

The Main Purpose is Growth

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In an earlier post you had mentioned `...If I am meant to fail according to the Lord's plan and if I succeed, then I'm going against God's plan' Please explain this. How is this possible? Can we go against God's plan? — Sunita Chemburkar

That statement was made only to drive a point home. Unlike a programmed squirrel (which is the example I had given) which will act in complete harmony with the forest, human beings, given the freedom of choice, can act differently, and *Ishwara's* plan is broad enough, flexible enough to be able to take my freedom of choice as part of it. Therefore, I can give it my best shot, but if the plan is that I'm meant to fail then chances of me succeeding are very, very slim. But, yes, there is a slim chance, because if I tap into all the resources available, to the laws of nature that are functional....if I can do all of that, then there is a slim chance that in spite of *Ishwara's* plan at this juncture wanting me to not succeed, I may still succeed, and the plan will change and modify itself to take my success into account. So it's perfectly fine... I don't have to worry whether I'm meant to succeed or fail, I just have to give it my best shot and do what I can....If I don't get what I want, I accept it as *prasada-buddhi*; if I get what I want, be happy and still accept it as *prasada-buddhi*.

There is one thing that is fundamental to this plan: you're meant to grow. Therefore, everything that is happening is meant for a human being to grow....grow all the way until one gains *moksha*. That is the larger plan, but inside this there will be lot of variations, lot of twists and turns....You don't have to worry too much about the plan, because, anyway, you're not going to know all of it. When I say `plan', I don't mean it as a grand design, as a rigid design where God has planned out every little detail. If you look at the way Vishnu, the sustainer of the universe, is portrayed in the Hindu sculptures, he's shown reclining on the bed. So, basically, he's set up the infrastructure, he's put things in motion, which includes freedom of choice in human beings, and then let things work out for themselves. He's not micro-managing every little detail, and this can be a good lesson for those of us who want to micro-manage everything.

Can I presume that every opportunity that is presented to me should be taken up, should be experienced? If I don't take up the opportunity, does it mean that I'm going against the script?—Sunita Chemburkar

Definitely not. An opportunity, or opportunities, may come your way, and you have the freedom of choice to take them up or not. The freedom of choice is in your hands. One of the main purposes of life is to grow, so if an opportunity is conducive to your growth then it may be wise to take it up. But there may be opportunities that are not conducive to your growth. In fact, sometimes, saying `No` to an opportunity may be conducive to your growth. Therefore, keep growth as your focus and then do what is necessary.

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Meditation and analysis can help us get rid of habitual patterns. But how long should one do the analysis? How do you know when to stop?—Mohan S

A habitual pattern starts either with some wrong conclusions in our thinking or picking up certain thinking patterns as part of our socialization process, and we have not given enough thought to these. Certain habitual patterns are OK, in fact even good to have. Like you may have a habitual pattern of exercising or meditating every morning, and that's good. Or having a cup of tea in the morning; that's not a problem. A habitual pattern becomes a problem if it becomes a conditioning. It becomes a conditioning if I get disturbed or upset when I cannot do it. It's only these patterns that are unhealthy conditioning or patterns that prevent me from building up healthier patterns. These are the patterns I need to break.

Analysis is necessary because I have to see how valid or invalid this pattern is. Is it harming me or not? What is it doing to my life? And I try to see the limitation of the whole thing in a logical and rational way. But if I'm behaving in a certain pattern in spite of understanding it, then I need to do some contemplation, etc., to soak up that knowledge and make that knowledge a part of me. Like the *golla* that needs to soak up the *rasa* to become a sweet *rasagolla*.

How long do I continue this analysis? I do it until I'm not responding in a conditioned manner any more, but am responding more deliberately. Along with contemplation, this is also important—that I learn to respond deliberately, consciously, and not unconsciously, which is what habitual patterns are about.

So, along with my understanding, my contemplation to soak up that understanding and to break that pattern, I have to learn a healthier way of responding or living deliberately and consciously until it becomes natural for me. I continue this until I reach that point when I am spontaneous. Then I will know when to stop.

Would a *jignasu* or a *jnani* also have some desires or some wishes? And when these people pray to God to fulfil these desires while effortlessly performing actions to fulfil these desires, does that make them an *arthi* or an *artharthi* at that point of time?—Mohan S

An *arthi* is a person who prays to God only when he is in trouble. An *artharthi* is one who prays to God not only when he is in trouble but also when he wants things. A *jignasu* seeks to understand what is God, but that doesn't mean he doesn't have a desire or he will not pray to fulfil his desire nor will he not pray when he is in a soup. Therefore, he's basically a *jignasu* and he has desires as well.

You have to see these three states as a plus, one adding to the other. So the *artharthi* includes the *arthi* but becomes something more, the *jignasu* includes the *artharthi* and the *arthi* but he is something more. The *jnani*, however, shouldn't be compared to these three. In fact, Krishna himself says, `Treat the *jnani* as myself because he has discovered his identity as me.' But, yes, at times a *jnani* may pray for the welfare of the world, for the welfare of his students, and at times he may have a desire—a desire to reach out to more people. The Vedas are full of prayers of wise people who prayed like this. A wise person may actually pray, `May a lot of students come to me and benefit from this knowledge`.

In the case of the first three, the desires are more or less binding in nature, their happiness depends on the fulfilment of the desires. In the case of the *jnani*, the desires are not binding. His happiness is not compromised whether the desire is fulfilled or not because he has discovered that the source of *ananda* is himself.

Can japa-dhyanam be converted into a prayer? Or is it already that as obeisance is paid to Ishwara at the start?—Mohan S

It is true. It is already a prayer because you are saluting the Lord before you start. If you choose a mantra from what is popularly known as *Pauranic Mantras* like `Om Namah Shivaya' or `Om namo bhagwate vasudevayah' where you're actually bringing in *Ishwara* and you're saying `Unto the Lord in this form my salutations, my prostrations...', it has already become a prayer. The advantage of using a traditional mantra is that it becomes a *japa-dhyanam* and also a prayer. Therefore, both are taken care of in one practice.

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