



Svaroopā® Vidya Ashram

October 2017 Contemplation: Exploring
Yoga's Multidimensionality #10

Human Condition, Human Capacity

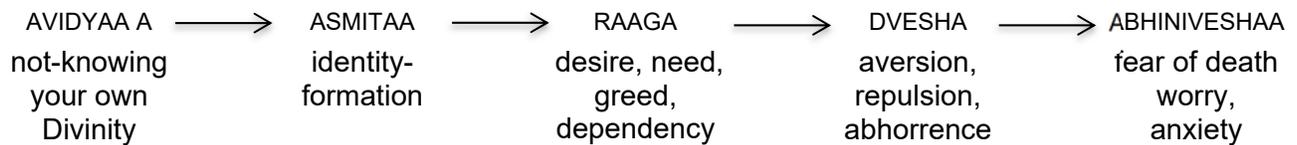
By Swami Nirmalananda & Rukmini Abbruzzi

Your inherent nature is ever-blissful, all-knowing, unceasing joy. You are Consciousness. Unfortunately, your usual experience of yourself is more limited, even painful. Why? Because of the “root bindings” which Consciousness takes on in order become you. Called “kleshas,” this is another yogic map that reveals your own Divinity to you.

Avidyaa-asmitaa-raaga-dvesha abhiniveshaa pancha klesha.h— Patanjali 2.3

Your suffering is caused by the five root bindings:
avidyaa, asmitaa, raaga, dvesha and abhiniveshaa

A plant's roots anchor it in the ground. You can trace your family tree to find your roots, your origins. Swami Nirmalananda describes them this way, “Kleshas are root limitations, hidden in every human being, creating a domino effect of need, greed and fear that you get lost in, unto lifetimes.”



The deepest root, the first and most powerful klesha is avidyaa. The “a-” means “not” and “vidya” means “knowing,” making the literal translation be “not-knowing.” The not-knowing of your own Divinity is also called “spiritual amnesia.” Experientially it's the feeling, “I don't know who I am.” Full strength, it's utter aloneness and despair, even a sense, “I don't know why I exist.” Most of the time, avidyaa merely makes you feel “not good enough.” Everyone has this experience.

Avidyaa is so painful that you reach outside of yourself for something to give you a sense of self-worth. Identity is thus the next binding you take on, called asmitaa. You construct an identity based on where you live, your relationships and what you do. You're an Aussie, an American or a city girl. You're a daughter, a son, an uncle, an employee, a friend. No one ever says, “I bake” or “I predict the weather.” They say, “I am a baker,” or “I am a weather man.”

You work hard at your identities, creating a sense of meaning and purpose that hides the underlying emptiness. You use identity to compensate for “not good enough,” but it doesn't always work. Ultimately, you have to pierce avidyaa to know you are enough. More than “enough” — you are the whole of Consciousness.

The next two kleshas ride on your identities: raaga and dvesha (desire and aversion).

You desire things that prop up your identities and are averse to things that threaten them. A piano teacher wants a piano, students and a place to hold recitals. A bride-to-be needs a ring, a wedding dress and a cake. Every desire supports an identity.

When fulfilling a desire turns out to be painful, or when your desire cannot be fulfilled, it turns into repulsion. You never want to repeat that experience! Dvesha is aversion, repulsion, even abhorrence. A jilted bride can be averse to another relationship. A runner with a knee injury may become averse to doctors, not only because of pain, but because their sense of identity as a runner is threatened. You'll never be repulsed by something you didn't desire.

Life becomes a cycle of chasing things that support an identity while avoiding things that threaten it. Of course, your multiple identities create conflicting desires and conflicting aversions. Rukmini shares, “As a yogi, when I was home with my kids I yearned to go to more yoga trainings. When I got to the trainings, I longed to be home with my kids.” These inner battles include loving baked goods but wanting to lose weight. You desire a bigger paycheck, but are averse to working overtime.

It all leads to fear. You fear that your desire will be thwarted or that life will throw you into situations you're averse to. This is the fifth klesha, abhiniveshaa, fear of death. All your fears are variations on this overarching fear, which Patanjali says “dominates even the wise.” Not just the “big-D Death,” but all the little deaths that punctuate your life are scary: the death of a relationship, the death of a job, the death of an ideal. Fear drives

you. All the time. Why? Because when an identity dissolves or is taken away from you, you're back to avidyaa, the not-knowing of who you are.

By now, you're hopefully looking for a way out of the kleshas, "Well, I'll just tell myself that I'm the Self. Then I'll know who I am, so I won't experience avidyaa. Kleshas avoided!" Unfortunately, it's not so easy. Your mind is not creating avidyaa, thus you cannot think your way out of it. You didn't create avidyaa; Consciousness did. She knowingly, willingly and lovingly contracted to be you, for the pure joy of being you. To think you are the Self and to know you are the Self are different things. It's like the difference between wishing you were happy and actually being happy.

The kleshas construct the Human Condition: you don't know your own Divinity and thus live in a perpetual cycle of loneliness-neediness-love-hate-fear. Yet, built into you is your Human Capacity: to know your own Divinity, a deep inner knowing that is beyond thought. While you're not to blame for avidyaa, you are the one who has to work on it. How do you do this? Patanjali has an answer:

Te pratiprasava-heyaa.h suuk.smaa.h — Yoga Sutras 2.10

Resolve the subtle ones [kleshas] backward into their origin.

Since each klesha comes from the preceding one, the way to become free from them is to dissolve each one back into its root. When one is activated, simply look for the underlying klesha, that which is causing it. When you do this, you don't have to wrestle with yourself.

For example, you may be afraid of losing your job (abhiniveshaa). Once you recognize you're experiencing fear, now look for the aversion (dvesha) that is certainly hidden underneath. You are probably averse to being without a regular income. Under that aversion, look for the hidden desire (raaga). Of course, a regular income matters, but you may also like your job and want to keep it.

There's nothing wrong with feeling fear, aversion or desire. Remember, they're built into the human condition. Simply see them for what they are. Then peek inward to see what's lurking in the background. Once you recognize the motivating desire, it's no longer an unconscious motivator, and you can look for the identity underlying it (asmitaa). Perhaps your identity is "I'm a valued employee," or "I'm the family's breadwinner."

Something amazing happens when you see the identity underlying all your mental and emotional churning. Whatever that identity is, you're no longer lost in it in the way you were. By shining the light of your awareness on it, you see asmitaa. It is merely an identity — an activity you perform in life. It can be an important activity, but it's not who you are. It's something you do.

By finding the hidden identity that's propelling all your angst, your next step is to perceive what's hidden under asmitaa. In other words, your identity has been providing a superficial sense of personal value. Without an identity, you lose your self-worth. Worse, you realize that you don't know who you are. Now you've identified the real problem — avidyaa, the not-knowing of your own inherent Divinity.

The problem is not that you might be losing your job; the real problem is that, without it, you don't know who you are. Avidyaa is the root of all the kleshas. The domino effect begins here. Liberation is also found here. The shortcut out of the kleshas is to know who you are, not merely thinking that you are Consciousness, but realizing who you really are.

This is what Shaktipat opens up for you. Whether you've gotten spontaneous shaktipat through your *Svaroopaa*® yoga practices, or you take a Shaktipat Retreat with Swamiji, you are initiated into the knowing of Self. This is the incredible gift of our lineage of Realized Masters. Shaktipat awakens you to your own Divinity, to the splendor of Beingness that is your Self. Once you experience your Self, you can never fully forget again. Once you know, none of the other kleshas has a hold on you.

Of course, you will continue to have identities: things you do, people you care about and where you live. You will do things to support your many identities, but you won't be compelled by them. It will be clear that you can choose to do anything: to bake, to play music, to parent. You won't get lost in desire, aversion and fear. Instead, you'll pour the light of your Beingness into whatever you choose to do, in every moment. This is your Divine destiny. Shaktipat guarantees your future, freedom from the kleshas. All your practices support you along the way. Do more *Svaroopaa*® yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "EXPLORING YOGA'S MULTIDIMENSIONALITY," OUR THEME FOR 2017, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI, VIDYADEVI STILLMAN & RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

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