

"The Art of Listening" and the Dīgha Nikāya with Dr. Sarah Shaw

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I'm going to speak today about a group of texts called the Dīgha Nikāya. And I think if you read those books about Buddhist texts, most critics are unanimous in saying that the Dīgha Nikāya is probably the most odd and the most mythical, and it's full of literary embellishments. And, implicitly, they almost seem to suggest it's the least authentic of the Buddhist texts. But I hope people have the whole collections of texts people like the pithy sayings of the Sutta Nipata. What I hope to do is to suggest that the Dīgha Nikāya is actually one of the greatest collections of Buddhist texts. And it is so on terms which are thoroughly in accordance with how it would have been transmitted, and understood and heard at the time.

So that will be my basic tenet. And you can see if you agree with me, and it doesn't mean I don't like the the short texts, I love koans, and I love the Dhammapada verses, and I love the Sutta Nipata. But there is something about these very long texts, which has its own magic and its own mystery, and has its own way of teaching meditation, as well.

The talk will not be very long. So I will have to do it through a little bit of invocation and just suggesting things rather than reading the whole text.

I wanted to sit by a Buddha image because to me, the the Dīgha Nikāya is really about the Buddha. And it's about how the teachings can be true and transmitted in the absence of the Buddha. While there's no evidence that most of the texts are from late in his career, the 34 suttas in this collection, all refer to his transience in some way. Most of them do, there are one or two that don't. But nearly all of them in some way, refer to the fact that the Buddha as human being, is impermanent and subject to change.

Now, I don't know how much you know about the transmission of the texts. But they would have been communicated, of course, through chanting, and people will have listened to them. And one of the most moving things I found when I first went to Asia, was the way that people did listen so attentively to long long texts, even not necessarily understanding all the words that sort of understand some of them, because they would have grown up with the Pāli traditions, perhaps some phrases. But the deeper tension that's there is very striking, and very moving.

Now, these collections were each handed down to different groups of monks, the bhikkus or bhikkunis, the nuns as well. And each group developed its own identity. So I don't know how familiar you are with all the different Buddhist collections, but each one does happen its own identity. So the Anguttara Nikāya has a particular kind of quality, the middle length sayings Majjhima Nikāya, has its own particular kind of mood or tone, if you like. And the same with the Samyutta Nikāya, the the linked discourses.

Now, the Dīgha Nikāya, the one we're going to talk about is Dīgha means long, so it's the Long Collection. But it isn't just a collection of 34 texts that are there because they're very long, they've

actually seem to have become long for a reason. And most of them are in some way preoccupied with the Buddha, at the end of his teaching career, or with the Buddha's saying that he will, at one point no longer be with people. And in a way the whole collection feels to me like a means of allowing the teaching to survive in the Buddha's absence.

So I'll just start with two little quotes, which I opened the book that I wrote on this because I love this collection, the most personally out of all the Buddhist collections. And then I'm not saying it is better, but I just really love its gander and its depth. So I'm going to just start have two little quotes. The first one is by the Christian theologian CS Lewis actually.

And that is, the first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship, from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is, what it was intended to do, and how it is meant to be used. And he uses that yardstick to talk about poetry of various kinds. It's a very useful yardstick to look at Buddhist texts, what are they for? Why do we have texts in the form we do. And the other one is the short quote from the Anguttara Nicaya, which is very simple, and very short. And to me sums up a particular essence of the Buddhist teaching, there is a time for listening, a time for talking, a time for calm samatha, and a time for insight, vipassanā. And sometimes people use the word season for that rather like the biblical there is a season for things.

Now, those two quotes sum up to me something about the Dīgha Nikāya, which I feel is wonderful, in the it's something that you each text to me has its own function. Now, most of us know the other end of the spectrum, most of us know the function of say, a koan, or a very short Buddhist text. It's intended to, perhaps suspend our usual thinking processes, to wake us up, to make us alive to contradiction in the world, and perhaps to settle in the mind even for the whole day. Several days as something disturbing that has a meditative effect, precisely because it is so pithy and so economical, and so puzzling. The Dīgha Nikāya seems to me to have a different kind of effect, which is that each of the 34 texts are very long exercises in a process of listening.

So I'd like to just start off by talking about listening. It is the first in that little quote, of things that are useful to do. And oddly enough, it's one of those things we we can find very difficult if we have to do it. If you're a child, and somebody is reading your bedtime story, you don't find it difficult at all. You want the same story again, and again, word for word, and you want your mother or your father to tell it to you, with all the same inflections and all the same rise and fall. And a child likes that familiarity and, and repetition. When we grow up, we we we tend to be a little bit disdainful of repetition in literature. And if I want to look up a Buddhist list, I go straight to Google, put straight to Sutta Central. And I find, you know, five khandas, what's that? Body mindfulness? What's that? And I just scroll through until I find the word I want. And I look at it. And I think, right, that's fine. I don't need to do more. But these texts were in a culture, of course, were composed in a time when the wasn't writing. Curiously, their structure is oddly like the internet, they do have that curious interconnectedness of the way you find things when you're using search terms. And people who have just perhaps gone in the evening, and there is a theory that the Dīgha Nikāya was a group of texts for the evening, and would have just listened to them for quite a long time. And when you're listening in this way, you are in a way, like a child listening to a story. You don't skip to the end. Children who hear their favorite story, don't rush to the end in like, I was reading a detective story recently, and I just couldn't wait any longer. I had to go to the last page. But you can't do that in a long sutta. You let each part of the sutta affect you.

It is always called a meditation, listening. It's called a form of bhāvanā in early texts, and if you go to Asia or if you go to Asian temples in the States, there are many people who will listen to the text as a meditation. And I think it can be very odd for Westerners to come to terms with this. I was very lucky that my first introduction to Buddhist texts was through listening to them. And I was told not to try and worry too much about the detail. But just be aware of the breath, and let them wash through you just listen, suspend all the usual, you know what's going to happen next, and just listen to them. And it was a wonderful introduction, because I did realize then that the texts were a kind of meditation. In that CS Lewis quote I gave at the beginning, he says, You need to know what the Buddhist texts were for. And we tend to assume that they are repositories of information which we can consult and find something useful that we can immediately put into practice outside the text. But for early participants, and for many now, listening to the text is the meditation, that the text is doing something while it's going on through time, which is a meditation in itself, you don't extract the meaning and the content, you don't separate them while you're listening to the text. That is the meditation. It seems to me that that is how the Asians that I met when I've been in Buddhist countries have regarded for texts simply by instinct. And it's something that I think we have to learn a little bit. So what I'm going to do is I obviously haven't got very much time. So I went, read a whole text can say, please look at it as a meditation.

I'm going to take four extracts from four different suttas. And I hope that will suggest to you how the text can work as as the meditation now the the one that I think you will all know very well, indeed, is the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, because you're all mindfulness practitioners. So I'm going to start with with that sort of, because I think it will be one where you will just feel immediately you're on your home ground, I hope so.

And I'm just going to read something which again, will be terribly familiar to you. But it makes the point, I hope that repetition is not necessarily something that you skip over, but something that you enjoy while it goes on. So I'm just going to read something right at the beginning of the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta.

With a Buddha's suggests that people should sit under a tree and watch the breath. So just like you just read here, this short extract, and rather than thinking about what does this mean, actually just do it. So it will only take a couple of minutes. And how, how Bhikkhus does a bhikkhu abide contemplating the body, his body. Here, a bhikkhu having gone into the forest or to the root of a tree, or to an empty place, sits down cross legged, holding the body erect, and establishes mindfulness before them. Mindfully they breathe in, mindfully, they breathe out. Breathing in a long breath. They know that they breathe in a long breath, breathing out a long breath. They know they breathe out a long breath. Breathing in a short breath. They know that they breathe in a short breath and breathing out a short breath. They know that they breathe out a short breath. They train themselves thinking, I will breathe in conscious of my whole body. They train themselves thinking I will breathe out, conscious of the whole body. They train themselves thinking, I will breathe in calming the whole bodily process. They train themselves thinking, I will breathe out calming the whole bodily process. Just as a skilled turner or his assistant in making a long turn. This is a woodturner, knows that they are making a long turn or making a short turn, know that they're making a short turn. So too, a bhikkhu or a practitioner in breathing in a long breath knows that they breathe in a long breath and so training themselves and goes through all the repetitions thinking I will breathe out, calming the whole bodily process.

Now, I'm sure everybody here has heard those few lines quite a few times. And I think just by hearing them now, it makes the point that it is actually a meditation that we're being taken through as we listen.

And we are supposed to just do it a little while we're hearing it. Now, we went to it all the time. But when we listen to a text, something is happening whereby we can actually participate in it. Now, you will all know Maha-Satipatthana Sutta of very well, so I won't talk about it very much. But if you remember, it goes through all the activities you do during the day. And it keeps on coming back to these refrains going through all the sense bases, the body, taste, smell, sounds, sights, and mind, and it just circles round and round and round. Now, publishers hate this, as do translators, because they say, well, these are all just repetition. Why do we need them in a book or in a text? And obviously, that's something for them to sort out. But if you actually listened to them more, and try and do them at the same time, the text actually becomes completely different and interactive. And if we try and read it on our own, and in solitude, we're not doing really what the text intended us to do, which is to listen to it, and to let it work on us. Now you all know the mindfulness sutra, and you know that it goes through all the, the charnel ground contemplations, so it's quite unattractive, but it doesn't stay with them. It just goes round and round and round. And then you go round all the bodily processes, then you go round all the factors of awakening, round and round around your body and mind all the time. And then at the end, you you find the Eightfold Path, and in the longer version.

So what is going on here, it seems to me is that the text is meditation. And I think that is one where it is very clear that that is happening. Where it is less clear is in some of the other suttas, where people have often been put off and understandably, by things that they say, lots of myths and lots of legends and very strange things happening. So I'll just talk a little bit about a myth before I talk about some of the other suttas. Now, a myth is a story of mythos. And when I was first introduced to these suttas, I was told you don't have to believe it, you just go along with it. If we hear the story of Cinderella or any of the fairy tales, we don't have to believe that there really was a Princess Cinderella or that Snow White actually met the Seven Dwarfs. It's not the point. In that world, we are entering that story and we are just enjoying it and experiencing it. And this is a feature of the great heroic literature's of the world, the Bardic glitches like Homer and Welsh and Irish epic. They take you into worlds and they also use repetition a lot, not necessarily for a meditative purpose. But because there is something about our minds just becoming immersed in a world, which actually is quite natural to us. I think we protest vicara in Buddhist terms, that we like to explore things and to find out more about them.

So I'll talk a little bit about now one of the mythic suttas and this is the Maha Sudassana Sutta, which is another unpopular Dīgha Nikāya sutta, for many practitioners, because it's full of kings and palaces and magical lands and elephants that fly through the air and jewels that irradiate the darkness because they're so bright. I have met many Buddhists who find that this kind of material is very off putting and I do understand that if you want to have something which helps your daily practice. But it seems to me that these myths are things which describe our experience through a different kind of language. If we think in terms of how we construct the world, you can say our sankhāra says, we do it through creating things around us that we perhaps make things nice in the home, we make things beautiful. We try and create worlds around us. Now, the Buddhist position, of course, as you will know, in an insight center, is that we're doing this in every moment, we are actually using sankhāra to construct our world, and that we are building it. So I would like to suggest that the mythical suttas are inviting us to construct our world, through mythical means through story means, and to do it consciously. Because most of the time, we don't realize we're putting constructions on things. And this is a way it seems to me of purifying these skills. And I use the word purify, because it can seem slightly puritanical word to use, but to exercise these skills in a way that we have free of. If we dismiss our imagination and our emotions as being extraneous to the practice in some way. We're dismissing a part of our experience, which is with us all the time. But if we can, conversely, explore our emotions and our response to images, and how

we feel about them, then we can start to explore the way that sankhāra has a built in the mind. So the next sutta, I'm going to look at is a very, very different one. And it's called the Maha Sudassana Sutta, the great King of Glory. And it's number 17 in the Dīgha Nikāya.

And this describes a great monarch. Now, we have to be sort of almost tactful here. I'm British, I'm I'm actually quite happy about monarchy, I sort of feel okay about that. But I do feel that America has a slightly different history and that you're all in the US and probably think, well, what do we want to do with monarchs. So, I would like to invite you to exercise your imagination back to ancient India at a time where monarchs were a fact of life and actually to be a monarch was considered quite desirable, and it was quite desirable to have one. So, we have the world of the the universal monarch, who is a mythical creature being and this is the order in his and one of his earlier lives. In fact, he has six or seven, as this mythical being. And this is the great pan-Indic ideal of the monarch, who rules by justice and not by force. And it represents in the Dīgha Nikāya, an ideal which is often forgotten when people discuss and talk about Buddhism. That is the lame ideal. I'm constantly as I'm an academic, I'm constantly coming across references in books about Buddhism, they say that, Oh Theravada. Buddhism is very monastic. And it's a monastic form of Buddha's in which it isn't particularly, and certainly in the Dīgha Nikāya, we have promoted the great ideal of Buddhahood. But we also have this ideal of the the universal monarch, the highest life that it is imagined, for a lay person, the monarch, who rules by dhamma. And when the monarch sits on their throne, the world is at peace, and the world listens.

Now, I don't think we need much imagination to see that the monarch is clearly meant to be the human practitioner, that this is the practitioner at the center of their world. And we see in this sort of the Maha Sudassana Sutta. All the elements which we find later in the great tantric meditations, the Mandelic meditations of Tibetan Buddhism, of Tiantai of Shingon, all these great meditative systems that use visualization, we find all the elements here in the Maha Sudassana Sutta.

So for a moment, I would ask you to just feel that wherever you are in your chair in your own home, that you are the monarch in your own palace. And of course, its language which is very hyperbolic and very, very much filled with beautiful imagery. And I think a lot of people who come to Buddhism, find it off putting, but I'd like you just to put aside for a few moments those previous conceptions. And I'm just going to read you a few lines. And again, just as you did with the breath, I suggest you try and do with your with your own mind with your with your eyes closed.

So, I'd like you to imagine that you're a monarch in the center of the palace. And you have to you have to create your palace around you. And you have the four directions. East, South, West, and North. And each of the gates is made of wonderful, miraculous gems. And one gate is gold, one silver, one lapis lazuli and one crystal. And so we have these wonderful gates to the palace. And I just like you to play around with the imagery in your mind because savety This is the place was surrounded by seven rows of palm trees of the same materials. And this is gold, silver, lapis lazuli, Crystal, Ruby, emerald, and multicolored gems.

The gold trees have gold trunks with silver leaves and fruit. The silver leaves had silver trunks with gold leaves and fruit. The barrel trees had barrel trunks with crystal leaves and fruit. The Crystal trees are crystal trunks with barrel leaves and fruit or lapis lazuli. I'm using this Welsh translation but Lapis Lazuli is a better one. The Ruby trees had Ruby trunks and emerald leaves and fruit. The Emerald trees had emerald trunks and rubies and the fruit. While the trees have all sorts of gems with the same as regards trunks, leaves and fruits, so they're multicolored gems. The sound of the leaves stirred by the wind was

lovely, delightful, sweet, and intoxicating. Just like that are the five kinds of musical instruments played in concert by accomplished and well trained players. And around the edges of the city on and there were libertines and drunkards, who had their desires assuaged, just by the sound of the leaves and the trees.

So that's one very short passage, and I'm quite sure that half the people here will have really enjoyed it and found it very easy and pleasant to imagine all those being surrounded by these trees. And I'm quite sure also there will be some people who will who would find it off putting. I think this is just human nature, that people respond in different ways, to imagine imaginative exercises. So I'm not going to try and convert anybody to that kind of material. But I would suggest that it is as meditative as the material we found in the Mahā Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta, but of a different kind. Because what this monarch, this person in the center of their palace does is create the world around them and does so in a very disciplined way like a mandala. And it is an extraordinary text actually because the monarch rules the kingdom when the monarch is still, the kingdom is happy. They have seven treasures, the seven awakening factors. The wheel, the magical elephant, the magical horse, the magical jewel, the magical woman, the magical treasure, and the advisor, these seven treasures. And in fact in Tibet Buddhist temples always make sure that the landscape represents these seven treasures. They symbolize the effects of wakening.

But what is crucial about this monarch who lives in this palace is that they retreat to the inner part of their palace, they act in the world. But they also go deep inside to the innermost chamber in the palace and practice meditation. And they practice jhāna. This is a lay ideal. This is considered to be the highest kind of lay life to be able to work in the world and allow happiness and fairness to arise around one in one's own mandala if you like. But also to be able to go inside and to practice the four divine abidings of loving kindness, compassion, muditā (joy in in others joy), and equanimity, to the level of jhāna. And the great monarch does this, and as it's a sort of fairy story, kind of text, they do so for a few 1000 years, I can't remember how many, but every, everything takes a few 1000 years in these free leisure realms. But it is impermanent. And when the monarch emerges from their palace, they realize that they are about to leave this human heavenly realm, and it is a human realm, it is not a heaven in another realm. It is what the human realm can be. So each one of all these wonderful possessions the monarch has, they have to let go off. And Rhys Davis has said that the verse at the end of this sutta, so every single element that has been built up, is then dissolved. And this is very important. If you do do, say a tantric visualization I understand or Shingon, any of the visualizations in any of the systems, Buddha's systems, you create, but you also dissolve into emptiness.

So the monarch has to realize that is the end of a lifespan, they dissolve everything. And you can say in in one sitting practice, we arouse things but we have to let them go at the end of the sitting practice to return to the world. Rhys Davis has said this was the essence of Buddhism, the last verse of this sutta. Impermanent, are compounded things, prone to rise and fall. Happy is the one who can destroy them. Because they're passing is complete bliss. So this is, to me an exercise in how to use the imaginative faculty, consciously to do something we're doing all the time, unconsciously. So it is actually a form of insight practice. I know you, you're all vipassanā practitioners and might feel this, these are samatha skills. And certainly they are the playing with colors, and the allowing calm to arise to jhāna. And the brahama-vihāra is associated with some of the meditation. But it is so in a way, which actually produces a kind of insight into how one is doing that all the time. That one is actually creating one world.

So if one rejects this material, I think not everybody will like it. But if one rejects it, when is rejecting part of human experience, which is natural to all of us, and which children find very easy, which is the ability just to imagine something and see the world in a certain way.

So I don't want to talk for too long. But I will just talk a little bit now about the sutta, which again, people often read the the basic elements of but don't actually think of in terms of a text that's inviting you to do something. And this is the the Sigālovāda Sutta. This is the sort of for laypeople. And again, we have a practitioner at the center of mandala. And it's quite a beautiful and moving story. And I feel sad in a way that people often go to this sutta and say, what's the Buddhist ethical code? write ... write that down. And I'll teach about that, or write about it in an essay, without actually allowing themselves to participate in the hole sutta. And it's a lovely story. It's a young man whose father has recently died. And he has been entreated, his father entreated him on his deathbed, to carry on family practice of honoring each one of the eight directions. So that's the the six directions. So the four cardinal points is south, north and west, above and below. And this was a practice actually not particularly brahminical. It was quite a late practice for people who wouldn't be priests, or of high cast. And that is to perhaps to go down to the Ganges and pay homage to each of the directions in turn. And the Buddha finds the young man and he sees it, him doing it and he says, Why are you doing that? And the Buddha hears from the young man that he's doing it because his father has besieged him too. And I think this is a wonderful psychological moment. Because the Buddha does not as he does to sometimes very arrogant questioners, he does not criticize the boy for doing this practice and say, oh, forget all this stuff about ritual. The Buddha actually never criticizes ritual. What he is critical of his ritual which is harmful. Or ritual which is without meaning, and which does not correspond to skillful chatter, or volition. So he very gently says to the boy, I suggest you pay homage to the directions in a different way. And it's very subtle. And what he does to the young man is to speak of how he can do the very same practice that his parents had wanted him to do. But do it in a way which was his own. We like to say you can own it. He's actually making it personal to the young man and making it something he can put into practice.

And one of the things which I have never found noticed about the Dīgha Nikāya is this incredible emphasis on the directions. I could not find one sutta in the Dīgha Nikāya, did I find one? No, I don't think I did, where there wasn't some illusion to the four directions and sometimes the six. Now, when the texts were delivered, it was in a tradition of the Vedic oral tradition, which is very participatory. The text only exists when you are chanting it. Where there is no writing, there isn't a text unless there is somebody actually chanting it. And throughout the Vedas, these very ancient world texts, there are ways of making the chanter bring themselves to the present, the smutty actually means sati, actually means smriti, memory. And Patrick Colleyville translates the word, which is the same as your center sati. In earlier into Indian literature, as tradition, smriti, you're bringing alive the tradition in the present moment.

Now my understanding is the Buddha completely transformed the meaning of the word to a kind of a memory of the present, a kind of remembrance of the present. But the texts have this inbuilt instruction, instructional bias, which is to bring the chanter to the present. So there are a lot of things like daic pronouns, which sounds terribly boring and technical. But what they do is they point the while the person is chanting, they will point to the sky here, or the earth below, or the direction in front, the east. Throughout the texts, there are reminders for the person to situate themselves where they are. Now, I think we can forget that very much on Zoom. You know, I'm sitting in Scotland in a little cottage, I need to remember where I am. And you need to remember where you are. Now, at one time, we've all been in the same space, but we would have been made conscious by the text of what you if you like the here

and now we would have been made the present would have been made real for us. Now, the texts, it seems to me of the Dīgha Nikāya do this. And in the Sigalovada Sutta, the young man is told to pay homage to the directions and I'll just say what they are. And I'll do it very, very briefly, because I don't want to go on too long. And it's to pay homage to your parents in the East. And to be aware of your duties to your parents, and also their duties to you. Now, in traditional India, the duties to parents were actually a bit scary to just do everything you were told. But on paper, when I say on paper in chant, in in theory, whether that actually happened or not, I don't know. But the Buddha doesn't say this. He just says you honor family traditions and you look after your parents. And if you do this, they will look after you. And he goes through each of the directions in turn, in a reciprocal way. So the east of the parents, the south are the teachers. If you're nice to your teachers, they will be nice to you. The West is the family. If you treat your spouse as an equal, if you look after them, that spouse will look after you. And it is because he's a chap bit, it's a chap talking about the wife, but it would work the other way as well. And there's nothing of the kind of slightly draconian instructions about marriage that you get in some of the Western, the Hebraic, literatures of this time. The North is friends and companions. And if you are loyal, and stay by them, they will stay by you.

And the direction below denotes anybody who's in your employ, who depends upon you. And again, it says give them all of your best, you know, people who live in your house looking after you give them the best food. Now Brahmanic texts of the time, used to say, Oh, give leftovers to servants. But the Buddhist text doesn't, it says given them the best, and then they will be loyal to you. And work better. And above are the holy people, but the priests, if you honor them, they will give you a good teaching. So what we're doing is we're going through each one of the six directions and seeing ourselves in the center. And this is why this is one of my favorite texts and the degree to care. Because it shows us as laypeople how to we don't have to take each direction literally, but to see ourselves in the center of a whole connection of relationships, that where we have duties, and where if we fulfill them, we will have some karmic result. And I find it a very beautiful one. And it somehow works if you listen to it, and I cannot read the whole text. But I would like to suggest that if possible, you try and listen to the texts or read them with that in mind that it's something that you can do as you listen to or read.

Anyway, that's I think I have spoken enough. But I wanted to suggest that the through I was going to do four but I have only time for three I think that these texts are actually ways of situating ourselves in a particular environment, our own world and helping us to be mindful and alert within that world. Okay, so thank you for listening to me. And on a on a morning and when we could be out of the sunshine. So thank you for thinking about this, and listening. And I'm very happy to take any questions or to discuss anything.

Where can we find the text? Can you hear me? Yes. Okay. You're sorry, without the repetition, the texts that have not edited out the repetition?

It's very difficult. And what you have to do is to be terribly clever and try and read them through. I think we are modern Westerners. I don't think our attention span has the leisured ease ancient times. So I wouldn't worry about trying to do all the repetitions. What I have found though, is that the thing, the very piece of text, which the translator often or the publisher often says is just a repetition is the one that is actually the key to the whole text. And I think it's very interesting to look at them in that light. I think Morris Walsh, she's not bad, okay. Sutta Central it tends to put dot dot dots, but you can is quite easy to find the text. If you if you go up. If you look up, they will have the repetition above, because they put the text in short pages. So, you will be able to find the repetitions

Just to see it right above it. How about your books? So you have the longer do you have the longer?

My own book is the one that's just come out with Shambala, "The Art of Listening". When I when I talk a bit about well, in fact, the whole book is about just listening to these texts and enjoy how to enjoy them in a way how I found it helpful to enjoy them. Does it does that answer your questions? Yes. Okay, but it would be wonderful to have them without repetitions too. But I don't think we have that measured sense of listening for days and days which quite clearly they could in ancient times.

Thank you a wonderful talk.

Thank you You're familiar? Yeah. Check tea. Oh, everybody's got nice names.

Yeah. Check tea. Yes. Yeah, I just wondering if you know of any versions of this that have been read so that we can listen.

Ah, now that's, that's very interesting. You do sometimes find them on the internet. I haven't found any, no. But you just sometimes come across them by mistake, what you can do is hear them chanted. And there is one that I like the Maha-Samaya sutta. You can hear chanted, so you won't understand the words, but you will hear something of that majestic, meditative sweep of the rhythms that actually helped the mind to focus in meditation. And if you Google, if you go to YouTube, and Google the name of a long text from the Dīgha Nikāya, you may well be able to find it chanted. And it is quite different. And it would have been, you'd have heard it like that 2000 years ago.

So the chanting is probably in Pāli.

Yes, yeah. Yeah. But clearly, we need somebody to read them all out to us so that we can just turn on YouTube and just listen to it or on a podcast. I don't I I don't think I have ever heard that. I sometimes chanced upon extracts, but I don't think I've ever heard a full text like that. I know, I was just envisioning, like, oh, wouldn't it be cool if there is an audible version? Well, maybe you, maybe you should start making audio.

We've got some nice comments on chat. I better look at chat, and see what's happening here. If you're inspired to support events, that's a donation thing. Very important. Generosity helps all aspects of practice. Is there an audio version available of the Dīgha Nikāya? I don't know of one but wouldn't it be great? Yeah. Oh, what was the fourth sutta you would thought to include today? I will come back to that. Oh, Audible has audiobook. Oh, thank you. I let go or says this Audible has audiobook recordings of Dīgha Nikāya, Majjhima Nikaya, and others. Oh, and some by Sujato. So we can do it. I didn't think we could. And Grace Burford. I'm very glad she's here as well. Grace. I'm very, very pleased to meet you. And I happen to have heard of Grace, because she's done a wonderful editorial job on a book I was editing. So she was doing the checking all my errors and things. She was very. Thank Thank you, sir. It's lovely to see you here today. I didn't see you in the list of people. I've just seen you now. Yeah. Okay, the fourth one I was going to do is the Brahmajāla Sutta and the the the sutta on views. Because it's the thing which is repeated all the time, is it takes us back to the Buddha all the time. And when you look at this sutta if you read about it in academic discourse, you usually think it's about views, which cost is up to a point, but it's really showing us how to be without views.

I'll read out the little extract. It's the repetition again, which everybody misses out, which I feel is the crucial bit. So, it goes through all the 62 wrong views. But this monks the Tathagata understands these views thus grabs and added to will lead to such and such destinations in another world. This Tathagata knows and more. But he is not attached to that knowledge. And being thus unattached, is experienced for himself perfect peace. And having truly understood the arising and passing away feelings, their attraction and peril and the deliverance from them, that a Tathagata is liberated without remainder. There are monks other matters profound, hard to see, hard to understand peaceful, excellent, beyond mere thought subtle to be experienced by the wise, which the Tathagata having realized by their own super knowledge proclaim, and about which those who would truthfully praise the target to speak and gets asked what they are. So we have this refrain throughout that brings us back to the Buddha. So this is a very good point. Here we have a Buddha figure, we've got the Buddha at the end, we've got the Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta. We've got these suttas around the end of his life. What are we going to do without the Buddha? And it must have been a question and lots of suttas actually asked what you know what happens to the Buddha and what should we think about the Buddha after death. And this Dīgha Nikāya has very careful instructions, what to do with the body, how to see the Buddha's death in the Mahā-Parinibbāna Sutta as a meditation, but also to come back to that possibility of a mind without attachment. And if you're listening to an old text, and you hear this description of the Buddha, I feel sure we are been invited to try and find that lack of attachment in ourselves as we listen. And that's, that's how it seems, seems to me anyway.

And I've in my book, I've looked at a few and tried to see them as meditations and and how they can help us. But I feel in the end, the central text is the Mahāparinibbana Sutta what the text actually what the collection really wants us to do is to take the Buddha's of meditation object and as a kamma tanhā, showing the the impermanence of Buddha's of the awake mind, if you like the impermanence of the Buddha as a physical being, but also the continuity of awakesness.

Okay, well, I think I should finish there and this