



The Role of Desire

The subject of desire, when seen in the context of our evolution into self-realization, is directly linked to the relationship between awakening and our transformation on the human level, as well as the relationship between the soul and our human self in general. The force of desire is fundamentally positive. Without desire there would not be an incentive to live. Desire is not related only to survival or pursuit of pleasure, but it touches all the dimensions of our existence, like learning, creativity, experiencing love, and our spiritual evolution. For instance, without desiring it, Buddha would not have sought liberation; without desiring to help others or to share his understanding, he would not have taught, and no one would have known about his existence. So while transcending certain desires of a negative nature or desires that are detrimental to our psychological sanity is obviously important, we need to understand that it is not the desire itself that is an issue but its content and context.

Desire can have both a bright and dark side. The negative manifestations of desire are associated with various neurotic tendencies based on obsessively desiring things that we cannot obtain, desiring things that are not good for us or destructive to our well-being, desiring things that can bring harm to others, or utilizing the energy of desire as a way to run away from our emotional emptiness. Negative desire is often a compensation for an inner deficiency, psychological lack, and spiritual poverty. Sometimes excessive desire is caused by repression of our natural desires, like sexual desires that arise when one is abstaining from sex or infatuation with food when one is starving oneself.

Desires can relate to excessive emotional attachment to things or others. People like this are usually referred to as 'needy'. This neediness can express itself in many ways: for instance, in romantic relationships when one of the partners is excessively clinging to the other, creating an energy of emotional suffocation, or in general connections between people who all the time need company or cannot stop talking even if the other person is not listening. Emotional emptiness can express itself as a constant search for approval and appreciation; people who are considered to have a big 'ego' are usually emotionally dead and as a compensation seek different ways to procure their sense of self-esteem and positive self-image, and to get all the attention they can from others. It is even common to look for spiritual attainments as a way to prove oneself worthy of love from others. The constant cherishing of our self-image is directly related to emotional dependency caused by our inner emptiness and absence of self-love. We should not forget that self-image, which is the root of ego, exists only in the social context of how we perceive ourselves through the eyes of others.

When emotional desires are experienced from the right place, they are an important extension of our human nature. Not only do they make our life richer, but they are essential to allow us to evolve into the realization of love. Our emotional existence is an external reflection of the feeling dimension of the soul. We must honor our emotional needs while not falling into the pitfall of over-dependency. Overdependence is an indication of losing the balance between oneself and others. We can experience our emotional needs in a positive way, nourishing each other and learning how to love, only when we are able to find the source of emotional fulfillment inside our own heart. Our heart and the depth of its relationship to itself determines the depth of our emotional connection to others in terms of being able to give and receive human love.

Then there are desires related to physical security and sensual gratification. There is nothing wrong with these types of desires if they are experienced in a balanced way. Our physical survival is essential to continue living and evolving in this dimension, and what makes us human is our ability to improve our life circumstances. However, when our perception of our place in this reality is overly materialistic, we become too attached to the physical aspect of our existence, too obsessed with physical security, gradually developing greed for the things of this world. Greed can be described as desire that has gone out of control, desire that has moved to the dark side.

In a similar way, seeking sensual pleasure is in essence healthy. The sense of pleasure is one of the tools we developed in order to discriminate between what is good for our survival and what is not. When we eat a sweet fruit, our sense of taste immediately recognizes that it is good for our body. Feeling cold is unpleasant because we can eventually 'catch a cold' or even freeze to death, while the warm sun caressing our skin gives us the natural feeling of pleasure. The pleasure of making love, though it is rooted in the instinct of procreation, which is why in many species only the male experiences gratification, points to the general positive influence of sexual union on our existence on many levels, from physical and emotional to energetic and spiritual. Whether we like it or not, at all times we are pursuing the instinct of pleasure; our whole existence is constantly discriminating between what is pleasant or unpleasant. Our senses, emotions, and feelings are constantly on alert, sorting through the countless stimuli we receive in each moment to identify what is good for us. The spiritual concept that we must renounce pleasure is unrealistic and if pursued honestly will result in self-destruction. The pursuit of pleasure is natural to all beings, and is not only necessary to assure survival but also heals and allows us to heighten the value of our human existence.

As with everything, what is initially positive and healthy when used from the wrong place becomes corrupt, losing its original purpose. For many the search for pleasure is an addiction. It is no longer about assuring our well-being, but is about filling the empty hole in our existence with sensual experiences. When our sensitivity to pleasure is dulled through excess, pleasure actually becomes detrimental to our well-being; it becomes unhealthy. Gorging oneself on food when one is no longer hungry and using



drugs that stimulate the mind and senses gradually makes us fat and sick. Through over-stimulating the natural experience of pleasure, we desensitize our ability to recognize what is really good for us.

Incidentally, even on the spiritual path, the ability to distinguish between pleasant and unpleasant experiences is essential to help us move in the right direction. This should not be confused with addiction to altered states of consciousness, or imbalanced energy experiences, or to various mystical conditions of suspension. It is only due to a lack of spiritual sensitivity that one may interpret these experiences as pleasurable or exciting. For one who has the ability to really differentiate what is in accordance with his spiritual well-being, these various states of inner alteration are forms of suffering – they are in fact *unpleasant*. What is truly pleasant spiritually is what is in harmony with our pure nature. One can have many experiences of false bliss that are spiritually useless or negative. True bliss is the natural happiness of the soul unified with her original light. Yes, to dwell in pure consciousness is pleasant; to be absorbed in the absolute is pleasant; to embody our higher self is pleasant; to be a soul is pleasant. But these are the highest forms of pleasure, pleasure that has returned to its original condition of bliss, the silent ecstasy of our natural state.

There is no spiritual path without desire to evolve, to realize oneself. We already spoke about the naive idea which presupposes that to awaken one should not even have the desire for it because having desire recreates our ego and separates us even further from our true self. In this view, wanting to realize our pure nature only reinforces the illusion of being separated from it. These kinds of half-witted concepts indicate a lack of understanding of what the spiritual path is about and the nature of this reality. These views tell us more about the workings of our human linear mind than about what is out there in the real objective world. The mind can talk itself into all kinds of things, creating its autistic virtual picture of reality – the ‘ideal’ world of thoughts. Whether the mind is our friend or our enemy depends entirely on our intelligence. In many cases, we are not using the mind; the mind is using us – we are not thinking; the mind is thinking us. The mind is a wonderful servant but a terrible ruler. This linear concept of desire is an example of how the mind can manipulate something so natural, forcing to us to live in self-denial.

Desire is the active principle constituting our relationship with creation and our evolution. On the lower level, it points to what we lack and to our need to reach what we still lack inside or outside. On the higher level, desire points to a purely positive expansion into the higher level of existence, both inside and outside. When one is homeless, a natural desire may arise to build a house; when the house is already built, one may be content or one may wish to make the house bigger and more beautiful. A positive desire is linked to our creativity and natural instinct to evolve and expand on all levels. Life cannot stand still; it has to move forward, and desire is the energy that makes it happen.



Our desires are directly connected to our imagination, the level of our intelligence, our personal preferences, and, spiritually speaking, to our ability to recognize the purpose of our soul – what our soul desires. The desire of our soul must be honored above all other desires because only what she desires will manifest our highest good. The more we actualize our true self, the more we become fulfilled by our own existence and the less we leak our light through the pursuit of futile desires. This is the meaning of becoming a light onto oneself, which is realization of our independence from the relative world.

However, this is a sensitive area where we can fall into the trap of fully negating the human dimension of our existence. After having actualized our true self, we still continue to exist on the human level. The human cannot exist unless he remains connected to the world through the energy of desire. We can have here one of two scenarios or something in between. One scenario is that even after self-realization we are still incomplete on the human level and need to mature through fulfilment of certain essential desires in the world. The second is that one is complete on the human level but is still experiencing natural human desires which are simply the expression of being human. To cut the root of these natural desires in the name of some spiritual concepts or wanting to fit into an artificial model of a saint or a monk is not only totally unnatural and foolish, but it is impossible and results in living in a lie.

A human Buddha still has human desires, not only those which assure his physical survival, like the desire to eat, but also those of an emotional nature. As an emotional being he continues to have emotional needs as well. These emotional needs are not in conflict or contradiction to his emotional fulfilment and independency. His relative dependency on the things of this world is experienced from the place of complete relaxation in existence, from the place of natural samadhi, from the state of bliss. He has enough honesty and humility to allow himself to be a natural human being. Seeing the concept of liberation in a linear fashion as renouncing all desires is another trap of the mind. To cut off our natural desires is not freedom but even deeper bondage. A Buddha is not afraid of having human needs or even of being vulnerable because his heart is free.

Blessings,

Anadi

For a glossary of the terminology used in this teaching and for further resources, you may visit our website www.anaditeaching.com

