

Nan Yar? (Who am I?)

Introduction

In 1901, when Bhagavan Sri Ramana was just twenty-one years old and was living in a cave on the holy hill Arunachala, a humble and self-effacing devotee named Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai began to visit him and asked him many questions about spiritual philosophy and practice. Sri Ramana, who seldom spoke in those early times, answered most of his questions by writing either on the sandy ground, or on a slate or slips of paper that Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai gave him.

Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai copied many of these questions and answers in a notebook, but for more than twenty years he did not publish them. However in 1923, at the request of other devotees, he published them under the title *Nan Yar?* (நான்தான் யார்?), which means 'Who am I?', or more precisely 'I [am] Who?', in a small booklet containing thirty-two (if I remember correctly, or perhaps it was just thirty) questions and answers.

During the ten years or so that followed the first publication of *Nan Yar?* various versions of it were published, and various other versions of it exist in manuscript form in the notebooks of Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai. Each of these versions has a different number of questions and answers, with slight variation in their actual wording, and with a varying amount of content in some particular answers. The standard and most authentic version, however, is the essay version that Sri Ramana himself wrote a few years after the first version was published.

Sri Ramana formed this essay version, which consists of twenty paragraphs, by rewriting the first published question and answer version, and possibly by drawing on some of the other versions, and while doing so he made several improvements, removing all but the first question, rearranging the order in which the ideas in his answers were presented, and making some changes to the actual wordings.

Of all the changes he made, the most significant was to add an entirely new paragraph at the beginning of the essay. This opening paragraph serves as a suitable introduction to the subject 'Who am I?', because it explains that the reason why we need to know who we are is that happiness is our real nature, and that we can therefore experience true and perfect happiness only by knowing ourself as we really are.

The first question that Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai asked Sri Ramana was "Who am I?", to which he replied simply, "Knowledge [or consciousness] alone is I". The actual Tamil words spoken by Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai were "*nan yar?*", which literally mean 'I [am] who?', and the words that Sri Ramana wrote in reply with his finger on the sandy ground were "*arive nan*".

The Tamil word *arivu* means 'knowledge' in the broadest sense, and is therefore used to denote many different forms of knowledge, including consciousness, wisdom, intelligence, learning, sense perception, anything that is known, and even *atma*, our real self, which is our fundamental knowledge 'I am'. In this context, however, it means only our fundamental knowledge 'I am' – our essential consciousness of our own being. The letter *e* that he appended to *arivu* is a suffix that is commonly used in Tamil to add emphasis to a word, conveying the sense 'itself', 'alone' or 'indeed', and the word *nan* means 'I'.

In these two simple words, *arive nan*, Sri Ramana summarised the essence of his experience of true self-knowledge, which is the basis of the entire philosophy and science that he taught. What he meant by these simple words is that our true and essential nature is only our fundamental knowledge or consciousness 'I am', which is the conclusion that we have to arrive at if we critically analyse our experience of ourself in our three ordinary states of consciousness (as explained in [Happiness and the Art of Being](#), particularly in chapter two, 'Who am I?').

The next question that Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai asked him was "What is the nature of [such] knowledge?", to which he replied either "The nature of knowledge is *sat-chit-ananda*" or more probably just "*sat-chit-ananda*". The compound word *sat-chit-ananda*, which is actually fused into one word, transliterated correctly as *saccidananda*, is a well-known philosophical term, which is of

Sanskrit origin, but which is widely understood and frequently used in Tamil and all other Indian languages. It is a term used to describe the nature of the absolute reality, and though it is composed of three words, it is not intended to imply that the absolute reality is composed of three distinct elements, but only that the single non-dual nature of the one absolute reality can be described in three different ways.

The word *sat* basically means 'being' or 'existing', but by extension also means 'that which really is', 'reality', 'truth', 'existence', 'essence', 'real', 'true', 'good', 'right', or 'that which is real, true, good or right'. The word *chit* means 'consciousness' or 'awareness', from a verbal root meaning 'to know', 'to be conscious of', 'to perceive', 'to observe', 'to attend to' or 'to be attentive'. And the word *ananda* means 'happiness', 'joy' or 'bliss'. Thus *saccidananda*, or as it is more commonly spelt in roman script, *sat-chit-ananda*, means 'being-consciousness-bliss', that is, being which is both consciousness and bliss, or consciousness which is both being and bliss, or bliss which is both being and consciousness.

Thus through these two first answers Sri Ramana revealed three important truths about the nature of our essential self or real 'I'. Firstly he revealed that our essential self is only consciousness. Secondly he revealed that this consciousness is not our consciousness of any other thing but only our consciousness of ourself – our consciousness of our own being, that is, our being-consciousness or *sat-chit*. Thus he implied that since we are in essence only this consciousness of our own being, neither our self-consciousness nor our being are separate from ourself, and hence our essential self-consciousness is our very being, and our being is itself our consciousness of our being. In other words, there is absolutely no distinction between our being and our consciousness. Our being and our consciousness of being are therefore one, and hence our real self is only this essential self-conscious being, which we always experience as 'I am'. Thirdly he revealed that this essential self-consciousness or being-consciousness is not only our true being and our fundamental consciousness of our being, but is also that which we experience as happiness. In other words, we are being, we are consciousness, and we are happiness, and hence our being, our consciousness and our happiness are not three separate things, but are one indivisible non-dual whole – our single, true and essential self.

When we are seemingly consciousness of otherness, as in we are in waking and dream, we experience a mixture of relative happiness and unhappiness, but when we are conscious of nothing other than ourself, as we are in dreamless sleep, we experience absolute, unqualified happiness. Since we experience absolutely no duality or otherness in sleep, that is, since we know nothing other than 'I am' in sleep, what we experience in sleep must be our essential self. Since we know that we exist in sleep, our essential self is both our being and our consciousness of our being, and since we know that we are happy in sleep, our essential self is also happiness – the happiness of being conscious of nothing other than our own being, 'I am'.

When Sri Ramana rewrote the original question and answer version of *Nan Yar?* as the present essay, he highlighted the first question, *nan yar?* (I [am] who?), and his first two answers, *arive nan* (knowledge [or consciousness] alone is I) and *arivin sorupam sat-chit-anandam* (the nature of [this] knowledge is being-consciousness-bliss), in bold type. The reason he did so is that the rest of the second paragraph, in which this question and two answers are contained, consists of ideas that were not actually a part of the answers that he gave to Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai.

Before its publication, a draft of the original question and answer version was shown to Sri Ramana for his approval, and when he read it he noticed that Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai had expanded his original answer to the first question, adding a detailed list of things that we mistake ourself to be, but that in fact we are not. On seeing this, he remarked that he had not answered in such a detailed manner, but then explained that, because Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai was familiar with *neti neti*, he had added such detail thinking that it would help him to understand his answer more clearly.

By the term *neti neti*, Sri Ramana meant the rational process of self-analysis described in the ancient texts of *vedanta*, a process that involves the analytical elimination or denial of everything that is not 'I'. The word *neti* is a compound of two words, *na*, which means 'not', and *iti*, which means 'thus', and hence *neti neti* literally means 'not thus, not thus'. The ancient texts of *vedanta* use

these words *neti neti* when explaining the rational basis for the theory that our body, our senses, our life-force, our mind and even the ignorance that we seemingly experience in sleep are all not 'I'.

The rational and analytical process which is thus described in the ancient texts of *vedanta* as *neti neti* or 'not thus, not thus' is essentially the same as the logical analysis of our experience of ourself that Sri Bhagavan taught us (which is described in chapter two of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#)). If we did not first critically analyse our experience of ourself in this manner, we would not be able to understand either the reason why we should seek true self-knowledge, or what exactly we should scrutinise in order to know our real self.

So long as we imagine that we are really our physical body, our thinking mind or any other object, we will imagine that we can know ourself by attending to such things, and hence we will not be able to understand what is really meant by the terms *atma-vichara*, self-investigation, self-examination, self-scrutiny, self-enquiry, self-attention, self-attentiveness or self-remembrance. Only when we understand the essential theory that we are nothing other than our fundamental non-dual self-consciousness – our adjunct-free consciousness of our own mere being, which we experience just as 'I am' and not as 'I am this' – will we be able to understand what actually is the 'self' or 'I' that we should scrutinise or attend to.

Once we have understood that we are truly not our physical body, our thinking mind or any other object known by us, we should not continue thinking, 'this body is not I', 'this mind is not I', and so on, but should withdraw our attention from all such things, and focus it wholly and exclusively upon our real and essential being. We cannot know our real self by thinking of anything that is not 'I', but only by investigating, scrutinising or attending keenly to that which is really 'I' – to that which we really are, that is, to our essential self-conscious being. Unless we withdraw our attention entirely from all other things, we will not be able to focus it wholly and exclusively upon our essential self-conscious being, which we always experience as 'I am', and unless we focus it thus upon our essential being, we will not be able to attain the non-dual experience of true self-knowledge.

However, though Sri Ramana taught us how we should critically analyse our experience of ourself in our three ordinary states of consciousness in order to understand that we are nothing other than our essential non-dual self-conscious being, 'I am', which is the only thing that we experience in all these three states, and though this process of self-analysis is essentially the same as the process that is described in the ancient texts of *vedanta* as *neti neti*, he would not himself have said, "Having done *neti* [negation, elimination or denial of whatever is not ourself by thinking] thus, all the abovesaid things are not 'I', not 'I', the **knowledge** that [then] stands detached **alone is 'I'**", as Sri Sivaprakasam Pillai wrote when he expanded his first answer *arive nan* (knowledge alone is I) for his own clarification.

The qualification of the word 'knowledge' by the addition of the defining clause 'that stands detached [separated or alone] having done *neti* thus, all the abovesaid things are not I, not I' is potentially misleading, because it could create the impression that simply by thinking *neti neti*, 'not thus, not thus' or 'this is not I, this is not I', we can detach our essential consciousness or knowledge 'I am' from everything with which we now confuse it. In fact, many scholars who attempt to explain the ancient texts of *vedanta*, which often describe this process of *neti neti* or negation of all that is not our real self, interpret it to be the actual means by which we can attain self-knowledge. However, the sages who first taught the rational process of self-analysis called *neti neti* did not intend it to be understood as the actual technique of practical or empirical research, but only as the theoretical basis upon which the empirical technique of *atma-vichara* or self-investigation should be based.

The reason why we confuse ourself – our essential consciousness 'I am' – with our body, mind and other such adjuncts is that we do not clearly know what we are. If we knew ourself as we really are, we could not imagine ourself to be anything that we are not. Therefore the only practical means by which we can separate our essential self-consciousness 'I am' from everything that we now mistake it to be, is to know ourself as we really are.

In order to know ourself clearly as we really are, "*jñana-vichara* [scrutinising our consciousness to know] **'who am I?' alone is the principal means**", as Sri Ramana says in the final clause of the

first paragraph, which he highlighted in bold type. The term *jñana-vichara* literally means 'knowledge-investigation', and is the process (or rather the state) of investigating our essential self-consciousness 'I am', which is our primary knowledge and the base of all our other knowledge, in order to attain true knowledge of our own real self. This practice of *jñana-vichara* is described by Sri Ramana in verse 19 of [Upadesa Undiyar](#):

When [we] scrutinise within [ourselves] 'what is the place in which it [our mind] rises as I?'
[this false] 'I' will die. This [alone] is *jñana-vichara*.

What Sri Ramana describes in this verse as our *ezhum idam*, the 'rising place' or source of our mind or finite sense of 'I', is our own essential self, our adjunct-free self-consciousness 'I am'. When we scrutinise our essential self-conscious being, 'I am', which is the source from which our limited adjunct-bound 'I' rises, this "I will die", that is, it will cease to exist as such, because we will discover that it is truly nothing other than our adjunct-free self-consciousness.

When we look carefully at a snake that we imagine we see lying on the ground in the dim light of night, we will discover that it is not really a snake but is only a rope. Similarly, when we carefully scrutinise our basic self-consciousness 'I am', which we now experience as our mind, our limited consciousness that imagines itself to be a body, we will discover that we are not really this finite mind or body, but are only the one infinite non-dual self-consciousness – our essential adjunct-free consciousness of our own being.

Therefore what Sri Ramana means in this first paragraph by the term "knowledge-investigation 'who am I?'" is not a mere intellectual analysis of our knowledge 'I am', but is an actual examination or deep scrutiny of our fundamental knowledge or consciousness 'I am' in order to know through direct experience what it really is. Such an investigation or scrutiny cannot be done by thinking, but only by turning our attention back on ourselves to know our own essential consciousness of being. When our attention or power of knowing is turned outwards to know things other than ourselves, it becomes our thinking mind, but when it turns back inwards to know our essential self, it remains in its natural state as our essential self – that is, as our true non-dual self-conscious being.

The same truth that Sri Ramana expresses in this final clause of the first paragraph, "*jñana-vichara* 'who am I?' alone is the principal means" for us to know ourselves, is reiterated by him in many of the other paragraphs. For example, he begins the sixth paragraph by saying, "Only by [means of] the investigation 'who am I?' will [our] mind subside [shrink, settle down, become still, disappear or cease to be]", he begins the eighth paragraph by saying, "To make the mind subside [permanently], there are no adequate means other than *vichara* [investigation, that is, the practice of vigilant self-scrutiny or self-attentiveness]. If restrained by other means, the mind will remain as if subsided, [but] will emerge again", and he begins the eleventh paragraph by saying, "As long as *vishaya-vasanas* [latent impulses or desires to attend to anything other than ourselves] exist in [our] mind, so long the investigation 'who am I?' is necessary".

Besides using this Sanskrit term *vichara*, which means 'investigation', 'examination' or 'scrutiny', Sri Ramana used many other Tamil and Sanskrit words to describe the practice of self-investigation. For example, in the sixth paragraph he describes it not only as *nana ennum vicharanai*, which means the "investigation 'who am I?'" but also as *ahamukham*, which means 'I-facing' or 'self-attention', *antarmukham*, which means 'inward-facing' or 'introversion', and *summa iruppadu*, which means 'just being', 'silently being', 'peacefully being', 'motionlessly being' or 'being without doing anything', in the tenth paragraph he describes it as *svarupa-dhyana*, which means 'self-meditation' or 'self-attentiveness', in the eleventh paragraph he describes it as *svarupa-smarana*, which means 'self-remembrance', and in the thirteenth paragraph he describes it as *atma-nishtha*, which means 'self-abidance', and *atma-chintana*, which means 'self-contemplation' or the 'thought of self'.

All these words describe the same state of practice, namely the thought-free state of just being self-conscious or self-attentive. This simple practice of keeping our mind or attention fixed firmly in our own essential self – this is, in our thought-free self-conscious being – is clearly described by him in the sixteenth paragraph, in which he says:

... The name '*atma-vichara*' [is truly applicable] only to [the practice of] always being

[abiding or remaining] having put [placed, kept, seated, deposited, detained, fixed or established our] mind in *atma* [our own real self] ...

In both Sanskrit and Tamil the word *atma*, which literally means 'self', is a philosophical term that denotes our own true, essential and perfectly non-dual self-conscious being, 'I am'. Hence the state that Sri Ramana describes in this sentence as *sadakalamum manattai atmavil vaittiruppadu* is the state of just 'being', in which we keep our mind firmly fixed or established in and as *atma*, our own essential non-dual self-conscious being.

The compound word *sada-kalamum* means 'always' or 'at all times', *manattai* is the accusative form of *manam*, which means 'mind', *atmavil* is the locative form of *atma* and therefore means 'in self', and *vaittiruppadu* is a compound of two words, *vaittu*, which is a past participle meaning 'having put', 'having placed', 'having kept', 'having seated', 'having fixed' or 'having established', and *iruppadu*, which is a gerund formed from the verbal root *iru*, which means 'be'. When it is used alone, this gerund *iruppadu* means 'being', but when it is appended to a past participle to form a compound gerund, it serves as an auxiliary verbal noun denoting a continuity of whatever action or state is indicated by the past participle. Therefore the compound word *vaittiruppadu* can be interpreted either literally as meaning 'being having placed', or idiomatically as denoting a continuous state of 'placing', 'seating', 'fixing' or 'keeping'. However there is actually no essential difference between these two interpretations, because the state in which we keep our mind continuously placed, seated, fixed or established in *atma* or 'self' is not a state of activity or 'doing', but is only the state of just 'being' as we really are.

Thus in this sentence Sri Ramana clearly defines the exact meaning of the term *atma-vichara*, saying that it denotes only the state of just 'being' – the spiritual practice of keeping our mind firmly established in and as *atma*, our own real 'self' or essential self-conscious being, 'I am'. In other words, *atma-vichara* or the investigation 'who am I?' is only the practice of just being as we really are – that is, just being in our true and natural state, in which our mind has subsided peacefully in and as our own essential self, our thought-free and therefore absolutely actionless self-conscious being.

This simple practice of *atma-vichara*, self-investigation, self-scrutiny or self-conscious being, is the only means by which we can experience ourselves as we really are, and hence it is the central theme running throughout this profound but clear treatise on the philosophy, science and art of true self-knowledge.

The translation that I give below is extracted from [Happiness and the Art of Being](#), in which I have in various contexts quoted and discussed the meaning of each paragraph of *Nan Yar?*. Though this translation is basically one that I made on my own, it is to a large extent based upon the meanings that Sri Sadhu Om explained to me, and hence it is quite similar to an earlier translation that he and I made together, which is included in appendix one of Part One of [The Path of Sri Ramana](#).

No translation can be perfect, but in this translation, as in all my translations, I have attempted to express in English as clearly and as accurately as possible both the *vachyārtha* and the *lakshyārtha* – the literal meaning and the intended meaning – of Sri Ramana's words. Therefore I have often given alternative meanings for certain words in square brackets. Moreover, because Tamil grammar is very different to English grammar, and because the structure of a Tamil sentence is therefore very different to the structure of an English sentence, and ideas are expressed in Tamil in a manner that is quite unlike the way we express ideas in English, I have often had to add words in square brackets that are not explicitly present in the Tamil original, but whose sense is implied in the idiomatic manner in which Sri Bhagavan expressed himself in Tamil. Therefore I hope that this translation manages at least to some extent to convey the true depth of meaning that Sri Ramana expresses in this profound and important treatise.

In the original Tamil, the paragraphs are not numbered, but for ease of reference I have added the number of each paragraph as a sub-heading.

Nan Yar? (Who am I?)

From the original Tamil prose of
Bhagavan Sri Ramana
Translated by Michael James

PARAGRAPH ONE

Since all living beings desire to be always happy [and] devoid of misery, since all [of them] have greatest love only for their own self, and since happiness alone is the cause of love, [in order] to attain that happiness, which is their own [true] nature that they experience daily in [dreamless] sleep, which is devoid of the mind, knowing [their own real] self is necessary. For that, *jñana-vichara* [scrutinising our consciousness to know] **'who am I?' alone is the principal means.**¹

PARAGRAPH TWO

Who am I? The *sthula deha* [the 'gross' or physical body], which is [composed] of the *sapta dhatus* [the seven constituents, namely chyle, blood, flesh, fat, marrow, bone and semen], is not 'I'. The five *jñanendriyas* [sense organs], namely the ears, skin, eyes, tongue and nose, which individually [and respectively] know the five *vishayas* [sense 'domains' or types of sense perception], namely sound, touch [texture and other qualities perceived by touch], form [shape, colour and other qualities perceived by sight], taste and smell, are also not 'I'. The five *karmendriyas* [organs of action], namely the vocal cords, feet [or legs], hands [or arms], anus and genitals, which [respectively] do the five actions, namely speaking, walking, holding [or giving], defecation and [sexual] enjoyment, are also not 'I'. The *pancha vayus* [the five 'winds', 'vital airs' or metabolic forces], beginning with *prana* [breath], which perform the five [metabolic] functions, beginning with respiration, are also not 'I'. The mind, which thinks, is also not 'I'. The ignorance [the absence of all dualistic knowledge] that is combined with only *vishaya-vasanas* [latent inclinations, impulsions, desires, liking or taste for sense perceptions or sense enjoyments] when all sense perceptions and all actions have been severed [as in sleep], is also not 'I'. Having done *neti* [negation, elimination or denial of whatever is not ourself by thinking] that all the abovesaid things are not 'I', not 'I', the **knowledge** that [then] stands detached **alone is 'I'**. **The nature of [this] knowledge [I am] is *sat-chit-ananda*** [being-consciousness-bliss].²

PARAGRAPH THREE

If [our] mind, which is the cause of all [dualistic, relative or objective] knowledge and of all activity, subsides [becomes still, disappears or ceases to exist], [our] perception of the world will cease. Just as knowledge of the rope, which is the base [that underlies and supports the appearance of the snake], will not arise unless knowledge of the imaginary snake ceases, *svarupa-darsana* [true experiential knowledge of our own essential nature or real self], which is the base [that underlies and supports the appearance of the world], will not arise unless [our] perception of the world, which is an imagination [or fabrication], ceases.³

PARAGRAPH FOUR

That which is called 'mind' is an *atisaya sakti* [an extraordinary or wonderful power] that exists in *atma-svarupa* [our essential self]. It projects all thoughts [or causes all thoughts to appear]. When [we] see [what remains] having removed [relinquished, discarded, dispelled, erased or destroyed] all [our] thoughts, [we will discover that] solitarily [separate from or independent of thoughts] there is no such thing as 'mind'; therefore thought alone is the *svarupa* [the 'own form' or basic nature] of [our] mind. Having removed [all our] thoughts, [we will discover that] there is no such thing as

¹ The meaning of paragraph one is discussed on pages 91, 157-58 and 612 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

² The meaning of paragraph two is discussed on pages 158-60 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

³ The meaning of paragraph three is discussed on pages 200-2 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

'world' [existing separately or independently] as other [than our thoughts]. In sleep there are no thoughts, [and consequently] there is also no world; in waking and dream there are thoughts, [and consequently] there is also a world. Just as a spider spins out [a] thread from within itself and again draws [it back] into itself, so [our] mind projects [this or some other] world from within itself and again dissolves [it back] into itself. When [our] mind comes out from *atma-svarupa* [our essential self], the world appears. Therefore when the world appears, *svarupa* [our 'own form' or essential self] does not appear [as it really is, that is, as the absolute and infinite non-dual consciousness of just being]; when *svarupa* appears (shines) [as it really is], the world does not appear. If [we] go on investigating the nature of [our] mind, '*tan*' alone will finally appear as [the one underlying reality that we now mistake to be our] mind. That which is [here] called '*tan*' [a Tamil reflexive pronoun meaning 'oneself' or 'ourself'] is only *atma-svarupa* [our own essential self]. [Our] mind stands only by always following [conforming or attaching itself to] a gross object [a physical body]; solitarily it does not stand. [Our] mind alone is spoken of as *sukshma sarira* [our 'subtle body', that is, the subtle form or seed of all the imaginary physical bodies that our mind creates and mistakes to be itself] and as *jiva* [our 'soul' or individual self].⁴

PARAGRAPH FIVE

What rises in this body as 'I', that alone is [our] mind. If [we] investigate in what place the thought 'I' rises first in [our] body, [we] will come to know that [it rises first] in [our] heart [the innermost core of our being]. That alone is the birthplace of [our] mind. Even if [we] remain thinking 'I, I', it will take [us] and leave [us] in that place. Of all the thoughts that appear [or arise] in [our] mind, **the thought 'I' alone is the first thought**. Only after this rises do other thoughts rise. Only after the first person appears do the second and third persons appear; without the first person the second and third persons do not exist.⁵

PARAGRAPH SIX

Only by [means of] the investigation 'who am I?' will [our] mind subside [shrink, settle down, become still, disappear or cease to be]; the thought 'who am I?' [that is, the effort we make to attend to our essential being], having destroyed all other thoughts, will itself in the end be destroyed like a corpse-burning stick [that is, a stick that is used to stir a funeral pyre to ensure that the corpse is burnt entirely]. If other thoughts rise, without trying to complete them [we] must investigate to whom they have occurred. However many thoughts rise, what [does it matter]? As soon as each thought appears, if [we] vigilantly investigate to whom it has occurred, 'to me' will be clear [that is, we will be clearly reminded of ourself, to whom each thought occurs]. If [we thus] investigate 'who am I?' [that is, if we turn our attention back towards ourself and keep it fixed firmly, keenly and vigilantly upon our own essential self-conscious being in order to discover what this 'me' really is], [our] mind will return to its birthplace [the innermost core of our being, which is the source from which it arose]; [and since we thereby refrain from attending to it] the thought which had risen will also subside. When [we] practise and practise in this manner, to [our] mind the power to stand firmly established in its birthplace will increase [that is, by repeatedly practising turning our attention towards our mere being, which is the birthplace of our mind, our mind's ability to remain as mere being will increase]. When [our] subtle mind goes out through the portal of [our] brain and sense organs, gross names and forms [the thoughts or mental images that constitute our mind, and the objects that constitute this world] appear; when it remains in [our] heart [the core of our being], names and forms disappear. Only to [this state of] retaining [our] mind in [our] heart without letting [it] go outwards [is] the name '*ahamukham*' ['I-facing' or self-attention] or '*antarmukham*' ['inward-facing' or introversion] [truly applicable]. Only to [the state of] letting [it] go outwards [is] the name '*bahirmukham*' ['outward-facing' or extroversion] [truly applicable]. Only when [our] mind remains firmly established in [our] heart in this manner, will [our primal thought] 'I', which is the root [base, foundation or origin] of all thoughts, go [leave, disappear or cease to be], and will [our] ever-

⁴ The meaning of paragraph four is discussed on pages 202-5 and 371 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

⁵ The meaning of paragraph five is discussed on pages 213-26 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

existing [real] **self** alone shine. The place [that is, the state or reality] devoid of even a little [trace] of [our primal] thought 'I' is *svarupa* [our 'own form' or essential self]. That alone is called '*mauna*' [silence]. Only to [this state of] just being [is] the name '*jñana-drishti*' ['knowledge-seeing', that is, the experience of true knowledge] [truly applicable]. That [state] which is just being is only [the state of] making [our] mind to subside [settle down, melt, dissolve, disappear, be absorbed or perish] in *atma-svarupa* [our own essential self]. Besides [this state of non-dual being], these [states of dualistic knowledge] which are knowing the thoughts of others, knowing the three times [what happened in the past, what is happening now, and what will happen in future], and knowing what is happening in a distant place cannot be *jñana-drishti* [the experience of true knowledge].⁶

PARAGRAPH SEVEN

That which actually exists is only *atma-svarupa* [our own essential self]. The world, soul and God are *kalpanaigal* [imagination, mental creations or fabrications] in it [our essential self], like [the imaginary] silver [that we see] in a shell. These three [basic elements of relativity or duality] appear at the same time and disappear at the same time. [Our] *svarupa* [our 'own form' or essential self] alone is the world; [our] *svarupa* alone is 'I' [our mind or individual self]; [our] *svarupa* alone is God; everything is *siva-svarupa* [our essential self, which is *siva*, the absolute and only truly existing reality].⁷

PARAGRAPH EIGHT

To make the mind subside [permanently], there are no adequate means other than *vichara* [investigation, that is, the art of self-attentive being]. If restrained by other means, the mind will remain as if subsided, [but] will emerge again. Even by *pranayama* [breath-restraint], the mind will subside; however, [though] the mind remains subsided so long as the breath remains subsided, when the breath emerges [or becomes manifest] it will also emerge and wander under the sway of [its] *vasanas* [inclinations, impulses or desires]. The birthplace both of the mind and of the *prana* [the breath or life-force] is one. Thought alone is the *svarupa* [the 'own form'] of the mind. The thought 'I' alone is the first [or basic] thought of the mind; it alone is the ego. From where the ego arises, from there alone the breath also arises. Therefore when the mind subsides the *prana* also [subsides], [and] when the *prana* subsides the mind also subsides. However in sleep, even though the mind has subsided, the breath does not subside. It is arranged thus by the ordinance of God for the purpose of protecting the body, and so that other people do not wonder whether that body has died. When the mind subsides in waking and in *samadhi* [any of the various types of mental absorption that result from *yogic* or other forms of spiritual practice], the *prana* subsides. The *prana* is said to be the gross form of the mind. Until the time of death the mind keeps the *prana* in the body, and at the moment the body dies it [the mind] grabs and takes it [the *prana*] away. Therefore *pranayama* is just an aid to restrain the mind, but will not bring about *mano-nasa* [the annihilation of the mind].⁸

PARAGRAPH NINE

Just like *pranayama*, *murti-dhyana* [meditation upon a form of God], *mantra-japa* [repetition of sacred words such as a name of God] and *ahara-niyama* [restriction of diet, particularly the restriction of consuming only vegetarian food] are [just] aids that restrain the mind [but will not bring about its annihilation]. By both *murti-dhyana* and *mantra-japa* the mind gains one-pointedness [or concentration]. Just as, if [someone] gives a chain in the trunk of an elephant, which is always moving [swinging about trying to catch hold of something or other], that elephant will proceed holding it fast without [grabbing and] holding fast anything else, so indeed the mind, which is always moving [wandering about thinking of something or other], will, if trained in [the practice of thinking of] any one [particular] name or form [of God], remain holding it fast [without thinking

⁶ The meaning of paragraph six is discussed on pages 182-200, 216, 218, 444-5, 451-3, 505, 506-8 and 512 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

⁷ The meaning of paragraph seven is discussed on pages 201-2 and 274 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

⁸ The meaning of paragraph eight is discussed on pages 491-4 and 496-8 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

unnecessary thoughts about anything else]. Because the mind spreads out [scattering its energy] as innumerable thoughts, each thought becomes extremely weak. For the mind which has gained one-pointedness when thoughts shrink and shrink [that is, which has gained one-pointedness due to the progressive reduction of its thoughts] and which has thereby gained strength, *atma-vichara* [self-investigation, which is the art of self-attentive being] will be easily accomplished. By *mita sattvika ahara-niyama* [the restraint of consuming only a moderate quantity of pure or *sattvika* food], which is the best among all restrictions, the *sattva-guna* [the quality of calmness, clarity or 'being-ness'] of the mind will increase and [thereby] help will arise for self-investigation.⁹

PARAGRAPH TEN

Even though *vishaya-vasanas* [our latent impulses or desires to attend to things other than ourself], which come from time immemorial, rise [as thoughts] in countless numbers like ocean-waves, they will all be destroyed when *svarupa-dhyana* [self-attentiveness] increases and increases. Without giving room to the doubting thought, 'Is it possible to dissolve so many *vasanas* and be [or remain] only as self?', [we] should cling tenaciously to self-attentiveness. However great a sinner a person may be, if instead of lamenting and weeping, 'I am a sinner! How am I going to be saved?', [he] completely rejects the thought that he is a sinner and is zealous [or steadfast] in self-attentiveness, he will certainly be reformed [or transformed into the true 'form' of thought-free self-conscious being].¹⁰

PARAGRAPH ELEVEN

As long as *vishaya-vasanas* [latent impulses or desires to attend to anything other than ourself] exist in [our] mind, so long the investigation 'who am I?' is necessary. As and when thoughts arise, then and there it is necessary [for us] to annihilate them all by investigation [keen and vigilant self-attentiveness] in the very place from which they arise. Being [abiding or remaining] without attending to [anything] other [than ourself] is *vairagya* [dispassion] or *nirasa* [desirelessness]; being [abiding or remaining] without leaving [separating from or letting go of our real] self is *jñana* [knowledge]. In truth [these] two [desirelessness and true knowledge] are only one. Just as a pearl-diver, tying a stone to his waist and submerging, picks up a pearl which lies in the ocean, so each person, submerging [beneath the surface activity of their mind] and sinking [deep] within themselves with *vairagya* [freedom from desire or passion for anything other than being], can attain the pearl of self. If one clings fast to uninterrupted *svarupa-smarana* [self-remembrance] until one attains *svarupa* [one's own essential self], that alone [will be] sufficient. So long as enemies are within the fort, they will continue coming out from it. If [we] continue destroying [or cutting down] all of them as and when they come, the fort will [eventually] come into [our] possession.¹¹

PARAGRAPH TWELVE

God and *guru* are in truth not different. Just as that [prey] which has been caught in the jaws of a tiger will not return, so those who have been caught in the glance of *guru*'s grace will surely be saved by him and will never instead be forsaken; nevertheless, it is necessary [for them] to proceed [behave or act] unflinchingly according to the path that *guru* has shown.¹²

PARAGRAPH THIRTEEN

Being completely absorbed in *atma-nishtha* [self-abidance, the state of just being as we really are], giving not even the slightest room to the rising of any thought other than *atma-chintana* [self-contemplation, the 'thought' of our own real self], is giving oneself to God. Even though we place whatever amount of burden upon God, that entire amount he will bear. Since one *paramesvara sakti* [supreme power of God] is driving all activities [that is, since it is causing and controlling

⁹ The meaning of paragraph nine is discussed on pages 493-502 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹⁰ The meaning of paragraph ten is discussed on pages 510-5, 526 and 554-5 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹¹ The meaning of paragraph eleven is discussed on pages 155-6, 222, 510 and 514-30 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹² The meaning of paragraph twelve is discussed on pages 473-6 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

everything that happens in this world], why should we always think, 'it is necessary [for me] to act in this way; it is necessary [for me] to act in that way', instead of being [calm, peaceful and happy] having yielded [ourselves together with our entire burden] to that [supreme controlling power]? Though we know that the train is carrying all the burdens, why should we who travel in it suffer by carrying our small luggage on our head instead of leaving it placed on that [train]?¹³

PARAGRAPH FOURTEEN

What is called happiness is only *svarupa* [the 'own form' or essential nature] of *atma* [self]; happiness and *atma-svarupa* [our own essential self] are not different. *Atma-sukha* [the happiness of self] alone exists; that alone is real. Happiness is not obtained from any of the objects of the world. We think that happiness is obtained from them because of our lack of discrimination. When [our] mind comes out, it experiences unhappiness. In truth, whenever our thoughts [or wishes] are fulfilled, it [our mind] turns back to its proper place [the core of our being, our real self, which is the source from which it arose] and experiences only the happiness of [our real] self. In the same way, at times of sleep, *samadhi* [a state of intense contemplation or absorption of mind] and fainting, and when a desired thing is obtained, and when termination occurs to a disliked thing [that is, when our mind avoids or is relieved from some experience that it dislikes], [our] mind becomes introverted and experiences only the happiness of self. In this way [our] mind wavers about without rest, going outwards leaving [our essential] self, and [then] turning [back] inwards. At the foot of a tree the shade is delightful. Outside the heat of the sun is severe. A person who is wandering outside is cooled by going into the shade. Emerging outside after a short while, he is unable to bear the heat, so he again comes to the foot of the tree. In this way he continues, going from the shade into the sunshine, and going [back] from the sunshine into the shade. A person who acts in this manner is someone lacking in discrimination. But a person of discrimination will not leave the shade. Similarly, the mind of a *jñani* [a person of true self-knowledge] does not leave *brahman* [the fundamental and absolute reality, which is our own essential being or self]. But the mind of an *ajñani* [a person lacking true self-knowledge] continues to undergo misery by roaming about in the world, and to obtain happiness by returning to *brahman* for a short while. What is called the world is only thought [because all that we know as the world is nothing but a series of mental images or thoughts that we have formed in our mind by our power of imagination]. When the world disappears, that is, when thought ceases, [our] mind experiences happiness; when the world appears, it experiences unhappiness.¹⁴

PARAGRAPH FIFTEEN

Just as in the mere presence of the sun, which rose without *iccha* [wish, desire or liking], *samkalpa* [volition or intention], [or] *yatna* [effort or exertion], a crystal stone [or magnifying lens] will emit fire, a lotus will blossom, water will evaporate, and people of the world will engage in [or begin] their respective activities, do [those activities] and subside [or cease being active], and [just as] in front of a magnet a needle will move, [so] *jivas* [living beings], who are caught in [the finite state governed by] *muttozhil* [the threefold function of God, namely the creation, sustenance and dissolution of the world] or *panchakrityas* [the five functions of God, namely creation, sustenance, dissolution, concealment and grace], which happen due to nothing but the special nature of the presence of God, move [busy themselves, perform activities, make effort or strive] and subside [cease being active, become still or sleep] in accordance with their respective *karmas* [that is, in accordance not only with their *prarabdha karma* or destiny, which impels them to do whatever actions are necessary in order for them to experience all the pleasant and unpleasant things that they are destined to experience, but also with their *karma vasanas*, their inclinations or impulses to desire, think and act in particular ways, which impel them to make effort to experience certain pleasant things that they are not destined to experience, and to avoid certain unpleasant things that they are destined to experience]. Nevertheless, he [God] is not *samkalpa sahitar* [a person

¹³ The meaning of paragraph thirteen is discussed on pages 24, 223-4, 460-1, 465-8, 471-2, 512-3 and 526 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹⁴ The meaning of paragraph fourteen is discussed on pages 92-4 and 203 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

connected with or possessing volition or intention]. Even one *karma* does not adhere to him [that is, he is not bound or affected by any *karma* or action whatsoever]. That is like world-actions [the actions happening here on earth] not adhering to [or affecting] the sun, and [like] the qualities and defects of the other four elements [earth, water, air and fire] not adhering to the all-pervading space.¹⁵

PARAGRAPH SIXTEEN

Since in every [true spiritual] treatise it is said that for attaining *mukti* [spiritual emancipation, liberation or salvation] it is necessary [for us] to restrain [our] mind, after knowing that *mano-nigraha* [holding down, holding within, restraining, subduing, suppressing or destroying our mind] is the ultimate intention [or purpose] of [such] treatises, there is no benefit [to be gained] by studying without limit [a countless number of] treatises. For restraining [our] mind it is necessary [for us] to investigate ourself [in order to know] who [we really are], [but] instead [of doing so] how [can we know ourself by] investigating in treatises? It is necessary [for us] to know ourself only by our own eye of *jñana* [true knowledge, that is, by our own selfward-turned consciousness]. Does [a person called] Raman need a mirror to know himself as Raman? [Our] 'self' is within the *pancha-kosas* [the 'five sheaths' with which we seem to have covered and obscured our true being, namely our physical body, our *prana* or life force, our mind, our intellect and the seeming darkness or ignorance of sleep], whereas treatises are outside them. Therefore investigating in treatises [hoping to be able thereby to know] ourself, whom we should investigate [with an inward-turned attention] having removed [set aside, abandoned or separated] all the *pancha-kosas*, is useless [or unprofitable]. Knowing our *yathartha svarupa* [our own real self or essential being] having investigated who is [our false individual] self, who is in bondage [being bound within the imaginary confines of our mind], is *mukti* [emancipation]. The name '*atma-vichara*' [is truly applicable] only to [the practice of] always being [abiding or remaining] having put [placed, kept, seated, deposited, detained, fixed or established our] mind in *atma* [our own real self], whereas *dhyana* [meditation] is imagining ourself to be *sat-chit-ananda brahman* [the absolute reality, which is being-consciousness-bliss]. At one time it will become necessary [for us] to forget all that [we] have learnt.¹⁶

PARAGRAPH SEVENTEEN

Just as no benefit [is to be gained] by a person, who should sweep up and throw away rubbish, scrutinising it, so no benefit [is to be gained] by a person, who should know [his or her real] self, calculating that the *tattvas*, which are concealing [our real] self, are this many, and scrutinising their qualities, instead of gathering up and rejecting all of them. It is necessary [for us] to consider the world [which is composed of these *tattvas*] like a dream.¹⁷

PARAGRAPH EIGHTEEN

Except that waking is *dirgha* [long lasting] and dream is *kshanika* [momentary or lasting for only a short while], there is no other difference [between these two imaginary states of mental activity]. To the extent to which all the *vyavaharas* [doings, activities, affairs or occurrences] that happen in waking appear [at this present moment] to be real, to that [same] extent even the *vyavaharas* that happen in dream appear at that time to be real. In dream [our] mind takes another body [to be itself]. In both waking and dream thoughts and names-and-forms [the objects of the seemingly external world] occur in one time [that is, simultaneously].¹⁸

PARAGRAPH NINETEEN

There are not two [classes of] minds, namely a good [class of] mind and a bad [class of] mind. Only

¹⁵ The meaning of paragraph fifteen is discussed on pages 281-4 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹⁶ The meaning of paragraph sixteen is discussed on pages 439-40, 526-7 and 533-54 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹⁷ The meaning of paragraph seventeen is discussed on pages 160-3 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

¹⁸ The meaning of paragraph eighteen is discussed on pages 129-36 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

vasanas [impulsions or latent desires] are of two kinds, namely *subha* [good or agreeable] and *asubha* [bad or disagreeable]. When [a person's] mind is under the sway of *subha-vasanas* [agreeable impulses] it is said to be a good mind, and when it is under the sway of *asubha-vasanas* [disagreeable impulses] a bad mind. However bad other people may appear to be, disliking them is not proper [or appropriate]. Likes and dislikes are both fit [for us] to dislike [or to renounce]. It is not proper [for us] to let [our] mind [dwell] much on worldly matters. It is not proper [for us] to enter in the affairs of other people [an idiomatic way of saying that we should mind our own business and not interfere in other people's affairs]. All that one gives to others one is giving only to oneself. If [everyone] knew this truth, who indeed would refrain from giving?¹⁹

PARAGRAPH TWENTY

If [our individual] self rises, everything rises; if [our individual] self subsides [or ceases], everything subsides [or ceases]. To whatever extent we behave humbly, to that extent there is goodness [or virtue]. If [we] are restraining [curbing, subduing, condensing, contracting or reducing our] mind, wherever [we] may be [we] can be [or wherever we may be let us be].²⁰

This document is a PDF copy of www.happinessofbeing.com/nan_yar.html.

¹⁹ The meaning of paragraph nineteen is discussed on pages 588-609 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).

²⁰ The meaning of paragraph twenty is discussed on pages 588 and 609-10 of [Happiness and the Art of Being](#).