



Sati Center for Buddhist Studies

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

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Welcome, everybody, I'm coming to you from Parramatta from the land of the biomedical people of the Darug nation. And we acknowledge their custodianship of this land, past, present and future.

And I'm not sure if I mentioned this in the first message, but I'll just going to mention it now just for so all of you folks in the US know what's going on here. In Australia, you may or may not know about when the white folk, aka my ancestors, took over the country, there was no treaty, no seeding of the land. And there wasn't even the acknowledgement that the land was formerly occupied. The estimates between one to 3 million indigenous people were living here, and they call this the doctrine of Terra Nullius. So this was the kind of legal fiction on which the nation of Australia was founded. Anyway. There is currently a movement instigated by Australia's indigenous peoples to have the acknowledgement of Aboriginal ownership in our Constitution. And this is called the Uluru statement from the heart. And so we are finally taking some steps to do this kind of long awaited movement. And the people who are organizing this are seeking the support of Australia's religious bodies apart from other people. So we need a broad based consensus Australia, we need to make a constitutional reform, you need two thirds of the population in a referendum to make a constitutional reform. So we, so I made the Buddhist contribution for this. We're putting together in a book which is hopefully going to be presented to Parliament and be part of the part of the sort of widespread movement for the establishment of an indigenous voice in Australia's parliament. So I've been one of the representatives on behalf of the Australian Buddhist community. And so we've been very proud to support this. So I just want to let you know that this is one of the things that we're doing here in Australia. Now, let us go forward.

This is the fourth and final of our sessions on the Pārāyanavagga. Most of you have been with us since the beginning. So I will briefly recap, Pārāyanavagga, the final chapter in the Sutta Nipata and is a collection of 16 sets of questions by Brahmins to the Buddha on diverse subjects. But often concerned with quite deep matters of philosophy and meditation. And these are bookended by a narrative. The narrative, especially the introduction, was clearly written some time later. But the whole creates a large scale structure, which is unusual in the Sutta Nipata. In fact, you could even consider the whole of the Pārāyanavagga as a single, long sutta, which could even belong in the Dīgha Nikāya or something as a single sutta. It's it's tightly integrated in that way. So we've read through many of the sets of questions so far. And so for today, we will look at some of the remaining sets of questions. And we will also look at the closing verses. And the closing verses to me are very moving and some of my favorite passages in the suttas.

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All right, and please do pop questions into the chat. If you have any questions or comments, please do put them there. And even if you just want to say g'day then please do so. By the way, it's okay. You can say g'day. Australians are not going to be upset that cultural appropriation or something that's like fine.

Okay, very good. Now. Okay, here we go. Can we see the application? Yes. Or can we hear hang on I've got to do the hearing. One second. Check that I'm going to try that once more. Share application share sound. Why do you torment me so zoom. Okay, here we go. Can we see and hear? We good? I'll take that as we're good.

And we're going to begin with Chapter 5.13. The Questions Bhadrāvudha. Interesting name Bhadrāvudha. Literally means the auspicious weapon. Not quite sure why he had that name. Anyway.

"I have a request for you, the shelter-leaver, the craving-cutter, the imperturbable," said Venerable Bhadrāvudha, "the delight-leaver, the flood-crosser, the freed, the formulation-leaver, the intelligent." So here Bhadrāvudha begins with a series of epithets to address the Buddha. And obviously bit difficult to capture these descriptions in a sort of elegant way in English. So anyway I tried to do my best. The first one is interesting, the shelter-leaver or taṇhacchidaṃ. The one who leaves behind the oak or the house or the home. Oh and the other one is worth commenting on is a kappañjahaṃ, which I've translated here is the formulation leaver. Terrible translation. Anyone's got a better idea, please tell me. The word kappa is a tricky one to translate. We find that more characteristically in the Aṭṭhakavagga. But here, as we have seen a couple of times previously, there are idioms that are found fairly commonly in the Aṭṭhakavagga that we also find, if more rarely, here in the Pārāyanavagga. And kappa means something like a formulation, a thought, a creation, an idea, a theory, and imagining. Okay. So the basic root of it is to create or to make something. And so it refers to, could even be like a plan. So it's a difficult term. One of these psychological terms that doesn't quite match exactly on to the terms we have in English. But often like a plan might even be a good one but in that idea that of like you're sort of developing like fantasy, is developing you know, you could even say a fantasy leaver. Or something like that. Someone who's left behind just that capacity of the mind to like build up fairy castles and to just live in this world of make believe.

Okay. "Many people have gathered from different lands wishing to hear your word, O hero. After hearing the spiritual giant they will depart from here." So I use spiritual giant to translate the Naga which is ... Looks like I mistranslated there. Oh there you go. So Right. So after hearing the spiritual giant they will depart from here. So Naga you're familiar with the Naga as the the mythical serpent like a dragon. But Naga also means an elephant, or an arahant, or the Buddha. And generally has this idea of like a giant or a powerful being or powerful beast.

"Please, sage, answer them clearly, for truly you understand this matter." "Dispel all craving for attachments," replied the Buddha, "above, below, all round, between. For whatever a person grasps in the world, Māra pursues them right there. So let a mindful mendicant who understands not grasp anything in all the world, observing that, in clinging to attachments, these people cling to the domain of death." All right.

Somewhat curious question here. But Bhadrāvudha is not, doesn't seem to be really asking like a specific question, but he's encouraging the Buddha to answer the questions of others. And so it's not

this particular set of questions or answers, not exactly clear what the Buddha is answering to. But in any case, the substance of his answer is clear enough. Okay, let's move on to Udaya.

Okay, Jhāyirū virajamāsīnaṃ. "To the meditator, rid of hopes, who has completed the task, is free of defilements, and has gone beyond all things," Pāragurū sabbadhammānaṃ, "I have come in need with a question. Tell me the liberation by enlightenment, the smashing of ignorance." Aññāvimokkhaṃ pabrūhi, Avijjāya pabhedanaṃ.

So Aññā in this case is a technical term that we find in the suttas that basically always means enlightenment or awakening or arahantship. So this is asking for what we would call enlightenment.

Remembering again, that the introductory narrative begins with the question of head splitting. And the Buddha responded to that with his answer in terms of ignorance and knowledge.

"The giving up of sensual desires," replied the Buddha, "and aversions, both; the dispelling of dullness, and the cessation of remorse. Pure equanimity and mindfulness, preceded by investigation of principles— this, I declare, is liberation by enlightenment, the smashing of ignorance." Alright so the Buddha's answer here, first of all, he teaches the abandoning of the five hindrances. And so many of you may recognize some of the five hindrances. Kāmacchanda, the first of the five hindrances. Domana here appears as a synonym for vyāpāda, the second one of the hindrances. So Domana often means sadness or depression, but also sometimes as here it means aversion. Then panūdanaṃ, here the dispelling of that darkness. And Kukkuccānaṃ is the remorse. So the only one of the hindrances which is missing here is doubt. So this is a very characteristic of the verses. That we find that very standard doctrines that we're very familiar with from elsewhere, the five hindrances which are taught countless times in the suttas. And then here in the verse, we find it somewhat reformulated a bit loosely phrased. There the terminology is a bit different. Here one of the factors is missing, but generally speaking, the idea is the same.

Then it goes on, of course, normally, in the suttas, the abandoning of the hindrances is also the attaining of jhāna. And in a way, like the relationship between these two things is very, very close and the suttas. It's almost so close as you could say that they are the same thing, but from a different perspective. So the abandoning of the hindrances is like a negative perspective. What's let go and the entering into jhāna is the positive perspective of what is realized.

But here, the Buddha heart goes on to speak of Upekkhāsatisaṃsuddhaṃ, which is almost identical with the normal phrase in the fourth jhāna, the upekkhāsatiṃsuddhi. So pure equanimity and mindfulness, a clear reference to the fourth jhana preceded by investigation of principles. This I declare is liberation by enlightenment, the smashing of knowledge. So the interesting phrase here is dhammatakkaṃ purejaraṃ, preceded by investigation of principles. Dhamma, phenomena, teachings, principles. Takka, thought, rationality, inquiry. So dhammatakka is probably a synonym for like, vimamsā, or something like that; of inquiry, investigation and so on. Purejaraṃ. Pare, beforehand. Jaraṃ. Jaraṃ is to run, almost like driven, right? So driven by previous investigation of principles. In fact, maybe I should put driven in there.

So the idea here is that abandoning the hindrances. And then there's a previous reflection on the dharma. Reflection, applying the principles of the dharma in your mind and your body. Listening to the

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dharma, listening to the teachings. Asking yourself, how do they apply to me? Hopefully, we're doing this right now. Hopefully as we listen to this we think of these things. What are they? Sensual desires. What are they? Aversions. What are they? Dullness. What are they? Remorse. Are these things that I'm experiencing right now? What is going on in my mind as I'm hearing this? Sometimes when you hear a particular teaching, your mind might be like, eww, I don't like that. Eww, it makes me uncomfortable. Right? That's when you're getting the good stuff. Right? When you hear the teachings that make you go, Oh, yes, I know that. Oh, yes. Yes, I knew that. Yes. Well, these ones are just feeding your ego, right? These are just telling you that you already know things, right. So that's making your pride go up. So always be a little bit careful of those things. But if you hear something and you go, eww, surely not. Surely not. That couldn't be me. That doesn't apply to me. Then that's a sign. Oh, there's some resistance there. That's interesting. What's going on with that? And so this is where we start to get interested and start to look into it and say what actually is happening with these things.

So this is that investigation of principles of dhammatakkapurejavarṇ. And we can do that now as we're listening to dhamma. We can do that as we go about our business during the day. We can do it during a dhamma talk, or reading a dhamma book, or in a meditation, or in conversation and so on. And so we're always looking and investigating and inquiring. Ah, okay, yeah, that's how that's working. And you start to understand things. And like this whole thing about the meaning of the dhamma in this case, is that we understand that all of these things are natural. Sensual desires is natural. Aversion is natural. Dullness and drowsiness is natural. Restlessness and remorse and doubt, these things are all natural. They're normal. They're part of what it means to be human. There's no call to be ashamed of them, or to even like worry about them or anything. Actually, there's nothing really wrong with these things. I mean from a Buddhist point of view, we don't really think of things in terms of like oh, it's wrong and bad, and so on. But rather you think of things as being kusala or akusala, which means that it leads towards happiness, or it leads towards suffering. And so when we experience these things, and you experience like a resistance to them. Investigating. Ah, okay, you feel that resistance. Ah, okay, that's worth looking at. It's worth investigating. Why? Because that thing will lead to suffering. So don't be worried about it. Don't be judgmental. Don't be ashamed to experience those bad things in yourself. Actually, it's good. If I see any meditator, any spiritual practitioner, who's feeling angry and feeling greedy and feeling all of these things. I'm like, whew. That's a relief. And so the ones who don't have any of those things, I start to think, oh, okay, maybe this is a bit of a worry. Because actually, they're inside. They're normal. It's alright. But just understand, ah, Let's Move. Let's Move along. Past them.

Okay Udaya, we've moved on is, asks the next questions. "What fetters the world?" Kiṃsu saṃyojano loko. "What explores it?" kiṃsu tassa vicāraṇaṃ. "With the giving up of what is extinguishment is spoken of" Nibbāna. "Delight fetters the world. Thought explores it. With the giving up of craving extinguishment is spoken of." And Udaya: "For one living mindfully, how does consciousness cease? We've come to ask the Buddha; let us hear what you say." In a way, very simple question. Very straightforward question. But also, he's talking at a very high level. I mean, we've already been talking at the level of the fourth jhāna beforehand. You know, we learnt, we heard in the introduction, that these are all meditators. And we've seen a number of questions that suggests that they're actually are genuinely very highly attained meditators. So the Buddha is pitching his answers at this high level. How does consciousness cease? So again, this is showing that these Brahmins, or at least this brahman, is moving beyond or has moved beyond or understood, the doctrine of the Upanishads. So the Upanishadic doctrine that consciousness is infinite and eternal. He said something from the Buddha about the cessation of consciousness, and he wants to know Kathaṃ satassa carato. Actually, how

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does this happen? How does this come about? But he's asking a pragmatic question, not a metaphysical one. Kathaṃ satassa carato, for one, living mindfully. Not taking pleasure in feeling, internally and externally. For one living mindfully. That's how consciousness ceases.

Comes back a little bit to what it said before about the Upekkhāsatisaṃsuddhaṃ. Living pure mindfulness in deep meditation. Then without taking any delight in feelings. And living mindfulness, then consciousness comes to an end, no attachment. Alright, let's move on to the question of Posala.

"Yo atītaṃ ādisati," said the Venerable Posala. "To the one who reveals the past, who is imperturbable, with doubts cut off, and who has gone beyond all things, I have come in need with a question."

Interesting opening there. "Yo atītaṃ ādisati." "One who reveals the past." "Consider one who perceives the disappearance of form, who has entirely given up the body, and who sees nothing at all internally and externally. I ask the Sakyan about knowledge for them; how should one like that be guided?" Again, zero to 100 very quickly here. He's asking a very profound question. Now, of course, how you take a question like this depends very much on the context. And in this particular case, you know, we've already had that strong indication that these are in fact meditators who are practicing these kinds of things. And the meaning of this phrase, Vibhūtarūpasaññissa, as a compound can be interpreted a number of different ways and you'll find a number of different translators will render this in different ways. But I believe the key to this is found in the Kalahavivāda Sutta, which is in the Aṭṭhakavagga again, Sutta Nipata number 4.11, where there is a series of questions including the term Vibhūtarūpasaññissa. So, this is what I think that it means. One who perceives the disappearance of form. In other words, somebody who has attained the formless attainments, right? So the four jhānas, four normal jhānas, if you like or the four rupa jhānas, are all attained with some mental residue or echo or reflection of some kind of physical property, which is usually perceived of as a light by the meditator. So when the meditator is perceiving a light, that light is a Rupa. It's a part of the rupakkhandha, part of the aggregate of physical form. This is one of the differences between the way that Buddhism sees things and the way that Western science sees things. In Western science, that our perception of a light that isn't there is considered to be entirely a mental phenomenon. Whereas in Buddhism it's considered to be actually a material thing. It's a rupa because it has material properties. This is the difference. In western science, things that are considered to be physical are considered to be physical because of the underlying substance. So it's a substantialist philosophy, it's made up of atoms and neutrons and protons and stuff like that. And therefore it's material. From a Buddhist point of view, something material is something that seems material. It's something that has material properties like shape, and color, and position. These are all things which are matters of perception. So things that are perceived or as material, like a light are regarded as being part of the rupakkhandha. And so in the first four jhānas, even though you're not, you're not perceiving the avacara rupa, the coarse physical form of the material realm, you are still perceiving the sukha ma rupa, the subtle matter, which is the reflection of that external material form that's perceived in the mind.

And in the fourth, after the fourth jhāna, going to the formless attainments, even that subtle form, then disappears.

Perceives the disappearance of form who's entirely given up the body, sabbakāyappahāyino. Ajjhatañca bahiddhā ca. And who sees nothing at all internally and externally. I ask the Sakyan about knowledge for them; how should one like that be guided?"

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So, the Buddha replies. "The Realized One directly knows all the planes of consciousness. And he knows this one who remains, committed to that as their final goal." So the planes of consciousness, *Viññāṇaṭṭhiti*, is elsewhere defined in terms of the different realms of rebirth. So the development of consciousness corresponds with the realm into which one is born. It's important to understand the distinction though. In Buddhism, rebirth is not produced by your level of consciousness, okay? It's characterized by your level of consciousness. But your rebirth is produced by your kamma. Always remember that. It's your kamma that produces the rebirth. Whatever your intention is, whatever your choice. That's the energy that activates a rebirth and that sends you to one or other of these planes of consciousness.

So of course, again the difference between the Buddhist point of view and the Upanishadic point of view that these Brahmins are representing. For the Buddhists, all of these stations of consciousness are merely conditioned dimensions in which consciousness can abide for a while, but from which it will inevitably fall. Whereas for the Brahmins, that consciousness is the true absolute underlying ground of being from which they came and to which they will ultimately return.

Okay, so this last one again is a bit of a tricky translation. So you can read the footnote here. The last line you can see in the text here it has *Vimuttarā*, whereas I think it should read *'dhimuttarā*, abbreviated form of *'dhimuttarā*. And *'dhimuttarā* means dedicated to, committed to that.

So the Buddha is. This is the Buddha talking about his ability to see the consequences of different spiritual paths and the outcome of different practices.

And so, again, it seems that the Buddha is referring here to the kinds of Brahmanical wishes that he encountered before his practice, namely *Ājāra Kālāma* and *Uddaka Rāmaputta*. And as we've seen already, that the 16 Brahmins are at least associated with those brahman schools. And what he's referring to, that those who remain committed to that as the final goal. That attainment of desire of rebirth. Understanding that desire for rebirth in the dimension of nothingness is a fetter. *Ākiñcaññasambhavaṃ*. This is, in fact, almost exactly what the Bodhisattva said when he rejected his teaching under *Ājāra Kālāma*. He said that this is no good because or not good enough because it leads only to rebirth in the realm of the dimension of nothingness.

"Directly knowing what this really means, one then sees that matter clearly. That is the knowledge of reality for them, the brahmin who has lived the life." So even that most refined. So this is the kind of the overall thesis of I think of this whole collection really. Is a very kind of clear expression of. That even that most refined of spiritual goals still is not good enough.

Okay, so I'll come to your questions in a minute, but I'll just read through another couple of questions. Before we do that, another couple of these sets of questions. Let's go on to *Mogharājā*, 5.16. *Mogharājā* being another slightly odd name; means King of Fools. Okay, fine. "Twice I have asked the Sakyan," said Venerable *Mogharājā*, "but you haven't answered me, O Seer. I have heard that the divine hermit answers when questioned a third time." Interesting opening there, right, obviously very noteworthy. Yeah. And so we haven't heard from *Mogharājā* before this point. So clearly not everything that's been said has been passed down. But he asks the Buddha and the Buddha doesn't answer curious, right? Why is he? He's answering all of these other people. Maybe? I wonder whether this

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even relates to what we saw before with Bhadrāvudha, where Bhadrāvudha was saying, answer them clearly. People have come here. Please give them an answer for you truly understand this matter. Perhaps Bhadrāvudha was really subtweeting Mogharājā in that particular one. Not sure. that's a bit of a hypothesis. But what is clear in any case is that for some reason the Buddha didn't answer. Now the text itself doesn't tell us why. But the commentary explains, reasonably enough, that the Buddha felt that Mogharājā was not ready to understand the answer to the question previously. And so he wanted him to wait. And he could hear the questions and answers from the others. And then gradually learn. And then by this time he was ready to understand.

"Regarding this world, the other world, and the realm of Brahmā with its gods, I'm not familiar with the view of the renowned Gotama." Again the idea of this world and the other world being commonly found in the Upanishads.

"So I've come in need with a question to the one of excellent vision. How to look upon the world so the King of Death won't see you?" Kathaṃ lokāṃ avekkhantaṃ, maccurājā na passati. Very beautiful question, very powerful one. How do you see the world so that the King of Death won't see you? Interesting.

"Look upon the world as empty, Mogharājā, ever mindful. Having uprooted the view of self, you may thus cross over death. That's how to look upon the world so the King of Death won't see you."

So here the Buddha teaching the famous Buddhist doctrine of emptiness. Of course, we find emptiness taught many times in the suttas as well. And as usual, the doctrine of emptiness in the suttas, early texts is very closely related to the idea of not-self. In fact, as here, it often seems to be pretty much a synonym for not-self. It's used, it's not always used exactly in that way. But generally speaking, the idea of emptiness in the suttas is similar to the idea of not-self. So the idea of being empty of a self. And obviously the idea of emptiness underwent a lot of philosophical reflection and development over the years. But I think it's important to sort of just keep that sort of grounded approach. That when the Buddha was talking about emptiness, he was talking about it in a specific way. It's empty of a specific kind of thing. He wasn't sort of advocating some kind of abstract metaphysical principle of emptiness.

Okay, so see the world is empty, ever mindful. So once again, the Buddha is advocating a method of reflection, of meditation. And, you know, I find sometimes there's a kind of a dialogue in some circles in modern Buddhist studies, where people like, this whole kind of thing about meditation. Is this kind of Western imposition on Buddhism. And I'm like, have you read the suttas? I don't know. It seems like it was important to the Buddha. And the Buddha was talking about these kinds of things all the time. And we don't find throughout the suttas that the Buddha is telling people, you know, do lots of rituals and do lots of these kinds of things. And not to say that you can't do those things. You know, doing rituals and making offerings and so on is nice, you know. There's nothing wrong with it. But the thing that the Buddha was really emphasizing all the time, was about knowing. It's about being aware. How do you see the world?

Okay.

Then I'll just do the last one of the sets of questions here and then we'll go to the chat. So from Piṅgiya. Piṅgiya, again, kind of an odd name. Piṅgiya, you could translate Piṅgiya as Pinky, if you wanted. Not

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quite sure why is called Piṅgiya, but anyway. "I am old, feeble, and pallid" said Venerable Piṅgiya, "my eyes unclear, my hearing faint. Don't let stupid me perish meanwhile; explain the teaching so that I may understand the giving up of rebirth and old age here." Māhaṃ nassaṃ momuho antarāva. He's just come such a long way. Poor Piṅgiya. Bāvāri said that he couldn't come because he was too old, but Piṅgiya came. I'm old, feeble and pallid. Jiṅṅohamaṣmi abalo vītavaṅṅo.

"Having seen those stricken by forms," replied the Buddha, "negligent people afflicted by forms; therefore, Piṅgiya, being diligent, give up form so as not to be reborn." So here the Buddha again using this word Rupa, which has so many different connotations and implications. One of the indications here of course, being formed as the body. Right. So when you get attached to the body, then it becomes an affliction for you. And the more you get obsessed with bodies, obsessed with beauty, obsessed with our form, then the more it comes back to bite you. Because inevitably, that's what happens. Give up form, so as not to be reborn.

And Piṅgiya, responds, "The four quarters, the intermediate directions, below, and above: in these ten directions there's nothing at all in the world that you've not seen, heard, thought, or cognized. Explain the teaching so that I may understand the giving up of rebirth and old age here."

And once again, it's very common formulation *adiṭṭhaṃ asutaṃ amutaṃ* found constantly in these passages where we're finding the Brahmanical teachers. What has been seen, what has been heard, what has been thought. And *viññāta* is cognized. So I probably mentioned this before, but I'll say it again, just because repetition is good sometimes. But *muta* here means thought. Doesn't mean sensed as too many translators render. Actually, this is purely an *Abhidhamma* meaning. But in the suttas, *muta* has a meaning of what has been thought. And the four of these things taken together, generally speaking, these are not sensory categories. These are not equivalent to the six senses. These are our ways of knowing and ways of learning spiritual truths. So these are epistemological methodologies, rather than being synonyms for the senses. So to *diṭṭha* to what has been seen, is to see a spiritual teacher, to see the Buddha, to see some kind of yogi or saint. And that idea of *darshana*, to be uplifted because of that this is what this means with *diṭṭha*. *Sutta* is not just hearing something, but hearing the teachings, hearing the passing down of the oral tradition. *Muta* is again, not just random thoughts, but *muta* here means the cognition and what we would call philosophy really. To be able to rationalize about the truth of spiritual things. And cognized, again here doesn't just mean to know any old thing. But it means to be aware of spiritual truths, especially as revealed in meditation and other states of altered consciousness.

So when Piṅgiya is praising the Buddha as saying there's nothing that he hasn't seen, heard, thought, or cognized, he doesn't literally mean that there's like not a mote of dust on the other side of the galaxy that he hasn't been aware of. He's not praising the Buddha in this kind of way. But he's talking about all of the different spiritual truths and teachings that have been passed down. And that there's nothing, there's no means of knowing of these things that the Buddha is not familiar with and hasn't understood.

So the Buddha continues. "Observing people sunk in craving, tormented, mired in old age; therefore, Piṅgiya, being diligent, give up craving so as not to be reborn." *Taṅhādhipanne manuje pekkhamāno*.

So what the Buddha is turning, in a way Piṅgiya's reflections from the beginning, he's turning it upside down. Piṅgiya's like, well, how do I practice when I'm old, I'm old, right? It's difficult to practice because

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of you don't have energy. And the Buddha turns it upside down. Says use this for your insight. This is how you find wisdom. You look at your own experience, and you understand. This is the suffering. And it's not just me who's going through that suffering, but everybody's going through that suffering. At the very least, when we can reflect in that way, it gives rise to compassion and a sense of connection. Ahh, I'm going through universal experience.

All right. So I'm going to stop there and come to the chat. See if we've got any comments here. I've got a few comments in the chat. And a few "hi's" from everyone. Julianne, Elizabeth Robert, Debbie. All looking good. Okay, so Gabriella, how's it going? Gabriela from the unceded Coast Salish territory in Canada. "Can you comment on the idea that absence of hindrances equals absorption? This is a general widespread understanding of the sutta." okay. So, if you look in the suttas, basically the way that it always presents meditation is that always says you sit down to meditate, you establish mindfulness, close your eyes, and then you abandon hindrances. And then when the hindrances are abandoned, then the mind goes into jhānas. Now in the commentaries, they develop this kind of more. They sort of tease out things in a lot more detail. And so they start to talk about things like *khanikasamādhī* and *upacārasamādhī*, which are like states, especially *upacārasamādhī*, is like a kind of an in between where the hindrances have been abandoned and the jhāna is not yet fully attained, right. Whereas in the suttas, it's more like the kind of the flip side. So the commentaries. Now, is this a different teaching to what the sutta is teaching about? I mean, it's a bit hard to say honestly. I don't have strong opinions about it. I think that most of those things that are talked about in the commentaries come from meditators experiences. So I don't necessarily take them as being as authoritative as I would take the suttas. But at the same time we're listening to the voice of experience of meditators of old, so don't kind of dismiss it lightly. So in any case, the commentaries want to sort of split apart the abandoning of hindrances and the entering of jhāna. Now, it's true to say that there are some kinds of contexts that might justify that from the suttas, right. But generally speaking, the abandoning of the hindrances and the entering of the jhāna are more or less the flip side of the same experience. And that is true. And that's not just true in that particular case. But that is generally true of the progress of meditation, if you look at the way that meditation and spiritual development is described. It's always described both as a negative thing and as a positive thing. Think about, for example, you know, even like within the jhānas, right. So from first jhana you abandon *vitakka-vicāra* and then you enter second jhana. From second jhana, you abandon rapture and you enter third jhāna. And so always that letting go of that negative thing is equated with the realisation of the positive thing. Or even say, the attainment of the states of enlightenment, same thing. Becoming an arahant is, on the one hand, letting go of greed, hatred, and delusion. And on the other hand, is becoming an arahant, becoming a perfected one. So that way of talking in the suttas is very deeply embedded. It's not just like a specific technical point. So when we're reading the suttas, try to avoid looking for gotchas. Okay, this is what sometimes people try to look for. They want to try and prove a point. "Ahh, I've got this passage. This is going to this is going to prove that I was right all along." Or this is right or wrong. So try not to read things in terms of gotchas. Try to listen to what the suttas are saying. The abandoning of these negative things and the realization of these positive things, actually are more or less flip sides of the same thing.

Okay, so Eric asks, "Does cessation of consciousness only refer to *parinibbāna* and *sañavedayitanirodha*?" Yeah, in this particular case, I would say it's referring to *parinibbāna*; to the ending of consciousness of *parinibbāna*. That's really what they're talking about the goal of practice, cessation of perception and feeling is a bit more of a specialized kind of thing.

"Afflicted by forms preserves the Pali pun of ruppanti rupesu". So yes, that's what I'm trying to do. But yeah, not easy to get.

"Does your comment about seen, heard, thought and cognized apply to the Bahiya sutta too?" It does, yes. So this is generally true throughout the suttas. Whenever we see this seen, heard and thought and cognized, that this is what it's referring to. You want to look at the details of that? Then I recommend Jayatilake's book, Kul Jayatilake's Early Buddha's Theory of Knowledge. Not an easy read. But I did do a course on it a year or two ago. And he went into a lot of detail into this. And to looking at the way that these particular terms are being used. See, what happened is that these terms were inherited from an Upanishadic context. But in the Abhidharma, which then is a few 100 years later, the Abhidharma was very concerned about mapping certain teachings onto certain other teachings. So this thing occurs here, but how does that relate to that thing that occurs over there? Oh, we will map them onto each other like this. Generally speaking nothing is wrong with that, right? Because sometimes that helps to understand things. But sometimes that mapping happens in a way that misses the nuances of what was really being talked about.

Okay, Eileen says "We can be aware of craving fairly easily, but does one need to enter states of jhana in order to abandon craving?" Yeah, again, it comes back to that thing of the flip side of things, right? So again, think of that language that you're using there. Do you need to enter jhāna, right? Like do you have to have. Oh God, really do I have to get into jhāna? Jhānas are just what happen when you let go of defilements. So if you don't have any hindrances, then jhānas is just a kind of a natural state of mind. And so it's not an extra thing that you need to do on top of that.

Okay, so Julian, "Has this course on Abhidhamma been recorded? If not, would you do it again, and one or two years?" So I did the course on Jayatilleke's Early Buddha's Theory of Knowledge. I haven't actually done a course on the Abhidharma. I did do one on the Visuddhimagga, which covers a lot of these areas as well. But maybe I should do one on Abhidharma. They's probably annoy a lot of people, it'd be fun. Okay. I'll think about it. Think about it. I always like to try to do a challenge. Because you know, I do the same thing all the time. But was that first course recorded? Probably. Probably. Ask on our Sutta Central forum, and somebody there will probably be able to point you to the recording. Okay. Great.

So I'm going to go back to sharing the screen again. And we're going to look at the last couple of sections. Excellent. Very good. So we've now heard from all of the 16 Brahmāns. And it comes back to a narrative voice.

This was said by the Buddha while staying in the land of the Magadhans at the Pāsāṇake shrine. When requested by the sixteen brahmin devotees, he answered their questions one by one. If you understand the meaning and the teaching of each of these questions, and practice accordingly, you may go right to the far shore of old age and death. These teachings are said to lead to the far shore, which is why the name of this exposition of the teaching is "The Way to the Beyond".

And then resumes with some verses, again still in the narrative voice. 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: they approached the Buddha, the hermit of consummate conduct. Asking

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their subtle questions, they came to the most excellent Buddha. The Buddha answered their questions in accordance with truth. The sage satisfied the brahmins with his answers to their questions. Those who were satisfied by the all-seer, the Buddha, Kinsman of the Sun, led the spiritual life in his presence, the one of such splendid wisdom. If you practice in accordance with each of these questions as taught by the Buddha, you'll go from the near shore to the far. Developing the supreme path, you'll go from the near shore to the far. This path is for going to the far shore; that's why it's called "The Way to the Beyond".

So these verses, recapping the main events. And obviously, this is a narrative framework for the 16 questions. Now we looked at the Vatthugāthā, the Introductory Verses, it was very clear from those verses that these were not only later than the verses. But that they were quite late. And probably among the latest additions in the Pali canon. Yet here, it's not entirely clear what the relationship is. Were these ending chapters added at the same time as the origin? There's nothing really in these that I think allows us to date them in the same way as we dated the Introductory verses. I'm just having a quick look through them, nothing. That doesn't mean that they were earlier, but they certainly could be earlier. So it could have been the case that originally the 16 questions were sort of ended with these couple of chapters. And then the introduction was added on later. Or it could be that the introduction and ending were composed at the same time. But just that the introduction sort of betrays more signs of its lateness. It's hard to say.

Now from the impersonal narrative voice in the previous section, then the final chapter or final set of verses, returns to a much more personal verse here.

"I shall keep reciting the Way to the Beyond," said Venerable Piṅgiya, "which was taught as it was seen by the immaculate one of vast intelligence. He is desireless, unentangled, a spiritual giant: why would he speak falsely?" Now, so here we find the first of all the return of Piṅgiya. Remember Piṅgiya was the last one of the 16 Brahmins who said he was very old. And was described in the previous verse as the mahāsi, the great hermit. So clearly is respected. Among all of them are respected. And he is particularly so.

Now one detail, which is easy to miss in the Pāli here, anugāyissam. To gāyati is to sing. So in one way, he's saying he's going to sing or he's going to recite the Way to the Beyond. That's interesting, right? Because what it's saying is you have here one of the characters in the events, who is now announcing that he will take responsibility to recite these. You see? In a way he's saying, I'm pressing the record button on these teachings to make sure that we've got them for later on. And, but the prefix "Anu" here is also significant. He's not just going to "gāyati", he's going to "Anugāyati", to sing after repeating verse, the "Anu" here has a implication of to keep on, right. To keep on reciting. In other words, he is going to establish the oral tradition of reciting these verses so that they can continue to be remembered throughout time. And so this is very, very unique. Very interesting little detail here. And so you're almost like you're recording the moment when it was decided that these would be retained as a set of scriptures.

Piṅgiya continues: "Come, let me extol in sweet words of praise the one who's given up stains and delusions, conceit and contempt. The Buddha, all-seer, dispeller of darkness, has gone to world's end, beyond all rebirths; he is free of defilements, and has given up all pain, the rightly-named one, brahmin, is revered by me." So first of all, notice that so far in these verses, we haven't had any context. We

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know who's speaking, it's Piṅgiya. We don't know where he's speaking. We don't know to whom he is speaking, except that now he's addressing a brahman. So he's talking to, not particularly surprising, perhaps since he was a brahman with a bunch of brahman. But who is the brahman that he is actually addressing? We don't know yet. "Like a bird that flees a little copse, to roost in a forest abounding in fruit, I've left the near-sighted behind, like a swan come to a great river. Those who explained to me previously, before I encountered Gotama's teaching, said 'thus it was' or 'so it shall be'. All that was just the testament of hearsay; all that just fostered speculation." And we've seen actually similar complaints in some of the questions previously. The testament of hearsay, "itihītihaṃ", so iitihītihaṃ", referring to passing down on an oral tradition. But perhaps more specifically, referring also to legendary tales. And perhaps even more specifically still, referring to the stories that we know today as the Mahabharata and Ramayana. I mean, that is a speculative Association. But I think that that's the kind of thing that has been referred to. Also fun fact, the earliest recorded versions of many of the primary events in the Ramayana and Mahabharata, I mean, the Pāli Jataka stories, which are earlier than any of the Hindu versions of those events. Okay

"Alone, the dispeler of darkness is splendid, a beacon: Gotama, vast in wisdom, Gotama, vast in intelligence. He is the one who taught me Dhamma, visible in this very life, immediately effective, the untroubled, the end of craving, to which there is no compare." Yassa natthi upamā kvaci.

So, then the brahman to whom Piṅgiya is speaking, responds: "Why would you dwell apart from him even for an hour, Piṅgiya? From Gotama, vast in wisdom, from Gotama, vast in intelligence? He is the one who taught you Dhamma, visible in this very life, immediately effective, the untroubled, the end of craving, to which there is no compare." So, again, it's not specifically identified here, but it's likely that this is Bāvāri that has been referred to here. So Piṅgiya's teacher. And according to the commentary, that is the case.

Piṅgiya replies again, "I never dwell apart from him, not even for an hour, brahmin. From Gotama, vast in wisdom, from Gotama, vast in intelligence. He is the one who taught me Dhamma, visible in this very life, immediately effective, the untroubled, the end of craving, to which there is no compare. Being diligent, I see him in my mind's eye day and night. I spend the night in homage to him, hence I think I dwell with him." Beautiful lines there. That sense of devotion. And I never dwell apart from the Buddha. I see him in my mind's eye day and night. I spend the night in homage to him. Hence I think, I dwell with him.

"My faith and joy and intent and mindfulness never stray from Gotama's teaching. I bow to whatever direction the one of vast wisdom heads. I'm old and feeble, so my body cannot go there, but I always travel in my thoughts, for my mind, brahmin, is bound to him. Lying floundering in the mud, I drifted from island to island. Then I saw the Buddha, the undefiled one who has crossed the flood." And once again, we see Piṅgiya echoing imagery and ideas that we've heard throughout the 16 questions.

Now then is a another intervention from another unnamed speaker. But this unnamed speaker, it seems, is meant to be the Buddha. Bit unclear here, but I think this is meant to be the Buddha. "Just as Vakkali was committed to faith— Bhadrāvudha and Gotama of Āḷavī too— so too you should commit to faith. You will go, Piṅgiya, beyond the domain of death." So the phrase here to commit to faith, the "muttasaddho" or here "pamuñcassu saddhaṃ". And this is same as the phrase which is spoken by

Brahma after the Buddha was enlightened. And "pamuñcassu saddham", the other people may commit to faith.

The Buddha spoke of people who pursued not really different paths, but people who pursue the path with different faculties foremost. So for some people, devotional faculty is a foremost one. For others, it might be wisdom and investigation. So Piṅgiya, because of his very strong devotion, very strong sense of a personal connection and love to the Buddha. It's been encouraged by the Buddha in this to find liberation with faith as foremost. I think this is really beautiful, I find it's really beautiful. And I think it's a very good thing to remember as well. The Buddha did not, you know, the Buddha was not critical of people who were very devotional or people who had different emphases and practices. As long as their path is leading them in a positive direction. He would encourage them to practice in that way that is going to be suitable and nourishing for them. And so this is always in the Buddhist tradition, this is regarded as one of the special qualities of the Buddha. That other disciples will tend to encourage students to practice in the way that they have practiced and to find that nourishment through the things in which they have found nourishment. Whereas the Buddha had a higher vantage point and was able to teach in a more diverse way to respect where each individual is coming from. And so this, I think, is something which is really important to bear in mind because obviously, there are many different approaches to the dhamma. And there are many different personalities. And the things that inspire me, do not inspire somebody else. And the things that inspire them, do not inspire me. And that's okay. As long as we're continuing to practice.

"My confidence grew when I heard the word of the sage, the Buddha with veil drawn back, so kind and eloquent. Having directly known all about the gods, he understands all top to bottom, the teacher who settles all questions for those who admit their doubts. Unflinching, unshakable; that to which there is no compare. For sure I will go there, I have no doubt of that. Remember me as one whose mind is made up.", Asaṁhīraṁ asaṅkappaṁ, Yassa natthi upamā kvaci; Addhā gamissāmi na mettha kaṅkhā, Evaṁ maṁ dhārehi adhimuttacittan"ti. So these are the final words in the Sutta Nipata. Love this verse. I love that, just that confidence in it. He just comes out and says, "I just don't care anymore". I love that, "I just don't care". Whatever happens, I'm going there. I'm gonna get there. My mind is made up. So when I did my translation project for the suttas, I deliberately left the Sutta Nipata to the last book that I would translate because I knew that this would be the last verse in the last book that I was going to translate. So I had something to look forward to translating my favorite verse to give me that inspiration. So that made me really happy when I finally got there.

All right, so this is the Pārāyanavagga and the ending of it. You know, what a journey that those 16 Brahmins went on. And what they endured. And that deep sense of questioning that they brought to their own tradition, right? And their depths of dedication to their meditation and spiritual practice. But also the humility that they brought to see the Buddha and to listen and to practice his teachings. And the way that the whole chapter is sort of wrapped up and included in his narrative. A little bit, yes, a little bit sort of clunky with the different time periods and things like that. Okay, we can understand there's a bit of editorial process there. But still, I think that in this case, that narrative gives like a human context, that makes the whole thing more relatable and more engaging.

So this is the and he's already given it a title, Julian commenting on on what Piṅgiya said at the beginning. Yes, you're quite right. So so he's not only determining to keep on reciting them, but he's also titled them. Yes.

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So question from Elizabeth, why have these 16 questions and answers not been included in the four nikayas? Yeah, good question. I don't think there's really an answer for that. It would have been nice. I mean, it would have been nice if they had been included, especially in the agamas in Chinese and we would have parallels for them. But as it stands, we don't have parallels for most of them. Yeah, one of these mysteries Yeah. Hard to say.

Anyway, it's good that there's some mysteries in life, right. Otherwise, I mean, what are people going to write their PhDs about? So, Rob, I think, I think that's I think that's about it. I think we've finished for today.