

The Inner Circle — Edition #2

Who Are We Really? Identity, Consciousness and the Vedic Answer

By Dr. Dibyendu Choudhury | The Inner Circle Newsletter

The Central Question

Dear Inner Circle,

Every philosophical tradition eventually arrives at the same question: **Who am I?** Not what is my name, not what is my role — but what is the nature of the awareness that reads these words right now?

The Vedic tradition gives the most precise answer in human intellectual history: You are not the body. You are not the mind. You are not the accumulation of your experiences, opinions, or memories. You are the witness of all these — the unchanging Atman, the pure consciousness that observes thought without being thought.

The Voice of the Gita

"The self is not born, nor does it die. It has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. It is unborn, eternal, ever-existing, and primeval."

— Bhagavad Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 20



The Atman — Pure Consciousness

The Vedic concept of Atman is not a belief to be accepted on faith — it is a philosophical position arrived at through rigorous inquiry. The Atman is described as:

- Unborn and undying — beyond the cycle of creation and destruction
- Eternal — existing outside the dimension of time
- Ever-existing — self-luminous, requiring no external source
- Primeval — the most ancient and foundational reality

The Crisis of Modern Identity

The crisis of identity in the 21st century — anxiety, burnout, the constant need for external validation — is precisely because we have mistaken the costume for the actor. We are playing roles: entrepreneur, parent, professional. These roles are real and important. But they are not who we are.

The Entrepreneur

A role defined by market conditions, success metrics, and external outcomes — real, but not the self.

The Parent

A role shaped by relationships and responsibilities — meaningful, but not the unchanging witness within.

The Professional

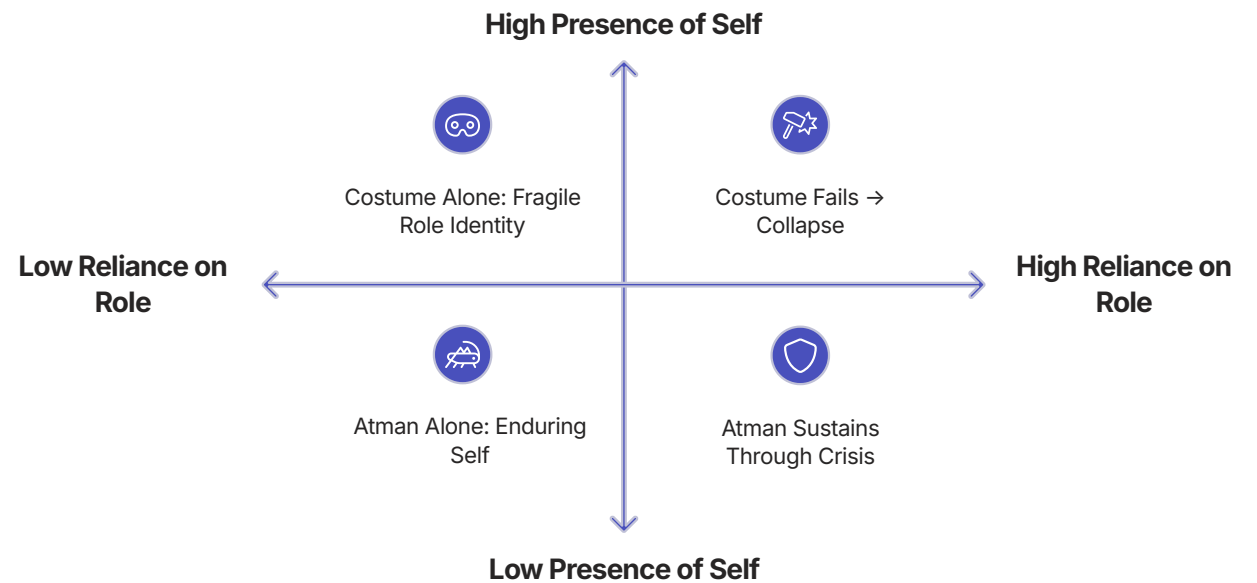
A role constructed by credentials and performance — valuable, but a costume, not the actor wearing it.

When the role fails — and every role eventually faces crisis — the person who identified completely with the role collapses. The person who knows the Atman simply adjusts the costume and continues.

The Costume and the Actor

We are playing roles. These roles are real and important. But they are not who we are.

The Vedic metaphor of the actor and the costume is one of the most powerful frameworks for understanding identity. The actor — the Atman — remains unchanged regardless of which costume is worn. The costume changes with every scene, every lifetime, every role. Mistaking the costume for the actor is the root of all existential suffering.



This is not a call to abandon your roles — it is a call to hold them lightly, with the knowledge that you are infinitely more than any single role could contain.

Three Practices from the Vedic Tradition

The Vedic tradition does not merely diagnose the problem of mistaken identity — it prescribes a rigorous path of practice to restore clarity. These three practices form the core of that path:



Witness Meditation

Observe your thoughts without becoming them. Sit in stillness and watch the stream of mental activity as a detached witness — noticing that the one who watches is never the thought itself. This practice gradually reveals the unchanging awareness beneath all mental movement.



Neti Neti

"Not this, not this" — the ancient method of systematically disidentifying from what you are not. You are not the body. You are not the emotion. You are not the thought. By negating each layer of false identity, what remains is the pure Atman — the irreducible witness.



Svadhyaya

Self-study through scripture, reflection, and honest self-inquiry. Svadhyaya is not passive reading — it is an active confrontation with the deepest questions of existence, guided by the wisdom of those who have walked this path before.

Witness Meditation — A Closer Look



The Practice of Pure Observation

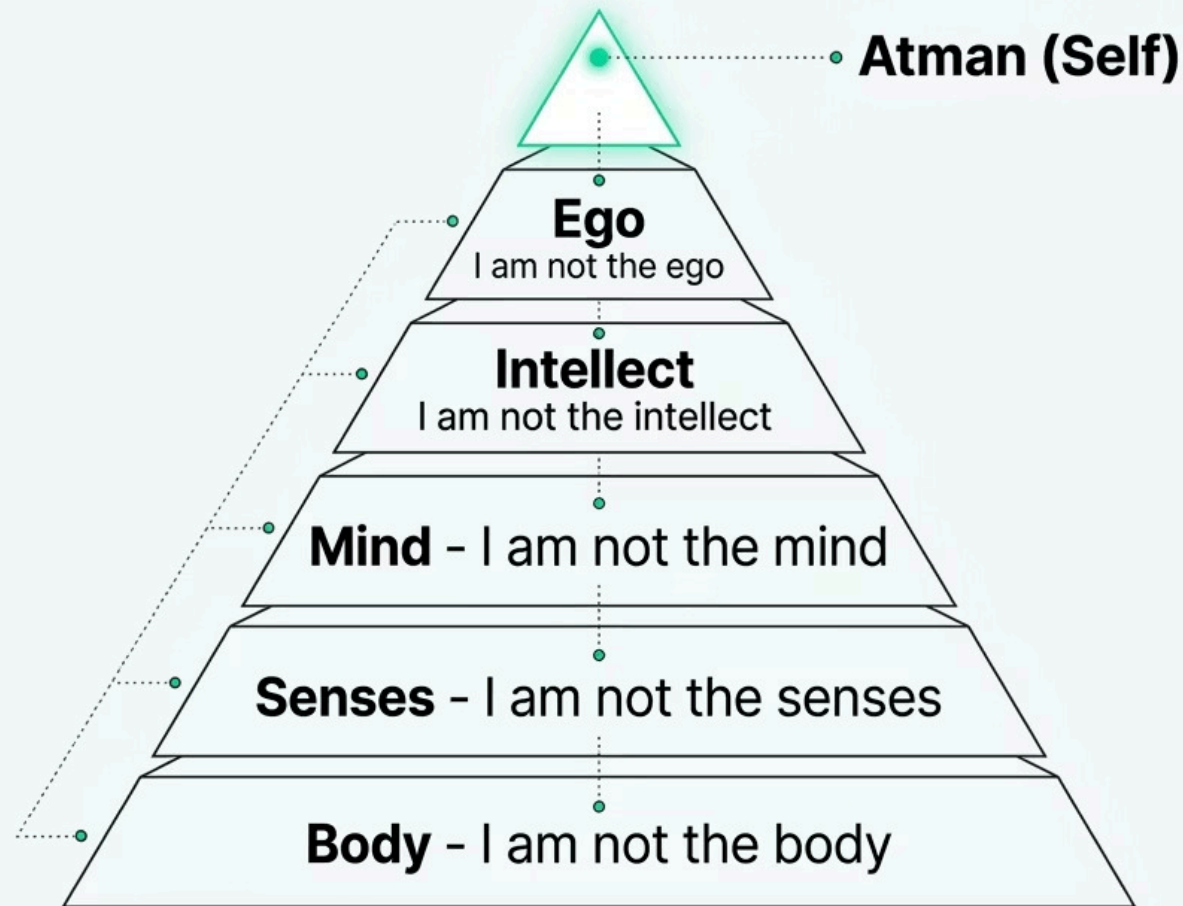
Witness meditation is deceptively simple and profoundly transformative. The instruction is singular: observe without interfering. Watch thoughts arise and dissolve. Watch emotions surge and recede. Watch sensations appear and disappear.

In this watching, something remarkable becomes apparent — the watcher itself never changes. Thoughts are impermanent. The awareness of thoughts is not. This is the first direct encounter with the Atman.

- The goal is not to stop thinking — it is to stop *being* the thought. The witness remains, always.

Neti Neti — The Path of Negation

Neti Neti — "not this, not this" — is one of the most intellectually rigorous methods in all of philosophy. It proceeds by systematic elimination, stripping away every false identification until only the irreducible truth remains.



Each layer of false identity is not destroyed — it is simply recognized for what it is: a costume, not the actor. The body is real. The mind is real. But neither is the ultimate self. Neti Neti clears the lens of perception until the Atman shines through undistorted.

Svadhyaaya — The Discipline of Self-Study

More Than Reading

Svadhyaaya is one of the Niyamas — the personal observances — in Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. It is the practice of turning the light of inquiry inward, using sacred texts, philosophical reflection, and honest self-examination as instruments of illumination.

True Svadhyaaya is an active confrontation with the deepest questions of existence, guided by the wisdom of those who have walked this path before. It demands intellectual honesty, the willingness to question every assumption, and the courage to sit with uncertainty.



Scripture as Mirror

The Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, and the Brahma Sutras are not merely historical documents — they are precision instruments for self-inquiry, refined over millennia by some of the greatest minds in human history.

Reflection as Practice

Reading without reflection is information. Reflection without application is philosophy. Svadhyaaya demands all three — reading, reflecting, and allowing the insights to reshape how you live and who you believe yourself to be.

Honest Self-Inquiry

The most challenging aspect of Svadhyaaya is the demand for radical honesty. The ego is a skilled defender of its own illusions. True self-study requires the willingness to see past those defenses.

From the Bookshelf

Moksha and the Modern Mind

By Dr. Dibyendu Choudhury

A deep exploration of Vedic consciousness philosophy applied to contemporary questions of identity, meaning, and liberation. This work bridges the ancient precision of Vedic thought with the urgent existential questions of the modern world.

Visit www.dibyenduchoudh...

Until Next Fortnight

Keep thinking. Keep building. Keep asking the question that matters most — not *what* you are, but *who* is the one doing the asking.

The Atman is not found by searching outward. It is revealed by ceasing to mistake everything else for it.

Dr. Dibyendu Choudhury

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