

Anger and Ambition

Ram (James Swartz)

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Dwayne: Hello, James. Some more questions after inquiring into some of these things you've said in your response, which I very much appreciate. Given that it's human nature to get angry when desire is thwarted, do you ever get angry when desire is thwarted, and if so, how do you deal with it?

James: Yes, once every year – or two. I think about it before I express it and I stay angry for less than five minutes, and it is not because I am not getting what I want personally. It is never at myself – because I treat myself right. It is always directed at someone who is responsible for an egregious violation of *dharma*. And so far it has always proved to have had beneficial effects for the person I told off. I had an opportunity to get angry this weekend, but I didn't take it. I get a bit cranky once in a while when I am tired and physical circumstances are not conducive. The thing about anger and other negative emotions is whether or not they are a habit. I never was an angry person, but I did have a small tendency toward it many, many years ago. I got rid of it by realizing that I did not like the feeling of anger and monitoring my mind carefully, cutting it off at the root before it had a chance to work out. It always starts as a *vasana*, an unspecific sense of irritation or dis-ease which if not looked into and dismissed leads to an outbreak. A person who is consistently angry – or depressed – is vain and narcissistic. He or she thinks the world is only there for his or her pleasure.

Dwayne: On a different topic, I have some questions regarding goals and ambition. Isn't motivation behind the goal or ambition a big factor? For instance, I'm a musician and I've lately been inquiring into why I practice, and try to get more proficient on my instrument because I frankly haven't felt like practicing ("getting better") – I know it's not *tamas*, because I always end up doing something else constructive – work out – study Vedanta – I don't sit around watching TV. So if I'm practicing to get more proficient because I think it will help get more work (pay bills) or more enjoyable work, this would not fall under ambition (definition: desire for personal achievement) or *rajas*, correct?

Or is all this a moot point because God provides for all in the appropriate way and will provide the inspiration needed to practice if that's what I'm supposed to be doing?

Thanks for your time, and I hope you are doing well!!

James: This is not a desire that is opposed to *dharma* in any way. It is okay to go for a result, i.e. better jobs, etc. The only problem is the agitation around this issue. So your conclusion that God will provide the inspiration is the way to go. If you feel like practicing, that is God inspiring you. If you don't feel like it, that is also God. There is no sense thinking about it. Try to stay with the original feeling that attracted you to music in the first place. It does not sound like "better" gigs are going to make any significant difference to you spiritually or financially. When you play a gig, do it with the *karma yoga* attitude.

Yes, things are fine. A bit busy, but fine. Take care of yourself.

~ James