

# 2016-08-28 Nothing Is Worth Clinging To

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clinging, preoccupied, buddha, gods, dwell, craving, adhering, moggallana, sakka, person, slogan, question, preoccupation, unfolds, defines, dwelling, people, nymphs, worth, agitated

## SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

Welcome time see. So for this morning's talk, I want to tell a story. And so maybe it's like a fireside chat there, you know, it's an ancient fable from the Buddhist texts. And it's from those of you interested in knowing where it's from, it's the shorter, shorter discourse on the destruction of craving. So it's in the middle length discourse, number 37. And it starts off with the ruler of the gods man named Sakka, coming down to the Buddha to ask him a profound question. And he says, venerable Sir, how In brief, he wants a brief response, move your ruler of the gods, you're probably busy. And so it's good to get things done in brief. How, In brief, is a person liberated in the destruction of craving? And how does one reach the ultimate end? The ultimate freedom from bondage, the ultimate goal and become foremost Foremost among gods and humans. So here's asking a question about how do you reach the end? How do you reach the ultimate goal that the Buddha had to teach, to often describe this destruction or the end of craving? So the Buddha gives a, an answer that's, you know, it's a little bit lengthy. But the first line is very evocative, and sometimes is taught just by itself as a little slogan. And that's, he says, here, and I love when the Buddha says he uses the word here, it often implies something immediate, like, you know, like, we can do it now. So it's not something the abstract like oh, someday, somewhere someplace a person could do this. But now, here, here, a person here, a person has heard, that nothing is worth adhering to. When a person has heard that nothing is worth adhering to. The person directly knows everything has been fully known, understood everything, the person can become liberated. So that it goes on explains more how this works. But the slogan nothing is worth adhering to. Sometimes it's translated into English as nothing is worth clinging to, which is a little bit more evocative for some people. And it's a wonderful kind of slogan to carry with you as a challenge, because it's from time to time, you'll probably find yourself clinging to things. And then the slogan, nothing is worth clinging to, is meant to be it can be a challenge then for you to grapple with that. Because you think it's really important to what you're clinging to, and you have to cling to it, then you know, your whole everything depends on it. And you have good reason to cling. And so this question, his slogan is like, well, let's look at is it really the case? Maybe it's not true? Maybe you're better off not clinging to anything? And how could that be true? When there's so many important things that have to be done and accomplished for your safety, your well being for that of your friends and family and society? How can it be that not clinging is better than clinging and if I don't cling, then everything will just unraveled and fall apart. And my clinging holds it all together. So it's a very powerful statement, nothing is worth adhering to. The word is being translated here as adhering. Be navasana is doesn't kind of means adhering it's a little hard to know how to translate these ancient words into English. It literally literally means to, to abide in to dwelling. And so sometimes we have the expression in English that if someone is preoccupied with something, they're thinking about something, they're dwelling in their thoughts, they're dwelling in the past or dwelling in the future or their plans, and has more than meaning of dwelling or abiding in it at the mall. Logically, it means to enter into, so like enter into a home or something. And so clinging is is given the whole story unfolds, doesn't make sense to say nothing is worth clinging to. But it has a kind

of a wider a deeper meaning than clinging because also this word also means not adhering. To philosophical views,

it's translation that I like, especially given the story is preoccupied. Nothing is worth being preoccupied with. And perhaps the most of your clinging would be overcome if you're not preoccupied by things. So what are you preoccupied by? So I want to tell the story and how it unfolds. And then we'll, and then at the end of the story, the Buddha repeats his teachings that he gave. And so I have a chance to go through a little bit more detail then. So Sakka says, great, thank you, and goes back. And then goes back to his heavenly heavenly realms. And, but there's a monk in the audience named Mr. humbug Leanna. Who saw this, all this. And he was wondering how well didn't vocally I hear what the Buddha had to teach? Did he really hear that teaching and take it in. So he Muhammad Lama decides to go visit the Sakka up in the heavenly realms. So since he's a very good meditator, he just like, you know, snapped his fingers and appeared up there. And he goes finds places as quickly as a strong person might flex the arms or flex or unflex the arms the Venerable Moggallāna vanished from this earth, appeared among the gods. Now on that occasion, Sakka, ruler of the gods was furnished and endowed with 100 fold kinds of heavenly music and he was enjoying it in the pleasure park of the single Lotus. So, this guy is living a life of luxury, you know, a lot to you know, pleasure Park, you know, it's probably every kind of pleasure that God is allowed to have is happening and hundreds of old kinds of music and everything. So it's a pretty, pretty nice thing. And he was there enjoying himself, which is nice thing. And, but when he saw Moggallāna, up here, he dismissed the musicians and welcomed him Come, come. It's great that you found had the opportunity come visit us. Thank you. So. So then Muhammad Yunus, humbug, Liana sat down. And he asked him, when you asked the Buddha, to give a brief answer to your question about the destruction of craving, what did he tell you? So it's really a test to see if you remember it, if you took it seriously. So So, remember, the Buddha said nothing is worth being preoccupied with. So then the great God says, Good serve locally. We are so busy. We have so much to do. Not only with our own business, but also with the business of the gods of the 33 other health Evans. Besides good sir Moggallāna what was well heard welder and well attended to well remembered suddenly vanished from us. Good sir. It once happened that war broke out between the gods and the Titans. Titans are a different kind of gods. In that were the gods one of the Titans were defeated when I had won that war and returned from it as conquer. I had the great palace built good sir Moggallāna. The great palace has 100 towers, and each tower is 700 upper chambers. And each upper chamber has seven nymphs. So nymphs, I guess, you know, it's kind of we shouldn't anymore kind of choose one gender over the other over all the different kind of genders we could have. So maybe is nymph a gender neutral term? no. Nymphs and nymysirs? What was well on it? Don't don't don't dwell on it. Just going anyway, so I apologize for these old languages. But anyway, each tower has 700 chambers, and each chamber has seven nymphs, and each nymph has seven maids. Would you like to see the loveliness of the palace? Good, sir. So that's his answer to the question. What was it the Buddha said to your brief about the end of craving? He starts off saying I'm busy.

But he was just hanging out this pleasure Park and then invites him to go see, you know, his wonderful palace, everything. So apparently Sakka is preoccupied at Apparently, he didn't take in what he heard for himself is, you know, quite preoccupied he's or he's dwelling in his pleasures and his preoccupations, concerns. He's clinging, he said herring. And anyway, so my blog, he takes him up for the tour of the palace. And they go around. And when they finish, Moggallāna says he's he, he thought this, this God is living much too negligently. What if I stare up a sense of urgency at him. So he took his toe, and he touched the palace palace for something that's a palace to make an earthquake. And that got suckers attention. sucks that it's wonderful, it's marvelous with power and might, this monk has that with a point of his toe, he makes the heavenly region shake and quake and tremble. So something it took an earthquake or heaven quake for to get Sakka's attention. And this is also kind of interesting,

what does it take to get our attention, and some people it takes to take some kind of major event sometimes, to kind of shake us up and feel like time is short, we better kind of address the issues of our life. If we wanted to, I've had a lot of people come to me and say, you know, something happens in their life. And they say, You know, I realize I can't wait anymore. I've been wanting to do a spiritual practice for a long time. And you know, if I'm not going to do it now then when but it took something something had to happen. And so many of us have a wake up call up some things, some event, an accident or an illness or, you know, a variety of things that could happen. And so, it took that to get this preoccupied, ruler of the gods attention. And so then Moggallāna asked the question again, what did the Buddha teach you? And it turns out, he had memorized it, he remembered it. Maybe just hadn't taken to heart. So then he recited it. to mumble mumble mumble aka Yoda went back to the Buddha then on earth, and said I was just up there. And this is what the role of the gods said. And the Buddha said, Yes, that's accurate, he came here, this is the questions he asked. And this and this is what I said. So nothing is worth adhering to or nothing is worth being preoccupied by. Nothing is worth clinging to, perhaps. And so then Buddha repeated this, the full teaching. When a person has heard that nothing is worth adhering to when grid directly knows everything. That's quite a statement on directly knows everything. Why is that? knowing everything, it's a my understanding is that you know something about everything. You don't know everything in the universe, but you know, a common denominator of everything. And to have access to that kind of common denominator or root issue, or some kind of thing that's relevant in all domains of life, is quite a powerful piece of knowledge. So that's how it usually knows. So this thing, when you if you know that nothing is worth adhering to, you know, something significant, that's relevant everywhere you go. So you know something about everything. So that's also going to kind of evocative the idea that it's portable. That's, you know, it's really universal, nothing is worth clinging to, you're better off not clinging, being preoccupied.

Having fully understood everything in this way, whatever feeling when feels, whether it's pleasant or painful, or neither painful nor pleasant. One abides aware of how it's impermanent, how it's changing how it's in flux. And here's this idea of seeing the impermanence of something the changing nature of it, is offered as an alternative to being preoccupied by something. And in the Buddhist psychology, the same things have much more semblance of permanence. When we're preoccupied, when we're caught up in concepts and ideas, we're thinking about it, as opposed to being in direct contact with it. And over and over again, the emphasis in Buddhism is to direct Contact direct experience of the moment. And in the moment, things are actually shifting and changing all the time, for no other for many reasons. But for one reason, our experience is changing because our vantage point or perspective, or understanding, or what we're focusing on is constantly shifting and changing. And things are always in flux always changing. And I've, I, for me, that's become a refuge. In many, many situations, when I remind myself, this is in process of changing right now, let's let's, let's hang out, and just see how it change. And so many times when I'm willing to let the situation unfold, things become clear things become easier things, you know, things that are usually used that that'll kind of tool when things are challenging. So let's see how it changes when things are good. I don't often say that. But when things are quite difficult, and then sure enough, if I hang in there, as opposed to, you know, call the fire department right away, you know, and that maybe was a bad analogy. But But, but the idea is, you know, let's see how it goes out unfolds. So see the impermanence of it. And as we see the changing nature of things, then what begins to fade away, ideally, or as a student, they the suggestion here is that preoccupation is the craving or the clinging. craving requires a sense of holding onto something fixed away. If we're tuned into the facts, how everything is changing, it softens. It's like a massage, that loosens the grip, and there's a fading away of our preoccupation. And then as it fades away, we get this interested in it. At some point, there's this moment that can occur in this text, it's called relinquishment, which is a very mature step in adding any spiritual life. And that is not only to let go, or see the value of letting go, releasing, fading away, but making a choice. And the choice is, I'm done with this. I'm no

longer interested in this, this is not something I'm really, in what to dwell in, reside in, be involved in, I might not be able to let go of it so easily, because letting go is it can be very tenacious. But there can be a clear sense I'm done with this. In my heart, I don't want to do this anymore. And I think coming to a place we make that choice is very important. Because too often it's too easy to just kind of think that if I just keep being mindful, everything will take care of itself. Which kind of will sometimes but but I think to make a choice, you know, I'm done with this. I'm gossiping all the time. I'm done with gossiping, I'm being cynical all the time I'm done, you know, I'll probably still do it to habit, but I feel done or you know, all kinds of things.

So, contemplating in this way, one does not cling to anything in the world. When one does not cling, one is not agitated. And this is also a very interesting statement. That it that this if you don't cling you will be agitated. Something about that, apparently for the Buddha agitation is caused by clinging to something. So if you don't cling, you don't get agitated. Some people think that they they can be wiser in the world if they're not agitated. So it's one of the reasons why it's helpful not to cling to anything, not agitated. When one is not agitated, one personally attains Nibbana, one personally attains freedom. So, ending of clinging, settling of agitation and then a certain kind of freedom arises. So nothing is worth being preoccupied. It's not worth taking up residency, in any kinds of preoccupation. It's interesting in there in the Buddhist tradition, that a person is defined by where their mind dwells. So if we dwell in anger, that anger defines the person that's an angry person. If we dwell in kindness, that defines the person as a kind person. If we dwell in, in fear, then that defines us, if we dwell in shopping, then that you know, defines us you know, whatever it is, you know, we kind of finds us But a person who isn't doesn't dwell doesn't take up residency doesn't have an address. And someone who's free doesn't get defined by something because their mind doesn't dwell anywhere. They can still be kind. The enlightened people tend to be helpful in the world. But there's something about their mind where they don't dwell, and even the kindness. They don't dwell in the love. They don't dwell and you know, generosity. Their mind is not taking a breath, it's not preoccupied by it. And so there's nothing in it. Nothing. You can't define that mind. That heart can't be defined. In the ancient world, they say that God people like gods, they have some like psychic ability to look into people's minds or hearts. When you look into the mind and heart of someone who's enlightened, they can't see anything. They think they have nothing, there's nothing there to that defines them. There's a kind of just clarity, just openness, freedom. Freedom is not something that can be seen. Because like clinging, if I'm, when you're when we don't, when we don't cling. It's kind of like there's nothing there. But it's an absence, which is very meaningful. The app is an absence, which can feel sublime, we don't clean even though nothing's there. I have kind of an injury in my foot. So periodically, flares up and when I walk, it troubles me. But yesterday, I went for a hike. And both feet, the one that usually hurt, someone doesn't, didn't hurt. So it was nice, but the one that usually hurts, felt sublime. Just the absence of the usual pain. Wow, that's something. So the absence of clinging is sublime, this freedom, even if the gods can't read your mind, it's pretty good. So nothing is worth adhering to. Nothing is worth being preoccupied with. There are many things to cling to the Buddha's because it kind of specializes in studying this this long lists of wonderful cleanings maybe next week, we can talk about the different kinds of cleanings. But what I'd like to do though, before we end and have the potluck, is I want to pose a question.

And that is what benefit what positive experience nothing Have you had with having been preoccupied by something? And then being free to the preoccupation? What do you know about how that feels? The freedom from the occupation? What's that like for you? What's that feel like for you? What's that experience like? And this is not the time to tell a long story, but more the felt sense, you know, just to even if just a few words what that's like, to me no longer be preoccupied by something. Great. Thank you.