spelt in the Sanskrit way) is a Tamil advaitic work that was composed by Sorupananda, a distinguished Tamil saint and Guru who lived near Virai, a Tamil town, probably around the end of the sixteenth century. He is associated historically with Tattvarayar, an eminent scholar who was also his sister's son. The following biographical information about them has been taken from a Tamil introduction to *Sorupa Saram*:<sup>1</sup>

Sorupananda and Tattvarayar were fluent in Sanskrit and Tamil, and both were learned in all the *sastras*. However, the true realisation dawned upon them that the profit to be gained from this limited knowledge, however praiseworthy, did not have the power to grant freedom from birth in the way that true knowledge does. They realised that it showed a lack of judgement on their part to devote their time any longer to the acquisition of this limited knowledge, which confers advantages in this life only. By doing so, they would waste a human birth, something that is very hard to attain. Since they were both overcome by a desire to free themselves from worldly attachments, they devoted themselves to the task of seeking out a *Sadguru* who could bestow *jnana*.

Having made this resolution, the two of them, before leaving their dwelling-place, made an agreement with one another: 'Whichever of us is first to obtain the fortune of a Guru's *darshan*, he shall assume the position of Guru to the other.'

They then set out on a pilgrimage, Sorupananda to the South, and Tattvarayar to the North. Upon the banks of the Kaveri, in a holy place called Govattam, Sorupananda had a miraculous experience in which he attained a tranquillity of mind that had thus far eluded him.

'This occurrence is due to the presence here of some great *mahatma*,' he decided.

Upon consulting the learned people in that place, he discovered that a great being called Sri Sivaprakasa Swami dwelt there in a patch of rushes, immersed in perpetual *samadhi*. However, he ascertained that on a few occasions he had been known to come outside in the morning time.

Going immediately to the holy presence of that *Sadguru*, he waited until Sivaprakasa Swami emerged from his state of absorption and came outside. Making obeisance in the proper manner, he beseeched him to accept him as his devotee. When he had received the Guru's grace, Sorupananda waited for Tattvarayar's return.

Tattvarayar had travelled to the North, but he had not obtained the *darshan* of any Guru. When he lost all hope of doing so, he gave up his search and returned to the South. On his way, he had the good fortune to meet Sorupananda, who by that time had realised the Self. Tattvarayar then received the grace of his uncle.

Whilst Sorupananda and Tattvarayar were peacefully dwelling in this way as Guru and disciple, Sorupananda one day ordered that oil be brought for an oil bath. Since that day was *amavasai*, the disciple was acutely aware of the sastraic injunction that an oil bath was forbidden on the day of the ancestors.

'But today is *amavasai*, [new moon]' he said.

On hearing this, Sorupananda said: 'What have all the prohibitions of the *sastras* to do with *sadhus*? Although you have dwelt in my presence for many days, you remain unable to free yourself from the constraints of the *sastras*. Is there really any advantage in your remaining here any longer?'

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<sup>1</sup> *Sorupa Saram*, pub. K. Nagarajan, 1971.

Thus, by means of this question and answer, he confirmed his suspicion that for Tattvarayar birth was not yet at an end. Tattvarayar was shocked by these compassionate words from his Guru. Realising that he had not yet succeeded in eliminating his *vasanas*, he was filled with remorse.

He came to the following decision: 'Rather than remaining here and besmirching the holy presence of my Guru, it would be better to drown this sinful block beneath the ocean.'

Then, realising that it was forbidden to turn one's back on the Guru, he retired, slowly moving backwards.

When Tattvarayar was departing in this way, meditating on his Guru, the devotees who were accompanying him took down the gems of truth that came out of his lips as his divine utterances and submitted them to Sorupanandar. These words were published in *jnana* texts that are revered even today.

When Sorupananda saw these works he was astonished by their profundity. Realising in his heart that such a sea of learning did not deserve to drown in the watery ocean, he commanded Tattvarayar to return to his presence.

As soon as Tattvarayar returned Sorupananda said to him: 'These difficult works, useful as they are to yourself, will not easily benefit the world as a whole. Compose, therefore, a simple work that everyone may understand and win salvation from.'

After giving this command, Sorupananda went off to eat. In accordance with his Guru's wishes Tattvarayar composed and completed *Cacivanna Bodham* while his Guru was still eating. This work became part of the *Mohavatai Bharani*.

Ramana Maharshi was particularly fond of the next development in the story. This is how he narrated the story. The extract is from *Day by Day with Bhagavan*, 21st November 1945:

Tattvarayar composed a *bharani* [a kind of poetical composition in Tamil] in honour of his Guru, Swarupananda, and convened an assembly of learned pandits to hear the work and assess its value. The pandits raised the objection that a *bharani* was only composed in honour of great heroes capable of killing a thousand elephants, and that it was not in order to compose such a work in honour of an ascetic. Thereupon the author said, 'Let us all go to my Guru and we shall have this matter settled there'. They went to the Guru and, after all had taken their seats, the author told his Guru the purpose of their coming there. The Guru sat silent and all the others also remained in *mauna*. The whole day passed, night came, and some more days and nights, and yet all sat there silently, no thought at all occurring to any of them and nobody thinking or asking why they had come there. After three or four days like this, the Guru moved his mind a bit and thereupon the assembly regained their thought activity. They then declared, 'Conquering a thousand elephants is nothing beside this Guru's power to conquer the rutting elephants of all our egos put together. So certainly he deserves the *bharani* in his honour!'

Though Tattvaraya was the author of many verses (most of which have disappeared) Sorupananda himself only wrote one poem. This was *Sorupa Saram*, a distillation of his advaitic experience. This work was highly regarded by Ramana Maharshi. When he gave Annamalai Swami a list of six books to read, he included *Sorupa Saram* on a list that also included *Kaivalya Navaneetam*, *Ribhu Gita*, *Ashtavakra Gita*, *Ellam Ondre*, and *Yoga Vasishtha*. This recommendation puts the text in very distinguished company.

This is the first-ever English translation of *Sorupa Saram*. It has been translated Dr T. V. Venkatasubramanian and Robert Butler and edited by David Godman. The verses themselves are by Sorupananda and the interpolated questions, answers and comments are by a later, unknown

commentator. However, these additional remarks have always been associated with the work and they are now regarded as being an integral part of it.

### **Benedictory Verse Addressed to the Self**

- 1 May the unique Self, which appears as various objects in the same way that gold takes the shape of the mould into which it is cast, be our support and guide for composing this work, *Sorupa Saram*, which proclaims that the nature of the world is only consciousness.

#### **Text**

- 2 Since the three kinds of differences do not exist, everything is only consciousness. The certainty of the existence of consciousness is stated in this way.

Since there is nothing at all that is different from consciousness, the five elements, along with the five senses and the five organs of sense, all these are consciousness only. Whatever is in the beginning, in the middle and in the end – all these are also consciousness. The indescribable illusion is also consciousness. The one who perceives everything and the act of perceiving are also consciousness.

- 3 **Question:** Is there a logical way of concluding that everything is consciousness alone?  
**Answer:** Yes, there is.

All the world's diversity, which derives from the misperceptions of the mind and which appears to be real – is it not the witnessing consciousness alone? Hence, everything – beginning with liberation and including purity and impurity, joy and misery, that which is and that which is not – is only being.

- 4 **Question:** If all is being, do objects appear as one's own Self, which is being-consciousness-bliss?  
**Answer:** Yes, they do.

In whichever direction I look there is absolute perfection. The real nature of all the holy waters is blissful consciousness. The real nature of all the verses praising the Lord is bliss. Apart from me, what other form can exist?

- 5 **Question:** Is the above statement merely verbal or is it experienced?  
**Answer:** It is experienced as well.

My Guru instructed: 'Sir, the world appearance and its substratum – all these are you. There is no one who does not say "I". Therefore enquire thoroughly into the "I".' If this is known intently and thoroughly [one can say] 'I myself am pure consciousness'. Hence, I am the primal entity.

- 6 **Question:** Which entity had this experience of the Self, and when did the experience arise?  
**Answer:** It is experienced by myself and the experience is ever-present.

I saw my real nature as pure consciousness. I see only myself, and not the great multitude of the world. Simply because I had not looked at myself thoroughly, did I at any time cease to exist?

7 **Question:** If everything is only the Self, why are the names many?

**Answer:** The many names do not make the Self multiple.

Since everyone abides as 'I' and declares himself to be 'I', right up to Iswara there is nothing other than 'me'. The same person is addressed differently as son, brother and father; but for that reason will the body of the person become different?

8 **Question:** If so, the known and the knower will be different.

**Answer:** No, they won't be different.

It is my Self who remained as the [seer] 'I'. Those objects that were rejected as 'not I' – these too are my Self. It is like someone who goes to sleep at night as himself, manifests [in dream] as the form of [the seer and] the world and then wakes up as himself.

9 **Question:** What is the inherent nature of the Self that shone as everything?

**Answer:** It is 'shining by itself as itself'.

The Self that shines as the body, as the beloved soul, as all the actions, as ignorance, as the enjoyment of true knowledge, as the blissful reality and as the one consciousness – that indeed is my own real nature.

10 **Question:** Is it possible to give a true name to the Self that shines by itself?

**Answer:** As it is a transcendental experience, it is not possible to give it a name.

They will describe it as bliss, as transcendence, and as the witness of all that remains at the culmination of the four *Vedas*. What designation might I apply to my real nature, which all the treatises on *jnana* are unable to track down?

11 **Question:** If it is transcendent, there is no scope for enquiry. It is therefore necessary to indicate and signify it in some way.

**Answer:** As it is everything and as it is nothing, it is beyond description.

Is it 'I'? Is it That? Am I That? Is That 'I'? Is it shining *jnana*? Is it the source of all sounds [*nadanta*]? Is it *mauna*? Is it the pure state [*suddha*]? Is it a void? The self-shining natural state is all these and none of them.

12 **Question:** If it is said like this, none can realise the Self, and so there can be no realisation. Hence, a name should be given.

**Answer:** The following are the names given by the *Vedas*.

Knowledge is 'I'; love is 'I'; perfect bliss is 'I'; being is 'I'; consciousness is 'I'; tranquillity is 'I'; purity is 'I'; that which is unique and beyond the scope of the *Vedas* is 'I'; pure consciousness, the source of all, is 'I'.

13 **Question:** Are all these descriptions experienced?

**Answer:** They are experienced and also transcended.

My son! I became and dwelt as the indescribable experience, transcendental joy, and everything else. I felt no need to declare, 'I have rid myself of the misery-causing karma'. I recovered my Self and have been freed.

14 **Question:** What is the benefit arising from this experience?

**Answer:** It is becoming the ruler of the kingdom of liberation.

I obtained the supreme lordship that is never lost. I burned up the pair of opposites – happiness and misery. I gave up the life of the body-forest, which tormented the mind. I entered and occupied the house of liberation.

15 **Question:** What play will this king witness on his stage?

**Answer:** He will witness the dance of the three *avasthas* [waking, dreaming and sleeping].

In the waking state I will witness the dance of the five organs of action and the five organs of sense. In dream I will witness the dance of the mind. In thought-free sleep I will dance the object-free void-dance. However, I will [always] remain as the exalted essence [the Self].

16 **Question:** Where was this experience when you were regarding happiness and misery as 'I'?

**Answer:** Then, too, I was remaining as the Self. I was nothing else.

Who was the one who remained as [the ego] 'I'? If I see him, I will not allow him to take up the form of the body. Only the 'I' whose form is consciousness is the real 'I'. All other 'I's will get bound to a form and go through birth and death.

17 **Question:** The Self is immutable. Will it not get bound if it gets involved in activities?

**Answer:** As the Self remains a witness, like the sun, it will not get bound.

Even if I bear the burdens of the family and have them follow me like a shadow, or even if the cloud called '*maya*' veils, I am, without doubt, the sun of knowledge, self-shining as pure light and remaining as the witness [of the world].

18 **Question:** But the *jnani* is not remaining motionless like the sun.

**Answer:** He also remains actionless.

Whatever comes, whatever actions are performed, in whatever I may delight, I am only pure consciousness, remaining aloof and aware, without becoming any of them.

19 **Question:** All things move because the Self makes them move. Hence, is there bondage for the Self?

**Answer:** Like the rope that makes the top spin, there is no bondage for it.

In the same way that a top is made to spin by a rope, desires fructify in my presence. But, like the rope that is used to spin the top, I will not merge with them. I have rid myself of their connection. I became my own Self. My bondage is indeed gone.

20 **Question:** But what is the way by which knowledge and ignorance was destroyed?

**Answer:** In one's own experience of the Self neither attainment of knowledge nor removal of ignorance is seen.

By what did ignorance get destroyed? Through what did knowledge gained through enquiry arise? How was the clarity, known as the experience of true knowledge, obtained? Other than my Self, what do I know?

21 **Question:** If the dawn of knowledge and the removal of ignorance are not known, how can we call such a one a *jnani*?

**Answer:** With ignorance removed from knowledge, like unreal from real, becoming both and becoming neither – this indeed is the nature of the *jnani*.

When, ultimately, the real shone as ‘I’, did the unreal, which became ‘I’, go anywhere? I myself became the base of both the real and the unreal, but remained beyond the reach of the conflicting pair of real and unreal.

22 **Question:** Previously it was stated, ‘I am the possessor of the body, but not the body’. Now it is said, ‘I will remain different from the body and also be the body’. Which is true?

**Answer:** The truth is remaining in but aloof from the body, like the kernel in the mango seed that remains within the seed shell, but aloof from it.

Oh, I said, ‘I am the body!’ I regarded wealth as mine! I felt, ‘I am the enjoyer!’ Are all these not false? Though I remained as everything, beginning with the body, the real ‘I’ always remained aloof without associating with anything, like the mango kernel in the seed of the sweet mango.

23 **Question:** Is remaining like this [attached and detached] only in the period of ignorance, or also in the period of knowledge?

**Answer:** It is in both.

The periods of *jnana* and *ajnana* were seen and passed like the periods in which intellect had not developed and in which intellect had developed. Everything that was a superimposition during practice has now become false.

24 **Question:** Is there birth and death during the period of ignorance that exists prior to this experience?

**Answer:** As these are illusory, they do not exist.

Oh, where was I born? What did I worship as God? Where did I seek refuge? When I became the blissful essence, the reality, experiencing unbroken bliss, were not all these [known to be] false?

25 **Question:** In what condition was the Self before the dawning of this experience?

**Answer:** When I am redeemed by realisation of the truth, I am not confused any more.

I lived as ‘someone’. I laboured in vain for ‘somebody’. I underwent change, taking a thousand names. Now, enough of this! I have seen my Self, that which is hard for me to discover. Oh, now I am free!

26 **Question:** What is obtained and experienced if one sees the Self?

**Answer:** The mind dissolves in love and one becomes *sat-chit-ananda*.

I made the deceitful mind melt and dissolve. I knew myself as I really am. Since I am the substratum for everything, I became and dwelt as myself, the clear ambrosia of *sat-chit-ananda*.

27 **Question:** Is the statement ‘The world is only the Self’ figuratively true and not literally true?

**Answer:** Anything seen cannot exist apart from the eye. Similarly, the world does not exist apart from the Self.

Can there be anything seen that is apart from the eye? Can there be anything heard that is apart from the ear? Did any of the other four elements manifest independently of space? Though the world may appear like a flowing mirage-river, when thoroughly examined, can the world exist apart from the Self?

28 **Question:** Seer and seen appear different.

**Answer:** This is just like seeing gold as various ornaments. They are not different.

Here, other than myself, nothing else exists. I swear to this. A gold ornament does not exist separate from the gold. In the same way that one can change the shape of gold and give it different names, I described myself in various ways.

29 **Question:** What is the nature of this experience?

**Answer:** It is the transcendence that arises, dissolving thoughts, and in which everything shines as the Self.

It is beyond the reach of speech and it is beyond the reach of the mind. It is the clear ambrosia with which one does not get satiated, even when it overflows. Like saliva that secretes on the tongue, it springs forth from within me. Like a dumb pot it remained as ‘I’, without being another.<sup>2</sup>

30 **Question:** When everything exists as *Sivam*, why should one become *Sivam*?

**Answer:** This is to enable the removal of all differences of ‘one’ and ‘two’ and to become perfect *jnana*.

Do not question, ‘What is the bliss of Siva? What is Siva-nature? What is Siva’s activity?’ It is only the fullness of consciousness that does not get divided, does not unite, and does not become different.

31 **Question:** What is to be rejected as *asat* [unreal], and what is to be accepted as *sat* [reality]?

**Answer:** Reject objects that are known as *asat* and accept consciousness as *sat*. This is tranquillity.

All the *tattvas* [principles] that one knows are foreign to oneself. While rejecting these objects as ‘not-Self’, realise the Self through the consciousness that remains as the one who rejects objects. This is tranquillity.

32 **Question:** If tranquillity is the one true thing, what is the witness?

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<sup>2</sup> A dumb pot is a spherical, baked mud pot, without a mouth, that absorbs water through its porous skin.

**Answer:** Tranquillity is itself everything, beginning from the witness right down to *svanubhava* [one's own experience]. It is *Sivam*, the state of realisation.

Tranquillity is itself the witness-Self. The witness-Self is itself *Brahman*. *Brahman* is fullness. The pure fullness realised by enquiry is itself the ever-present *svanubhava*. This is the state of realisation, which is itself *Sivam*.

- 33 **Question:** Even if the mind subsides, *sayujyam* is attained only when *maya* is destroyed.  
**Answer:** The destruction of the mind is itself the destruction of *maya*, and hence it is *sayujyam*.

I have seen the way of the birth of the mind that leads to the birth of the world and the birth of the doer, the ego 'I'. The non-subsidence of the mind is itself *maya*. The firmness of those who destroy this *maya* is *sayujyam*.

- 34 **Question:** If this is *sayujyam*, where will the past karmas go?  
**Answer:** In this experience they will disappear without leaving a trace.

I rid myself of the fear that arises from the misery of imagining, 'I underwent an endless succession of births and deaths'. All of the ancient world has become the vast, empty expanse that is my own Self, since everything other than my Self is false.

- 35 **Question:** When there is such an experience, why perform karma?  
**Answer:** When this experience has not arisen, actions are performed.

Until I became the endless, blissful experience through the superior wisdom that regards all worship and similar things as the 'not-Self', I worshipped the gods at the prescribed times and observed all the vows.

- 36 **Question:** Who will attain this experience?  
**Answer:** Only those who are pure and who have the prescribed qualifications will attain it.

The experience of reality – eternally abiding and shining as oneness, as freedom from impurity, as fullness, and as truth – is attained only by those who are most qualified, pure, who have a steady mind, and who are undergoing their final birth.

- 37 **Question:** What are the marks of a pure one?  
**Answer:** They are as follows:  
[The answer is the content of verses 37-42]

They will not utter harsh words; they will not hate anyone; they will be of cheerful countenance; whatever things they relish, they will not use them for themselves but will offer them to the great ones; they will not associate with evil persons; they will not curse anyone; their eyes will not blaze with anger. These are the ones who will rid themselves of birth.

- 38 They will not value as real those things that are destructible; they will never speak out, saying, 'This is good and this is bad'; they will not grieve over events of the past; they will not condemn anything; they are the exalted ones.



39 They will not speak contemptuously of the ordinances of the *Vedas*; they will not remain without chanting and melting with devotion as long as they live; they will not forget death; they will not get attached to this world through weakness of mind; they are the ones who will not be born again.

40 They will not experience at all sudden movements of the mind; they will only desire to know the path of salvation; their minds will not get immersed in attachments, saying greedily, 'This is my wealth, my house, my wife and my children'. Such are the mature ones.

41 Will they care for things that are valued by others as desirable and not desirable? When one really looks, those who become tranquil and eternal, who experience truth and abide in the final state are few in number.

42 Those who do not see anything other than their Self here and in the hereafter, who are beyond both and without any division, will they degrade themselves by not regarding as trivial this phantom-like world appearance that is an illusory play of the *sankalpas*?

43 **Question:** *Sastra vasana* [a latent desire for scriptural knowledge], or the *vasanas* of knowledge and ignorance – will these too not arise in those *jnanis* even through forgetfulness?

**Answer:** As these are *vasanas*, they will not arise.

During every superimposing *avastha* the liberated one clearly knows that the illusion of sound and the illusion of real and unreal are only the illusion of the mind, because [he knows that] the superimposed *avastha* that appears and disappears is false.

44 **Question:** If this is so, for such ones what constitutes the worship of God?

**Answer:** Worship is only seeing the Self.

The great *tapasvin* devotedly worships with the flower of tranquil space and with the mantra of aloneness the deity [who abides as] the expanse of consciousness in the temple of the body. Who can equal those who live forever, revering such *jnanis*?

45 **Question:** Why does everyone not perform this worship?

**Answer:** Because of ignorance.

When the three prime fruits [mango, jackfruit and banana] along with rice pudding made with milk are right in front of them, they will long for food vomited by a dog. Without knowing that we ourselves are the great essence, the basis of all things and all powers, they become slaves of the mighty.

46 This concerns the fate of those who insult *jnanis*.

They do not know fairness and rectitude; they do not know the phantom-like nature of the world; they do not know themselves; they do not realise the disgrace that arises from their ignorance. They are dark within themselves and without any reason insult those who are good, the righteous. Which way will these people go?

47 **Question:** Are all books, other than those *jnana* scriptures that speak of supreme bliss, not true?

**Answer:** No, they are not true.

The five flowers are his arrows. The six-legged beetle is the bowstring. The soft sugarcane is his bow. This bodiless cupid is a valorous warrior. He will infect everyone with powerful lust. All this is false. Similarly, is all this barren world-appearance true? You yourself reply.

48 **Question:** Are time and so on false?

**Answer:** To those who are not attached to anything, they are certainly false.

Be it time, or God, or karma, or illusory observances, the workings of the mind, the great enthusiasm that accomplishes things – to him who is not attached in any way, where is the question of taking them to be either good or bad?

49 **Question:** Are they [time and so on] at least necessary for the body?

**Answer:** Since the body is not-Self, they are not needed.

Why are they born, those cunning ones who do not seek their Self? What is this body that has come into being through food? Who is the 'I'? How many were the bodies that were discarded before? Innumerable were the bodies that were taken with delight again and again.

50 **Question:** But are all these [*jivas*] reflected consciousness?

**Answer:** As there is no knowledge without the Guru enabling one to know, they are only reflected consciousness.

To reveal the unreal as unreal and the real as real, truly a Guru was needed. Alas! All the *jivas*, becoming kings and achieving greatness,<sup>3</sup> are only reflected consciousness.

51 **Question:** Why should the one *Brahman* appear differentiated as many, as reflected consciousness?

**Answer:** To those who do not see it as one, it appears as many.

What is the truth of the world reflection that appears in the one [*Brahman*] but does not appear as one? Like the scenes that appear to the vision of a bewildered person, the world appears as many only to those with defective knowledge and who therefore do not see it as the one reality.

52 **Question:** When all is one like this, what is the reason for not seeing it as one?

**Answer:** I do not know the reason for not knowing the Self that exists as one's own Self.

What a wonder it is that one seeks the Self without knowing the Self! What can I say of this? Know that this is like a person in this world standing [neck-deep] in water having his thirst unquenched. What else can we say?

53 **Question:** What is the way to see the Self?

**Answer:** By abiding still in the Self. This is the essence of enquiring into the scriptures.

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<sup>3</sup> I would take this phrase to mean 'arrogantly strutting around'. It can also be translated as 'flourishing and becoming like little children'.

You who, babbling the scriptures, become haughty! You who accumulate karma with your caste and lineage! Can you not become sattvic, know your Self through your Self, give up unceasing activity and remain still?

54 **Question:** Can devotion to God be *jnana*?

**Answer:** There can be no devotion apart from the devotee.

Those who are wallowing, identifying with the body, will perform *puja*, wave lights and bring their palms together in salutation before the idol of the god with much longing, but they will not enquire whether the true God is the worshipper or the idol.

55 **Question:** Is it not necessary to go and see the car festival?

**Answer:** No. The one who sees the car festival should be seen.

They will go, see, and salute the car on the auspicious day of the car festival. Alas! Leaving their Self, whom are they going to worship? The god seen in the car is not fullness. Does anyone not know this?

56 **Question:** If so, is yoga good?

**Answer:** For knowing consciousness it is not necessary.

They will practise the highly respected yoga, remaining in a corner and controlling their breath and speech. For seeing and abiding as supreme consciousness, why this *sadhana*? They are attempting to eat and live here for a long time by making the body strong.

57 **Question:** In that case, can *sannyasa* be good?

**Answer:** True bliss, which is present in those who renounce the ego, is not there in *sannyasa*. How, then, can it be good?

Without any difficulty they will take up a begging bowl in their hands; they will shave their heads and wear only a loincloth; and they will appear to be great ones. But will they also experience the bliss of sleeping without sleeping that is experienced by those who have renounced the ego.

58 **Question:** In that case, are scriptural study and spiritual practice not necessary?

**Answer:** To those who have seen the Self, which is their true import, they are not necessary.

To see one's Self, what *sastra* is needed? What *sadhana* is necessary? Is not all this a mad game? Those who regard as real the illusion that has arisen – like the imaginary imp created to scare simple-minded people – will not see the Self.

59 **Question:** Is not *sadhana* necessary to know the Self?

**Answer:** What use is a *sadhana* that does not enable one to see the *sadhaka*?

The objects, which are seen to be many, such as male, female and neuter, and the seer who remains as one – all this is only the manifestation of the excellent consciousness. Can they exist apart from consciousness? However much *sadhana* they practise, how will it be of use for those who do not know this clearly?

60 **Question:** Why do they suffer instead of enquiring and realising the Self?

**Answer:** They suffer because what they have known to be one by studying has not been experienced.

What does it matter [to the realised one] who lives and in what way? What does it matter [to the realised one] who goes where and in what manner? His solitary state is like that of a bat in its roost. He will be detached in every way and will sleep experiencing the blessed state that never leaves. Bliss is only for him.

61 **Question:** Is it not necessary to know the nature of Iswara and *jiva*?

**Answer:** Since *Sivam* is non-dual, it is not necessary.

They will say that Iswara is infinite and that *jiva* is finite. They will say that *jiva* is like the eye and that Iswara is like the sun. These two definitely cannot be non-dual. Pure consciousness, which is neither of these two, alone is *Sivam*.

62 **Question:** Then what is the way to attain *Sivam*?

**Answer:** The way to see one's Self is by rejecting everything else as *maya*.

The inert semen became the foetus and then became alive by mixing with the conscious principle. It appears to be real. When this happens, he who contemplates his real nature, regarding all this as illusory, is *Sivam*.

63 **Question:** Will not those who know the past, present and future become *Sivam*?

**Answer:** Only those who have seen the Self, which is beyond time, are *Sivam*, not those who know the three periods of time.

The self-effulgent Self destroys both night and day, the two that determine yesterday, today and tomorrow. Hence, he alone is *Sivam* who has become the Self and who consequently worships the auspicious day that remains perpetually as the one unique day.

64 **Question:** If one renounces the *jnana sastras*, how can one attain the bliss of liberation?

**Answer:** Liberation is only delighting in the Self through tranquillity and without anxiety. When this is attained, what is the use of books?

One may know the *jnana sastras*, or take up good *sannyasa*, or attempt to experience *mauna samadhi*, but the indescribable delight of liberation is simply to become the Self, remaining free of all anxiety, experiencing bliss.

65 [continued from verse 64]

He may be endowed with learning, or established in great yoga, or his body and senses may be active, but he who does not merge with supreme grace will not know tranquillity and will not obtain the final reward, the bliss of liberation that never fails.

66 **Question:** If so, do they not have to experience even *prarabdha*?

**Answer:** If one remains without movement as the Self, like the column supporting the windmill, the *prarabdha* will exhaust itself.

You base, ignorant ones, wallowing in the three types of *prarabdha*!<sup>4</sup> If you understand that those who accepted alms will now be donors, you can be like the column that supports the windmill.

67 **Question:** But will not this experience come to everyone?

**Answer:** If one becomes inward-turned instead of being externalised, this experience will come for everyone.

I declare: 'If their minds are directed inward, attending to the light [the Self], and do not become outward-turned, all those upon this earth are capable of seeing the Self, just as I have seen my Self.'

68 **Question:** Don't *jnanis* have to perform karma?

**Answer:** Since they have seen the truth of both action and the one who performs the action, they do not have to perform activities.

He who has clearly seen in his mind both the performer of actions and the actions themselves, who has thus redeemed himself and become the reality, will he perform, without fail in every birth, every action at the prescribed time?<sup>5</sup>

69 **Question:** Will the *jnanis* hate the *karmis* [the performers of activities] when they see them?

**Answer:** They will delight in seeing the *karmis*, in the same way that they witness conjuring tricks, but they will not hate them.

Seeing the deceitful ones who cannot see and enjoy reality as it is and who cannot melt by experiencing it, I rejoiced. However many illusory lotus flowers bloom, is there any anger on the part of the moon?

70 **Question:** How did this experience arise?

**Answer:** It was obtained providentially through the grace of the Guru.

Like a sweet mango fruit appearing under the thorny karuvelam tree, the divine lotus feet of the Guru – who has the power to bestow the grace to transform me into the reality that is sought by everyone, everywhere – came to me who was replete with evil, taking birth over and over again.

71 **Question:** Is getting this experience so difficult?

**Answer:** It is extremely difficult.

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<sup>4</sup> **Bhagavan:** *Prarabdha* [the actions the body has to perform in this life] is of three categories, *iccha*, *anichha*, and *parechha* [personally desired, without desire and due to others' desire]. For him who has realised his Self, there is no *iccha-prarabdha*. The two others, *anichha* and *parechha* remain. Whatever he does is for others only. If there are things to be done by him for others, he does them but the results do not affect him. Whatever be the actions that such people do, there is no *punya* [merit] and no *papa* [sin] attached to them. (*Letters from Sri Ramanasramam*, 3rd June 1946, p. 65.)

The column that is necessary for the existence and operation of the windmill remains unaffected. Only the sails of the windmill move. Similarly, the Self is unaffected by *prarabdha*. Only the body is affected by it.

<sup>5</sup> This is a rhetorical question for which the assumed answer is 'no'.

Where is my [state of] remaining as the ego? Where is my attachment? Where is my desire to rule heaven and earth? Siva! Siva! Where is the *jnana* Guru? Where is liberation? How can I express this?<sup>6</sup>

72 **Question:** What is the benefit of this experience?

**Answer:** It is obtaining the Self that is beyond the mind.

I did not obtain anything other than my Self. I had my Self in my possession all the time. Separate from me, there is no bondage or release. If one sees [this], even the mind that enquires into these is non-existent.

73 **Question:** As soon as one obtains this experience, who should be worshipped?

**Answer:** The Guru, the 'I' and the body should be worshipped, seeing them as one's own Self.

I will worship as my own Self the gracious Guru who showed everything to be like a conjuror's trick, or the Self that is realised after thus scrutinising everything, or the body-temple that came [into being] to terminate the evil of birth.

74 **Question:** How to get rid of the *vasana* of the gross body?

**Answer:** It should be rejected by seeing it as the form of food.

You body who remain as the sheath of food! If you do as I tell you, you will experience bliss as long as you live. I swear to this. Do not go near evil and useless *vasanas*. Whatever comes according to *prarabdha*, remain a mere witness.

75 **Question:** How to remove [or be rid of] the senses of perception?

**Answer:** They should be removed by seeing them as the Self.

O senses! You cherished and nourished me all these years. Now I have become blissful consciousness. Even you, who [appear to] become different from me, I have come to know as my Self. Henceforth, remain one with me, without becoming divergent.

76 **Question:** How to be rid of desires?

**Answer:** Through desire for realisation of the truth.

O desire! Though I suffered much through you, on account of your help I dwelt in the Self. I reached the *Sadguru* through you. In liberation I have, along with you, become the Self. I swear to this.

77 **Question:** How to destroy anger?

**Answer:** Through tranquillity.

O anger! Through you I rid myself of my deficiency. Because of the weariness experienced by your rising that invariably produced misery, I rid myself of this danger

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<sup>6</sup> The wide disparity between his previous wretched state and the state of knowledge makes the author wonder at the greatness of the Guru's grace that accomplished the transformation, and how little he deserved it.

and dwelt in supreme tranquillity. Even in dream, do not rise up in lamentation, but remain calm.

- 78 **Question:** How to get rid of avarice?  
**Answer:** By abiding peacefully in the Self.

O avarice! I took you as my relation. Those who do not know the truth say that your form is only sin. You will exert yourself hard merely to accumulate. O sinner! Because of you I am now possessed by peace.

- 79 **Question:** How to dissolve the mind?  
**Answer:** It should be dissolved in the Self, which is its basis.

O mind! I myself am you. You yourself are me. Despite being so, deceitfully you forgot me. That I am surrendered to you is also true. But do not remain different from me, the reality.

- 80 [The same answer continues in verses 80, 81 and 82.]

My mind! You roamed about, laboured hard and learned many arts, seeking a way to make a living. You sought and gave me a *Sadguru*. To you who were so considerate to me, what help did I render in return?

- 81 O mind! Just as I once remained, assuming your form, now you have come and merged with me as my own form. Is there anyone like you who values the virtue of gratitude? Dwell henceforth in the loving care of the supreme state, without returning to your prior form.

- 82 O mind! You remained, right from the beginning, without renouncing love towards me. Through that love you gave me the benefit of cultivating all the virtues of a devotee, beginning with forbearance. You removed desire and its progeny. Now, like me, you remain still through good and proper discernment.

- 83 **Question:** Will the mind subside through the above means?  
**Answer:** If it is firmly established in the experience of the Self, it will then shine as consciousness and remain still.

As my mind roamed about, I too was similar to it, thus allowing myself to remain in an unquiet state. With my mind remaining still and motionless, I too remained similar to it, shining and dwelling like gold.

- 84 **Question:** Are there no likes and dislikes in this experience?  
**Answer:** Since everything is experienced as the Self, these do not exist.

Whatever is to come, let it come. Whatever is to leave, let it leave. I will not reject even a life of living on alms as defective. Neither do I desire even the state of Brahma. I became all actions.

- 85 **Question:** Will he worship God?  
**Answer:** He has no worship other than the worship of seeing everything as his own Self.

What I extol everywhere is only my Self. What I worship everywhere as God – that too is only my Self. In all places, sitting, lying down and running are all performed only in my Self. I myself am the enjoyer and that which is enjoyed.

86 **Question:** Is this the experience of all *jnanis*?

**Answer:** There is no experience other than this experience of the Self.

He who has attained liberation will see, as not different from his Self, all this world that rises in the Self, which remains in the Self, and which merges in the Self. Will he see it as opposed to his Self?

87 **Question:** Will likes and dislikes arise in him?

**Answer:** As everything has become his Self, they will not arise in him.

For what will he desire? For what will he rise as 'I'? For what will he experience envy and malice? He will dwell as the unmoving support for everything, as the sum of all things animate and inanimate, like the great Meru mountain that is the axis for the seven worlds.

88 **Question:** Will not this experience cease?

**Answer:** Even if the creations of Iswara falter, this experience will not cease.

Even if the cardinal points change, even if the moon gets burned, fire becomes cold, or the sun travels north to south, the Self-state of the liberated one who has enquired thoroughly into the primal state will not cease.

89 **Question:** How to determine those with such experience?

**Answer:** They remain unruffled in joy and misery. They should be known by taking this as the hallmark.

Only he is a *jnani* whose mind does not get agitated, who does not identify with and desire objects before him, and whose state of purity never wavers whether he lives on alms in poverty or enjoys the illusory state of being Brahma.

90 **Question:** Will they not care for praise and slander?

**Answer:** No, they will not.

Some may utter praises and worship, or evil and cruel ones may utter words of slander and insult, but the *jnani's* mind will not associate with them. He will remain without thoughts, like the sky that remains the same whether the sun rises or a vast collection of clouds appear.

91 **Question:** What is food for the *jnani*?

**Answer:** Whatever happens to come to him is food for him.

Whatever enjoyments present themselves to him, and in whatever measure, he will undergo those pleasures. Like the sun that spreads its rays, he will remain free of bondage in the unique and natural state.

92 **Question:** Will not the ego-nature, beginning with desire, touch these *jnanis*?

**Answer:** As they have attained total destruction of *vasanas*, it will not.



Desire, anger and so on will not touch the liberated one – who has become the form of consciousness and the witness of the world – since he has uprooted and destroyed all the base *vasanas*, and is therefore without *sankalpas*.

93 **Question:** Do they not need to stay in a holy place, or take baths in holy waters, and so on?

**Answer:** The place where they reside is the holy place. Their look is holy water.

The place where the unique *jivanmukta* – who exists everywhere equally – resides is itself the holy place. His look itself is holy water. The service to his lotus feet is itself liberation.

94 **Question:** What are the eternal attributes of a *jnani*?

**Answer:** They are soft words, and so on.

They are soft-spoken; their look is free of desire; they experience everything to be *sat* alone; they have a measured gait, and their mind is filled with a joy that never diminishes. The characteristic of a *jnani* is to be ever firm in these.

95 **Question:** What does the *jnani* think?

**Answer:** There are only thoughts that everything is the Self.

The *jivanmukta* is he who has become one [with the reality] through the experience ‘I have seen myself everywhere; I have seen everything in me’; who possesses intensely and clearly the experience of having learned ‘unlearning’, and who has renounced everything.

96 **Question:** What is proper conduct and what is prohibited conduct for *jnanis*?

**Answer:** Actions they undertake are proper conduct; actions they abandon are prohibited actions.

For the *jnani* has become one, tranquil and blemishless, everything, beginning with space [and including the other elements] is his own form. The actions he abandons are prohibited actions, and the actions he takes up are proper actions.

97 **Question:** What are the disciplines and *pujas* for the *jnani*?

**Answer:** They are meditating on the Self, and so on.

Meditating on consciousness is bathing for a *jnani*. Whatever external appearances he delights in, that is noble discipline. Whatever he obtains as alms and eats without ego, that is his supreme *puja*. His faultless movements are pure *samadhi*.

98 **Question:** The actions that should be performed, and the actions that should be avoided: are these not necessary for *jnanis*?

**Answer:** As they remain as *Sivam*, they do not exist for them.

To the *jnani* who has become *Sivam*, having seen all the universe as his Self and as the form of consciousness, for him, what is there that should be sifted and rejected, and what is there that should be accepted as proper?

- 99 **Question:** What is the state attained by those who criticise the conduct of *jnanis*?  
**Answer:** It is the hell of transmigration.

Know that those cruel ones, who view as faulty the life of the *jnani* who has attained supreme bliss, will experience crore upon crore of births like the silkworm that never gets detached from its cocoon

- 100 **Question:** What is the benefit obtained by those who worship them?  
**Answer:** It is becoming the non-dual Self.

Those who are able to obtain the grace of the *jnani* – who remains as the eternal, formless, blemishless, blissful and pure non-dual reality, and for whom everything is his own Self – will become *jnanis*.

- 101 **Question:** How will the *jnani* shine?  
**Answer:** He will shine as everything and as different from everything.

They have rid themselves of the blemish of the mind; they have rid themselves of the mind; they have rid themselves of the entity within the mind; they have transcended the shore of *jnana*; they have rid themselves of the blissful state of consciousness, the supreme; they have rid themselves of the experience of *Sivam*. They have also rid themselves of all concepts.

#### **The Benefit of Studying this Work**

- 102 Those who are able to enjoy through their two ears the savour of *Sorupa Saram*, which describes the experience attained at the proper stage of ripeness, will be able to see the entire world as their own Self.