

2011-01-21 Sutta Study The Parinibbana Sutta Part 1

Tue, 8/18 10:33AM • 1:17:38

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

buddha, people, died, text, india, buddhism, ordinary, lord, monks, war, discourse, life, river, important, walk, king, death, literature, relics, read

SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So then as part of this meditation, I'll offer you some images that in your mind's eye you could imagine or visualize or think about.

They are images that are meant to evoke India the way it was for thousands of years maybe

the plains of India, the great flat expanse of Northwest India, are great rivers that flow flow through the plains join together so we maybe you can have the images of rivers, maybe a great river

river that flows through the vast expanse of flatland with trees, forests,

river and plains and forests. Before there were cars and roads and telephone poles. At a time when people walked thousands of years and people walked across India

many people walk barefoot sandals

In there are scenes the events from and must have been repeated millions of times, ordinary events

situations which, as a as a human being in northern India, the Buddha himself must have experienced maybe many, many times.

In this image of a river and edge of an expansive woods in the plains, there's a trail or dirt road, which many travelers have traveled. And here's an old man walking along And the old man comes to the edge of the river. No bridge. Just a vast, flat River. You can see the other side.

An ordinary situation of an old man may be wary from walking, standing at the edge of a river. contemplating how to cross seeing people nearby who are building a raft or having more small boat, they ferry people across

This old man did something which people have done for thousands of years. Millions and millions of times ordinary thing. Having gone for a walk and being tired and sweaty and tired and thirsty, took a bath in the river to cool off to become clean. drank the water to be refreshed.

And perhaps being an old man. He folded his robes, his clothes and nice square nice pillow and lay down to rest in the shade of a tree.

And then, later in the day event another event occurred that must have happened happen many times in India many times for the Buddha event which is described in the, this discourse we have as a religious person a mendicant. This old man received an invitation to come to see A man's house for a meal.

He comes to the house and he's offered a seat honored place to sit. And the hosts bring out a variety of dishes. Different kinds of food for this mannequin to choose from. And Amanda can't eats the food until the mannequin satisfied.

And when, as is the custom when the they would eat them back in India that back back then they'd eat with their hands, not with utensils. Get out of a bowl and when the hand comes out out of the bowl for the final time and rests on the side. That's an indication that the mendicant has finished eating. And so, the peep the hosts then sit down. They finished what they had to do and offering food and they sit down to one side

and then the mendicant says thank you.

First thanks

and then gets up, leaves the house and continues his walk along the dirt roads in the plains of India

What's an old man doing 80 years old? Walking for days? What's an 80 year old man doing? on a journey of some 200 miles on foot. Crossing rivers, resting, eating at people's homes, traveling north. What is it an 80 year old man has to do that requires such an arduous journey.

Good morning and welcome to our Sati Center Sutta study day and so this day, we're going to spend six hours now exploring the Parinibbana Sutta, the discourse and the Buddha's final passing away, which records or provides a story about the last month so the Buddha's life and what happened to him as he passed away, and what happened right after he passed away. So the existence of the Buddha is very important for Buddhists. And his passing away is then somewhat meaningful for many Buddhists. And so it's interesting to what happened was that about, and there's this amazing discourse called Parinibbana Sutta. It's amazing because for many reasons, one is that not only is it the longest discourse in the whole Pali Canon, I think in this wall sheet translation is some like 50 pages long book and it's booked by so it's a really long discourse. It's one of the few discourses that has a lot of biographical material kind of describes a lot about the story of the Buddha and in one place and it's also seemingly I've read I don't I don't know myself but I've read that is also the longest piece of literature coming out of ancient India. Before the common Eric time of India, things like the some of the other Indic literature like the punish, odds are the grammatical texts or Ramanujan on variety things are quite big, but they're actually made up of a lot of smaller sub texts that are kind of combined together I could their collection. And so this is, as well as one text. This is a one of the longest pieces of Indian literature from the ancient times and it How to study it is a big issue, how to relate to it. And certainly some people will try to relate to it, or eager to relate to it as if this is a historical account of what happened the Buddha's last days, and that they're looking for who was this guy? What happened, you know, the latest gossip or what happened? Can so I can relate to this person understand, or I'm coping with my own death and dying. And so what is this going to teach me about me? You know, how to help, you know, what model is this great religious leader have that is meaningful, it's kinda like some people's a test,

they're going to test their Buddhism, because, you know, how that how the founder of the religion died is says something about what this religion has to promise. You know, I mean, what if the Buddhists in his deathbed said, Well, you know, gee, you know, this is hard. I guess I was knocked off to it. You know, I guess all those years of practice, and this is just a drag. You know, probably probably I didn't quite Get it right. I mean, that would be kind of disappointing, right? I mean, probably Buddhism wouldn't have survived if he had ended his life that way. So we're kind of people look. Another way of looking at this discourse is that not to read it as an historical document, but to swing all the way in the other direction, and read it as a piece of fiction. The way you would read maybe a play of Shakespeare. And most people don't think the plays of Shakespeare are real, like, you know, accounting for real events. But they, people find tremendous value in reading a play of Shakespeare. And there's so much of our humanity, that deep humanity that's expressed in kind of powerful ways, in Hamlet and Macbeth and, and, and people will get go into those plays and see themselves and see the kind of deeper kind of connection to life or questioning of life. understanding of the context of life and, and the issues of life in a way that is meaningful for many, many people. And so it's possible to read this text as that kind of literature maybe like a play or, and it might actually be more more meaningful in the way that sometimes myths are more meaningful than just a dry kind of historical account of something. And so and then it's interesting that if you could look at the ancient world, India, ancient Buddhism, they weren't, they seemingly weren't able to or didn't, weren't inclined to make that sharp separation, as many of us here in the West can make between what's historically true, and what's myth what's historically true, and what's kind of fiction or literature or, you know, kind of made up.

And so there's kind of a, you know, kind of a least that's what it looks like from our vantage point. And so there's kind of a kind of a nebulous stream maybe dreamlike quality. Between these two realms of the historical and the mythic, the historical and the story making the historical and the way in which this with the story of historical the way its are counted, is embellished or enriched or highlighted or emphasized or even made up as a way to make some points to teach something powerful to have an effect. And so, this sutta has has, you know, you know, is you know, how do you how do we address it, how do we look at it, as important topic before we go into it delve into it. It says I said it's the longest thing has been written, or piece of literature, but it seems pretty clear that it's made up of a lot of segments that are brought in from other places like it's been added interpolations, and added some Things have been added and added over the centuries. The we have some evidence or suggestion that some of the things, some of the poems were added quite late, maybe 500 years after the time of the Buddha. And what suggests that is that the Theravada tradition and the commentaries in Sri Lanka, make that claim. You know, so here the very Theravada, and elders of our tradition, you know, the people who kind of recreating the tradition itself, they had himself say, Oh, these poems, they weren't from the time of the Buddha these were added later. And, and, and some of the things that are discussed clearly seem to refer to things which became important later. And so the assumption by scholars is that, oh, yeah, these were interpolations things added in, and how much things were added in and why were different things added in. Things were added in because of the reasons that were very important for the authors or for the editors. And what were those reasons and what was being taught towards being expressed. And there are many, many things. So when I look at this text, I see it as a fascinating hodgepodge. Pot pourri of Buddhist religion of so many editors and people that are combined to make it that you find a whole different range of what Buddhism has meant to many different people. And you don't find like one Buddhism in this text. And but you find many, many things and some of the things you find, it may be not your kind of Buddhism. And some of the things you find might be are kind of Buddhism. But it's nice to know there's this hodgepodge of different kind of approaches and intakes of what people have. There is the Buddha is presented in the most seemingly ordinary, pretty ordinary human ways and you can see an ordinary human being there, maybe in the way like I did for the visualization I asked you to do, which was drawing from little little events that are

described in this text. And then the Buddha appears as a as it basically as a divine being as a supernatural kind of godlike being who has amazing Powers and abilities that you can't relate to as being human in any kind of way. So we have the kind of the kind of, you know, that kind of very human centered kind of Buddhism, which many people relate to. And then we have kind of this almost theistic centered Buddhism, which represents the Buddhism that grew up and developed in much of Asia. In the centuries after the Buddha, you have an emphasis on real simple direct practice, like practice the four foundations of mindfulness, that's the essence of what you should do. And then you have this ramp and you know, on ramp is right word, but elaborate devotionalism, worshipping of all kinds. And so, you have you have kind of whole class of Buddhist terms relate more to practice in some simple way or some way and whole class of Buddhists to relate to not to practice in terms of four foundations of mindfulness and meditation, but relate to it from the point of view of worship and devotion. And so that comes into the text. The politics or the time and politics of later are infused in the text. It's they're kind of in the, in the fabric of this text or in the and not necessarily obvious how impregnated politics and war is in this text. If you kind of read it through once, but it's, you know, it's a little as we go through it, you'll see that this was a seemingly a period of great crisis. And the Buddha died in a time of great turmoil. And so what's that about?

This man's calmly walking across India during the time when, and what is it what is 200 200 mile March as an ad All men, you know, how is that connected to the turmoil and crisis and war that was raised it was about to was was going on in India at his time. So that's kind of in their text as well. And then there's all this issue, you know, when someone's going to die, the great religious teacher, I suppose, is going to die. One of the things that maybe they're concerned about is their legacy, especially someone who kind of created a whole new path, a new understanding, and an order of monks and nuns, disciples. How does these teachings get passed on? If the founder of the religion is not there to arbitrary and say, This is what the truth is? How who's going to say afterwards? How repeat How are people going to know? And so the text has a lot of emphasis on how do we know what the Dharma is? What are the what's really important, what are the teachings and how do we know that was the teachings after the Buddha has died? And, and whether the Buddha actually was concerned with these things or whether The tradition after him, interpolated these ideas in both posts makes sense because the Buddha was probably concerned about what happened after he died. But after he died, people were really concerned. What's the Dharma? How do we figure out what the Dharma is and continue here? There are lots and lots of disciples of the Buddha, who has fanned out across India, it's been time with him had learned from him and memorize what he had to teach at different times in his career, he said different things to different people. So, you know, if, you know if, if you say if this person said it would have said one thing to a person, one year and then 20 years later said something very different, that helps someone else out. It might have been very different things they said, and then what happened if they ran into each other? on some, you know, say, Oh, the Buddha said this, wait a minute, he told me something different. You know, he told you to relax. He told me to make effort. You know, He's all about effort. And he's all about relaxing. And so which one is right? So there's, you know, there's a spirit, he probably differences, you know, people heard different things. And then people don't always remember. Right, right. I've had people come to me and say, Gil, what you said was so helpful. What did I say? I can't imagine I ever said that. So do people remember accurately? And so what happens when these people gather together? And, and? And they people have different opinions or different views? And how do you sort that out without creating disharmony in the community? So this whole idea of what is a teaching, how is it preserved? How is it recognized is a recurring and important theme in this text. And then there's a theme of death itself and the Buddha's own passing away. And you'll see that this is a recurring theme in this text death, the Buddha's death, the impermanence of things And then there's a whole range of issues that come up about facing death dealing with death, attitudes towards death that come into play in this and it's might be interesting to see, you know, what is it How did the Buddha relate to his own death and dying? I think it's death you know plays a central part

in Buddhism, confrontation and meeting of death and in some ways, the Buddhist Buddhist career is sandwiched between death if you depends on when you decide this career starts but you know when you saw the four heavenly messengers, it said, so he saw a corpse it's the last of the challenging held the heavenly messengers so he saw the Buddha was a person who was somehow dismayed or upset or, or so moved. So Trump By the contact with a corpse, that he left his ordinary life in order to understand something different. And so this person that's, you know, that's one end of the sandwich. And the other end of the sandwich is a man who's dying. Now it's his death. It's not some other corpses, his gonna be his corpse he's dying. And so what did he learn the intervening years, from the time of his dismay, to the time of his own passing away? And so you know, so here we have at both ends of his career, you know, the issue of death being highlighted. So what I would like to do today, I don't have a handout for you to make it easier. Some of you have copies of the book, many of you don't. So I'm going to hopefully, keep you engaged and easy to keep people engaged and interested and involved. But

but that is engaging, isn't it? So we keep that we keep that close close at hand. And it's really close to the end for me, because I just barely got down here in time this morning. Because this morning early in the morning I went up to sit with a friend who just died yesterday. And kind of a Buddha he was a Zen priest, old man 95 years old. And he was laid out with a shaved head and his full Zen robes in his bed. And so I was basically more or less along with him, his daughter was sleeping in the corner of the room. And but she was sleeping right so we were basically alone with him. And the SAT and meditated sat with him, reflected on him. So that's, you know, that's right here for me. I thought it was oh, this is kind of perfect. The party bond of my friend and then I come down here and talk to you about the party bond of the Buddha. So that is always close by so today in part to kind of contemplation of death and dying, so I have kind of different areas of chunks of areas I want to cover today. So the first area is, is the Buddha himself. So this section talks about how the humanists of the Buddha and pull out those passages in the texts that talk about his humanists, and then we'll talk about the Buddha as a divine being and how that appears in the text little bit. And then a little bit about the Buddhist devotionalism that comes up in the text. And then, probably in the afternoon, then a whole section on this, what is the Dharma? What's the teachings? I know in the present day, how are the teachings preserved? And that's it. For me, one of the more important parts of this day is to really do you see some patterns or you see that common themes, come back to over and over again, around this very important topic. What is the Dharma? What is it? What was it teaching what's essential and then at the end of the day, we'll look at the Buddha's own passing away the issues around that. And my hope is that by doing a thematically this way, and kind of jumping around the text, that at some point, that's interesting, valuable in its own right, for those of you are never going to read the text. And for those of you who can read it afterwards, which I hope you do, now, when you read it, you'll have the all this as a background in New Age, you'll come across these passages and see the context and it'll be kind of you'll be pulled into it then. And you'll be living there in ancient India and understand some of the issues and something you know, and, and, you know, it'll be like Hamlet or something for you. Wow, you know? Yes. I'm going to mostly Refer to Walsh's translation which is published by wisdom publications. There's some other translations that there. There's one by Rupert Gethin. And then he has a little anthology of sutras get into nice translation. I'm not sure about all his all his choices, but he's a great quality scholar, so I shouldn't be doubting his choices, but let's look at some of those things and wonder. And well, she had much more confidence in somehow. And Tanisha Baker has sections from it. There's not the whole thing. And what else? What else do you have?

Sister vijendra and Francis story. Yeah, I don't really know that one so much. Okay, and there are others around. There's plenty of plenty, lots of them around. There are seven or nine different versions of this text. And the Pāli version just won. And it is such an important issue in the history of Buddhism,

right. And so what happened is that after the Buddha died, the Buddhist Buddhism kind of split into different denominations, let's say that way. And that different denominations had different collections of texts. And or and as as things evolve, they adopted adapted the texts in different ways, or they preserve some texts they preserve, some of them were remembered in one denomination, but not the other and whatever. And so, in the Theravada tradition, has one version. It doesn't have the original one. It just has one of those versions of those seven or eight or nine versions that are there. So there are versions that are preserved in Sanskrit and language called cundari. In Chinese are number of versions. And so scholars have put a lot of effort into looking at all These seven or nine different texts, and to try to see if they can find the original, by triangulating to like say, Well, if this incident occurs in all nine versions, it must be really early, they all share. But if it only occurs in one of the versions then and not any of the others, then it must be added quite late into it. And so there's a lot of work that's been done. I'm not going to bore you with that. But it is interesting, it could be interesting if it was well presented, but I can't do that. And, and, and, you know, one of the holy grails of Buddhist studies is to try to go back find the historical Buddha. And it seems impossible to do that. Yeah, we are we the, we had the filter with which we get back to the Buddha is through these ancient texts, and texts themselves are already part of this process of mythologizing or building up or creating stories around the Buddha. And so, you know, and how do we pick and choose and decide which is a later addition which is the original and it just can't almost can't really can't be done very well. So that's why Yeah, I think it's helps to be fluid when you read this not be too stuck on historical and be willing to kind of step back and look at it almost as inspired literature. That way you can really engage in some deep reflective way and like where you would if you did Hamlet, or the Odyssey or something or question questions we're gonna do today. any concerns, other ideas you want to see happen? Different things? It's okay with you all learn? Yes.

That are even

trying to find something

No, I think I think in the early 1800s, there was some doubts of Western scholars just kind of getting a sense of the existence of the Buddha. But I think that I haven't seen any real questioning whether Buddha existed. That's pretty much accepted as a given fact. But, but how much you know how much of this these texts actually represent historical Buddha is a very open question.

The closest archaeological evidence we have that the Buddha existed is that in the 1898, or something, an archaeologist in India opened up an ancient stupa. And they're found like a, like a two ton sarcophagus kind of thing, where they lifted up the lid. And inside were all these little jars. And they were seemed like under still in really good shape. Like they hadn't been touched in 2000 years. And they and, and, and inside some of the jars were relics, you know, like, bones and, you know, relics, you know, human relics if someone had been cremated, and one of the jars it's a little bit people not not not completely sure how to read what it says. But it either says here lay the relics of the Buddha or here relays the route I have relatives of the Buddha and, but that they believe that this stoop or these relics date from about you know really early and before even before Shogun Shaka Shaka came shortly lived about 100 years after the Buddha. And so they think that these relics come from even before that. So it's possible these go back to the Buddha and it's actually his relics. It's possible that it's, you know, it says relatives, but that's the closest we have to a store, you know, archaeology, archaeological evidence that the Buddha existed.

Okay. You guys, Yes, please.

I understand that the Buddha's name If dung was something like Magadha you know anything about the language or its correlation with either Pāli or Sanskrit

depend a lot of work on that. And chances are the Buddha would have understood Pāli, they're closely related and but they're not quite the same language. And so they have scholars have somehow teased apart or found or think they have no the difference it's like different dialects. And, and so, some people will point out you know, differences in some some of the early texts have more maga D influence. Pāli is more a dialect of western India, rather than Northeastern India with Buddha lived. And so I don't know the fall scholarship of it, but something like that. So we don't have we don't have much in his original language, but it's more like a different dialect.

Okay, so it's now 1017 Should we take a break at this point? Or should we spend another 2020 minutes here getting into the human Buddha? Get started on the human Buddha. Okay, so so, you know, I, when I read this text as I come across some of these very simple images, you know, I'm a little bit I'm kind of kind of touching it just seems you know, makes the person come alive. It's ordinary things like, but here he is. This is really, in this case, it's his last day. And he's walking, he's walking, walking for a long time. And he feels it is that this coming probably is going to die that night and And so, we have this, this little account.

Then the Lord went with a large number of monks to the river Kakuta. He entered the water bait and drank and emerging went to the mango grove, where he said to the venerable couldn't have got his attendant to come Kanaka folder robe and for, for me, I am tired and want to lie down. Very good lord said the quantica and did so. Then the Lord adopted the lion posture lying on his right side, placing one foot on the other, mindfully and with clear awareness, bearing in mind, the time of awakening. took a nap. There's an old guy realizing his death is coming. He's not quite ready yet. takes a bath drinks lays down And takes a nap. That's the ordinary thing. A human being spotted, you know, many human beings would do. And then he woke up and then he had any talk some more. An ordinary human being who gets sick

and during the rains so that the last rains three month period of time where monastics stay in one place, so their last rains retreat in the Buddha's life during that time, maybe by probably about three months before he died. And during the range, the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness, with sharp pains as if you as if he were about to die. But he endured all this mindfully, clearly aware and without complaining, he thought, it is not fitting that I should attain final Nirvana without addressing my followers and taking leave of the order of monks. I must hold this disease in check by energy and apply myself to the force of life. He did so and the disease abated. So, you know, that's this kind of thing happens often enough. And even in our modern life, if someone gets really sick, they feel like they're about to die, but something they need to do something. And so somehow they rally like sometimes you see people in hospice, that you know, they really want to stay alive until a child a relative, you know, relative can come and sometimes they seem to you know, then when they come then they pass away. Or sometimes other things like heard recently, they wanted to someone want to live until a grandchild graduated from high school. And that was really important but wasn't able to do it. They didn't die before. So here the Buddha for the sake of His monks and nuns is doing this thing he's really sick. So this is this is not a image of a god. You know, Gods usually don't get sick. In fact, religion Just great religious leaders, you usually don't think of them as being sick. You know, they're supposed to be like this shiny, bright, radiant sitting on lotus petals. And we tend to want to kind of kind of aggrandized and make beautiful and blissful. And here we have this person who's, you know, definitely sick. And then we have and then he had his last meal. And somehow his last meal didn't work so well for him. And after having eaten the meal provided by kwindā, the Lord was attacked by a severe sickness, with bloody

diarrhea and with sharp pains as if he were about to die. So, again, you know, here's the Buddha, the great enlightened being, you know, for some Buddhist, you know, the most enlightened being have ever ever lived who's over Suffering penetrated the Four Noble Truths experienced great spiritual liberation with bloody diarrhea and sharp pains.

That's interesting in the past just before this and I see this another side of the humanity of the Buddha, if I interpreted accurately or the humanity that later tradition wanted to have, we don't know actually writes literature maybe.

Then the Lord having dressed in the morning, took his robe in bowl and went with his order of monks to conduct dwelling, reset down on the prepared seat and said, serve the pigs delight that had been prepared to me Serve the remaining Hard and Soft food the order of monks. Very good lord said contented so. Then the Lord said to kwindra whatever is left over of the pigs delight, you should bury it in a pit, because conda I can see none in this world with its devas, morrows and Brahmas. This generation of his ascetics and Brahmins, its princes and people who if they were to eat it could thoroughly digest it except for the photographer. So he's been served something called pigs delight, no one knows what it is whether it's actually pork, or a mushroom. We know it's been a lot you can't believe how much Scarlet scholarly literature has gone down where the people trying to understand what this pig is that light thing is and because pigs like the mushrooms so it's that's what it mean. But is it or is it a pork dish that was made in lightful way or you know, what is it? There's one theory is that it was actually a medicinal kind of medicine. And, and that's why we specially prepared for him because he was an old man who was sick. But what I find interesting is the Buddha said, I can see no one in this world, you know any, first the gods, no one at all, who can digest it except for me. That's a great claim. In fact, it's such a great claim. I think it's kind of, it's dangerously close to a boast. But then what happens? After having eaten the meal, the Lord was attacked by severe sickness with bloody diarrhea and sharp pains, was able to digest it after all. Somehow, he had this post, I can do it, but maybe he didn't. It's kind of like that to me, you know. I kind of like to read this as part of his his fallibility. Rather than looking at the Buddha has been valuable, which is often the way the divine view people have in the Buddha Perfectly enlightened can make no mistakes. Here here, you know the old man, he's fairly sick. He's kind of coming to an end to his last meal. And he makes this claim I can digest this, but he can't. Now is this just a deal's way of interpreting it or, but I see the contrast stands out to me. There is

then the Lord having risen early and dressed, took his robe and bowl and went into a Sally forearms. very ordinary thing monks do this, even to this day, they get up early, they put on the robe in their robes in their bowl, and they go out into the village into town for their food. So this is easy to think to visualize those of you been to Asia and seeing this And then having returned from the alms round eaten, he looked back at Sally to start to talk though he was a town his time. He looked back at it and said and nunda This is the last time I will look upon bizarrely. Now we will go on to ban de Gama. That's, I think is touching to me, some guy reflecting This is the last time you know, this is the last time you're going to see someone. And some of you probably had that experience last time you can experience something, see something, do something see person is a touching thing. And so he's just marking that it seems also a very human kind of thing to do. And then, you know, it's kind of his last tour or his last walk through India. And we have just this passage Yes. Oh, okay that last one last time it was solid was four one. And then and then three, two. Then the Lord came to the cupola shrine. The word shrine is czechia and many people think that scholars think that witches refers to is a tree shrine trees were considered very special in ancient India. There are three spirits and yakshas and, and worshipping of trees and the spirits live in trees and some others. So they think this shrine is not like a building or something, but it's a tree that was kind of special or Grove. So he came to the cupola shrine and sat down on the prepared seat, and under saluted the Lord and sat down to one side. And the Lord said,

and under the Sally is delightful. The Adana shrine is delightful. The good maka shrine is delightful. This Baka shrine is delightful. The Bahu put shrine is delightful. And cupola shrine is delightful. You know, here's this guy delighting expressing the beauty that he's known. And, and, to me, it's kind of touching and he was kind of here at the end of his life kind of remembering things and seeing this beautiful, appreciating the beauty of around him. And part of the reason I value this kind of whole passage is it goes a little bit against the often the impression you get from Theravada Buddhism, where you're not supposed to enjoy life, you're not supposed to see the beauty. It was to see the ugly switch, see the problem you're supposed to, you know, basically, sometime, that's not all of Buddhism, but sometimes in Theravada Buddhism, you get a little bit of a world negating kind of feeling and attitude. And, and you don't get off and get, you know, this emphasis on what's delightful. And in fact, in some of these other versions of this text, that sense of the beauty Of Life is, is mentioned much more explicitly in this one. And we know whether the terror avoidance just couldn't quite keep those passages in or what happened. I don't know.

Another ordinary kind of depiction 120 The Lord has arrived. So that he came to a town of pata like Gumby, comma. And people have heard that he's arrived. And so the lay followers came to the Lord, saluted him sat down to one side and said, may the Lord consent to stay at our Rest House. And the Lord agreed, understanding his consent they rose from their seats saluted the Lord and passing him on. Passing him by it to the by the to the right, went to the rest house and strewed the floor. prepared seats and provided water pot and filled the oil lamp. And they went to the Lord saluted him, stood to one side and said, All is ready the Rest House. Then the Lord dressed, took his robe and bowl and went with his monks to the Rest House, free, washed his feet, went and sat down facing east, this back against the central pillar. And the monks having washed their feet went and sat down with their backs to the west wall, facing east, with Lord sitting in front of them. And the lay followers of butter like gamma, having washed their feet went in and sat down with their backs to the east wall facing west, in the Lord before them. So you know, I don't know if this happened. But this is a pretty ordinary scene, you know, he still happens to you know, you're invited to someone's home for the rest of the day and prepared for them in simple ways. And seats made ready and waterpots and back in India, still to this day, people wash their feet before they go into homes. Remember, I was amongst in Burma, being invited to a lay person's home for a meal. And, you know, by the time we got there, we were in sandals and our feet were all dusty. And we take our sandals off at the door of the house, and they have a base in the water for us to wash our feet before we come into the house. So you know, this is kind of ordinary life that the Buddha live, then you get this little sense of this ordinariness of it all. This last one thing about the ordinary thing I want to work on second, a few more things. Okay. So I don't know if this is ordinary, but I think there's a nice little hint of something.

So the Buddha is been resting and unidesk give him some water and He's resting into the river and this A student of another teacher comes along and sees sees the Lord sitting under a tree. He goes over to the Buddha salutes him, sits down to one side. And then he says, It is wonderful, Lord, it is marvelous how calm these wonders are. To the Buddha sitting there was other monks. And the comment that the passing person passing by says, How wonderful to see how calm you all are, or how peaceful you all are. And that's something that's touching to me that that's what stands out. And I don't know if the traveler knew the Buddha was dying or getting close to his death. But the fact that that that somehow there's a calm presence is is noteworthy. So perhaps is something about it's another part of the ordinariness of life you can imagine someone being calm and feeling they're calm. And here we have this ancient little record, referring back to the Buddha and Imagine he was common at times. It makes sense. Yes.

Yes, the word is Bhagavan. And that's a word that is used still to this day in India for to refer to teachers and sometimes gurus, I don't know who else sometimes. It's used quite a bit. Someone people know its name. It's a common word for gurus, teachers. And it means something like the apparently it comes from the root of the word meaning to shine, or to be illustrious, or radiant. And so the radiant one, the illustrious one, or the black, sometimes it's a the stage comes from the root meaning to the blessing one. So sometimes you see the translation, blessing one, rather than Lord. So this translation is Lord Bhikkhu Bodhi has the Blessed One. And, and in Lord Islam, But challenging for people who come out of this Christian background.

So another ordinary thing, perhaps, in two, four It seems that what happens here the Buddha comes to a village where there's been a plague and, and there's names of 12 people that the Buddha knows as disciples, and when it comes to that town, he finds out that those 12 have all died. And they have the plague. You know, the 12 people died in one village. That's a lot. That's a lot of people. So there's other places where they suggest maybe there was a came across it was a plague. And so here he is, you know, it's not necessarily always pastoral, India, but this is a you know, it's it's a text assisted about death. And here, we have This meeting of a common occurrence, people getting sick play coming through unexpectedly, not just simply an old man who dies in old age, but here we have reference to, you know, in this must have been what I must encounter this often often. Some of the things that I find touching, touching about this text, you have to know a lot about the background to see how it's touching. Early in this text, there's a little account of sorry, Pluto. So Pluto was considered the Buddha's right hand Lieutenant right hand man is his primary disciple. And he makes a short appearance in this text in the beginning, where they have a little exchange with a an on site put that says, you know, there's no one there's never been anybody as great as you and pushes back and says, How would you know? You know, that's basically presumptuous of you to say that's me. You haven't been around. You haven't? And all the other duties and everything. And then Sariputra says something that Buddha then approves. And that's it. That's the last Okay? So that's you can read it but but what's held in the tradition and what appears elsewhere in the text, and the other suttas is that the sorry food had died before the Buddha. So, we're talking here in the last month, so the Buddhist life, so, so, and I think the assumption understanding is the Buddha knew that sorry, Buddha died, and sequitur took his leave from the Buddha and went back to his hometown and died there. And so here, you know, in the back drop of this great in this death of this great religious leader, his his, the death of his own close disciples just before he died, you know, how did you feel about that? what that was like What was going on? We don't know, but that seems to be in the mix of what's happening here. So At the opening of this text, the book, the text opens with conflict and ends with conflict. Here's a man dedicated to overcoming conflict spent his life dedicated to peace to liberation from freedom, suffering freedom from conflict. Stepping out of the popular currents of war and conflict that people often live in, and this text begins and ends with it. It begins with the king of Raja Gohan, King of casilla. Who's where the Buddha happens to be residing at that time deciding that he was going to attack the neighboring country genes He says I will strike the genes who are strong and powerful. I will cut them off and destroy them or bring them to ruin and destruction. That's in the first paragraph of the glass days of the Buddha's life this and how it begins getting mowed them down. And then he goes and he sends a minister to the Buddha and says, Go tell the Buddha I'm planning to do this. To me, he's not asking for advice. You just saying, just tell the Buddha and then tell me how you react reacts how he responds. That's that's how it begins. I got to Satoru is a his story which is kind of nice to know in the background, is that he usurped the throne from his father by killing his father. So patricide is considered a terrible thing. So, here this is the kind of person he has he killed his father, so you can be Kim King. And now he wants to declare war on the neighboring country.

The discourse ends with the Buddha having died and his body cremated. And then this idea so true in new the Buddha sends a message that he would like to have the remains the relics and then someone else says no, I would like to have the relics. And someone else No, I'd like to have the relics. And there are eight people who claim to the relics of the Buddha. And if and then the last one says on hearing all this, the molars of cousine era address the crowd saying the Lord passed away in our parish. We will not give away any share of the Lord. remains. So that's a strong statement, you know, like taking a stand. So there's conflict here. There's conflict overs remains, the Theravada tradition calls it the War of the war the relics. And I think there's other accounts, maybe later accounts about this war that conflict with it. It was resolved peacefully when someone stepped forward and say, let's just divide it up. And so they divided it up and it got divided into eight portions, and then ninth person received the bowl that the ashes were held in and the 10th person received some of the ashes left in the on the fire and so conflict right beginning and this is kind of sad a little bit that here's this guy devoted to peace, that somehow even after he died, that doesn't, the peace doesn't stay very long and within days, you know, there's people that are arguing over his remains seems like shouldn't argue over the Buddha It's a little bit more poignant, I think. It doesn't seem like the Buddha had any real wishes for what happened after he died. Nothing like a Ajahn Buddhadasa, where the great Thai teachers in Thailand in the last century, were his instructions for when he died, was he lived in the woods much of the time. He liked being outdoors in the forest a lot. And his instructions was when he died, the monks were supposed to prop his body up against the tree and leave him there. So the monks could do contemplation of death and decay, and impermanence. And but he was so famous in Thailand that he wasn't allowed his wish. But here, so we don't know if the Buddha had any wishes. But in the text Ananda asks the Buddha But Lord, what are we to do within the target those remains? So it's a reasonable question when many of you if some of you might have asked a relative or a parent or grandparent, you know, when you die, what are your wishes, because that's often very helpful to people to know what your wishes are, rather than have to make it up after you die. So people want to know how best tick so he asks which we do with your remains. And then Buddha says, I won't go through all of them now, but he says, they should be dealt with as the remains of a great monarch and they should be cremated. And then he says, an under a stupa should be erected at the crossroads for the Agata. So a stupa should be built a big pile of thing and all those remains that's in the crossroads in place where a lot of people travel and go by and so that's where that three main should go. And the Buddha says whoever lays reefs and puts sweet perfumes and colors They're with a devout heart, read benefit and happiness for a long time. So this is a little kind of plug for devotional ism. That if you go, you know, worship there at the stupa that's beneficial, but that what the Buddha's instructions are, take all the remains, put them in one stupa in a crossroad. Well, you know, that's not what happened. They had a war over Israel next and they got divided up. And 10 stupas were built from the result of that. So here, ordinary human life, the Buddha was in the midst of it, and it was conflict, there was war. The war is even more dramatic. And this gets into a little bit more speculation. But I think it's worth speculating about.

It means taking, pulling together the evidence from different places because the early tradition was not particularly interested in history. And what they were what they thought was important was not what the historian thinks is important. So in the middle length, discourses, and discourse at nine, there's a discourse called monuments to the Dharma. And the reason why it's preserved is maybe is because at the end of it, the Buddha says, says, Remember these statements. And so it's now it's preserved because Buddha said you should. But the story of why these statements were made, wasn't particularly important to people. So they kind of didn't fill in the picture completely. But what it what it has occurs is that the Buddha is 80 years old. It says that in the text, so it's close to the time of his dying. He died when he was 80 or 81. And he's back in his home country, in the shotgun, hills, hill tribes of Himalayas and as you know, it's kind of That's also pretty ordinary for people to want to go home when they're going to die back to some place where they grew up or something. So anyway, that's where the Buddha

happens to be. And the neighboring King, his name is Pasha Nadi comes to see the Buddha. And personality says to the Buddha, something like we've known each other for a long time. We're the same age, we come from the same clan. We've been friends and I've come here to pay my respects to you. And he gives, he says all kinds of praise to the Buddha. How wonderful the Buddha is, that the Buddha later called that's the monument that's the monument to the Dharma, or whatever he said it was and but it was, but in the in the lead up so what happens in this story describes how the king approaches the Buddha. The King comes with as Minister Now I can imagine if you leave your hometown home country has a king and you go to a different country to see a religious person, you probably come with some protection, you probably come at least with a sword or two, you know, because so he came as Minister, maybe other people too. But you don't bring your weapons when you go see the Pope, you know, receive great religious person, you kind of, you know, some person dedicated to life. So he said, 10 minutes You stay here. And here are my weapons here my insignia of office instinct, the things that the objects that kind of tell him say, Tell the world he's a king. So you leave leaves everything behind with the minister. And then he goes into the woods, and has this conversation with an old friend, the Buddha, if you don't, for they've known each other for, you know, 60 years or hundred, who knows how long and then had exchange it's nice and personality leaves. That's the end of that sutta. What is said elsewhere, in which probably the people at time knew the story is that that minister saw his chance to usurp the throne. And so he left with the weapons and the signia of power and went back to the country to personality son. Instead to assign either you become the king or I'm going to do it. And the sun took over the sun had a really big grudge against the Buddha's home country. And he had vowed earlier that when he had the chance, he would attack and massacre the people in the Buddha's home home. And we don't have any evidence in the Pali Canon, that such a thing happened. But in other early literature, there's sutras from other traditions, other denominations, there are accounts of while Udo still alive, that this new sun the sun, new king, actually did that went and attack the Buddhist homeland. And in that period massacre, the Pali tradition claims later Later literature claims that the massacre happened after the Buddha died. But as soon after that long afterwards, so here we have this, you know, war intention going on. Now, it's, it's more interesting. So. So, the story goes that came last night I came out of the woods and as Minister was gone, a serving woman was left there and she explained what happened so he knew that he had been usurped. And so what does he do? He can't go back. He's defenseless.

So he heads south. To see King Argento sat through. They haven't haven't always seen it! but you know, they're kind of you know, colleagues in the business. So he goes to the neighboring King to see if he can get support or help or replace a refuge. Now remember, this is another 80 year old man. Sometimes a good Buddha probably was in good shape. Probably he walked a lot, but a king, probably, you know, save your king, chances are radio kings are not in good shape. That's my bias. So he walks these 200 miles and they're good if you do Google Map. That's one of the edge if you do the Google Map thing. You're from one place to the next on the roads of modern India. It's 200 miles. Back then, probably the roads weren't that straight. And there were rivers across and you know, but according to Google, he walked 200 months. You know, and, and he came to the at nightfall he came to the edge of Raja griega. With this king I just saw through lift and because nightfall the gates of the city. We're closed, he wasn't allowed in. So he found a Rest House outside. And he died there that night. Probably exhausted, wary, whatever. So here the Buddha's good friend, probably one of his best friends outside the monastic order, was usurped and head itself. The Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta begins with the Buddha and Roger griega begins with the Buddha in this town, about jetsetters capital. The previous discourse, the madhyama, has the Buddhist and eight year old man back in his home country, and now he's here. Why did he do man that he go all the way down to Russia, Korea? And then was there for a little while, and assumingly turned around and headed back north again. What is it that in the last year of his life, he decided to head down or was important enough to walk through this long walk south and this long

walk North. So now maybe we'll show you the map. And I helped put together a map for for this so you can see the walk a little bit, get a sense

as they, as they're warm up, it's warming up and we're cooling down. It's up now. Okay, so, okay, so here. So here's Rajagaha. It's a modern town of Raji, Raji here in India. And this is where Vulture Peak is. Vulture Peak was a famous place where the sutras take place there. And so the Buddha heads north, and he goes up the mountain and it's mentioned there's this parting amount of sutta mentions a lot of villages. And many of them we don't have a clue what they are now, but some of them are still exist at these towns. So that matches no londa. And alanda became a very, the most famous Buddhist University in ancient India. Huge, huge place, and so it's mentioned and then he goes up to patali gamma And see here the king I just saw just sent a minister to ask about, you know, I want to say says you know, I want to declare war and destroy the neighbors up here. This is the big guns up here. Here's the maga does and then the Buddha heads up north and then in the sutra when he gets to polygamy, that's the modern town of Patna, City of putting on India. And there he comes across the same minister, but now the ministers up here and he's building fortifications. He's building Big Four, but this is the border to down the genes. So he's building a big fort. And because wars in the air, that's what's going on. And then the Buddha crosses the river, big river to cross somehow have to cross it. And then he kept walking North North cross the river again, and, and eventually came to kusina IRA and casinos where he died. And according to the text itself Christina at that time was just a little remote boondock kind of village or town and you see at the very top lumbini and a couple of us do that's suck suck, he says up there. So lumbini is where the Buddha was supposedly born. And a couple of us that was kind of like the capital of that sucking country. And so he's heading north, it's clearly is going back home. And, and only recently because when he was at he was already home. So somehow he came he travelled from home, home country all the way down to here and then started head back again, all within one year. And a part of that year he spent three months and the rains retreat here. So he left this town, spend three months here and then and then hear at some point during his range retreats. He says He made the claim that he was going to die within three months. And so, between here and there, took about three months to walk. The Pāli commentaries claimed the last day of the Buddha's life, just eliminated came close to kusina kusina era where he lay down. He was walking in he had to rest 25 times. You know, he's sick and his bloody diarrhea, you know, and what keeps a person is so sick, and so tired and barely can go, keep going, keep going. It looks like he's really hard, really trying hard to go home. But he doesn't make it and that also seems like a very human thing. You have this big wish you're trying to do something and life you don't get what you want in life. That's what he said. Right? And so his life is the end of his life kind of represents almost as you don't get what you want and you get this war happening. And so in fact, what happened to it was such as To the Buddha died, he became the he had war, many of the neighboring countries and created a big empire for himself because Empire at the time. I mean, he's in his conquering of places. So what the what the theory is one theory is that came pressing naughty when he was usurped. When he headed down here to see, get help, or get refuge, the Buddha followed him to support his help support his friend, or the Buddha followed it in order to try to enlist help, and Jota Satoru to help defend his own country, because there was going to be war happening up there to this new this new King was going to attack. And so we don't know what happened down here.

But whatever was going to happen, be something significant. You don't choose to go for a last little trip like that. If you're 80 years old, a little bitter. In India, and then he turned around and he went back, back up, and maybe try to help his country or maybe just to die at home or who knows why. So that's the that's kind of the little bit. That's the, my effort to try to give you the human side of the Buddha as it comes through in this text and little bit to give you a sense that, you know, you might you many people read into the Buddha, a peaceful man, living at peace, living in the woods, living in groves of trees, and

just kind of oblivious to the circles around him. But here's a man who's living with war and violence and tension and conflict all around him, and he must be in. He knew the main characters he knew he was connected, he was friends or he was acquainted with all the kings. So the time and You know, he was had his personal connection to it all and somehow coming to the end of his life this you know, this is all there in the backdrop of this man who's gonna die. That Okay, so hopefully that's a adequate introduction for the day. And let's take a break. And then let's take a break for 20 minutes and start again at 1120