

Actions Prompted by *Dharma*, Not Desire

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Sandra: How do you separate actions related to *dharma* versus action prompted by desire?

Rory: By using discrimination, the key faculty of the intellect. If your desire happens to be in line with *dharma*, if you naturally want to be honest, kind and to do what is appropriate in a given situation, then there's no conflict, no split between desire and *dharma*.

If, however, what you want is at odds with what you know is right – if you desperately want to eat cake even though you're on a strict diet for health reasons or have diabetes or something, then you have to restrain your urge, making your desire subservient to your discrimination. So, basically, it's about being able to understand the needs of the situation and being able to separate that from your own particular desires, if your desire happens to be out of harmony with that situation.

Sandra: It seems like one needs to deny all desires to avoid creating *vasanas*, but that almost puts you in a non-doing state. I guess it's similar to Taoist non-doing, i.e. do what you feel compelled to do without being attached to result.

Rory: It's about being careful which desires and *vasanas* you feed. The positive *vasanas*, those in harmony with *dharma* (positive, healthful habits, etc.) should be encouraged, and the harmful *vasanas* (self-destructive or harmful habits) should be discouraged by not indulging and thus feeding them.

By living a life of *dharma*, *karma yoga* and inquiry you do come to realize that the self is *akarta*, beyond doership. You see that the correct action is already determined and you simply need to follow *dharma*, the pattern that's already laid out for you.

Life becomes so much simpler that way, and it removes so much stress and anxiety and deliberation.