

## The Way to the Far Shore Pārāyanavagga: Sutta Nipāta Book Five (1 of 2)

**Leigh Brasington**

**February 24, 2024**

**Leigh Brasington:**

Yes, it's very nice to be back with the Sati Center again. I so appreciate the Sati Center. I mean, I've attended many classes here and yeah, it's given me a platform to do some teaching as well. And so I really appreciate the Sati Center. It's just great.

So the Pārāyanavagga, the Way to the Far Shore. I'm going to share the screen so you can see what I'm talking about. So the first thing is the Sutta numbers. There are two ways the Pārāyanavagga gets numbered. Some are zero relative. The Pārāyanavagga starts out with a backstory about how this came to be. And on a scale of one to a hundred, the odds of the backstory being anything other than somebody's fiction, I put it exactly one. Okay. It just, it's cute. It has nothing to do with the Pārāyanavagga's teachings. But some people number the Suttas with it as number one, which I think is wrong. That should be number zero. And then others number things starting with the first Sutta as number one. And so you have to be really careful if somebody says, "Oh, take a look at Sutta Nipata 5.15." Are they talking about the 14th Sutta or the 15th Sutta or the 16th Sutta? Yeah. Okay.

So I'm going to use the zero relative. The first Sutta will be number one. And that's what these numbers over here. That's how that's all set up. Okay. And that's what Bhikkhu Bodhi uses. And his translation is quite good if you have that one. Access to Insight uses that. It has some from John D. Ireland and I believe all the Suttas are there from Thanissaro Bhikkhu. The method two where the first Sutta is number two is K. R. Norman and Sutta Central. K. R. Norman is the most accurate translation and also the most difficult to work with because it's accurate. It's kind of hard to read, but there's a great book on it. If you want, there is no digital version. I checked Amazon yesterday afternoon to see if there was a digital version yet.

**Questioner:**

What book was that Leigh?

**Leigh:**

It's called the Rhinoceros Horn by K. R. Norman. And it's a translation of the whole of the Sutta Nipata, not just the way to the far shore. And yeah, it's quite good. So I will be referring to things using the zero relative counting. The first Sutta is number one, but we'll look at stuff at Sutta Central, which uses the other one. So hopefully it won't be too terribly confusing there.

The Suttas have a bunch of epithets for the Buddha, descriptions of him. This you can look at later. I assume everybody has this link. Rob sent this out in the original. Everybody's got this if you want it. Yeah.

The translations, these are the translations of book five that you can find. This is just for your reference in the future. And then the Pāli. This particular page tells you how to find the Pāli in a Sutta, and it's the easiest way to do it. Okay. I'm not going to go over the whole thing. I'll give you a demo when we get to that.

And then the one that mostly I'm going to be working with is the summaries of the Suttas. All right. So I think we're ready to get started on the Suttas. And the first one is to Ajita. And my summary is, a summary is not possible. Just read the Sutta. So that's what we're going to do. So you can see I have the English and the Pāli. The way I got that, and this is a good thing to know about Sutta Central, is you need Bhikkhu Sujato's translation. It doesn't work for most other translations. And then you click views, and you set it to English or Spanish or Indonesian, whichever you want. And then you view the Pāli side by side or line by line. I find it easiest to work with line by line. Okay. All right.

By what is the world shrouded, said Venerable Ajita, why does it not shine? Tell me, what is its tar pit? What is its greatest fear? Okay. The question is not exactly clear of what's going on, but the answer is helpful for figuring out. The world is shrouded in ignorance. So we can't really clearly see what's going on is because of our ignorance. The Pāli word is avijjā, and not knowing.

Avijjā is to know something, and avijjā would be not knowing. So you can even see the avijjā here. And if you double click the word, oh, it pops up. All right. So you can see some of the Pāli. Some of the words won't show up. Loko is world, right? So avijjā hinders the world. Ignorance and negligence make it not shine. And then it says prayer is its tar pit. And I'm like, what? What? What is he talking about? I call longing its sticky lime. So this is K.R. Norman. So rather than prayer, it's longing. And he translated not as tar pit, but as sticky lime. How do you get caught with your longing, your desire? Suffering is his greatest fear.

And you can see dukkha right down here. And if you know, avijjā is fear, right? So what we're afraid of is that we're going to experience dukkha. I once made the comment that all aversion is related to fear. And somebody said, I hate broccoli, but I'm not afraid of it. And I said, actually, you are. You're afraid if you put it in your mouth, you will experience unpleasant vedanā. So yeah, fear is what drives us. And it's fear of, well, dukkha vedanā or fear of dukkha.

And back to Ajita, the streams flow everywhere. What is there to block them? Tell me the restraint of streams. By what are they locked out? So the streams is all the stuff that happens that's, well, disturbing your peace. They're blocked by mindfulness. Okay, that's how you deal with it in the moment. So when stuff is happening that you don't want to happen, you know, this is, this is about crossing to the far shore. Okay, so if there's a stream coming by that you don't want to be caught in, then the first thing is mindfulness. I tell you the restraint of streams, they are locked out by wisdom.

So I'll give you an image. There's a river coming along. And there's a place where it divides. And one part is pretty narrow. And another part is quite wide. And the wide part is our normal way of processing the world. In modern neuroscience, they talk about the default mode network. You're probably very

familiar with the default mode network in that when you get distracted, that's the default mode network running. Okay. But this is other narrow part where the river divides called mindfulness.

And the Buddha is saying, yeah, put some more energy not in your distractions, your default mode network, but in the mindfulness, and then use wisdom to build a dam across the default mode network. And I think that full awakening is to basically shift the river. So that's all going down the mindfulness when there's nothing to do. The default mode network is what runs when you have nothing else going on.

And what we want is a new default. And the new default is mindfulness. And the way to dam up the current bigger, wider default mode network that we run all the time is wisdom. And then we can dam it up and we can open up the mindfulness one. And I think that's what the Buddha is talking about here. That wisdom and mindfulness, that which is name and form.

When questions, please tell me of this, where does this all cease? Okay, name and form is Nama Rupa. Name and form is a literal translation. Sometimes you see, particularly in talking about dependent origination, you see it as mind and body. It's used in many different circumstances. And I don't think there's one really great translation that captures all. I like concept and manifestation. If I say to you, cell phone, you know what that is. You know what a cell phone is, right? That's the name. That's a concept. There's a manifestation. This is a Rupa. All right, this is the manifestation of it. And mostly what we're dealing with is our concepts and the manifestations of those concepts. And what Ajita wants to know is, where does that come to an end?

And he also wants to know that wisdom and mindfulness. Where does this all cease? This question you have asked, I shall answer you. Where name and form cease with nothing left over. It's with the cessation of consciousness. That's where they cease. Okay. You know, that sounds really weird. Is enlightenment just going unconscious? That doesn't make much sense. Right? So what's going on here? The cessation of consciousness shows up in a number of suttas. And it generally tends to show up in suttas that are fairly early. If I go back to my summary, which doesn't have a summary here, it says concerning the cessation of consciousness, see Digha Nikāya 11 and Saṃyutta Nikāya 22.53. Viññāṇa is the word we usually translate as consciousness. And it literally means divided knowing. Okay, so to understand this, let's take a look at Digha Nikāya number 11.

So these are some verses at the end of a very nice fairy tale. Okay. And there's a monk who wants to know where the four elements cease without remainder. And he goes up through all the heavens trying to find the answer. Nobody knows. And finally, Brahma says, Hey, you look like a Buddhist monk, go ask the Buddha. And so he asked the Buddha. And the answer is, you've asked your question wrong. You should ask where to earth, water, fire and air no footing fine, where long and short, small and great, fair and foul, where name and form and he has wholly destroyed, which would be one way to translate the Pāli. But a better way would be all comes to an end or stopped. And the answer is, where consciousness is signless, limitless, and all illuminating.

Consciousness that's signless. It's a cell phone, right? How did you know it was a cell phone? Oh, well, it's a rectangle. It's got a screen on it. It's thin, it's got cameras on the back. These are the signs of a cell phone. Okay. Can you see the bird in the flowers? Yeah, you see the bird in the flowers? No bird or flowers. It's only colored shapes. Your mind makes the bird and the flowers. This is *sañña*, which is one of the five aggregates. Okay.

And we go around *sañña*-izing, conceptualizing, usually *sañña* is translated as perception, but I think a much better translation is conceptualization. And so you conceptualize those colored shapes as a bird and flowers. And you do that by picking up the signs of the colored shapes. The signs of the colored shapes are the signs of a bird and the signs of a flower.

Okay, so yeah. What the Buddha is saying is that *Nama Rupa* comes to an end with consciousness that's not grasping onto the signs, that's not conceptualizing what's going on. And that consciousness is limitless. If you can do that, you realize that normally what we're doing is interacting with the world in terms of our concepts. We go around conceptualizing the whole world. But if you don't conceptualize and can still remain conscious, you realize it's all like that. It's like you're experiencing the world raw without any conceptualization on top of it. It's signless.

And so it's limitless because well, you're not conceptualizing any limits and you realize, oh, it's like this everywhere even in the places where I'm not getting the sensory input. It's where I'm not getting the sensory input, I'm not conceptualizing obviously. And where I am getting the sensory input, I'm not conceptualizing. And this is all illuminating. You realize the world is like that.

Now, the other thing is say about the world, the only world we know is the world of our senses. The only thing you've ever seen in your life is neurological activity in your visual cortex. You've never seen a tree. What you've seen is neurological activity in your visual cortex. You've never touched a tree. What you experience when you touch a tree is the pressure receptors in your fingers being activated.

And then we interpret all this stuff with our concepts, which, yeah, we got to do that because we have to have to find stuff to eat. We need clothes to wear. We need a house to keep warm, keep the rain off of us. So the conceptualization is actually very useful, but it's somewhat hides what's actually going on. And the name and form, the conceptualizing and manifesting that we experience comes to an end with consciousness that is signless, limitless, and all illuminating. Then water, earth, fire, and air, and wind, no footing fine. They're long and short, small and large, pleasant and unpleasant. Their name and form are all stopped or all come to an end.

With the cessation of consciousness, divided knowing, all this comes to an end. So the literal word that we translate as consciousness is divided knowing. For example, you're not aware of the pressure on your left foot until I said pressure on your left foot. You weren't conscious of it. But then you divided that sensory input out from the rest of the sensory input. It's the same with what's in your peripheral vision. Oh, yeah, you weren't aware of what's in your peripheral vision until I said it. But then you divided your peripheral vision from what you had been looking at, presumably my face or your book or

whatever. So with the cessation of divided knowing, with the cessation of chopping the world up into bits and pieces, what I call thingifying the world, that's where Nama Rupa comes to an end.

And you do that with the consciousness that's signless. You do that with the consciousness that's not getting lost in the concepts that are created by the signs of things. That it not only sees through the bird and flowers, it also doesn't get lost in the concept of greeting card or anything else. All right. That was a pretty huge amount of material there. Come on.

All right. The finish of the sutta. The cessation of consciousness, that's where they all come to an end. There are those who have been appraised, who have appraised the teaching and many kinds of trainees here. Tell me about their behavior, good sir, when asked for you are alert. So the people that are training to experience the world without thingifying the world, experience the world without getting lost in concepts. What are they like? Not greedy for sensual pleasures. Their mind would be unclouded, skilled in all things, a bhikkhu would wander mindful. Okay. So yeah, this is basically the four noble truths, not greedy for sensual pleasures. In other words, not doing the craving and being mindful. Skilled in all things. Things is dhamma. You can see dhamma hidden away in here. Phenomena, skilled in all phenomena. Understanding the phenomenal world and not being fooled by your conceptualizing.

Rob mentioned I have a book on dependent origination and emptiness. The title of the last chapter is Don't be Fooled by Your Conceptualizing. The idea isn't that you never conceptualize, you have to conceptualize to find something to eat. I mean, the Buddha conceptualized, he ate with his hand, but he never ate his fingers. He was conceptualizing and the food is different from his fingers. Right. But he wasn't fooled by his conceptualizing. And that's what we're after. To experience the world from time to time without concepts, just experiencing it raw.

All right, that was a huge amount of material. The rest of the suttas for today won't be quite this damn packed. But I suspect I might have, you know, said a few things that raised a few questions. So if you have questions.

**Questioner:**

Thank you for your interpretation. What did you mean? Could you say a bit more about what you mean by experiencing raw? The phenomenological world is raw. What do you mean by that? Thank you.

**Leigh:**

Yeah. So all the words that I could possibly say about it will not capture what it's like. You have to, you have to experience it. I mean, if if you've never eaten a mango and somebody describes a mango to you, you have no idea what it tastes like. Right. You actually have to bite into the mango.

So by experiencing the world raw, I mean experiencing the world and not conceptualizing your experience. OK, the advice to Bāhiya, this is Udāna 1.10. And the advice to Bāhiya is in seeing there is only seeing, in hearing only hearing, in sensing only sensing, in cognizing only cognizing. When you can do

that Bāhiya, there's no you in that, there's no you in this, there's no you in between. Just this is the end of dukkha.

So if you want to get to that place where you're experiencing the world raw, then the practice to do is the Bāhiya practice. This is an open awareness practice. And since you're seeing, you would do it with your eyes open and it's non-dual. You're not seeing tree and house and bird and car and so forth. At first you see seeing, but then you want to step even further back and there is just seeing. There's not even seeing seeing. There's just seeing. So that's how you would get there. And that's the best that I can do is practice the Bāhiya practice.

One way to do that is when you're going for a walk, some place where you don't have to worry about navigating back and there's no tree roots or rocks in the path or something and it's not too busy. I mean, I wouldn't do this in a city. You walk along and see can you just sort of, it's almost like your mind steps back from the visual field and there you're seeing just the visual field and you're just hearing the auditory field. And if you can do that, then you begin to experience the world without conceptualizing your experience. And when it's going well, what I find is I can sense my feet going up and down, but it's not, I'm not conceptualizing my feet going up and down. There's just a sense of things moving and the visual field coming past me. And so now I've got the seeing, hearing, sensing. The mind is the hard one. Get good at those first three and then you can try and work with the mind.

Is that helpful?

**Questioner:**

Yeah, I have a sense of it. Personally, I have a sense of that. So I just wanted to find out what you thought about it and see if there's any correlations, but I'll talk to you about what I personally feel some other time because I know there's a lot of people on this call.

I think it's a more a descriptive practice rather than a defining conceptualizing practice. It's more of a creative endeavor of how you experience phenomena.

**Leigh:**

Right. How you experience.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. But it's how you describe that experience is what I'm, I guess, where I feel is the value of it rather than defining it because we still got to use language. We still got to use language. It's how we use language, I think, is what's interesting about that point that the Buddha makes, for me anyway.

**Leigh:**

We actually want to get to the point where we're not even doing language. Right.

**Questioner:**

So the ideal is just complete silence forever.

**Leigh:**

Well, no, no, not forever. But in time, experience...

**Questioner:**

That's what I'm saying. It's like, well, how do we use this on a practical level if we're going to integrate this into our everyday lives? How do you integrate this on an everyday level?

When you integrate it, you're no longer as likely to be fooled by your conceptualizing. That's the whole idea. So what we do is we conceptualize, oh, this is my cell phone. Well, no, this is a bunch of plastic and silicon and metal and glass. And it's only temporarily mine. If I lose it, it's not mine. And so we start seeing the world differently.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. OK. So seeing the three marks. Yeah.

**Leigh:**

And to move on to the other questions. Carol.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. Hi, Leigh. I have a quick question. So just to be clear, in the line with the cessation of consciousness, it means with the cessation of conceptualizing.

**Leigh:**

With the cessation of divided knowing, with the cessation of chopping your experience up into bits and pieces.

**Questioner:**

So there is consciousness, but it doesn't contain the divided knowing.

**Leigh:**

Correct. Yeah. OK.

And it's not unconscious. Now, this is my interpretation. OK. The orthodox interpretation is that cessation of consciousness is a path moment. Path moments are an experience without an experiencer that takes you to the various levels, the four levels of awakening. But I don't think that's what's going on, because that's a much later idea found in the commentaries, not in the suttas. And so I think what the Buddha is doing is reverting back to the literal meaning of Vinaya, divided knowing. With the cessation of divided knowing, with the cessation of breaking the world up into bits and pieces, with seeing, just seeing. That's what's there. But in order to see seeing, you have to be conscious, obviously.

**Questioner:**

Yes. OK. So if I remember correctly, in the dependent origination, there is also consciousness there. It would be the same as here, the divided knowing. I think it was one of the first steps.

**Leigh:**

It's the third one when you start from ignorance or consciousness. Consciousness in dependent origination gets used in multiple ways, and it's not well-defined as to what it means every time it's being taught. The original version of dependent origination didn't have consciousness as part of it. The original version is Sutta Nipata 411. At least that's what I say, and I discuss all this in the book. But consciousness got added in, and it's more like mental processing as opposed to divided knowing there. So it's like the Buddha in the very earliest was reverting vinaya back to the literal divided knowing. But as time went on, he or whoever elaborated on dependent origination so that we now have 12 links took the understanding of divided knowing, which we think of as consciousness, and used it in that way. That appears to be what's going on, but it's hard to tell because ...

**Questioner:**

I see. OK. Thank you. Thank you very much.

**Leigh:**

Victoria.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, thank you, Leigh. As usual, I have a zillion questions. I'm going to try to reduce them. But for me, all of this smacks very strongly of, as you know, my background's more in Christian mysticism and the apophatic versus the cataphatic traditions where the apophatic tradition was vehemently saying we cannot use language to define God or define the sacred because we're just going to, I mean, talk about divided knowing. And so the apophatic tradition will only say what is not, whereas the cataphatic tradition is trying to define and define and define. So I'm wondering, in this context, like the divided knowing sparked in me this question about is part of the divided knowing sort of intrinsic to the idea of defining, in other words, or parsing out like this is what ... because even with words in English, like consciousness versus awareness, because I was thinking consciousness actually, the way I understand the English word, is not the culprit because that's just the state of like still being alive. Whereas awareness is then entering into this, what is the world around me? What am I seeing? What am I observing? Does that, I don't know how to, you can figure this out for me because I don't know how to put it in a neat little box.

**Leigh:**

So the neat little box is there's no boxes and there's nothing to put in it.

Okay. So you get to the point where there is no conceptualizing of anything. There's just the raw sensory input and that can teach you the fact that when there is anything, what we're experiencing is our concepts and our concepts aren't necessarily correct. I mean, look at the political division in the United States today. It's all about different concepts. This is a human. This is not a human. Therefore, you know, and it goes on and on and on like that. So trying to ... the idea is, can you step back far enough and see the limitations of concepts by actually experiencing the world prior to conceptualizing?



Now that you understand the limitations of concepts, don't get lost in your own concepts because you're still going to have to use concepts. That's how you're going to get something to eat. And yeah, the Nibbāna as a concept is only described in the suttas, not this, not that. Okay. Right. Because you can't say what it is other than it's the end of Dukkha. It's the end of greed, hatred and delusion. You know, that's about as positive as you can get. It's the end of something. The reason that it's the end of greed, hatred, and delusion is your conceptualizing of the world no longer finds anything for you to be greedy about or hated about or to be deluded about. And I think that's the best I can do for you. You opened up a whole new can of worms. Well, I'll take it up with you on Tuesday.

**Questioner:**

Okay. Sure.

**Leigh:**

Kate.

**Questioner:**

Would you say, I'm very newbie, would you say more about divided concepts? Okay. So it's divided knowing. So when I hold this up, you divide this from my eyeglasses. It's different. And from the blackout curtain on the wall and from the tanka over there. In order to see something, you have to divide the something from everything else.

**Leigh:**

Right. And so when you become conscious of something, you divide the something out from all the other possible sensory inputs. And that's what's being talked about. At least that's what I'm saying. But yes, if you're a newbie to Buddhism, it took me about 30 years of practice to come to this understanding. Yeah, I didn't get it right off. But basically, the takeaway is that our conceptualizing the world is not particularly accurate. It may be good enough to keep us eating, but it has the inaccuracy of conceptualizing things as worth craving and clinging to, which is the set of Verduga. Does that help at all? Yes, thank you very much.

**Leigh:**

Okay, Sean.

**Questioner:**

Hello. Hi, everybody. So my question just relates to so what's the relationship between the non conceptualization on one hand, and craving on the other? So in what way, if any, how does non conceptualization help to deconstruct craving?

Leigh?: By getting a deeper understanding of our conceptualizing of the world and how we do that, and how it's not totally accurate. Then we can see that something we're craving, actually, we're craving the concept, we don't really know the thing, we only know the concept of the thing. And it might not be totally accurate. So I'm craving this thing. But my conceptualization of this thing doesn't include the

fact that it's impermanent, or that it's really valuable, and I'm going to have to get an alarm system for my house, and I'm going to have to up my insurance, and it's going to break anyhow. And then I'm going to experience Dukkha. So we were only seeing the attractive properties of the concept, and not getting the full complete picture of the thing that we're craving. The fact that it's impermanent, it's not going to give you lasting happiness, and it arose dependent on other things. And it's only going to stick around while they're supporting conditions for it to stick around.

In other words, the three characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta. We tend to crave things and miss all of the less than desirable aspects of the thing we're craving. You meet a really nice person, and you're starting to fall in love with them. And you're ignoring the fact that they did that really stupid thing, and so forth. And you wind up marrying them. And then the stupid thing turns out to be a habitual pattern.

And there's lots of dukkha, and you get divorced. And that was lots more dukkha. And it was because you're conceptualizing, this is the perfect person led you into this state. And we do that with everything. We conceptualize it as to how it's going to be so good for me, and therefore we crave it, as opposed to getting an accurate picture. Once we understand the limitations of our conceptualizing, hopefully we can use our conceptualizing to get more accurate pictures in the future.

**Questioner:**

Right. Yes, yes, it does. Just a brief follow up question, because I've come across this little gem that you probably recognize it.

This is from Saini Sarabhika, where he sort of compares some of the applications of the three characteristics. And he says, you know, it's like, if you speak, you know, your stomach is impermanent and non self, food is impermanent and non self, then why don't you just stop eating? You know, it's the hunger that drives you. It's not the fact that you misperceive the food, it's because you're hungry, and it doesn't matter if it's a impersonal non self. And, yeah, and I guess what this points is that, you know, with certain things like our physical survival, we will always need to acknowledge some of the craving that just allows us to continue. But then the difference between the sort of physical and the mental is that where the mental hunger then can be extinguished. Is that right? Yeah, yeah, that's very good.

There are things that we have to do physically, like eat, breathe, go to the toilet, etc. Okay, all of these, yeah, there there is. There is a biological need that needs to be taken care of. And you have to take care of that. But we have so much more going on in our lives that we tend to crave. And we're not getting a clear picture of the things we're craving and don't see the less than perfect aspects of the things we're craving. It may be that you crave something, you see it really clearly, you see it's not going to get what you want it to give you, but it turns out it's useful. And you can deal with the fact that eventually it's going to break or wear out or whatever. And then okay, no do good. But get the clear, don't be fooled by your conceptualizing. When you conceptualize, get as an accurate a picture as possible. Because all concepts are not what the thing is. They're just your concepts. In other words, all concepts are wrong,

but some are useful.

**Questioner:**

Thank you very much.

**Leigh:**

Sure. Maya.

**Questioner:**

You know, in my understanding is a lot of times what we express or respond is something like to do with the name and form, like, you know, through the perception. Sometimes we see things and we presume and assume, and then that becomes my habit to look at things. It's kind of clouded as you mentioned here. And then that is within the consciousness establishes the way of looking with a cloudiness and delusion. So my interest is like every time in the dependent origination, when I come to responses, it's already name and form and all the way to down to the craving.

And Buddha says clearly like mindfulness will help me. But I feel like I am entangled in that a lot of time. So if you can talk about it a little bit to lighten up, like I feel like right now I'm in the consciousness, how do I change my habits and how do I change my anusawa or asawa? That is like, oh, I'm again presuming I'm already assuming that's what's happening in daily life. Right?

**Leigh:**

Yeah. I mean, we're all entangled in this stuff. And the way out is practice not being entangled. And the advice to Bāhiya, I mean, I got this understanding by doing, well, Tibetan Dzogchen practice, but I say to my Tibetan friends, the Bāhiya practice is the start of Tibetan Dzogchen practice. And they all get upset because, well, never mind, they're attached to their concepts. But the Bāhiya practice of experiencing the world prior to conceptualizing the world and notice, oh yeah, I'm laying something on top of what's really there. And the thing I lay on top of it isn't necessarily accurate.

So yeah, the only way I've ever made progress on the spiritual path is by doing the practice. And the Bāhiya practice is a really great practice. Once you get the hang of it while going for a walk, you can actually do it while you're sitting, sit down, open your eyes and just try and rest in the non-conceptual visual field, the non-conceptual auditory field, the non-conceptual tactile field. And the more time you can spend hanging out in the non-conceptual experience of the world, the more you understand the limitations of the concepts. You can't get rid of the concepts, but you begin to get their limitations. And so now when you recognize, oh, I'm starting to crave something, what I'm craving is a concept. What are the limitations of this concept? And then maybe that backs us off of the craving. That's the hope at least.

**Questioner:**

Okay. Thank you.

**Leigh:**

Sure. All righty. So luckily, most of the rest of the suttas here are not quite as difficult as this one. This next sutta, looking at, this is number 5.2, who has succeeded on the spiritual path? That's the question. Those leading the spiritual life among sensual pleasures, instead of craving, ever mindful. Okay. Because we have so many suttas to try and cover, and we're already 10 minutes behind my schedule in my mind, I'm just going to leave this here. But this is what it takes to succeed on the spiritual path. There are going to be sensual pleasures out there. Don't get hooked. Don't lose your way. Don't get lost in the craving. And keep your mindfulness up. That's really what's necessary.

There is a sutta in the numerical discourses here. And it's interesting. Part of this particular, this 5.2, is interpreted in six different ways in this particular sutta. And it's worth reading to see what the various ways of interpreting this are. And the Buddha says that he had one specific way in mind, but he liked them all. So you can access it from here. But we're not going to go into detail on that.

Okay. The next one, 5.3, why do people perform sacrifices in the hope of escaping old age and death? Does it work? No. What does work? Wisdom, calm, freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion. So most spiritual practices across all religions are in some way or another trying to escape dukkha. Right? It might be escaping old age and death, which is, well, the sort of inevitable dukkha. I mean, death is inevitable. I mean, yeah, okay, you're not dead yet. That's a good thing. What are you going to do with the fact that you're not dead yet, given the fact that at some point you will be dead? Right? Performing sacrifices is not going to get you there. What works? Wisdom, calm, freedom from greed, hatred, and delusion.

We can take a look at, so that's the one we just skipped. Look at the bottom of this one. Those devoted to sacrifice, if not by sacrificing crossover and its birth, it's not rebirth. Jati, there's no re there, an old age. Then who exactly in the world of gods and humans is crossover birth and old age, good sir, I ask you, please tell me this. Having appraised the world high and low, having looked at the world and seen it as clearly as possible, there is nothing in the world that disturbs them. Peaceful, unclouded, untroubled, with no need of hope, they've crossed over birth and old age, I declare. Norman translates this slightly differently. He for whom having considered what is far and near in the world, there are no commotions anywhere in the world, I say. Calmed without fumes of passion, without affliction, without desire, has crossed over birth and old age.

So yeah, understand how the world works. This is the insights. My teacher, Ayya Khema defined an insight as an understood experience. If you just have the understanding without the experience, that's better than not having the understanding. But it's going to be transformative if you have the understood experience. If you have the experience with no understanding, that's just confusion.

So yeah, basically appraise the world high and low. In other words, understand how the world works. And then peaceful, unclouded, unclouded by greed, untroubled by aversion, with no need for hope, they've crossed over birth and old age, I declare. Again, I'm not going to stop for questions on this one. But basically, yeah, sacrifices aren't going to get you there. What's going to get you there is practice.

You know, it's the old joke. A tourist stops someone on the street in New York and asks, how do I get to Carnegie Hall? And the reply is practice. Yeah, it's the same for us.

Okay. What is the source of dukkha, creating an attachment? How did the wise cross the flood of dukkha? Expel delight and dogmatism, uproot consciousness, forego becoming. And again, we have the cessation of consciousness talked about here. So take a look at this one. Please tell me I think you know, where do all the sufferings, the dukkha come from? And all the in all their countless forms in the world? Why is there dukkha? You've asked the right question, I shall tell you. Attachment is a source of suffering. We have the Pāli word upadhi here. Upadhi is a very interesting word. Worldly possessions or belongings, acquisitions, according to the commentaries

, including the body, attachment to such possessions forming a basis for rebirth, it's becoming. Okay. So, cause ground, the cause of dukkha, the ground of dukkha, the necessary condition for the arising of dukkha is upadhi. And I meant to bring up something else. Let me do this right quick.

So upadhi is a very interesting word. Upadhi has two distinct shades of meaning primarily in accordance with its etymology. It means foundation, basis, ground, substratum, support. So yeah, the things that you require for to keep your life going, you know, a house and some food and some money in your bank account, things like that.

Secondarily, particularly in Majjhima 26, it says, wife and children, men and women, slaves, goats and sheep, fowl and pigs, elephants, cattle, horses, mares, gold and silver are referred to as upadhi. Perhaps the term assets will do justice to both senses, since assets are things laid by which one relies upon. Upadhi covers a whole gamut of footholds or assets, which culture provides for measuring self identity, gender, nationality, ethnicity, rank, occupation, power, wealth, status. This is from John Peacock, who's actually quite an excellent scholar. And then we have Bhikkhu Bodhi's footnote over here. The root meaning is foundation, basis, ground. In the commentaries, various kinds of upadhi are enumerated, among them the five aggregates, etc. Ñāṇamoli renders the term as essentials of existence, which obscures the clear contextual meaning. Bhikkhu Bodhi has tried to capture by using the word acquisitions, where its objective meaning is prominent as it is here in Majjhima 26. And acquisitions where its subjective meaning is prominent. Nibbāna is called the relinquishing of all acquisitions. You can see upadhi in here, with both meanings intended. So I think of upadhi as all the accoutrements of your lifestyle.

Okay, so if we go back to the Sutta, all the accoutrements of your lifestyle are the source of suffering. And that's everything from your gender, your nationality, your cell phone, your car, your friends, all of these things. If you get attached to them, that's where the dukkha comes in. So upadhi in all its countless forms in the world. When an ignorant person builds up upadhi, the accoutrements of their lifestyle, that idiot returns to dukkha again and again. So let one who understands not build up attachments and contemplate the origin of dukkha and birth. Okay, again, it's jati, not rebirth. Whatever I ask you, you have explained to me, I ask you once more, please tell me this. How do the wise cross the flood of

birth, old age, sorrow and lamentating? Please sage answer me clearly for truly you understand this.

Okay, so the problem is attachment to the accoutrements of your lifestyle. So how do we cross over the flood? How do we cross over the flood? Remember the simile of the raft, you're on the near shore, and you want to get to the far shore. The near shore is dangerous because a lot of craving and clinging going on here. But you don't have a bridge or a ferryman to take you across, you make a raft and use your hands and feet to propel the raft to the far shore. Okay, the far shore is the name of this collection.

All right, so how do we cross the flood? What's what's the raft to get us across? I shall extol to you a teaching that is apparent in the present, not relying on tradition. The Buddha is very much about don't rely on tradition or, you know, how many books somebody's sold or their YouTube channel or anything, you know, it needs to be seen in the present. Having understood it, one who lives mindfully, here we got mindfulness again, may cross over clinging in the world.

And then the next verse is great. Once you've expelled relishing and dogmatism, relishing I've seen translated a bunch of different ways delighting. You would expect to see Nandi, that's delight. Nandi, joy, pleasure, delight. Once you've expelled delight and dogmatism, getting lost in what's going on. So the first time the 49ers won the Super Bowl, I went to downtown San Francisco, because that's where I live. And people were lost in delighting that. The next time they won the Super Bowl, I had just come back from Asia and had been practicing. And now can I go to the celebration and not get lost in the delight, but enjoy it. And yeah, that's what I've tried to do.

So I get rid of the delight and dogmatism. When you're dogmatic about something, you don't have an open mind. You really are going to have to change your mind to get anywhere else. I mean, duh, you can't get anywhere else unless you leave where you are. And that applies to your mind. Whatever views that you have need to be held very lightly. The teachings on right view, sometimes are the four noble truths, sometimes dependent origination.

But in the Sutta Nipata, it's about not holding to fixed views, keeping an open mind. Having uprooted consciousness, having uprooted divided knowing. They don't continue in existence, they don't continue in Bhavana, becoming. Right? Existence is a translation and sometimes it's good. But I think here would be becoming. You're not giving birth to yourself in new ways. You're not constructing yourself in new ways. A bhikkhu who wanders meditating like this, diligent and mindful, calling nothing their own, would being wise, give up dukkha of birth, old age, sorrow, lamentation, right here.

So the key thing is expelling delight and dogmatism. Don't get lost in the pleasures of existence and do keep an open mind. Great. That's basically what it says. Surely, those you'd regularly instruct would also give up dukkha. Therefore, having met, I bow to you. Hopefully the Buddha may regularly instruct me. Any Brahmin recognizes a knowledge master who has nothing, unattached to sensual life, clearly has crossed this flood, crossed to the far shore, kind, wishless, wishless. A wise person here, a knowledge master, having untied the bond to life after life, free of craving, untroubled, with no need of hope, has crossed over rebirth, crossed over birth in old age, I declare.

So wisdom, mindfulness, not being attached. That's basically how you get there. Questions, comments on this particular sutta? Victoria.

**Questioner:**

I was waiting courteously for other people, but okay, a zillion again as usual. Well, first of all, the dukkha, well this is maybe for a longer discourse, but I don't believe that all religions are after the cessation of dukkha.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, very much not so.

**Questioner:**

Because a lot of religions have the sense of that because that it's appropriate to go through dukkha in order to achieve nirvana, I mean I'm using the Buddhist terms, but as they would translate in other religions. But I'm not going to go down that path right this second.

The thing I was wondering about was the upadhi, and it's a nitpicky thing, but to me it makes a big difference, translated as acquisitions versus assets, because acquisition implies that you are going about the practice of trying to acquire, which to me already falls into the trap of craving in some form, because you wouldn't acquire it if you didn't want it.

Whereas assets, especially if it's an expansive definition like nationality and gender and all that stuff, if those are all included in the term assets, then to me that's a more accurate word I would say, insofar as we don't crave our gender, we have it. We don't crave our nationality, you know what I mean? There are givens, there are certain just attributes, attributes might be the word, I don't know, what do you think?

**Leigh:**

So basically there's craving and clinging. If you haven't got it, then there's a craving part going on, and if you've got it and you're attached to it, that's the clinging part. And the Buddha says both of these are problems, and upadhi actually captures both of those terms.

**Questioner:**

Oh, so it's the whole

**Leigh:**

yeah, the stuff you're going after and the stuff you got. If you're lost in any of that, that's the setup for dukkha. So don't do that.

**Questioner:**

So what would be though an ideal, I get it now in the Pāli, that's clear. What would, do you think would be the most accurate English word we could use for that? Because it's...

**Leigh:**

This is the problem. Pāli is a meaning that just English doesn't capture. That's why I read you the two

long footnotes to try and give you a sense of what this word means. And the best English word that we can use is upadhi, which unfortunately is not here.

**Questioner:**

Touche, touche. Okay, got it. Thank you.

**Questioner:**

Hello again. So I just want to go back exactly to upadhi or upādāna as well. I think that would be the closely related word. And so just a note on translation. So Thānissaro Bhikkhu translates upādāna as feeding in some of his texts, such as the shape of suffering, which concerns with dependent origination. And what it reminds me of, so there's a translation itself, which is very kind of vivid, at least for me. And what it reminds me of is sort of, it feels like a parallel, a bit like evolutionary theory. I know that's a bit of a random thing to connect to, but in evolutionary theory, the focus is very much on adaptation, the process of adaptation, the service of survival, just to kind of simplify it. And it's always seemed to me like it's quite a good parallel. So my question would be, one, could you comment on the translation of upadhi or upādāna as feeding in both its physical and mental dimensions, how that lands for you? And number two, how would you feel about drawing the parallel between that and, let's say, evolutionary theory and its view of life as adaptation or process of survival?

**Leigh:**

Yeah. So upādāna usually gets translated as clinging, but at the time of the Buddha, so Thānissaro Bhikkhu's book, *The Mind Like Fire Unbound*, you've got to read that book. That's a brilliant book. And so the fire similes throughout the suttas make a lot more sense when you understand that they thought of fire clinging to its fuel. So we would say a fire is blazing and they would say a fire was clinging. So we are clinging. In other words, we're blazing with the fires of greed, hatred and delusion.

And what is it that we're clinging to? Well, the five aggregates basically. And the aggregates, the five aggregates, the five khandas are categories of experience. They're concepts. Okay, we experience physicality, physical phone, and we experience vedanā, we experience our concepts, we experience our thoughts, emotions, memories, etc. And we experience consciousness. And so we set those alight with the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. Some of the stuff, particularly the rupa and the thoughts and emotions and memories and intentions, we are upadi. You don't think of your pleasant experience as an asset or anything like that. So there's a bit more over there that we tend to set alight and have the clinging associated with it. But particularly for physical and mental assets, which would be the rupa and the sankara bits. Yeah, that's the upadi. And we set them alight. So you've got upādāna, blazing with the fires of greed, hatred and delusion. In other words, that's the thing that we're after. So it's a slightly different shade of meaning. But they're really close together.

As for evolution, basically evolution is just simply looking for things that work. You know, what actually makes this organism survive long enough to reproduce. That's it. It's there. And so it may be because there is craving or clinging or both associated with both of those. It may be mindless. I mean, I don't



think that amoebas are doing craving and clinging. I'm pretty sure that trees aren't doing craving and clinging. I mean, they grow towards the sunlight. But that's because, you know, the cells in the dark grow fast and the ones in the light. And this is an evolutionary thing. So I don't think that craving and clinging are necessary for evolution. But as you get a more sophisticated organism, then the craving and clinging does show up. I mean, your dog goes into heat. That's craving, right? Well, okay. So for evolution, it's very useful for the dog to go into heat because that ensures the survival of the species. So it does get used along the way once the organism becomes sophisticated enough. And then when he gets to our level of sophistication, we have not only the craving, the clinging, we've got the assets as well that we think are ours.

**Questioner:**

Okay, I see. Thank you.

**Questioner:**

Thank you for being here and doing this. I'm watching the delight in my appurtenances of my lifestyle and noticing how much it means to me. And I'm wondering, this is sort of a two-part practical question. I'm wondering if there's a way besides daily meditation practice, and being aware to sort of nudge my detachment from those things a little bit quicker. And then the second part is, when you take delight, it seems like it's not intrinsically a bad thing that you have to reject. And so I'm wondering about the balance, how to achieve detached delight.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, that's something I've been working on for decades. You know, it's really tricky. So, okay, in Buddhism, they talk about the three personality types, the greedy type, the aversive type, and the deluded type. Well, I'm very definitely the greedy type. And so, yeah, when I first encountered the suttas, and there was all this thing about, yeah, not getting attached and not taking delight and delight and so forth. It's like, I'm not too sure about this sort of stuff. But it so, remember, you're getting this from a greedy type. Okay. But I think that it is possible to enjoy the pleasant *vedanā* of an experience without having attachment, without having craving or clinging. You know, it's just a pleasant experience, and you're just there with it. It takes mindfulness to do that. Because the default is, it's pleasant, I want more, I want to get it again, I want to make sure it doesn't go away. And it's your mindfulness is go, oh, this is pleasant, I'm just going to enjoy it. So mindfulness seems to be the key for doing that. I don't always manage, I get lost. This is just what happens. But that seems to be the key is the full awareness of what's going on.

The other things that are helpful is again, the conceptualizing. The craving and clinging that arises around the incoming pleasant *vedanā* is arising around the concept of how the pleasant *vedanā* is coming, whatever it's giving it to me, it's this thing, or it's this person, or it's this situation. But that's a concept. Right now, can I see the concept more clearly? Can I see the concept is a concept of something that's impermanent, not going to give everlasting happiness, and as fact is dependent on many other

things, it's without self with its empty. So that's one way to address the delight. There are suttas, there's one that I remember, it's in the Angutra, I don't have a reference for where the Buddha says to I believe it's a Brahman, you may think that being fully awakened would be a very boring and drab state. But no, it's actually very, very pleasant and wonderful.

So I can see that I notice when I'm having a very pleasant experience. If I can be fully present with that experience, it's even more pleasant. And if I'm thinking about, oh, I don't have my camera, I need to take a picture or whatever. Just being totally in the moment, heightens the pleasure of it. And if I'm not thinking about how can I keep it or anything else? I often refer to cameras as a Anicca stoppers. Because that's, you know, you're here and it's a party and you want to stop Anicca because the party's going to go away. So you're going to stop it on your film or whatever. And I know it works because I took a three year trip around the world and did not take a camera. And I had to be fully present because this was my one shot to enjoy this view from the top of this mountain or whatever.

And I think in some ways that was much better, especially when I'm sitting on the top of a mountain eating my lunch. And this couple walks by in front of me. And the husband is taking pictures like crazy. And the woman apologizes for walking in front of me, which she didn't need to do. And she said, we like to take a lot of pictures. So when we go home, we can finally enjoy our vacation. I didn't say anything. But that's often how we're running our lives. We got a delightful situation. And there's so much more going on other than just being present with a delightful sensation.

Yeah, yeah, I've completely forgotten your first question.

**Questioner:**

Oh, it's okay. I was asking how to nudge along the process of letting go of the appurtenance need.

**Leigh:**

Right. To see the limitations in things is the best way. One of the ways to see the limitations is to realize, oh, I have a concept and my concepts aren't necessarily fully accurate. Okay. And so it requires mindfulness, and it requires awareness of the three characteristics of Anicca, Dukkha, Anatta. So mindfulness and recognizing that what I'm really attached to what I'm really attracted to is my concept of the thing, not the thing itself.

**Questioner:**

Thank you so much.

**Leigh:**

You're very welcome.

**Questioner:**

Oh, Leigh, I don't know what to do. I have a whole list here. I'm gonna have to come up and visit you.

Well, first of all, in the evolution thing that Sean brought up, that just like exploded in my head of that I've always had the feeling that the lower so called lower life forms have an enormous advantage over

humans because I'm, well, I'm assuming that mindfulness is kind of a natural thing because otherwise you'll be eaten. I mean, they're in the moment. And so for us as human beings, vis-a-vis evolution, I always feel like the challenge that we're all facing trying to achieve nirvana, which is hard when you've got a mind and concepts, is what one has to address is the idea of choice.

In other words, like you were saying, you know, there could be craving and, you know, animals because if you look at a dog and heat, you know, you know what it wants. But by the same token, we have the capacity to override, which is, of course, what we're trying to do to get rid of dukkha. So the question, I don't know what the question is exactly, except the sense of how choice plays into this. And, and, and refusing to engage with making any choice as it well, no, nevermind. That's a choice. Yeah, that's a choice in itself.

**Leigh:**

So, okay. All of this leads into so many other things. There's the two truths, or actually what I like to say is there's the two perspectives. This is the relative or conventional perspective, and this is the ultimate perspective.

Okay, if I had a soup bowl, if I'd known I would have brought a soup bowl in, is it concave or convex? Right? If you're going to put soup in it, you better take the concave perspective. If you're going to elevate a tea candle, probably the convex perspective is better. But it's two contradictory things at the same time. It's the same with the two truths. It's, it's not that they're separate truths, it's different perspectives. And when we look from the relative perspective, then we choose. You chose to come and hang out with me on this beautiful sunny day. Well, at least in Oakland, California, it's a beautiful sunny day. You could have done whatever else. So you had a choice.

From the ultimate perspective, yeah, there aren't any choices. Things in the past have unfolded in such a way that you wound up here. But it's not that one of these perspectives is, displaces the other. It's that you need to choose the proper perspective for what's going on. If you want to find freedom, you have to look from the ultimate perspective. And from the ultimate perspective, you're seeing that, yeah, all the concepts are actually empty. You're making them up in your head. And you're trying to see the impermanent, unsatisfactory nature of the universe. From the relative perspective, it's like, yeah, well, I need a new cell phone because I broke my old one. And so I'm choosing to go out and buy this particular one or something like that. And we have to operate from both of those perspectives. When you go to cross the street, you need to operate from the relative perspective and choose not to step in front of the bus. All right. But you could also say, well, yeah, from the ultimate perspective, there has been enough wisdom in this being so that it understands stepping in front of the bus would be deadly. And it automatically chooses not to step in front of the bus. But that's a little too complex to actually talk about what's going on. So choice is a relative perspective activity that we need to engage in because we can't operate entirely from the ultimate perspective all the time. And so we drop into the relative perspective. And we choose to keep the precepts. We choose to go on a meditation retreat.

We choose to hang out on a Saturday morning and listen to some ex-hippie computer programmer talk about some suttas.

And it's 26 past. And my plan was at 25 past, we were going to take a 10-minute break so you can get up and stretch and drink some water and go have a bio break. And at 25 till 35 past, we'll take a look at four more suttas if we can squeeze them in an hour and a half. So see you shortly.

[BREAK]

Okay, continuing on. The next one.

Summary, teach me, be keen, alert, mindful, release me from my doubts. You cannot release anyone from their doubts. Teach me the principle of seclusion. Everything is a snare. Don't crave for becoming this or that. We can look at the sutta itself, which basically says the same thing.

I long for your voice. After hearing your message, I shall train for quenching. Quenching is the translation for nibbana. Well then, be keen and alert. You actually have to work at the practice. It's got to be a priority. That's the keen and alert. This is like mindfulness, you know, pay attention to what's going on. Keen, alert and mindful right here. In other words, pay attention to what's going on in the here and now.

After hearing this message, go train for nibbana. I see in the world of gods and humans, a brahmin traveling with nothing. Therefore, I bow to you, all seer. Release me from my doubts.

And the Buddha, I'm not able to release anyone in the world who has doubts. But when you understand the best of teachings, you shall cross the flood. In other words, Buddhism is a do-it-yourself project. You get instructions. They're very useful instructions. But yeah, you're going to have to do the work yourself. The Buddha can't release you from your doubts. There's a story where a merchant from Sāvattthī comes to visit the Buddha who's in the kingdom of Magadha. And he says, "Do all your monks become fully enlightened?" And the Buddha says, "No." "Well, why not?" The Buddha says, "Well, do you know the way to Sāvattthī?" "No, of course. Yeah, that's where I live." "What's the way?" "Well, you go up the road here to get that, and then you take a left." And the Buddha says, "Suppose you give those instructions to someone and they don't follow them." "Well, that's their problem, not mine." And the Buddha says, "Just so. I'm just the shower of the way. Everybody's got to do the practice for themselves." And so, Vacchagotta here wants the Buddha to remove his doubts, but no, the Buddha can show the way to the removal of doubts, but you've got to do the practice yourself.

"Teach me out of compassion the principle of seclusion so that I may understand. I wish to practice right here, peaceful, independent, unimpeded as space. I shall extol that peace for you that is apparent in the present, not relying on tradition. Having understood it, one who lives mindfully may cross over." Yay!

Once you have understood everything, you're aware in the world above, below, and all around, between is a snare. Once you have understood that everything you are aware of in the world, above, below, all

around, in between, is a snare, don't crave for this or that." Again, we have bhava down here, which could be translated life after life, becoming after becoming, existence after existence, but I think more accurate, this or that. So, "Once you have understood that everything you are aware of in the world, that's your concepts, right? Once you know that all of your concepts, above, below, all around, are a snare." In other words, you get lost in your concepts. Don't crave for this or that. So, this is again, the Buddha coming back to say, "Don't be fooled by your conceptualizing." Right? We have to conceptualize. I mean, you need it to eat, you need it to keep yourself alive, but don't fall into craving because of it.

I'm again, going to move on to the next one because this is a big one. Upasiva. "Alone and independent, O Sakyan." So, Sakyan, the Buddha was from the Sakyans. In the foothills of the Himalaya. "I am alone and independent. I'm not able to cross the great flood. Tell me a support, O all-seer, depending on which I may cross the flood. Mindfully contemplating, and it should be no thingness, no hyphen thingness. Depending on the perception, there is nothing cross the flood." Okay. So, this is a controversial bit right here. The commentaries and some modern scholars interpret this to mean the seventh jhāna, the base of nothingness. As a practitioner of the seventh jhāna, I'm going, "No, that's not what it's talking about." I do not see the seventh jhāna here. I see what was talked about earlier. Don't thingify the world. Don't take your sensory input, your visual field, and break it into a bunch of things. "Mindfully contemplating no thingness, depending on the perception, there is no thing."

It turns out that there are no independent things in the entire universe. Everything arises dependent on other things. Nothing has independent existence. I mean, you may think that you have independent existence, yet you are completely dependent on the 14.5 pounds of air pressure per square inch of your body to keep you alive. If that air pressure were to disappear, I mean, even if you had oxygen coming in through your mouth or nose, you'd still die right quickly. Okay?

You're not independent of the atmosphere in which we live. Just the pressure of the atmosphere, let alone the oxygen. You're not independent of the food. I mean, how many of you grow all of your own food? Yeah, I didn't think so. Nobody. Right? You're dependent on the grocery store and the people who bring the food to the grocery store and the farmers who grow the food and so forth. You're not an independent thing. You're not independent of electricity. Suppose all of the electricity in the country you live in were to go away, the whole continent. No electricity. How long would you last? You can't buy food from the grocery store because, you know, it takes electricity to make the trucks run to bring the food to the grocery store. And besides, they don't have any lights and the cash registers don't work. Right? And yeah, maybe you have gas heat, but maybe the thermostat requires some electricity and you freeze. And the thought of all electricity disappearing, unless you live in a third world, you know, subsistence agricultural place, you probably die within a few weeks. Depends on how many cans of beans you got in your cupboard. Right? You're not independent of the guys who are keeping the electricity going.

When we carve the world up into bits and pieces, when we thingify our experience, we're missing the

bigger picture. And so this right here is not saying nothingness. It's no independent thingness. The things of the world are the divisions that we make. We divide the world up into all these bits and pieces. Because yeah, we can't take the whole universe in. Our minds aren't big enough. In order to take in the whole universe, our mind would have to be as big as the whole universe. I don't think that's going to happen. Right? So we have to break it up into bits and pieces. But we have to realize that our breaking it up into bits and pieces concepts is not a fully accurate picture of what's going on. It might be an accurate enough picture to get us enough to eat and a place to live and clothes to wear. But if we are basically lost in the things of the world, the thingifying that we're done, we're not going to cross the flood.

Okay? Mindfully contemplating no thingness, depending on the perception there is no thing, cross the flood. Giving up sensual pleasures, refraining from chatter, watch day and night for the ending of craving. So yeah, giving up sensual pleasures, don't go pursuing sensual pleasures. Refraining from chatter. How much of your life do you waste just chattering on about nothing? Or having something chatter on about nothing to you? Right? I mean, there's a lot of really interesting things on YouTube, some of which are actually kind of useful. But it's also deterrent, you can go to YouTube. And yeah, I love cat videos. They're great. But I don't think anybody's ever been laying on their bed going, I never watched enough cat videos. Right?

So yeah. Look at how you're spending your communication time. In communication, at the time of the Buddha was talking. They didn't have any other methods. We've got so many other methods. We've got our computers and our phones and letters, remember letters. And yeah, there's all sorts of ways to communicate. Make sure that it's useful. And watch day and night for the ending of craving. Notice when the craving comes up and let it go. That's the thing to do. Yeah, we're probably not going to get to the place where we don't crave until we get to at least the third stage of awakening. So the craving is going to come up, recognize when the cravings come up and let it go.

One is free of all sensual desires, depending on no thingness, all else left behind, intent on the ultimate liberation of perception. Might they remain there without traveling on? Okay, if I can get to this place that you're talking about, can I stay there? One free from all sensual desires, depending on no thingness, all left behind, intent on the ultimate liberation of perception. Perception is the word *sañña*. You can see it right here, right? As I say, I want to translate it as conceptualization. So one free from all sensual desires, so one free from all sensual desires, depending on no thingness, all left behind, intent on the ultimate liberation of conceptualizing. They might remain there without traveling on.

Okay, if you can get to that point, you will have experienced the world in such a way that you can stay there. If they were to remain there without traveling on for many years and being freed, or to grow cool right there, would the consciousness of such a one pass away? And here I think consciousness is being used in our usual way of talking about consciousness. It's vinaya down here.

Okay, it's not the divided knowing. The divided knowing is the literal, and occasionally the Buddha

uses this. But here, if someone can get to this point of not being fooled by their conceptualizing, their thingifying the world, and were to stay there forever, and they were to grow cold right there, in other words, if they die, would the consciousness of such a one pass away? As a flame tossed by a gust of wind comes to an end and cannot be reckoned, so too a sage freed from the set of mental phenomena comes to an end and cannot be reckoned. So it's possible to ask questions that seem to make a lot of sense that, well, don't make a lot of sense.

The one that shows up in the suttas, this is in Majjhima 72, I believe, Vacchagotta. Now Vacchagotta was a wanderer from another sect, and he's one of my favorite characters in the suttas. He comes to the Buddha over and over again and wants to know the answer to various questions. And he wants to know the same thing. What happens to an enlightened person after they die? Do they exist? Do they not exist? Do they both exist and not exist? Do they neither exist or not exist?

And the Buddha says, Vacchagotta, if there's a little fire burning right here, would you know there's a fire burning here? Yes, Venerable Sir. If you put more sticks on the fire, what happens? The fire blazes up bigger. What if you don't put any more sticks on the fire? Well, eventually it would go out. Vacchagotta, when the fire goes out, which way does it go? North, south, east, west, up, down? Venerable Sir, the question makes no sense. It just goes out. It's the same for an awakened one. There's no more fuel for their passions, and they just go out. So like asking which way does the fire go when it goes out, asking what happens to the consciousness of one who's liberated doesn't make any sense. You can't say anything about it. The body of a fully awakened one obviously dies.

I mean, the Buddha got old, sick, and died. That happens to everybody, right? But we can't say anything about his consciousness. In Majjhima 38, there's a foolish bhikkhu named Sati, the son of the fisherman, who thinks that his consciousness transmigrates from incarnation to incarnation. Other bhikkhus hear this and try and convince him that's not what the Buddha teaches, but he thinks that's what the Buddha teaches. So the other bhikkhus go tell the Buddha about Sati, and Sati says, "Tell Sati the master calls." And so Sati comes to see the Buddha. The Buddha asks him, "Is this what he believes? Yes, consciousness transmigrates." And then the Buddha asks, "Sati, what is consciousness?" It is that which speaks and feels and experiences here and there the results of good and bad actions. Right? So the speaking, it's called the speaking of the mind. Right? So the speaking, it's consciousness is speaking. My consciousness is making these words and throw them at the microphone on my computer so they go into your ear eventually. And feels, you know, I feel thirsty, I drink some water, I feel pleasure, I smile, whatever. And experiences here and there the results of good and bad actions. It gets the karmic resultants. You think that's a good description of consciousness? The Buddha's reply, "You foolish man, when have you ever known me to speak of consciousness like that?"

For on many occasions, I have said that consciousness is dependently originated. For without supporting conditions, there is no origination of consciousness." They ask the monks if they think Sati is right, they go, "No, venerable sir, you said the consciousness is dependently originated." And then the

Buddha says something very interesting. He said that consciousness is reckoned by the conditions on which it depends. When it depends on eye and sights, it's eye consciousness, ear and sound, ear consciousness, nose and smell, nose consciousness, tongue and taste, tongue consciousness, body and textures, body consciousness, mind and mind objects, mind consciousness.

Just like a fire is reckoned by the condition on which it depends. If it's burning on a house, it's a house fire. If it's burning in the forest, it's a forest fire. If it's burning on rubbish, it's a rubbish fire. If it's burning on chaff, it's a chaff fire. If it's burning on logs, it's a log fire. So do with consciousness. Consciousness requires a condition. There's a condition on which it depends. Either five sensory input or input from your mind. It's not an independent thing.

And we talk about the sense consciousness, but that's a way of reckoning it. It's not that there are six different types of consciousness. It's just that we talk about it in that way. Just like there are not six different types of fire. Fire is always fuel and oxygen uniting in the presence of heat. Whether it's burning on a house or a forest or chaff or rubbish. And then the Buddha starts in with a series of questions and answers about dependent origination that goes on for page after page and is actually very tedious.

But at the end it comes back to monks knowing and seeing in this way. That's in terms of dependent origination. Would you run back to the past wondering, was I? Was I not? What was I? Being what? What did I become? No venerable sir. Monks knowing and seeing in this way, would you run to the future wondering, will I be? Won't I be? What will I be? Being what? What will I become? No venerable sir. Monks knowing and seeing in this way, would you be inwardly perplexed about the present? Wondering, am I? Am I not? What is this being? Where does it come from? What will happen to it? No venerable sir. Monks, are you saying this just because I'm your teacher? No venerable sir. Are you saying this because you know it from your own experience? Yes venerable sir.

If you truly understand dependent origination at the deepest level, then you don't think about what was I in the past or what will I be in the future or even what am I now? You realize that you are nothing but the intersection of a bunch of streams of dependently arising processes interacting. That's all there is. And the idea of there being a thing doesn't occur.

Joseph Goldstein gave a talk one time, he said you should think of yourself as a verb rather than a noun. And I thought that was really good because we're just a collection of processes, digestive process, circulatory process, endocrine process. But then I got to thinking and I realized there aren't any nouns. It's just that some verbs move kind of slow. You see a tree? Well, it's treeing. You know, it was an acorn and then it changed and it became a giant oak tree and eventually it's going to fall down and then there'll be firewood and then it'll be burned and then it'll be carbon dioxide for some other tree to breathe. Right?

Once you start seeing past the things of the world, you start seeing the flow of verbs and then you realize that actually all of the verbs are dependent on other verbs and there's really only one verb unfolding.



We could say the universe is unfolding, but the universe is superfluous. There's just unfolding. When you can get to that, then yeah, the question about what happens to an enlightened one after death just doesn't arise because there's just this giant unfolding. That's all that's happening. And the fully awakened one has realized that and they're not conceiving of themselves in the past or the future or even in the present. There's just sensory input happening and they're not getting attached to it.

Another question, one who has come to an end, do they not exist or are they free from disease for eternity? Please answer me clearly for you truly understand this matter. One who has come to an end cannot be defined. They have nothing by which others might describe them. When all things have been eradicated, eradicated to all ways of speech. Nagarjuna talks about the ultimate as indescribable, inconceivable, indivisible. Once you get the full holistic nature of the ultimate universe, you get it, but you can't talk about it because any word that you use, well, it's a concept. It's the indescribable, inconceivable, indivisible nature of the universe doesn't lend itself to concepts. There's just the giant unfolding.

And so, what I think the Buddha is teaching here is if you can, for example, do the Bāhiya practice really well, then what you see, what you experience is just the giant unfolding. There are no things. You don't think of either world. You stop looking at the world in terms of nouns. You start seeing processes, but then you stop seeing separate processes and realize they're all interconnected until eventually there's just unfolding. At least this is my interpretation of this particular sutta. As I say, the orthodox view is different and some modern scholars interpret it differently, but I'm going to go with what I understand. So, any questions?

Bindu.

**Questioner:**

Hi. I'm quite open-minded about rebirth. Philosophically and intellectually, I get the arguments, you know, why certain scholars and exponents want to just argue for an empirical rebirth or becoming. But I do have a curiosity about people's testimonies. And I use the word rebirth rather than reincarnation because I do feel from my meditation that there is a flow, that there isn't a static entity that lives on in a metaphysical realm after death. I do feel that, but I also feel in this vast cosmos of unfolding, stuff just doesn't stop on an astronomical level.

So, I don't know what I'm trying to ask you because I think we'll all find out ultimately for ourselves when we die if there is such a thing as rebirth. But I think it's just a very rich area for me for exploration rather than seeking a definitive answer because I do keep an open mind and I really enjoy listening to teachers and scholars who have, you know, alternate views because it informs my practice, I think. That's what I feel. And I mean, the suttas I have read, I haven't read all the Nikayas, the suttas I have read, they seem to be replete with rebirth. And to say that's an interpolation from Brahmanism or the Upanishads, it's quite a leap because my understanding is the suttas were being recorded while the Buddha was alive.

So, it wasn't like it was all kind of just reinterpreted after he died. They were being locked down while he was alive. So, I don't really have a question. I just wanted to share some thoughts with you. And I think, yeah, for me, there is a distinction between reincarnation, which is metaphysical, and rebirth, which I feel is more of a flow. And I think maybe we just don't have the scientific, empirical means to investigate this phenomena on a conventional level. Because I remember listening to someone describe rebirth, and I think it was Venerable Gunaratana, and he said it's like a fax machine, which is, it's our outmoded way of communication now. But you send a piece of paper from London, it arrives somehow in a Willy Wonka way in San Francisco. But you don't actually see it physically traveling across the pond to San Francisco. It just gets there. I mean, maybe you as an engineer or computer programmer, you know the technology. You know the tricks. Yeah. So, but also what's curious is that, you know, when I was studying at university, there was a book, the Yogis of Ladakh, and it was two social scientists from England. They went to witness people, these yogis, walking through walls and doing all kinds of supernatural exercises. And that, I suppose that is for me, an area that I'm really curious about. How do you, you know, get your practice to such a level where you can see, you're almost like in a matrix mode, you can see the spaciousness between...

**Leigh:**

Let me give you the answer before you keep going, okay?

I don't know what happens after we die. I have no memory of ever dying, so I don't know. Okay, I've heard lots of views and opinions, and they all contradict each other. I do know that the actions that I do have consequences, and some of those consequences will unfold after I, my physical body is dead. Now, is that my rebirth? Well, if it is, okay, that's fine. I think I've done useful stuff, and I don't worry about it. If there is something else, and I go on, which I kind of doubt, everyone who says that all agrees that your next station is dependent on how good you led your previous life. And so, if I lead my life well, lead an ethical life, then yeah, it's taken care of, and I don't have to worry about it. On the other hand, if there's nothing else, I better lead a full life now. And so, if I lead an ethical full life now, I've covered both bases, and it doesn't matter. And that's where I've left it.

So, yeah, it's not going to give you an answer, and that's all you're going to get out of me. It's just that there's so much more that can be talked about. But yeah, I got no information, so I can't give you anything more than that.

**Questioner:**

This is my second time doing this with you, and I think I'm beginning to understand it maybe 2% better. But my question is, it seems to be all these teachings are pointing to non-dual to me. I mean, ultimate concept is self, and once you create self, you create other, you create things, you create, and you're caught because of greed, hatred, delusion. So, how did non-dual become such a big thing in Tibetan and Dzogchen and called Rigpa, and why is that word not used in these teachings? I mean, it's so confusing when you look at Bhikkhu Bodhi's use of the commentaries, and like, when you go off into

nothingness as a state, as a meditative state, rather than what you're talking about, not looking at it through concepts, it just makes it more confusing. So, why is non-dual such a bad word?

**Leigh:**

Well, non-dual as a word, as a concept didn't exist at the time of the Buddha. Okay, so he had to try and explain it. And rather than invent the word non-dual, he talks about nothingness. Okay, so he was limited by the ideas that were in, you know, in his culture, just like we are limited by the ideas in our culture. As it became understood that that's what he's talking about, then somebody along the way invented the concept of non-duality. And the Mahayana took that concept, and maybe it was in the Mahayana tradition where they actually came up with that concept, and they ran with it. But we do find it in the early suttas. I mean, when I read you the stuff from Digha Nikāya number 11, about where do the four elements cease without remainder, consciousness that's signless and so forth, then the four elements, no footing, fine. You don't have high and low, long and short, beautiful and ugly, or nama rupa. So now it's describing non-dual, but it didn't have the word. And so the Buddha used the word, the end of divided knowing, to talk about non-dual, the end of consciousness. So we don't find it in the suttas, because they didn't have the concept in a easily expressible form. And the Buddha had to elaborate to get people to actually understand it. And it was only later somebody invented a shorthand, non-duality, to talk about it. And so it shows up in the Mahayana. Whereas the commentaries are pretty much stuck at the level of their literal interpretation of the suttas. And they wind up with things like, yeah, seventh jhāna, when the Buddha is talking about something far, far more important.

**Questioner:**

Oh, hi. Thank you very much. You ended your discussion of the sutta as you said, this is your interpretation, but not necessarily that of some modern scholars, current scholars. Okay. And so as another mathematician, could you give me a sort of a sense of who those other scholars might be like Bhikkhu Bodhi or just so I can get a sense of other viewpoints, because I'm hearing yours, but I'd like to have a sense of what other modern scholarship might point me to.

**Leigh:**

Okay. So if you go back to that summary from the way to the far shore on my page and look up Upasiva, which is SNP 5.6. And you look down further at the very bottom of that, the origin of Buddhist meditation by Alexander Wynne is a modern scholar. And he thinks referring, this is referring to the realm of nothingness, the seventh jhāna. I have read what he wrote. And when I read what he wrote, I go immediately, oh, no, that's wrong. I mean, it just didn't strike me. And then the commentaries, I don't, there is the commentary to the Sutta Nipata in Bhikkhu Bodhi's translation in the back of it.

So you can look up what the commentaries say there. I have never looked at the commentaries there in any detail. I've seen a little bit where stuff is quoted and I go, I don't want to pollute my mind with what they've got. I don't think they know what's going on. I'd rather take the Buddha's words as they are and work with that rather than to have my mind colored by what the commentaries are saying. I have

read the Visuddhimagga, the whole thing. It's a really powerful book. If you have insomnia, just crack it open anywhere, start reading, it'll put you out. But I didn't find it particularly helpful. There's some stuff in there that's helpful. I've read some of the Abhidhamma. And again, I didn't find it particularly helpful. So I'm a Sutta scholar. I want to work with the Suttas and I'm very content to, you know, look at modern scholars that are working with the Suttas and see what they have to say. And I don't agree with all of them either. But I'm kind of shying away from the commentaries simply because it was written in a different culture so many years later. And they missed so many, so many very important points. Thank you. Right.

**Questioner:**

So my question is, who teaches this, besides yourself? Because I'm, it's very clear to me, I'm not getting anywhere on my own. And I've been practicing 30 years almost with, you know, IMS, Joseph Goldstein, that kind of lineage, right? Which I love, absolutely adore. And there's a lot of emphasis on early texts. But I find, you know, you go to an interview with a teacher and it's, they're just very conceptual. They're talking about, and I really would love to find someone who does interviews that are experiential, sort of like I'm a psychotherapist, I do internal family systems. And it's great because it's experiential. And I have just stumbled in the last couple years on Shinzen Young, who I feel like that kind of broke thing. I was like, wait, I've never practiced this way. I'm having a little more trouble getting into that sangha because it's West Coast and it's a little harder. And that's the hard thing too, is I have a beloved sangha through Mark Nunberg just on Zoom. And they, you know, they don't speak this way, really a little bit. I mean, I'm trying to figure out how to how I can hear them speak because I don't want to leave them and sort of move more in this direction. Less conceptual. That's why I like Shinzen. And then also some of the non-dual people I'm wondering about like Locke Kelly, whether he might be someone who's kind of touching into this.

**Leigh:**

I don't know about Locke Kelly. I mean, I know who he is, but I don't know enough about his teaching. So I have a good friend here in the Bay Area named Diana Clark, and we went for a hike last Friday. And this is exactly what we were talking about. And she's a teacher, but she's on the West Coast here. Again, she's part of Gil Fronsdal's sangha. And so there could be other people in Gil's sangha that are teaching, you know, teachers in his sangha that are looking at this like this. But there's not a lot of people looking at this. I mean, people like their concepts and that's where they are. I mean, when I started out, I was very conceptual for decades of practice before I stumbled into an experience where, yeah, the concepts all dropped away. And it was like, oh, wow, that's what the world is really like. And so then I began looking for hints of that in the suttas, and it was all over the place. Well, not all over the place, but it occurs in multiple places. And the teachings on emptiness in the suttas, I mean, it's, things are empty in the suttas, because they're without self. But everything is said to be without self. And when you really take that to the ultimate level, everything is, yeah, it doesn't have any intrinsic existence, it's just a concept. So this isn't talked about in many places. I talk about it. A few other people talk about it,

but it's pretty rare. You might find maybe Stephen Batchelor or John Peacock talking about it. But I don't know, you know, I haven't, I haven't had discussion with them on this particular stuff. And yeah, it's kind of weird being out here and teaching a bunch of stuff that other people don't teach, like the jhānas, like no thingness, non-conceptuality, and so forth. I'm sure there are other teachers around and definitely in the Mahayana, there's much more looking at non-duality.

**Questioner:**

Okay, but Shenzhen, you're giving him a thumbs up, I think.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, Shenzhen's very good.

**Questioner:**

Another very quick question. I'm signed up for your retreat on the jhānas in April. And I, well, maybe, and I just, is there a way to contact you with a couple questions about whether that's appropriate for me? Because I can't concentrate, you know. Don't worry about it. Very well. I picture myself like the only person in the hall and everybody else is in their room doing this great stuff. And I, I need like group support, kind of, I think.

**Leigh:**

I think you'll get group support on that retreat, because people will be in the hall. Now, maybe not everybody will be in the hall. I would say that probably around 75% of the people who come on retreats with me say they don't have very good concentration. Their concentration is less than average. Well, guess what? 75% can't be less than average. And people come in and say, I don't know why I'm on this retreat, because I can't concentrate. And they learn some jhānas. So, yeah, you're not going to get any excuse from me. You should be on the retreat. On my website, which you can find, I'll just plug my name into Google. There's an email link, and you can send me an email and we can communicate. The co-teacher, Heather Sundberg, is also someone who would teach stuff like this. And so you definitely want to meet her. She has a multi-year program that you can get in where she's looking at stuff from this perspective.

**Questioner:**

Right, great. And then I'll just throw one last insight dialogue seems to get close also, which I'm pretty involved in, where you're doing experiential together, which is, is quite amazing, I think, but not everyone gets it. You know, there's people doing that, that are still very conceptual. So anyway, but thank you so much. Yeah,

**Leigh:**

Insight dialogue is great. I've done two 10 day retreats with Greg and some a lot of others as well. Excellent. Look forward to seeing you in April. Send me an email.

Okay, so it's two people have asked questions. Carol has asked less questions than Victoria. So you get to go first.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. I have a question like about the teachers who teach like no thingness or the unfolding. It kind of relates to a lot that has been said in the last sutta. And because I found on your website, like among others, a recommendation for a book called Buddha Essence, but by Daryl Bailey. So I wonder if you are familiar with his other books, because he basically in like he has this one book when where he describes in his own terms, what's the essence of Buddha's teachings and the suttas basically. And in the others, he talks a lot, I would say about the like getting a perspective in which you basically perceive the unfolding without differentiating different things that are there. And it kind of feels like he says that this perspective is the thing in a way to be achieved. I wonder what is your view on that? And what he teaches?

**Leigh:**

Right. So I've read several of his books. I know him personally. He's a really good guy. And yeah, his his view on that is pretty good. The one thing I would say is that he tends to dismiss the relative and promote the ultimate. Okay, and I'm saying you got to have both of them. Right. But his, his his take on the ultimate view is quite good. I haven't read all of his books, but I've read Buddha Essence, that was his first one, and I found it extremely helpful. And then I read his second and third one. And in one of those, it seemed to me he was putting too much emphasis on the ultimate view being superior to the relative view as opposed to different perspectives on reality. And what do you mean by the relative view? The relative view is that yeah, I'm sitting here in California, and this is my cell phone. And you're in, I believe you're in Poland. Is that right?

**Questioner:**

Yes, yes.

**Leigh:**

Yeah. Right. And so we're in, you know, different places. And I have a tank on the wall over here, the picture of the Potala Palace, and these, these are my possessions, and so forth. So that's the all the relative view. But working on the relative view is not going to lead to freedom, you've actually got to also work on the ultimate view. And Darrell Bailey is really good at talking about the ultimate view if you want to.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, I actually read all his other books. And yeah, I really enjoyed them. They influenced my practice a lot, I would say.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, he's good. I mean, he spent 10 years as a monk at Amravati in England, and then he wrote "Buddhessence" and then he started going in the direction that he that his books go. He's good.

**Questioner:**

Yay. Again, I have to choose one out of a million. I had a big, you weren't entertaining questions

that time. So I'm jumping back a little bit in the discourse, but the camera, Anita Stopper discourse. Venerable, sir. I was thinking, you know, and that's like in Western culture, that's the Faust syndrome. Oh, Augenblick für weile die hits, you know, wanting to cling to the moment. And, and, and not recognizing the Nietzsche. However, I'm wondering about how that works in the context of being an artist since I'm in the arts. And also how it works in the context of trying to help others along in the spiritual path. In other words, like, like, just to use the camera thing as a simple example. If Ansel Adams had walked in front of you while you were eating your lunch, you know, I would question the, you know, because he wasn't, he obviously wasn't doing it so well, maybe he was also, but he, you know what I'm saying, he had, he had ulterior motives in the sense that he was doing something to contribute to whatever, to me, to the beauty in the world, you know. And so there, so the question is, and then also, if we, if we sort of relinquish that idea ... Well, you know what I'm saying, what I'm asking about. It's, it's, there's a bigger picture there. I understand the syndrome, but in an individual sense, but, and maybe this also relates to the different paths of Buddhism itself, like, to what extent should I be also engaged in helping others along with, well, I can't do it, but you can, and you are.

**Leigh:**

Okay. So as an artist, you're doing something different than the guy snapping photographs and missing the scene. I mean, Ansel Adams saw the scene. He couldn't have taken those pictures without truly seeing it and capturing it. Okay. So as an artist, yeah, you're, you're doing your artwork. I mean, I still write computer programs for myself, right? I'm there, I'm totally absorbed. I'm enjoying it. You know, I got all the bugs out. It works just like I wanted it to. Yeah, it's fine. As for helping others, yes, that's part of what goes on. The first precept, I undertake the training to refrain from killing living beings. Actually in the suttas, if you'll give me one second, I can actually read you what the first precept is in the suttas.

Having abandoned the destruction of life, one abstains from the destruction of life. One has laid down the rod and weapon and dwells conscientious, full of kindness and sympathetic for the welfare of all living beings.

So the first precept is not just don't kill. It's about one dwells conscientious, full of kindness, sympathetic for the welfare of all beings. So yeah, you want to, you want to do what you can to help other people. You want to recognize the interconnected nature of all of us. I mean, we're interconnected now in such a way that I'm giving all these words out to you and I'm affecting who you are and how you relate to the world.

Okay, hopefully I'm doing something to make your world a little bit better for you. Okay. And so yeah, when you're doing things that have an impact on another, you want to have the impact that it makes their world a better place. And that's certainly what Ansel Adam was doing.

Okay. So doing art can be very helpful that way, but so can, you know, feeding the homeless or, you know, working in the soup kitchen or donating some money to the refugees from Ukraine or whatever.

There are lots of ways to be of help.

**Questioner:**

Okay. That brings up another question, but I'll let you go. I mean, everyone else.

**Leigh:**

So the next Sutta, Nanda, this one has an interesting thing in it as well. People say there are sages in the world, but how is this the case? Is someone called a sage because of their knowledge or because of their way of life? And the Buddha replies, experts do not speak of a sage in terms of view, learning or knowledge. Those who are sages live far from the crowd, I say, untroubled with no need of hope.

So it's not your knowledge that makes you a sage. I mean, in English, we think of a sage as a wise person, but the Buddha is saying that the Muni, right, the Muni, a monk, a wise person, they're wise because of how they live their life. They live far from the crowd. They're not entangled with other people and they're untroubled and they have no need for hope. When I first met Ruth Dennison, who was a very amazing teacher, lived in Southern California, on our station wagon, she had a bumper sticker that said, I feel so much better since I gave up all hope, which was like, what? I didn't get it. But our hope, that's a grasping into the future, right? I hope that this goes well for me. I hope when I go to the dentist, I don't have any cavities. If your hope is met and you don't have any cavities, oh, you feel so good. If your hope is not met and you've got a cavity and it's going to cost you money and it's going to hurt and everything else, and you got to come back in three weeks when there's a point. Yeah. But if you just go to the dentist and take care of it, if it needs to be taken care of, instead of having a hope for one way or another, less a source of dukkha. Okay. This is what's being talked about.

In the Tibetan tradition, there's a book called The Flight of the Garuda and full awakening, enlightenment is talked about as the absence of fear and hope. The absence of aversion and attraction, basically. Okay. And so a sage is someone who's away from the madding crowd, maddening crowd, and they're untroubled with no need for hope. As to those ascetics and Brahmins who speak of purity in terms of what is seen or heard, or in terms of countless different things, living self-controlled in that matter, have they crossed over birth, old age, good sir, I ask you, please tell me this. So, in some of the traditions, spiritual traditions at the time of the Buddha, and even today in India, purity is in terms of what is seen or heard. In other words, you're pure based on what you experience. As to those ascetics and Brahmins who speak of purity in terms of what is seen and heard, or in terms of precepts and vows, or in terms of countless different things, even though they live self-controlled in that matter, they've not crossed over birth and old age, I declare. In other words, not good enough. You may be leading a really pure life, but you haven't tackled the big existential thing of old age, sickness, and death.

So, then who exactly in the world of gods and humans has crossed over? I don't say that all ascetics and Brahmins are shrouded by birth and old age. There are those here who have given up all that is seen, heard, thought, and precepts, and vows, given up all the countless things, fully understanding craving, free from defilements. Those people, I say, have crossed the flood. So, the giving up all that



is seen, heard, and thought, that's the giving up the concepts. They're not lost in conceptualization. Giving up precepts and vows, you don't keep the precepts. You don't keep your vows because you're attached to that. You keep them because you see it works. Okay?

You could not kill another because if I kill another, I'm going to hell. You're attached to it. You could not kill another because you see that's a better way to live, to take an extreme example. So, the giving up precepts and vows doesn't mean that you go out and you kill people and you steal from them or things like that. It means that you keep them because it's the useful way to behave. And who have given up all the countless different things. In other words, they've seen the conceptual nature of reality and penetrated it. Those, I say, have crossed the flood. And then it's basically repeated. So, if we got quick questions, we can do that before going on to the next.

All right. I'm going on to the next one then.

**Questioner:**

Can I just ask a technical question? How are you activating the dictionary on Sutter Central? Because I've double clicked on a Pāli word and it's not coming up with the meaning.

Okay. You click on views up at the top and then you click on English if you want an English dictionary. And then you click on either line by line or side by side and then it should work.

**Leigh:**

Alright. Those who have previously answered me 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 speculations. I found no delight in that. But you, Sage, explained to me the teaching that destroys craving. Having understood it, one who lives mindfully may cross over clinging in the world. The removal of desire and lust, Hamaka, for what is seen, heard, thought, or cognized here, or anything liked or disliked, is extinguishment. Nibbana.

Is Nibbana the imperishable state? So all the other teachings that Hamaka had heard were just speculations. And yeah, he likes what the Buddha has to say. The removal of desire and lust for what is seen, heard, thought, or cognized here. This covers all of our sensory input, whether it's external or mental. The removal of desire and lust for anything liked or disliked. This is Nibbana. This is the Four Noble Truths, right?

Okay. Dukkha is the problem. Dukkha arises dependent on craving, desire, and lust. With the end of desire and lust is the end of dukkha. And of course, the fourth one is how you get to the end of desire and lust. Those who have fully understood this, mindful, reach Nibbana in this very life. Always at peace, they've crossed over clinging to the world.

The peace that Nibbana brings is actually quite important in the suttas. In the previous book in the Sutta Nipata, Book Five, the Buddha says that he left home not because he saw an old person, a dead person, a sick person, or a monk. He says he left home because he was seeking peace. Everybody was

quarreling. There were the Sakyans. It's a warrior culture. When you think of where the Buddha grew up, think of a macho culture. That's probably more what it was like than what you think of as India today. And people are quarreling and he's like, "I want some peace." And he couldn't find any until he looked into his heart and removed the barb. The barb is the craving and clinging.

So yeah, this is basically an early depiction of what's taught in the first three of the Four Noble Truths. The removal of desire and lust for what is seen, heard, thought, or cognized here. For anything liked or disliked, this is Nibbana, the imperishable state.

Any questions on this one? Joshua.

**Questioner:**

Hi Leigh, thanks for your teaching. Question, could you talk a little bit more about this notion of seclusion that keeps coming up?

**Leigh:**

Yeah, yeah, the Buddha was big on peace and quiet. There are suttas where he's there at the monastery and a bunch of monks show up and he's like, "What's going on here? This sounds like fishermen hauling in a catch." He's looking for peace and quiet. And he frequently is recommending that you go off by yourself and meditate. So basically, he's recommending go on retreat, whether it be self-retreat or a formal retreat with a teacher and interviews or anything. But at least at some point during the day, get yourself secluded enough and do your daily practice. And so that's what he's talking about, the seclusion. Get yourself out of the busy world that we normally operate in and see, can you actually get to a place where you can hear yourself think or even better hear yourself not think.

**Questioner:**

So it's not being in seclusion the entire time, you have to interact with you.

**Leigh:**

It is better the more you can be secluded, right? So I spent 20 out of 36 months at the Forest Refuge on retreat in seclusion. It was powerful. It was really powerful. I learned more in those 20 months than I had in any previous 20-month period, actually any previous several year period, just simply because day after day, just keep practicing. It wasn't that I got an insight a day, that was definitely not the case. But every now and then I'd get an insight and every now and then the insights I got were just completely beyond anything I'd ever conceptualized before. And it's just a matter of putting in the time. So that's what he's suggesting. And so what we want to do is do the seclusion bit as much as makes sense for us, given the life that we're leading.

**Questioner:**

Thank you.

**Leigh:**

Right. Okay, move on to the last one we're going to do today.

In whom sensual pleasures do not dwell, and for whom there is no craving is crossed over doubt. What kind is their liberation?

So what's it like to be someone in whom sensual pleasures do not dwell, and there's no craving and no doubt? And the Buddha replies in whom sensual pleasures do not dwell and for whom there is no craving and who've crossed over doubts, their liberation is none other than this. This is what it means to be fully liberated, fully awakened, enlightened.

Are they free of hope? Or are they still in need of hope? Do they possess wisdom? Or are they still forming wisdom?

Oh, Sakyan, elucidate the sage to me so that I may understand. They are free from hope, they are not in need of hope. They possess wisdom, they're not still forming wisdom. That is how to understand the sage, one who has no thing unattached to sensual life. So this is a pretty good depiction of Nibbana. Right? Sensual pleasures do not dwell, no craving, crossed over doubt, not in need of hope, not in need of more wisdom, they've arrived.

So this is what we're after. And just like you get to Carnegie Hall by practicing, that's how we get there as well.

So we've covered the first half of this particular collection. And we've got 20 minutes left for questions in general, or on particular suttas. You could look back at the summaries, perhaps you'd find something there that you want more about, jog your memory.

Victoria.

**Questioner:**

I'm starting to feel very greedy here. Just cut me off again if, well, there's Sean, I know he asked questions too, so I feel okay so far. But throw me off if you need to.

This hope thing, that's now sticking in my craw. Because I don't see hope the way that you described it at all. I mean, that's like the common parlance, hope, yeah, we say it all the time. I hope we're going to get, you know, ribs for dinner, whatever, like, that's connected with craving and not wanting to suffer. Yeah. However, hope in a, as a, I'm wondering about it in the context of like, the spiritual path of hope being, because the way I see it, I mean, I could quote the Christian scriptures, but I won't. But in general, I see it as an orientation where while we are still in this moment, present moment, hopefully, if we're mindful, and we're aware, yet there's, it's like a double layer that we are aware of some ultimate, it's kind of the relative absolute thing again, that we're aware of an ultimate purpose, or an ultimate destination, or, and so I'm wondering if in fact hope is, seen that way, is something almost essential for the spiritual path. In other words, and not in a trivial way of like, I hope I achieve nirvana, you know, and then that, but in the sense of like, orientation, like, not like, lest we forget kind of thing.

**Leigh:**

Yeah. If you can do it without the concept of hope, okay, orient yourself that way. I think it'll work

better because the hope, hope seems a little disempowering. I hope it turns out all right.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, but you're using it. I mean, the root is fabulous, but and I know exactly what she meant. And I agree with her. I love the but that's not what I'm talking about.

**Leigh:**

Right. Well, what I'm saying is that the concept of hope that you're talking about is probably okay. But it's tinged with this kind of craving thing in there. And it's better if you could go, oh, yeah, well, it would be really good to actually make progress on the spiritual path. And I know the only way I can make progress is to do the practice and hoping and wishing is not going to do any good at all. It's better just go do the practice. So it's, I see what you're pointing at. But I'm thinking that you can find a better word. One that doesn't have the craving associated with it. But yeah, yeah. There is the hope that if I do this really well, it will make my life better. Right. But there's can also be the yeah, if I do this really well, this will make my life better without throwing the hope part in there.

**Questioner:**

Why would I would reject both of those statements as I mean, I would reject both of those on the grounds of clinging and craving. So I'm it's neither nor it's I'm talking more about like, just like, why are we all here today kind of thing? Like, in other words, just orientation that this is, this is wise.

**Leigh:**

Right. And all I'm saying is that the word hope, although it can orient you, it's got this little thing on the side that I, I don't want to go there with that word. Maybe it's just semantics.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, I think it is. I think it is. Okay, thank you. Right.

**Questioner:**

Yes, thank you for this evening. I wanted to ask a question about something you said earlier about verbs versus nouns, which I found helpful. And that is, if I'm not mistaken, the Pāli, there's also very little nouns, if no, if not no nouns. So I wonder if this is some kind of truth that's already captured by the Pāli or because the Pāli of course, was a lot earlier than the Buddha. But I just wondered about that, if you could say something about it.

**Leigh:**

So Pāli is far more verb oriented than English. English is very noun oriented. But Navajo is even more verb oriented than Pāli. Okay, so Pāli is going in the right direction, definitely. But I think Navajo is even even closer to reality. And so when you understand the verb orientation of the Pāli, and you're reading the suttas, and you can re translate the translation into a more verb oriented sense, you're probably closer to what the Buddha actually meant. Because it gets translated into English, and therefore it starts losing some of the verb aspects of it. So yeah, you're exactly right. The more verb feeling you get

when you read a sutta, the better, the closer I think you're probably going to get to what the Buddha was actually talking about.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. And do you think it could be a helpful practice to just start verbing things? Like you said about the tree.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, it is a helpful practice. I have done that. Again, go for a walk. I mean, I highly recommend going for a walk in nature. Yeah. Go for a walk in nature and see all the verbs around you. The trees are treeing, they're doing it kind of slowly. But the birds are birding, they're moving a little faster, and the leaves are falling. And yeah, so just trying to experience the world more from a verb standpoint than an noun standpoint is really good. Yeah. I mean, the ideal thing we'd all both learn Pāli and Navajo. But yeah, probably not going to happen. But you can still do it in English or Dutch. Right.

**Questioner:**

Hi, Leigh. Nice to see you again. I had a question about, so this is from two different monastics, prominent Theravadan monastics, around what you're talking about with the employing the ultimate view at times and employing the relative view at times. So one monastic has told me that that is the middle way. The middle way is between sort of the extremes of those two perspectives. Another monastic who's perhaps a little bit more conservative or more strictly in this, taking the Sutta, or early Buddhist tradition perspective, was saying that that's garbage and that actually it's the ultimate perspective is what the Buddha is pointing you to. And that's the direction to go. And you're over, at least over time, that's where you want to move towards. So it's not so much of this or thing. And, and, you know, you could hold both, I think, to some degree. Yeah. It's just curious, what in terms of the middle way, what's, what's your thought on that?

**Leigh:**

Yeah, I wouldn't have used the middle way between the relative and the absolute. But I would say that both are required. I mean, you can't cross the street from the ultimate perspective. You really do need to look both ways and make sure there's no cars coming in. That's all dropping back into the relative perspective. When you're eating your peanut butter and jelly sandwich, you have to know the difference between the sandwich and your fingers. That's relative perspective. So I wouldn't say it's between the two. I'd say that you have to operate with both. And what the Buddha is trying to do is get you a clearer view of the ultimate perspective. But the only way you can do it is by throwing relative concepts at you, you know, fingers pointing at the moon only, I guess this is fingers pointing at Andromeda, because it's not as easy to see as the moon, so that you can look in the right direction and begin to get the sense of what's going on. So I wouldn't put it in the middle way there, I would put it that you should do both. The middle way is middle way between extremes. And, you know, the original one is extremes of central intelligence and asceticism. But it's also the extremes between existence

and non existence, which I think is the most profound that's Saṃyutta 12.15, if you want to look it up. And, yeah, so I wouldn't, I wouldn't use it as the middle way between the two, I'd say, don't latch on to either one fully use the appropriate one depending on the circumstances. Right.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, hi, highly. I had to put my hand up and we started really digging into the language, right?

**Leigh:**

So, Pāli scholar, so yes.

**Questioner:**

My first Pāli teacher was Richard Gombrich. And one of the first things out of his mouth was Pāli is a language of verbs, right? And it's kind of like the verbs are the basic building blocks, and they have what they call primary and secondary derivatives built on the verbs, many of which are the nouns. So, you know, it's really helpful to think of verbs as the main building block in Pāli. So, that's one. But then, when I raised my hand was to bring up this point in relation to this word that we're translating as hope, because what's the root of that word, we're seeing it like nirasa, okay, take the nir off, that's a prefix, and we're left with asa, that's what we're translating as hope. It comes from the root to desire, right, to seek, to desire. So, anything that's built on this verbal root is, has this kind of moving out, I want it, feel to it. And you look at the other definitions, and it's like, you know, desire, expectation. So, it's different from what I would think of as like, you know, charting the course, you know, we're going that way, that's just a fact. But this asa, this root is has this desire built into it. So, it's a great example of how, yeah, the verbal roots are the building blocks. And it's useful to think of that and remember that.

**Leigh:**

Great, thank you, Clara Lynn, that's really helpful. Excellent. Alex.

**Questioner:**

Thank you so much for the talk. And I'm looking forward to the second part. When is it next week?

All right, sounds good. So, the question I have is about the something that you said about the long time you were spending on retreat. And you said, find something that works in your life, something like that, right? So, to me, that's like, I'm not so sure how to, hey, how to do this, what works, what does it mean what works in your life? I tend to like, notice what doesn't work in my life, or I overdid it. Or maybe I neglected the other thing, or whatever, right? But then you can look at it and say, do I need to be paying more attention to that other thing? What I call neglect, maybe that's my previous understanding. But now, maybe there's no need to do it.

To give an example, really short, is that right now I'm replacing sLeighp with meditation, to fit more meditation into my normal life, when I work also full time. And it seems to be working fine for me. But anybody I tell this, they're like, oh my gosh, how do you feel and stuff like that? I'm like, I'm fine. But am I fine? I don't know. So, how do you do this? Find what works for you? And what does it mean what

works for me? And also, like this hope, and like, do what needs to be done instead of hoping? Well, does that getting to the other shore is the only thing that needs to be done?

**Leigh:**

Yeah, so the Buddha said, I teach only dukkha and the end of dukkha. So he's only teaching how to get to the other shore. There's a lot more we can learn in life other than how to get rid of dukkha. But you know, that's what mostly we want anyhow, is to get rid of dukkha. So how to figure out what works for you? Experiment and see if sLeighping an hour less gives you an hour more for practice, and you're not falling asLeighp when you're meditating. Well, okay, that looks like it's working. And you keep playing with it. And if it seems like your life is going well, yeah, that works. I did the exact same thing.

What I gave up was smoking marijuana. Okay. When I gave up smoking marijuana, I needed an hour less sLeighp. And I use that same hour for meditating when I very first started out. And so yeah, I gave up an hour of sLeighp to meditate. And it was great. But yeah, it's given the constraints of the life you're leading. What can you do to advance on the spiritual path? And yeah, I quit my job. And so I had 24 hours every day to do whatever I wanted with. I had made enough money as a computer programmer, I could afford to run off to the forest refuge and go on retreat for long periods of time, come out occasionally and teach another retreat, and then go back in and do it again. And so it worked great for me. But if I couldn't do it, while I was working, I was neglecting my own practice, working as a computer programmer and teaching retreats every now and then. And so it was great when I could completely neglect the computer programming, because I didn't need to do it and just replace it with meditation. And it was really profound.

So you have to figure out, okay, this is a priority, how can I fit it in? And it may be that yeah, you just do an hour a day, because that's all you can do. And when it's time for your vacation, yeah, you need to go see your relatives, and you can't go on retreat. I was lucky because I wasn't on the leading edge of what the company was doing. I was just a maintenance programmer. But that meant that, yeah, I could take time off without pay and go on a month long retreat while I was a programmer. I had the perfect setup. And it worked.

**Questioner:**

Thanks so much.

**Leigh:**

Yeah, it's, it's a matter of just experimenting around and figure out what you what will work for you. Okay, last question, Lauren.

**Questioner:**

Hi, there. Yeah, I just I haven't heard before that the Buddha had started out on his path through kind of wanting to get away from quarreling to find more peace. I just wondered, did you deduce that yourself through reading the suttas? And I'm quite new to sort of exploring the suttas myself. I just wondered if you had any, feels a bit kind of vast and overwhelming. I just wondered if you got any advice about

how to start kind of my own exploration?

**Leigh:**

Yeah, the best place to start is a book by Bhikkhu Bodhi, entitled *In the Buddha's Words*. And he has, it's an anthology of suttas. And he groups them by topic. And he has a nice little introduction to the topic. And then you read the suttas. And you have some idea what you're reading, because he gave you a nice introduction. Most of his introductions are useful. The one on dependent origination, though, no, I give it thumbs down. But the rest of it is pretty good. So that's the place to start. Okay. Once you've worked with that, you might want to take a look at a book by Gil Fronsdal, entitled *The Buddha Before Buddhism*. And the sutta I mentioned, *Where the Buddha Left Home, Looking for Some Peace* is actually covered in that particular book. So those would be the two books I would recommend to start. I have a reading list on my website for other books that I think are good. But these are the two books I would recommend to start with if you want to study suttas. Helpful. Thank you.

All right. Thank you to all of you for showing up. Thank you for your generosity. And may any merit from this sharing of the Dharma be for the benefit and liberation of all beings everywhere. See you next week.