

PART TWO

PROFOUND
HUMAN DESIRE

Human beings have a profound desire to know something fundamental, something basic. In the intellectual sense we don't know what it is exactly, but we intuitively know it in the spiritual sense. We want to be in the pure and clear state of existence that is always going on beyond our feelings of attachment, passion, grasping, or egoism. We want to be in that state of existence where there is nothing to attach to and all we can do is just be. Strictly speaking, the something we want to know is impermanence, the true nature of time.

But people love passions and emotions, so we usually deal with life using the aspect of body and mind that is based on ideas and feelings. We never give ourselves a chance to see the other aspect—the body and mind that is beyond ideas and feelings. When we don't understand that other aspect, suffering always comes up, and the things we expect will bring us relief and satisfaction just create more confusion and dissatisfaction. Finally, sooner or later, we want to know what is beyond ideas and feelings.

We want to know that pure and clear aspect of existence, but we always think of it as something that is separate from us, so we try to know it objectively. The

problem is, impermanence isn't something we can see objectively because we are already part of it. We can be together with it spiritually, but it's too close to us to know it intellectually. Still, for as long as human beings have existed, we have wanted to know anyway. Everyone, regardless of whether we are wise or not, tries to know. Then, when we cannot know, we experience suffering.

We say "suffering" in English, but in Sanskrit the word is *dubkha*. The Dalai Lama translates *dubkha* as "unsatisfactoriness." That is really a better translation, but we usually say suffering. *Dubkha* has two meanings. In the common sense, *dubkha* is a kind of thirsty desire: a sensation of dissatisfaction that always drives you to approach or avoid something based on greed and hatred. In the deep sense, *dubkha* is emptiness: there is nothing to satisfy you. When you see suffering, it has already appeared on the surface of the conscious world. But at the bottom of suffering is the transient nature of reality itself. That's why *dubkha* is the first of Shakyamuni Buddha's Four Noble Truths.

In the conscious world of suffering your body may hurt or your mind may be uncomfortable, so you want to get something pleasant or escape from something unpleasant. You may find temporary relief from the transient aspect of life, but your needs and desires can never be satisfied for long because your life is based on impermanence. Your body and mind, your needs and desires, are always changing, so there is nothing to attach to, nothing solid for you to hang on to, and nothing that can give you permanent satisfaction.

At the bottom of suffering is time. Our ordinary minds

cannot catch the quick changes of time, so we feel a gap between ourselves and time. Then we believe that our individual existence is something that is completely separate from everything else in the universe. But this is a misunderstanding, which is called ignorance. Ignorance is a misunderstanding because in terms of reality there is no separation—everything is interconnected. Yet, because of ignorance, we experience ourselves as separate, and we feel dissatisfied.

As human beings, we always base our thoughts on this misunderstanding. We always feel that something is missing from our lives. We think that to live a peaceful life we must get something that is outside ourselves. Then we try to get it. But actions based on thirsty desire just become the cause of more suffering. That is why Buddha's teaching that suffering arises from desire based on ignorance is the second Noble Truth.

Buddha also taught that everyone has the capability to go beyond the ordinary body and mind and be fully present in impermanence with the whole body and mind. Then ignorance, desire, and suffering all disappear. That is the freedom we are seeking, the pure and clear state of existence where nothing is missing, the place where all we can do is just be. Then, from that place, truth comes up. From that place new life comes up. So let's accept our profound desire to be free from suffering and learn to touch the depth of human life that is beyond our ideas and feelings. That is how we can find real satisfaction.