

# Sujato Bhikku: The Way to the Beyond: A Study of the Pārāyanavagga (3 of 4)

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And welcome, everybody. Sādhū Sādhū Sādhū. So good to see you. I hope you're all doing well. You're all in different parts of the world today. Will, Korocat, Kim, Alex, and everybody else who's there joining us. And I'm coming to. Eric, how's it going? So you've got your camera working. So I'm joining to you joining you today as always from Harris Park in Sydney, just near Parramatta and this is the traditional land of the barren medical people of the Darug nation. And we pay respects to their elders past, present and emerging.

For the last couple of weeks, we've been doing a series of classes on the Pārāyanavagga of the Sutta Nipata. And I've been reading through my translation of the Pārāyanavagga. And talking a little bit about the meaning of the text and how it's formed and why we've chosen to translate in this way and so on. And this week, we will continue with that.

The first week, we looked mainly at the introductory narrative. And we noted the somewhat lowbrow emphasis of the introduction to sort of get people involved and get people excited. And if if somebody was reading it, and they were looking forward to having a good story about cursers and black magic, they were probably going to be disappointed with the second part which was all about very advanced states of meditation. And throughout this we are seeing a glimpse into the meditative culture in the time of the Buddha. Particularly how the Buddha responded to the meditative culture of the most, what appeared to be the most advanced, of the Brahmanical Rishis of the time. And clearly the questions and the culture and meditative culture around these discussions is reminiscent of the teachings of the Buddha's former teachers, Alara Kalama and Uddaka Rāmaputta, with a special emphasis on the dimension of nothingness. One of the formless attainments. And in addition, I would suggest that it's likely that these are generally that these Brahmanical issues were of the Upanishadic school, perhaps related to that of Yajñavalkya. A bit difficult to specify this exactly. And I'm sure there was a lot more diversity and richness to these cultures than even were aware of. So I wouldn't want to sort of push this too far in terms of identifying the people. But just as a general affinity of ideas that certainly is that.

And I also suggested that one of the reasons for the framing of the narrative in the way we have it today is as a conversion narrative, and especially bringing the dhamma to new lands. And so this is very interesting, because, you know, I'm speaking to you from Australia, many of you listening from the United States. And, you know, these also are new lands where the dhamma is being introduced to. And in a similar way, we find ourselves having to find a way of articulating the dhamma, that is going to somehow connect with the people in these different countries. So of course, we're not going to do that in exactly the same way that was done in early Buddhism. But still, I think, interesting to listen to how

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that was done, and to see what things there are to learn from that. One of the overarching features of the conversion narratives in Buddhism, is that the narratives are much more interested in incorporating and subsuming and relating to the things that they found in the other places, rather than in replacing them. And so we see in Buddhist cultures today that it's very common, if you look in Sri Lanka, you know, there's devala at each temple, or many of the temples, like a Hindu shrine. In Thailand there is a spirit house or something. And in China then, the Chinese Buddhism, it's almost related to kind of folk Buddhism and so on. And it would be a mistake, I think, to imagine that these were sort of late creations to dharma. In fact, I believe that right from the beginning, that these things were part of the Buddhist culture. And they what they do is that they express a relation of, if you like friendliness and connection with the beliefs and practices that are found around in a particular culture, rather than a very contested and aggressive relationship. So Buddhists have never felt that they had a need to sort of displace or replace or eliminate people who were believing and practicing other things. On the contrary, our main motivation has always been to try to uplift people and freedom from suffering.

Now, that said, let us continue with the discussion today, the chat is open, please ask questions in there. I'm going to try to take it a little bit more slowly today. And leave the opportunity for you to ask questions as you would like. So let's begin with the next one of these series of questions. I should also just mentioned just like a kind of a meta comment on this is that, you know, what we've got is a series of questions. It shows how important that is that the manner of the Buddha's teachings was shaped by the kinds of questions that people are asking him. So to be able to ask good questions is a skill all in itself. So this is number 5.8. The questions of Nanda.

"People say there are sages in the world," said Venerable Nanda, "but how is this the case? Is someone called a sage because of their knowledge, or because of their way of life?" "Experts do not speak of a sage in terms of view, oral transmission, or notion. Those who are sages live far from the crowd, I say, untroubled, with no need for hope." "As to those ascetics and brahmins," said Venerable Nanda, "who speak of purity in terms of what is seen or heard, or in terms of precepts and vows, or in terms of countless different things. Living self-controlled in that matter, have they crossed over rebirth and old age, good sir? I ask you, Blessed One; please tell me this." "As to those ascetics and brahmins," replied the Buddha, "who speak of purity in terms of what is seen or 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 rebirth and old age, I declare." "As to those ascetics and brahmins," said Venerable Nanda, "who speak of purity in terms of what is seen or heard, or in terms of precepts and vows, or in terms of countless different things. You say they have not crossed the flood, sage. Then who exactly in the world of gods and humans has crossed over rebirth and old age, good sir? I ask you, Blessed One; please tell me this." "I don't say that all ascetics and brahmins," replied the Buddha, "are shrouded by rebirth and old age. There are those here who have given up all that is seen, heard, and thought, and precepts and vows, who have given up all the countless different things. Fully understanding craving, free of defilements, those people, I say, have crossed the flood." "I rejoice in the words of the great hermit! You have expounded non-attachment well, Gotama. There are those here who have given up all that is seen, heard, and thought, and precepts and vows, who have given up all the countless different things. Fully understanding craving, free of defilements, those people, I agree, have crossed the flood."

All right, so here Nanda wants to ask about the idea of a sage, of somebody who's become free. Now this idea of a sage a Muni, is a ... I don't know if it's unique, but it certainly is very characteristic feature

of the Indian tradition. And from a very early time, even long before the Buddha, there was somehow this idea in the culture that it was possible for a human being to find some kind of transcendence, some kind of perfection. That it was possible to recognize the change, the sufferings, the things that are binding us to this world, and through that recognition by acting in the right way to become free of them.

Now, in a certain sense, that understanding is quite common sense and quite empirical. Because we've all seen that happen, at least to some degree. I mean, we've all been subjected to some kind of suffering some kind of being entrapped. And through some way, we've been able to get free of that might only mean little things. But still, we have some idea of what that means. But the Indian Tradition says that, it's possible to do this completely, that this being of entrapment is not inherent to who we are as human beings. In fact, nothing is inherent to who we are as human beings. There's no such thing as having an inherent nature of any kind. And so if it's possible for us to be entrapped, then it's equally possible for us to be freed. So from a very early time, people believed that there were these sages, and of course, not easy to know, who is a sage and who is not. Who is really freed and who has not. Why do we believe this, because of their knowledge, because of their way of life. And, you know, these are still similar kinds of criteria that we have today. Be we don't say that someone's a sage because of their view, because of oral transmission, or their learning, or because of a notion.

Now I'm going to just comment a little bit on these terms here. Terms of view, I'm gonna actually revise that translation, which with that view, is correct, they're gonna have to double check that any case. Normally, here when we have this *diṭṭhiyā na sutiyā na ñāṇena*, it means the what is seen. Ahh, *diṭṭhiyā*, right. Again, I'm going to have to just review this a little bit. Normally what this means is in terms of seeing what's heard and what's known. And this is referring to the different kinds of epistemological sources of knowledge that were recognized in ancient India. So these categories, and these ideas are used extensively throughout the sutras. Most characteristically in the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, the previous chapter in the *Sutta Nipata*. But we're finding them also here in the *Pārāyanavagga*.

So the vision. We see somebody who's a sage, they look like a sage, they strike us as being one. Is still very powerful, isn't it? Very powerful thing to be able to see somebody and to recognize, ah this is a sage. Because of oral transmission, because of their learning, because they have been part of a lineage. And again very, very common these days right? So and so from such and such a lineage. So and so from such a such lineage. Therefore, they must be a sage. Or from a notion. And this is the word *ñāṇena*, normally translated as knowledge. But when we find it in this kind of usage in the *Aṭṭhakavagga*, it is often used for a kind of mistaken understanding of things and misrepresentation of things. And so I use notion when it's used in this kind of sense.

So sages live far from the crowd, I'm troubled with no need for hope. So *nirāsā*. So the word *āsā* is probably the closest word in Pāli, to what we would have in a sense of hope in English. It is not exactly the same. But it's still that idea that you're not longing to have to realize something in the future because you have already realized it.

Precept and vows of course being another of the criterion by which people are sometimes judged as being sages. Okay, so and so is very ascetic. So and so is keeping all of these precepts. So and so has these vows and so on. And these things can be very impressive. So, the Buddha says that anybody who understands purity in this way has not crossed over rebirth and all that. Okay? So if you believe that all of these things, your knowledge, your transmission, your tradition, your precepts, your vows and

so on, if you believe that these things grant you purity, then you have not crossed over old age. But then who has crossed over?

So one of the things that this dialogue is getting to is that the things that we use to judge spiritual practitioners, the things that are obvious, the things that are on the surface. But those things are ridiculously easy to be fooled by. And as somebody who does this professionally, I can just tell you, honestly, as one of the tools of the trade, that there is like nothing easier than fooling people who want to believe. I can tell you some of the tricks of the trade if you like, for example, if you as a monk, you meet somebody, and you want to impress them, you just sort of silently nod and say, you meet someone for the first time you silently know, "Ah, we meet again." See, that's all it takes. And then they're going away, "What does he mean? Has he seen us in past lives?" That's all you have to do. And so it's ridiculously easy to convey these kinds of things. And unscrupulous spiritual practitioners are doing this kind of thing all the time. Like, it's literally going on, it's part of the business of religion, or business or spirituality. Has been since the time of the Buddha. And it doesn't matter what, whether it's Buddhism, or Hinduism, or whatever it is, you know, it's exactly the same all the time. And it's so easy. I remember one time I was at this temple in Singapore, I was doing a talk. And so it was a fairly large temple in Singapore. Sometimes with these big places, you might have different people doing different kinds of things. So the people who invited me were kind of the sutta or meditation group in the temple, and they wanted me to come and talk about meditation, and so on and so forth. And so I was in the dhamma hall giving a talk. And then at the back of the dharma hall, it's a large hall so it wasn't interfering with us. But at the back of the dhamma hall, there was a monk who was doing blessings and amulets. And as I was giving my talk, I was just sort of keeping an eye out for what was actually going on at the other end. And you could see, there was this line of people coming to see this monk, constant line of people, for the whole hour. And each one, he would give some blessing, give us some short chant, sprinkle a bit of holy water, and give them an amulet. And they would give him money. That's it. So they would give money, and then they'd get this stuff in return. Okay, next, next next next, there was a purely material relationship. And that's just how it works. And you can see what these things that the it's so easy to slip into these kinds of things.

So the Buddha redefined someone who is free, not in terms of the things you can identify, but in terms of what they've let go of. They've given up all of these different externals. They've given up all of these attachments. They've given up craving, and they're free of defilements. These are the ones who have really crossed over the flood. So who is that? How do you tell? Well, not easy, right? Not easy. And still today people still wonder about these things. And it's kind of a hot topic of conversation, who's enlightened and who isn't enlightened. And you know, it's easy to make a nice list of all of the red flags that are going to show you who isn't enlightened. Not so easy to tell who is. Anyway, I'm not sure if I can solve this problem for any of you. But my only consideration would be to say, the debug viharitar. And the Buddha said, rely on yourself, rely on your own wisdom, there's nobody out there who is going to be able to save you. If you can find wisdom, it doesn't matter if you find it from a coffee mug, or a fortune cookie or from a dhamma talk or from the dog next door, it really doesn't. Okay, you can find wisdom wherever it is. But you can also find delusion and attachment wherever they are. And you can go to all of the great teachers and do all of the great retreats and all of these things. And then do nothing but increase your own attachments. And so just always try to encourage people just learn learn the dharma, learn the simple principles of the dharma. And then just try to let go and be peaceful. Don't be in too much of a hurry. Don't try to skip things over. Don't be caught up in the latest new thing.

Right? The latest kind of short cars and the latest kind of method and all of these kinds of things. Yeah. Anyway.

Okay, Nancy's asked to have one of these sources read through in Pāli. Interesting idea. Sure. Kim has mentioned the movie "Kumare" is about a man who plays at being a fake guru, he is shocked when he succeeds. Also, Monty Python's the holy grail being another one, right? The Buddha's response, to answer, Debbie, the Buddhist response here is to talk about whether a sage defines themselves in terms of their purity through those different kinds of things. And so a sage is somebody who is pure, but they don't define their purity by those external things.

Advice on addressing charlatans, yeah, not easy, not easy. There's a there's a great ... I was reading just yesterday, the great podcast and so on of con spirituality, which, if you're not familiar with, is really excellent and really good resource. And I think one of the things to do with these things is to become familiar with the patterns because usually these things are pretty ... like they're not, you know, you're not like dealing with the upper echelon here, right? I mean it's like, if you'll have sex with me, you'll get enlightened. You're like, I don't know, doesn't feel like you have to sort of strive for great wisdom to be able to see through this kind of nonsense, you know, I mean, most of it seems like pretty, pretty straightforward. So have your own inner strengths. Don't be afraid to check in with people. There are a lot of frauds and pseudo gurus around the place. And stick with the dhamma and just be cautious. But if we familiarize ourselves with the kind of the means and methods of cultish behavior, then that can be I think that's really important.

Okay, okay, let's go on to another sort of the next sutta and I'll try doing some in Pāli. Okay, so we got a nice short sutta so I'll read this through in Pāli. Football in Pāli. And you can read the English as we go.

"Ye me pubbe viyākaraṃsu, (iccāyasmā hemako) Huram gotamasāsanā; Iccāsi iti bhavissati, Sabbam tam itihītiham; Sabbam tam takkavaḍḍhanam, Nāham tattha abhiramim.  
Tvañca me dhammakkhāhi, tañhānigghātanam muni; Yam veditvā sato caram, tare loka visattikam".  
"Idha diṭṭhasutamutaviññātesu, Piyaṇṇesu hemaka; Chandarāgavinodanam, Nibbānapadamaccutam.  
Etadaññāya ye satā, Diṭṭhadhammābhiniḍḍhā; Upasantā ca te sadā, Tiṇṇā loka visattikan"ti.

So there you go. There's the Hemakamāṇavapucchā in Pāli for you.

All right. So hopefully you were reading along with that. Now, the first part of this is a very interesting one. And this will reappear at the end of the sutra as well, "Huraṃ gotamasāsanā". Before the Buddha's teachings was "thus it was or 'so it shall be'. Iccāsi iti bhavissati." "All that was just the testament of hearsay. itihītiham." "All of that just fostered speculation, takkavaḍḍhanam". "I found no delight in that."

So, Hemaka here, you know, I mean, Hemaka has come from a Brahmanical background, where, studying under one of the great sages of the time. And he has no doubt. Devoted a large amount of his life to studying the Vedas. Probably studying Upanishads. Listening and studying to I don't know probably a lot of traditions that have been lost and we don't know anything about. And yet he says until he came to Buddhism, that everything was just hearsay, that's it was, "Iccāsi iti bhavissati". So it shall be.

So this is a really important perspective to notice. It's a perspective that is echoed a number of times in the sutras that we find Brahmins discussing their own tradition, and having a variety of sometimes critical views about their own tradition. And it's not just in the suttas that we find that because we find similar discussions in the Brahmanical literature itself. And so we find expressions of skepticism, of questioning, and doubting within that tradition as well. So it's really important to bear in mind that when we speak of a tradition, whether a Buddhist tradition or other traditions, that we're not talking about a monolithic bloc of people who just uncritically accept everything that's within the tradition. I mean, clearly, Hemaka found something worthwhile, you know. Perhaps the lifestyle, perhaps his companionship, perhaps a support for meditation. But there was something at a root level, which was really dissatisfying about what he had encountered within his own tradition. And because that sense of missing and that sense of longing for some meaning is, of course, we find that all around us today. I'm guessing probably most of you have been through something like that. Certainly, that was the case for me. That when you come to Buddhism and start reading dhamma, practicing dharma, and so on, that you begin for the first time realize, oh, this is something that's talking about experience. It's not just a theory. It's not just a speculation. It's actually about the reality of how I'm living my life and it's given me a capacity to be able to live better and become a better person.

So that spirit of inquiry and that spirit of questioning and disillusionment with where you come from, and that feeling of recognition almost like coming home to Buddhism is something that we'll find recurs in the Pārāyanavagga, especially in the last chapter.

So this one isn't actually really quite a question. But the Buddha here, sort of implied question. So how do you destroy craving? The removal of direct desire and lust for what is seen, heard, thought, or cognized here, *diṭṭhasutamutaviññāta*. And once again we find that similar list we saw in the last set of poems. You may have noticed when I was reciting it that this particular line is hypermetrical. So usually H syllables 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8-9-10-11-12. So twelve syllables, as opposed to the normal eight syllables. So I'm not quite sure what's going on there. Perhaps. Yeah, I won't speculate too much. But just to notice that particular line is hypermetrical. It sounds a bit clumsy when you're reciting it. "Yaṃ viditvā sato caraṃ, tare loke visattikaṃ". "Idha diṭṭhasutamutaviññātesu, Piyaṛūpesu hemaka;" So it's kind of noticeably quite longer and different rhythm.

Okay Todeyya. So Todeyya. Another interesting question. An interesting question here. Subtle one. "In whom sensual pleasures do not dwell," said Venerable Todeyya, "and for whom there is no craving, and who has crossed over doubts— of what kind is their liberation?" Right. Okay. So the Buddha is talking about all of these things which are like the qualities of a an enlightened sage, right? So they've got let go of all their attachments, and they don't have any more craving, they've crossed over the doubts, all of these things, that's fine. But then, what is that freedom? What is that state of freedom that you're talking about? What do you actually realize as a result of that? The Buddha's response "In whom sensual pleasures do not dwell," replied the Buddha, "and for whom there is no craving, and who has crossed over doubts— their liberation is none other than this." "Vimokkho tassa nāparo."

So this is a slightly tricky translation. Another possible reading would be their liberation is one from which there is no return. But I don't think that's what the sense is there. The point that the Buddha is making here is that there's not like another thing, which is the liberation. It's the freedom from those things that is itself the liberation. So again, to contrast with other metaphysical or religious systems, where you might say, well, I will become free of my worldly attachments, and then I will achieve union

with Brahma. So for Buddhism, it's that we become free of those attachments, and it's the state of what we call nibbāna. It's not like a separate state that you go to when you're free of attachments. Nibbāna is simply a word that we use to describe that state of freedom from attachments.

"Are they free of hope, or are they still in need of hope? Do they possess wisdom, or are they still forming wisdom?" "O Sakyan, elucidate the sage to me, so that I may understand, All-seer." Samantacakkhu.

So, here Todeyya again, not quite clear about the notion of the sages, are they still growing? Are they still learning things? This comes back to the point that I made a little bit earlier about the nature of realized one. That there is this kind of conception that there is, I guess, an end of the road. That there is a state of perfection and the state of freedom. Normally, of course, we think as human beings, that to still have hope, to still be looking to the future, to still be longing for better things, is part of our nature as humanity. And it seems hard to imagine what it would be like, if you were like, actually, no, I'm not longing for better things. This is fine. Just as it is. And similar thing with learning knowledge.

"Paññānavā so uda paññakappī". Again paññakappī is a slightly difficult word to translate here, I think I've got a footnote. Yeah, so anyway, you can read the little footnote that I've got there. So kappī, I'm taking it in terms of. Kappī, the idea of forming, creating or making. So are they somebody who is in the process of forming wisdom? Are they growing? Or do they already have it?

And again, it seems it seems almost a bit kind of arrogant, doesn't it? I mean, normally, we think that humanity to be humbled that we always should be in a state of growing. And of course, normally that's true, right? We should always be wanting to learn and want to grow. So it doesn't mean that an enlightened person can't learn anything, obviously, they can still learn things. But in terms of what matters for their spiritual freedom, they're not sort of growing or evolving spiritually in that way. They've already reached that state of freedom. Or at least this is the question. So the answer, the Buddha's answer, they are free of hope. They're not in need of hope. And so this idea that hope as something which is bound to the future, contains within it the seeds of fear. If we are hoping for a better future, then we are dissatisfied with our present and we are afraid of a worse future. Whereas somebody who's truly freed, they're content now. And they'll also be content in the future. They possess wisdom. Then still not not still forming wisdom. "That, Todeyya, is how to understand a sage, one who has nothing, unattached to sensual life." So here the Buddha is making a strong claim for his notion of what a sage is.

The Questions of the Student Kappa. So, I should think I mentioned before, but each of these is called the māṇavapucchā. So the Kappamāṇavapucchā. The questions of Kappa. And māṇava is a word meaning a student or Brahmanical student literally, it means a follower of Manu. So many of you have probably heard of Manu, the mythological first man in Hindu or Brahmanical mythology. So māṇava is like a follower of Manu.

All right now Kappa's questions are less philosophical, more existential. "For those overwhelmed by old age and death," said Venerable Kappa, "stuck mid-stream as the terrifying flood arises, tell me an island, good sir. Explain to me an island so that this may not occur again." "For those overwhelmed by old age and death," replied the Buddha, "stuck mid-stream as the terrifying flood arises, I shall tell you an island, Kappa. Having nothing, taking nothing: this is the isle of no return. I call it extinguishment,

the ending of old age and death. Those who have fully understood this, mindful, are extinguished in this very life. They don't fall under Māra's sway, nor are they his lackeys."

Alright, so this is quite a famous one, the imagery of the flood and overcoming the flood is an often quoted verse. It's not a comforting image. And particularly spoken in India where flooding is quite a regular occurrence, certainly in the Ganges valley it is because of the runoff from the snowmelt from the Himalayas. So we got we regularly find stories of travelers getting caught in floods. So an island or refuge so that this may not occur again. "nāparam siyā".

One of the characteristics of the Buddha's teachings in the way that the Buddha responds to people is that he doesn't minimize or dismiss their fears and experiences. And sometimes when we're put in this kind of situation, our sort of compassionate response might be to think, Oh, well, we need to comfort somebody. And you say, oh, you know, they're there, it's okay. It's not really that bad. You know, you'll be alright, I'm sure everything will be okay. And so we give these kinds of comforting words, when somebody expresses a state of terror, depression, anxiety, fear, and all of these overwhelming emotions which people have. And so one of the problems there is that when we give people sort of generic words of comfort in those circumstances, were not really hearing what they're talking about. In a sense, we're implying, well, you're going through a bit of emotion now. And just calm down and everything will be okay. And look, obviously there are plenty of occasions when that's a perfectly fine, valid way to do it. But when the Buddha is responding here, you notice that he's not minimizing Kappa's experience. Kappa is clearly expressing this existential fear. This existential fear reminds me of the Attadaṇḍasutta in the Aṭṭhakavagga, where the Buddha speaks in a similar way of his own experience of existential fear and terror before he went forth. One of the things that drove him to go forth. So this idea that we're surrounded by a world which is shifting, where there's no stability. And looking for something that we can find some stability on.

Now, while the Buddha affirms and shows Kappa that he is listening to him and taking him seriously, rather than dismissing him. The Buddha is not like, the Buddha is not. How to put this? The Buddha's not extreme about this. He could have said to him, yeah, it's overwhelmed by old age and death. Everything is impermanent. Deal with it. Right? He could have gone to that approach of being like, overly harsh, right? Yeah, that's just how the world is. Everyone's gonna die. Get used to it. And sometimes, it's tempting to speak in that way as well. But the Buddha doesn't. He says, Yes, I shall tell you an island. You are right. Yeah, this is terrifying. And all of these things that are happening genuinely are scary. And I shall also tell you an island. Very, very psychologically skillful approach. What is that island? That place of solidity. Right? It's an island, right? Dry land. Something solid. Having nothing, taking nothing. This is the isle of no return. I don't know about you, but doesn't sound all that solid. So the Buddha is offering him this island, but when he defines the island, he defines it purely in terms of negatives. I call it extinguishment, nibbāna. "Nibbānaṃ iti naṃ brūmi", the ending of old age and death.

So again, the Buddha's rhetorical style here, always when he's speaking about nibbāna, right, If you want the most simple and powerful key to understanding how the Buddha spoke about nibbāna in the suttas, I'll give it to you. When the Buddha spoke about nibbāna, it was always psychologically positive, and ontologically negative. It's psychologically positive and ontologically, negative. It's an island in the stream. It is blissful. It is the place of state of peace. It is a state of freedom, and all of these very attractive things. It's going to make you feel like you want it. But when you try to say what it is ontologically, it's nothing. Taking nothing. It's not born, it's not aging, it's not dead. And so there is



always these negatives about what nibbāna actually is. So nibbāna is psychologically positive, and ontologically negative. "Those who have fully understood this, mindful, are extinguished in this very life. They don't fall under Māra's sway, nor are they his lackeys."

And again, just to sort of a passing note, I guess. But you know, it's always interesting how often mindfulness is mentioned throughout these verses and throughout the suttas always. I mean, of course, there are plenty of other virtues and so on, which are mentioned as well. But that simple practice of mindfulness that we all try to do, right, and we all try to practice mindfulness. We know what it is. As we're sitting here, I hope we are being mindful of our posture, of being mindful, trying to be present, being mindful of our mood. And that simple practice of mindfulness again here the Buddha is saying is characteristic of somebody who is freed from old age and death.

Okay, so. Okay, so I've got a few comments here. Thanks, everybody. Korocot says seems to go in the direction of the nature of liberation. That is very true.

Eileen says having nothing, taking nothing seems to advise us to let go of possessions as we age. Yes, definitely. And so those words are, they do have that dual meaning. They definitely mean like having no possessions as well as letting go of attachments. Yeah. And yeah, as we get older, it's easy to accumulate stuff. But perhaps more and more important to be able to let go of things as well.

So Josh says is extinguishment the go to translation of choice for nibbāna and if so insights into this choice. That's how I translate it. There are obviously a number of different translations. Extinguishment is a pretty literal translation. I usually use extinguishment, although I sometimes waver with quenching, and I use that occasionally. That's KR Norman's translation. So these are both fairly literal translations, main metaphorical basis for the idea of nibbāna of course is going out of the flame. We saw that last week with the questions of Upasiva. And so many times that idea of nibbutā being the going out and the extinguishment of a flame. So, in just sort of a note on translations. In my translation project, I decided to try to translate every single word into English, rather than leaving technical terms and so on in Pāli. And one of the reasons for that is because words have meanings that are not like ... Pāli Words have meanings that are not necessarily the same today as they were then. So even like a word nibbāna is such a pregnant term. You can leave that word in there, everyone knows you're talking about nibbāna. But what everyone understands nibbāna to be, of course can be very different things.

Another good example of that is the word bodhisattva. If you Google Bodhisattva, it will tell you the meaning of Bodhisattva is somebody who delays their own enlightenment for the sake of all sentient beings. Whereas in the suttas, the Bodhisattva is specifically somebody who goes home goes forth from home in order to seek their own enlightenment. And so it's actually quite a different kind of meaning. So this is why I always try to translate everything, rather than leave it in the party.

Eric asked is the psychologically positive only applicable to nibbāna with residue. I wasn't really meaning that nibbāna itself is psychologically positive. I was more talking about the way that it's talked about. So it's talked about in a way that's attractive, right? That makes you think, oh, that sounds good. Draws you in. So Buddha has this kind of way of drawing you in and then pulling the rug out from you when you're there, right? Ah, yes, that sounds good. It's blissful. And it's safe, and it's happy. Oh, there's nothing there. What and then you're okay. So that's more it's more of a small talking about the manner in which the Buddha discussed nibbāna.

Mike mentions that the simile is a little confusing, you would have thought nibbāna was the far shore and an island would be just a temporary resting place. Of course that comment by Mike having far more poignancy, given the fact that he's writing from New Zealand. Yeah, look, yeah, sure. I mean, it's just a simile. But you know, the Buddha is just responding to that particular thing. But generally speaking an island is used in the suttas as a place of safety.

Having nothing. Wonder if having nothing, taking nothing speaks to the culture he's addressing. Yeah, I'm sure it does. And I mean, remember that akiñcana, the same word, was used in the introduction of Bāvari right. So his teacher was described as being a Brahmin who had nothing and so through the whole thing, it has actually those different meanings. Having no possession. Also the meditation on nothingness, and here also of nibbāna as well. So clearly, it was an important idea for these particular Brahmins.

Okay, so let's go ahead and we'll read one more set of questions before we wrap up for today.

Okay, so this is the Questions of Jatukaṇṇī. "Hearing of the hero with no desire for sensual pleasures," said Venerable Jatukaṇṇī, "who has passed over the flood, I've come with a question for that desireless one. Tell me the state of peace, O natural visionary. Tell me this, Blessed One, as it really is."

A bit of a comment here. Exact sense of the unique term "sahajanetta" is open to interpretation. Surely Normans "omniscient one" following Nidessa is not right. So the term here is a sahajanetta. Netta meaning one who sees, like being an eye. Sahaja is an interesting term. Saha meaning together, Ja meaning truly born. So for Sahaja, meaning born together. So the visionary one born together. Hmm? But Sahaja is also used in the sense of being something which is nature or natural. So I've translated as a natural visionary. But that idea of nature as being Sahaja is also I think quite a nice idea, right? So it's the idea that nature is something where everything is born together, everything arises and is dependent on.

Okay, so I'll just finish up with this one that I'm doing.

Sound great. Sahajanetta. Okay, we're good. All right. So yes, the natural visionary that sahajanetta.

For, having mastered sensual desires, the Blessed One proceeds, as the blazing sun shines on the earth. May you of vast wisdom explain the teaching to me of little wisdom so that I may understand the giving up of rebirth and old age here."

I love this verse here. I love the humility of it. Remember that these are accomplished great sages who've been practicing, learning, studying and meditating for so many years. And this is the attitude that he brings when he sees the Buddha. I've come to the Buddha. "Parittapaññassa me bhūripañña". And he's not he's not being like excessive about it or anything like that. Just saying, I've finally found somebody who understands. Please tell me so that I can understand.

"With sensual desire dispelled," replied the Buddha, "seeing renunciation as sanctuary, don't be taking up or putting down anything at all." Okay, so just a few comments on this line. "Nekkhammaṃ daṭṭhu khemato" is a line we see a few times in the suttas. A bit of an unusual line linguistically. "Daṭṭhu" is to

see. "Khemato" is as sanctuaries in ablative form here. Now, the word khema is usually translated safety or security. But khema is actually not dissimilar to the dīpa as the island. It's actually a place of safety and refuge. And originally was probably the oasis, which was reached at the end of the day's journey by the Indo European wonderers. So khema is a place where the animals and the people will live in harmony. Whether it's water, whether it's food, whether it's plenty. So khema has this very beautiful connotation of safety and ease and sanctuary.

Don't be taking up or putting down anything at all. This idiom of taking up putting down, Uggahītaṃ nirattaṃ vā, is extremely reminiscent of the Aṭṭhakavagga and is one of the most characteristic forms which we find throughout the Aṭṭhakavagga in slightly different ways. One of the things that I learned in my translation of the Aṭṭhakavagga was that we have to be very careful about how we're phrasing because these are past participle forms. And if we translate them with excessive grammatical literalness, we would say "nothing has been taken up or put down". Which seems a bit weird, right? Because we know Buddha's always saying we should put things down, we should let go of things. But in fact, in all these cases, and we can see this by looking at the variety of uses of similar idioms through the Aṭṭhakavagga, that these are past participles that are used in the present perfect sense. So what they mean is that we are not engaged in that process of having without taking things up and putting things down. So an arahant is somebody who has already put everything down. So they no longer are going and taking up or putting things down. So this is an idiom, which took me a long time to get my head around, actually. And it was always something for me when I had read previous translations of these verses that have always been a bit puzzling to me. And so it took me quite a while to actually figure out what was going on.

What came before, let wither away, visosehi. And after, let there be nothing. māhu kiñcanaṃ. Again, this idea of kiñcanaṃ. Let there be nothing, kiñcanaṃ. Nothingness. If you don't grasp at the middle, you will live at peace. Majjhe ce no gahessasi.

So we already saw, in one of the previous sets of questions, this idea of the two ends and the middle. Here we find that same idea in a slightly different form. And in this particular case, it seems that partly one extreme is past. And other extreme is the future. And middle, presumably is the present. And if you recall, in that previous case, when we looked at that series of questions of the past, the one extreme, the other extreme in the middle, that this was actually one of the interpretations that was offered, even though it wasn't the actual interpretation in that context. It wasn't the intended meaning in that context. But it was still one possible interpretation. But here, it's more explicitly that this is what's being meant.

One rid of greed, brahmin, for the whole realm of name and form, has no defilements by which they might fall under the sway of Death." Āsavāssa na vijjanti, Yehi maccuvasaṃ vajeti. So, again, notice the use of the term name and form, nama rupa, many of you will be familiar with the concept of nama rupa as spoken about Buddhism. But I think it's really important to bear in mind that it is in fact a Brahmanical term. And we'll find it a number of times through the veranda, number of times in the Upanishads. And so clearly, it's a case where the Buddha was adopting and responding to that Brahmanical usage. And in this kind of case, you know, I wouldn't insist on a particularly technical understanding of what name and form means. In this particular case, really, what it means is just that whole world of phenomenal reality, everything that we know, and see and experience and think of as name. And this whole kind of world of appearances that we're surrounded.

Alright. So, approaching the end, I'll just see. There's one more question here from Josh. Are the names of any of the questioners be translated? Or they kind of like American names, not really having much apparent meaning. Or English names even perhaps. I wonder if the term were internet connection was lost, the communication was lost. That's the sahanetti alludes to understanding the relationship with seeing objects of sight and contact. Yeah, I'm not sure. Like I said, it's a bit difficult to nail that one down. Although I mean, the interesting thing is that it was spoken to the Buddha by brahmins, so it does suggest that perhaps was one of those very many terms, epithets, was used in the culture. Bit hard to say.

If the theme of taking up or putting nothing down speaks to the theme of no thingness, or that you're talking about the meditation on it? I think it can do, although in these cases, it's more talking about nibbāna. But just to come back to the point about the names, it's actually quite common in Pāli, that names will be more of a kind of epithet, than they are really in English. So the names have, you know, the names have that kind of, they retain more of the sense of the meaning of them. And, in a number of cases, it's quite common in Pāli, that names are given, which are clearly kind of back formed as an epithet from the story that they're attached to. A good example of this is the various paravajhas, which we find in the sutras. paravajha being a common Brahmanical name. And it seems to be used as a kind of a generic term for brahman. And then attached to the kind of thing that we find doing. So for example, if you have a brahman who's yelling abuse, then they call acosticavjha, the abusive paravajha. If they're doing a fire ceremony, then they are Geka doing the fire ceremony. So a lot of the times there is that tendency to use these kinds of epithets, where we find names. But also obviously not all the time. And, you know, the Buddha's name Gotama means dark cow literally But I don't think anybody was thinking of dark cows when they use the word Gotama.

Thank you. Well, we've managed to make it through another lesson. And we're doing pretty well on the apocalypse meter right now. In Australia, there's no flood, no fires, mild pandemic situation. So not too bad. Hopefully that will remain similar for the next week. Hopefully the world won't completely come to an end before we can have our next class. I mean, look, if the world's gonna come to an end, we might as well study dharma and practice dharma right? I mean, what else is there to do? So I hope that you all stay well. And I hope that you all find something of usefulness and some wisdom, some joy to find in the Buddha's teachings. I wish you all the best.