Desire and Its End

Joseph Goldstein · Notable Dhamma Teachers — Joseph Goldstein · 58:48

Although we're still toward the beginning of the retreat, this evening I'd like to talk about the end of the whole path—where it's going—and how we can actually taste the fruition of the path all along the way. It's possible to touch or taste the peace and freedom that comes in the fulfillment of the path.

The French philosopher, political activist, and mystic Simone Weil wrote, "What people are looking for is not wrong, but they are looking for it in the wrong place." When I read that, it resonated so deeply with me and my understanding of the work we're all doing. Although we may call it by different names—peace or awakening or enlightenment, even love—really what we're all looking for is happiness, some deep abiding fulfillment and completion. The problem, though, is that mostly people are looking for this kind of happiness in the wrong place, misdirected.

This problem is highlighted in one of the teaching stories of Mullah Nasruddin, the Sufi teaching figure who is a combination of wise man, mad man, and fool. There are lots of stories, and you'll probably recognize this one—it's quite well known. Mullah Nasruddin was scrounging around under a lamppost looking for something. Some friends came along and said, "What are you looking for?" He said, "I lost the key to my house." They said, "Where did you lose it?" He said, "In the house." So they said, "Why are you looking under the lamppost?" He said, "Because there's more light here."

It's just this misdirected craving and desire for happiness. We're looking in the wrong place. We're looking in the places that society tells us to look or our conditioning tells us to look, but it's not really where happiness is to be found.

These are some words from the Buddha. When he was addressing the monks in his teaching, he would refer to them as bhikkhus. But bhikkhus also has a much wider meaning than just monk. In its broader meaning, it refers to everyone on the path to awakening, everyone on the path to enlightenment. In that sense, we're all bhikkhus, and it would be helpful when we hear the words of the Buddha to listen to them as if he's speaking directly to us—as if he's really addressing us.

He said, "Bhikkhus, I do not envision even one other fetter, fettered by which beings go wandering and transmigrating for a long, long time, like the fetter of craving."

The Buddha is being very specific here about that quality of the mind, that binding quality, that keeps us bound to this whole long samsaric journey. So what is craving, and how do we experience it in our lives?

Craving or desire is the translation in English of the Pali word tanha. The root meaning of tanha is thirst. Sometimes it was expressed as the fever of unsatisfied longing. I like those other translations because

when we think of thirst, or the fever of longing that's unsatisfied, it gives us a very visceral sense of what craving is like—a very visceral sense of the feeling when the mind is filled with craving.

In English, we often use the words craving and desire to mean the same thing, but this can be a little confusing because desire has a wide range of meanings. We use that term in many different ways. One meaning of desire is this desire of craving—the thirst, the fever of unsatisfied longing. It's rooted in greed and attachment. But sometimes desire simply means the motivation to do something, the motivation to accomplish something. We could say we have a desire for enlightenment, or a desire to become more compassionate, or a desire for service. This is a very different mind state than the mind state of craving.

This evening I'm going to be using these two terms—desire and craving—interchangeably, but keep in mind that in other contexts, desire can mean many other things. Don't get confused by my limiting the meaning of desire in this evening's talk.

The Buddha pointed out some very particular fields or arenas of craving that misdirect us from the happiness we're all looking for. Tonight I'd like to explore two of these arenas of craving, because if we want to free ourselves from the grip of this fever, we have to understand where to look, where to examine, where to investigate.

Two of the fields of craving that the Buddha highlighted are the craving for sense pleasures and what he called the craving for becoming. The desire for sense pleasures is the most obvious, and it's the one we're really most familiar with. This desire is for pleasant sights, pleasant sounds, smells, tastes, and pleasant sensations in the body.

We could also include pleasant mind states. In Buddhism, often the mind is considered the sixth sense, alongside the five physical senses. So craving for sense pleasures is this desire to experience all of these different pleasant sense objects.

What makes this so interesting to me is that our engagement with desire for sense pleasures is just our usual engagement with life, with the world—enjoying and wanting what's pleasurable and trying to avoid as best as possible what's unpleasant or disagreeable. It seems so natural, so normal. This is just how we're living. And it is, in a way, normal and natural.

But right here is where the Buddha begins a very revealing analysis of this whole situation—the situation of being enmeshed in the world of sense pleasures. He didn't condemn them as being sinful. Rather, in his very scientific methodology for investigating experience and the mind, he was led to ask some very basic questions about these kinds of experiences.

The first question he asked was: What is the gratification in the world? This is a fundamental question. We're living in the world, engaged in the world. What is the gratification in the world?

As a young prince, before he left home on his quest for enlightenment, he thoroughly enjoyed all the

various strands of sense pleasures. There are very elaborate descriptions of all the ways he was enjoying himself. So these pleasures were not foreign to him. This was not outside his realm of experience.

Then, as it's told in the suttas—sutta is the Pali word for discourse—the thought came to him: whatever pleasure and joy there is in the world, that is the gratification in the world. He was talking about the gratification of joy and pleasure. If there were no pleasure and joy in the world, beings would not become enamored of it.

We're beginning to see something here. Why do we become enamored? Because we're gratified. It is gratifying to experience the joys and pleasures of life. It's precisely because there is joy, precisely because there is pleasure in this realm, that we desire and crave these sense pleasures. If they weren't enjoyable, we wouldn't be craving them. So that's part of our experience, part of the reality.

But rather than simply listening to the Buddha's words about this, it's always helpful to take the words and apply them to our own lives—to ask ourselves the same questions that the Bodhisattva, the Buddha before his enlightenment, asked of himself. An interesting exploration would be to consider, to reflect, for each one of us: What is the gratification in our lives? What different experiences of body and mind do we become enamored of, that we want, that we desire?

When we look both in ourselves and in the world around us, we see that our cravings and gratifications seem to come in a very wide range of intensities and frequency. On one end of the spectrum, there might be obsessive cravings that totally consume our lives. Perhaps we've gone through periods of this ourselves, or we see it in others, where the mind becomes obsessed with a particular craving. This might include things like addictions to food, or to sex, or to alcohol, or to drugs, or to success, or to power, or fame, or wealth, or possessions, or comfort, or even love.

When the mind becomes obsessive in its craving, we really want to understand that fever of unsatisfied longing. We see, when it's on that obsessive level, how damaging it is. A good part of the world's great literature is precisely about these very human passions. This was certainly not limited to the Buddha's time, and it's not limited to any small subset of people. These are universal, strong driving forces in people's lives.

In many ways, this Western culture is just feeding that. There are two advertisements over the years which really have jumped out at me. One was in a storefront in New York—just a sign that said, "Don't let desire pass you by." Another one, from the days when cigarette ads were still in magazines, featured a very handsome and beautiful couple with cigarettes in their hands, and the caption was, "I don't let anything stand in the way of my pleasure."

These are the messages we've been getting throughout our lives. Don't let desire pass you by.

We may not be totally consumed by them, but still they may be a driving force for many of the actions in our lives. So it's illuminating just to pay attention to the various things we crave as we go through our

lives, not to simply remain caught in the habitual momentum of it. And this is the great power of mindfulness. As we learn to pay attention to what's going on here on retreat and in our lives, we can begin to see and notice, "Oh, this is where the craving starts to arise."

We can also watch desires that may not be obsessive and may not even be powerful forces in our lives. I've noticed in a very interesting way that sometimes desires arise simply as quick, light, passing thoughts in the mind. And it's interesting to see how even a light passing thought can be deeply rooted.

I'll give you an example. I was on retreat—and this has happened more than once—but I'm thinking of one particular time. I was doing walking meditation, and the thought came to my mind, "Oh, a cup of tea, that would be nice." And I noted it: "wanting, wanting." Took a few more steps. "Oh, a cup of tea." Noted: "wanting, wanting." Cup of tea. Wanting, wanting. I must have noted it ten times and then went for the cup of tea. You sometimes see how a tiny little blade of grass can push through cement. So the craving or the desire can be a very small, even trivial or insignificant thing. But the power of craving, the power of desire is very deeply rooted in our minds. It's almost like a primal energy in us.

It's also interesting to watch how seemingly trivial, momentary desires can sometimes, through repetition, strengthen into strong habits. At first it may just be a passing thought, but with repetition, it becomes more than a quickly passing thought, and we go from "I want this" to "I need this" to "I must have this."

So again, retreats are a great time to expand one's repertoire of stories because our minds are so entertaining if we're watching. I was in the habit, as maybe many of you are, that every morning I really look forward to that first cup of coffee. It kind of gets the day going. So I was doing a self-retreat at my home, and every morning I would get up and, you know, it's a real sense pleasure. Then one morning I got up and the coffee grinder didn't work. The first word that came into my mind—it's almost embarrassing to say this—the coffee grinder doesn't work, and the first word that comes to my mind is "disaster." And I meant it. I wasn't making fun of myself. It felt like a disaster. Now, in the realm of human disasters, this doesn't quite rank. But that's what our mind does. One yogi in an interview quite a few years ago came in and was sharing that great discovery and phrased it beautifully: "The mind has no pride. It'll do anything, it'll say anything." But it is helpful to have a sense of humor about it all.

Now, with all these different patterns of craving—whether it's the obsessive kind, or a little less than obsessive but still pretty demanding, or just momentary thoughts that become habits—all these different realms of craving and desire are so familiar to us that they're mostly invisible. We just take it to be who we are and how life is. This is normal, and we're not paying attention to it because it's so much part of who we take ourselves to be. Until we bring the power of mindfulness, the power of awareness, to this deeply conditioned pattern in all of us.

That's why the Buddha highlighted that he didn't see any other fetter as strong as craving that binds us to this wheel of samsara. So we want to take those words to heart. This is something that's really important to look at in our lives. And the retreat environment is very conducive to doing this.

We can start by really examining, really paying attention, to the first thing the Buddha mentioned: seeing the gratification that we feel in the enjoyment of different sense pleasures. So just as an experiment, you might notice during the day: What little experiences give you moments of delight? What do you become enamored of? For me, it was that early morning coffee.

Maybe it's the lunch meal, or a cup of tea, or a hot shower. Do you ever notice, when you get into a hot shower, just how pleasant it is? Or that very delectable moment—this is probably the highlight of the day—when you finally lie down at night in your bed after a long day, and the body just relaxes. It's a sense delight, a sense pleasure.

So it would be very interesting and instructive to notice the pleasure that's associated with all these experiences, and then to look: is there a subtle level of craving in the mind for them? This is a chance for us to explore, a chance for us to investigate in real time—not as an abstraction or theoretically, but really seeing it in those moments of enjoyment. Is there craving there, even on a subtle level?

One place where I saw this, again on retreat, was simply doing walking meditation. Very settled back in my body, just being aware of the movement—the lifting, the moving forward, the placing. Very still, very mindful. And then the lunch bell rings. I noticed that I could be walking just as slowly, but I could feel myself being pulled toward the lunchroom. Just this kind of subtle anticipation of enjoyment. This is the level I'm talking about on retreat. The beauty of retreat is that you have nothing else to do. You have no other job. And so you can really devote yourself to this very subtle inquiry of how these forces are working in us. Because out in the world, in the busyness of our activities, it's hard to be quiet enough and still enough to really see all this clearly.

We can also investigate the same conditioning in the enjoyment we have of pleasant fantasies in the mind. It's not only the physical pleasures, but really watching the same process at work in the mind. It's not uncommon at all—probably pretty universal at one time or another—to get carried away by enticing sexual fantasies, or food desires, or fantasies about relationships, like Bonnie was talking about the other night, the Vipassana romance. It's all just creations in our own mind. But it's so easy to get caught up and carried away by pleasant thought forms, pleasant fantasies.

At some point, as we investigate this and explore this realm of craving for sense pleasures, we might resonate with the Buddha's words when he said, "Whatever gratification there is in the world, that I have found." I think this is really important. Are we still looking for some new hit, some new taste, some new sensation, some new thought? Or do we realize, yes, we've already experienced the gratification in the world? We've all had innumerable pleasurable experiences in the body, in the mind. Whatever gratification there is in the world, that I have found.

But the Buddha did not stop here. This was just the first step of becoming aware of the ground of our lives—this desire for sense pleasures and the gratification that comes from them. He then went on in his exploration. He said, "Because I then set out seeking the dangers of the world."

"Danger" here is a translation of the Pali word *adinava*. This might also be translated more colloquially as "the drawbacks" of things, or the downside, the disadvantages. There are very few things that have just an upside to them. But the Buddha is particularly pointing out and encouraging the investigation: what is the downside or the drawbacks of gratification in the world?

He continued, "Whatever dangers or downsides there are in the world, that I have also found. Namely, that the world is impermanent and because of that, ultimately unreliable, subject to change."

We all know this conceptually. We could probably go up to anybody on the street in any town in America and ask them, "Do things change?" This is not an esoteric truth. Probably everybody would say yes, things change. But we're not living it. Because if we really were living it, if we really understood it deeply, we wouldn't get attached to things. We would know that whatever we're attached to, whatever we're craving, is going to change. And that's the drawback. That's the downside.

But how many of us, in times when things are going well, in times of good fortune when we're enjoying various pleasures—as we often are, for many of us, perhaps most of us—

We lead pretty privileged lives, given what occurs in so many parts of the world. But even if we have difficulties in our lives, still there are many times when we are enjoying things, enjoying the pleasures. How many of us have the interest, and even the courage, to really ask the question of ourselves: in the midst of this enjoyment, even as we're enjoying, what is the downside? What is the drawback?

There are several ways of understanding the drawbacks of sense pleasures. It's good to become aware of them and reflect on them so we can integrate that understanding into the choices we make.

First, we can reflect on the fact that in the end, sense pleasures do not deliver on their promise of happiness. We're enamored of them because we think they're going to make us happy. But the happiness from sense pleasures comes because of the pleasant feelings associated with them, and they do bring happiness for a short period of time—it's not to deny that. They do bring us a kind of joy and happiness. But precisely because they're so impermanent, so changeable, they're like bubbles in a stream. We have these moments of enjoyment and the happiness that may come from that, and then it's gone.

How many sense pleasures have you already enjoyed in your lives? Innumerable. But they're continually changing, continually disappearing, and so we go after another one and another one and another one, always anticipating the next. And all too soon, our lives are at an end. We go chasing after the illusory happiness of these sense pleasures, and unless we start paying attention to the downside, to the drawbacks, we are just living in that forward momentum of desire and craving without ever coming to a place of completion, to a place of real peace, to a place of real contentment.

So how much of our lives and energy do we want to spend in this endless pursuit? This is a meaningful question for all of us in how we're choosing to live our lives.

Now, as laypeople—I don't think there are any monastics here, mostly laypeople—we are living in the world engaged with all kinds of sense pleasures. This is our life, and there's nothing at all wrong with that. But still, some deep part of us, of each one of us, already knows on some deep level that it's not going to bring the fulfillment we're looking for. And it's clear that you understand this, because you decided to come here for this week rather than go to a beach in the Caribbean. So we want to honor that understanding that's already within us. We have a certain level of understanding and wisdom with regard to this, and it's good to reflect on that and honor it.

So the first drawback of relying on the gratification of sense desires for our genuine happiness is that it doesn't actually accomplish our aims. It's good to really let that in.

The second danger is that when craving becomes a strong or obsessive force in the mind, it often leads us to very unwholesome actions, creating the unwholesome karma that brings a lot of suffering to ourselves and others.

One time Sayadaw U Pandita, one of my Burmese teachers, was giving this talk on sense desires—just this whole discourse. He went on and on and on, all in translation. He was talking in Burmese, and he must have talked for about ten minutes. Then the translator translated the entire ten-minute discourse in four words: "Lust cracks the brain."

It is absolutely true. I'm sure you can all think of times when the mind was filled with lust for something, whether sexual lust or lust for anything—we go crazy. How many really harmful acts have taken place, harm to others, because of this force? Lust does crack the brain. We want to pay attention to this. This is a powerful force in the mind and in our lives. We have to take responsibility for it, to learn how to engage with the gratification of different sense pleasures in a careful, responsible way.

It takes a lot of interest and sometimes courage for us to really look deeply into our hearts, into our minds, to see these patterns—so that we're not just going through our lives on the momentum of habitual conditioning. We've all been conditioned in so many different ways, some of which are wholesome but some of which are not so wholesome. The only way to become free in the midst of all this is if we become aware, if we really see in our minds: this is leading to a good result, or this is not so skillful, this is not wholesome. It takes interest—we have to be interested in doing that—and sometimes it's challenging to really see our own patterns in this very deep way.

So I've talked a lot about this first arena of craving: the desire for sense pleasures, the gratification that comes from it that's real. There is a gratification, but also there's the examination of the drawbacks or the downside, so we come to a balanced experience of them.

The second type of craving is more subtle. Desire for sense pleasures, in one way, is quite obvious to us. But the second kind of craving mostly goes unnoticed. This is what the Buddha called craving for becoming.

The basic urge or desire to become this or that.

We can experience this craving in some very specific ways. One familiar pattern is the obsessively planning mind. Have you ever gotten caught up in endless planning? Imagining yourself in some future situation, then engaging in all the thoughts and actions that will get you there? Just notice—being on retreat and watching your minds in such a systematic way, you'll see many examples of this, of how often we get lost in mind creations of a future self. A lot. A good part of our mental activity is just that: the desire for becoming, the craving for becoming, whatever it may be. I'll do this, I'll go there, I'll become this. Being lost in all these thought fantasies about our future is exactly this kind of craving for becoming.

Keep in mind that this is very different from mindfully planning for things that need to be done. I'm not suggesting that all planning is unskillful. In our lives we do need to plan. But there's a big difference between being lost in future fantasy and being grounded in the moment—really embodied and grounded, knowing, "Yes, this needs to be done, I'll plan for it," while doing it from a place of groundedness in the here and now. We're not lost in some mind fantasy.

Another way of experiencing this energy, this craving for becoming, is noticing the many times that expectation arises in the mind. One of the biggest hindrances in meditation practice, as well as in our lives, is being caught up in expectation. Expectation can happen on many levels. It can be a kind of distant expectation, but on a more subtle and pervasive level, expectation can be happening moment to moment.

This is something to really investigate for yourselves, because it's a very common experience in meditation that mostly goes unnoticed. As we're meditating and simply being with our experience moment after moment, notice how frequently—and it's probably the norm—the mind is with this moment but leaning into the next, energetically. It's a subtle pattern: we're with this breath in order to get to the next breath, or we're with this sensation in order for it to become something. It's very common, as if the next moment somehow is going to resolve everything. We forget that the next moment is just as impermanent as this moment. It's not going to offer any resolution of anything. But we're so habituated to this craving for becoming—this, in order for this, in order for that—and that's what keeps us caught.

The problem with expectation—and there are many problems with it—is that it inevitably brings agitation to the mind. This would really be helpful for you to observe. But what makes certain kinds of expectations, especially on retreat, so seductive is that they often come masquerading as Dharma aspirations. We think, "Well, I should be leaning into this because it's meant to accomplish some noble experience."

Here's something for you to parse clearly: the difference between aspiration and expectation. Aspirations can inspire us. We have an aspiration for awakening. We have an aspiration to become more compassionate. Aspiration sets a direction for us. Aspirations can be beautiful and ennobling. Expectation, however, leads us into the agitation of hope and fear. We get tossed about by those two polarities. When there's expectation, we're hoping it will happen and fearing that it won't. We go back and forth. That mindset is a very different experience than aspiration. It will be very helpful for you to get clear about

that difference so you don't confuse them.

So the next time you feel frustrated in your practice, when you feel some agitation in the mind—and that's going to come, it comes for everybody at different times—when you're feeling the agitation, this sense of unease, notice and explore the expectation and the craving behind it.

I've found something so helpful in my practice, which I mentioned in one of the groups this morning: beginning to appreciate the feeling of struggle as helpful feedback rather than as a problem. Mostly when we're struggling with something, whether in meditation or in life, it's a very uncomfortable feeling, especially when we're caught in it. But actually, that feeling is telling us something really important. What it's telling us is that something is going on in our experience that we're not accepting.

Because if we were accepting it, we wouldn't be struggling.

A million examples come up in meditation. You're sitting and you're struggling with some discomfort in the body. What is the struggle telling you? That you're not relaxed back and open to the unpleasantness. You're expecting it or wanting it to go away. So we're in a struggle.

Maybe you're sitting and for the whole sitting the mind's just wandering, just a run of thoughts, and you're getting frustrated with that. What is that frustration, what is that struggle telling you? That you're not accepting of the fact that the mind is racing. So instead of seeing it as a problem—oh, okay, racing mind, racing mind—we just settle back and open to whatever it is.

The desire of expectation, wanting something to be different than it is, also feeds the comparing mind. And that's one that's really a great torment—when our mind is just caught in comparing ourselves with others. Sometimes yogis get into competitive sitting. That person behind me, they were in the hall when I came in, they're still sitting there when I'm leaving, or whatever. The mind can spin out in a million different ways.

There's a big difference between being inspired by someone else's practice or life and getting caught up in comparing and self-judgment. I experienced this in a big way during the first retreat I did with Sayadaw U Pandita. This was in 1984. We hadn't met him before. He came here, taught a three-month course, and he's a very demanding teacher. It was a high-pressured retreat. We were seeing him every day. We had to report on our experience. We had to report how many hours we sat and walked. And the aim was fourteen hours of sitting. So it was intense.

I was going through a lot—stuff was coming up for me. And then I would look around. There were some yogis who clearly were doing so well. It was so easeful for them. Meanwhile, I'm in all kinds of struggle. I just saw my mind going crazy, comparing myself, and there was a lot of self-judgment and a lot of suffering in that.

It was springtime. After weeks of this—and this was not just a passing phenomenon, weeks of really

suffering from all this comparing—I was walking right outside the hall here. And right next to the wall, the flowers were coming up in the springtime. I saw that some flowers had come up and were already blooming. Some had emerged, but the flowers hadn't opened. Some were just poking out of the earth.

That was a great teaching for me. I realized, yes, we're all unfolding in our own way, in our own time. One flower doesn't compare itself to another. Oh, that one has bloomed already—why haven't I? Sometimes nature can be a great teacher for us if we just tune into the harmony of nature and try to translate that into our own lives.

One of the easiest places to notice this craving for becoming, this leaning into the next moment, is to become aware of the very common feeling of rushing. We're often rushing, even here on retreat where there's no place to go or get to. Rushing is when we're ahead of ourselves. Our mind is ahead of ourselves. Energetically, we're toppling forward into whatever we think we have to be doing. And it doesn't have to do with speed. We can be rushing while moving very slowly, and we can be rushing while moving very quickly.

There's a great line in one of James Joyce's short stories in the collection *The Dubliners*. It's a famous line you'll probably recognize: "Mr. Duffy lived a short distance from his body."

How often are we living a short distance from our body? A lot.

So just in your time here, if you remember, really pay attention to that. You'll pick up that this is really a craving for becoming. We're not back in the moment, simply open to this moment's experience. It's that craving for something in the future, and our whole energy body is responding to that.

In this process of leaning into the next moment—it can happen in sitting, it can happen in moving, when we're rushing—we're forgetting an essential understanding of the whole practice, and that is that liberation is not about getting anything. It's not about getting. It's not about craving. It's not about holding on or clinging. It's all about letting go. And we can let go in any moment. You don't have to wait till the ninth day of the retreat to let go. Why not let go now? In every moment. So that's settled back.

The Buddha gave some very specific and challenging instructions for this. Really take this in, because he's saying very directly how to live the awakened life. But it's challenging. He said, "Not reviving the past, not hoping to be in the future. Instead, with insight, see each arising state. Not craving after past experience, not setting one's heart on future ones, not bound up in desire and craving."

It's pretty profound. And you've probably noticed, in the days you've been here already, how much of our mental activity—a great preponderance of our mental activity—has to do with past and future. I don't know the percentage, but it's a big percentage of what our minds are doing. Reviving the past, hoping for the future.

Not reviving the past, not hoping to be in the future. Instead, with insight, see each arising state. It's so

simple, but it's not easy. Not craving after past experience, not setting one's heart on future ones. That's a big one. Not bound up in desire and craving.

So what would it be like in your time here to actually practice that? Take those words. These are powerful instructions from the Buddha, powerful teachings. You can use your time here to really experiment, to challenge yourself, and to notice when the mind is reviving the past or longing for something in the future—and then to just come back to the present with each arising state. Even if it's just for short periods of time. But for each one of us to get a taste of the freedom of this can then inspire further practice.

The great Indian sage Ramana Maharshi had a very succinct expression of this. He said, "Try to be less, not more." Our whole life energy often is about becoming more, and the whole practice is about becoming less. It's like this rather than that. So we can watch for that. As you go through the day, there will be many and countless times when you can play with that understanding.

In the early morning of the Buddha's enlightenment, he was sitting under the Bodhi tree, and it is said that when the morning star first appeared and he had attained to full understanding, to full enlightenment, these are some of the words that came to his mind: "Realized is the unconditioned"—you could say the highest peace. "Realized is the unconditioned. Achieved is the end of cravings." He's saying so clearly the nature of the liberated mind: the end of craving.

So we can practice that. We can practice it in any moment, and we can also aspire for its complete fulfillment. I think it's helpful just to have this very large framework of understanding of what the practice is about, because it's so easy to get caught up in the momentary struggles and techniques and the minutiae of the practice, often losing sight of the big picture and what it's really all about.

Realized is the unconditioned.

Achieved is the end of craving.

I'd like to close with just a few lines from the Sufi poet Hafez:

Ever since happiness heard your name, it has been running through the streets trying to find you. Let it catch up.

And this is the way.

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