

FORTY VERSES ON REALITY

Invocation

Could there be a being-consciousness existing apart from that which (eternally) is? Since that Reality exists in the Heart, free of thought, who could meditate upon that Reality called the Heart? You should know that to remain within the Heart, as it is, is truly to meditate (upon the Heart).¹

When those who are in dread of death seek refuge at the feet of the deathless, birthless Lord Supreme,
their ego and attachments die;
and they, now deathless, think no more of death.

Text

1. Since we know the world, we must concede for both a common source, single but with the power of seeming many. The picture of names and forms, the onlooker, the screen, the light that illumines, — all these are verily He.

¹ Orig. trans. reads: Unless Reality exists, can thought of it arise? Since, void of thought, Reality exists within as Heart, how to know the Reality we term the Heart? To know That is merely to be That in the Heart.

ULLADU NARPADU*

Mangalam

Uḷḷa-dala duḷḷa-vuṇar uḷḷadō vuḷḷa-poruḷ
Uḷḷa-laṛa vuḷḷattē uḷḷa-dāl — uḷḷa-menum
Uḷḷa-poruḷ uḷḷalevan uḷḷattē uḷḷa-paḍi
Uḷḷadē uḷḷal uṇar-vāyē — uḷḷe**

Maraṇa-baya mikkuḷa-vam makkaḷara ṇaga
Maraṇa-bava millā magēsan — chara-ṇamē
Sārvar-taṅ sārvoḍu-tāṅ sāvutṭṛār sāveṇṇaṅ
Sārvarō sāvā davar-nittar — pārvai-sēr

Nul

1. Nāmulagaṅ kāṇḍa-lāl nānāvāṅ sakti-yuḷa
Ōrmudalai oppal oru-talaiyē — nāma-vuru
Chittira-mum pār-pānum chērpada-mum āroḷi-yum
Attanai-yun tānām avanulagu — karta-nuyir

* In *kalivenba* metre.

** The last words of the second and fourth lines of each verse are punctuated with a long dash (—) to indicate a break according to the *kalivenba* metre.

2. On three entities — the individual, God and the world, — every creed is based. That ‘the One becomes the Three’ and that ‘Always the Three are Three’, are said only while the ego lasts. To lose the ‘I’ and to stay in the Self is the State Supreme.
3. ‘The world is true!’ — ‘no, it is a false appearance’; ‘The world is mind!’ — ‘no, it is not’; ‘The world is pleasant!’ — ‘No, it is not’. What avails such talk? To leave the world alone and know the Self, to go beyond all thought of one and two, this egoless condition is the common goal of all.
4. If Self has form, the world and God likewise have form. If Self is without form, by whom and how can form (of world and God) be seen? Without the eye, can there be sight or spectacle? The Self, the real eye, is infinite.
5. The body is made up of the five sheaths;
in the term body all the five are included.
Without the body the world is not.
Has one without the body ever seen the world?
6. The world is made up of the five kinds of sense perceptions and nothing else. And those perceptions are felt as objects by the five senses. Since through the senses the mind alone perceives the world, is the world other than the mind?
7. Although the world, which stands before us, and the mind arise and subside together, it is through the mind that the world shines forth. That which is the perfection that shines without appearing or disappearing as the place where both the world and the mind appear and disappear, is indeed the Real.²

² Orig. trans. reads: Though the world and mind rise and fade together, the world shines by the light of the mind. The ground whence the world and mind arise, and wherein they set, that Perfection rises not nor sets but ever shines. That is Reality.

2. Mummuda-lai emma-damu muṛkoḷ-ḷum ōrmu-dalē
Mummuda-lāi niṛku-menḍru mummuda-lum — mum-mudalē
Yennal-ahañ kāram irukku-mattē yān-ketṭu
Tannilai-yil niṭṭral talai-yāguñ — konnē
3. Ulagumei-poit tōṭṭram ulagaṛi-vām andren-ḍru
Ulagu-sukam andṛen ḍṛurait-ten — ulagu-viṭṭut
Tannai-yōrn donḍṛi-raṇḍu tānaṭṭru nānaṭṭra
Annilai-yell ārkkum oppā-mūnē — tunnum
4. Uruvan-tan āyin ulagu-param aṭṭrām
Uruvan-tan andṛel uvattṛin — uruvat-taik
Kaṇṇuṛu-dal yāva-nevan kaṇṇalār kāṭchi-yuṇḍō
Kaṇṇadu-tān anda-milāk kaṇṇāmē — yeṇṇil
5. Uḍal-pañcha kōsa uruvada-nāl aindum
Uḍalennuñ chollil oḍuñ-gum — uḍalandṛi
Uṇḍō ulagam uḍalviṭ ṭulagat-taik
Kaṇḍār uḷarō kazhaṛu-vai — kaṇḍa
6. Ulagaim pulan-gaḷ uruvē-ṛan ḍṛavvaim
Pula-naim poṛik-kup pula-nām — ulagai-manam
Onḍṛaim poṛi-vāyāl ōrndiḍu-da lānmanattai
Andṛi ulaguṇḍō aṛai-nērē — ninḍra
7. Ulagaṛi-vum onḍṛāi udit-toḍuṅgu mēnum
Ulagu-ṛivu tannāl oḷirum — ula-gaṛivu
Tōnḍṛi-maṛai daṛkiḍa-nāit tōnḍṛi-maṛaiyā doḷirum
Pūnḍra-mām ahḍe poru-ḷāmāl — yēnḍra-dām

8. Under whatever name or form we worship It, It leads us on to knowledge of the nameless, formless Absolute. Yet, to see one's true Self in the Absolute, to subside into It and be one with It, this is the true knowledge of the truth.
9. 'Twos' and 'threes' depend upon one thing, the ego. If one asks in one's Heart, 'What is this ego?' and finds it, they slip away. Only those who have found this know the truth, and they will never be perplexed.³
10. There is no knowledge without ignorance; and without knowledge ignorance cannot be. To ask, 'Whose is this knowledge? Whose this ignorance?' and thus to know the Primal Self, this alone is knowledge.
11. Without knowing the Self that knows, to know all objects is not knowledge; it is only ignorance. Self, the ground of knowledge and the non-Self, being known, both knowledge and ignorance fall away.
12. True knowledge is being devoid of knowledge as well as ignorance of objects. Knowledge of objects is not true knowledge. Since the Self shines self-luminous with nothing else for It to know, with nothing else to know *It*, the Self is knowledge. A void⁴, It is not.
13. The Self that is awareness, that alone is true. The knowledge which is various is ignorance. And even ignorance, which is false, cannot exist apart from the Self. False are the many jewels, for apart from gold, which alone is true, they cannot exist.

³ "Twos" are pairs like pleasure-pain, knowledge-ignorance; "threes" are triads like the knower, knowledge and the known.

⁴ Orig, trans. reads: Nescience, It is not.

8. Yeppa-yariṭ ṭevvuru-vil yēt-tinumār pēr-uruvil
 Apporu-ḷaik kāṇ-vazhiya dāyinu-mam — meip-poruḷin
 Uṇmai-yil-tan uṇmai-yinai ōrndo-ḍuṅgi onḍru-dalē
 Uṇmai-yiṭ kāṇal uṇarn-diḍuga — viṇmai
9. Irattai-gaḷ muppuḍi-gaḷ enḍrum-onḍru paṭṭri
 Irup-pavām avvon-ḍrē denḍru — karut-tinuḷ
 Kaṇḍār kazhalu-mavai kaṇḍā-vare uṇmai
 Kaṇḍār kalaṅ-gārē kāṇiruḷ-pōn — maṇḍum
10. Aṇi-yāmai viṭṭari-vin ḍram-aṇivu viṭṭav
 Aṇi-yāmai inḍrā-gum anda — aṇivum
 Aṇiyā-maiyum ārkken-ḍram mudalān tannai
 Aṇi-yum aṇivē aṇi-vām — aṇiba
11. Aṇi-vuṇun tannai aṇiyā dayalai
 Aṇiva daṇi-yāmai anḍri — aṇivō
 Aṇi-vayaṇ kāḍārat tannai aṇiya
 Aṇi-vaṇi yāmai aṇumē — aṇavē
12. Aṇi-vaṇi yāmai-yum aṭṭra-daṇi vāmē
 Aṇi-yuma duṇmai aṇi-vāgādu — aṇi-darku
 Aṇi-vittaṇ kanniya-min ḍrāya-virva dāl-tān
 Aṇi-vāgum pāzhan ḍraṇi-vāi — seṇi-vāya
13. Jñāna-mām tānē-mei nānāvā jñāna-maṅ
 Jñāna-mām poyyām-ajñ jñānamumē — jñāna-mān
 Tannai-yandri inḍraṇi-gaḷ ṭām-palavum poimei-yām
 Ponnai-yandri uṇḍō pugaluḍa-nān — ennu-mat

14. 'You' and 'he' — these appear only when 'I' does.
 But when the nature of the 'I' is sought and the ego is destroyed,
 'you' and 'he' are at an end.
 What shines then as the One alone is the true Self.
15. The past and future depend for their existence upon the present
 which is experienced daily. Whilst they are occurring, these too
 are the present. The present alone exists. To attempt to understand
 the past and future without having ascertained the truth of the
 Now is like trying to count without the number one.⁵
16. Without us there is neither time nor space. If we are only
 bodies, we are caught up in time and space. But are we bodies?
 Now, then and always, — here, now and everywhere — we
 are the same. We exist, timeless and beyond space.
17. To those who do not know the Self and to those who do, the body
 is the 'I'. But to those who do not know the Self the 'I' is bounded
 by the body; while to those who within the body know the Self
 the 'I' shines boundless. Such is the difference between them.
18. To those who do not know and to those who do, the world is
 real. But to those who do not know, Reality is bounded by the
 world; while to those who know, Reality shines formless as the
 ground of the world. Such is the difference between them.
19. The debate, 'Does free will prevail or fate?' is only for those
 who do not know the root of both. Those who have known
 the Self, the common source of free-will and of fate, have passed
 beyond them both and will not return to them.

⁵ Orig. trans. reads: Past and future are dependent on the present. The past was present in its time and the future will be present too. Ever-present is the present. To seek to know the future and the past, without knowing the truth of time today, is to try to count without the number 'One'.

14. Tanmai-uṇḍel munnilai paḍark-kaigaḷ tām-uḷavān
 Tanmai-yin uṇmai-yait tānāyndu — tanmai-yaṛin
 Munnilai paḍark-kai mudi-vuṭṭronḍṛāi-oḷirum
 Tanmai-yē tannilai-mai tānida-mum — mannum
15. Nigazh-vinaip paṭṭri yiṛap-pedirvu niṛpa
 Nigazh-kāl avaiyu nigazhvē — nigazh-vonḍṛē
 Yiṇḍruṇ-mai tēra diṛap-pedirvu tēra-vunal
 Onḍṛinḍṛi yeṇṇal unaluṇara — ninḍra-poruḷ
16. Nāmandṛi nālēdu nādēdu nāḍuṅ-gāl
 Nāmuḍambēl nāl-ṇāṭṭuḷ ṇām-paḍuvam — nāmuḍambō
 Nāmiṇḍṛan ḍṛeṇḍṛu-moṇḍṛu nāḍiṅ-gaṅ gengu-moṇḍṛal
 Nāmuṇḍu nāṇaḍil nāmū-nam — āmiv
17. Uḍal-nānē tannai uṇarārku kuṇarn-dārkkku
 Uḍa-lalave nāntan uṇa-rārku — uḍa-luḷḷē
 Tannuṇarn-dārku kella-yarāt tānoḷiru nāniduvē
 Inna-varḍam bēda-mena yeṇṇu-vāi — munnām
18. Ula-guṇ-mai yāgum uṇar-villārku kuḷ-ḷārkkku
 Ula-gaḷa-vām uṇmai uṇa-rārkkku — ulagi-nukku
 Ādāra māiuru-vaṭṭṛā-rum uṇarn-dār uṇmai
 Īdā-gum bēdam-ivark keṇṇuga — bēda
19. Vidi-madi mūla vivēkam ilārkkē
 Vidi-madi vellum vivā-dam — vidi-madi gaṭku
 Ōr-muda-lān tannai uṇarn-dār avai-taṇan-dār
 Chār-varō pinnu-mavai chāṭṭṛuvāi — chār-bavai

20. To see God but not the Self that sees is only to see a projection of the mind. It is said that God is seen by him alone who sees the Self; but one who has lost the ego and seen the Self is none other than God.
21. When scriptures speak of ‘seeing the Self’ and ‘seeing God’, what is the truth they mean? How to see the Self? As the Self is one without a second, it is impossible to see it. How to see God? To see Him is to be consumed by Him.
22. Without turning inwards and merging in the Lord, in His light that shines within the mind and lends it all its light, how can we know the Light of lights with the borrowed light of the mind?
23. Since it is insentient, this body does not say ‘I’.
And no one says: ‘When I am asleep I do not exist’.
After the ‘I’ arises, all else arises. When (one) investigates with a keen mind whence this ‘I’ arises, it will disappear.⁶
24. The body, which is matter, says not ‘I’. Eternal awareness neither arises (nor disappears). Between the two, bound by the body, arises the thought of ‘I’. This is the knot of matter and awareness. This is bondage. This is *jiva*, the subtle body or ego. This is *samsara*. This is the mind.
25. Holding a form it arises; holding a form it stays; holding and feeding on a form it thrives. Leaving one form, it takes hold of another. When sought, it takes to flight. Such is the ego ghost with no form of its own.

⁶ Orig. trans. reads: The body says not it is ‘I’. And no one says, “In sleep there is no ‘I’.” When ‘I’ arises all (other) things arise. Whence this ‘I’ arises, search with a keen mind.

20. Kāṇum tanai-viṭṭut tānkaḍa-vuḷaik kāṇal
 Kāṇum manō maya-māñ kāṭchi-tanaik — kāṇu-mavan
 Tān kaḍa-vuḷ kaṇḍa-nān tan-mudalait tān-mudal-pōit
 Tān kaḍa-vuḷ aṇḍriyila dāl-uyirāt — tān-karu-dum
21. Tannait-tān kāṇal talai-van tanaik-kāṇal
 Ennum pannūl-uṇmai ennai-enin — tannait-tān
 Kāṇal-evan tānonḍ-ṛār kāṇa-voṇā dēṭṭralai-var
 Kāṇal-evan ūṇādal kāṇevai-yuñ — kāṇum
22. Madik-koḷi dan-dam madik-kuḷ oḷi-rum
 Madi-yinai uḷḷe maḍakki — padi-yil
 Padit tiḍu-dal aṇḍrip padi-yai madi-yāl
 Madit-tiḍu-dal eṇṅan madi-yāi — madi-yila-dāl
23. Nā-nenḍrid dēgam navilā duṛak-kattu
 Nā-ninḍren ḍṛāru navil-vadilai — nānonḍru
 Ezhun-dapin ellām ezhu-minda nāneṅgu
 Ezhu-menḍru nuṇ-madi-yāl eṇṇa — nazhu-vum
24. Jaḍa-vuḍal na-nennadu satchit tudi-yādu
 Uḍal-aḷava nānonḍ-ṛudik-kum — iḍaiyi-lidu
 Chit-jadak granti-bandam jīva-nuṭpa mei-yagan-dai
 Icchamu-sara manam eṇṇennē — vicchai
25. Urup-paṭṭri uṇḍām urup-paṭṭri niṛ-kum
 Urup-paṭṭri uṇḍu-miga oṅgum — uru-viṭṭu
 Urup-paṭṭrun tēdi-nāl oṭṭam piḍik-kum
 Uru-vaṭṭra pēi-agan-dai ōrvāi — karu-vām

26. When the ego arises, all things arise with it.
 When the ego is not, there is nothing else.
 Since the ego thus is everything, to question ‘What is this thing?’
 is the extinction of all things.
27. We are ‘That’ when ‘I’ has not arisen. Without searching
 whence the ‘I’ arises, how to attain the self-extinction where
 no ‘I’ arises? Without attaining self-extinction, how to stay in
 one’s true state where the Self is ‘That’?
28. Controlling speech and breath and diving deep within oneself
 — like one who, to find a thing that has fallen into water,
 dives deep down — one must seek out the source whence the
 aspiring ego springs.
29. Cease all talk of ‘I’ and search with inward-diving mind whence
 the thought of ‘I’ springs up. This is the way of wisdom. To
 think instead, “I am not this, but I am That”, is helpful in the
 search, but it is not the search itself.
30. When the mind turns inward seeking ‘Who am I?’ and merges
 in the Heart, then the ‘I’ hangs down its head in shame and
 the one ‘I’ appears as Itself. Though it appears as ‘I-I’, it is not
 the ego. It is reality, perfection, the substance of the Self.
31. For him who is the bliss of Self arising from extinction of the
 ego, what is there to do?
 He knows nothing other than this Self.
 How to conceive the nature of his state?
32. When the Vedas have declared, ‘Thou art That’ (*tatvamasi*)
 — not to seek and find the nature of the Self and abide in It,
 but to think ‘I am That, not This’ — is want of strength.
 Because That abides forever as the Self.

26. Ahan-dai uṇḍā-yin anait-tum uṇḍa-gum
 Ahan-dai inḍrēl inḍra-nait-tum — ahan-daiyē
 Yāvu-mām āda-lāl yādi-denḍru nāḍalē
 Ōvu-dal yāvu-mena ōr-mudal-pōl — mēvu-minda
27. Nā-nudiyā duḷḷa-nilai nāmadu-vāi uḷḷa-nilai
 Nā-nudik-kum stāna-madai nāḍa-mal — nānudi-yāt
 Tannizhap-paic chārva-devan chā-rāmaṟ tānadu-vān
 Tan-nilai-yil niṟpa-devan chāṭ-ṭṟudi — munnar
28. Ezhum-bum ahan-dai ezhu-miḍattai nīril
 Vizhunda poruḷ kāṇa vēṇḍi — muzhugu-dal-pōl
 Kūrnda madiyāl pēcchu mūccha-ḍakkik koṇḍuḷḷē
 Āzhn-daṟiya vēṇ-ḍum aṟi-piṇam-pōl — tīrnuḍa-lam
29. Nā-nenḍru vāyāl navilā-duḷ-ḷazh manat-tāl
 Nā-nenḍreṅ gundu-mena nāḍu-dalē — jñāna-neṟi
 Yāman-ḍṟi anḍṟi-dunā nāmadu-ven ḍṟunnaḷ-tuṇai
 Yāmadu vichāra-mām āva-danāl — mī-muṟaiyē
30. Nānā rena mana-muḷ nāḍi-yuḷa naṇṇavē
 Nānām avan-talai nāṇa-muṟa — nā-nā-nāt
 Tōnḍṟu-moṇḍṟu tānā-gat tōn-ḍṟinu-nān anḍṟu-poruḷ
 Pūnḍṟa-madu tānām poruḷ poṅgit — tōn-ḍṟavē
31. Tannai azhit-tezhunda tan-mayā nanda-rukku
 Ennai uḷa-don ḍṟi-yaṭṭṟu daṟkut — tannai-yalādu
 Anni-yam onḍṟum aṟiyār avar-nilai-mai
 Inna-den ḍṟunnaḷ evan-paramāp — pannum
32. Adu-nīyen ḍṟam-maṟai-gaḷ ārtti-ḍavun tannai
 Edu-venḍṟu tān tērn-dirādu — adu-nān
 Idu-van-ḍṟen ḍṟeṇṇal-uran inmai-yi-nāl enḍṟum
 Aduvē tānāi amarva-dālē — aduvu-malādu

33. To say ‘I do not know myself’ or ‘I have known myself’ is cause for laughter. What? Are there two selves, one to be known by the other? There is but One, the truth of the experience of all.
34. The natural and true Reality for ever resides in the Heart of all. Not to realize It there and stay in It but to quarrel: ‘It is’, ‘It is not’, ‘It has form’, ‘It has not form’; ‘It is one’, ‘It is two’, ‘It is neither’ — this is the mischief of *maya*.
35. To discern and abide in the ever-present Reality is true attainment. All other attainments are like powers enjoyed in a dream. When the sleeper wakes, are they real? Those who stay in the state of truth, having cast off the unreal — will they ever be deluded?
36. If we think we are the body, then to tell ourselves, ‘No, I am That’ (*aham Brahmasmi*), is helpful to abide as That. Yet since we ever abide as That, why should we always think, ‘I am That?’ Does one ever think to himself, ‘I am a man’?
37. ‘During the search, duality; on attainment, unity’ — this doctrine too is false. When eagerly he sought himself and later when he found himself, the tenth man⁷ in the story was the tenth man and none else.
38. If we are the doers of deeds, we should reap the fruits they yield. But when we question, ‘Who am I, the doer of this deed?’ and realize the Self, the sense of agency is lost and the three *karmanas*⁸ slip away. And Eternal is this Liberation.

⁷ Ten men crossed a stream and wanted to make sure they were all safe. In counting, each one left himself out and found only nine. A passer-by gave each a blow and made them count the ten blows.

⁸ See Glossary.

33. Ennai Yaṛiyē-nān ennai aṛindēn-nān
 Ennal nagai-puk kiḍa-ṇāgum — ennai
 Tanai-viḍaya māḱka-iru tān-uṇḍō vonḍṛāi
 Anai-var-anu būdi uṇmai-yālōr — ninai-vaṛavē
34. Enḍ-ṛum evark-kum iyal-bāi uḷa-poru-ḷai
 Onḍ-ṛum uḷat-tuḷ uṇarndu-nilai — ninḍṛi-ḍādu
 Uṇḍin ḍṛuru-varu-ven ḍṛon-ḍṛiran ḍan-ḍṛen-ḍṛe
 Chaṇ-ḍai-yiḍal māyaic chazhak-kozhiga — vonḍi-yuḷam
35. Chit-tamāi uḷporu-ḷait tērn-dirut-tal siddi-piṛa
 Siddi-yelāñ chop-pana-mār siddigaḷē — niddi-rai-viṭṭu
 Ōrndāl avai-meiyō uṇmai-nilai nin-ḍṛu poim-mai
 Tīrn-dār tiyañ-gu-varō tērn-dirunī — kūrndu-mayal
36. Nām-uḍalen ḍṛeṇṇi-nala nāmadu-ven ḍṛeṇṇu-madu
 Nām-aduvā niṛpa-ḍarḱu naṭṭrunaiyē — yāmen-ḍṛum
 Nām-aduven ḍṛeṇ-ṇuvaḍē nān-mani-dan enḍṛe-ṇumō
 Nām-aduvā niṛku-mada nāl-aṛiyā — dēmuya-lum
37. Sādak-katil ē-duvitañ sāddi-yattil addu-vidam
 Ōdu-kindṛa vāda-madum uṇmai-yala — ādara-vāit
 Tān-tēḍum kālum tanai-aḍainda kālat-tun
 Tān-dasaman anḍṛi-yār tānvit-tup — pōnḍṛa
38. Vinai-mudal nāmā-yin viḷai-payan ḍṛuyp-pōm
 Vinai-mudal āren-ḍṛu vinavi — tanai-yariyak
 Kart-tat tuvam-pōyk karuma-mūn-druñ kazhalum
 Nit-tamā mukti nilai-yīdē — matta-nāi

39. Thoughts of bondage and of freedom last only as long as one feels, 'I am bound'. When one inquires of oneself, 'Who am I, the bound one?' the Self, Eternal and ever free, remains. The thought of bondage goes; and with it goes the thought of freedom too.
40. If asked, 'Which of these three is final liberation: With form, without form, or with and without form?' I say, "Liberation is the extinction of the ego which enquires 'with form, without form, or with and without-form?'"

This work, *Ulladu Narpadu*, which Sri Ramana in his grace (composed and) linked as one *kalivenba* is the Light which reveals Reality.⁹

⁹ These concluding lines were composed by Muruganar.

39. Bhadda-nān ennu-maṭṭē banda-mukti chin-tanai-gaḷ
Bhaddan āren-ḍṛu tan-naip pārkuṅ-gāl — cidda-māi
Nitta-muktan tāniṛka niṛkāḍēr banda-chindai
Muktti-chindai mun-niṛkumō manat-tukku — ottāṅgu

40. Uruvam aruvam uruva-ru-vam mūn-ḍṛām
Uṛu-mutti ennil uraip-pan — uru-vam
Aru-vam uru-varu-vam āyumu ahandai
Uru-vazhidan mukti uṇa-rīdu — aruḷ Ramaṇan

Uḷḷadu nāṛpadum onḍṛu-kali veṇbā-vām
Uḷḷadu kāṭṭum oḷi.