



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Insight into Sutras #10

Illusion & Delusion

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

Maayaa is illusion. Moha is delusion. The difference can be confusing, though it is easy to sort out. A magician doing card tricks is a master of illusion. To believe that their illusions are real is delusion.

Our world is made of energy, manifesting as matter. This means that matter isn't really solid. You could call it an illusion. Some meditative traditions base their teachings and practices on this principle. Kashmiri Shaivism says the illusion is real — you are living in a movie set. But there is nowhere else to go. This is Shiva's movie set. The storyline is compelling, due to Shiva's incredible creativity. All the players are Shiva in disguise. The disguise is called Maayaa, the illusory power of Consciousness.

Maayaa is like the night sky on the Fourth of July in America. The stars and expanse beyond them are hidden by exploding fireworks. Maayaa is the fireworks. Maayaa is a great and powerful energy, so powerful that she can hide Shiva from you.

As you enact your part in the storyline, unfortunately you get lost in it. Your happiness depends on the story. Your whole sense of self is determined by what part you play and what others think of it. This dependency is delusion, moha. Delusion means you make a mountain out of a molehill. Maayaa creates the molehill. You turn it into an unscalable mountain — moha.

This is the human condition, created by your mind, which is so easily trapped in illusion and delusion. It comes about because you are trying to get happiness from your actions and from others. The reality is that happiness comes from inside. It arises, like the impulse to laughter.

Yoga says you must find where the happiness is arising from, so you can tap into it directly. The source of happiness is your own Divine Essence, your own Self. This is also the source of love, creativity, compassion, generosity, helpfulness, kindness and all the other Divine virtues. They bubble up spontaneously when you find your own Self.

The knowing of your own Self frees you from illusion and delusion, Maayaa and moha. You stop chasing clouds and tilting at windmills. You live in the eternality of your own Beingness, so you are undisturbed by events as they pass by. You meet and manage them, but they don't define you.

The sage Patanjali explains your condition as the “not-knowing” of your own Self.

Anitya-shuchi-duhkanatmasu nitya-shuchi-sukatma-khyatir avidya..¹

— Yoga Sutras 2.5

Taking the temporary as eternal, the impure as pure, misery as happiness,
and not-Self to be Self is avidya (not-knowing).

Temporary as Eternal: Your body is not eternal, yet your Beingness is. But you think that you are your body. The truth is that you are more, so much more. Similarly, any situation you face has a beginning point and will have an end point. It is not eternal, thus it cannot diminish the light of your own eternality.

Impure as Pure: You may strive to eat a pure diet, yet all foods contain bacteria. Your digestive tract is full of bacteria as well. No matter how many times you bathe in a day, your body will never be pure. And how's your mind? It is not outer purity that you seek. It is your own Divine Essence, absolutely pure, perfect, whole and complete.

Misery as Happiness: Many new students start yoga to reduce pain. With some, I have had to convince them to quit their exercise routine. The key is that they had to spend an equal amount of time doing Svaroopa® yoga.

In a yoga retreat, I challenged a bicyclist to change his training for an upcoming race to yoga only. He didn't agree. But he did try out my recommendation after the race. He found that he bettered his time when he used Svaroopa® yoga for his conditioning. I won our \$100 bet! He sent the check as a donation with a charming note of apology.

¹ Anityaa"suci-du.hkaanaatmasu nitya"suci-sukaatma-khyaatir avidyaa.

Not-Self as Self: Looking for others to appreciate you or to approve of you is a well-trodden path. However, when your sense of self depends on their opinions, it's not self-worth at all. It is called "other-worth," that others find you worthy. Do you think that will be eternal? Or pure? Or make you happy?

It is only your inner knowing of your own Is-ness that makes you feel whole. Your own Self frees you from clinging and from depending on your own actions to prove your value. You already know who you are.

The point is to see beyond the situations in your life, to discover the eternal, pure, ever-blissful Self that is your own Beingness. Based in Self, your responses to the temporary, impure, misery causing situations change. Your own Self carries you through.

There is a stage along the way to Self-Knowingness where you lose interest in the dramedy. Knowing there is more to you than the ups and downs your mind offers, you have no need to follow every wisp of thought. Nor do you need to follow what other peoples' minds offer. You may begin to wonder, "What's the point?"

You have reached the beginning of the end of dependency. You have begun to see that, when someone likes you, you are still you. And when someone doesn't like you, you are still you. Now you don't have to morph your whole persona around what they want. When you quit doing this, do you continue to care what they think or do? If you don't care anymore, life can become arid like a desert. What do you do now?

You put your Capital-S Self into it. Instead of looking for others to fill you up, you are already full, so you give what you've got. It's a radically different way to live.

Tripad-adya anuprananam.² — Shiva Sutras 3.38

While in all three states, enliven yourself with the bliss of the fourth state, which underlies them all.

The sutra has two meanings, depending on whether you are looking from the outside-inward, or looking from the inside-outward.

- 1) Looking from the outside-inward: in life, you are either awake, asleep or dreaming (the three states). You invest most of your time in looking for experiences to make you happy. You even want to have happy dreams. Every moment of happiness is a flash of the bliss of Consciousness, which is arising from within. Recognize its source so you can tap into it more and more.
- 2) Looking from the inside-outward: when you abide in your deeper dimensionality (the fourth state), you can infuse the bliss of Consciousness into your other three states. You fill your all three states of mind from your inexhaustible well of inner bliss. Your body and your life are thus fully invigorated. Now you have something that is worth sharing.

Let's return to the fireworks in the sky. "Oooh! Aaah!" We love fireworks because each one triggers an inner surge of transcendental bliss, like a flash of light shining from within. Earlier, I described the sparks and their smoke like Maayaa, hiding the greater reality of the sky beyond. Yet you can use the fireworks to enjoy surge after inner surge, while tracking the surges to their source inside. Now you are a yogi. Or you can be deluded about where happiness comes from, "I like the red ones, but not the blue ones." Moha.

Are you looking outside for your bliss or are you looking inside? If you look outward, your bliss will be temporary, impure and even cause pain. You are fueled by the delusion that the illusion will make you happy. Instead, you drown in your sorrows as your mind replays them for you over and over.

To see the illusion without delusion — this is the goal. To know your own Self while choosing to play your part, yoga will give you this. To bring the whole of your Beingness to each moment, to share from your deepest dimensionality, to be authentic and whole while making space for others. This is doing more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "INSIGHT INTO SUTRAS"

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² Tripad-aadya anupraanaanam.