



## Living the teachings

yoga's everyday spiritual meanings

### Samskara-Unconscious blueprints

Why is it that despite our best intentions or heartfelt sankalpa's (as discussed last month) we often self-sabotage and fail to achieve what we set out to achieve? Our personal samskaras may be to blame, but what are they? Samskara's can be likened to little grooves in our sub conscious minds, grooves that have been formed as a result of repeated behaviours or thoughts, these grooves can be deeply ingrained, leading to us form habits, the stronger the habit the less mastery we have over our mind and the habit inevitably wins the day. They can act like unspoken mantras and reach deep into our sub conscious mind, if negative, as they often are, they can tint the way that we see ourselves, the way that we think and keep us in a loop of suffering.

Freud used the metaphor of an iceberg to describe our conscious and unconscious mind. The tip of the iceberg that extends above the water represents the conscious mind. The conscious mind involves all the things you are currently aware of and are thinking about. Beneath the water is the much larger bulk of the iceberg, which represents the unconscious. The things that are hidden from awareness, Freud believed, exerted the greatest influence over our personalities and behaviours. Our samskaras exist here in our unconscious mind and can have a significant impact on the way that we live our lives.

Eckhart Tolle (The Power of Now chapter 2) discusses the concept of the pain body, there are lots of similarities to samskaras and an understanding of both can significantly help set us free. The pain body is a negative energy field that occupies our bodies and minds. Every time we experience emotional pain a residue is left behind, it merges with all other pain or traumas from our past, including childhood pain. In the same way that samskaras cause thinking loops and habit formation, exposure to certain triggers cause us to "feed" our pain body and keep it strong. All of this is happening sub-consciously. Awareness however, weakens the grip and takes what was unconscious into our conscious minds so that we are then able to question our thoughts and feelings instead of acting them out with negative consequences.

Our samskaras are our own creation, if negative, causing pain just as long as we allow them to. When we are aware of them, we can then begin to heal. The practice of yoga can bring our attention to these habits, ruts, or faulty ways of thinking by getting us out of our heads and into our bodies. Somatic yoga in particular **helps by retraining the brain and the nervous system to let go of these patterns through small and gentle movements**. These small, gentle movements **promote time for rest and encourage self-agency and healing**.

**Are your samskara's sabotaging your goals or making you live your life in a way that doesn't serve your best interests? Head to your mat, draw inwards and see what you can bring up into your conscious mind. Remember, "The truth can set you free" and yoga can be the tool to bring about this change.**