



# Sujato Bhikku: The Way to the Beyond: A Study of the Pārāyanavagga (1 of 4)

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Thank you so very much and thanks to everyone sati center for organizing this and thanks to all of you for coming along. I am speaking to you today from Harris Park which is near Parramatta in Western Sydney. And this is the traditional land, the traditional owners of this land, the barrow medical people have the Kurig nation and as is conventional in Australia we always pay respects to the traditional owners of the land past present and emerging and acknowledge their unseeded custodianship of this land.

So we are going to start a series of four sessions on the Pārāyanavagga of the Sutta Nipata. I know some of you were hoping to start last week and I had to cancel because of ill health. So sorry, to everybody who was inconvenienced because of that. But anyway, we are hoping to we will be will be putting an extra session on at the end. So we'll have still have the four sessions.

Good to see so many friends, joining us, Esther, Mike, Susan, and many new friends as well. ramsha Rochelle, Julie star, so good to see you all. And I'm really looking forward to spending a little bit of time talking about the suttas. Now we know that we're living in all of these very difficult times in Australia, we have, of course the COVID pandemic like everywhere, and we have also floods have been afflicting our country for many months now. So that's like a kind of a to pale horsemen stage of the apocalypse that we're at now. And I'm sure that different places around the world are enjoying different sort of phases of the end times. But meanwhile, we still have the dhamma. And one thing that the dhamma does promise us is that there is a way to the Beyond, that there is an escape away out of all of this.

I know that most of you will have some experience and knowledge with the suttas. But some of you may not also, so I'm just going to begin by giving a little bit of a brief background and introduction to the suttas and what we're doing here. The teacher that we know as the Buddha was one of the many wandering renunciant teachers in India about two and a half thousand years ago. And he lived and taught in northern India, India today the region of the Ganges Valley. He taught for 45 years and accumulated a large community and when he passed away his community got together and organized the recitation of his teachings to preserve his message. And they passed those scriptures down. And they've come down to us in various forms today. And the scripture we'll be reading from today is from the Pali canon, which was passed down in Sri Lanka. And the Buddhist scriptures are conventionally divided into three

portions we call the tipitaka, or three baskets: the suttas, Vinaya and Abhidhamma. Sutta as being the main discourses of the Buddha taught. The Vinaya being the monastic code and the Abhidhamma being the scholastic treatises.

So this comes from the suttas or from the discourses. Within the discourses we have five nikayas or five sections. And this is from the last of those known as the Khuddakanikāya or minor section. And it's within the code of conduct from a book called the Sutta Nipata. And within the Sutta Nipata is from a chapter called the Pārāyanavagga. So this is where it sits.

Now I'm saying a lot of words in Pāli. If you don't know Pāli, don't worry about it. I will try to avoid using too much Pāli for this session. But if there is anything that I say that you don't understand, please tell me because if you don't tell me I don't know. Okay. So please help me out because I just in case you're wondering, I can't read all of your minds, okay. And zoom can't read your minds yet either may give us a few years and we'll be able to do that but not quite. So if I'm talking and there are things that are talked about that you don't understand or it doesn't make sense, then please do just pop your questions into the chat. And I will keep my eye on that and hopefully I'd be happy to answer any questions.

Now in the chat, I did put the link for the first chapter of the Sutta Nipata, a section Sutta Nipata of the Pārāyanavagga, which we will be reading first. All right.

Now, a little bit of an introduction, general introduction to this text before I start reading. Now, the Sutta Nipata is a compilation of five chapters, which was unique to the Theravāda School of Buddhism. Many of the parts of the Sutta Nipata are found in other schools of Buddhism. But the collection as a whole is only found in the Theravada canon. And the same is true for the Pārāyanavagga. We do have various parallels and so on. But it's mostly preserved in the Theravada tradition, Pali tradition. And certainly that's the version I'll be reading from. However, the Pārāyanavagga is referred to a number of times throughout the Buddhist traditions both inside the Pali and also in the Chinese and Sanskrit traditions. So even within the other suttas, it refers to verses quotes from verses in the Pārāyanavagga. And it even calls it the Pārāyanavagga. So that shows that it was quite an early collections that already existed when the other suttas were being compiled. Having said which the Pārāyanavagga as we have it today is a composite. Not all just for one session. But the heart of it is the 16 questions of soḷasa brāhmaṇā. And they to those 16 questions have been added an introduction and an ending. And so they create a narrative, which sort of wrap up and give context for those 16 questions and give her questions meaning. And I'm going to be talking quite a bit today about the narrative context of the Pārāyanavagga or about how meaning is created through the way that the narrative is shaped.

I'm when I'm teaching suttas, and I'm talking about suttas. I try and I try to get to the actual sutta as quickly as possible. So we can read through the sutta and then discuss it rather than giving too much information upfront. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to just share my screen, and then we can read through the first portion of the Pārāyanavagga. Okay. Let me see it's going to work.

I don't mean may ask a question. Yes, please. I come from a little bit of a Sanskrit background in time that Parana is set up. It comes with a composition and possibly a meter associated with that as well. Yes. Is that the case? Yeah, there is a way of chanting in addition to the essence of the meeting in this particular sutras.

Well, yes, there's certainly, metrical sorters and the verses in Pāli or the meters and Pāli are essentially similar or closely related to the same metrical styles that you find in Sanskrit, there is no fixed way of reciting. So the different traditions will recite it all with their different styles. Of course, the meter in Pāli is very strongly determined by the length of the syllables, but apart from that, the chanting style will vary.

I appreciate that. Thank you.

Yeah. All right. So let's so this is the my translation from the what to get into the introductory verses.

From the fair city of the Kosalans to the southern region came a brahmin expert in hymns, aspiring to nothingness. In the domain of Assaka, close by Aḷaka, he lived on the bank of the Godhāvarī River, getting by on gleanings and fruit. He was supported by a prosperous village nearby. With the revenue earned from there he performed a great sacrifice. When he had completed the great sacrifice, he returned to his hermitage once more. Upon his return, another brahmin arrived. Foot-sore and thirsty, with grotty teeth and dusty head, he approached the other and asked for five hundred coins. When Bāvari saw him, he invited him to sit down, asked of his happiness and well-being, and said the following. "Whatever I had available to give, I have already distributed. Believe me, brahmin, I don't have five hundred coins." "If, good sir, you do not give me what I ask, then on the seventh day, let your head explode in seven!" After performing a ritual, that charlatan uttered his dreadful curse. When he heard these words, Bāvari became distressed. Not eating, he grew emaciated, stricken by the dart of sorrow. And in such a state of mind, he could not enjoy absorption. Seeing him anxious and distraught, a goddess wishing to help, approached Bāvari and said the following. "That charlatan understands nothing about the head, he only wants money. When it comes to heads or head-splitting, he has no knowledge at all." "Madam, surely you must know— please answer my question. Let me hear what you say about heads and head-splitting." "I too do not know that, I have no knowledge in that matter. When it comes to heads or head-splitting, it is the Victors who have vision." "Then, in all this vast territory, who exactly does know about heads and head-splitting? Please tell me, goddess." "From the city of Kapilavatthu the World Leader has gone forth. He is a scion of King Okkāka, a Sakyan, and a beacon. For he, brahmin, is the Awakened One! He has gone beyond all things; he has attained to all knowledge and power; he is the seer into all things, he has attained the end of all deeds; he is freed with the ending of attachments. That Buddha, the Blessed One in the world, the Seer, teaches Dhamma. Go to him and ask— he will answer you." When he heard the word "Buddha", Bāvari was elated. His sorrow faded, and he was filled to brimming with joy. Uplifted, elated, and inspired, Bāvari questioned that goddess: "But in what village or town, or in what land is the protector of the world, where we may go and pay respects to the Awakened One, best of men?" "Near Sāvathī, the home of the

Kosalans, is the Victor abounding in wisdom, vast in intelligence. That Sakyan is indefatigable, free of defilements, a bull among men: he understands head-splitting. Therefore he addressed his pupils,

brahmins who had mastered the hymns: “Come, students, I shall speak. Listen to what I say. Today has arisen in the world one whose appearance in the world is hard to find again— he is renowned as the Awakened One. Quickly go to Sāvattṭī and see the best of men.” “Brahmin, how exactly are we to know the Buddha when we see him? We don’t know, please tell us, so we can recognize him.” “The marks of a great man have been handed down in our hymns. Thirty-two have been described, complete and in order. One upon whose body is found these marks of a great man has two possible destinies, there is no third. If he stays at home, having conquered this land without rod or sword, he shall govern by principle. But if he goes forth from the lay life to homelessness, he becomes an Awakened One, a perfected one, with veil drawn back, supreme. Ask him about my birth, clan, and marks, my hymns and students; and further, about heads and head-splitting— but do so only in your mind! If he is the Buddha of unobstructed vision, he will answer with his voice the questions in your mind.” Sixteen brahmin pupils heard what Bāvari said: Ajita, Tissametteyya, Puṇṇaka and Mettagū, Dhotaka and Upasiva, Nanda and then Hemaka, both Todeyya and Kappa, and Jatukaṇṇī the astute, Bhadrāvudha and Udaya, and the brahmin Posala, Mogharājā the intelligent, and Piṅgiya the great hermit. Each of them had their own following, they were renowned the whole world over. Those wise ones, meditators who love absorption, were redolent with the potential of their past deeds. Having bowed to Bāvari, and circled him to his right, they set out for the north, with their dreadlocks and hides. First to Patitṭhāna of Aḷaka, then on to the city of Mahissati; to Ujjenī and Gonaddhā, and Vedisa, and Vanasa. Then to Kosambi and Sāketa, and the supreme city of Sāvattṭī; on they went to Setavyā and Kapilavatthu, and the homestead at Kusinārā. To Pāvā they went, and Bhoganagara, and on to Vesālī and the Magadhan city. Finally they reached the Pāsāṇaka shrine, fair and delightful. Like a thirsty person to cool water, like a merchant to great profit, like a heat-struck person to shade, they quickly climbed the mountain. At that time the Buddha at the fore of the mendicant Saṅgha, was teaching the mendicants the Dhamma, like a lion roaring in the jungle. Ajita saw the Buddha, like the sun shining with a hundred rays, like the moon on the fifteenth day when it has come into its fullness. Then he saw his body, complete in all features. Thrilled, he stood to one side and asked this question in his mind. “Speak about the brahmin’s birth; of his clan; and his own marks; what hymns is he proficient in; and how many he teaches.” “His age is a hundred and twenty. By clan he is a Bāvari. There are three marks on his body. He is a master of the three Vedas, the teachings on the marks, the testaments, the vocabularies, and the rituals. He teaches five hundred, and has reached proficiency in his own teaching.” “O supreme person, cutter of craving, please reveal in detail Bāvari’s marks— let us doubt no longer!” “He can cover his face with his tongue; there is a tuft of hair between his eyebrows; his private parts are concealed in a foreskin: know them as this, young man.” Hearing the answers without having heard any questions, all the people, inspired, with joined palms, wondered: “Who is it that asked a question with their mind? Was it a god or Brahmā? Or Indra, Sujā’s husband? To whom does the Buddha reply?” “Bāvari asks about heads and head-splitting. May the Buddha please answer, and so, O hermit, dispel our doubt.” “Know ignorance as the head, and knowledge as the head-splitter, when joined with faith, mindfulness, and immersion, and enthusiasm and energy.” At that, the brahmin student, full of

inspiration, arranged his antelope-skin cloak over one shoulder, and fell with his head to the Buddha's feet. "Good sir, the brahmin Bāvari together with his pupils, elated and happy, bows to your feet, O seer!" "May the brahmin Bāvari be happy, together with his pupils. And may you, too, be happy! May you live long, young man.

To Bāvari and you all I grant the opportunity to clear up all doubt. Please ask whatever you want." Granted the opportunity by the Buddha, they sat down with joined palms. Ajita asked the Realized One the first question right there.

All right. So this is the first the opening introduction for the 16 questions. Now those of you who have read the Pārāyanavagga already will know that the tone and the manner of this introductory portion is quite different to what we find in the 16 questions. And it is universally agreed by scholars that the that this was a much later addition. And how much later well, we I'll do a little bit of give to a little bit of his text historical analysis here, just so we got a context. But I don't want to spend too much time on this because I think there are more important things to say about it. But just very briefly, if you look at the journey that was undertaken there, and I should have got this beforehand. But I'll see if I can find a map for you. But the journey that was undertaken starts from places that were a long way from where the Buddha normally lived. And so this is the first sign that it's later Buddhism spread in the years following the following his his the Buddhist passing away. And the we know some of the details about the way that that has spread. Specifically, we know details from the Askokan inscriptions and from various other texts that date from the time of King Ashoka about 150 or 200 years after the Buddha. And those texts include some of the same names that we find mentioned here. So this is one very good indication as to the lateness of this particular session. Now I'm just going to do another screenshare. We're going to have a look at a map. We've got the map. Yes. Yes, we got the map. We're good. Yep. Thank you. So this is around here is where we started out. This is this is this these many of these are approximate. But this is about where Bāvari's hermitage is. Okay. So we can see this is quite far south up here Benares, and this is Rajagaha. And Sāvattī. So this is where the Buddha normally was. He went a bit further and a bit further east a bit further west. But normally he was around this area. And so they traveled past Mahissati, Ujjenī, Vedisa, Vanasa Kasambī, and so on. They took a detour. So they obviously heard that the Buddha was going to be at Sāvattī. That's where he spent most of his time. So they sort of took a detour up to Sāvattī. And then they're like, oh, no, he's actually down here. It came back down. This is almost this part of the journey. The last part is almost the reverse of the Buddhist journey in the Mahāparinibbana Sutta, where he traveled north from Rajagaha. So down through these places and ended up in Rajagaha, in the hills there, where the Buddha was teaching. Now, this region down here is called the Dakkhināpatha. And in fact, Dakkhināpatha means the southern road or the southern trade route. And so this was because you can see here this is quite hilly area, often known as a Dakkhin today. This is quite hilly and rugged. So the trade route went down to the southwest, where it joined up with the sea trading routes here, where there will be trade. From about 100 years after the Buddha there was then trade with the Greeks and then the Romans. And then the southern route then continues down to the east, where it reaches Andhra Pradesh, and then from there to Sri Lanka. And in fact, this is likely the route that Mahinda and later Sanghamitta took on their way to Sri Lanka.

So we can see that this this is considerably outside of the region normally would have went into and all of these place names that we encounter in that first part of that journey are not found anywhere else in the sutras. So this is one of the reasons for understanding that this is a later text. But there are many other reasons for this as well. It includes various doctrinal ideas that we don't find in other early Buddhist texts, one of those most obvious ones being the idea of *vāsanavā*. Okay, so in in those verses, we heard that *Bāvari* was still redolent with the potential of past deeds. This is a concept of *vāsanavā*, which was introduced in the very latest books in the Pali canon, *Milindapanha*. Net Deepa Khurana and became a very, very common idea in later forms of Buddhism, but we don't find it in the suttas at all. So the idea here is that when we're born in this life, that we are our character, our spiritual potential, is informed by the kamma that we've done in our past lives. All right.

Now, of course, in the sutras, talks about kamma and rebirth and so on all the time. And it says that we experienced the different results of it. So it's not as if this is a radically new idea. But this terminology and the way that it's talked about, we don't really find that in the early suttas. And there are a number of other terms like this, quite a lot of the idioms we find here are Sanskrit inform, some of the narrative devices echo, for Echo, things we find in a Sanskrit epic poetry and so on. So we can't really date this introductory portion earlier than about the second century BCE, which puts it about two or 300 years after the Buddha. And it makes it one of the latest portions of the Pāli canon. All right. So now that if you if you're interested in the historical analysis of all I just said, there's a great article by the Sri Lankan scholar to Jayawickrama. He did, let's call it a critical study of the *Sutta Nipata*. It was published in the early 70s. But you can still find it on the Internet Archive. If you want to go have a deep dive into a lot of the the details that I've been talking about that.

So we know this is the late text, okay, that's fine. All right. And but what does that tell us? What kind of thing are we dealing here? Why is this text there? And why is it like the way that it is? These are to me much more interesting questions, right? So we don't when we do textual study, and especially text historical study. I found sometimes that there's a tendency for people to say, well, this is a late text, therefore, I can ignore it. Well, okay. Sure, you can ignore it if you want to. But that means you're not learning anything from it. And the different kinds in different strata of texts each tell us something slightly different about the time and the place, and about the way that the people in those places were responding to the dhamma. I'm going to return to this idea in just a minute. But first, I'm just going to put this introductory text in the context of this chapter as a whole. I'm going to trace if you like a narrative arc. So we have our starting point. Think about how their starting point when we begin with *Bāvari*, we're introduced to him. He seems like a nice guy, right? He's just given away all of his money. He's trying to do what he can to help people. He's sincere, he's earnest. And then this bad guy comes along this unscrupulous brahman who wants to rip him off for all of this money, and then threatens him with a curse? So we have a dramatic tension. Okay? Ah, right, any good narrative, you have to start with some kind of tension, where there's a threat, his head is going to explode in seven pieces. And obviously, in the context of the narrative, he takes it very seriously. Now, it seems kind of a bit goofy to us. Okay. We might think, well, you know, someone's going to come along and lay a curse on you Sure. Sure, mate. Yeah, whatever. And we're not going to take it very seriously. But for most people, over most time, these things were very serious, and they weren't messing

around. And when people make these kinds of curses, then it was felt to be very kind of powerful.

Now he can't solve this problem. I'm gonna go into more of these details a bit later on, so he can't solve them. He can't deal with that himself. He gets help. This Devatā comes here. Nice, right? It's nice if you can get your own personal god to come to help you out with your problems. Okay. Nice. And then his students also helping. So this is one of the things that's giving us here is about the importance of community the importance of spiritual friendship. All right, they go to see the Buddha, then they ask all of the questions. Now, the questions when we get to those in the next weeks, they have a much more serious time. And much more, we don't find that kind of mind reading stuff, and the marks and all of those kinds of things. It's much more straight dhamma questions about meditation and living your best life and so on. It's elevating the discourse. Yeah. And then when we come to the final chapters, again, we find that the the discourse is even elevated still, it becomes almost quite transcendent by the end. And I think that this is a deliberate choice by the composer of the chapter. And I know that some commentators tend to be a bit dismissive of the introductory or it's late, and it's a bit goofy with the curses and things like that. But to my mind, that's the point. The purpose of the narrative is to meet people where they are to talk to people in terms that they would understand with a popular narrative, and then gradually to lift them up to a place of transcendence. And I think that this whole narrative was very, very carefully designed specifically to do that. It reminds me in fact, of the, the monument at Borobudur, and I don't know if anybody here has had the chance to visit Borobudur on Java. Has anyone been to Borobudur? If you can, you should go. It's really amazing, really stunning. And what they do in Borobudur is something like this, that you have these different layers, and you're supposed to walk around the layers, okay? And each layer has panels on the side that tell stories. And in the bottom layer, it's all like Jataka stories like folktales and morality, fables and things like that. And then as you go up, it tells the life of the Buddha. And then as you go up, it starts expressing more abstract and profound philosophical ideas. So actually your your journey of walking around is taking you on that whole spiritual journey, which is encapsulated in the artwork there. And I think this story is doing something, the Pārāyanavagga is doing something similar. It's starting out with a popular level narrative, and then gradually, it's building you up to a more transcendent finish. Which, again, begs the question, why, why is it doing this? Why said something so far away? Clearly, you know, clearly the that whole introduction, you know, we're not going to take that literally from a historical point of view. But why is that there? Then it seems to me that this is a conversion narrative. This was a narrative that was designed precisely because it was about introducing Buddhism to those faraway lands. And so typically, what happens when Buddhism spread to new countries, especially after the time of Ashoka, that you would develop a mythology that would make some connection of your place with the dhamma, which would backdate your connection with the place to the time of the Buddha. So either usually, either the Buddha himself visited that place, or maybe one of the Buddha's disciples visited or something like that. So in some way, you're making that connection. And so I think this is an early example of a conversion narrative, which I think makes the whole spectrum of it actually really gives it another layer of interest. Now, when we think of it as a conversion narrative, right? Then it starts to make sense, because the curses and these kinds of things you see, in much of the world still today, like like a holy man, like

monks, right? Or brought wandering Brahmins and things like that. They're not necessarily, I mean, they're a bit scary.

Right? Because you can, you know, you can do stuff, mysterious stuff, and you got to keep on the right side of people. Otherwise, they might, you never quite know what's going to happen to you know, and people will always kind of project things on to you. So if you arrive, in some cases, a bhikkhu, people will always project things onto you, depending on what they are conditioned by. So when, for example, I arrived in New York, and I'm traveling on the train on New York, and people see me they'd go, ah Avatar! That's what they think of Avatar, the comic, anime something anyway, whatever. And so they're like, I'm gonna be doing kung fu or something like that. I'm like, yeah, no, sorry, but I don't. I don't know come for.

So it's a similar kind of thing. So this is this, this genre of literature would reach people where they're at. And it's part so part of that message is about showing them actually, you know, you don't have to be scared. Because, you know, the Buddhist monastics are not going to be like that, we're not going to be making curses and all of these kinds of things. So this is just giving us an initial perspective to try to understand that kind of narrative arc of the Pārāyanavagga as a whole and why it begins such a profound series of questions with an apparently, slightly, you know, popular or bit weird introduction.

So I'm just going to check the chat. See if we've got any questions so far, thanks. Julian has given us a link to Jayawickrama's article. So if you if you if like I said, it's a pretty deep dive. And he goes into a lot more than just the Pārāyanavagga. But it's really excellent because he gives a lot of the resources he compares with a lot of the Sanskrit texts. For example, one of the things that I just learned this morning that he talked about is in the I think it's about Hyuna Gregor sutra, one of the Sanskrit sutras, Sanskrit law books. It says that if brahman visits the dukkha, and upekkhā, then they have to do purification when they return. So the dukkha nimitta, was so far away that it was considered not part of the Arivata or the sacred lands. So that this is again, this idea that we're heading into unknown territory. All right. Let me come back to the sutta itself. Have and go in a little bit more detail in the introduction, text. Okay.

And please do pop any questions into the chat as I go. And I will get to them as I go and I'll just make a few comments along the way. So from the first city of the Kosalan, which of course is Sāvattthī to the southern region Dakkinapan. Actually, I probably should change that translation that came up Dakkinapan, literally means the southern road. It's a trade route brahman expert in hymns, the Mantapāragū, the hymns is of course, being the Vedas. Aspiring to nothingness. And now the word for nothingness here is I think, bar playing double duty. Normally, in this kind of context, it would mean simply owning nothing possessing nothing. Right? So just, you know, leaving leaving everything behind and just going and living a simple life. But we also find that a number of the questions revolve around the meditation attainment of the dimension of nothingness. The Qin Chandra Jana. And so perhaps what it means you could also read that as saying that he went there to practice meditation, so that he could realize the dimension of nothingness. And that was, of course, the meditation attainment, which was taught by Alara Kālāma, one of the Buddha's former teachers. So we know that he lives getting by on gleanings and fruit. Yeah. So it's been very humble life he's living alive. So this is in throughout the suttas,



the Buddha and the Buddhist texts depict a like a true brahman as being living a life of simplicity and renunciation, which is not unlike the lifestyle of the Buddha's mendicants. Typically they argued, or the suttas argue that modern Brahmins had fallen away from that state and that they were falling into corruption. But here is painting an idealized picture of somebody who's living in accordance with the ancient the true Brahmanical ideals.

So who performed the sacrifice? We're not told what the sacrifice was, of course, there are many different forms of sacrifice. Hopefully he wasn't doing animal sacrifice. I don't know but anyway, I hope hope not. Anyway, so another brahman arrived, traveling brahman, this one obviously not. Not very reputable. Paṇkadanto rajassiro, grotty teeth and dusty hair. Asked for 500 coins, that's a lot, I think, seems like a lot. So we're not getting what he wants. He then threatened him with splitting his head and seven pieces, this threat is, it's kind of it's a standard threat. And did actually happen in one of the Upanishads where somebody got this threat. And that actually happened and their head exploded in seven pieces. So no idle threat is all I'm saying. Now, in a way, like what this is setting up is because this is a kind of classic. It's a classic kind of Buddhist way of revaluing and reinterpreting ideas from a Brahmanical tradition, right. So in this context, clearly, it means like a physical curse, it's going to explode your head into seven pieces. But when it gets to the Buddha, of course, he reinterpreted and says, Well, this is ignorance and so we're going to ignorance is the head because the beginning of dependent origination, so we're going to get rid of ignorance instead. So, this is a typical way that the Buddha would reinterpret these things. So Bāvari became very distressed and emaciated because of this and this is not an unrealistic description in many cases that have been recorded where people who get these kinds of curses or black magic and causes very real psychological distress. It happened to my mother, actually, she's living in Malaysia living in Eco, and long story short, but there was one of the people around the place started doing black magic to scare the maid. Like Mom only found this stuff out much later. So in my mom's house, she was staying there, had a maid was looking after the place. And she she was just an educated woman. And so someone from the local area started doing all this, like they what they call a boom or started doing all this black magic leaving these things around the place and icons and these kinds of things, specifically to try and scare the maid. Why was he doing that? So that he could coerce her into giving her the key to the place and then steal stuff from the house, which they then did. So this is where it all kind of came out in the court case. Anyway.

So a goddess wishing to help approach Bāvari and said the following. So we don't know who this particular goddess was. Bāvari was in this extreme of distress at that time, maybe it's not unheard of that people might have some kind of breakdown, some kind of hallucination. Maybe he was losing this goddess, possible. Maybe she was a local deity. Right? So when Bāvari has moved in there, you know, he's a representative of what what would have been a foreign religion at that time. And so this is in a way, showing perhaps, that the local deities were on their side.

So she tries to console him. But she also admits that she doesn't know about heads and head splitting. Again, a standard part in the kind of the Buddhist rhetoric when it comes to relating to other kinds of religions, especially theistic religions, and so on. The Buddha wasn't interested in trying to deny the existence of gods and so on from other realms, but he just said that, well, they

don't really know what's up, they don't really know the answers to the problems that matter. So again, this is a standard Buddhist rhetorical device.

It is the victors who have vision. Interesting choice of terminology. The victor is more commonly used as an epithet for Mankhaliputta, who was the founder or the leader of the Jain community. The word Jain, meaning the followers of the victor. But jina is also used more generally and is used for the Buddha as well. So this deity knows about the Buddha, the world leader, "lokanāyako".

A scion of King Okkāka. Interesting that she introduces this idea of lineage here. King Okkāka is the legendary founder of the solar dynasty of kings in ancient India. The Sanskrit name is the Ikshvaku and the Ikshvaku dynasty. There's sort of two major royal dynasties, the lineage of the sun and the lineage of the moon. And the Buddha's family is said to be descended from King Okkāka and the lineage of the sun.

Then the deva offers these verses of homage or praise of the Buddha. And so it's bringing in this devotional aspect. And as we'll see, this also is something which is revisited at the end. And I think this is something that, clearly this is this has been deliberately introduced, right? This conversion narratives. And so the Buddha has been hyped up. Buddha has been praised as being exalted is being lifted up. But I think it's really important to to acknowledge the emotional content and the emotional perspective of these texts. These are not dry scriptures, and they're not just about some intellectual answer to a particular problem or something. It's about an act of commitment, his sorrow faith and he was filled to brimming with joy. So, the deva recommends you go to Sāvaatthī. Then he addresses his pupils. We haven't heard about the pupils before, the sissas. They're Brahmins who have mastered the hymns, that means they've memorized the Vedas. And he encourages his students to go to see them because he is now too old.

How do we know him? And then they introduce the topic of the marks of the great man. The Mahāpurisalakkhaṇā. Now the 32 marks of a great man, it's a bit of a controversial topic, I won't go into too much detail, but it's mentioned a number of times through the suttas. And there's a list of 32 physical features, which are according to the suttas were passed down in Brahmanical scriptures as a sign of somebody who would be enlightened, or would follow one of two destinies, as it says here. Either they become a universal monarch, or they become an enlightened Buddha. One of the curious things about this doctrine of the marks is that we don't really find it in Brahmanical scriptures that have passed down to us. So perhaps it's been lost. Or perhaps it was just something that was invented by the Buddhists. We're not really sure. In any case.

So they they're using this as a sign to test whether the Buddha really is the Buddha, according to their system. And we find a similar thing in for example the Brahmayu Sutta, in the Majjhima Nikaya.

But a unique detail here is this idea of just asking questions in the mind. I don't think we find that anywhere else in the suttas, right? Especially not used as a deliberate strategy like this, right. Yeah, quite an interesting kind of little detail. And I mean, I know as a monk, that a lot of people

sometimes assume that you can read people's minds. And so there'll be sitting there and then you might say something completely innocuous. And then they'll be like, Oh, I must be reading my mind. Because I'll say something like if you get attached to things that will cause suffering. And they'll say, Oh, really, you must be reading my mind because I could attach to something and it caused me suffering. And so definitely this kind of propensity to imagine these kinds of things are happening, because the interesting kind of rhetorical device that's being used here.

Now next, we have the list of the 16 Brahmins. Most of them we only find here or in the later books. We don't find them in the rest of the suttas. But we will hear from each of those later on. Here it sort of tries to hype up each of the brahman students saying that they've all got their own followings. Maybe. Wise ones, meditators who love absorption, "Jhāyī jhānaratā dhīrā". So in the questions, the 16 questions, we don't really get a sense that they were necessarily famous teachers in that way. But that second part, yes, that's definitely true that they many of them ask questions about meditation.

Okay, so then they go up on their journey would have taken a while many weeks, perhaps a few months. This is an interesting, this is a little detail here that it would be easy to overlook. But that, in fact, is also quite significant, like the merchant to great profit. So that kind of attack on a trade route. And so this is kind of acknowledging the significance of those trade routes. Buddhism, in fact, spread along trade routes all across Asia.

Then they asked about Bāvari. In his mind the Buddha answers 120 years old. Everybody's wondering, how can we be asking these things? So I won't go too much into all of these details.

This this particular passage is an interesting one, the particular qualities that are mentioned here. First, main emphasis is on knowledge or wisdom, and then faith, mindfulness, immersion, or Samadhi, and enthusiasm and energy. So these are more or less the same as the five faculties and the five faculties: faith, energy, mindfulness, samadhi, and wisdom. And the five faculties of course, taught commonly in Buddhism, but also interestingly, that they were taught by Alara Kālāma, as well as Uddaka Rāmaputta. So they're taught by the Buddha's early brahman teachers. So this sort of adds to the idea that perhaps Bāvari was from a lineage or tradition that was related to that of Alara Kālāma. Were these one of his students or at least from a school that had an affinity.

Then Ajita bows to the Buddha and the Buddha gives us very nice little blessing to him. "Sukhito bāvarī hotu. Saha sissehi brāhmaṇo; Tvañcāpi sukhito hohi, Ciraṃ jīvāhi māṇava."

Again, it seems it's kind of innocuous, but it's a little bit different from what we normally find in the suttas. And in the suttas, the Buddha will engage in a kind of polite conversation. How are you? Has your journey been well? How are you traveling? And so on. But that particular idiom of saying, May you be happy. Sukhito, which is, we're so used to seeing that these days, it's such a common part of Buddhism. But this might be the actual one of the first cases where we actually see this in the texts. Then the Buddha grants the opportunity to ask whatever you want, "Yaṃ kiñci manasicchatha". And then this leads on to Bāvari asking his first question. Okay.

So this is the introductory portion to the Pārāyanavagga. Like I said, this is quite different from the rest of it. It has quite different tone. And it's really just setting up that the context that we're going to be reading later. Now even though, you know, obviously, this is an earlier portion. And obviously, I'm not going to I don't think any scholar would really take it too literally as a historical document of what actually happened. I mean, it seems likely, given that the 16 questions were early. Then it seems likely that there must have been some background story to it. Right? So something happened which probably wasn't that much unlike what we've just heard, right? These things normally are not just made up out of nothing. They're usually told and retold, as are legends, which then get elaborated into a final form. And to me, like I said, this whole narrative, as we go on try to bear this narrative context in mind. And is one of those places where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts? Okay.

Cator is asking about if I'm gonna say a list or outline of the suttas covered each week. I won't be but what we're going to be going through the Pārāyanavagga. So it'll be basically be the next few suttas. So 16 questions, so you can do the math. So I'll try to get through about half a dozen of those each week. It's probably a bit ambitious. I might not do any of them. But if you want to do preliminary reading, I would say do at least the next half a dozen sets of questions. They're mostly pretty short. So yeah, it doesn't take too long.

Okay, Julian asked a question. How's it going Julian? Julian was curious about the name Bāvāri. Does it have meaning? I could only find the Sanskrit Bhavārii, an enemy of worldly existence says the internet. Related? No. So this is Bāvāri with a B. Not Bhavārii with bh. Okay, different letters. So Bhavārii is yes, the enemy of worldly existence. Bāvāri doesn't seem like it's related. I mean words can change in all kinds of funny ways. But unlikely. I'm not exactly an expert on this. I know that one proposal was the Bāvāri was related to Babylon. And that he was a Babylonian, which also could be connected with his location. Because you remember he was down in the south west, near the ocean. Which was where the trade routes with Babylon were established. So it's a fairly tenuous argument. Probably not. Probably not viable. But apart from that I'm not really sure if we have any meaningful the name Bāvāri as such.

Oh, one thing I should mention actually, that I was going to say earlier about the name Pārāyanavagga. So Pārāyanavagga, the name of the chapter as a whole, is also very nice meaning. The meaning is the Way of the Beyond. So literally, Para is the other. Yeah, the other self and other. An ordinary word. And pārā with a long A, is what they call a taddhita or secondary derivation, which means the place that is other, in this case. Unusually used of the far shore. So a far shore is the place that is other. And the Ana is Going. You may be familiar from the Ana from the Satipatthana Sutta. Satipatthana has the atthana, that which is going to one, going to oneness. And so here we have the Pārāyana, same construction. But here the Pārā, going to the far shore. Very beautiful and very evocative name.

Okay, so Korakot mentions that the 16 questions are in the Thai monk education level. Okay, so in the first dhamma education level, so many monks will be familiar with mallets. That's interesting. I remember when I was in Thailand, I read a translation in English translation of the 16 questions by I think one of the Thai, I can't remember one of the Thai. Anyway, senior patriarchs or someone, one of the famous Thai monks. So it's a bit unusual, because it's not,

you don't find many English translations of suttas in Thailand. But that's nice to know that those questions are part of a regular thing. Korakot, have you done the nat thaimec?

He has. Okay. How was it? Sorry, getting bit off topic here. It is difficult. Yeah, but fun. Good. Well, anyway, I'm glad to see you're keeping it up.

Good. So we're heading towards an hour already? Seems like no time. Does anyone have any final questions before we break up for today?

I'll just mention, place. Simple little thing. I just enjoyed hearing, you know, hearing you recite place names and the personal names. With what seemed like a correct accent. It sort of took me back to that time, more than almost anything else has done. That's all.

Ah, thank you. Thank you, Bill. That's really nice. I do try to get the pronunciation correct. So thank you for noticing. If anybody is interested in Pāli and wants to learn it, and so on, then Pāli pronunciation is pretty easy to get right. And it's pretty kind of well defined and relatively straightforward, but yeah, a little bit of effort and then you can do it.

Okay, Rob, I think we should maybe wrap up about now. What do you reckon?