

THE END OF THE OBSERVER

K. NAGARAJAN



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Offered at the Lotus feet of
Saint Thayumanavar
Who shows the way towards
REMAINING SILENT

*If this book is in your hands, it is not by accident
Your search for the TRUTH has brought you here*

An insightful journey awaits you

*The following pages are not meant to be rushed through
They are meant to be inhaled, digested and absorbed into
one's Being*

Why This Book...?



All human beings long for peace.

Whether rich or poor, healthy or sick, educated or uneducated, successful or unsuccessful, spiritual or worldly, every one of us seeks every one of us seeks a deeper fulfilment. Behind our desires, ambitions, achievements, possessions, relationships, and pursuits lies a longing for lasting peace and happiness.

We seek wealth, hoping it will bring security. We seek recognition, power, relationships, knowledge, and even spiritual attainments, believing that fulfilment in life lies there. Yet, despite unprecedented advances in science, technology, medicine, and material prosperity, lasting inner peace continues to elude humanity.

This inner unrest is reflected in the growing prevalence of stress, anxiety, loneliness, and emotional exhaustion across the world. Modern medicine and psychology

have made remarkable progress in understanding and addressing many of these challenges. Yet, they also lead us towards a deeper question:

Why does inner peace remain so elusive, even when our external comforts continue to increase?

Perhaps the answer lies not in what we possess, but in our understanding of who we truly are.

Could it be that, in our search for peace, we have been looking in the wrong place?

And perhaps there is an even more fundamental question:

Who is the one searching for peace?

We ordinarily experience ourselves as the one who thinks, feels, remembers, desires, chooses, observes, and reacts. We say, "*I am thinking,*" "*I am worried,*" "*I am observing my thoughts.*" But who is this 'I'?

Is the observer of our thoughts itself something that we can observe?

And if it can be observed, who is observing the observer?

These questions take us beyond the ordinary search for peace. They invite us to examine the very identity from

which the search begins. They invite us to examine the very identity from which the search begins.

The ancient Indian scriptures approached this question not merely as an intellectual question, but as an inquiry into the nature of the Self. Their wisdom points towards a simple yet profound insight: the peace we seek may not be something to be acquired, created, or achieved. It may already be present, obscured by our identification with the ever-changing activity of the mind.

This book invites us to look more closely at this search for peace — to explore where we have been looking for it, why it has remained elusive, and whether the very act of searching may be preventing us from discovering what we seek. The journey is not merely one of intellectual understanding, but of careful observation, inner inquiry, and direct experience.

Let us begin our journey into the timeless wisdom of the Indian scriptures—and ultimately, into ourselves.

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Contents



Chapter 1: The Problem – Why We Cannot Find Peace.....	1
Chapter 2: The Discovery – There Is a Witness Within.....	14
Chapter 3: Observing the Observer.....	25
Chapter 4: The End of the Observer.....	47
Chapter 5: From Understanding to Direct Experience	72
End Note	77

Chapter 1

The Problem – Why We Cannot Find Peace



1.1 A Mind That Never Stops

Have you ever tried to sit quietly for a few moments without doing anything?

No phone.

No television.

No book.

No conversation.

Just you and your thoughts.

What happens?

For most people, the mind immediately begins its work.

A forgotten conversation resurfaces.

Tomorrow's tasks demand attention.

An old regret appears.

A future worry takes shape.

A pleasant memory drifts by.

An imagined argument begins.

The body may be sitting still, but the mind continues to move.

This constant movement of the mind has become so familiar that we rarely question it. We assume that thinking continuously is normal. We assume that the voice in our head is who we are.

Yet there is an important distinction that most of us never examine.

Thoughts happen.

But are we the thoughts?

The Bhagavad Gita begins not with serenity but with mental turmoil. Before Krishna imparts wisdom, Arjuna experiences confusion, grief, fear, attachment, and despair.

This is significant.

The Bhagavad Gita does not begin with enlightenment.

It begins with a troubled mind.

The human journey starts where we are, not where we wish to be.

1.2 Arjuna's Breakdown

Arjuna was no ordinary warrior.

He was courageous, skilled, respected, and accomplished.

Yet when he looked across the battlefield of Kurukshetra and saw teachers, relatives, friends, and loved ones standing on both sides, his confidence collapsed.

His mind became overwhelmed.

His emotions took control.

His reasoning became clouded.

In the first chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna describes his condition vividly.

Arjuna said: My dear Krishna, seeing my friends and relatives present before me in such a fighting spirit, I feel the limbs of my body quivering and my mouth drying up.

— The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 28, Chapter 1

My whole body is trembling, my hair is standing on end, my bow 'Gandiva' is slipping from my hand, and my skin is burning.

— The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 29, Chapter 1

I am now unable to stand here any longer. I am forgetting myself, and my mind is reeling. I see only causes of misfortune, O Krishna, killer of the Keshi demon.*

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 30, Chapter 1

[In this verse, Arjuna has addressed Lord Krishna as ‘Keshava’, killer of a demon called Keshi.]*

I do not see how any good can come from killing my own kinsmen in this battle, nor can I, my dear Krishna, desire any subsequent victory, kingdom or happiness.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 31, Chapter 1

His limbs tremble. His mouth becomes dry. His skin burns. His bow slips from his hand.

What is happening?

The battle has not yet begun.

No arrow has been released.

Nothing external has changed.

The crisis exists entirely within his mind.

How often does the same thing happen to us?

A meeting has not yet taken place, but we are already anxious.

An examination has not yet begun, but we are already fearful.

A conversation has not yet occurred, but we are already upset.

We suffer not only from events but also from our thoughts about events.

The battlefield of Kurukshetra exists within every human mind.

1.3 The Tyranny of Thought

Thoughts are useful servants.

They help us plan, learn, remember, and solve problems.

But when they become masters, they create suffering.

Consider how much of our day is spent replaying the past or rehearsing the future.

We revisit old mistakes.

We relive painful memories.

We imagine scenarios that may never occur.

We carry conversations in our minds long after they have ended.

In many cases, the event itself lasts only a few minutes, but the mental replay lasts for days.

A critical comment from a colleague may occupy our thoughts for an entire week.

A small setback may dominate our attention for months.

The mind magnifies experiences.

It creates stories.

It adds interpretations.

It constructs fears.

The mind persuades us that these constructions are reality.

The problem is not that thoughts exist.

The problem is that we become completely identified with them.

1.4 The Chain of Attachment

The Bhagavad Gita describes a psychological process that remains remarkably relevant today.

Lord Krishna explains:

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them, and from such attachment lust develops, and from lust anger arises.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 62, Chapter 2

The teaching continues, describing how anger leads to confusion, confusion to loss of memory, loss of

memory to the destruction of discrimination, and ultimately to downfall.

From anger, complete delusion arises, and from delusion bewilderment of memory. When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one falls down again into the material pool.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 63, Chapter 2

This sequence can be observed in everyday life.

We dwell on something.

We become attached to it.

We begin to desire it.

When the desire is frustrated, irritation appears.

Irritation grows into anger.

Anger clouds judgment.

Poor decisions follow.

A simple thought becomes the starting point of suffering.

Krishna's insight that a simple thought becomes the starting point of suffering is not merely spiritual; it is profoundly psychological.

Krishna invites us to observe how the mind creates bondage through unconscious identification.

1.5 The Endless Pursuit

Modern life encourages the belief that happiness lies somewhere ahead.

After the next promotion.

After purchasing a larger house.

After achieving financial security.

After gaining recognition.

After retirement.

The destination keeps changing; the promise remains the same.

"If only I achieve this, I will finally be at peace."

Yet experience tells a different story.

Achievements provide satisfaction; but the satisfaction rarely lasts.

Soon another goal appears.

Another desire emerges.

Another pursuit begins.

The mind remains restless.

The Bhagavad Gita does not condemn ambition or achievement.

Rather, it asks us to examine whether we have mistaken external accomplishments for inner fulfilment.

The mind constantly seeks lasting fulfilment in things that are themselves temporary.

As a result, true contentment remains elusive.

1.6 The Restless Mind

At one point, Arjuna openly admits his difficulty.

He tells Krishna:

For the mind is restless, turbulent, obstinate and very strong, O Krishna, and to subdue it is, it seems to me, more difficult than controlling the wind.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 34, Chapter 6*

Anyone who has attempted meditation understands these words immediately.

The mind wanders.

Attention drifts.

Thoughts multiply.

Despite our best intentions, we find ourselves carried away by mental activity.

Krishna does not dismiss Arjuna's concern.

Krishna acknowledges the restlessness of mind. It is not something abnormal.

Lord Sri Krishna said: O mighty-armed son of Kuntī, it is undoubtedly very difficult to curb the restless mind, but it is possible by suitable practice and by detachment.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 35, Chapter 6

The restlessness of the mind is real; the challenge is universal.

1.7 What Can Suppression Accomplish?

When disturbed by fear, anger, jealousy, or anxiety, our natural tendency is either to express these emotions impulsively or to suppress them through willpower. Neither approach brings lasting freedom.

Suppression may produce an appearance of calmness, but it does not remove the root of the disturbance. The emotion remains hidden beneath the surface, waiting for another opportunity to express itself. Suppressed anger may return as resentment or bitterness. Suppressed fear may reappear as anxiety or insecurity.

What is buried in the mind continues to influence our thoughts and actions.

The Bhagavad Gita recognises this truth. Krishna does not ask Arjuna to suppress his emotions. Instead, He asks him to understand them.

Even a person of knowledge acts according to his own nature. All beings follow their own nature. What can repression accomplish?

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 33, Chapter 3

This profound question invites us to look beyond mere self-control. Reactions such as fear, anger, and attachment do not arise without a cause. They spring from deeply rooted conditioning, habits, desires, and mistaken identification with the mind.

The solution, therefore, is not suppression but understanding. When we observe our thoughts and emotions without immediately reacting to them, we begin to understand their nature. That understanding gradually weakens their hold over us.

The Bhagavad Gita does not teach us how to escape from the mind. It teaches us how to understand it. And understanding is always the beginning of freedom.

1.8 The Question That Changes Everything

Imagine that you are sitting quietly and observing your thoughts.

A worry appears; you notice it.

A memory appears; you notice it.

An emotion appears; you notice it.

Who is doing the noticing?

This question marks the beginning of a profound inquiry.

Most people spend their lives examining the contents of consciousness.

Few examine consciousness itself.

The Bhagavad Gita gently directs our attention toward the observer.

Before we can discover the witness, however, we must first recognise how deeply we have become entangled in the mind.

Only then does the journey towards freedom unfold.

In the next chapter, we will explore a possibility that has transformed the lives of seekers for centuries:

What if you are not the thoughts you think?

What if there is within you a silent observer that remains untouched by the changing movements of the mind?

Reflection:

Before you continue,
pause for one minute.

Watch your thoughts.

Don't stop them.

Don't judge them.

Simply observe.

Then ask yourself:

Who is aware of these thoughts?

Carry this question into the next chapter.

Chapter 2

The Discovery – There Is a Witness Within



2.1 A Simple Observation

Let us begin with a simple experiment.

Close your eyes for a few moments.

Notice the thoughts that arise.

Do not try to stop them.

Do not judge them.

Simply observe.

Perhaps a memory appears.

Perhaps a concern about tomorrow surfaces.

Perhaps the mind comments on this very exercise.

Now ask yourself:

Who is noticing these thoughts?

The question may seem unusual at first.

We are accustomed to examining our thoughts, but not the one who is aware of them.

Yet this simple inquiry opens the door to one of the deepest insights of the Bhagavad Gita.

2.2 The Difference Between Thinking and Knowing

Most of us spend our lives immersed in thoughts.

We think about work.

We think about family.

We think about success, failure, health, money, and relationships.

Thought follows thought in an endless stream.

But there is something remarkable about every thought.

A thought appears and you are aware of it.

An emotion arises and you are aware of it.

A sensation occurs in the body and you are aware of it.

The thought is one thing.

The awareness of the thought is another.

This distinction is subtle but profound.

Without awareness, no thought could ever be known.

Without awareness, no experience could ever be recognised.

Awareness is the silent background against which every experience appears.

2.3 Clouds and the Sky

Imagine looking up at the sky on a windy day.

Clouds drift across it constantly.

Some are dark; some are bright.

Some are large; some are small.

Yet, the sky itself remains untouched.

The clouds come and go.

The sky remains.

The mind is like the clouds.

Thoughts come and go; emotions come and go;
memories come and go; experiences come and go.

The witness is like the sky.

It remains present while everything else changes.

Most of us spend our lives studying the clouds.

The Bhagavad Gita invites us to notice the sky.

2.4 What Changes and What Does Not

The Bhagavad Gita repeatedly directs our attention toward the distinction between the changing and the unchanging.

Everything we ordinarily identify with is changing.

The body changes; the mind changes.

Opinions change; relationships change.

Circumstances change.

The child becomes an adult; the adult grows old.

The person you were ten years ago is not the person you are today.

Yet, despite all these changes, there remains a continuous sense of "I am."

Something has been present through every stage of life.

Krishna points to this truth when he explains that the Self is not subject to the constant changes experienced by the body and mind.

For the soul there is neither birth nor death at any time. He has not come into being, does not come into being, and will not come into being. He is unborn, eternal, ever-existing and primeval. He is not slain when the body is slain.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 20, Chapter 2

This verse of the Bhagavad Gita is often misunderstood.

This verse is not meant to convey what happens to one after death.

Here, Krishna describes the nature of the witness (the *Atman*), the one who is observing all of this, yet remaining unaffected – remaining untouched by thoughts and emotions.

The *Atman*, which is your true nature, has never reacted even once to anything. It has only been witnessing.

A person may look back upon childhood memories and say, "I remember."

Who is this "I" that has remained present through all the changes?

The Bhagavad Gita invites us to investigate this question.

2.5 The Witness Within

The Bhagavad Gita repeatedly points to an unchanging reality within every human being.

While the body changes and the mind fluctuate, there is an ever-present awareness that silently witnesses all these changes.

This witnessing presence is what may be called the witness within.

Consider your own experience.

You are aware of your thoughts.

You know when the mind is restless and when it is calm.

You are aware of feelings of joy, fear, anger, and anxiety.

You observe memories of the past surfacing and thoughts of the future taking shape.

All these experiences are known to you.

The question is: What is it that knows them?

Thoughts cannot know themselves. Emotions cannot observe themselves.

There must be a deeper presence that is aware of them.

Just as a screen remains unchanged while countless images appear and disappear upon it, the witness remains unchanged while thoughts, emotions, and experiences come and go.

This witness does not judge. It does not condemn. It does not take sides. It simply observes.

Let us consider this 'witness within' as the one who observes everything without getting attached to anything – the Observer.

When anger arises, the observer is aware of anger.

When fear appears, the observer is aware of fear.

When joy is experienced, the observer is aware of joy.

The observer itself is neither angry nor fearful nor joyful. It stands apart, allowing things to happen.

Most of the time, however, we overlook this witnessing presence (the observer) because our attention is absorbed by the objects of observation.

We become fascinated by thoughts and emotions and forget the awareness in which they appear.

It is like becoming so engrossed in a movie that we forget the screen on which the movie is being projected.

Spiritual growth begins when attention shifts from the contents of the mind to the observer who remains unaffected by whatever happens.

This shift marks the birth of inner freedom.

The moment we recognise that we are not our thoughts but the awareness in which thoughts arise, a certain

distance is created between ourselves and our mental reactions.

Emotions may still arise, but they no longer possess the same power to dominate us.

This discovery of the observer within is not merely a philosophical idea.

It is something that can be verified through direct observation.

Sit quietly and watch the movement of your mind.

Thoughts will appear and disappear. Emotions will arise and subside. Sensations will come and go.

Throughout these changes, notice that there is an unchanging awareness that remains present.

The recognition of the witness (the observer) is a crucial step on the spiritual path.

Most people believe they will find lasting happiness through success.

There is nothing wrong with striving for excellence.

The Bhagavad Gita does not discourage effort.

What it questions is our tendency to derive our entire identity from outcomes.

Suppose success arrives.

Recognition follows.

Goals are achieved.

For a time, there is satisfaction.

Then another desire emerges; another goal appears.

The cycle continues.

Now, suppose failure arrives.

Plans collapse; expectations are disappointed.

The mind becomes troubled; self-doubt appears.

If our identity is tied entirely to outcomes, our inner state rises and falls with every external event.

The Bhagavad Gita does not ask us to withdraw from action.

On the contrary, it urges wholehearted action. What it questions is our tendency to derive our entire identity from outcomes.

Krishna reminds Arjuna:

You have a right to perform your prescribed duty, but you are not entitled to the fruits of action. Never consider yourself the cause of the results of your activities, and never be attached to not doing your duty.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 47, Chapter 2

Success and failure belong to the field of action; they do not define the one who is aware of them.

When we forget this, our happiness rises and falls with circumstances.

When we remember it, we can strive for excellence without losing inner freedom.

Pause for a Moment

Sit quietly for a minute.

Do not attempt to control your thoughts.

Let them arise naturally.

Watch them as though you were watching clouds drift across the sky.

Notice that every thought appears...

stays for a while...

and disappears.

The same is true of every emotion, every sensation, and every memory.

Now ask yourself:

What has remained unchanged while all these experiences came and went?

Do not search for an answer in words.

Simply remain with the question.

Perhaps, for the first time, you may begin to notice the silent observer that has always been present.

The next chapter invites you to explore this observer more deeply.

Chapter 3

Observing the Observer



3.1 Observe the Observer

Just as your hands, legs, eyes, and ears are instruments through which you interact with the world, the mind is also an instrument.

Mind enables you to think, remember, imagine, reason, and make decisions. It is an extraordinary instrument, but it is still an instrument.

Mind is something you have.

It is not what you are.

This distinction is subtle and is therefore easily overlooked.

Think for a moment about the way we use the word “my.” We say “my body,” “my mind,” “my thoughts,” “my feelings,” and “my emotions.” The very language we use seems to suggest a distinction between the one

who possesses or experiences these things and the things themselves. Yet, in everyday life, we rarely pause to examine this distinction.

From childhood onwards, we become so accustomed to saying, "I am angry," "I am afraid," "I am worried," or "I am happy," that we rarely question whether these statements are literally true.

Gradually, we begin to identify ourselves with every thought, emotion, and reaction that passes through the mind.

But pause for a moment.

If you are aware that you are angry, there must be something within you that knows the anger.

If you can observe fear, then fear cannot be your essential nature. If you can notice a thought arising and disappearing, then you cannot be that thought.

The observer and the observed cannot be the same.

This is the subtle distinction to which the sages repeatedly draw our attention.

The mind changes from moment to moment. Thoughts appear and disappear. Emotions rise and fall. Yet the one who is aware of these changes remains present throughout.

Unless we observe carefully, we tend to identify ourselves with the movements of the mind.

We mistake the instrument for our identity.

Consider what happens when a particular thought remains in the mind for several minutes. While the thought is present, we may become completely absorbed in it. We may feel that there is nothing separate from the thought. But when the thought disappears and another thought takes its place, something remains aware of both. The content has changed; the awareness of the content has not.

Spiritual inquiry begins the moment we question the assumption that we are the thoughts we experience.

The purpose of observing the mind is not to control it or suppress it. It is to discover that we are more than the thoughts and emotions that continually arise within it.

This simple shift—from being identified with the mind to observing it—marks the beginning of inner freedom.

This does not mean that thoughts will suddenly stop, or that emotions will no longer arise. The mind may continue to think, remember, imagine, and react. What changes is our relationship with what is happening. Instead of being completely carried away by

every movement of the mind, we become aware that the movement is being observed.

That small distinction can have a profound effect. A thought may still be present, but we are no longer compelled to follow it. An emotion may still arise, but we can begin to see it as an experience rather than as our identity.

3.2 Neti, Neti

Whenever a thought arises,

ask quietly,

Am I this thought?

If the answer is no,

simply say,

“Not this.”

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad presents a powerful inquiry that helps us see that our true nature is not the body, the mind, or the ego.

"The description of Brahman: "Not this, not this" (Neti, Neti); for there is no other and more appropriate description than this "Not this." Now the designation of Brahman: "The Truth of truth." The vital breath is truth and It (Brahman) is the Truth of that.

– Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 2.3.6

At first, what the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad says here may seem puzzling. Let us pause and understand what it is pointing towards.

The Upanishad is not saying that Brahman does not exist. Rather, it is saying:

- Brahman is not the body.
- Not the senses.
- Not the mind.
- Not thoughts.
- Not emotions.
- Not any object that can be perceived or conceived.

Every concept we form about Reality is negated because Reality is greater than every concept.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad provides a simple yet profound method called “*Neti, Neti*” –“Not this, not this.”

The value of “*Neti, Neti*” lies in its simplicity. It does not ask us to replace one belief with another. It asks us to examine what we normally take ourselves to be. When a thought is observed, we ask whether the thought itself can be the observer. When an emotion is

observed, we ask whether the emotion can be the one who is aware of it.

Let us examine this further.

For example, suppose the thought “I am a failure” arises. Instead of immediately accepting the statement as truth, simply observe it. The thought has appeared. It is known. It may remain for a while and then disappear. If it can appear and disappear while being observed, then it cannot be the unchanging observer.

The same inquiry can be applied to anger, fear, excitement, disappointment, or even a pleasant memory. The purpose is not to reject these experiences. It is simply to see them clearly.

By examining and disidentifying from everything that can be observed—the body, thoughts, emotions, and the ego—the seeker is led towards the discovery of the witnessing awareness that remains unchanged.

Practice this whenever a thought or emotion arises.

At first,

nothing may seem to happen.

Then, one day,

you may notice something extraordinary.

For a brief moment,

there appears a tiny gap

between yourself

and the thought.

The thought is there.

You are aware of it.

But you are no longer completely identified with it.

In that tiny gap,

the observer quietly reveals itself.

Do not underestimate that moment.

Many spiritual traditions point towards this simple discovery.

By saying ‘not this’ you are not denying the happening of the event – you are not denying the emergence of a thought. You are only refusing to identify yourself with your thought.

Practice this whenever possible.

This task may appear small.

But, during the refusal, something subtle will happen.

You can observe a very tiny space appearing between ‘you’ and your reaction.

Maybe it will last only for a fraction of a second.

Still, it is worth noticing. During this tiny fraction of time, you recognise yourself as the observer; as an observer, you will not get disturbed by what is observed.

‘Peace’ prevails in that tiny space where you stand apart from what is observed.

In that tiny time interval, you rest in yourself, without any conditioning, without being influenced by what happens around you.

This is the state of stillness that many spiritual practices strive to reach.

The scriptures and sages remind us that peace is not something to be attained through years of practice; it has always been present, waiting to be recognised.

What is required is a moment of reflection—the right kind of reflection, in which you simply observe the observer within you.

Thus, “*Neti, Neti*” is not a denial of Reality; it is a denial of all limited descriptions of Reality.

It frees us from complete identification with the mind and opens the door to deeper inquiry. And in the process, you come to know you are only an observer.

There is an important practical point here. Observation does not require a special place, a special posture, or a special time. The next time irritation arises during a

conversation, or anxiety arises before an important event, the same inquiry can be made. “This is being experienced. Who is aware of it?” The purpose is not to force an answer, but to create a moment of distance from the reaction.

The Bhagavad Gita speaks of this state very eloquently.

When the mind, restrained by the practice of yoga, becomes still; when seeing the Self by the self, one is satisfied in the Self alone.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 20, Chapter 6

In that state, one experiences infinite bliss which is grasped by the purified intellect and transcends the senses. Established there, one never moves away from the truth.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 21, Chapter 6

In the very moment you know that you are only an observer, there is a part of you that is simply watching everything happening inside you with perfect stillness. It is watching your thoughts arise and dissolve. It is watching your emotions move through you. It has never once reacted.

Yoga Vasistha speaks in the same language of the Bhagavad Gita.

Yoga Vasistha repeatedly reminds the seeker that he is not the stream of thoughts passing through the mind.

Thoughts appear and disappear; the witness of those thoughts remains. Emotions rise and fall; the witness remains unchanged. The mind is an object of observation, while the Self is the ever-present awareness in which the mind is observed.

Just as space is unaffected by whatever appears within it, the Self remains untouched by the thoughts, emotions, and experiences that arise in the mind.

– Yoga Vasistha

3.3 Observation Without Reaction: The End of the Karmic Chain

The cycle of bondage begins with judgment.

When the mind labels experience as good or bad, attraction and aversion arise.

These give rise to reactions, which consume mental energy and drive desire-based actions.

Such actions create *karma* and reinforce the sense of a separate self.

When judgment ceases, reactions lose their force.

As reactions subside, the energy that sustained them is no longer dissipated.

Actions may still occur, but they arise from clarity rather than compulsion.

In that state, *karma* loses its binding power, and the mind rests in the peace of pure awareness.

The Bhagavad Gita teaches that a steady and tranquil mind (*sthita-prajña*) is not attained by controlling the world around us but by understanding who we truly are.

Such steadiness becomes possible only when we realise that we are not the constantly changing thoughts and emotions that arise within the mind.

Thoughts come and go.

Emotions rise and fall.

Desires appear and disappear.

Yet there is something within us that remains unchanged amidst all these movements – the silent witness, the observer within.

When this truth is forgotten, the cycle of bondage begins.

The Bhagavad Gita explains this process with remarkable psychological precision.

As we have seen, the cycle of *karmic* bondage starts with judgment.

Every judgment arises from the information supplied by the senses. The senses constantly move outward toward their respective objects, seeking pleasure in

what is agreeable and avoiding what is disagreeable. This creates attachment and aversion, the twin forces that keep the mind restless.

Sri Krishna therefore cautions:

The senses naturally incline towards their respective objects with feelings of attachment and aversion. Therefore, one should not be enslaved by the senses, for they obstruct the path to wisdom.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 34, Chapter 3*

The senses themselves are not the problem.

The problem begins when we unconsciously identify with their movements.

We see something desirable and become attached.

We encounter something unpleasant and develop aversion.

Gradually, our peace becomes dependent upon circumstances outside ourselves.

Lord Krishna then traces the entire chain of psychological downfall:

While contemplating the objects of the senses, a person develops attachment for them; from attachment arises desire, and from desire arises anger.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 62, Chapter 2*

The process is subtle.

Repeated attention creates attachment.

Attachment strengthens into desire.

Desire demands fulfilment.

When fulfilment is obstructed, frustration and anger arise.

Thus, the mind that was initially attracted to an object gradually becomes enslaved by it.

The next stage is even more dangerous:

From anger comes delusion; from delusion, bewilderment of memory; from bewilderment of memory, the loss of discrimination; and when discrimination is lost, one falls into ruin.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 63, Chapter 2*

Anger clouds judgment.

Delusion distorts perception.

Memory of one's higher nature is forgotten.

The intellect, which should guide life with wisdom, loses its clarity.

The individual is then swept away by impulses, emotions, and habitual reactions.

In this manner, one becomes trapped in the endless cycle of *karma*, repeating the same patterns of attachment, desire, disappointment, and suffering.

Millions have lived and died without recognizing this mechanism. They have spent their lives trying to control external circumstances while remaining unaware of the deeper cause of their bondage — the mistaken identification with the mind and its movements.

The Bhagavad Gita offers a profound solution.

Freedom does not come from suppressing thoughts or withdrawing from life.

It comes from recognizing that we are not the thoughts, emotions, desires, or fears that arise within us.

We are the observer in whose presence they arise.

Whenever anger appears, observe it.

Whenever fear appears, observe it.

Whenever desire appears, observe it.

Whenever sorrow appears, observe it.

Instead of saying, "I am angry," recognise, "Anger is being observed."

Instead of saying, "I am afraid," recognise, "Fear is being observed."

This simple shift changes everything.

The moment we recognise the observer rather than the participant, our identification with the experience begins to loosen.

Attachment loses its grip. Desire weakens. Anger subsides. The mind gradually regains its natural balance.

The practical instruction is therefore simple, though not easy.

Whenever the mind becomes disturbed, gently bring it back to the conviction: "I am not these passing thoughts. I am not these changing emotions. I am the witnessing awareness that observes them all."

With repeated practice, a profound inner transformation takes place.

Notice that observation is not the same as indifference. If someone is angry, observing the anger does not mean that the person becomes careless about the consequences of the anger. It means that the reaction is first seen clearly, before it automatically becomes speech or action.

This distinction is important in everyday life. Between an event and our response to it, there may be only a very brief moment. Usually that moment goes unnoticed. Observation makes that moment visible. In

that space, we may see the thought, the emotion, the impulse, and the desire to react — all before the reaction becomes action.

Suppose someone criticizes you. The first reaction may be hurt. Then a thought may arise: “How dare they speak to me like that?” Another thought follows: “I must answer them.” Anger gathers momentum. If the entire sequence is observed without immediately identifying with it, the chain can weaken. The criticism has happened, the emotion has arisen, but the automatic reaction need not follow.

This is where observation becomes more than a philosophical exercise. It becomes something that can be noticed in ordinary life.

The mind becomes less reactive and more stable.

The pull of attachment and aversion weakens.

Fear and anger lose their intensity.

Equanimity begins to emerge naturally.

It is this state that Krishna describes as the mark of a person established in wisdom:

"One who is not disturbed even amidst suffering, who does not become elated in happiness, and who is free from attachment, fear, and anger, is called a sage of steady wisdom."

— *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 56, Chapter 2*

Such a person continues to live, work, love, and fulfil responsibilities in the world.

Outwardly, nothing may appear different.

Inwardly, however, everything has changed.

He no longer lives as a captive of thoughts and emotions but as the silent witness of them.

This is the secret of the steady mind taught by the Bhagavad Gita.

The path begins by observing the movements of the mind.

It deepens through freedom from attachment and aversion. If you

And it culminates in the recognition that our true nature is not the restless mind but the ever-present awareness that witnesses it all.

This also explains why the aim is not to become permanently free from thought. A functioning human being must think, plan, decide, communicate, and respond. The deeper freedom lies in not being psychologically imprisoned by every thought that arises.

The mind can continue to perform its functions while awareness remains free from unnecessary identification. Action continues; life continues;

responsibilities continue. What changes is the inner relationship with experience.

3.4 From Observation to Equanimity

In the previous section, we saw how the cycle of *karmic* bondage begins with judgment and is sustained by attachment, desire, and reaction. We also saw that by observing thoughts and emotions without identifying with them, this cycle gradually loses its force.

When reactions diminish, the mind begins to regain its natural balance. Attachment and aversion no longer dominate our responses. Success and failure cease to dictate our inner state. This balanced state of mind is what the Bhagavad Gita calls equanimity (*samatvam*).

Lord Krishna declares:

Perform your duty equipoised, O Arjuna, abandoning all attachment to success or failure. Such equanimity is called Yoga.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 48, Chapter 2*

This verse reveals that yoga is not merely a practice but a state of inner balance. Equanimity arises when actions are performed without becoming psychologically dependent on their outcomes. One continues to act diligently, yet remains inwardly free from anxiety, expectation, and disappointment.

Lord Krishna further explains:

"Abandoning attachment to the fruits of action, ever content and independent, though engaged in action, he does not perform any action at all."

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 20, Chapter 4*

The meaning is subtle. Such a person does not cease to act; rather, he ceases to identify himself as the doer and to become attached to the results of his actions. Actions continue, but attachment to outcomes disappears. As a result, the mind remains peaceful regardless of success or failure.

This can be understood through ordinary experience. Imagine two people working equally hard on the same task. Both want to succeed. Both make sincere efforts. But one person has psychologically tied his entire sense of worth to the result. The other gives his best but remains inwardly prepared to accept whatever result follows. Their external actions may look almost identical, yet their inner experiences can be completely different.

Equanimity, therefore, does not mean lack of ambition, lack of care, or lack of commitment. It means that our identity and peace are no longer made dependent upon the outcome.

This understanding deepens further:

Although seeing, hearing, touching, smelling, eating, walking, sleeping and breathing, the wise person knows that he does nothing at all. The senses merely move among their objects.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 8, Chapter 5*

The sage recognises that the senses interact with the world according to their nature, while the witnessing awareness remains untouched. He participates fully in life but remains inwardly free.

Thus, equanimity is the natural flowering of observation without reaction. When judgment subsides, reactions weaken. When reactions weaken, attachment loosens. When attachment loosens, the mind becomes calm and balanced.

The journey begins with observing thoughts and emotions. It culminates in a state where one acts without attachment, lives without fear, and remains undisturbed by the changing circumstances of life. This serene balance of mind is the dawn of equanimity – the state that Sri Krishna calls Yoga.

At this stage, it is useful to notice the progression that has taken place. We began by seeing that thoughts and emotions arise within the mind. We then learned to observe them rather than immediately identify with

them. Observation created a little distance. That distance weakened automatic reaction. As reaction weakened, attachment and aversion lost some of their force. And from this came a greater sense of inner balance.

This is not a dramatic transformation that has to occur overnight. It can begin in very small moments—a pause before replying, a moment of awareness before acting, or the recognition that “anger is arising” rather than “I am angry.” Each such moment is an opportunity to remain as the observer rather than being carried away by the mind.

Before You Continue

Whenever a thought appears,
pause for a moment.

Instead of asking,

What should I do?

Ask,

Who is aware of this thought?

Do not search for an intellectual answer.

Simply observe.

If you remain with this question patiently,

the observer will gradually become clearer than the thoughts themselves.

That quiet discovery marks the beginning of true inner freedom.

And yet, there is one more step. If you have discovered that you can observe the mind, and if you have come to recognise yourself as the observer, another question naturally presents itself: **Who is observing the observer?**

This is not a question to be answered quickly. It is an invitation to continue the inquiry. The next chapter takes us precisely there.

Chapter 4

The End of the Observer



4.1 Who is Observing the Observer?

The practice of witnessing is a powerful spiritual tool.

By observing thoughts, emotions, sensations, and mental reactions, one gradually discovers that one is not the body-mind complex but the witness of it.

At first, this discovery brings immense freedom.

The seeker realises:

"I am not the body."

"I am not the mind."

"I am not the thoughts and emotions that arise and pass away."

"I am the witness of all these."

Yet the inquiry cannot stop here.

A deeper question inevitably arises:

Who is witnessing the witness?... Who is observing the observer?

If the witness can be observed, then it too has become an object.

And if it has become an object, there must be another observer standing behind it. But then who observes that observer?

The mind can continue this inquiry endlessly, creating an infinite chain of observers observing observers.

The sages recognised this problem centuries ago.

Their answer is profound: the observer is not an object that can be observed. The observer is only a transitional concept. It is like a ladder. One climbs it to reach the terrace, but once the terrace is reached, the ladder no longer needs to be carried.

The analogy of the ladder is important. A ladder is extremely useful when we are climbing, but it is not the destination. In the same way, the idea “I am the witness” can be immensely helpful when we are trying to free ourselves from identification with the mind. But eventually, even this idea has to be examined.

At first, saying “I am the observer” creates a healthy distance from thoughts and emotions. Instead of saying “I am angry,” we begin to recognise “anger is being

observed.” Instead of saying “I am afraid,” we see “fear is being observed.” This is a significant step.

But notice what has happened. We have created a new position: there is “me,” the observer, and there is “anger,” “fear,” or “thought,” which is being observed. The sense of separation has become subtler, but it is still present.

The purpose of the witness is to free us from identification with the body and mind. Once that purpose is fulfilled, even the witness must be relinquished.

The journey inward begins with a profound discovery:

I am not the body.

I am not the mind.

And I am not the stream of thoughts and emotions that continually arise and pass away.

I am simply a witness to whatever happens.

At this stage, a seeker learns to stand apart from the movements of the mind and observe them without identification.

Yes, there is an observer who stands apart, who is not involved.

When you realise that you are unaffected by whatever happens around you, you have begun to take the position of a witness — an observer. But there is a deeper question to be addressed.

When ‘you’ are really an observer, how do you know that?

When you have become the observer and remain unaffected by the happenings around, it is a great step towards freedom.

Yet the inquiry does not end here.

A subtle question now arises.

Who is observing the observer?

This question may initially seem like a play on words. It is not. It takes the inquiry to a point where the ordinary structure of thinking begins to fail. Every thought normally assumes a thinker. Every observation seems to require an observer. But when we turn attention towards the observer itself, what exactly do we find?

If we find another observer, that observer too can be questioned. And if we continue in this way, the inquiry has no end. The purpose, therefore, is not to find one more observer hidden behind the previous one. It is to

discover what happens when the search for a separate observer itself comes to an end.

4.2 Awareness: The True Self

The mind cannot resolve the puzzle of ‘Who is observing the observer?’

This is because the mind itself operates through subject and object, observer and observed.

It assumes that every observed thing must have an observer standing apart from it.

But the sages point out that the problem arises from a mistaken assumption.

Awareness is not an object that can be observed.

Everything that can be observed – the body, thoughts, emotions, sensations, and even the sense of being a witness – **appears within awareness.**

The Bhagavad Gita refers to it as the Self – the unchanging reality that remains present amidst the changing experiences of life.

Awareness itself cannot be placed before us as an object because it is the very light by which all objects are known – a difficult concept to comprehend.

Let us explore further.

The eye can directly see every object except itself.

Similarly, awareness illuminates everything, but cannot be turned into an object of observation.

At first, the witness is a useful spiritual perspective. It helps us disidentify from the body and mind.

But eventually even the witness must be examined.

When attention turns toward the witness, one discovers that there is no separate observer to be found.

There is only observing.

There is only knowing.

There is only awareness.

The observer, which seemed so real, is revealed to be a subtle mental position that serves a purpose in the practice.

When that position dissolves, the division between observer and observed collapses.

What remains is pure awareness—without centre, without boundary, without a separate witness standing apart from experience.

This is what may be called the end of the observer.

This is perhaps the most difficult step in the entire journey. The mind wants to hold on to something. It is

comfortable with the idea that “I am the witness.” But if awareness itself is what makes both the thought and the witness known, then awareness cannot be another object that “I” can possess.

There is nothing new to find behind awareness. There is no hidden person sitting inside us who is watching everything. The search ends not because we have discovered another observer, but because we recognise that the very idea of a separate observer was itself created by the mind.

The journey began with observing thoughts.

It matured into observing the observer.

It culminates in the recognition that there never was an independent observer separate from awareness itself.

This can be understood through a simple example. When you watch a film, you normally become absorbed in the story. You may laugh, worry, or feel anxious about what is happening on the screen. Then you suddenly remember that you are watching a film. The story continues, but your relationship with it changes.

The spiritual inquiry goes further. It asks: who is the one watching the film of life? At first, we say, “I am the watcher.” But then we turn our attention towards this

watcher. The deeper realisation is that the watcher is not another person standing apart from the experience. There is simply awareness in which the entire experience appears.

Let us examine some of the declarations of Hindu scriptures to gain deeper insights into this.

4.3 The Voice of the Scriptures

The truth that the separate observer ultimately dissolves into pure awareness is not the teaching of a single scripture. It is a recurring theme throughout the Upanishads, the Bhagavad Gita, the Ashtavakra Gita, the Yoga Vasistha and other Indian scriptures. Although their language differs, they all point towards the same realisation.

The Ashtavakra Gita

Ashtavakra first establishes the seeker in the position of the witness:

You are the one Witness of all and are ever free. Your only bondage is that you see the Witness as something separate.

– Ashtavakra Gita 1.7

The witness is a necessary step in spiritual practice because it frees us from identification with the body

and mind. Yet Ashtavakra immediately cautions us not to make even the witness into a separate entity.

It later declares:

In me, the boundless ocean, the universe rises and falls like waves.

– Ashtavakra Gita 15.4

Here the witness has dissolved into pure consciousness. There is no separate observer standing apart from experience. The entire universe appears and disappears in the limitless ocean of awareness.

The image of waves and ocean makes this teaching especially accessible. A wave can appear to have a separate form, a separate beginning, and a separate ending. Yet the wave is never anything other than water. In the same way, individual experiences may appear separate from awareness, but they never exist outside it.

The Yoga Vasistha

The Yoga Vasistha expresses the same truth in a different way:

The idea of a consciousness and an object of consciousness is bondage; freedom from it is liberation.

– Yoga Vasistha 9.30

As long as experience is divided into a knower and the known, subject and object, the sense of separation persists. Liberation is not the acquisition of something new but the ending of this division.

Another profound verse declares:

The belief in a knower and the known is called bondage. The knower is bound by the known; he is liberated when there is nothing to know.

– Yoga Vasistha 10.5

This does not imply ignorance. Rather, it points to the disappearance of the illusion that Reality is something separate from oneself to be attained. When the division between seeker and sought comes to an end, the search itself comes to rest.

This is a subtle distinction. “Nothing to know” does not mean that the world disappears or that the mind becomes incapable of knowing ordinary things. It points to the end of the psychological assumption that there is some separate ultimate Reality outside oneself that must be acquired.

The seeker and the sought belong to the same structure of seeking. When that structure dissolves, there is no longer a psychological distance between “me” and “what I am seeking.”

The Kena Upanishad

The Kena Upanishad directs our attention to the very source of knowing:

That which the mind cannot think, but by which the mind thinks.

– Kena Upanishad 1.6

Awareness cannot become an object of thought because it is the very light by which thoughts are known. Just as the eye cannot directly see itself, awareness cannot be placed before itself as an object of observation.

When we attempt to observe the observer, the mind merely produces another thought claiming to be the observer. That thought too is observed. Thus, the true observer always remains beyond the grasp of the mind—not because it is hidden, but because it is the very consciousness in which the mind functions.

This is why intellectual analysis eventually reaches its limit. We can think about awareness, discuss awareness, and describe awareness, but none of these descriptions can become awareness itself. The map can point towards a place, but the map is not the place.

The Chandogya and Brihadaranyaka Upanishads

The Chandogya Upanishad describes the Infinite in these unforgettable words:

Where one sees no other, hears no other, knows no other—that is the Infinite.

– Chandogya Upanishad 7.24.1

The Infinite is not a place but the absence of psychological separation. The observer and the observed are no longer experienced as two independent realities. Diversity continues at the level of forms, but inwardly there is only unity.

The Brihadaranyaka Upanishad makes the same declaration:

Where, indeed, there is duality, as it were, there one sees another...

– Brihadaranyaka Upanishad 4.5.15

The phrase "as it were" is deeply significant. Duality only appears to exist. Like waves appearing separate while remaining nothing but water, the many are only appearances within one indivisible awareness.

These teachings do not ask us to deny the obvious diversity of everyday life. People, objects, events, relationships, and experiences continue to appear

different. The inquiry is directed at something subtler: whether these differences imply a fundamental separation at the level of awareness.

The Bhagavad Gita

The Bhagavad Gita leads the seeker through a gradual unfolding.

First, it challenges the belief that we are the doer:

"All actions are performed by the gunas of prakrti. One whose mind is deluded by ego thinks, 'I am the doer.'"

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 27, Chapter 3*

Next, it introduces the witness:

The Supreme Self is the witness, the permitter, the supporter, and the experiencer.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 22, Chapter 13*

Finally, it points beyond even the witness:

It is the Light of all lights, beyond all darkness.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 17, Chapter 13*

The Self is not another object to be known. It is the very light because of which all knowing is possible.

Although expressed in different ways, all these scriptures converge upon the same truth. Spiritual practice may begin with observing thoughts, mature

into recognizing the witness, and culminate in the realisation that even the witness is not a separate entity. What remains is pure awareness — silent, self-luminous, and ever-present.

Seen as a whole, the scriptures are not presenting a collection of unrelated ideas. They are describing a movement of inquiry. First, identification with the body and mind is questioned. Then the witness is discovered. Finally, the distinction between witness and witnessed is examined and allowed to dissolve.

The observer does not “die” in any physical sense, nor does an observer who was once present somehow come to an end. What comes to an end is the belief that there is a separate entity standing apart from experience, observing it and claiming ownership of it.

4.4 Resting in Awareness: The End of the Search for Peace

The end of the observer is not the end of consciousness. On the contrary, it is the end of the false centre that claimed ownership of experience. When the observer—the egoic sense of "I am the thinker," "I am the doer," "I am the experiencer"—comes to an end, what remains is pure awareness, self-luminous and ever-present.

But an important question naturally arises:

How does resting in awareness lead to peace?

The answer lies in understanding the true source of our inner conflict.

Every disturbance begins with the observer. The observer constantly divides experience into opposites: pleasure and pain, success and failure, gain and loss, praise and blame, "me" and "the world." Once this division is created, the mind begins its endless movement of seeking, resisting, comparing, judging, fearing, and desiring. This movement is what we call psychological suffering.

The observer thinks.

The observer judges.

The observer compares.

The observer desires.

The observer fears.

Awareness simply is.

In its presence, thoughts arise and subside, emotions come and go, and the world appears and disappears. Yet awareness itself remains unchanged — silent, boundless, and ever free.

Just as the sky remains untouched by the clouds that pass through it, awareness remains untouched by the thoughts and

emotions that arise within it. The clouds may be turbulent, but the sky is never disturbed.

This does not mean that difficult experiences cease to occur. Life will continue to bring pleasant and unpleasant events. Bodies become tired, relationships change, plans fail, and unexpected events occur. The difference lies in whether these events are allowed to define our inner state completely.

When the observer is active, every event becomes personal: “This happened to me. Why did this happen to me? What does this say about me? How can I change it?” The mind then builds a story around the event. Awareness, by contrast, simply allows the experience to be known without immediately constructing an identity around it.

The Bhagavad Gita repeatedly points to this state of inner stillness.

Lord Krishna says:

One who abandons all desires arising in the mind, and is satisfied in the Self by the Self alone, is called a person of steady wisdom.

– The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 55, Chapter 2

Notice that Krishna does not say peace is gained by fulfilling desires. Peace dawns when the restless

movement of seeking comes to an end. The Self rests in itself.

Again, Krishna declares:

For one who is united with the Self, whose mind is peaceful, the Supreme Bliss comes naturally.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 27, Chapter 6*

Peace is described as the natural consequence of a quiet mind. It is not manufactured by effort; it reveals itself when mental agitation subsides.

The Upanishads express the same truth with remarkable simplicity.

The Mandukya Upanishad describes the Self as:

Peaceful, auspicious, non-dual.

(Santam, Sivam, Advaitam)

– *Mandukya Upanishad, verse 7*

Notice that peace (*Santam*) is not listed as a quality acquired by the Self. It is the very nature of the Self. Just as heat is inseparable from fire and wetness from water, peace is inseparable from pure awareness.

Santam – Peace

The first description is *Santam*, meaning peaceful.

This is not the peace that comes after a conflict has ended or after one's desires have been fulfilled. It is peace that is intrinsic and unconditional.

It is the absence of all mental agitation because the mind has ceased projecting separation, fear, desire, and resistance. Nothing can disturb it because it is not dependent upon circumstances.

There is a useful distinction here between peace as an experience and peace as our essential nature. An experience of peace may come and go. We may feel peaceful after completing a task, spending time in nature, listening to music, or sitting quietly. But the peace being described here is not dependent upon any particular experience; it is inherent in our essential nature.

The deeper inquiry asks whether there is a dimension of peace that remains even when experiences change. This is why the scriptures connect peace with the Self rather than with circumstances.

Sivam — Auspicious, Pure Goodness, Complete Well-being

The word *Sivam* is often translated as auspicious, but this English word hardly captures its richness.

Here *Sivam* does not refer to Lord Shiva as a deity. Rather, it denotes the essential nature of Brahman or the Self.

The Sanskrit root ‘*si*’ carries the sense of that which blesses, prospers, heals, or brings well-being.

Thus, *Sivam* means:

- absolute goodness,
- complete well-being,
- perfect harmony,
- unconditional blessedness,
- supreme auspiciousness.

It points to a reality in which nothing is lacking and nothing is out of place.

Sivam is Wholeness

Everything we seek in life – security, happiness, love, fulfilment, freedom – is ultimately a search for this wholeness.

We imagine that these qualities exist in external objects, relationships, achievements, or possessions. The Upanishads declare otherwise.

The Self is already *Sivam*.

It is complete.

It lacks nothing.

Nothing needs to be added to it.

Nothing can diminish it.

When one abides as the Self, there is a profound sense that everything is exactly as it should be. This is not complacency but freedom from psychological incompleteness.

Sivam is the End of Inner Conflict

Conflict arises because the ego continually divides life into:

- desirable and undesirable,
- success and failure,
- mine and yours,
- self and other.

The Self makes no such divisions.

It is the silent background in which all opposites appear and disappear.

Hence it is *Sivam*—perfect harmony.

Saints often describe enlightenment not as acquiring extraordinary powers but as discovering an indescribable ease with existence itself.

That ease is *Sivam*.

This idea of wholeness also helps us understand why the search for external fulfilment can become endless. If we assume that something outside ourselves will finally make us complete, every achievement becomes temporary. Once one desire is fulfilled, another appears.

The insight of the scriptures is radically different: completeness is not something added to us from outside. The search ends when the sense of inner incompleteness is understood at its root.

Advaitam – non-dual

Finally comes *Advaitam*.

Advaitam does not merely mean "one" as opposed to many.

Rather, it means that there exists no second independent reality apart from the Self.

Observer and observed.

Knower and known.

Subject and object.

All appear separate only because of ignorance.

Why These Three Words (*Santam Sivam, Advaitam*) Together?

The order is deeply significant.

The Self is first described as *Santam* because freedom from mental agitation is its immediate experiential characteristic.

It is then called *Sivam* because that peace is not an empty void but fullness, goodness, blessedness, and perfect well-being.

Finally, it is called *Advaitam* because this peace and blessedness arise from the absence of duality. There is no "other" to fear, desire, resist, or possess.

In other words:

- Because Reality is *Advaitam* (non-dual), it is *Sivam* (whole and auspicious).
- Because it is *Sivam* (whole), it is naturally *Santam* (peace itself).

The three words therefore complete one another. Peace is not merely the absence of disturbance. It is the peace of wholeness. And wholeness is possible because there is no fundamental second reality standing apart from the Self.

This brings us back to the observer. The observer creates a psychological 'me' who identifies with what is observed and develops the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. *This brings us back to the observer.* The observer creates a psychological 'me' who identifies with what is observed and develops the sense of 'I' and 'mine'. This identification becomes an obstacle to peace.

The Bhagavad Gita echoes this truth in one of its most beautiful verses:

The person who is free from longing, who has abandoned all sense of 'I' and 'mine,' attains peace.

– *The Bhagavad Gita, Verse 71, Chapter 2*

The obstacle to peace is not the world but the ego's insistence on possession and identity. When "I" and "mine" dissolve, peace shines of its own accord.

This is not merely tranquillity of the mind. It is abiding in one's true nature.

The sages therefore never instructed us to create peace. They invited us to discover the one to whom disturbance appears.

When that false observer is examined and seen to be only a bundle of thoughts, it quietly dissolves.

What remains is not emptiness but fullness; not silence born of suppression but silence that is alive with awareness.

This is why the search for peace eventually comes to an end.

One does not find peace.

One discovers that the peace one has always been seeking has never been absent.

The journey began with observing the mind.

It matured into observing the observer.

It culminates in the disappearance of the observer itself.

What remains is pure awareness — silent, boundless, and ever free.

To rest in that awareness is to rest in the peace that the scriptures call *Santi*, the peace that neither arises nor fades, because it is the very essence of the Self.

As we approach the end of this journey, let us reflect on the essential truths that have gradually unfolded before us.

- Peace is not the result of becoming something new; it is the revelation of what has always been present.

- It is not created by controlling the mind, accumulating spiritual knowledge, or escaping the world.
- It is uncovered when the illusion of the separate observer comes to an end.
- As long as there is an observer, there is someone to compare, judge, fear, desire, and struggle.
- When the sense of being a separate observer dissolves, only pure awareness remains — silent, unchanging, and ever-present. In that awareness there is no conflict because there is no "other."
- There is no psychological becoming because there is nothing to become.

This is the peace that the Bhagavad Gita calls *Brahma-nirvaṇa*.

The Upanishads describe it as *Santam*, *Sivam*, *Advaitam*.

The sages proclaim it to be our true nature.

The journey, therefore, is not from unrest to peace, but from mistaken identity to Self-knowledge.

In discovering who we truly are, we discover that the peace we have sought throughout our lives has never been absent—it has always been our very Self.

Chapter 5

From Understanding to Direct Experience



Every meaningful journey begins with a single step.

The inward journey is no different.

The purpose of this book has never been to offer you another philosophy to accept or another belief to adopt. It has simply been an invitation to look within—to observe your own experience with openness, sincerity, and quiet attention.

If these pages have encouraged you to pause, to observe your thoughts with greater clarity, and to enquire into the nature of the observer, then they have fulfilled their purpose. From this point onward, the journey is no longer through the pages of a book, but through your own direct experience.

Throughout this journey, we have explored one central truth: lasting peace is not created by changing the world

around us but by understanding ourselves more deeply. The peace we seek is not hidden in some distant future, nor is it reserved for a fortunate few. It is our very nature, temporarily obscured by the restless movements of the mind and our habitual identification with them.

At first, this may seem difficult to comprehend amidst the demands of everyday life. Yet the sages ask very little of us. They do not insist that we renounce the world, suppress our thoughts, or suddenly transcend the mind. They simply invite us to begin with observation.

Observe your thoughts as they arise.

Observe your emotions without immediately reacting to them.

Observe your fears, desires, likes, dislikes, successes, and disappointments.

As this observation becomes steady, a subtle shift begins to take place. You gradually discover that thoughts are known, emotions are known, and therefore they cannot be what you truly are.

Then, quite naturally, another question arises:

Who is observing all this?

Do not hurry to answer.

Simply remain with the question.

As observation deepens, the sense of being an observer becomes clearer. There is no need to fight it or make it disappear. Merely becoming aware of this sense is enough. As this insight deepens, the sense of being a separate observer slowly loses its hold. What remains is effortless awareness — silent, ever-present, and untouched by the changing movements of the mind. Allow this unfolding to happen in its own time.

Spiritual growth is seldom dramatic. More often, it unfolds quietly — in the gradual easing of fear and anger, the deepening of patience and compassion, and a growing sense of freedom amidst the changing circumstances of life.

There is no need to hurry towards the destination. Every sincere moment of observation is itself part of the destination.

One day, perhaps quietly and unexpectedly, you may discover that the peace you have been seeking was never absent. Nothing new has been gained. Nothing extraordinary has been added; only a misunderstanding has quietly fallen away.

Therefore:

- Do not strive to become what you already are.
- Simply begin to observe.

- Observe patiently.
- Observe with sincerity and without judgment.
- As observation deepens, gently turn your attention towards the observer itself.
- Let understanding unfold naturally.
- Trust the wisdom of the scriptures, the guidance of the realised masters, and above all, your own direct experience.

The journey described in these pages is not a journey towards becoming something else. It is a journey of seeing clearly, letting go naturally, and finally resting in your own Being.

Saint Thayumanavar expresses this timeless truth with remarkable beauty:

*Without analysing,
Without even thinking,
Without seeking the inner light as an object to be seen,
If one simply remains as one truly is,
Will not an overflowing flood of Bliss arise,
Spread through all the ten directions,
And surge beyond all shores, O Supreme One!*

May these words not remain merely a beautiful poem to admire, but become your own living experience.

May sincere observation blossom into quiet understanding, quiet understanding into effortless awareness, and effortless awareness into the recognition of your own true nature.

May the peace that has always been your own nature reveal itself in all its fullness.

Now, the journey is yours.

End Note



I have tried to present, in simple and accessible terms, some of the timeless wisdom that lies within the profound teachings of the Indian spiritual texts. These teachings have endured through the ages because they point us towards questions that are as relevant today as they were thousands of years ago — questions about who we are, the nature of the mind, the source of peace, and the deeper reality of our existence.

The scriptures and the sages can show us the direction, but they cannot walk the path for us. **The journey is ours to undertake.** Reading, listening and understanding may point the way, but it is through observation, reflection, inquiry and inner experience that the meaning of these teachings can truly unfold.

We are indeed fortunate to have inherited such profound wisdom. It is not merely knowledge from the past; it remains a living invitation to look within and

explore for ourselves the deeper truth that the scriptures and sages have sought to illuminate.

May we receive this wisdom with humility, explore it with sincerity, and live with the awareness it seeks to awaken in us.

Let us be grateful for this timeless wisdom and for the opportunity to walk the path it illuminates.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti