

Allowing the Releasing of Clinging

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The *upaniṣad*, or dependent condition, introduced last night, is *vimutti*, often called freedom, liberation. I particularly like translating it as release. It belongs to the family of letting go. Something lets go. The idea of release has in it less sense of agency. Letting go sometimes feels like we're supposed to let go.

Something is released. One way that's nice to think about it is that it's letting something go, allowing the bird to fly off the hand, allowing the going of things. So the emphasis is how we create the conditions that support something that wants to be released to do so.

I'll tell you a story. There was a magic boat that had no pilot, no captain. It would float around just by itself and go into harbors with a sign that said, "Free day trip. Just return me at the end of the day to float out at sea." Then it would go around all over the world, picking up rock, giving people rides for the day, and people would bring it back to the harbors. And then it would just float further through the night.

But one day, the Coast Guard found it floating there. "This is dangerous." So they pulled it in toward shore and tied it to a buoy with a big, thick rope. And the Coast Guard was going to look for the owner. But they couldn't find one, and the boat just sat there in the water tied to a buoy. Sometimes there were no waves, and it was very peaceful. Sometimes there were a lot of waves, and it had to ride the waves up and down.

And slowly, over the months and years it was tied there, that thick rope, in the seawater, in the wind, in the sun, slowly began to wear away. It was imperceptible, but the outer strands began to unravel and weaken and dissolve. And slowly, especially in the middle, they got thinner and thinner and more worn out, until there was just a little string left. And then there was just a little thread of rope left. And one day, on a calm day, there was just enough pulling,

just enough something, that the thinnest of threads released, let go. And the boat was free again to float out into the ocean in a continuous journey of offering rides to people.

So we are tied to our clingings. And this practice is to slowly have them wear away, thin out. And one of the places to see this is with thinking. Thoughts themselves have no weight, no substance. But when there's clinging in thinking, thoughts can seem heavy, solid, and tight. They come with pressure, and Gorilla Glue that keeps it glued to us.

And to turn attention to that pressure, that sense of solidity, the weight, maybe someplace in the body, around the eyes, cheeks, and forehead, sometimes in the shoulders, in the neck, sometimes in the upper arms or the hands, in the belly, many places where the contraction around thinking seems centered. And just to feel it, soften around it, quiet. And someday becomes that someday that thoughts feel wispy, no weight, no substance, very thin and light. It's more like they float through like a cloud floating in the sky than an incessant pressure to just keep thinking, a spigot that's been left on for a blast. Just a few drops.

And those thoughts can get thinner and thinner, softer and softer. And when the conditions are right, the thoughts will release, let go. We might be attached to ideas. We might be attached to how we're feeling. Positive attachment of holding on tight, negative attachment of pushing away, resisting. And that's the rope that keeps us tied.

And to gently, caringly feel it, sense it, hold it in attention. Allow it to thin, allow it to fade away. And when it's ready, it will release. And then it will release. Gently, softly, where in your body are you holding on? Where in your body are you tense, tight?

Where in your body is there a little or big feeling of suffering, of contraction, tightness, feeling of fear or strong wanting it to be different, anger, resentment, grief, or sadness? It's all okay, it's all good. But to feel it all in the body, maybe the gentle waves of the harbor slowly massaging away the holding, the tightness, the rope, and getting a sense, feeling for the possibility of greater release, greater letting go, and holding the hand of awareness open. So whatever wants to be released can go. Whatever wants to go is allowed to go. Whatever wants to come is allowed to come.

And the freer you are, the more you're like the boat. Things come, passengers come, they're on for a while, and they get off. And you're not tied to anything. As you sit here, there are more things in this room that you're not clinging to than you cling to. Feel your way into what it's like to not cling to something, not be attached. Maybe you have no attachment to the clock on the stage here, or the water bottles on the stage, or the light switches.

Okay. What is it like to have something in mind when there's no attachment, maybe no fear,

no desire? What is it like to know that this too is present? There is a non-clinging present as well as anything you're clinging to. And there are more things you don't cling to than what you cling to in this world.

And what happens if you place them next to each other, clinging and non-clinging? Can it help you to not cling to clinging, to not resist clinging? Allow the clinging just to be, appreciating a kind of non-clinging to clinging. A particular form of clinging, attachment, is to think that you have to manage everything. You have to manage and figure out the clinging.

There's a way of letting the space around you hold it. The space can manage it. It has room for it all. That inside of you which doesn't cling has room to hold the clinging. That which is in suffering has infinite room to hold suffering. It's okay. It's okay to let go.

There is somewhere within that doesn't cling, that doesn't move. There is somewhere in this wide open mind that doesn't cling, that doesn't move, even when there's some movement elsewhere. For example, when you learn it's now 9-10.