

## *Craving & its Companions*

*March 27, 2021*

Try to stay with the breath. Watch out for any inclination that goes someplace else. Because wherever we go, the Buddha said, we go with craving as our friend. The problem with craving is that it doesn't come along as one friend. It drags along a lot of other companions. It's like those people who, in the days when we had guests coming here to stay, would call up and say, "Do you have a space?" We'd look at the calendar and yes, there was one space. So, we'd say "Okay, you can come." Then they would say "Okay. And I'm bringing along five friends."

Craving is like that. You crave something and you realize that the thing you crave has a world in which it exists. In order to get it, you have to take on an identity in that world. You suddenly find yourself committed to all *kinds* of things. To make another comparison, it's like getting married. Suddenly you realize you don't only have a spouse, you've also got in-laws. Because where there's clinging, there's clinging. With clinging there's birth, aging, illness, death. If you've decided you don't like that, then you can crave non-becoming. But then craving is going to take you back to another state of becoming. It's got you surrounded on all sides.

So, we meditate to get out of that dilemma. As the Buddha said, if you go for becoming, it's going to lead to more becoming. If you go for non-becoming, it's going to lead to more becoming. If you go for sensuality, it's going to lead to becoming. Where are you going to go? So, you just learn to see things as they arise, and see them as a process. This gives rise to that, that gives rise to this, and you begin to see that the process is all very make-shift, very unreliable, very tenuous. You begin to lose all interest.

So, you don't have to destroy the becomings. The becomings end on their own. As long as you don't get interested in terms of becoming, then you'd be fine.

This sounds fairly abstract, but this is basically what happens when the mind drops the breath and goes for something else. It's like taking birth in that little world and then you go off. If you realize that you don't like that and you want to destroy it, that gets you into another world, and another world. But if you realize that "I can just pull out, I don't have to get involved in the process"; you *see* it as a process, and that's the door out.

This is why we practice concentration together with right view. Concentration gives us a quiet place where we can see this process clearly. Otherwise, we just go through it day after day after day, without any clear sense of what's happening. But when the mind is still, it can see it happening. And when you have right view about this—i.e., the things to watch out for—and you recognize your craving as a cause of suffering, then you can start pulling out of that friendship. It's only then that you're really free.