

## DESIRE

*You should find a wider, unselfish desire which is without limitation and which you can extend forever.*



Our way is not asceticism. If you read our ethical precepts literally, they might seem to be ascetic, but our understanding of them is completely different.

The asceticism practiced in India before Buddhism was based on a kind of selfish idea because it emphasized a future good life after death. The idea was to practice so that one could be reborn in some very enjoyable place, a more perfect world. In Buddhism, there may be some asceticism, but the purpose of it is not based on that kind of selfish desire; it is to con-

trol our desire so that our desires find their correct place. Still, when you begin to study Buddhism, you may have a lot of selfish ideas about how you will study and how you will understand.

You may think there is nothing wrong with extending your desires. That is the mistake. There is something wrong if you just extend your desire without thinking, reflecting, and observing.

When I say you should restrict your desire, I mean you should not extend your desire in its ordinary, limited sense of wanting something just for yourself. I mean you should find a wider, unselfish desire that is without limitation and that you can extend forever.

The only desire that is complete is Buddha's desire, which includes everything and is for everyone. Whatever Buddha does is all right, because Buddha is just the one whole being. For Buddha there is no friend or enemy; all that exists is Buddha.

We say that you should practice zazen without a gaining idea. A gaining idea is based on selfishness. When you just practice because that is Buddha's way, there is not much of a selfish idea in your practice. When you eliminate that selfish idea from your practice, you are practicing the truth.

We cannot accept the kind of desire that is based on a selfish idea. But when our desire is unselfish desire, we use it to extend our way. So there is a difference between asceticism and Buddhist practice. The ways to con-

trol desire in asceticism and Buddhism might look the same, but actually they are completely different. This is the most important point.

To control our selfish desire is to be strict with ourselves. Without being strict with ourselves we cannot do anything. We should reflect on our practice, and before we say something, we should reflect on ourselves. This is a very, very important point. You should not rely on some teaching, but you should reflect on yourself, polish yourself, and, as much as you can, get rid of selfish ideas. Even if you attain wonderful enlightenment, if you forget to polish yourself, that is not real enlightenment and that enlightenment will not function.