

2011-01-21 Sutta Study The Parinibbana Sutta

Part 4

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SPEAKERS

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So, one of the, in the early morning I talked about the ordinary aspect of the human of the of the Buddha, ordinary human aspects of his life. And one of the most most ordinary aspects of his life is that he died. You know the if the Buddha really existed, which assumption is and if you know something about his life. We don't know much about his life, but we certainly know that he was born. He grew up at some point he died

so And the depth of a religious leader, founder of a religion is sometimes taken as being very significant. And certainly, certainly religion has all kinds of symbolic value. So like, you know, Jesus on the cross, I mean, the amount of symbolism attributed to his death and resurrection and what it means to be crucified on the cross, how the vertical and horizontal dimensions of life meet in the middle by his heart, and there's all kinds of things people build on that. You know, and his suffering, the end of his life and the powerful, powerful symbolism of Christ's suffering and looking up in the heavens, I guess, and say, you know, why you forsaken me? and all that, you know, it's been very rich theologically for Christians to struggle with this and question it and build theologies on this. And so Buddhists also have the founder of religion who died, and it has its own symbolism, its own representation that it has those teaching. No, I don't think things that can be done with it. And one of the and so there's some characteristics of the Buddha dying. One is that he died is the old and the other is the one is that so he died as part of a natural part of life as opposed to being killed. So it was kind of the nature of life to death to die. So he died a natural death and other is that he died at peace peacefully. He wasn't afraid of it. It wasn't reluctant about it, he faced it directly. There were certain amount of choice involved in it. And, and he died peacefully knowing to that died peacefully, but he died with a lot of control, self control, enough self control over his mind that he could one last time do a tour pass through. The jhanas has a deep absorptions and he died outside connected to nature underneath trees. It's actually all the significant events in the Buddhist Life occurred under trees. He was born under a tree. he attained enlightenment under a tree, he died under a tree. And, and probably he taught this first teaching under a tree as well. And so some people, you know, like the fact that it's a nature and, and is kind of connected to the natural world. So, you know, there's there's a kind of, you know, there's a kind of a theologically rich possibilities in building on how he died or the symbolism or the archetype of that. And the question is not to believe or not believe in that. But to what degree does that image or that archetype of a person being that way? How does it support and help us in our life? Is it motivating? Is it to create a certain kind of faith that's useful to have confidence is a short possibility that Oh, yeah, that can be done. Is it just a show direction that we can go I don't have to stay afraid of dying. It's someone has modeled what it's like not to be afraid of death, this great world religious person who have a lot of

respect for he could look death directly in the face and not be afraid. What would it take for me to do that? It's okay to do that. So here we have this man who gives his very last teachings. All condition things are of the nature to decay, strive on untiringly. Then the Lord entered the first jhana and leaving that he entered the second, the third and the fourth jhana. Then leaving the fourth jhana enter the sphere of infinite space, than the sphere of infinite consciousness than the sphere of nothingness. In the sphere of not neither perception nor non perception, and leaving daddy attain the cessation of feeling and perception. Then the Venerable Ananda said to the venerable on a rouda venerable Aniruddha The Lord has passed away, no friend and under The Lord has not passed away, is attain the cessation of feeling and perception. And I didn't have as the practice as on a Rota, rota was fully awakened, enlightened person our heart and under was not so and I couldn't track the Buddha. As the Buddha went through the stages of meditation but somehow Neruda knowing these really well could somehow track or tune in or feel or sense what the Buddha was doing. And then the Lord leaving the attainment of the cessation of feeling and perception, and through the sphere of neither perception nor non perception. From that he entered the sphere of nothingness who's going back down through these Chinese jhanas then the sphere of infinite consciousness, the spirit infinite space, from the sphere of infinite space, he entered the fourth jhana From there, the third, the second and the first jhana leaving the first jhana he entered the second, the third in the fourth jhana.

After leaving the fourth jhana the Lord finally passed away so he kind of goes up or down starts going up again, it comes to the fourth jhana there's something about the deep equanimity and peace and the presence of mind that can be there and the fourth jhana it's a very powerful place to let go. And so there that he let go, let go of his life and so there's some choice there involved or some involvement in it, that he actually led choose, that kind of went to die but he chose what state of mind to die and when to die in. It's remarkable, to taste to have some choice around that. And at that, and at the Lord bless it Lords final passing, there was a great earthquake, terrible in here rising accompanied by thunder and the Brahma so how the Brahma some party is one of the gods in the heavenly realms are diverse, all being In the world, all bodies must break up. Even the teacher peerless in the human world, the mighty Lord and perfect Buddha's passed away. And suck Shaka, the ruler of the gods under this verse, and per minute are compounded things prone to rise and fall, having risen they're destroyed their passing truest bliss. This is the chant we do on each ovata Sankara padova you Domino, you Bucky to narrow Shanti sung Vipassana Sukkot. And the venerable Neruda either this verse, no breathing in and out, just the steadfast heart. The sage who's freed from lust has passed away to peace. With mind unshaken, he endured all pains. By Nibbana. The luminous mind is freed.

It might be nice for If you're fucking follow along, to see gethins Rupert Gethin is translation of that piece it's a little bit easier. I can find it quickly.

Hear. So in the router said, there was no in breath and no outbreath when such a man's mind was steady, so he's still alive steadied his deep concentration, and breathing and stopped, happens in deep meditation. Then undisturbed, set on peace, the sage died. So he's undisturbed. He's in deep state of equanimity, peace, is peaceful set on peace. There from there he died. He endured pain and he endured pain and dismayed in heart. the freeing of his mind was like that. blowing out of a lamp. So he had to his pain and his old age. And, and but he endured it. And here it says and dismayed and heart his heart his mind was, and dismayed and despairing was you know, not troubled by this I'm troubled by it. And then the final freeing of his mind was like the blowing out of a lamp. And then he died. Or he, it Buddhist tradition doesn't like to use the word die. The Buddhists don't die enlightened people don't die. They usually they were they get Nirvana iced. And it's very, it's most the, it doesn't work so well in English. So we don't usually translate the polio accurately. And we say, you know, attain Nirvana as if Nirvana is a noun. But more often than not, and this should tell us, the word is Nirvana. The person who

was binarized and if we translate Nirvana as release, then we can translate the person who was released. So they don't want to say the person has died, they say the person has been released. But what is that? You know, it's not quite you know that person. And then and then they want to say, if you ask the question, you know, the Buddha then no longer exists now that he was really released. And that's an initial you can't ask that question. There's no answer that there's no answer to that question. Yes, it does it does he exist after he's dead, you know, realize released? That's an inappropriate question. You can't answer that question that way. So, what what does it leave you you know, what is the status and some people say that, it best way to understand this is kind of an ancient Indian kind of physics, that in the universe, There's this heat element. And sometimes that heat element gets condensed into a flame. When the flame goes out, the heat that's in that flame, the conservation of thermal energy or something, the heat doesn't disappear, it just gets dispersed into the universe. And so that when the, when the consciousness dies, is that you can't really say that, you know, when, when a flame gets extinguished, like it's referred to here, you know, our idea is that it's it's over and done with but the ancient people, it's like, the flame is gone, but the heat element is still there. But how is it there? You can't really point to where and where it is. So something mysterious there, but and whether that's irrelevant to anything I don't know. It's just, you know, from practical purposes dead. Does it help him that he's that way and I don't know what it means at all. But yes,

Just to comment about how much emphasis there is placed on the breath and the practice and emphasis on what

emphasis on the breath is placed

in the practice, and then you know, if you've ever seen someone die really becomes very apparent that that's what that is, is this final breath that's taken, but then there's this idea that in this case, there's a flame that's extinguished. It's not the observation of the final breath. It's that right? It's just a very unusual way of witness.

That's what we're that's so unusual. But But, but this isn't, this was an honest mistake. Perhaps Ananda, maybe didn't see any more breath and assume that Buddha was dead. But on a route I know knew that, in that in deep meditation, the breathing stops. And so the lack of breath is not proof in and of itself for the person who's died, especially for a meditator and so on. But even so, you know, the end of people sometimes who are involved in hospice will point out that the fact that someone stopped breathing, we don't know what other functioning still is going on. And you're like, you know what with mental consciousness functioning might still be going on. And generally in Buddhism, there's the assumption that there's still processing going on after the final breath. And so there's a kind of care given to not disturbing that process and keeping things quiet and calm. And, and one of the reasons in Buddhism where you're discouraged from grieving in the presence of someone who just died, is to not somehow mess with their process. And, you know, you look at grief in a way but then you could do it away so that they don't, you know, get distressed as they go through their last post breath process. But you know, exactly where death occurs. You know, it's, I don't know, it's kind of hard to decide. And, you know, I've been around people and died and you know, my way is you get it, you get a feeling there's a sense Oh, something's shifted now. I think it's not here anymore or not something you know something's changed now, but when that is no, we have the hospice expert here Tell us please correct me. When is that moment of death are you concurring you don't know they know sorry to single you out you have to work on your head movements. So, so. So, you know, so we have this human Buddha who died. We have the non human Buddha, who, you know this divine Buddha for him is kind of godlike and should have tremendous Powers and abilities. And sometimes in later Buddhism, the Buddha, the

human Buddha was, this is an Yana Buddhism, the Lotus Sutra, the human Buddha was seen, it's actually not just it really not, didn't really, really exist. The human Buddha was a was a projection and emitter projection of the cosmic Buddha who really exists. And the cosmic Buddha has been eternal and lives on a throne high above and the stick stupa in the sky. And, and in order to help people who are convoluted and need extra help, and he created this kind of projection of a human Buddha, because that we can relate to and it's kind of like bait to get tricked them into the Dharma and then later he'll tell them the real teaching, but only once they kind of got along for a while. And, and the Lotus Sutra was gonna be the final revelation that wants He kind of kind of got along here. And so in some schools of Buddhism, then it's this, this deified Buddha kind of arose. You know, it came to the came little bit of a problem, the Buddha died, you know, how does that happen? So one solution say, Well, he didn't really die, he didn't really he was just a projection. So you don't have to you don't take that too seriously. But for people who don't quite go that far, you know, he died, but he, you know, he died before his hundred years. How does that happen? And, you know, if he's really such a great, powerful spiritual person, isn't it, you know, the pinnacle of human and pinnacle of even higher than the gods, he should have enough power and ability to live out his full lifespan of up to 100 years at least. So what happened there? So I think Buddhists grappled with this and you see down to the centuries, there's a lot of grappling with some of the human qualities of the Buddha aspects of the Buddha. Like even the fact that he

That boulder rolled down a hill and struck him with a splinter and he bled in his foot little bit. That was a big problem for Buddhists. Because you know, your God doesn't push the bleed. And so they had to explain that, or they had a bad back, you know, you know, to explain how do you explain that away from your God. And so this was a problem, but as soon as you kind of try to make him more than ordinary human, and so I believe it's part of one of the one of the dimensions or layers of this text is people are trying also to explain this in the text. And, and this is, this is why MRI appears. And those of you haven't read it. It's explained in a text that, that Mara comes to the Buddha near the end of his life. And tomorrow says to him, tomorrow is kind of the devil or it's kind of the god of death and destruction. The God Mario's job description is to stop people from getting enlightened. So Buddha was like really bad news for the Femara. So Mara is really eager for the Buddha to get on with it, you know, get out of the way. So much comes to the Buddha and says, you know, we made an agreement long time ago. Or that once the for assemblies once the monks, the nuns delay followers, they women followers and men followers, once they were well established in the Dharma, once they were realized and once they were established and teaching the Dharma, they could teach it. After that you could depart, you can die. But until the younger you know, it's okay to get them established, but when you're no longer needed at some point, So the Buddha said basically says, Okay, I agree. I'm no longer needed. So that teaches something is that the Buddha chooses his time, and he doesn't die until he's no longer needed. And that makes a little bit more palpable that you're a great person is going to die. But he doesn't just say that then he passes the blame a little bit on to poor Ananda And he a whole bunch of times it's referred to here like no, no 18 times or something. They're visiting some beautiful shrines and beautiful trees area hanging out. And the Buddha says something which is meant to be a broad hint. And the broad hint is, oh, for someone who's developed the four roads to power, these four strong capacities of mind, anybody's developed the strong capacities of mind. They can if they can extend their life to live out the full span of life. 100 years. That's all he says. And then it says, great, okay. And doesn't get the hint. And the hint is, it's obvious when you hear it right. I'm sure. The obvious hint is that Ananda should have understood that he was supposed to request of the Buddha to please live out your life. The whole lifespan, boosted anybody who can't anybody who has that can do it. So Ananda was supposed to responsible for saying please do it. And then he gets told that's your fault you didn't answer. And you got lots of opportunities. 18 times I brought this up, and you didn't get it. You're such a dunce for Ananda. I mean, he's responsible for it, you know, I mean, the Buddha, you know, kind of weird, take

more responsibility are gonna just be more direct. And I think it's all part of this playing out of this, this, you know, who's responsible for the Buddha dying and him not wanting, there's something about not taking responsibility yourself, but rather kind of, you're kind of playing out this, this theater, in a sense, with other with the gods, with Mara, with Ananda and all these different things, and that's, you know, that's partly why he died, you know, because if you wanted to, of course, you could have continued. So it's a little bit odd, but it does explain something and the tradition says enough people back then needed some kind of explanation like That it's not unsimilar to the story when the Buddha was enlightened. And he was disinclined to teach.

But then the god Brahma came along and asked him to please teach. And then the Buddha agreed. And so there was a need to have this deity kind of person show up to encourage the Buddha to teach. Now, why is that? One theory is that it's unbecoming for someone who's spiritually mature on their own initiative to teach. And so to have the great God come, says two things, at least two things. One is that he's not doing it his own initiative. He's being asked to do it. And so he's, he's accommodating a request, because he has no desires. And it's another validation that the greatest God of all, all the universe is the one is asking the Buddha to teach. It's a kind of, again, creating a status the Buddha status that higher than that great guy. So why did the tradition need to insert this These guards and these Mario's in, and I don't have the, you know, a quick, definitive answer. But this I believe it had to do with this trying to figure out trying to explain why the Buddha was an ordinary human being. When the tendency for many people is to want to deify their religious founders make some sense. Some sense, I don't expect make a lot of sense, but at least understand the words. The so the Buddha predicts his own death, which we saw. And then people were grieving and everything afterwards. And then the last thing I want to read, and maybe that'll be at the end is so the Buddha has died. And those monks who had not yet overcome their pain wept and tore the hair, raising their arms throwing themselves down and twisting and turning crying. All too soon the blessing has passed away all too soon the welfare has passed away. All too soon the eye of the world has disappeared. But those monks who are free from craving endured mindfully and clearly aware saying all compounded things are impermanent, what is the use of this? Then they enable an unroot I said, friends, enough of your weeping and wailing is not the Lord already told you that all things that are pleasant and delightful are changeable, subject to separation, and to become other. So why all this friends, whatever is born become compounded, subject to decay. It cannot be that it does not decay, Deborah's friends are grumbling. I guess they're annoyed with amongst for being upset. This kind of very sharp contrasts like you, can you expect someone who's grieving just costs, you know, realize everything in permanent and get over it. It's a bit kind of black and white to me to talk this way, but maybe it is literature and trying to make a point. venerable Aniruddha what kind of DeVos Are you aware of? Friend, Ananda, there are skydivers, there are Earth divers. And he just talks about the different depths. And this is the part I wanted to end with. So, Nanda, so the Buddha just died. Some monks have cried Some were injured. They had a conversation about the gods. It's the middle of the night Buddha died late in the night early in the morning, I guess sometime tonight. And this is what Ananda and a Ruda to senior disciples of the Buddha This is how they spent the evening that night after the Buddha died and venerable Neruda The venerable and under spent the rest of the night in conversation on Dhamma. They spent the night talking about the Dharma is not a fitting end. It's not the end of the sutra. But isn't that tie touching that here they're the great teacher and the person who spent many years with and that their way of honoring him way of marking this transition is to spend the time talking Dharma as opposed to maybe practicing it, but talking is practicing it. So I hope that you have lots of opportunities to talk to Dharma, I hope that there's a chance to explore and negotiate

the sutras, death, your own death, your relationship to death and dying. I hope that you This Buddhist path and practice as a very direct support and a way to really face these important issues directly and

honestly, and, and work through it so that when your time to die if you're lucky enough to drive, die slowly, that you can do it with the kind of equanimity and peace that will allow you to like go in deep way when the time comes and not hold on, and kind of so that your heat can spread out and touch us all. So that's so for those of you who never read this before, now you can read it and it's a little bit hard to read cold but now maybe with this kind of introduction and all these little segments and pieces and beams that do go through it, then it'd be much more interesting for you. And, and, and it's the kind of thing that will come more alive and you as you engage with it. And if you think of it as literature that maybe that you know that it has All the potential of Shakespeare for Odyssey or something. So it's not good enough for today. So a couple of things. So you want to say something?

Yes. So different traditions have different dates. The if you follow the chronology, and here, it seems like the latest he could have died is in January. In the Zen tradition they celebrate in February 8, I think it is. Because he declares he's going to die in three months while he's on the rains retreat. And the retreat ended in October. So if you take, if you take from October, end of October to three months, let's get into January, February. And, and so and, and that's, you know, the Mahayana tradition has more that To kind of date, why the Theravada tradition celebrates in May, with the VSAC lumping that all the different events together, I don't know how that came to be. And but it doesn't, you know, this chronology as it seems to appear here doesn't seem to support that. And I don't know how it's explained. I don't think he minds so much. I don't think he cares so much, you know. So a couple of things before we end. It's really helpful that there's some people who can help tidy up the place after a day. This is a Sati center event. IMC is letting Sati center use it for its classes. It's a little bit confusing that I'm teaching both. like nothing's changed, right? You're sitting up here, talking away. But actually, this is the Sati center event, and so we want to return it to a good place. So Laurie is the manager and we have maybe seven people to stay behind. to tidy up just the bathrooms and kitchen and stuff. We have seven people. So 1234567 Okay, so talk to Lori and she'll kind of delegate. And then And then also, I think it's worth saying that in terms of the because of the Sati center event, the whatever dāna is offered for the event is, is handled differently than IMC dāna it's a whole different kind of it's a whole different organization really to know its own separate group. And so that's why there's on the IMC dāna slot discovered is only one data slot just for Sati center. And so that all goes together and then Sati center will has a kind of formula they use to where they divide, you give some of that some of that data to the teacher. In this case, we may in some bit for Sati centers overhead, including offering some rent for using another building for this. So that's it difference. So you know, some people get confused and thinks all the same. So, thank you very much for the day and for your interest. I'm just kind of surprised that you stayed. I didn't think I don't think I could manage that. So thank you.