

Understanding Suffering

Karma and Saṃskāra: Karma is the action or inaction that creates a result or a consequence. Karmic impressions are recorded in the citta (the individual heart mind field of consciousness) as memory. A saṃskāra is a deep impression in our memory is formed from a strong or repeated karma that can influence our future behaviors. Saṃskāras are our patterns, habits, or tendencies.

Duḥkha: Duḥkha refers to suffering, or a painful experience in the heart-mind field of consciousness. The majority of our mental-emotional suffering is the result of unexamined saṃskāras and much of our future suffering is avoidable when we examine the root tendencies involved in our thoughts and behaviors. The path out of suffering is the path of yoga.

The Kleśa-s: The Causes of Suffering

- **Avidyā:** Avidyā, a lack of awareness, is the root cause of suffering. All other kleśa-s exist in the field of avidyā. Avidyā occurs when we falsely identify the changeable world with the unchanging witness consciousness. We are “in the dark” and forget our true nature; we forgot our pure inner light of awareness.
- **Asmitā:** Asmitā is egotism. It occurs when we falsely identify with our physical bodies, thoughts and emotions instead of the unchanging witness consciousness. Asmitā is at work whenever we feel we are different, better, worse, more powerful, or less powerful than someone else.
- **Rāga:** Rāga is the attachment to past pleasure.
- **Dveṣa:** Dveṣa is the avoidance of past suffering.
- **Abhiniveśa:** Abhiniveśa is the fear of death. It is our deepest fear and a primal instinct. Death can be thought of as our final surrender, the releasing of all ego identities and all attachments.

