

Preparation for Philosophy Discussion III

Sunday, March 8, 2009 (2:30 – 4:00pm)



STRENGTH
BALANCE
EQUANIMITY



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As we discussed last month, the klesas are the 5 related afflictions that disturb consciousness: *avidya* means spiritual ignorance. Because of the circumstances of our perception and existence, we identify with changeable nature rather than unbounded consciousness, causing us to feel vulnerable and alienated. This misidentification engenders *asmita*, egoism, where we confuse the seer (consciousness) with the instrument of seeing (the human self). *Asmita* gives rise to the feeling states of *raga* and *dvesa*, attraction and aversion, and *abhinivesha*, clinging to life, or as Mehta's commentary suggested, desire for continuity.

Avidya and *asmita* are abstract and difficult to understand. What is spiritual ignorance? How do we understand egoism when it seems the ego is asking the question? How do we achieve the necessary perspective?

Last month we discussed why we practice yoga. We found that it is common to have more than one motivation. We may practice yoga because we have come to believe it is beneficial for our health, but in the moment, we may be practicing because the teacher tells us to and it would be awkward to refuse. We often have both theoretical and circumstantial motivations. *By examining our immediate circumstantial motivations, we come to understand our theoretical premises.* We practice because the teacher makes us but we put ourselves in front of the teacher because of our belief that learning yoga will benefit our health.

Sutra II.10 tells us that by going back, a process Mr. Iyengar calls "involution", we will understand the basic afflictions. By observing the circumstantial motivations – *raga*, *dvesa* and *abhinivesha* we can come to see the fundamental misunderstanding.



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For our next meeting, consider the following in your asana practice.

1. As you practice, observe attraction and aversion as they arise. What effect do they have on your actions? What effect (if any) does your *observation* have on your actions?
2. We usually translate raga and dvesa as attraction and aversion but that is not quite what the Sutras say. Study the translation and commentaries of II.7-8. Notice in your own practice whether attraction always follows happiness and aversion always follows unhappiness.
3. We understand our experience through sensation (and reflection). Observe the role of sensation in your practice. What happens when you practice in such a way that you minimize sensation? What happens when you maximize sensation?
4. Read as many translations of II.10 as you can find (try a bookstore or the library if you don't have a collection of translations). How do different translators describe *prati-prasava*? Experiment with this idea in your practice.

Read Sutras II.12-II.25 to prepare for our next discussion on March 8, 2009 (2:30 – 4:00pm). Read with a questioning and critical mind. (*I will be disappointed if no one protests!*)