

2018-03-05 Nothing Is Worth Clinging To

Thu, 9/3 5:49PM • 41:39

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

clinging, buddha, gods, people, attachment, venerable, bondage, world, important, monastic, bit, life, buddhist, palace, ideals, feelings, repeat, sucka, lives, ancient

SPEAKERS

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The ancient times ancient Buddhists, who sometimes like to have fun, and they'd like to have fun in offering some profound teachings. And so it was kind of offered notice in order to make some interesting points sometimes if you have myths or fables, they make some interesting points that stands out to kind of an a highlight. And, and if you're a part of the ancient world, maybe you would laugh and smiling about it, invite it all. And so I don't know if you will laugh and smile or cry or get upset. In it has a one of the things that makes it kind of special is someone asks the Buddha for his teachings and In brief, and so the Buddha offers him a very brief synopsis or kind of summary or pointed kind of formulation of what is most important. Now in this ancient world that Buddha lived in, there were people who believed at that. Great spiritual teachers had omniscience that they could know everything. And so it's a little bit the Buddha goes along with that. Tap in the instructions and saying how you could become omniscient. So that should be interesting. If you're interested in such things, so listen carefully. So, I suppose once upon a time, that doesn't say that to here it says, thus have I heard the one of the great gods of the pantheon of gods at the time his name is Sakka, the In Pali, and it said that it's the Pali word for the god Indra. So Sakka went to see the Buddha and he paid homage first. And then he asked the Buddha, venerable Sir, how in brief is a monastic liberated in the destruction of craving. So, here the liberation that the Buddha was talking about the particular form of liberation, freedom he was talking about was freedom from craving. Another way of saying it this little bit more mixed more sense maybe for a modern audience, is freedom from attachment for kinds. So, how is the monastic liberated in the destruction of craving being one Who has reached the ultimate end? and attain the ultimate security from bondage? like kinda like that? So how do you get completely free from being entangled, being caught being trapped by anything whatsoever and, and have attained the ultimate holy life The ultimate goal and one who was Foremost among gods and humans, is it interesting idea, becoming formally that they were the great God right to the Pantheon is saying, How do you become Foremost among the humans and gods? How does a monastic do that? How does a renunciant do that? So and so the idea here is this Buddhist texts that the attainment of liberation before spiritual awakening puts us puts people at a plane or at a level in the hierarchy Higher than even the highest gods. So the Buddha then replies, here, ruler of Gods monastics have heard that nothing is worth clinging to. And he goes on a little bit more to elaborate a little bit, but nothing is worth clinging to. And that's kind of like that's the pithy statement. And so, that's the summary. That's the heart kind of thing that the Buddha has his towel a great God, nothing is worth clinging to. And it's one of those phrases.

That is were very worthwhile carrying around with you for a while and reflecting on it thinking about it, debating with it, arguing with it, protesting best you can come up with ideas when it's okay. When it's worthwhile to cling, when should you cling? One of the ways to kind of consider this reflection is that if you're doing something wholeheartedly, whatever you have to do you do it wholeheartedly. So you can't really do more effort you're doing it wholeheartedly in a good way. Is it better if you're a clinging at the

same time as you did it? You need to cling if you're engaged wholeheartedly in what you're doing, or is clinging, a bit of a wind drag is clinging little bit of, you know, makes a little bit harder to do what you're doing.

If you're with a person that you love a lot, and you're able to share your time together. Are you better off just being with them? Or you're gonna let them a little bit better off if you clung or is it really not? The advantages are come from clinging, that really worth clinging to this because it's already good. So those are like two little examples. So you can consider that. One suggestion is that maybe people sometimes cling to things when they're not doing their life wholeheartedly. And that's the kind of funny thing, right? If you're not doing it wholeheartedly, maybe the more likely to cling or maybe clinging comes from not giving yourself heart wholeheartedly to what you're doing. So it's more of the reflection you can do you can think about how this work might work for you. nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. So then the Buddha goes on and continues. And this is the omniscient part so you probably are waiting the edge of your seat for this part. When when monastics have heard that nothing Worth clinging to. They directly know everything. They know something about everything. That's the omniscience the Buddha was interested in, not conditions. We know everything about everything, past, present and future, but rather to know something key about everything, like a common denominator or a common aspect of all things, so that you can have a wise relationship to no matter whatever you encounter in your life. Wherever you go, whatever you do, you know, something that is liberating is freeing that's worthwhile about that thing. And the thing that can make you omniscience if you if you really understand this, that nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. No matter what you encounter. Not that not that. Is that right? What do you think having Clean known everything. they fully understand everything, being fully understood everything. Whatever feeling when feels whether pleasant or painful or neither painful or pleasant. they abide contemplating impermanence in those feelings. So here we get into a part of the Buddhist teachings. It's not going to be obvious to everyone I think. But he has a way of saying that everything that we encounter and we experience we experience through the filter, or say like a funnel, like an echo, maybe like an hourglass. Like the whole world that we experience goes through the hourglass of our contact with the world, how we experience touch the world and see the world and smell the world. All kind of through our senses and when everything goes through the senses, and then comes out the other side, into the brain, for example, that's where we reconstruct everything. That's what we make up who know now that the brain is a big, reconstructing machine. And they can mix it we can start to see images and ideas of what's going on. But it goes through the filter, they're kind of the funnel of our senses. And as as our experience of the world goes through the funnel of our of our senses, there's a feeling tone, there's hedonic tone to that experience that's either pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. And for the Buddha, in his kind of strong capacity for mindfulness and concentration, if you can be really present in the moment, in the place where you actually make contact with the world. And you see that that contact and that feeling is impermanent, that it arises and passes it comes and goes it, it appears and disappears. There's something about seeing the inconstancy of it, which is at the heart of the Buddha's movement towards freedom. So, he says if you can see it that way, that all this is being impermanent, then that begins a process towards freedom. And that process begins by becoming disenchanted with those feelings, disenchanted means no longer enchanted. No longer in this spell of them, it breaks the spell, that whatever kind of attachment, this kind of spell out and then these these feelings begin to fade away.

Feelings but our attachments begin to fade and it isn't that attachments gifts, snap your fingers and you can stop being clinging, but with insight with understand Then attachments begin to fade away until they finally cease contemplating the US, they do not cling to anything in the world. When they do not cling, they are not agitated. When they're not agitated, they attain Nirvana. So that's the good news. That's the little story. So the God came down to see the Buddha. And he wanted to be told in brief, and

you'll see partly he wanted things in brief because gods have a lot to do. And so, you know, you don't want to you know, you have places to go IPOs to open, important things to do. And so, you want to kind of get your spirituality quickly efficiently. So, you could you can, you can go on to other maybe more important things. So the Buddha accommodated gave him this very powerful teaching to kind of a nice summary or something. Other places that this is unpacked and explained you know in greater detail to make it make sense of it's kind of in brief. So then Sakka, this great God, the great guy decides that goes home back up into the heaven where he lives. But nearby, listening to this conversation is a disciple monastic disciple of the Buddha, by the name of Mahā Moggallāna. And Mahā Moggallāna is curious. How well did Sakka, hear and understand what the Buddha taught. So he decides to go visit him.

So in the way that they were able to do back then. So Mahā Moggallāna says did that God penetrate to the meaning of the Buddha's words or not? Suppose I find out whether he did or not. Then just as quickly as a strong person might extend their flexed arm, or flex their extended arm, the venerable Mahā Moggallāna vanished from this earth and appeared among the gods in the heavens. It's pretty good trick.

So now on that occasion, Sakka, the ruler of the gods was furnished and endowed with 100 endowed 100 fold with five kinds of heavenly music and he was enjoying it in his pleasure Park. So it's pretty good to be born these hi Gods because it's It's a you have a lot of good karma and so you get a lot of pleasure and delight and all kinds of wonderful things. So he got all this music and in a different version of the story, he's not only listening to music, but he's also taking a bath with 100 celestial media agents. But that's in a different Buddhist tradition. And that in our tradition, we're a little bit more modest about our fantasies and so Sakka sees venerable Mahā Moggallāna coming and so he stops the music and goes over to Mahā Moggallāna and says, come in good sir Mahā Moggallāna welcome, good Mahā Moggallāna. It is long good since you found an opportunity to come here, sit down good sir. This seat is ready. The Venerable Moggallāna sat down on the seat made ready. And the great God Sakka took a low seat, a more humble seat and sat down to one side. So this is of course is great PR for Buddhists, or Buddhist monastics, you know, like this Buddhist monastic, even the highest Gods will take a lower seat to the Buddhist monastics. So it's a little bit of PR, I think. And, and then Mahā Moggallāna asks him, Sakka How did the Buddha state to you In brief, the liberation by destruction of craving, it would be good. If you might also, if we might also get to hear that statement. Can you repeat what the Buddha said to you? So Then we'll be honest answers like this. Remember, this is the guy hanging out in this pleasure Park listen to music. Good Sir Moggallāna. We are so busy. We have so much to do. Not only not only with our own business but also with the business of the gods of the other heavens. Besides good serve Moggallāna what is a well heard well learned, well attended to well remembered suddenly vanishes from us. Good sir Moggallāna now, it once happened that war broke out between the gods and that Titans other godlike creatures. in that war, the gods one and the Titans were defeated when I had won that war and returned from it as a conquer I had a great Palace built. Good sir. Moggallāna. The palace has 100 towers, and each tower has 700 upper chambers, and each upper chamber has seven nymphs. And each nymph has seven maids. Would you like to see the loveliness of the great palace?

The question was, can you repeat to me the profound statement that Buddha said and the answer he gets the monk yet come look at this palace. So the Maha maglia not consented in silence. Then, the psycho the role of the gods went to the palace, giving precedence to the venerable of Mahā Moggallāna when the maids of Sakka saw the venerable Mahā Moggallāna coming in the distance. They were embarrassed and ashamed. They went each into their own rooms. Just as a daughter in law is embarrassed and ashamed on seeing her father in law, so to win the maids of sucka saw the

venerable Mamba Leanna coming, they were embarrassed and ashamed, and they went to each to their own rooms. So no wonder he's busy. Then Sakka, ruler the gods ahead Venerable Moggallāna walk all over and explore the palace. See, good sir mogliano the loveliness of the great palace and Mahā Moggallāna said it, it it does the venerable suck your credit is one who has formally made merit and whenever he So, because he made a lot of merit in a former life. He got born to be the Sakka The Great God, you don't get bored as a god and You did something really fantastic, good deeds. And so he must have done some really good deeds Good, good karma. So we'll be honest, saying, hey, you must have done something really good metameric this. And the traditional commentary on this story is, he's kind of telling him, don't forget that you have to keep making merit. You can't just kind of sit around and enjoy the pleasure, because you're going to lose it all next time you die, because in Buddhism, Gods don't live forever. And so you should continue to make merit. But this seems to go by Moggallāna. Then the venerable Mahā Moggallāna consider this. This God is living much too negligently. Whatever stirred up a sense of urgency in him. So you know sky needs they need this guy needs a lesson Disney guys again, this is important this life of ours and the sense of urgency is a fantastic word in Pali called some Vega. And it's a sense of spiritual urgency. It's like this life is short, the task of kind of coming to the bottom of our craving coming free is a really important matter. And so this is some people get this idea Oh, this is important. I got to do this. I can't shouldn't waste any time. So the sense that this is what the sense of urgency means here. So what if I stirred up a sense of urgency and then the venerable Moggallāna perform such a feat of supernormal power, that with his toe, he made the great palace shake and quake and tremble, Sakka. The Great God was filled with wonder and amaze. went and said, Sir, it is wonderful is marvelous what power and might directly says that with his toe he makes them this heavenly abode shake and Quake can tremble. When the venerable Mohammed Leanna knew that shotgun, ruler of the gods was stirred to a sense of urgency, with his hair standing on end, imagine the great God because He got a little afraid, the earthquake. So, then Mahā Moggallāna said to him, how did the Buddha state you In brief, the deliverance, the freedom in the destruction of craving, it would be good if we might get to hear that statement from you. And then now he's gotten Mahā Moggallāna's attention. So then he repeats the statement. nothing whatsoever is worth hearing clinging to. That's that's the, you know, the end of the most exciting part of the story.

And you can imagine that in the ancient world where they had no TV and they had no books, there's no written written things at that time that the primary entertainment the pirate primary means for education for learning for passing information was oral. And we believe that the ancient time there was a really rich storytelling. People had the probably storytelling was richer in the ancient preliterate world word world than it is in the current world. So I don't think I did justice but I think that the story probably was told with great flair and you know, and this is imagine that people's imagination was filled with image of heavens and palaces and also the humor of this great God you know, kind of being so silly and you know, saying is too busy to you know, repeat this brief statement the Buddha said and then he has busy showing off his palaces. And then Maha Moggallāna goes back to the earth goes back to the Buddha and tells the Buddha and this is what Sakka heard and was it accurate then the Buddha repeats the whole thing over again third time. So in a story telling tick technique is to repeat the most important thing, maybe three times just so it sinks in. So nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. Is that is the teaching and what would happen to you if you carry that phrase with you through the days that repeated yourself in different situations or you have written he wrote it out and you put it on your desk or on your mirror and dashboard of your car. You know, you put it across the screen of your smartphone Every time you kind of looked at your phone or you know got in your car or something, you saw that nothing whatsoever it's worth clinging to. What kind of reflections would come up for you? What would you think about what perspective would it give? Would it give you a pause to consider what you're doing? Would it function as a kind of a mirror? To help you notice if you are in fact clinging or not? At that moment, are you clinging to anything? If not, then go and be happy. But maybe are you attached to

something? Are you caught into something? Are you preoccupied in something? And if you are, then ask yourself the question, is it really worthwhile clinging to this? Some people get confused around this kind of question because they assume that if they give up clinging they have to pursue they have to give up pursuing something or doing something engaged in something. But perhaps there is pursuit there is engaging and seeking and doing things But it can be done without clinging. What is clinging add to the situation? Are you better off because you cling? Are you more effective because you're clinging? Do you keep things in a more secure way because you cling, one of the definitions of freedom that Buddha gives is freedom from bondage, security, for be safe from all bondage. clinging is a kind of bondage, some people that bondage, that that grip of their clinging, their attachment, their desire is so strong, that it ruins lives. People make huge mistakes in their lives sometimes. So to expand it to spend some time maybe this next week with this phrase, nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to. And if you want to try to tell me you know I'm too busy for that. You have a lot of important things to do. Can't do that. Then Then you can remember the story. Even the great God of the heavenly worlds, try to get away with that one. Too busy. So, that's the story. So any comments, protests? You want to try to convince me that there's actually one thing that's important to cling to? What would you like to talk about her questions? Anything?

pass the mic.

It's just a short question. Can you cling to your ideals?

Yes. I think it's possible cling to anything you can think about. An ideal so some people cling very tightly to ideals, and it messes them up. And sometimes it's a problem for everyone else. Some of the great political movements that had been a disaster, someone was clinging to ideals

the same way because that's a very interesting question. What prompted prompts it for you?

I was just wondering what I might cling to what would I put at the top of the list? Oh, you favorite clay? Oh,

so,

you know, my daughter was high up there, huh? Not gonna do that. And my ideals are things I believe are important things I really care about.

That seemed like something I might try to grow.

So then a part of this investigation is, is there a distinction between commitment or a, or some wholehearted engagement in ideals versus clinging? And what's the difference in which, you know, which is their way of being involved in ideals that supportive and helpful? Is there a way of being involved in ideals which is harmful? I think that first teasing that apart as part of this investigation, thank you. You can pass them a career.

It seems like in a sense, bonding is a sort of can be a sort of unconsciously developed clinging, can you talk a little bit about bondage by bonding to some bonding? Yes. So a loved one. Okay. Well, it's kind of in the English least here has, but uses the word bondage. So the word bond kind of taught me to tie something together. Yeah, I mean, this is where we have to be very careful the semantics and the meanings of this, you know, in Buddhist English, you know, we have our own good jargon, you know, in Buddhist English. And the word attachment is considered like a pretty bad thing in Buddhism, a

Buddhist English. But when my, when my first son was born, my wife went to a local organization here in the Bay Area called Bay Area, attachment parenting. And there's a psychological term called, you know, there's healthy attachment, there's attachment, you know, dysfunctional attachment disorders and things. So, you know exactly what we mean by these words, we have to be a little bit careful if we're too quickly But in the word bond looks a little bit too much like attachment and we dismiss it, we might miss some of the healthy connectivity that can healthy bonding healthy relatedness that that can happen between people that's actually important like for children and parents is very important. And, and they have that develop strongly. I remember the, one of the times when my son was quite young that I kind of saw this operate was I, he was a toddler, so he was just beginning to walk. But he didn't have much sense of the world. And I was walking down the sidewalk is in town. And I ran into someone I knew. So I set a load, we started talking and it was just you know, it was kind of taken by surprise and engaged in this person I was talking to, and then suddenly realized that enough time had gone by. I had no idea that my toddler was on the sidewalk with busy streets and cars. And, and so I immediately spun around. I mean, my instinct was like I spun around and to make it out to look out towards direction to the street to make sure that he wasn't out in the street as a Wow, that was quite an instinct. And so that's, you know, that's kind of maybe, you know, I had kind of a primal bondage with him and so that, you know, was probably my job to have that kind of connection. But I don't know if that's clinging

or just thinking of unwillingness to let go or to lose. Even the Buddhist emphasis on the non permanence, impermanence. Is it willing to let go and willing to do something? Yeah, that's, that can be painful. I mean, even if things are going it's a pain Hold on to them with when they're already going. People hold on that's a really common clinging is they're not let things go when it's time for them to go. And you know, there's the Zen teacher in San Francisco is Shin Rio, Suzuki Roshi. He defined renunciation as something like accepting, allowing things to go when they go.

In picking up on the issue of attachment from a psychological perspective, I remember reading the novel siddhartha in college, and I don't know how accurate that is, in terms of

very accurate it's a very accurate depiction of Hermann Hesse's imagination, okay.

But it disturbs me greatly that the Buddha that story left his family. And that the idea that that was a important part of his liberation.

Yeah. Yeah, in the ancient story and you know, from the ancient times, it said the Buddha also left his family. And it's the way it's the myth is told, we don't know exactly If this happens, but kind of there's all these myths around the Buddha. But the myth wage told is that he left the day his son was born. So that's, you know, in, you know, that's in the, in our modern sensibility, that's a horrible thing to do. We don't know what it meant. And if that's happened, we don't know what that meant in the ancient world. He he was supposedly and that meant kind of royalty. in tears cultures, where father has very little to do with the child until the child There's a certain age there's some cultures when they're six or seven, that's when the father starts getting involved in the child's life. But until then, it's it's the mother and the women who are involved so exactly we don't know all the all the ins and outs of the culture of the time. He certainly didn't abandon them to poverty because they were, you know, they were royal family. And, and the, you know, as many ways of looking at this and understanding this, you know, this issue. But we don't we have examples, even in the modern world of young people who decide to leave their families for a great cause. In America, we have a sweetie, certainly my way but to some people in America, give high praise to the people who decide to join the military. And then they go off and some of them do leave their family and their kids in order to serve their country and it's considered a great honor and a great thing to do that. Some people will decide to do things like that for to take on

education. You know, I need to, I really need to release important I need to go off and I need to get you know, I shall go to a different country, I'll go to America to get an education, I'll come back. But I know that we have a young child, but this is our future is to go get this. In ancient India, there were no schools, there was nothing like this. But I can imagine that some people I've met people who are so deeply stirred up since urgency to try to understand what this is life is about. And that life as it's given to them just doesn't make any sense to them. And they are going to, you know, wither up and die if they can't really try to understand and find out and discover what this is all life is all about and do this in their spiritual education. And he might have been one of those people who almost didn't have any choice. You know, maybe he was deeply depressed. Who knows what was going on. But you know, I don't think it's too hard to imagine someone whose personal circumstances such that's that that kind of choices, the only thing that they can do, if we measure that with the tendency is when people we look at that story is we see it through the eyes of kind of being a standard family a standard situation. And, you know, there's a, there's a two or three standard people around. So who knows what was going on. But what we do and what the story is, do continue, that. When, when his son was seven, the Buddha returned to his son's life. And then and then he was the primary parent for the rest of his son's life. So we don't think of it we don't think of the Buddha as a parent, but he you know that he was apparently the primary parent for the rest of his sons growing up and the Buddha His son became a monk and was happily ever after. there's a there's a there's an I wrote an article about how the Buddha taught his son. It's on the article page of imcs website. Maybe you have time for one more. You know, there's a lot of men have spoken or any women who would like to say to me, which is

at what point is the Dharma itself no longer worth clinging to?

Oh, when is the Dharma itself not worth clinging to? Well, that's it raises the interesting question, when is it worth clinging to? And so you know, this whole question of what what is worth clinging to You know, that's a great question. And sometimes the answer is that for the time being, some things are worth clinging to. And, you know, if someone has trouble with addiction, for example, it's better to cling to something that will keep you from drinking. You know, rather than not cling to that and then succumb, for example, and sometimes the strong tendencies of the mind and the attachments, the neurosis, the fears, the thing, all kinds of them here, though, some people's minds have tremendous challenges. And their hearts have challenges. And so that we sometimes we need some stability, we need something to hold on to for a while to get our bearings. And so sometimes clinging is worthwhile. But it's understood to be temporary, that people who cling too long for you know, way beyond its loan longer needed. Don't become free. That's one possible answer. Sir, you will have something to say about that topic. Is survival clinging? Yeah. The I've known people who have trained people how to survive in the wilderness. And they say the most important thing you can do is Don't panic. And panic is a sign of clinging. Generally people's minds are more intelligent when they don't cling to in terms of problem solving. So, but you think it can be very brief.

Love, clinging to love? Why is that good? Time is that useful for you?

So clinging to glow love is kind of like clinging to Universal goodness that fills the universe. Is it possible to relate to that love to be involved in it to be connected to it maybe even be committed to it without clinging?

That's a good, that's a good point. But at least in Buddhist English clinging is, is kind of like we say sometimes, you know, the person was clinging to me. And it just feels very uncomfortable. Someone kind of climbing at us. clinging is is a compulsive attachment. compulsive driven is around something.

We can't easily drop it. It we can't you say stop doing it. We just keeps Coming back, it keeps hounding us It keeps pushing and insisting. It's kind of like a little bit of an obsession.

So please be devoted to love. But my image of you know, clinging to love begins to squeeze the life out of it. So great. So if you're interested, spend the week with that phrase and nothing whatsoever is worth clinging to, and see what you're learning. Thank you.