

EIGHT STANZAS TO SRI ARUNACHALA

1. Ah! What a wonder! It stands as an insentient¹ Hill. Its action is mysterious, past human understanding. From the age of innocence it had shone within my mind that Arunachala was something of surpassing grandeur², but even when I came to know through another that it was the same as Tiruvannamalai, I did not realise its meaning.
When it drew me up to it, stilling my mind, and I came close, I saw it (stand) unmoving.
2. “Who is the seer?” When I sought within, I watched what survived the disappearance of the seer³.
No thought arose to say, ‘I saw’, how then could the thought ‘I did not see’ arise? Who has the power to convey this in words, when even Thou (appearing as Dakshinamurti) couldst do so in ancient days only by silence?
Only to convey by silence Thy (transcendent) state Thou standest as a Hill, shining from heaven to earth.

¹ The adjective also bears the meaning ‘eradicating (objective) knowledge’.

² ‘To view Chidambaram, to be born in Tiruvarur, to die in Varanasi, or merely to think of Arunachala is to be assured of liberation.’ This couplet is very well-known, particularly in South India.

³ That is, the Self.

SRI ARUNACHALA ASHTAKAM*

1. Aṛi-vaṛu giri-yena amar-darum ammā
adi-saiam idan-seyal aṛi-vari dārkkum
Aṛi-vaṛu siṛu-vaya dadu-mudal Aruṇā
chala-migap peri-dena aṛi-vini laṅga
Aṛi-gilan adan-poruḷ adu-tiru vaṇṇā
malai-yena oru-varāl aṛi-vuṛap peṭ-ṭrum
Aṛi-vinai maru-ḷuṛut taru-ginil īrkka
aru-guṛum ama-yami dacha-lamāk kaṇḍēn.
2. Kanda-van evan-enak karut-tinuḷ ṇādak
kaṇḍa-van inḍriḍa ninḍradu kaṇḍēn
Kaṇḍa-nan eṇḍri-ḍak karut-tezha villai
kaṇḍi-lan eṇḍri-dak karut-tezhu māṛen
Viṇḍidu viḷak-kiḍu viṛa-luṛu vōnār
viṇḍi-lai paṇḍunī viḷak-kinai yen-ḍṛal
Viṇḍiḍā dunnī-lai viḷak-kiḍa vendṛē
viṇ-ḍalam achalamā viḷaṅ-giḍa ninḍṛāi.

* *Yen seer viruttam* (eight-word musical metre): These eight-line verses are divided into lines of four words each.

3. When I approach Thee regarding Thee as having form, Thou standest as a hill on earth. If, with the mind, the seeker looks for Thy (essential) form as formless, he is like one who travels the earth to see the (ever-present) ether. To dwell without thought upon Thy (boundless) nature is to lose one's (separate) identity like a doll of sugar when it comes in contact with the ocean; and when I come to realize who I am, what else is this identity of mine (but Thee), O Thou Who standest as the towering Aruna Hill?

4. To look for God while ignoring Thee, who art Being and Consciousness, is like going with a lamp to look for darkness. Only to make Thyself known as Being and Consciousness, Thou dwellest in different religions under different (names and) forms. If (yet) they do not come to know Thee, they are indeed the blind who do not know the Sun. O Great Arunachala! Thou peerless gem, abide and shine Thou as my Self, one without a second!

5. As the string in (a necklet of) gems, it is Thou in Thy unity who penetratest all the diversity of beings and religions. If, like a gem when it is cut and polished, the (impure) mind is worked against the wheel of the (pure) mind to free it of its flaws, it will take on the light of Thy Grace (and shine) like a ruby, whose fire is unaffected by any outward object. When once a photographic plate has been exposed to the sun, can it receive impressions afterwards? O benign and dazzling Aruna Hill! Is there anything apart from Thee?

6. Thou art Thyself the One Being, ever aware as the self-luminous Heart! In Thee there is a mysterious power (*shakti*). From it proceeds the phantom of the mind emitting its latent subtle dark mists, which illumined by Thy light reflected on them, appear within as though whirling in the vortices of *prarabdha*. Later developing into the psychic worlds, they are

3. Ninnai-yān uru-vena eṇṇiyē naṇṇa
nila-misai malai-yenum nilai-yinai nīdān
Unnuru aru-vena vun-niḍin viṇṇōk
kuṛa-vula galai-darum oru-vanai yokkum
Unnuru vuna-lara vunnida munnir
uṛu-saruk karai-yuru ena-vuru vōyum
Ennai-yān aṛivuṛa ennuru vēṛē
dirun-danai aruṇa-vān giri-yena irun-dōi.
4. Irun-doḷir unai-vidut taḍut-tiḍal deivam
iruṭ-ṭinai viḷak-keḍut taḍut-tiḍa lēkāṇ
Irun-doḷir runai-yaṛi vuṛut-tiḍaṛ kendṛē
irun-danai madan-doṛum vida-vida vuru-vāi
Irun-doḷir unai-yaṛi gila-renil annōr
iravi-yin aṛi-vaṛu kuru-ḍarē yāvār
Irun-doḷir iraṇ-ḍaṛa enaduḷat tonḍ-ṛāi
iṇai-yaṛum aruṇa-mā malai-yenum maṇiyē.
5. Maṇi-gaḷil sara-ḍena uyir-doṛu nānā
madan-doṛum oru-vanā maru-vinai nīdān
Maṇi-kaḍain dena-mana mana-menuṅ kallil
maṛu-vaṛak kaḍai-yanin aruḷoḷi mēvum
Maṇi-yoḷi yenap-piṛi doru-poruḷ paṭṭrum
maru-vuṛa lilai-nizhal paḍi-tahaṭ ṭinviṇ
Maṇi-yoḷi paḍa-nizhal paḍi-yumō unnin
maṛu-poruḷ aruṇa-nal oḷimalai yuṇḍō.
6. Uṇḍoru poru-ḷaṛi voḷi-yuḷa mēnī
uḷa-dunil ala-dilā adisaya sakti
Nin-ḍraṇu nizhal-nirai ninai-vaṛi vōḍē
nikazh-vinai chuzha-lilan ninai-voḷi yāḍi

projected without as the material world and transformed into concrete objects which are magnified by the outgoing senses and move about like pictures in a cinema show. Visible or invisible, O Hill of Grace, without Thee they are nothing!

7. When there is not the I-thought, then there will be no other thought. Until that time, when other thoughts arise, (asking), 'To whom?' (will call forth the reply), 'To me.' He who pursues this closely, questioning 'What is the origin of the I?' and diving inwards reaches the seat of the mind (within) the Heart, becomes the sovereign Lord of the Universe. O boundless ocean of Grace and effulgence called Arunachala, dancing motionless within the court of the Heart! There is no (longer any) dream of such dualities as in and out, right and wrong, birth and death, pleasure and pain, or light and darkness.

8. The waters rise up from the sea as clouds, then fall as rain and run back to the sea in streams; nothing can keep them from returning to their source. Likewise the *jiva* rising up from Thee cannot be kept from joining Thee again, though it may stray many times along the way. A bird which rises from the earth and soars into the sky can find no place of rest except the earth. So indeed must all retrace their path, and when the *jiva* finds its way back to its source, it will sink and be merged in Thee, O Arunachala, Thou Ocean of Bliss!

Kaṇ-ḍana nizhaṛ-jaga vichit-tira muḷḷuñ
kaṇ-mudal poṛi-vazhi puṛat-tumor chillā
Nin-ḍriḍu nizhal-paḍa niga-raruṭ kundrē
nin-ḍriḍa chen-ḍriḍa ninai-viḍa vindrē.

7. Inḍra-ham enu-ninai veniṛ-piṛa vonḍrum
inḍradu varai-piṛa ninai-vezhil ārk-keṛk
Konḍra-ham udi-talam edu-vena vullāzhnd
uḷattavi suṛi-noru kuḍai-nizhaṛ kōvē
Inḍra-ham puṛa-miru vinai-yiṛal janmam
inbutun biru-ḷoḷi enuñ-gana idaya
Maṇḍra-ham acha-lamā naḍa-miḍum Aruṇa
malai-yenum elai-yaṛum aruḷoḷik kaḍalē.

8. Kaḍa-lezhum ezhili-yāl pozhi-taru nīrdān
kaḍal-nilai yaḍai-varai taḍai-seyi nillādu
Uḍal-uyir unil-ezhum unai-yuṛu varaiyil
uṛupala vazhi-gaḷil uzha-linu nillādu
Iḍaveḷi alai-yinu nilai-yilai puḷḷuk
iḍa-nila mala-dilai varu-vazhi sellak
Kaḍa-nuyir varu-vazhi sendriḍa inbak
kaḍa-lunai maru-viḍum Aruṇa-bhū daranē.