

2011-01-21 Sutta Study The Parinibbana Sutta Part 2

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

So we're waiting for people to come. Do you have any comments or questions you'd like to make at this point? Yes.

I was just wondering if you could comment further about then, at the beginning when the Brahmin of Qing cha cha cha two says that we have a lot of work to do and to because there's no way to conquer the veggies other than through treachery, discord, and then the, the Buddha says do is now seems fit to you is just what your general sort of interpretation of, you know, that is sort of leaving it you know, the Buddha is just leaving it to people to work out their discord or

media why the Buddha is saying just do it. You see fit

with that it's common, common way of ending someone comes to the Buddha, and they have a discussion and they're going to take leave. And the Buddha says, you know, you're leaving a great, great religious figure. And so you know, okay, it's kind of like giving permission. Okay, you can go in and do it do as you see fit. Do as you're okay, you can you could you can do what you want. Now, you're excused. That's all it means. Doesn't mean go go fight a war if that's what you think you should do. Just means, you know, you're excused go do what you have to do.

Yeah, I guess the obvious sort of thing. thing is that he doesn't respond to the last comment that Well, we're going to get busy and you know, pursue treachery and discord. So you

say so you're concerned that the fact that the Buddha is minister comes and says we're going to go attack the Fijians, just as this was happening. And the Buddha gives a teaching about how to and And then go do what you see fit. And the Buddha should be more actively involved. So it's not a good idea. I think he just stopped. You shouldn't fight a war.

Yeah, I must say either way. I was just what I was. Yeah. I was interested in your what's your comment on his not reacting to it? Yeah.

Well, the way I read it, he did, he did respond. There's an etiquette. The ancient world and as many places in the world traditionally had etiquette of communication where people talked. And so a lot of things happen in non verbally. So for example, a number of these passages here, somebody invites the Buddha to do something like to have a meal or something. And the Buddha, consensus silence. The

Buddhists say silent, and everyone understands Oh, that means he's agreed, but doesn't say yes. So that's somehow understood by many people in India at that time. So what's going on here, So you know, and also the kings were ruthless back then. And the Buddha was, you know, you Uh, you know, if he if he protested too much if he became an engaged Buddhist and put, you know, put up put up a sign at the street corner saying, you know, democracy now and you know, it's probably he's off with his head, you know, it's you're not going to go very far and in a dictator, dictator ship like that that you did protest in I don't think was in the people's minds back then to protest it was kinda like this is there's a great ruler of the country who has who can choose life and death over people and there's not other options weren't really thought about that much. So I think the Buddha didn't have a lot of options to say stop that. But indirectly, he says that he does in an indirect way. He's, and he says, so those of you didn't read this. So the Buddhist minister says we're going to do this. The king is planning to do this And now and the Buddha doesn't address the it's interesting dedicated, the Buddha does not address the minister. He addresses an agenda. And he says, Ananda, have you heard that the big uns hold regular and frequent assemblies? I have heard Lord that they do a nun dice he's still talking indirectly. So this is part of the etiquette right? And as long as the big uns hold regular and frequent assemblies, they may expect to prosper and not decline. Have you heard that they have a G and meet in harmony break up in harmony and carry on the business in harmony. I have heard Lord that they do so and as long as the genes meet in harmony break up in harmony and carry on their business in harmony, they may be expected to prosper and not decline on like the number of things like this and

and then the Buddha then it returns to the minister and it says once When I was in VA, Sally at the this other town veggie in town, I taught the VA G and the seven principles for preventing decline. And as long as they keep to these seven principles, as long as these principles remain enforced the BlueJeans may be expect to prosper, not decline. The Buddha is offering his opinion. He's saying, you cannot compete these people. Because these people are making harmony. They meet regularly and do all these things that takes that allows them to prosper. And they're doing the things that allow them prosper. You don't have a chance. That's what he's saying to them, and that makes an impression on him. Then the minister says Reverend Gotama, if the big uns keep to even one of these principles, they may expect the expected to prosper and not decline, far less all seven. Certainly the genes will never be conquered by King George is set to by force of arms, but only by means of propaganda and setting them against one another. And now eventually Gautama May I depart, I am busy and have much to do. Brahmin do as you think fit. So it's like you're excused, I have a lot to do. And what he has to do, he has to go and set the jeans against each other. These because he's not gonna they're not gonna they're not going to beat them by army. But he's going to do an intrigue. He's going to send spies into the country, and set set them against each other. So they're no longer in harmony. And that's what the later tradition claims was he sent in spies, and kind of got a sentence kind of a turncoat kind of guy, a double agent, and who got kind of integrated into the leadership. And then quietly, you'd take her aside and he would disparage the others. And pretty soon they were all disparaging each other, so much so that none of them wanted to come to the assemblies when they were given the time to call assembly. And so when there was a call for assembly, then we're not going there because it's so tense, like those people that don't like me or I don't know what goes on. So no one came to the assembly. And, and, and I guess the king Tata knew about this. And so he timed his attack right then, because they couldn't gather together to be unified. And so he went in and conquered the country. So a little bit, the Buddha gave that advice. You know, maybe the Buddha was trying to stop the war, but he gave that he gave the king the clue he needed to go and you know, so that's unfortunate. There's this kind of what you're talking about.

Yeah, I was just very human, I guess. I have

a thought about this. When I read this, I thought, Oh, this is beautiful that here's my interpretation, that the Buddha is saying, don't kill other people. But if they are theirs, here's a way that if they aren't practicing, I don't know practicing well, that they will follow. decline it doesn't have to be killing

right but then it but then he he he thinks the minister I'm gonna get them to decline you might be good people but I'll get them against each other

but it the decline will be because the jeans aren't

can't hold it together

together right they can't rise above the discord that starts right so it's it's a different way to end

right there so then the Buddha uses this occasion that teaching toward the but the veggie ends in he applies it directly to the monastic order. So when they when they when the minister leaves he turns to his monks and says these seven principles are also true seven principles are also true for for you all. And so as long as monks hold regular and frequent assemblies, they may be expected to prosper and not decline as long as they meet in harmony break up in harmony and carry on their business in harmony and may be expected to prosper, not decline as long as you're not authorized. What has not been authorized. Do not abolish what is What has been authorized, so long as they honor respect, revere and salute the elders of long standing, as long as they do not fall prey to desires, which arise in them and lead to rebirth, as long as they are devoted to forest lodgings as long as they preserve the personal mindfulness, so that in the future the good among their companions will come to them. And those have already come will feel at ease with them. As long as monks hold these seven things, and are seeking to do so they expected to prosper and decline. So this these seven items for the prosperity of Sangha is often referred to end Buddhism. And it's this is very important passage. And you still to this day, people will quote it in song goes in communities and I think we are IMC board meetings that people have some of our we have a reading at the beginning of every board meeting, some of the suttas or some some passage, and this passage has been read at the our board meetings, essential to Zen center published it some document they had and you know, highlight lighter, you know, for their community these seven so it's a it's a you know, it's I think it's a very to be inspired to be moved to try to organize myself around these principles is a powerful thing for a community to do.

So now we're going to come into this more devotional side devotional side, deification of the Buddhist side of all this, I try to draw the picture earlier of the Buddha being so human and in the guided visualization if you could follow along the idea of this old man walking, walking through India coming to a river, you need to cross the river and standing there you know just probably be you know, my mind's a beautiful image of I've been to India see this big wide rivers there that they have in the plains and no telephone wires, no motor boats, no cars, just you know, it's it's a beautiful, timeless kind of image. The movie that was done in seven early 70s called siddhartha A little bit of a movie version of the book siddhartha that movie was kind of one of the one of the last movies it was made in ancient India. If you look at the movie The visuals of that movie they they're still able to kind of find parts of India where you know, there's no telephone wires or cell phone towers or trucks and smog and, and you get a sense from there that probably now it's much harder in India to find that but you can get a sense of that timeless quality of ancient India. So hear 133 so he's at the river. He came to the end. So then the Buddha came to the river Ganges, and just then the river was really full. So it's pretty cool contrast is a big river. And some people were looking for a boat, and some are looking for a raft in summer by together a raft of reeds to get to the other side. But the Buddha as swiftly as a strong man might stretch out his flexed arm, or flex it again, then is from this side of the Ganges and reappeared with his order of

monks on the other shore. That's pretty quick to do this, right? Boom, he's over there. Maybe there are faster ways of getting there. But this is pretty fast. So what's going on? Suddenly, you know, we've left the realm of ordinary human beings, and no ordinary person I know can do that. So here so what's what, wait a minute. To them, some people, you know what's going on now? One is the good. It's useful to think of this text that we're reading today as being multi layered. So at one layer, one of the primary purposes of this text is to aggrandize the Buddha and promote or justify the practice of worshiping and devoting the Buddha. And if you read the text from that point of view, you'll see that a lot, a lot of the time where the text is a lot of the things emphasized in the text and the way it builds is all for that purpose. So even even having the Kings minister come to the Buddha, at the beginning, could be read, even ministers, even kings are concerned about the opinions of the Buddha. The Buddha is not just some lowly monk, kind of, you know, the widow someone even had the attention of the kings. There's a passage here, where that's I guess we can look at it with where he's in this valley, and he goes and stays at the grove of, of Apollo, the court isn't and where's that peace? early on here, so today 14 So then, um but Polly, the courtesan quarters and here it means, like a geisha. She's really wealthy. So I don't know how, you know, in some areas you know some places courtesans are not like a street corner prostitute. So amber Polly the quarters in her that the Lord had arrived the facility was staying at her growth. She had the best carriages made ready and drove from this Dolly to her Park. She drove as far as the ground would allow, than alighted and went on foot to where the Lord was. She saluted the Lord and sat down to one side. And as she said, The Lord instructed, inspired fired and delighted her with a talk on Dhamma and the invest delighted amber Polly said, Lord made the Lord consent to take a meal from me tomorrow with his order of monks. The Lord consented by silence. Number Polly understanding is acceptance rose from receipt saluted the Lord and passing him by the right departed. Notice of passing on the right.

They don't have toilet paper back there. So they use their left hand for that purpose. And so the right hand is considered pure, the right side is considered pure. So you want to, you know, if you're going to leave someone, you show them the right side. And that's why we circumvent that's one of the reasons I was told you circumambulate on the right because the right is pure. And the pure side you want to show that side to what's sacred. So it's often it's part of the etiquette of the time. So she left but the chubbies A Sally choppies are like the noble noble men of the town, very little Lord and arrived into Sally and Mustang at Pawleys Grove. So they had the best carriages made ready and drove out to the Sally and some of the youngest jobbies were all in blue with blue makeup blue clothes and blue are dormant while some were in yellow, some in red, some in white. With white makeup, white clothes and white adornment. So these were the wealthy, you know, noble men, young men, and they were dressed up in local fashion. You know, they were kind of making makeup and everything right. It's quite something quite a sight to be seen. And I kind of love it back in the ancient world that there was this kind of, you know, focus on cosmetics among the men. And amber Pauline met the young Laci Charlie's axle to axle wheel to wheel yoke to yoke. So they met on the road. And they said to her, um, but Polly, why do you drive up against us like that? So what I imagine is that, you know, she's proud, strong core doesn't. She's not gonna move aside on the road for anybody. So there's a game of chicken going on here. You know, she's coming up her character coming in their courage characters, and she says, boom, you know, and they're used to getting this right away, but not for her. But so while you're doing this, because youngsters, the blessing Lord has been invited by me for a meal by his order of monks, maybe she's boasting, but who knows why she's just saying I'm going home, I got work to do. Because I'm making dinner. I'm upali they say, give up this meal, give up this meal for 100,000 pieces of coins. So they don't they're they're going out there. They want to invite the Buddha to their home for meals. And she's already has the mutation accepted. So they're trying to get her to button to find buyer out. They're going to give her a lot of money, a phenomenal amount of money, so that the Buddha will come to their house. But she says, young Sirs, if you were to give me all of a Sallie Mae With its revenues, I would

not give up such an important meal. Then Then watch Arby's snap their fingers saying we've been beaten, beaten by the mango woman. We've been we've been cheated by the mango woman and they set out for amber Polly growth.

And so the mango thing is kind of multi dimensional multi meaning because it It also refers to her breasts and mango breasts or something, which I guess were desirable maybe. And so they go to the Buddha and I tried to get him to agree but they he doesn't say he goes to they've been beaten by this woman. So here here chose the Buddha accepting invitation from a cortisone which is kind of nice that even you know, some people would discriminate against such a person. There's no discrimination here and he goes to their house and he turns down the imitation of these things. noble people. But here also you can read it as as indirect or direct way of building up the status of the Buddha. He's so important that the important people in town are fighting over him having his meal is so important than offering him a meal is worth a phenomenal amount of money. This is an important guy. That's a subtext that's coming through here.

And then

and then there's a story later on, I don't remember exactly where it is, or that I told you this, this student of another teacher comes and says everyone is calm here. But he then recounts to the Buddha how his teacher is able to go into deep meditation state and not here when 500 carts come, roll. Down the road like these ancient carts in India, I bet they're noisy. You know, David didn't have good lubrication or, you know, didn't have ball bearings and stuff. And so you know, it was kind of jostling along and probably pretty noisy, the Oxford bellowing 500 and he would go into deep meditation not hear anything. And so the Buddha is now going to best him. You know, what's going on best thing? I would think it's someone who was liberated and free and free of identity. So somebody said not happy for your teacher. That's nice. leave it at that. But no, the Buddha is going to say this is strange story. Huh? He says, Where is it? Here? No. here once when I was staying at utama The threshing floor there rain God streamed and splashed, lightning flashed and thunder crashed. And two farmers brothers and four oxen were killed. And a lot of people went out of utama to where those two brothers and the four oxen were killed. And because I had at that time gone out of the door, the threshing floor and was walking up and down outside, and the man in the crowd came to me saluted me and stood to one side. And I said to him, friends, why are all these people gathered here? Lord, the man said, there has been a great storm and two farmer's brothers, and four oxen have been killed. But you Lord, where have you been? I have been right here, friend. But what did you see, Lord? I saw nothing, friend. And what did you hear Lord? I heard nothing friend, where you're sleeping. I was not sleeping friend. Then Lord. Were you conscious? Yes, friend. So Lord, being conscious and awake. You neither saw nor heard the great rainfall and floods and the thunder and lightning. That is so friend. And then that student of the other teacher said he thought to himself, this is wonderful. This is marvelous. These wonders are so calm, that they neither see nor hear. When the rain God streams and splashes lightning flashes and thunder crashes, proclaiming my lofty powers he saluted me and passed to my right and departed. So then they he takes refuge in the Buddha, this guy, he thinks he's so impressed by him. So here somehow this lightning flashing in the storm Gods raining is louder, more dramatic than 500 carts and the Buddha is able to stay in meditation and not know that these people are being killed next door who need help. The strange story I think, is strange. You know, you know what's more important there's a beautiful Jewish story. Some Jewish men in sheet or something, praying and The baby next room next door is crying. The teacher comes in and sees the student praying. And he says, What's going on here? you're praying, don't you hear the baby next door? They said, No, I'm not trying to hear the baby. I was busy praying. He said, if you're really praying, you would even notice a fly on the wall. If you're really praying, you'd really be attentive and aware of what's going on. And here it's kind of this trance like state, which

you can get into in deep meditation. But this is considered to be really important and lofty. And so here you see an attempt to try to build up the status of the Buddha he's even better than the other meditation teachers of his time. is a subtext here. He's really important guy. The sky who heard who the student of the other teacher is so impressed the grifters in the Buddha, and then he gives them a golden robes to where the Buddha puts on these golden robes.

Nanda having arranged one set of the Golden robes and the body of the Lord observed that against the Lord's body, it appeared dulled. And he said it is. Excuse me. It is wonderful Lord, it is marvelous how clear and bright the Lord scan appears. It looks even brighter than the golden robes in which it is clocked. So here the Buddha is being seen as a radiant shiny person, the gold, the gold robes are not even adult compared to it. Again, it's kind of building up the spiritual resume credentials of the Buddha.

Sometimes people do die, they do die sometimes do get very clear complexion kind of peaceful and radiant. So maybe not so far fetched. But still, it's part of this many, many places in this context where the Buddhist status and specialness is being highlighted. gets even better because the Buddha is coming to his last place of resting. And the man is one of his oldest disciples expanding him and the Buddha and seemingly in a harsh way, says step out of the way and understand what's going on. Why are you doing that? And when I says a nundah, the gods of the 10 worlds spheres have gathered to see the theater for a distance of 12 yo jhanas, your jhanas like 12 miles, so like really big hundred miles here, around this Grove. There's not a space you can could touch with a point of a here that is not filled with Mighty debus. And they are grumbling. We have come a long way to see the thought that is rare for the target of fully enlightened Buddha to rise in the world. Tonight in the last watch of the saga, the target will gain final Nibbana and this mighty monk is standing in front of the Lord preventing us from Getting a last glimpse of the target. But Laura what kind of devices can Lord perceive? And under there are skydivers whose minds are Earthbound, they are weeping and tearing their hair, raising their arms, throwing themselves down and twisting and turning, crying. All too soon the blessing one is passing away all too soon the welfare is passing away all too soon the AI of the world is disappearing. And there Earth DeVos whose minds are Earthbound? Who do likewise. But those of us who are free from craving, under patiently saying, All compounded things are impermanent, what is the use of this was the use of crying and lamenting. So that's a pretty impressive visit. That all these, you know Gods are visiting, with one person standing in front of the Buddha that blocks the view of all these people, you know, they've all different directions. I don't know how it works, but, but so what is the subtext Buddha is such an important spiritual figure, that even the gods come into worship. I mean, the gods can pay the respects. And not just a few of them, but like multitudes of them come, the Buddha was an important dude. You know, he's spiritually very significant guy.

And then this interesting passage where the Buddha might not asks, What do we do with it, the target does remains. The Buddha says, read the full passage we didn't before. So this is 511 nundah that should be dealt with like the remains of a wheel turning monarch wheel turning monarch is like a, like, you know, I said, that's kind of like the archetype of a world ruling monarch is someone who wrote rules a whole known world and how is that Under the remains of a wheel turning monarch are wrapped in a new linen cloth. This they wrap in teased cotton wool, and this in a new cloth. Having done this 500 times each, then close the body, the king's body in an oil bath of iron, which is covered with an other iron pot. Then having made a funeral pyre of all men are perfumes that cremate the king's body, and they raise a stupa at a crossroads. So here again, the status of the Buddha is being compared to that of a world ruling monarch, the highest secular authority that that ancient India could imagine. And he's been being gonna be committed in this elaborate way. One scholar said if you really did this with 500, claws wrapped around and around the Buddha would be this big ball you know? And then the Buddha goes on. Under there are four persons worthy of a stupa. Who are they? At the tagata are heart fully

enlightened Buddha is one particular Buddha is one, a disciple of the Takata is one and the wheel turning monarch is one. And why is each of these worthy of a stupa? Because, Ananda at, at the thought, this is a stupor that the Takata or the others, people's hearts are made peaceful and then at the breaking up of their body after death, they go to a good destiny and rearise and heavenly world. That is the reason and those are the four Where were the other stupa. So, here, this passage is not only liking the Buddha is putting the Buddha in very high status for people in the world who are worthy of worshipping in the stupa for categories of people, but also it's saying stupa worship is a good thing. You know that this is something it's worth it to do, and it describes why. Because if you go to a stupor and remember Agata or some of these other enlightened beings are the monarch, this will make your heart peaceful. So it has an effect and emotional effect. And that emotional effect if that stays and lingers, then that will be a condition for good rebirth. And this is the kind of the theory that Buddhism has for dying, that for people who are not enlightened are clearly on the path to enlightenment, that the best way to die is to put your mind in a good peaceful state. So that that's great. So best conditions for good rebirth. And this is in Asia in mature Buddhism. This for many lay people this is often the strategy that's done is to help them have this kind of good feeling. Often the feeling is called Posada Posada is serene faith or joyful faith, peaceful heart. So here it's championing the stupa worship. Now what it's possible that this is anticipating or kind of the first hints of the whole phenomenon of super worship in Asia. It could also be what scholars think that this passage was inserted into the text after stupa worship became a big deal in Buddhism in order to find it early justification for it. So the text here is justifying one way others justifying the stupid worship. In fact, stupa worship here gets the approval of the sanction of the Buddha. And you can't get much better sectioning of stupid worship. And there's a lot still goes on to this world this day. And even places like spirit rock, they're planning to have a stupa for all the teachers chances are if things go the way they planned, some biatches ended up sprinkled into that little stupid and you guys can go and circumambulate the right side, remember

And then the Buddha comes to his final place of wrestling.

When it comes to the last place of wrestling, he lays down between two solid trees. Very majestic noble tree in India, kinda like the redwoods of our time. It lays down between two solid trees. And as he does so, the twin Sol trees burst forth with an abundance of untimely blossoms, which fell upon like a dose body, sprinkling it and covering it in homage divine coral Tree flowers fell from the sky, meaning the celestial flowers fell. Divine sandalwood powder fell from the sky, sprinkling and covering the legato body, in homage, divine music and songs sounded from the sky in homage to the Buddha. So here again, this is homage to the Buddha respect to the Buddha and he's receiving it from nature. If the Tree Spirits or whatever is getting the trees to blossom in an untimely way, offseason and we have these divine the divine beings sending down their music and flowers from the heavens. So that's also you know, this is a pretty hot guy, right. So now in terms of the timing of the Buddha's death, the theravadan world says that he died, and the shock which is the month of May, the full moon, and in fact the Theravada tradition celebrates the birth the death and enlightenment of the Buddha on the same It's, if you kind of try to figure out the chronology of the Buddha's last month's from this text here. It's hard to get to me. Because what happens in here, it takes us rains retreat and rains, retreats are like from July to October. And it seems it looks like at the beginning of that, but maybe near the end, we don't know exactly where the Buddhists declares that he has three months left to live. So even if it's October, November, December, January, because he's gonna die then of those three months. So in the in the Japanese tradition that they say is that Buddha's death is in February, February 8, I think. Some other people say it's December time. So there's different dates for when the Buddha died, and how the Theravada has got to May I don't know how that happened. Maybe they just like to be efficient and do all their holidays together. Get it over with But it seems like you know, he, you know, that's somewhere according to this chronology, according this text here three months after the rains, if the latest, it could

have been earlier. It's also a good time to walk through India because later in spring and gets pretty hot. And but if he wasn't, you know, if he was close to the southern end of his journey for the rains, and he was up at his hometown before the rains, if he walked down from there, in spring and early summer before the rains, I've been to India, that time he was in Bodhi Gaya, that part of the India in May, and boy was it a good time to visit with Gaia because no one else was there. It was extremely hot.

So even the gods you know, grieve the loss of the Buddha

And then

it goes on and on, you know, so they just eat, deification of the Buddha. Then he finally dies which we'll talk more about later. And there's an earthquake because that's what happens when Buddha dies. There's earthquakes.

And then he died in the mall as a local people were told about it so they came back, oh, back out. And they honored paid respects worshipped and adored the Lord's body with dance song music with Garland's incense making awnings and circular tents in order to spend the day there. So here's a description of someone's idea of how you would pay homage or worship to death. Very important religious speaker, teacher. And it's a little bit different than how in these Protestant Buddhist types would celebrate someone's that they're not going to be dancing in Zen center after my friend died. And, you know, it's not my style. But and, you know, here at IMC, you know, we're kind of like this white, Protestant, Buddhist kind of, you know, in terms of ritual and things, you know, we don't have a saying or, you know, do anything, right, sit here, couch potatoes, you know, religiously, we're pretty dull. But, and then people think, Oh, this is what Buddhism is. It's all non ritual, you know, just because that's, you know, just under WeeJun, right? That's what it means. That's what it means. Legion, Legion Lutheran, that's all yours. That's what you get. And if and if you know, if I had Come out of the Indian background, which most Indian Buddhist did right they come in Indian You know, it would be much more lively In fact, when I was at Buddha ceremony in Nepal I was the temple temple, there were some lay musicians who are playing their sitar and tabla and beautiful Lydian kind of music and playing kind of Indian style

kind of

so raga is kind of a just devotion on very very very loud fast emotional devotional music and it's Indian way and they were rocking out and they were they were rocking out with was boot I'm sorry, I'm gotcha me. You know here from here I'm seeing like boot I'm sorry that he has like a you know, it's like a funeral or something. Yeah, but they're it's like they're rocking out and dancing and in my first thought that went through my mind when I when I saw that Oh, dismisses Oh, that's Buddhism influenced by Indian culture. And then as soon as, as soon as I heard my mind say that I said wait a minute kill Buddhism came from India, that's the whole thing right. So, I mean, this was a my my bias was coming into play. So here and down through the ages in India, this is much more of the kind of at least for laypeople how celebrations best Buddhist festivals were conducted with dance and song and music, Garland's incense, awnings and tents. And you have bass reliefs, you have these sculptures from the second century BC, depicting Buddhist festivals. And they're clearly people are dancing and playing musics. And there's one beautiful one where someone's hanging in a tree or I forget or leaning out of window. And clearly whistling has you know, fingers two fingers in his mouth like you would when you whistle. And in one month when he's clearly dancing These musical people playing musical instruments and they're clearly dancing because the person in the middle is twirling around in the way you know, he's twirling around his back then they were kind of like togas and, and so his toga is been out to the

side, you know, to one side like this up into the side and they didn't wear underwear. So you see is naked but so, you know, I think that's dancing right?

And then the devils come and do the same thing the devil has come to visit after the Buddha died and they also sing and dance and play music and then they have Trouble lighting, they're gonna have a pyre they're gonna burn the Buddha. And it won't light they won't light. And so someone realizes that one of the monks realize No, it's not going to light until one of the Buddhist prime disciples Mark Ashoka comes and as it turns out Makkah shop buys so much for further away some days away, I don't know far away, doesn't know the Buddha's died. But someone who was there when the Buddha died, picked up one of those divine flowers that came from the sky and was carrying it. And when he passed Makkah shop on the road, my car shop said what's going on with a flower? And the guy said, Oh, the Buddha died. So the mica shop had headed up to where the Buddha was. But Interesting, interesting thing happened. So he was there and Makkah shop was there with his group of monks probably 500 or something. And 500 monks This guy comes and says the Buddha died. One of those monks in the ethnic group says this. And sitting in the group was one, sooo bata, who had gone forth late in life. And he said to those monks, enough friends Do not weep and wail. We are well read of the great ascetic, we were always bothered by his saying, It is fitting for you to do this, it is not fitting for you to do that. Now we can do what we like, and not do what we don't like. That's quite something quite something to do in here. And so there's a number of ways you know, one is way of looking at this one is that this is an historical event. You know, usually you don't, usually when you aggrandized your founders, you don't put in the legal things that are kind of pointed out, there was a monk who was thinking this funny way. Another possibility is that this was Put in there to justify Makkah Shabazz later attempt to create the canon. Mark Ashoka was the person in charge a few months after the Buddha died of gathering amongst together and begin creating the canon, the collected works, the authorized works, teachings of the Buddha. And so here we see the need for that. Now, these monks are going to do whatever they wish, and we can before that happens and we have to kind of create some kind of some kind of some some agreed upon reference point for which this tradition can be organized. So then Maha cachaca finally makes it up there. And when he does, only then there's the tire. So then, then the Makkah shop with a great went to the mall a shrine to Lourdes funeral pyre and covering one shoulder with his robe, joined his hands and salutations who put his hand together and now Mr. circumambulated the pyre three times and uncovering the Lord's feet paid homage with his head to them. 500 monks did likewise. And when this was done, the Lord's funeral pyre ignited of itself. So again, it's light of itself is more of this kind of magical stuff going on. And so here we hit see another example of the devotional aspect, one of the practices circumambulating. And then bowing at the feet. I, my understanding is that in India, Indian religion is very hierarchical. There's a lot of hierarchies that's put up, you know, whether it's castes, nor one of the hierarchies is body parts. So your head has a higher status than your feet. And so you don't want someone's head. And so your head is the highest part of your highest status part of your body. Your feet is the lowest. If you go to a person and put your head at their feet, bow down and put your head at their feet. You're really elevating them high above you. It's a statement of a ranking of hierarchy. And so here, Mike Ashoka is bowing his uncovers the Buddha's feet and bows to his feet. It's kind of a way of kind of veneration of holding the Buddha high up. And then the Buddha is burnt. And then when, when, when the body Lord's body was burned up a shower of water from the sky, and another, and another, which burst forth from the solid trees, extinguished the funeral pyre, so more magic more supernatural stuff. So this, the text is replete with this kind of things. What's the purpose of it?

I suggested part of the subtext is to continually aggrandized the Buddha to say that this religious person was almost like a god very special. And so we have in the text, this juxtaposition of this contrasting position of some seemingly a human In person with a human frailties and issues being sick and

everything, and then the issues of someone who are the view of someone who is supernatural is divine, this, you know, lives beyond what's human. And this human side became more of this, this divine side of the Buddha became more and more important in history of Buddhism, you can actually see in that in the growth of Buddhist texts down through the centuries, it clear in growth in hagiography, which means that the study of the saints, The Good Mythical stories that are created to make a person more and more simply, you see the word of becoming more and more treated as a god almost like a god and, and worship that way. And in some in the Mahayana tradition, they take it to the furthest extreme, certain schools of Mahayana Buddhism. The Theravada kept, keep trying to kind of route the Buddha back to being a human being and but only kind of pathway make it because there's such a strong divinization process going on there as well. You see in this text here, but the divine aspect of the Buddha raises some problems.

If you're divine Why can't you live forever? Or if you're a divine, why do you get sick? If you're a divine? Why can't you live out the full span of your life? And that the understanding back then was the full span of life was 100 years, and the Buddha's dying at 80. And if you're such a great person, how could he die when he's 80 instead of waiting 200 and so these people who were kind of wanted to or needed to see the Buddha as being divine, had these problems to answer and part of what this text is about is trying to answer those questions. In the afternoon, we come back to look again at his at his death. We'll look at some of the issues, some of the questions and some of the answers around. You know, how could the Buddha How could a god die at the age of 80 as opposed to living the full span of life and other things? So I think that's enough. There's one more little thing I want to mention about the worship and devotions you find in Buddhism and on 522 so the Buddha what's happened here is that the Buddha is lying down in the grove, he's gonna die. And messenger has been sent to the local people to come and pay the last respects to the Buddha. They come out to the Buddha molar's come and Paris one at a time. They come to worship the Buddha, but they're not has this, this is gonna take forever this guy's dying, we can't have everybody do it one at a time. So they're going to come as groups of people that figured you have much more efficiently. And so, then and so they do and they come up to the they come up to the Buddha. And they presented himself to the Buddha and, and one group at a time they said, Oh, and he then introduces them to the Buddha and says to their name, Lord, the mala, so and so and his children, his wife, his servants, his friends, pays homage to the Lord's feet. Now you know why it's the feet, right? So but they're saying their names. Their names are important. And you find down through history of Buddhism in Asia, is very common custom of stating the names of a devotee or stating the names of the person make a donation. It was very strange for most of us Americans to go to Burma and see you know, it The meals were paid for often by donors, which is a nice thing. But then there is a big, big Blackboard. And the donors names were on the blackboard. And this kind of went against the grain for many of us Westerners where, you know, if you make a donation you're supposed to kind of blast out, you know, everyone can see that you made the donation supposed to be a bit humble or quiet about a discreet about it. It seemed to us, but it seems that this is a continuous tradition of stating a person's name. And it does a number of things. by stating a name in front of the Buddha say so and so's here worshiping you, there's a better chance that the Buddha remembers who they are, and takes them in knows who they are. It also is a fuller way of paying homage. Because if you say your name out loud, so everyone can hear. Then you're not hiding it. Like I know some of Westerners, maybe some of you are happy coming here to IMC When your family of origin doesn't know about it, you know, but you're not going to blast it out, you know, at Thanksgiving with all your cousins and everything, you know, I'm sitting with a meditator, I, you know, got the IMC course you got a spirit rock, you know, and other people are what do you say? Do I sit at IMC you know, but they do they actually formally say to the world to everyone in here is a much stronger statement than if you keep it privately to yourself. The third reason is that sometimes by stating the name is considered to be very powerful in India. It's like a mantras have these kind of the sounds have symbolic or spiritual power to them. And so

if you say your name, it's kind of like in those ancient pictures, if you say, some cultures where you take a photograph of someone, you have some power over them, or if you know someone's name, you have some power over them. Names have power, and that is associated with you. And if you have your name associated with a powerful spiritual person, that somehow you partake in the power somehow connected to that and suspicious way. And so you find an Indian, ancient India.

And the ancient Indian monuments that were built stupas and stuff you find inscribed on the pillars and the walls, the names of the donors. And sometimes the names of donors are inscribed and inscribed in places where no one can see it. It's not really a matter that your name is known by everybody else. It's a matter of that your name is somehow placed tucked away in that place of power, that these stupas in place are places of power associated with that person. So you find here in this text, hints or suggestion just hints but the beginning of this Buddhist devotionalism or references to it in a way that's more concentrated here than any other place in the Pali Canon. And it speaks of what's coming in Buddhism. Whether it speaks to what's coming or whether it was written later, and put back into the early tradition, we don't know. But it certainly represents this thing that would happen. And, and therefore, most scholars think that the Mahāparinibbāṇa Sutta is a pretty late sutta was written probably composed after the well after the time of the Buddha, as much of the discourses in the long discourse of the Buddha, this whole book here is called the long discourses of the Buddha. And most scholars said most of this was, was written, similar last to the Pali suttas to be composed, and well after the life of the Buddha. And you find in here a lot of supernatural, a lot of magic, a lot of deification of the Buddha in the way that you don't see it in the early in the earlier sutta like the middle length, discourse and things like that. So kind of belong from a different era. And I asked one very famous American monk who's a scholar and translator, what he what he you know, what if what about this text, long discourse in the Buddha and he basically said, I basically ignore it. Because you know, all those elements are in it. But it's here in the tradition and this is what we have to contend with and figure out what to do with. If you react to it because you don't like this devotionalism, some of you might not like it. Then I suggest you put that reaction aside and read this like Greek literature, like a play. And then see if you know how that devotionalism and all this magic supernatural stuff, how that appears and is interpreted and related to when when it's more like fiction myth than if you're trying to struggle with it being historical or something. So any comments or questions? Yes, Erin.

It's this

couple pages right? At around, I'm just not really sure what the impression is here, a couple pages right around the Buddha interacting with Mara renouncing the life principle and then a Nanda, he tells Ananda the four roads to power have been mastered. And I, I'm supposed to be able to live for 100 years. Why didn't you ask me? And he says, he actually says, Ananda. Yours is the fault. Yours is the failure. Like he's blaming him for

his death. And that if you don't mind, that's what that was for the afternoon. Oh, we haven't covered that yet. So the stuff I've covered but probably good to discuss in that case. So because then whenever the last part of the day we'll talk about the death of the Buddha and those kinds of issues. Some people are concerned about the death of the Buddha, because it looks like suicide. Some people have you know, and it is okay. And what's what's this about?

I have a question from this earlier presentation.

So when he said he had three months to live, I assume at that point he had eaten the pigs delight.

Notice before before that, well before, yes, three months before, posted like was the last day.

So when he said he had three months to live, he just knew.

It sort of reminds me of the Bible in the sense that it's a lot of stories by a lot of people who lived well after the Buddha.

And

it kind of reminds Well, it's a question. I don't know much about the suttas. So I question why one studies them with such a validity. Sorry, why one studies them so carefully and closely. If they are a bunch of stories made up by a bunch of people who lived in years after, like any holy book, I'm assuming the Quran is

similar. Yeah. So I know that many answers to that question. Some people believe lock, stock and barrel, the whole thing. And it's part of their devotionals. And it's inspiring and meaningful them to read it and learn about it. And there's so it's so moving. To take this as being literal truth. That's why some people study it. Some people study it because they feel their pearls of wisdom to be found. And so you're looking for those individual pearls and they put aside other things. Some people read it like not as, as a fact, but as, but as literature. And it's a great epic discussion about some end of someone's life and they milk it for all the symbolic and archetypical value they can. Some people yeah, so there's there's all kinds of ways many, many ways of reading a text.

A bit like a Bible one could one can take what one life and justify positions? Yes, yeah. So that's why I'm kind of confused. I hear what you're saying. But I'm seeing all these people with their books, taking notes, you know, and so forth. It doesn't strike me as that kind of

text. But that's me.

So that's it. That's it. That's one text. It's there's, there's multiple texts, multiple layers, multiple approaches and ways to relate to it. And for people who have been involved in the Buddhist tradition for some time, I think it's useful to get educated about the tradition, this text, what goes on, even things we don't agree with. And like, it's good to kind of have it under your belt, so that when you're digesting and processing, understanding or getting a survey of the tradition, you can kind of get to understand the full range of what's going on. And if you understand the full range, then it's easier I think, to find our own way through it all. And so I use here to differentiate and be wise about all of the things you hear and see and encounter. And, and so that's one way, another way, you know, another way, you know, I don't know about people taking notes. But another way reading this is that with some people like to read things like this that are, that are kind of supernatural, they don't necessarily believe it. But it kind of opens their mind their hearts, it kind of speaks to something inside of them some religious sentiments, religious feeling emotion, that kind of stops their mind opens them up to the what they call the mystery. They don't know if this is true, they say but, you know, it makes me feel connected to the mystery. And that feels so great to some people. And, and so they left and some of the Mahayana literature texts are so much more supernatural in this and the scale that this cosmic scale in which things are operating in, and you kind of like look, you know, some people like to hit on their desktop, you know, this screensavers they get NASA photographs from NASA that you know, it's beautiful deep space photo. Graphs from the Hubble spacecraft and stuff. And you look at that, you know, it's like, you know, it's like mind starting. Wow. It's like some people like that's devotionals. And well get that. Well, for some people reading these Sutras, you know, is supernatural out of this world cosmic supernatural display of

stuff. They don't believe it, but it's just, it's kind of like poetry that stops their minds or opens them up in radically. So there's many ways of reading, and it's good to know them all. Yes, Rick.

So a question that arises for me is

that in the devotional sense, and making someone higher and higher, and they're the ones that know, they're the divine beings, that I put all my questions in the way that I should be totally on that person, which then unresolved me from knowing what the true answer is. And then when I look at the teachings, though, everything he was teaching is to say, look within yourself to find the answers. And on the devotional side is like, oh, he knows, this person knows. And so it kind of takes for me a little bit. Seems like it turns away from what the Buddha was pointing to. It seems to have that aspect a little bit.

Yes, it could. And so that's what we'll see in the afternoon. In the afternoon, we'll go into the text from a different point of view, which is a point of view, what is the teachings what are the Dharma and addressing this kinds of very kind of issue? But for now, I'll just say that it's such a relief to have someone else tell me what's true. You know, I just sit back and just let you know, I'll just kind of rest and go along and you know, it's a lot of work to it to come these classes and study and try to really get underneath it all and figure it out for myself. I mean, it's so hard To understand things, I just want someone to tell me. I'd really but but, but you know, that's one approach, you know, it's people. You know, that's one approach some people have. It's a lot of work.

But it also dissolves one of their actions. It's like, Yeah,

I don't I don't have any responsibility here. Please, please, no responsibility here for this life and I just, you know, ride on the coattails of the Buddha. Yes.

Somewhat along the same lines. The whole hagiography to me, undercuts the inspiration of the first aspect of the taking refuge, which is that there I believe in the urge to take refuge in the Buddha. And in fact, if the Buddhist having been a human being who became enlightened and if It's this divine being it's like well, okay guys, we can try but we ain't got a chance. So for me, it undercuts it undercuts the inspirational or aspirational.

But yeah, I agree completely with you and for some people, for other people, it's actually more inspiring take refuge in the divine being the refuge music, power, powerful person, that that powerful person is the person who's going to, because the person so powerful, that person can really help me get by my life better. I can't do it on my own. So if I pray to this divine being, they'll intercede. They'll make the crops grow, they'll do whatever needs to happen. And some people really, really rely on that idea of relying on themselves is really hard. And what's been pointed out by scholars of religion is that the people, the people's people who, whose lives are hopeless, where they're down and out. Living horrible, painful, miserable lives. And their whole population of people live this way. And they don't see any possibility of any improvement. There's a very strong correlation that those people are the ones who put their hope into their future lifetimes. Because that's the only hope they can see. I mean, they're slaves and they're being treated brutally. And there's no way out of slavery, you know? And so they're, you know, if you're going to take away their hope, say, oh, you're responsible, you should figure this out on your own. You know, it's, you know, that's that is inconceivable for them. And, you know, it's there's so many, I use that example of said, there's so many different kinds of people in this world. That I don't know if you were doing this, but we wouldn't be very careful not to read the ancient world, these people and look what's going on here. through the filter of, you know, modern American culture and acculturation, who we are and how we see the world, how we do things, and that we don't know what

the needs that people have, the struggles they have and what they're trying the best they have to how to cope with something. And if that, you know, there are people who, you know, if I'm not going to help them get out of slavery, I don't think I'm going to go there and try to take away their hope.

Either. Thank you. That's helpful because when working, because it strikes me that there's a parallel to Christianity, which is, seems to me that there may have been a fear, both with Buddhism and the messages of Jesus, that the teachings of Jesus that the messages weren't enough that a human being said these things It had to be from a divine being and I personally find that a little sad, but you're helped me be a little less judgmental.

A little bit more compassionate. Yeah, thank you.

Yes, please.

This might sound crazy, but
can't they both exist together? I mean,
they do in this text.

Yeah. I mean, I don't

I guess it doesn't bother me. I mean, I can see the human being and I can see the Divinity in the human being and i don't i don't see there doesn't seem to be a problem because I feel like everyone has that possibility. It's so it doesn't make me it doesn't mean he was a he was a man. And he reached enlightenment and think we all have that. Possibly

And we all have our moments.

But what does it mean to be enlightened? Does it mean that you now can jump over the Ganges rivers in a second? No. Does it mean that heavenly flowers and music comes down when you're?

But it could mean that you see things in a different way?

Yes, absolutely. So that's what it does mean. Yeah.

Right. So those those, those writings don't seem so far out, because you do see things. And if you have those experiences, you know, where you hear the trees talk, I mean, I mean, those things happen. And so that's it. I mean, I don't think it's black or white. I think that the spirit world kind of weaves in and out and I think it's beautiful.

It's beautiful. And

I don't know. And

it doesn't sound to Buddhists like so that's one of the things of point I wanted to make the afternoon was, was there's a way in which this certain issues that this text makes black and white and that it may be not so helpful to Sometimes I think in black and white terms, but to see that things are a little more

gray or interactive than that. And but I think that for many people, I think in our general Vipassana circles here in the West, if anything, we kind of lean in the direction of the human side of things, the ordinary side of things, away from the divinization side of it. And I think it's very important for our community people, at least to know that there's more to Buddhism, you don't have to agree with it or, or be part of it. But to know that Buddhism says if you're going to flesh out Buddhism as a whole, these these elements are important part of it. And, and so this text kind of points that direction as well. And some of this stuff, you know, pre support procedures, you know, it's kind of an early example of some of the things that you might end up doing. I mean, for whatever reason, And you know that it kind of feels connected to the tradition to feel because the tradition talks about it and because it has, you know, it's every, every people need to have rituals, as it's a language of expression expressing emotions and beliefs and ideas and rituals means you have to do something. So what are you going to do? So, so, you know, IMC is going to have a retreat center, hopefully some point soon. And maybe the property is big enough, I can imagine that. It might be nice to build a stupa by there. You know, and maybe with a with a, maybe the stupa would have us be written on it something like freedom you know, because it's freedom is or enlightenment or being awake. And that's an important quality and the stupa somehow becomes a reference point for that reminder of that, just like this statue here is a reminder of that. And then we have the stupa, you know, maybe we sprinkle some of our people in there. You know, it's nice to have people and, you know, have some place to put people and remember them and kind of the poignancy of life and death. And then I met him in the stupa. And then I imagine that people know start walking around clockwise. Because that's what their tradition does. And now you see it goes back so far as this. And you know, you don't believe in necessarily the gods and having these flowers and jumping over rivers and all that, but, but some of the devotionalism is expressed in a very modest, mild way, in the same forms as the ancient Indians did. Going around is clockwise, I can see you know, that would be simple, nice thing, Tony. Tony.

I've never come across the passages in the in the text myself, but I've been told by art historians that the Buddha requested that there not be images of himself made There certainly weren't images of him for a while. He's still the myanna I guess. So there There seems to be if that's correct. And at least it's correct that that the early images were images of footprints in, in the mud or Dharma wheels or other things, but not images of him at first, that he was requesting not to be. He didn't want anyone to make anything of him and his person. And then when the myanna came along, they said well case reminders of our practices, not about deification of him, wonder if

if you know there's a pat any passages in the scriptures and

what your thought is, in the Pali Canon, there's none like that, that I don't believe there's anything it's a probate an actual written prohibition against the images of the Buddha and just that It was basically notice that they're surviving images that don't start until about a year zero, first century. And so, people have guessed that there was a prohibition, but there's no evidence of a prohibition. And there might have been statues earlier, but they might have been made out of wood rather than stone. And so we don't know and no, actually no, there's more challenges to make things out of stone. And, and, and what's actually being depicted and why the avoidance of the Buddha images, we don't know. But I think that in terms of the Buddha prohibiting people focusing on him as a person, you see here he you know, this really text here that emphasis on stupa and having a stupor where people can go to and, and we didn't refer to it, but there's also the four areas of pilgrimage that he talks about and encourage people to go to the four holy sites of Buddhism. It's also kind of focusing on him. And when he asks when he tells his attendant Step out of the way so that other gods can see him. That's a very powerful, I think very powerful acceptance or approval and a sense of a worshipping of the Buddha, seeing the Buddha himself. And you have find languages there of seeing. And some of you know the Indian were Darshan

means to see. And it's very important part of Indian spirituality, the seeing of something sacred, whether it's a sacred person is teacher, sacred site, the sacred monument, sacred mountain, sacred something, and that there's something very powerful in Indian spirituality about seeing and also being seen. And, and it's somehow like if you're seeing and see, you partake somehow you're transformed somehow by what you see. And so that's how seeing aspect of Indian spirituality played itself out in this visit where the first one We have all these gods who 12 yojanas away are stacked in turn, look, they're there, they're there to do this to this very powerful ritual act of seeing and the Buddhists and get out of the way let them do their seeing. And so part of the reason for stupas, part of the reason for statues later on is a thing of gazing and seeing. And it isn't just simply it's inspiring to look at the symbol. But some of these statues you know, that the ritual for empowering a Buddha statue is opening the eyes. And again, the state of seeing that something something very powerful is transmitted through the eyes, the spirituals even with a statue. So, it was a bit of discouraging worshipping himself. He said, you know, those who see the Dharma see me, but those who see me see the Dharma. So if you see the Buddha if you had a good chance of seeing him, then you can see the Dharma too. And if you if you read the Pali Canon, the, like the majjima middling discourse, one of the primary themes of the middling discourse is a nature of who the Buddha was himself over and over again, this reference back to the Buddha, what who he is how he is in the world. And there's a lot a lot of reference to that. It isn't just simply his teachings are important, who he was as a person important as well. And if we too quickly dismiss the role and importance of the Buddha, by focusing on these teaching and doing our practice ourselves, we miss a hugely important part of what the early tradition emphasized. And so I don't go along with the thing you said to me, last one, Ted, we'll take a break for lunch.

Maybe this is too big a question to cover quickly, and maybe it's wrapped up in the whole day, but a lot of the devotional elements that we've talked about and are through here and the others seem to be in direct opposition to the sanction against rites and rituals. And so what's the right balance? If you read some of his words he's in seems in direct opposition to the superstructure that is wrapped around him even in his time, let alone later.

I don't think there's any prohibition against rites and rituals in Buddhism at all. They're really Buddhist, for what they were they don't say is that someone who becomes a stream, enter, no longer realize or believes in rites and rituals, that's a different thing. And what they don't believe in is that rites and rituals are the way to get enlightened. But there might be all kinds of other functions of rituals besides getting enlightened.

So I hope this is interesting for you. And I apologize if you know the way I'd set up today's I just talk I came by my assumption is is hard and demanding just listen to someone carry on a long monologue. But somehow I couldn't get organized to think of another way of doing this today. So this is my best attempt. And so the afternoon we'll do these two things. We'll look at the nature of the Dharma itself, and then more issues around the acts of the Buddha's death itself. So let's take an hour for lunch, and let's start again at 135