

2010-01-15 Samannaphala Sutta Part 1

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SPEAKERS

Gil Fronsdal

We'll start with a short sitting.

And then whatever way that you can if you can visualize this or imagine it or sense it, feeling. Think about it. See if you can enter into this image that I will describe.

Imagine or perhaps remember some time in your life. Imagine that you're in a beautiful pristine mountain wilderness. Beautiful day. safe place for you, you feel very contented you've been walking for a while in the mountains and feel quite present in your body. Your thoughts and concerns have fallen away

in the mountains and the trees, the rivers all seem so sharp and clear precedent for you as you walk around them with them perhaps tall mountains in the distance

Perhaps the green to the trees are quite intense, clean clear. mountain tops are clearly white with snow

and then imagine that you've come to a lake beautiful lake Alpine lake and you sit there stand at the edge of the lake and you look into it and you see that the surface of the lake is completely still flat at a ripple and if the water is clear, peaceful It's so clear and still that you can see right to the bottom of the lake.

And what you normally can't see in the bottom of the lake stands out really clearly see the pebbles almost magnified it through the water. Such a clarity. There's fish swimming about

and you're struck by how pure clean water is. So clear, transparent. It's almost as if the water is not there. In everything that's usually murky seen with great clarity in the water.

fish swims by and you're surprised by the clarity and the closeness that the fish seems to you.

Perhaps your mind becomes quiet still. Quiet maybe in our appreciation delight in seeing

Hello The lake the clarity, the purity of it all.

With a clear sense maybe of Lake clarity and imagine what it'd be like if your mind was that clear.

If your mind was that still and peaceful and pure,

is the quiet still

and then the things that appear in your mind appear clearly they appear within the clear The purity the water. You see them from what they are yourself. Safe, distinct, not caught by any of it.

So today we're going to study a discourse of the Buddha The climax of the discourse is this image that I just gave you, the lake and it's an image that's used as an analogy for what's possible for the mind.

And then what do you think it would be like to read a discourse by the Buddha and to have this as a reference point for what's being discussed

What do you think it'd be like to come across teachings, reading teachings, taking in teachings, be interested in teachings that are leading you, pointing you

to a mind, a heart. That's like this

Good morning and welcome to our study day. And for the next three hours or so we'll be exploring a particular discourse of the Buddha called the Samannaphala Sutta. Sometimes translated into English as the fruits of the homeless life or the fruits of their recluse life, fruits of the renunciant life. And that's considered to be one of the most important of the discourses of the Buddha. And so it has some value to study. And I'm happy to be here with you to study. So we'll you know, we'll do some teaching, I'll do some teaching or do some discussion of some breaks. And we'll keep kind of cycle going through the day. I guess we're scheduled to end at one o'clock, right. So So, what do you think? It'd be like to engage investigate to read, listen to a discourse like this sort of text. If you knew ahead of time that this kind of clarity and purity of mind was the point it was all really pointing to. That's really what was good about even though it initially was explicit about what what how would that prepare you? How would that how would you kind of be? How would you then kind of be prepared or be? What kind of attitude or approach or would you have? What were some of the faucet various possibilities that might come to mind for you. If you could wait for the mic, it would be helpful. Thank you. And, and whoever's the manager can be responsible for passing the mic around. And there's two mics so there could be two managers. They were they were arguing who was going to be the manager today, so they should both be deputized.

Please ease

the ease to start eating weeding with some ease. Thank you.

What do you think, Robert? What do you think?

I think that it would he it would evoke a sense of receptivity, a sense of openness

and

just receiving curiosity. Great

for me, but on joy and confidence, and hope.

Great, thank you.

Give it to Chris zero sssa.

I was just remembering that when I first started this practice, I would describe it to people as being like, the cold drink of water

instead of

coke or wine.

So this reminded me encouraged to find

so here, Diana.

If I had no idea that the purpose of the sutta was to lead one to protect clarity that would help me and not to get into things. Why not get bogged down in the details that I didn't quite understand. And to notice what makes when I'm reading this what makes me feel agitated and a way takes me away from clarity of mind, and not hold on to this.

Great, thank you.

Anybody else?

I would say that it piques my interest. It's not just a boring old text. It's something That's happening here now. Great.

Thank you. Okay. I neglected to do one thing in the introduction. Welcome, is kind of a warning about the day. I have a 12 years old son who's home alone this today because he has a sword.

He's comfortable enough being home alone. But he knows my smile. He knows if he can call me if something comes up. He can use me. So I'll have my cell phone right here. So, seven rings, and looks like it's in.

Some anybody else I just silence it.

So that's why.

Okay, great. So now when I tell you a story that's connected to this discourse. That's not some of this is the background material for this discourse. The Buddha left to become a renunciant himself in a seminar. seminar means someone who is kind of not exactly not all of them are ascetics. That's not the right word. But I like the translation renunciant someone has left the home life their usual domestic life, and is engaged in seeking a life of peace. And the word summit can mean the root of it can mean a seeker could also mean someone who is even or equal or has some kind of peace cater to peacefulness. But it's clearly a good lifestyle at the time someone who's left in a normal conditions of life knows a certain kind of people all over India are stratified life, that particular lifestyle, they have to live with vocations. They have to live they're born into it with very little movement possible. You know,

he could just go to college and get a new job is different from Your parents, you know, it's kind of, but the seminars were kind of like the dropouts or the people who stepped outside of the normal society,

just seeking some kind

of spiritual and religious fulfillment. And so the Buddha was that he did that at the age of 29. Soon after he was he was noticed and seen by the King bimbisara. And bimbisara saw him walking down the street, he wasn't still he wasn't yet enlightened. I was so struck by the dignified carriage the way that he carried himself. They seem to be like royalty. Story was he was, was struck by him and called on him and asked him to kind of work for him or something. And there was a no I can't do that. But he became a friend of his king. They had many encounters over the years, many years. And when the Buddha was in his 70s 72 or something, so You're the son of bimbisara King bimbisara. His name is Joseph was approached by Devadatta Devadatta was a monk in the Buddhist order, who was trying to usurp the Buddha's leadership, power struggle to leadership and become a leader of the order himself. He was jealous cousin of

an admixture playing out and

give it up a bit of variety.

And he went to the printer to BIM kingdom, osrs son, felony, I got to subdue and kind of conspired with him and in order for yourself to take over the kingdom from his father had his father in prison, and when his father was in prison, he died there. You start

So I just thought that was responsible for killing his own father.

And, and so add them together that was involved various schemes trying to kill the Buddha.

He anyway, that's good details but there's various attempts to kill the Buddha accordingly. So this happened when the Buddha was about 72 or so. This is after that after he usurped the throne, declared a war on the neighboring kingdom of the casilla. Were another render of the Buddha key another King pasenadi was the king and also had been King for a long time and it was quite close to the Buddha declared war to war, and that's not his kingdom. a truce was set to the war came to an end. And part of that truce was personality sent his daughter to become Joseph to his wife and That daughter had a son. And who appears in our discourse, so that so at some point when all this happened to takes a while to usurp the Father, and declare war and have the war end and get a wife from from it, and then have a kid, I don't know how many years that they'll take you think, you know, it probably takes two or three years but process to come through. So, you know, it could go quickly, I suppose but but you need at least nine months for those to happen. And, and so perhaps the Buddha knows maybe 75 years old, somewhere between the time but Buddha died around was at 81. So between the time the Buddha is quite old 75 to 80. And there's there's a war in the air there's this usurping to the throne, the kingdoms that was quite closely connected to or being threatened and fighting. As we get closer and closer to the end of the Buddha's life. We have Just in the last months of his life, we have our data set to this evil king sends a minister to the Buddha and tells him I'm planning to attack in other neighboring country to be giants. And what do you think about my chances for doing that? And then the Buddha gives us advice, very famous advice, where he says that if people gather and meet regularly, Concorde, it's very hard to conquer them, you can't really take them over. And I think at that point, I just decided not to attack because the Buddha saying don't but it's just gets delayed. And soon thereafter, the Buddha dies. And I test out to then then kind of galvanizes This forces and does it goes further and conquer

some neighboring countries. I got this out there was the first king in India that begins creating a bigger Empire, the Indian Empire. He was at the beginning of that stage of in history where the Emperor builders were happening. So this is the guy to kill this father. He's conquering neighboring countries, he has no end in sight of conquering and doing all this. Buddha's an old man. And the Buddha knows that this you know, it's a story of what's all this is about. I just up to, you can imagine, has a bad conscience, or at least feel a little bit bad about killing his father. It's a beautiful November, night, beautiful time in India, where there's not too hot, not too cold, not rainy, too beautiful, cleared clear night. Beautiful full moon. Perhaps the king can't sleep. He's on the roof of his palace or the kind of terrorists of his palace. And with his ministers, enjoying the view, the serenity that peace was there? Good perhaps you can't quite feel the peace because he's not at peace. And so he asks, you know, who can you go talk to who are the religious kind of seekers of the time in place? Where I could experience some some of my some peace myself. And eventually he gets directed to the Buddha to go to the Buddha. And so he agrees and he gathers together what looks like a an army 500 elephants elephants were warring instruments just like gathering together all your tanks and your all your hammers. You know, you take your 500 tanks and hammers, and you put all your 500 wives in those get a lot of wives in the discourse and you drive off you know, when you said nothing, you know, coming down brick streets, you know, and parking around here, you know, all these tanks. You know how I you know, I wonder how it feel. What's up, I'll go under. So he comes along, middle of the night, full moon night with all his entourage. And he comes to a grove where the Buddha is with a large gathering very large crowds Amongst kings been told there's 1000 plus monks here. And he has to get off as his elephant to walk the last bit into the grove and it's so silent still that he can't imagine

that it can be so still and so many people there and so he's worried that he's been tricked into that and so he says that his hair stands on end. And but his administer who's taking him there says Don't worry if everything's cool. But here's a man who's been fighting wars engaged where has a lot of enemies, walking out in the into, into the darkness and for one night into the forest and imagine that being afraid is pretty easy for a person like that. And wondering what says what's up. But he trusts his ministers. He goes in and goes to see the Buddha there and turns out the monks are sitting in meditation. They're very silent. Maybe some of you have been to a meditation retreat where you haven't been 50 people 100 people sitting in stillness. So the room is quite something, when you have that kind of stillness, different kind of stillness and silence than just an empty room. And, and he asks the Buddha he says to the Buddha, there's a lot of people who have crafts work, who are proficient in their work, benefit from their work in this lifetime here now. They get money, they could well, they could come for a good variety of benefits here now. And but you guys, you were in NCM types who are stepped outside of society, who have stepped out of the normal conference and take care of our society. What benefit is it that comes from your lifestyle, your lifestyle. So here's a man that was involved in trying to kill the Buddha. Coming to the Buddha And then who killed the Buddhist friend Kingdom Kingdom Massara? How would it be like for the Buddha to receive such a person like for you to receive someone who killed your father sitting there sitting quietly peacefully money your business and the killer of your father shows up Hey and then they couldn't be seen as kind of their question could be seen as a bit of a threat. You know what good are you guys they could be seen that after all your king that kills people. So you want to be careful about what he asks how you respond. So what are you guys up to what what you How can you prove yourself but also in their inherent in the question, perhaps as a man who's quite troubled, and he's coming to us advisor, spiritual advisor to somehow get some kind of relief for his troubles. And the way he asks it is, you know what benefit comes from the kind of lifestyle that you live, you live. And so the Buddha begins by Talking about if you have a slave, because it's slaves back then the slave somehow escapes and becomes dangerous. A monastic doesn't say, Buddhist monk could just as a monastic, then would you go out and hunt them down and grab them and bring them back to be your slave. This is a man who's quite powerful has given him basically the power of life and death over a

whole kingdom, maybe others. And you can get his will a surgeon anywhere. I mean, dictator. What would you do with your slave? And he said, Oh, if the person lives as follows a renunciant lifestyle, when it's dedicated to ethical purity or something, I would leave him alone. No, no, leave him alone to be renunciant. But I would honor Him and support him in his life. And what and that's the beauty that's the first fruit that's the first benefit that comes to this lifestyle. You get this kind of care. Letter goes on, and then it begins describing what happens if you follow the renunciant lifestyle, the Buddha teaches and he leads the king stage by stage through his benefits. And imagine the King's kind of guided meditation for the king, that you receive all these benefits. You'll feel certain kinds of happiness or blamelessness. Here's a man who feels blame and shame and remorse perhaps. And he's putting the Buddha's evoking the bliss for the happiness of being blameless, blameless, by living an ethical life. Perhaps the king feels worse, but perhaps the king is inspired by this. It's meaningful for the king to hear this possibility of a heart and the mind is blameless from living an ethical life. The Buddha talks about the happiness of blamelessness from guarding the sense faculties, by somehow not being caught up in all the advertisements, desires, here's a king right to his apparently a harem of 500 women, wives. Right.

So it's you know, must be a little bit busy with that and other things. And it says faculties probably are not that controlled. And but to be told Oh, there's a kind of a bliss or happiness and come from somehow taking control of your own sense faculties must have been quite an impact on him I imagine. And then there's a kind of benefit of fruit of contentment. Here's a man is probably not content he's you know, ever issues he wants to conquer more kingdoms probably wants more wives probably 500 not enough if you have 500 imagine you want more. And so you know that he had been content to something which is foreign to me, the Buddha evokes this feeling of contentment to maybe maybe it's meaningful to hear this, maybe it's the first time he's heard this possibility. And then the Buddha evokes the idea of a clear bright purified awareness that permeates the body Buddha evokes the possibility of insight of seeing clearly. And he does a lot of this, as evokes these things he evokes have been imagery. This course is full of imagery, similes, analogies, that are, you know, to kind of be used as visualizations. And then he goes on to describe various attainments of concentration and various things.

And then he

comes to this image of the lake that I gave you. And talks about when the mind becomes still enough and insightful enough and liberated. It sees into the just like you see into the bottom of the lake, you've seen to the bottom of your mind, bottom of your heart. And you see what actually operates there with great clarity in such a way that your heart is set free, you become liberated. The King hears all this, maybe guided along And he's inspired. And he's so inspired that toward the person that he was involved in trying to kill, he says, I would like have a refuge with You. I take you as my support my inspiration, my guide, guide, some kind of guidance, I took a refuge in You and your teaching and your community, quite something. And then the king says, I have a lot to do. And the Buddha says, Do as you wish. And so he goes off.

And does this thought of things that King does. And the Buddha says,

If he hadn't killed his father,

this discourse would have had such an impact on him. And he would have awakened His is the eye of wisdom in a way become a stream enter, he would awakened up Probably the Buddha knew that the king was so absorbed in the teaching wasn't just abstract, he was taking notes, checking off, and that's

good. But probably he was so engaged in the teaching. It was kind of like a guided meditation where he was concentrating still conditions being invoked. And if he had the capacity, he would have something would have shifted and changed for him he would have woken up to something. But this killing his father is such a huge toll such a huge stress on the mind that the mind was not capable of going that far. And then the discourse ends so if that's the orientation to reading the sutra or you read it then so what what what how do you so if you if you're told that's a story ahead of time And that's the background for the story has was, you know, maybe so that's what the story is about in a sense. What would you How would you read the story then what would you look for? How would you relate to the story? What will you be your, your approach to reading it then?

It might be different from the first way.

I'm happy to call on people. So Don, do you can take the mic please.

I would absorb as much focus as possible.

In other words,

because

that is what led the queue to

towards the fruits

of his teaching. You hoping

for some,

Okay, thank you.

Think you can leave it on really pass it around.

Your chance Say something.

I have nothing to say.

Next something Have

you heard the story? Have you heard this story impact you in a way that might influence how you engage in reading the text?

I guess I would

probably try and immerse myself in it.

Okay, great. here because other people have volunteered to save

points to me how important

virtuous action is being able to be open to the truth.

We're here to Ted.

I think I'd be glad having killed my father

and also left wondering what level of sins that I've committed might prohibit me from getting full benefit from this approach in the sutra

I think it gives it a cautionary slant as opposed to more of an aspirational slant

or a cautionary

it becomes more about

avoiding suffering, then moving towards peace in some sense

that question made me realize that when you when you ask it seems without live and killed my father done anything on that magnitude? And that made me think I think I should try to forget what I think I already know and reading this because I think Sometimes when I read these texts, I come at it with this thinking, Well, you know, these kings were killing people and they were, you know, they had 500 wives and I'm not like that I already know so much about Buddhist teachings and, you know, I already believe in them already sold. But I think that would keep me from getting as much as I could out of really reading this openly and without some notion of separation from the people that he's talking to in this he does. Great. Thank you.

I think

will definitely give me a spirit of wanting to do anything or kind of renouncing, maybe not take off on the Buddha so quick, you know, practice probably could have done more patients and hang around longer.

So what was the first time you're probably the first one? Well, I think there it

it's, it's an encouraging read. So you

feel

moved to

I think, leave a lot of old patterns and lifestyle choices behind and, and hang around the Buddha a little longer than the king did.

Great, thank you.

I think it's a cautionary tale and it it really shows the effect that one's actions has on one's either peace of mind or torment in one's life that's purely on.

Well, it's one's responsibility to

act accordingly. Okay. And excuse me

One more thing. It's actually kind of funny now that I think that that he puts that at the end. Because when I got to the end of this sutta, I didn't feel enlightened. So he's kind of saying, if this guy hadn't killed his father, he'd now be enlightened. And I mean, I think most people that read it don't feel enlightened. So you kind of have to ask yourself, oh, well, I'm not what did I do to keep me from being enlightened by hearing?

Well, you probably didn't read it. read the text with as much focus and presence as someone who was there at the time. There's a few things in the Kings favor. One was, it's a quite a quite a significant setting, to leave your world behind for a little bit. And to go into a grove of trees, the woods and a full moon night beautiful night, be surrounded in this new kind of concentrated group of monastics who are sitting there and listening. The Buddha also probably, you know, sharing a certain kind of presence of calm peace or presence or something. So, the Buddha was probably, you know, somewhat unusual person, they would kind of hold your attention in certain kind of way. And that setting is very different than, you know, just kind of hanging out in the corner of birch and Hopkin Hopkins. Right. And, you know, so and, and also the king the king came with, maybe we're very motivated. I mean, this is a guy who had been trying for a while right TV to talk to a different aesthetics. reporter asked me the same question six other aesthetics. So it was important question for him. It wasn't just casual. But it was something important enough for him that he went around Nast. And so there was a strength of interest and intentionality and presence and atmosphere, I think that really maybe helps is very different than sitting on your couch reading the text, you know, just with your feet propped up and the radio on and you know, and it's kind of you know, it's a little bit boring to read it. For the uninitiated, people who don't never kind of introduce introduced to a text like this before the language is kind of stilted. difficult to read. I think It's pretty easy to fall asleep. I've fallen asleep reading a lot of Buddhist sutras. And I don't fall asleep as much because now that I've spent some time studying them, I understand much more what's going on. And I'm much more fascinated and I see kind of the depth and the range of things going on. When I was first reading these things, I didn't know all these things that I know now about them. And I found them quite boring. Chris,

I was just thinking about all the little tipping points along the path where you, you listen to teachings and you come hear something and then what is it in the mind that just shifts and you say, Oh, well, okay, back to work. You know, like, like, he said, Okay, I have things to do in left. So, you know, instead of necessarily looking at it as one big, now I'm enlightened, just all the little points along the way where you commit more and more of your attention to the path

or I'll commit

and commit to some Else Yeah.

What I'd like to suggest is that reading a text like this, it's it's, it's like a multi faceted jewel, that you can look at it from many different angles or maybe multifaceted mirror. And it can you can view you've mirrored different interests we have. And it's not just there's not just one sutra here, there's many many sutras and you can come back to it and you pull different things out of different interests. And this last week when I was looking at it, one of the things I became interested in, stood out for me was, what it's like to be the Buddha to be in the receiving end of of what it like to meet someone be present. What does it take to meet someone and be present for them? How would you relate to someone who had

killed one of your best friends at restaurants? The Buddha probably the king was with a close friend or friend of the Buddha, someone the Buddha knew for a long time And someone who tried to kill the Buddha? Would it be allowed certain, like, we know what's required? What would How would you be? How would I be? If something like that came in here to IMC? And, you know, how would I relate to that? What I do? Would it take we would have to look at myself? What would you require of me? So, that's this, this this course kind of, is a mirror for me look at myself, and how would I be? I mean, you know, even if it's, you know, lot's of luck less than just, you know, someone try to kill me, what if they just kind of, you know, wrong beats in much smaller way? What's my relationship to that? And what would it take for the Buddha to be able to meet him seemingly with such kindness, openness and willingness and defensiveness just there. I mean, the king was one who was afraid of going into this forest. The Buddha was someone who stayed stable and peaceful, having Army to send all the elephants please.

Yeah, what I got out of it was, um, this was perverse. It was kind of hope.

Like you said, this was a time of

upset places in society for

everyone. There's no retirement for a game. And maybe he had a conscious attack.

Maybe there's another way. And he went and saw the Buddha. And he saw that there was but not for him. He was fixed in what he had to do. The course you started on? Yes, there was only death for him. Just like first out.

That's what I got out. Yeah. Yeah. There's great hope for us in other words.

So whatever we're trying to say is that there's there's many different ways of reading this. And one of the three one of the reasons why we considered scripture In Buddhism, you know, sacred texts in a way is, what it means to be a sacred text is that there's a community of people who are reading it, and are using it as a reference point. And it's part of their communities conversation, communities kind of reference point understanding, shared kind of imagery, shared teaching, shared ideas, shared something. And texts like this is not sacred, unless there's a living community that's engaged in it. Just like a language is not living unless people speak it. No one speaks anymore to dead language. If no one lives with a text like this is no longer sacred. It's just kind of just a text. And then different religious groups and around the world have these texts that become the reference point. And that were like in the Old Testament, Jews and some Christians use a story is there a lot is reference points regarding their lives. My mother in law who was Jewish, she was Very unreligious Lee Jewish, she claimed didn't believe in the religious side of it. But she loved reading the old the Torah, because it was. She liked the stories there. And she found all this value in reading the stories, and milking them for all the different kind of interpretations and mirroring of our own life. And really good stories can be interpreted dozens of ways. It's part of the reason why they're really rich for us. So here we have in our Buddhist tradition, we have stories we have teachings. And so what do we read for when we read a text like this? We read to find out what the Buddha really taught. Because the Buddha was the one who had ultimate authority in Buddhism, that we wouldn't know what the really what the truth is. And this is our Bible. We're fundamentalists, and we rely rely on what it says in here we're gonna find out what the truth is. And now we'll know because this is what the Buddha said. That's one approach. And the other approach is to, to consider this text is not actually The record with the Buddha actually said, maybe there's some semblance of what the Buddha said in it, maybe there is maybe its historical situation. But that was compiled by someone afterwards. And it was compiled by a narrator, there's a narrator for this little bit.

And that, and that narrator, that editor, what you're getting is getting some sense of what the editor was about. And that editor, not only some editors not only propose a text, but also chose where to put it in the collection of Buddhist discourses, and it's in the long discourses of the Buddha particular collection. It's a second discourse and as long discourses and someone chose to put it there, and why, how does it fit in the context of the texts that came before it and after it's in this in this collection? What's the editors or the near the composers of this text? What was his or her intention? What were they trying to do and convey as more than just simply accurately recording report of what the Buddha was all about? So you can explore it that way, what was the kind of composer's intent? You can look at it from the point of view of how the tradition, the Buddhist early Buddhist tradition, and the Theravada tradition down to the current age? How do they use this text? How do they interpret it? What did it mean for this community? There's extensive commentary that survive from this text. If you're interested in the commentaries, quite a bit, his commentary has been important commentary has been translated into English by Bhikkhu Bodhi so you can actually say the commentary and you know, how you get a sense of how the later tradition, they understood the text. We can read it from the point of view of our own so you can immediately point of view what the Buddha was all about. You can read something to learn something about that the early tradition was about, you can learn to read it from the point of view to understanding what the later tradition was about a little bit and how was used you can also use it from the point of view of your own practice. How is it this supports me in my practice? Is there some way that does that? Is it or how does this text inspire me to look good question my life in different ways. It's a challenge music, you know? So for example, my challenge this week, how would I be? If someone who wronged me in some dramatic way? How would I receive them, especially in my role as a teacher if they came walking in here? And, you know, sincerely came with a question, what would I do? How would I feel I might be. And so may I'm sure there's great stories in other religions that I would maybe point to the same kind of idea of same kind of challenge for me. But I kind of like it that it's a Buddhist story, because then I'm in a community of other people who share that story as well and becomes a reference point, or the people may have thought about and grappled with the story as well. They understand it.

Yeah. Wasn't a bhikkhu Bodhi Saying that Dick nicaya was put together for converts to inspire people to entertain the idea of becoming a voting pick vote. He is quoted a quotes a there's a woman named What's her name? scholar

may

last name is Mei who wrote an article where she studied the different discourses of the different collections. There's five major collections of discourses and pointed out or suggested that there's a there's a rationale for how different discourses replaced these different disk collections. And that the middle length discourses was primarily collected as a manual for monastics for monks primarily. And it was meant for monks, especially new monks for the training and support and you see that a lot of the discourses seem to from that point of view makes sense. That's that's how they were collected the longest In the samudaya nicaya, connected discourses of the Buddha was really a wisdom text and not so much about training and meditation practices. And, but rather had much more to do with insights, you know, the deep deeper insights, once a person is well along in the path of practice and meditation, that kind of wisdom and insight aspects of the tradition that come out. So, really for insiders, and then the longest courses, it's, it's for, and then they said for the, for the guitar discourses, the ones that have to do with the numerical discourses of the Buddha that he does she this woman she's proposing, those are meant as manuals for Dharma teachers. It gives you all these lists and all these different kind of simple topics. For lady a lot of a lot of teachings, ladies in the gutter in Ukiah. And so it's a way of

collecting premium, probably a resource guide for people who give a lot of Dharma talks And then and then the long discourse of the Buddha is much more debate oriented, it's much more meant for non Buddhists to convert them or defend Buddhism relationship to them to kind of present Buddhism a different kind of light for these kind of people who are a little bit outside the fold. That's a theory. And the Cambodia seems to like this theory.

So it makes quite a bit of sense. The reason why I brought it up is because it makes quite a bit of sense to put this sutta as the second surra in like a convert themed nicaya because it's not only a cautionary tale, like someone said over here, but a story of acceptance as well, whatever your past, so

yeah, I think that's nice. The first discourse in long discourses is called the Brahma net discourse. And it's it's discourse that primarily focuses on pointing out 62 I think it is 64 wrong views. And it's kind of like a grid, the way these 6264 views are laid out. And so it's kind of grid kind of like a net. So it's meant to be like a net that can catch all the wrong views. And so, and some people, the way, the way, the Canon in Theravada, Buddhism is organized, the longest courses appears first. And so the first discourse of longest courses is the first discourse in the Canon kind of, it's not as important as Genesis being first in the Bible, but it's kind of you know, and so the first discourse is trying to clarify what is wrong view? What is the wrong approach to spiritual active religious life? And then, and this comes second, which, rather than saying what's right view, it's talking about something much more pragmatic. It's talking about what are the benefits that come from the practice, and what are the practices and ways to get those Benefits are the stages in the practice that lead to those kind of benefits. So it shifts away from beliefs and philosophy to something pragmatic and utilitarian, something useful. And I think it's kind of nice that rather than responding to the idea of wrong view, by offering right view it responding to the idea of Ron view or introducing Buddhism by offering what it can actually was actually done, and the benefits that come from that. I think it's kind of nice.

So I wanted to again to re emphasize this maybe a third time now that this discourse, any discourse, any scripture at all, can be read for many too many different vantage points. And, and what vantage point do you want to you know, any given time you read it, you can ask yourself what vantage points my reading is from. If you're reading a text like this, without first questioning what your vantage point what your interests, what your approaches Then you're probably unconscious about something, because you'll come with always come with some approach some attitude or some interest, something you have for it. But also you might be not milking or benefiting for, for getting all the richness or possibilities out of a text, if you read it kind of casually, and without thinking about what's the approach, there's so much that can be taken from this, if you grapple with it, consider it in different ways. So for example, I mean, so one approach reading scriptures, it's, which is quite modern. Now it says a word in the scholarly word, world. It's called a reader response approach. And that is where it's not at all interesting. What the original intent of the discourse of Scripture is. It's been interesting because what you're interested in now, the only thing that's interesting is how you respond to the text. So your relationship to text will text us to you and all that and then If it was quiet, it was a fad for a while in academia to read texts from the reader response point of view. I think it's a nice one for people who are practitioners, because that's maybe how you can really face yourself and be transformed changed. If you also deal with look at it from the point of view, how you respond to it, what you're looking for. And there's so many different ways of doing that. Hopefully, all these approaches become interesting for people. And sometimes you will do historically, sometimes you want to do it personally, I find for myself, that I'm very interested in historical point of view to try to go back and see what can we learn from the Buddha? How was the Buddha taught? Can we go back to the Scripture and see, you know, we'll learn, you know, what, in essence or what, what was really the Buddha really teaching, but not because I was an historian of abstract ideas, because I think it's one approach I have been trying to then have approaching these

texts, to have it reflect that to myself, have me reflecting it. That's another way to read texts is what? How do I see myself better from reading this? So for example, if you say, I don't believe this one bit, I don't like this. That's interesting. Rather than kind of just letting that be, as it is, say, Okay, let me look more carefully at this. Why is it that I'm responding this way? Why do we have this reaction to it? And so, for me, this idea of going back and trying to find out best we can, what the Buddha actually was about, is really a very personal thing. It's not because I think, hopefully not because I'm a fundamentalist and thinking this is the truth, but rather I find it very useful to engage in this process with this, this kind of texts. Make sense? Yes, please. Yes.

The emotional response to the text. Yeah. And for me, it was there was a lot of sadness attached to the game. You know, not Being able to forgive himself and the self hate

that was limiting his practice

that I connected it to my own.

Yes, practice in the moments when I feel that feeling and you know, so in a way it was a urging to

see that ceiling and overcome that great,

beautiful thing. It's so very significant response so that that evokes something else that I considered as I read this week. And that, you know, there's also I think very important to question the Buddhist tradition and not today it's very easy to hold a religious tradition especially when the gear into and give it kind of some major authority like, you know, absolute authority, like it's all knowing. I mean, I I struggled with this when I was Younger practitioner, there was a time and when I was in a monastery in Japan, where it was committed to stay there certain for a certain three month retreat period. And after a while, but halfway through, I realized that this was the wrong place for me to be. And it was, it was kind of like a ridiculous place to be. The practice wasn't what I thought it was going to be. And, but who was eyes, no kid, you know, who young guy who didn't know much to stand up against the authority of Zen Buddhism, you know, you know, and say, This is not appropriate, and I should leave. And so I struggled with that until I came to a place where I realized I knew I should leave. And that and that there was quite a step to kind of, for me, kind of look up in the face of this great world institution, Zen Buddhism, you know, it doesn't actually exist, but I didn't know that then. And I'd something I'd given so much authority to and in the sense take my own authority and realize what I have Do in a variety of points that you know. So. So the question is text, you know, a question in that tradition some way. So here's an example of how I question this this week. Say it this way, say that you are really deeply troubled by something you've done, maybe ethically or it harmed someone. deeply, deeply troubled. And you came to your, your spiritual counselor, advisor, your teacher, you came to your therapist perhaps. And you said something like you're really deeply troubled. And the therapist or counselor or the advisor says to you, oh, you know, if you follow ethics, you get certain kind of happiness. If you can cultivate more contentment, you'll be contented if you can just develop some concentration practice, you know, Jobs nice, good, good feeling inside is really great. And if you have that really good feeling inside and have really concentrated and focused, then you might be able to get some real insights. And if you get some real insight you could be free. Come back next week.

You know, maybe they did a little nicer than that. But how would you feel about that? You go back. You didn't get much we you know, you didn't really engage you personally, your you know, your situation. The player doesn't engage the king at all. The King doesn't ask to engage the Buddha that way you can guess that particular thing. And then wait a response that way. But the Buddha understands that the

king is really troubled and is limited, you know, but what he can do because of his killing his father is a pretty big toll on the heart. But the Buddha doesn't counsel them and see how you're feeling. You know, realize you can't go very far in the path but I'm sure we can. Maybe we could do something for you. Perhaps just telling me what troubles you, we'll just go for a walk. And you can tell me a little bit about, you know, you're a king. So not too many people you can talk to. And so I'm a Buddha, and maybe you can least meekly go for a walk, and we can just lighten your load a little bit and look a little bit, maybe we could, maybe it'd be useful to kind of look at what you did and reflect a little bit of you can't go much further on further spiritually, but maybe you can learn from your mistake, and perhaps maybe, you know, be extinct twice in the future, but killing someone else. Isn't there something you could do when you expect a spiritual advisor to be more engaged in the person that personal kind of way and how the Buddha was? So so mean? So that's the kind of question one of the kinds of questions I had with text I was grappling with this week, which is about you know, what, why is it Why is it so limited? His response here, and what's behind that limited response? There might be a lot of wisdom maybe that maybe that's all he could do. You know, maybe that's, you know, I don't want to kind of say the Buddha was wrong. But it's a dynamic you see sometimes in Buddhism, where there's a certain kind of response that's sometimes excessively impersonal. And, and, and also and then what's between my mind as well, as you know, we've had now I don't know how long 100 years of psychotherapy. And I think that there's a lot of understanding about human psychology and the mind social dynamics and family dynamics relationships that have been learned in these hundred years of research, some of it is bogus, right, and sometimes is really wise and important to for our culture, people. And so,

you know, a lot of research went into that. The Buddhist tradition historically didn't have access to all that research.

So they didn't know about counseling. When you

So maybe the Buddha wouldn't have occurred to the Buddha to consult with the Buddha was alive today.

You know, do some of these things

would have been related very differently to

the way he did here.

So, I don't have answers, but just kind of give example of kind of grappling or questioning that went through my mind. As I read this this week.

I don't think he would have changed a few years in the 21st century. He realized life was tough and tragic things happen. And he was he saw this individual come before him and saw the limitations that that individual had as far as attaining any peace or liberation. And his whole deal was freedom in liberation. And so he probably saw this individually as well. It's too bad. So much I can do for you.

Well, that's not true. My favorite fish back a little bit. He did something for him. He did something very significant enough that he went for refuge in the Buddha. It's a quite powerful thing to go for refuge and to feel that kind of level of inspiration. So he did something. But is it really that black and whites all or nothing for the Buddha? It's either you know, the duration you can do that. Or what about everything in between? What about helping him become wiser maybe you know, the kind of person perhaps a little bit trying to deal with his guilt perhaps and less than a little bit. But it'd be beneficial someone it's

certainly something as important as the King to offer him some kind of counseling and some kind of some kind of level of healing even the healing can't be completed and can't ever get liberated. Are there other other ways we can benefit someone?

And I wouldn't settle

for the idea. No, there's no more you can do for this person, just as

he was tired of those and Pisco.

Diana

So I had actually a very different time. So

I'm assuming practice, as I was imagining, how does it feel to be in a space where I imagine that there's people that are trained in kindness and compassion. So, the Buddha is providing support in terms of words, but I was feeling like Oh, he must have a tremendous support just being in that area, in that vicinity being

proximity

to China.

Pretty big.

Maybe this situation, this kind of conflict.

So much peace and love in the air.

Letting Go harmony.

Beautiful. Apparently recently I

questioned it.

It's one thing to interpret the story that way, which is a nice thing to do. That's another thing I've noticed historically, I've noticed over the decades, I'm involved in Buddhism,

similar kind dynamics,

sometimes operating, where people are saying, you know, just concentrate, do the practice concentrate. And if you can't get concentrated, because you have that karma you have that you have built up the armies. And I've known people literally hit it again, against the zafu or, you know, the wall, in a sense really tried, you know, you know, really tried hard for years to practice really, really hard. And it's really a pity sometimes, because what they needed was some kind of therapy, or they need some kind of deeper counseling of whether their issues and they would have gone through something and then in practice would have been a lot easier. And I've known teachers lately. Just concentrate harder,

push harder, concentrate more. And so this story echoes to me what I've seen in the Buddhist tradition already, at times,

Robert Stein

so the thing that occurred to me some

years you were saying that it is

it was very clear in my mind is that

when I think

no one can actually create that understanding

in another person we can it's a matter of how much are you stepping forward and taking refuge in the Buddha.

That there's two other

things take refuge in

But it seems to me that

when I look back on my path that, you know, I see all this time when I was younger, we're kind of going towards something like this, but I don't have I don't feel regret that Oh, why didn't I, I wasn't ready. And I wasn't ready to be able to understand the level. And so I think that you really have to be ready to sort of put your entire self behind what you're doing. You can't just, you know, say Wow, that's great. That sounds beautiful. I want all that and just have it because you want to

see the work and you have to really have

there's that extra step

that you have to put in to the king was ready for the extra step. So this is as far as he could go. This is this is all the stuff points are valid, what are the things I want to try to point I'm trying to make here also is that please don't succumb to the temptation to feel like now you understand the sutra because you have one interpretation. You know, like, you know, if I come to the idea, oh, the Buddha just wasn't, you know, he wasn't trained as a therapist, so he missed this big opportunity. And if only had been, you know, gone to therapy school, first thing, you could have helped the king a lot more. And this isn't bad. This isn't you know, it's just unfortunate thing. Or someone else. Another interpretation is that this is as far as the King could go. You know, so you heard different interpretations here. I would suggested that we don't, it's not really very useful to decide which is the right interpretation. But it's actually very useful to hold them all, and see them all. And because they all cast, give perspective on different situations. You'll find yourself at different times, and in some situations, you'll find yourself wanting to be useful for that situation. There's others. But also even in living situations you find yourself in, maybe even there, there's not one perspective. There's different perspectives or approaches or understandings of that. And it's actually quite useful to be trained to look at all the different things going on all the different

approaches and perspectives that happen in any situation we find ourselves in. And so this kind of, to read texts like this and discuss it this way and, and hear the different perspectives a person might have is a training also, it's a practice in its own right. So training, in a sense, to be able to do that in their regular life and not succumb to the point interpretation. This is the truth.

So first of all, I appreciate everyone's comments. And I'll preface this Sure. I'll preface this by saying that I have the utmost respect for psychotherapy and Western therapy, I'm trying to think of why the Buddha is relatively disconnected in the situation. And then reflecting back on other sutras and thinking if I've ever in memory if I've ever seen him approach a person he's working with, like someone with a psychotherapy background, and I can't think of an example.

And

well, I think the psychotherapy or a therapeutic approach, working with the self is valuable. It also opens up sort of a Pandora's box of self and opens up with the self. There's lots of space for delusion. So it seems like it's consistent with these being wisdom teachings to cut right through the self. So that's why Eastern teachers and Western teachers say focus on concentration, or I think you said concentration earlier, because that's what helps you become your own teacher to see what's On your own life, this entire idea that I've heard it said before that psychotherapy or therapy is like rearranging the chairs in your room. But the Buddhist teaching helps you realize that you're, you know, rearranging the furniture in your room. But the Buddhist teachings help you realize that you're actually in a room, you're potentially trapped in a room, you know, you're in your, your body there. So it just seems like both are both have a lot of truth to them. But one is a deeper wisdom teaching. Right?

So that's what comes up for me. That's a beautiful, beautiful point of view. And, and I just have been everywhere I've been aware of the number of Buddhist casualties because the concentration approach in personal approach didn't work, they need something else. And also, you know, don't go to don't to hold it did not just talk therapy as the model. There's also I'm involved now with this whole chaplaincy world in chaplaincy world is kind of a wonderful A hybrid of counseling or therapy and spiritual advising. And, and, you know, you, someone's on their deathbed. And it's very common on people's deathbed that one of the most important things they need to do is to do some kind of reconciliation or forgiveness process with people they love. And you tell them, you know, just get concentrated, everything will be taken care of, you know, you're in a, you know, this is an imaginary room, you're in step outside, you know, it doesn't, you know, that doesn't really work. And so when it when's the time and place for different understandings and approaches, I think is very important to consider. And what's your strengths and weaknesses in the Buddhist tradition? Does it have weaknesses to admit that the Buddha said Buddhism has weaknesses?

And when you're ready as individual transitions,

and more traditional teachings,

was a very interesting summit you asked me this week. Asian American woman who came up to me so just because she's married to children wasn't clear exactly, but someone who wasn't a very different culture. And what I could make up was probably an Asian culture. And she had some trouble with his behavior, husband's behavior. And so she said, you know, if you are asked for help, and I said, Well, hopefully you have a chance you can talk about these things out front, and hopefully he understands even if he doesn't change, hopefully he understands that you're distressed by it. And, and so he's understands you, you feel understood. And she said, Oh, when I tell him my feelings he comes from

she said, she he comes from a collectivist culture, and we're nice telling my feelings. He tells me I'm selfish.

So, what to do? You know, how do these two well how do you have this dialogue? So, to go back to the switch, I don't want to talk about these issues, you know, abstract, but to go back to the sutra, heart, you know, remember, we're most of us, I think are reading it from, from, you know, Western cultural point of view. Some of you have been raised in other cultures. So, you know, each of us we raise it to our own cultural lens. And so for me to bring up this idea of even the word psychotherapy, perhaps other possible ways of meeting and talking with a king, you know, perhaps I'm bringing my own cultural perspective to see it. So, these are all very interesting questions, it becomes richer and richer, the possibilities are looking at a text like this. And, and what I'm trying to convey to you is the levels and depth and richness and possibilities in the text here. That depending on how you engage in, what you bring to it, and what questions and approach you bring to it, because I know from my own experience, how easy it is to read the text like this. I just kind of like that. Thinking about it and just kind of like a dry, boring context and kind of your plotting to get through what you're trying to say. And, and, you know, that's doesn't, that doesn't really make it come alive.

I'm married to somebody from India. And when I was listening to the sutra, what came to my mind was there's a certain abruptness to the way I've experienced communication with people from India in particular. And sometimes it can come across as lack of caring, when in fact, there's a lot of caring but it's just a very delivery that's very different from what I've been used to. And now that I'm used to it, it's a lot easier. And I can see behind the words and the tone and, and but obviously thinking about that listening to have the Buddha communicated.

You know, The speaker,

yes. And so when we text like this, we have to ask ourselves what is what are the cultural ways of communication relationships that are inherent in this text. And you'll see as we go through it that to the break, that there's a variety of subtle things are going on here that many of us would just kind of not even notice as we go through. And what does that mean these subtle differences? So maybe, for example, what I wanted to point out when in the story, the there's ministers who talk to the king, his ministers are talking to him suggesting going seeing different seekers than the administrator reports having gotten the king of course, having gone to these different aesthetics and asking them questions, and those ascetics talk to the king. The ministers and the ascetics all refer to the king as Your Majesty, when you're talking English. But they weren't talking English, right? They're talking the word that they use to refer to the title that we translate, as Your Majesty is Devo. Devo, usually we understand is a God. So he's being referred to as a God. He's not he's not taken as a God, but it's kind of offered as a very high status. So that's kind of interesting, you know, then itself, but then you see what the Buddha what the Buddha says, when that when that when the Buddha refers to him, he doesn't say death. I don't say Your Majesty. He

says, great king, Maharaja.

What is that? what's what's what's what's what's, what cultural dynamics, identity played out, like how the title is sometimes referred to.

And I would suggest that there's

not that important, that's very important point. But there isn't there is a point there's some subtle going on there about the relationship between people and they should adhere to the king, what he's willing to call him what other people call the king.

What it means to call some odd

That's also kind of very subtle cultural things going on in the text that you know he wouldn't he probably didn't probably none of you noticed that he went from your majesty to

great king.

It was a change there.

The etiquette comes through a lot of things come through. Okay, so I think we should take a break so I was just okay with all of you

so far,

you know, hope we have any look at the book. And, and so let's take a break and then we will come back and open the book a little bit.