

Victory Over Māra (3 of 3)

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So welcome. Welcome, everybody. It's nice to see you all. So here we are for our third and final class about victory over Māra. And we're going to look at a third rendition of the same story. At the beginning of the class, I put up a slide and said, what is the function of, you know, part one of the objectives of this course is to like what Māra means for you.

And that, of course, is still an objective. And we'll see another version of Māra that we hadn't seen before. But as I was pulling together the notes for this last class, I was reflecting on, like, for me, what this experience has been to look at the same story with different versions of it. And not only that, to do something about what we might call more Buddhist studies than just Dharma. The Dharma teachings, the way that I teach it, I would say, is something to help us with our practice and with our life and define our freedom, of course. And Buddhist studies is different in that it maybe steps back and looks a little bit at the nature of the teaching.

So not as much as the content, but the nature of it and who is saying it, where does it come from? What is it influenced by? What role does it have? What is the function? I said that. So something like that. So Buddhist studies, like I would say, practitioners don't really need Buddhist studies. They don't want to. They can just be practitioners and listen to Dharma talks and read Dharma books and that type of thing, which is a beautiful way and a completely adequate and sufficient way to practice.

But I can't help myself. I have this little geekiness, this nerdiness inside of me. I'll tell you, I'm trained as an investigator, researcher, and I like to poke around. I have a graduate degree in Buddhist studies. So there's this way in which I like to bring them together and offer them. And for some people, it's interesting and helpful. For other people, it's not. They just want to stay with the Dharma and have practice.

So I'm making this distinction between Buddhist studies and Dharma teaching. Of course, they're related. But when I was teaching at the university, it became more and more apparent, like, how are they different? And the manner in which I would teach as well as the content would be different. And yet there's a real overlap. So I just want to say that from the outset.

We'll point to this and talk about this a little bit near the end of the class because right the truth is I mean why even have a class on victory over Māra why not just say here's the story and here's the moral of the story and go out and practice and you know I do a lot of that too right in my role as a Dharma teacher but maybe this is how one way in which Sati Center as an organization is different than Insight Meditation Center as an organization, which is different as Insight Retreat Center as an organization. These are all three organizations or sister organizations as the same cast of characters. Me and Gail

are in all three of these. So it's easy to think like, well, wait, what's the difference? And who cares? It doesn't really matter.

But I would say one is Sati Center is we do bring in more of the study part, the Buddhist study, as well as the practice. Whereas IMC is really just about practice. And IRC is more about residential practice, you know, long term practice, residential practice. So if you guys have ever wondered, like, well, who cares? Why do you have three different organizations? That's one of them to emphasize the importance. Some of the academic or Buddhist part. Does anybody have any questions or comments about what I've said so far about this idea of Dharma teaching versus Buddhist studies?

Questioner

The first thing for me is gratitude for the explanation of those three settings to focus in a specific area that is as important as all the others supporting each other, the residential practice, and where we can have the practice in not a residential setting and where we can really study, engage in that way, engage in the understanding itself. The other feels more understanding from here, feeling the truth of the teaching that we can get at FATI. So that's what is coming to me. It's a difference. So I feel grateful to hear in that way. Thank you. Thank you, Beth.

Diana Clark

Thank you. Maybe I'll just say as an aside, in the whole big topic of religious studies and whatever religion you're doing, there is, you know, this conversation that's always happening. Do the people inside the religion, that is the practitioners of the religion, are they the best people to be looking at the study of it? Or does it take people on the outside of the religion to look at it in common time? And so there's this recognition that if you're an insider practitioner, you will have some different views than people that are just on the outside, just looking at texts maybe on practitioners or looking at the rhetoric or something like this and practitioners themselves.

So I just want to put that out there and of course I'm a practitioner so I have a view and this will come up a little bit when what we're going to talk about today. The translator is not a practitioner and so the way that he's choosing to translate a few words I feel like oh it's not the not the way that I would translate them and it can be a little bit we might not understand it in the way that it was intended in its original language. Okay, so I think I'll share screen here and off this PowerPoint that I put together. I don't even know if people still do PowerPoint anymore. Clearly I do, so I'm a person. So yes, some people do. But I think it's just helpful to get us all on the same page. And plus, because I'm using some words that might not be familiar with everybody to everybody, sometimes helpful to see them written.

Okay. So this, you guys have seen before, that there's these key components. Buddha-to-be, he goes to a location and I would say sets a resolve and does his final efforts towards awakening. And this is either in the Nirañjarā River or Bodh Gayā. And then there he is confronted by Māra where there's this conflict and then the Buddha-to-be overcomes the conflict and becomes awakened. This big general

arc that all versions of this story agree with.

And you guys have seen this slide before also. In early Buddhism, I'll just say, making a distinction between later Buddhism, and by that I'm meaning probably Mahāyāna Buddhism, and they have different texts that talk about it, but in the earliest version, they have these three versions of this story in the *Padhāna Sutta*, which we looked at in class one. It's in the Pāli Canon. And the *Nidāna Kathā*, which is, the translation is be like introduction, but it's the introduction to the commentaries on the Jātaka tales, not in the Pāli Canon. That's what we did in class two. And here, three, *Buddha Carita*, translated as life of the Buddha. You could see the word Buddha here in this word, in carita we it's more like activities of the Buddha uh literally but that doesn't matter so much and that's the subject today it's again this isn't in the Pāli Canon and it's part of this epic poetry tradition and uh which we don't talk about and um i'll you'll we'll read it and uh you'll understand maybe a little bit where it comes from.

And I just, you've also seen this slide before, just to highlight that there is so much time between these different versions. *Padhāna Sutta*, this is attributed to around the time of the Buddha, right? This is the third to the fourth century before the common era. And then here's the *Buddha Carita*. You know, this could be 600 years later. And between the *Padhāna Sutta* and the *Nidāna Kathā*, that could be 900 years later. So this is a big expanse of time.

And I think I'm going to skip over the next few slides and I want to introduce the *Buddha Carita*. So the *Buddha Carita* was written by Aśvaghoṣa. This is somebody's name. He was a Buddhist philosopher and poet who lived, it's believed, around these years, around the year 80 to 150. And partly we have left these texts behind, but it's substantiated by this Chinese pilgrim, I-Tsing, who 500 years later, maybe even 550 years later, goes to India and writes down what he experiences. And he mentions Aśvaghoṣa.

So here's somebody completely independently from the outside who mentions this and mentions him in the context of Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva. And for those of you who are familiar with maybe Mahāyāna Buddhism, Nāgārjuna has a big role. He has a very big role. So for Aśvaghoṣa to be mentioned with Nāgārjuna, this gives him a lot of credibility. Nāgārjuna is, you know, some consider the father of Mahāyāna and this very, very influential. Āryadeva, not as much. And Aśvaghoṣa is mentioned by this person.

And he wrote in a particular style, what's called kāvya. And he wrote these two, he wrote a number of pieces. But for Buddhism, he wrote the *Buddha Carita* and the *Saundarananda*. *Saundarananda*, which could be translated as handsome Nanda. This is the Buddha's half-brother. I think it's a story about him.

So according to I-Tsing this Chinese pilgrim 500 years later that this text the text we're about to read was read extensively throughout India and it was considered virtuous it was considered a worthwhile thing to do because it contained the teachings of the Buddha in a neat compact form if you were to

consider like you know the Pāli Canon is huge i don't know if you guys know like the whole canon i don't even know it hasn't even all been translated into English yet or maybe it was just a few years ago i think the last piece got translated into English but it's like so big even like just the yeah it's big so there was like okay well here's a poem you can read that is like a cliff notes version.

And not only that, it's in poetry. So this was often read and was highly, I don't know, esteemed or to read it was deemed worthwhile. So what is this kāvya? What is this kāvya? So this kāvya is like this epic poetry. It's written in Sanskrit, I should say. So the Pāli Canon, of course, is written in Pāli. This is written in Sanskrit so i'll go through this and i'll come back to sanskrit so it's this ornate literary style that has this elaborate language a lot of metaphors and similes and hyperbole and it's a meter that's a very musical and when it was recited it would have done maybe like a song or something like this.

It had a lyrical, maybe entertainment value, I would say. And this epic poetry has like this heroic narrative, right? All the, those poems, not all of them are Buddhist. Some of them are like a proto-Hinduism, or some of these poems, but they have this, there's a hero who has a great journey, you know, something like this is a common theme of it. And it's written in a way to evoke emotion. It's meant to touch our hearts. And it's meant to not only teach us or help us understand something, but also make us feel alive in some kind of way.

And this epic poetry also, this kāvya, showcases the poet's mastery of language. So it doesn't show up so much in the English translation, but the way that they use language and their erudition, their education and their knowledge of philosophy of the time or stories of the time. So there's references, obscure references in all these poems to other literary works, let's say that. And part of that is because this poetry was often recited by the poet or other performers in the court of the king. So it was a way to show like, oh, this is the educated people to feel like they're in on the, I don't know, education or in the know or something like this.

So it was like these uh these references that only the educated that probably only those in the court would uh really know what these references were so we'll encounter a few of those in the poem here they don't have value so much in terms of the main arc of the story that's being said here they're put in more to impress other people back at that time okay and i just want to say something about just epics in general what is an epic when i'm saying epic poetry i think we all know what poetry is but epic poetry is lengthy but it also has this elevated style like it's important like it may be mythology is uh sometimes fun and playful but epics maybe are like a form of mythology, in which not only are they long, but it's often like a great hero that goes on a great journey or something like this and covers these grand themes.

And I wrote here such as dharma, love, and war. So what is dharma? When I'm using this word here, what is dharma? I would say, so dharma has two meanings here. One is in India today and thousands of years ago, dharma was associated with one's place in the world like an individual like my place your place like what is one's dharma what is a person's dharma is what is your duty in the world what is

your fate what is uh you're supposed to do in the world so that's one version of the word dharma we don't use that version so much in the buddhist teachings but in Indian literature that's uh one way in which they understand the word dharma and then of course the word dharma also means like the teachings of the buddha or one's practice that leads towards awakening something like this so it could be doctrine as well as aligning with the way things are we could say that's dharma as well so these are like big uh big uh topics like or maybe grand uh generalized maybe that's a word i'll use generalized uh definitions of the word dharma and i'm pausing here for a moment because we will see this uh in a moment when we look at this stuff and so the epics they often are like you know providing instructions for life you know the hero embodies either the virtues or the flaws should emulate or avoid.

It links humans to the sacred and to interest entertainment. Okay. So, I'll stop sharing that. This is a little introduction into *Orientus*. And now, actually, before, does anybody have any questions or comments before I move on to where we actually look at this, instead of talk about it, but look at it? Maybe. Okay, let's jump in. So this is an epic poem. It's a very long poem. And I cut out the pieces, you know, Victory over Māra from this larger document. So whoops, sorry, sharing the wrong thing here. So you'll see that it's a little bit clunky. But sorry. Okay. So here we are. The *Buddha Carita*, Life of the Buddha by Aśvaghoṣa.

And I'll just say briefly for those of you who care. So this has this S, it has an accent mark. And this S has a dot underneath it. When we're not doing diacritical marks, we do that by SH. So transliteration, which is Aśvaghoṣa. Okay, here we go. This is what I mean, it's a little bit clunky. We're going to start here. So here's our hero, the Buddha-to-be. Then, with resolve as his companion, resolving to attain awakening, he repaired to the foot of a bow tree under which the ground was covered with grass.

Um I didn't highlight let's see this um um and then he took a posture with folded legs supreme unshakable drawn together like the coils of a sleeping snake thinking i'll not break this posture on earth until i fulfilled my task So here we are. We're arriving with the Buddha setting his resolve. I'm going to sit here until I become awakened. And the heavenly beings felt unparalleled joy. The birds and the throngs of beasts made no noise. The forest trees did not rustle, though shaken by the wind. And the Lord took up his posture, firm in his resolve. So like the whole universe is like getting ready. Now here's this. He sits down.

So then this continues. When that great seer, who was born in a line of royal seers, sat down there with the pledge to win release, the world rejoiced. And yet, Māra, foe of true Dharma, shook with fright. The one that people in the world call God Kāma, Kāma means sensual pleasure. The one with flower arrows and colorful bow, the one who oversees the working of passions, that same one they call Māra, the foe of release. His three sons, Fluster, Thrill, and Pride, and his three girls, Discontent, Delight, and Thirst, asked why his mind was so troubled.

So it's so sweet, right? Here's Māra. This is not a Māra like the evil, the wicked one. Instead, he has flower arrows, and he's a parent. He has children, and the children are asking like, hey, Dad, you

seem like you're a little upset. What's going on? This is kind of my interpretation of it. And so this is what Māra says. That sage wearing the armor of resolve, drawing the bow of courage with the arrow of insight, kind of like this, you know, he's about ready. He has this courage that's going to, insight's going to go off into there. Sits there desiring to conquer my realms. That's why my mind is despondent. For if he succeeds in vanquishing me proclaims to the world the path to release then today this my realm will be empty like that of the Videha king when he strayed from the correct path.

So this reference to the Videha king straying from the correct path that this is the poet showing off like look I know this other story too and I'm just sprinkling this in to uh show how educated I am So we don't need to know this. So this is a different Māra than we've seen before. But it is similar that he's saying that my realm will be empty. So Māra's realm, as we can say, it's saṃsāra. And Māra would be perfectly happy if people just stayed having all the sensual pleasures they wanted all day long. But he doesn't want people to leave.

And you know what? I don't know what happened to the highlighting I had here. Okay. I guess I do on the next page. So I'll go on here. This is Māra up here. Then taking up his bow made of flowers and the five arrows that delude the world. These five arrows are sight, sound, scent, touch, and taste. The one who troubles the minds of people went to the foot of the bow tree accompanied by his children, then placing his left hand on the bow tip and fondling an arrow. I just love this. It's so detailed, right? Like he's fondling the tip. He's right. Māra said to the sage, seated calm and motionless, seeking to cross the ocean of existence.

Rise up, oh warrior, afraid of death. Follow the dharma that's your own. Abandon the dharma of release. So he's saying, follow your own duty or obligation, which would have been to become the king of the era. We know the story of the Buddha, right? He's a prince, and if he would have been the king. And then he says, follow the Dharma that's your own, and abandon the Dharma of release. So give up this idea that you're going to get out of saṃsāra and have some freedom. That's what he's saying here.

And then he goes on to say, let's see here. The Buddha he just and then he threatens him and says well my army let's say I didn't read all of this but maybe we don't need to read all this so then so now the army no sooner than had Māra thought of his army wishing to hinder the calm of the Śākya Śākyamuni sometimes is a name of the Buddha. Muni means sage, and Śākya is the name of his family clan. So he's like the sage of the Śākyas. It could be like Diana of Redwood City, something like this. No sooner then had Māra thought of his army, wishing to hinder the calm of the Śākya sage, that his cohorts in diverse forms gathered around him, carrying in their hands spears, trees, javelins, clubs, and swords.

Some with faces of boars, fishes, horses, donkeys, and camels. Some with the guise of tigers, bears, lions, and elephants. Some with one eye, some with many mouths. Some with three heads, some with enormous stomachs, some with spotted bellies. And then the list goes on and on and on. About like

all of this, I'll let you guys read this on your own. I think you guys know that I posted this in the Google Drive. This text is, oh, it's amazing. Like all these descriptions, the gory descriptions of Māra's army. They stood there trying to frighten him some with multiple tongues dangling and quivering some with sharp and pointed fangs some with eyes like the sun's orb some with gaping mouths some with ears upright like spikes you could see like for me when i'm reading this i'm just There's somebody who is like a masterful storyteller or chanter or singer or something. And this is done with a certain rhythm. It has a particular meter. Maybe there's music accompaniments. Some accounts of Āśvaghoṣa says that he was a musician as well. So this would have been like maybe this grand performance.

As they stood in such guise, dreadful in form and mean, the great seer was no more alarmed or frightened of them than of little children, ebullient as they play. Wow, okay, so this big description of all these beasts that are showing up, the Buddha-to-be is not afraid of them. He's just like as if he's watching children. And then one with his eyes rolling with rage lifted up his club at the sage, but the hand holding the club froze, like Harandara's hand of old that was holding the bolt. Again, this is a reference to some other story that members of the court would have known. There's more of that here.

But here's something that's interesting, is that the Buddha-to-be's mettā practice transforms burning coals into lotus petals. I hadn't seen this before. But that shower of burning coals with flying sparks sprinkling around the foot of the bow tree became a shower of red lotus petals by the universal benevolence practiced by that foremost of seers. This word universal benevolence is *maitri*, which is a Sanskrit word for *mettā* in Pāli. So doing this mettā practice allowed this transformation of these flying sparks turning into flowers.

So we saw this in the *Nidāna Kathā* as well. But we didn't see it that it was due to the Buddha doing mettā practice or the Buddha-to-be. In fact, nowhere do we see the Buddha-to-be doing mettā practice. This is a new development, something that we see here. Not only is he doing mettā practice, but it's what's transforming, has this transformational power, like it's very protective. Having said my just saying that, well, we don't see him doing mettā practice, that's actually not quite true. Because in the *Nidāna Kathā*, if you guys would remember, he was doing the ten pāramī, the ten perfections, and mettā is one of those. Mettā is one of the ten.

While he was assaulted with these tribulations and torture of body and mind of various kinds, the Śākya sage did not waver from his posture, guarding his resolve as if it were a kinsman, as if it were a family member. Another fixed an arrow to his bow, but it flared up there and did not fly off. Like the anger of a poor, ill-humored man igniting within himself. So this is really interesting. I wrote here, the failures of Māra's armies are associated with Dharma teachings. Little Dharma teachings are getting in here. The anger of a person ignites within oneself. Often when we're angry, we feel like we want to throw something that's harmful to somebody else, but it's actually the harm happens to ourself. And that's what Āśvaghoṣa here is pointing to. He's sprinkling in a little dharma with the impotence maybe of Māra's army, why they can't work is a teaching for us.

So not only first, maybe it was entertainment, but now here's some teachings for us. And five arrows shot by another one stood still in the sky and did not fall on the sage like the five senses before the objects of senses in a wise man scared of saṃsāric life so this is another little dharma teaching the five senses as I said are sight, hearing, taste, touch labor I forgot you know nose thank you chris so it's and um it's us as practitioners not going out and grabbing on to whatever there is the objects of to be seen or the sounds to be heard or the flavors to be tasted not going out and grabbing onto them. So the five arrows shot by another one stood still in the sky and did not fall on the sage, like the five senses before the objects of sense. So they're not going anywhere. They're just here, not going out, grabbing onto. When we talk about the dangers of sensual pleasures, this is what's being pointed to. That we're always going out to be satisfied with some new sensual experience, a scent, taste, or very often an object to be seen.

Another enraged, rushed at the great sage, grabbing a club and intending to kill, But he fell helpless, his aim unattained, in much the same way as the world descends into vices that thwart its goals. So this is very interesting. So he, this demon, is trying to kill the sage, but he just fell helpless. He wasn't able to do it. In the same way that the world descends in vices that thwart its goals, if we aren't able to achieve something, whether it's a sensual pleasure or something else, often we fall into vices that don't get us to where we want to go. We fall into distractions. We fall into delusion. We fall into something that thwarts our goals. So this is like this little Dharma teaching here, just making it a question, well, how is the way that I behave when I'm not able to achieve something that I want? And I'm using the word achieve in such a broad way. It could include something as, how do I behave when I'm not comfortable? I wish that I were comfortable, but I'm not comfortable, or something like this. So these little Dharma teachings get sprinkled in.

Here's another one. A woman black as a cloud and carrying a skull in order to seduce the mind of that great seer flitted about there unrestrained and did not halt like a fickle man's mind amidst scriptural texts. So to say, maybe this is your mind when you're trying to read some of these suttas or these texts, like how it's just dancing around and hard to settle down into what's actually being pointed to in the text. So this continues in here with some little teachings. Not all of these descriptions of individuals of Māra's armies going out to attack the Buddha, not all of them have in their little Dharma teachings, but some of them do. And I don't know, I feel, I just think it's fantastic the way that that poetry, like it elicits some of this emotion like this, wow, all these terrible things are happening to the Buddha. And then it brings the mind towards, it's not only for entertainment, it brings the mind towards Dharma teachings, like some truths that we maybe recognize in ourselves.

And then there's a new development we haven't seen before. This is, for me, is fascinating. Then, I'm right here, then a certain being, standing in the sky, high in station, invisible in form, seeing Māra's malice toward the seer and his unprovoked animosity, spoke to him in a loud voice. So this is fascinating, right? Here's some being, we don't know who it is, it's not the Buddha, who's speaking to Māra. And he says, Don't toil in vain, Māra. Give up your murderous intent and go home. For you can no

more shake this man than a gust of wind, the great Meru mountain. Meru is a mountain. It was like the biggest mountain in India. Fire may well give up its fiery nature, water its fluidity, and earth its stability, but this man will not give up his resolve, having piled up merit over countless eons.

It's quite something, right, that this voice offstage, behind the scene, is a narrator of some sort. Well, he's not really a narrator, he's a character in this that's speaking about the Buddha. And says, for his resolve, valor, and energy, and his compassion, for creatures are such that they will not rise without grasping the truth as the sun without dispelling the dark. So just as it's impossible for the sun to not dispel the dark, It's impossible that this seer, the Buddha-to-be, will not rise up from that seat until he has learned the truth, grasped the truth. Write something. Write something. For one obtains fire by rubbing the wood, and one finds water by digging the earth. There is nothing that is impossible for the man, for the person who is persistent. Everything can be accomplished when it is done the proper way.

So this saying that maybe for us, I mean, this is directed towards Māra, but maybe it's directed towards us as well. Everything can be accomplished when it's done the proper way. This idea that maybe knowing the proper way, I'm using this word knowing lightly. It's maybe not knowing in an intellectual academic understanding, but in a proper way, maybe in the same way that with the Eightfold Path we have right right view, right intention, right speech, right action, etc. That word right, I mean this word proper is the same. Everything can be accomplished when it's done in the proper way.

In his compassion for this anguished world, mired in diseases such as passion, as he toils to find the medicine of knowledge, it's not proper to hinder this great physician. So it's likening the Buddha as somebody who wants to cure what ails us, wants to provide medicine for us. And then it continues here. And there's this being up in the sky that continues. Seeing the world plunged in the great flood of saṃsāra and unable to find the farther shore, this man is working to ferry that world across. What gentleman would entertain wicked thoughts against him? So, just saying that the Buddha's trying to help all of us. So why are you having these wicked thoughts against him?

It's not proper to cut down this flourishing tree of knowledge. So calling the Buddha a Buddha-to-be, a flourishing tree of knowledge that provides the fruits of Dharma, whose fibers are patience, whose deep roots are resolve, whose flowers are good conduct, and whose boughs are mindfulness and wisdom. Saying that the Buddha's like a tree and that the different parts of a tree has these qualities. Maybe this is a way in which the poetry comes in because there's this way in which fibers, roots, flowers, boughs, roots, that these are all parts of a tree. We can see how maybe there's a, different than just listing. Oh yeah, he has patience, resolve, good conduct, mindfulness, and wisdom. It feels like a list. There's a way in which seeing, oh no, all these different parts of a tree is a way, maybe it inspires in us something that recognizes the wholeness, the completeness, as well as recognizing that different seasons as different parts of the tree that are important. Deep roots are important during drought and when the wind is blowing and fruit is important for that, for the season, for the tree's reproduction,

but also giving fruit to others.

So there's this way in which the poetry of calling the Buddha a tree and then talking about the different parts of the tree. Also, I remember, of course, at this time of the, this is written, you know, there was not like civilization the way that we know it. They are so tuned into nature. And so bringing in this, something so natural, something that they would see all the time, all day, trees, helps to bring it more alive and more relevant for their daily lives, we might say.

His intent is to free creatures whose minds are bound tight by the bonds of delusion it behooves you not to seek to kill him who labors to free the world from its bonds so there's this great being in the sky he was trying to tell him not to do this and that it continues, and then, this is fascinating for me, after he listened to those words of his and saw that the great sage couldn't be shaken, then Māra went away brokenhearted, his effort struck down by the same arrows with which the world is smitten in the heart. Then his troops fled in every direction, their euphoria gone, their toil made fruitless, the rocks, logs, and trees all scattered around like enemy troops when their enemy has killed their chief.

This is fascinating. The Buddha-to-be is sitting quietly on the tree at the base of the Bodhi tree. This being up in the sky is talking to Māra, scares Māra or convinces Māra, and Māra and his army leaves. The whole time, the Buddha to me is just sitting. Just sitting. There's no verbal exchange. I'm fascinated by this, actually. Like, who is this great being in the sky? And why isn't the Buddha saying something? And why was Māra so easily convinced? Maybe it's just because this is a poem. And this is the way that the poet wrote it, right? Something like this.

So here's Māra Fane. As the flower-bannered one. So this is, Māra is described as the flower-bannered. Banner, we can understand as flag. So the one who has flowers as flags. Led defeated along with his cohorts passion free the great seer stood victorious in dispelling darkness the sky sparkled with the moon like a girl with a smile and a shower of flowers fell, fragrant and water-filled so all these beasts show up Buddha just sits there this being in the sky speaks more leaves and there's this shower of flowers fell well in a moment we can talk about an awakening but I'm going to stop here and see are there any comments about what we've seen so far about this just how it makes you feel any questions you have I mean you're welcome to share whatever it feels like would be whatever you'd like to share or maybe you just want to hear what happens next I'm sorry that the light is on me I'm trying to sit away so it's out of my face it's the way that it is this time of year, this time of day okay so maybe we'll go on to uh to the what happens next.

Questioner

Could i ask a question um the the translation is really readable and it this this is an edition in 2008 has it been just translated over and over again by people trying to make it more readable.

Diana Clark

Yeah, so thank you. I'll say a little bit words about, a few words about Patrick Olivelle, the translator. He's a fabulous translator. He specializes in Sanskrit. That's right, I was going to say something about

Sanskrit and Pāli. So this is written in Sanskrit. And your question, has it been translated over and over? No, it's only been translated a few times. I saw it was translated again just a few years ago, but it was done from an academic point of view and it felt a little more clunky and not as relatable. But there's this way in which Patrick Olivelle, I feel like he brings some heart to it in a way that I like to use the word relatable. I feel like he does that. Not all translators do that. It's an art, right, to translate.

And maybe I'll say something about Sanskrit and Pāli. The relationship between Sanskrit and Pāli, you can think of it as like between Latin and French. So Sanskrit is more complicated, but it's really complicated. The grammar is amazingly complicated. And Pāli, compared to English, is very complicated. Grammar and the syntax all that kind of stuff but compared to Sanskrit it's easier so so if a person knows Sanskrit they could read Pāli if you know Pāli you could make out most of Sanskrit and so that's what I've done I've looked at the Sanskrit and I can't read Sanskrit but I can recognize like oh that's probably this and then I go look at a dictionary but just knowing Pāli helps me to guess well with the Sanskrit. Some words are exactly the same in both languages, but often not. Yes, Chris?

Questioner

Yeah, you had mentioned that this translator was not a practitioner, and yet he sprinkled in insights throughout it. So it's just an interesting thing. So I'm just curious about that.

Diana Clark

Yeah, yeah. And in what we're about to read next, it'll become clear where the way that some translation choices he has made that he's not a practitioner. When it talks about awakening, which is a little more of the Buddhist teachings. One word in particular I'm thinking about. Oh, I'm sorry. Okay, so here we go. Well, I'm trying to decide whether I should tell you. how this ends. Yeah, I'll tell you here. The last chapter, chapters, a few of them, have been lost. Fascinating. It's been lost. But in the earlier, I talked about I-Tsing, this Chinese pilgrim who had come to India, had this really extensive journals describing his travels where he mentions Āśvaghoṣa and he mentions the *Buddha Carita*. Well, I-Tsing wasn't the only person from China who came to India. There's quite a few who did, and they translated all these Sanskrit and Pāli texts into Chinese while they were there, with the intention of bringing them back to China.

So what got preserved is Chinese translations for the last part, so for the part that's missing. So we don't have the original, we have the Chinese translation of it. For those of you who are familiar with Bhikkhu Analayo's work, this is the exact same thing, what he's doing, right? It's where the original Sanskrit was lost, But what has been preserved is the Chinese translations, and then he's translating the Chinese into English. So it's the exact same thing that happened. It's amazing, all these individuals that came from China down into India, and all the translation work that they did has really been incredible, really been incredible. Yeah. And it's fascinating for us to see like, oh, how did they, how did the Chinese choose to translate some of these concepts or words that are helpful for us to understand? Some concepts of karma. How was it understood back then? Maybe we can get a hint to

see how the Chinese translated it. Maybe they translated it after having spoken to some people or understood it. It's maybe one hint.

Okay, so now we're going to go to part of what's left of this life's abode. This ends the 13th Kanto. Kanto is a chapter. So then it's fascinating that now the 14th chapter starts then after defeating Māra's army by resolve and tranquility that expert in trance went into a trance this is the word I'm like what trance seeking to know the highest truth you know what I wish I had my notes in front of me yes I am remembering now the word trance here is actually jhāna so it's It's a meditative attainment. Earlier, I didn't read it out loud, but earlier we see the word trance and it's just the word samādhi. So this collectedness, this concentration or something. And I think a practitioner wouldn't use this word trance.

After achieving full control over all the techniques of jhāna, he recalled during the first watch this series of his former births. If some of you were here for last week's class, you'll know that this, the Buddha's awakening is described in the *Nidāna Kathā*, as well as in many places in the suttas, as going up to the fourth jhāna, and then having three knowledges. And the first watch of the night, a watch is usually considered like four hours, 10 p.m. We could understand maybe the fourth jhāna. In order to get into the fourth jhāna, you would have to know how to be in jhānas 1, 2, and 3. He recalled during the first watch this series of his former births. Over there, I had this name. Departing thence, I came here. In this way, he recalled thousands of births, as if he were living through them again.

After recalling births and deaths in all the various rebirth states, that man, full of compassion, then felt compassion towards all beings. This word compassion is karuṇā. So this is interesting, right? That we see here that the Buddha was practicing mettā before, and now with awakening, there's this emphasis on compassion. As that resolute man recalled thus the past he became convinced that saṃsāra had no substance like the core of banana trees I don't know if you know banana trees it's just like one leaf and then like another leaf and then another leaf and another leaf they don't have a trunk they just it's just a bunch of giant leaves and if you take all the leaves you there's not like maybe so technically it isn't a tree because it doesn't have a trunk but it's this way about seeing all his past lives made him say like oh there's uh isn't a self that has a substance that's uh traveling through instead as you look at one before the other you realize oh there's nothing solid there. This is a key insight he's having with the first knowledge during the first watch of the night.

And when the second watch appeared, the one whose valor was unmatched, the best of all who possess sight, obtained the highest divine sight. This is the, sometimes I'm translating it the divine eye. We saw that language in the *Nidāna Kathā*. We also see that language in the Pāli Canon. And then with that sight, spotless and divine, he saw the entire world as if in a stainless looking glass. As he witnessed the births and deaths of being doing base and lofty deeds, these compassion waxed ever great. These beings who perform evil deeds end up in miserable states. But these others who perform virtuous deeds rise up to the triple heaven. So this is the second watch of the night. The second

knowledge is seeing how

Diana Clark

all beings and have consequences to their actions, and they kind of, and, and seeing that, let's see here. I'm sorry, my mind is just, I'm a little distracted here. That to see how everybody is just going around and around, just life after life. And even though you might do some terrible deeds, you end up having a terrible next life. And you might do virtuous deeds, you rise up in the heaven, but then eventually that runs out and you fall from the heaven and you go down to a human realm or to a hell realm. So there's no such thing as eternity. There's no such thing as going to heaven for eternity. There's no such thing as going to hell for eternity or being a human for eternity. So it's just seeing that, oh, not only, first watch was just seeing for him personally having gone through that. And then seeing like, oh, I have to go through this. Like there's nothing except just going around and around and around. There's like, that's all that life is.

And then here's a lot of language describing the hells. It's very interesting. This is like a hell. Some are cooked, heads hanging down like dough in iron cauldrons. Some are cruelly burnt up in blazing piles of coal. Some are devoured by fierce and horrid dogs with teeth made of iron. Some are devoured by insolent iron beaks as if by iron crows. I mean, there's a lot of stuff here about the hells, which makes sense. If you want to do poetry in a way that's telling a story and is very dramatic, you're going to bring in the big dramatic things. And you don't hear Dharma teachers talk about it, but the Pāli Canon also includes some really horrific scenes of hells. We don't talk about it because it's not really consistent with our modern orientation towards dharma practice. And maybe I would even say modern understanding of what's the value of knowing about all these hells.

I'll just say for myself, I feel like, okay, there's all these descriptions of hells. There's a number of hells. But there's also lots of heavens. There are no descriptions of the heavens there's just labels on them and i feel like okay there's a reason why there's the descriptions of hells and it's more just to scare people you know scare people into behaving in a certain way if it was more a way to be described what's actually helpful i think it would be helpful to talk about how great the heavens are and that's completely missing in the Pāli Canon and everywhere so i think this just makes for a good story and might scare people. So that's my own opinion, how I'm interpreting all this stuff about all the hells.

And then lots of stuff here about the hells and all the beads. I'll let you guys watch to it. And then I write, the remaining original text has been lost. However, Chinese and Tibetan translations. And some of the Tibetan translations are translating the Chinese, and some of them are translating the Sanskrit. However, and I added this, here's a note from our translator. Note, in the Sanskrit text of the *Buddha Carita*, the last chapters from the second half of the Kanto 15 are missing. They are preserved in the Chinese and Tibetan translations. I give below a summary based on the English translations of somebody else.

So here's a summary from the Chinese translation. During the second watch of the night, Siddhartha

sees the births and deaths of creatures. He sees before his eyes their births in hell and gives vivid descriptions of the torments endured by people fallen into hell. He sees also their birth in heaven, as also their fall from heaven after the exhaustion of their merits. He describes the sorrow these creatures feel as they are forced to abandon the pleasures of heaven. Having examined all of life, Siddhartha finds nothing that is of substance. Everything is as insubstantial and without a core as the heart of a banana tree. We saw that.

During the third watch of the night, he meditates on the true nature of the world. This leads gradually to the discovery of the causal chain known as dependent origination. He sees that finally it is ignorance that is the driving force behind this causal chain, and that the absence of ignorance leads to the cessation of the causes that gives rise to suffering. In this meditative trance, he also grasps that there is no permanent center, no self, anywhere in the world. The fourth watch of the night, as dawn was breaking, Siddhartha becomes awakened. He becomes a Buddha. And there follows a description of the marvelous happenings that accompanied this event. And then I just crossed out the end of this sentence, so I don't have to. The next few paragraphs are about this marvelous happening.

Okay, so first knowledge, recollection of past lives. Second knowledge, recollection of how beings move through saṃsāra according to their actions. And the third knowledge is dependent arising, which is different than what the Pāli Canon says. So that's all we have I'm going to say here for this little bit of the *Buddha Carita*. The text is up there. You can read all of it. I just did some of the highlighted parts. But are there any comments? In a moment, I want to talk about how these three versions, I want to look at them together. But does anybody want to say a comment about this? does that feel like the usual sutta stuff does that feel ridiculous does it feel like oh there's something kind of fun and beautiful here or does it feel uh ...

Questioner

i thought uh the person in the sky talking to mara was really uh interesting and i was envisioning it as mara's own mara kind of like you know even mara has a mara kind of telling him what to do you know kind of hindering him from performing what he sees as his duties and or whatever. So it was just an obstacle for him to actually going against the Buddha. So that's funny.

Diana Clark

Oh, I love this, Chris. I ended on to this. Māra's own Māra. I love it. Thank you. Thank you. Anybody else have something they'd like to say?

Questioner

I really love the descriptions. I thought it was wonderful. and much more like literature than the suttas. She's a really good storyteller. Yeah. Thank you,

Diana Clark

Vimal. Well, you know, it's poetry and I don't know how it sounds in Sanskrit but it's much more evocative we would say than some of the suttas. Okay, so maybe we'll talk a little bit about what are

some of the points here with these three different versions. I'll share a screen again for a moment. Okay. So something to consider when we're thinking about this. Which version satisfies the mind? which version touches the heart which version inspires practice that we could say these are three different functions and maybe one version does all of them maybe none of them do any of this but it's uh um i think it's worthwhile to consider like what are the purpose of these texts any text and then just recognizing that there are different versions like there isn't one truth so like here's how it is really is just the mere existence of different versions how does learning that but with this course how does that um affect the the role of text for you the authority what authority do we give them like oh okay it's in this sutta that must be the best but then you know well there's other versions and for many of us i know the dharma stories that i heard when i was a dharma student primarily was not what was in the suttas it was something you know that was 800 years later in the commentaries and this for this question this even this version of the buddha you know taking his right hand touching the earth to be his witness right we hear that actually in the story, it's not the witness, he's not witness that he deserves to become awakened. It's a witness that he was generous. Right? So this is different than what Dharma teachers say. So then Dharma teachers are saying one thing, there's a text that's saying something and then the suttas are saying something else. And then like, okay, well, how does this, what impact does that have on you, if any?

And seeing these different versions, maybe the role of Dharma teachers. So, right, if you, many of the students, right, you're just at the mercy of whatever stories the Dharma teachers bring to you, right? And having read most of the suttas, there's a lot of weird stuff in there that, you know, you'll never hear in a Dharma talk because it's a little head scratcher, like, what? Wow. Yeah, okay, I'm not going to say that in a Dharma talk. So it's interesting right or maybe the role of your meditative experiences too like what if uh your own experience how does that relate to what do you hear a dharma teacher say or what you hear in the text and what do you do when they're these three things don't align you have an experience you go tell a teacher and the teacher says something you're like no it doesn't yeah maybe But then the books, the texts, the suttas say a third thing. Which one do you use to guide you, if any? Is it okay that there's the texts, your experience, and the teacher are saying three different things?

So I think for, I'll just say for me, I was a practitioner before I started. I did some Buddhist studies. And so I had my own experiences of course as a practitioner and it really helped me to understand the texts having been a practitioner myself but I will also say the text helped me understand some of my experiences as well and I will also say sometimes I would be reading some of the texts that had nothing to do with my experience, and they were just texts that I found interesting, but I felt different after reading them and really studying them. They touched me in a way that I couldn't explain. I couldn't say why exactly. I just felt something special. I couldn't even tell you what special was. It was just like it was different than reading the usual stuff. And that's why I kept on doing it and continue to do it today. Not only to support my role as a Dharma teacher, but it touches my heart in some kind of way.

So I just want to maybe this, these questions here and these queries, Maybe it's the real reason that I offered this course. I love this story, The Victory of Ramara. But there's a way in which just to lecture about like, oh, there's different versions of it. And what authority do texts have for you? It's different than to have the experience of actually seeing three different texts, three different versions. And Minch, yes.

Questioner

I was reluctant to raise my hand one because this is confusing and the other is it's very interesting to me and I've heard other traditions, stories about the Buddha's awakening and have been drawn to some of them, very confused by some of them. And so I took this course or class, these classes, so that I could open my mind a little bit and determine from within myself and these questions that you raised as I work with them, And I'm hoping that they will help me to come to have a degree of confidence in myself because I feel like I hear this account, I hear that account. And then I hear in Vipassanā Theravāda that a lot of things aren't even considered. And I'm relatively new. So I'm glad that I'm here. I'm glad that I can express some of the things that are going around in my mind, in my experience of this.

Diana Clark

Nice, nice. And Mitch, do you feel like you've gained some confidence maybe? And like, oh, there isn't one true, absolute true version. And your experience actually is important and is an integral part.

Questioner

That was one of the most important statements that you made that, that really resonated with me. Uh, and it, I, I have a tendency to want the story, the right one. And so, you know, growing, um, allowing that to be and expanding my mind around that, uh, and opening. Um, so, uh, it is helpful.

Diana Clark

Um, yeah. Thank you. Thank you, Mitch. You're welcome. Part of, while I'm also, uh, something that I'll just say explicitly also that I'm trying to offer here is that I'm, um, not a fan of dogmatism and fundamentalism. So I don't want there to be people to just, you know, jump on like, no, this is true. And everybody else is wrong. And, you know, I don't want that. I want all of us to bring all of ourselves, our thinking mind, our hearts, our practice to this experience. And as long as we do that, then we'll care for each other, including people who have different beliefs or different stories for their tradition or something like this. So, Midge, what you're pointing to supports that. Thank you. Thank you.

Questioner

yes I'm just struck by the social relevance of this version right now because we're being called on to watch ourselves for polarization I'm good those people over there are bad right us them and so portray Māra as kind of a sympathetic figure you know walks away broken hearted um i don't know i don't know what i'm saying but i just have some kind of feeling but i before i've already always thought of him as completely bad and any story that ends with Māra's defeat is a good story so um i don't know

I still think he's bad, but maybe not as bad as before.

Diana Clark

Yeah, right. One of his epithets was the evil one, you know, Māra, the evil one, right? So maybe he's not evil so much as he just wants people to stay where he can control them, in a realm where they can control them.

Questioner

Right, because he'll be sad if his kingdom is empty. Yeah, yeah.

Diana Clark

And he has kids who are like, hey, dad, what's going on? What's wrong? You know, but he's being there, right? Thank you. Jessica.

Questioner

Hi there. Thank you. So a curiosity that had come to mind as you were asking some of these questions is, did these different variations lead to certain development of certain traditions? Especially with this one that we just went over tonight, I felt like there was, like Buddha wasn't responsible for his own enlightenment. It was this outside entity that came and said, Māra, go away. And I have come across certain traditions where there is a deity that is still saving you. The name is Buddha. Buddha is there to save you. You pray to Buddha and you give offerings and there are rituals and things like that. And so that's a connection that I had made. And then like the other two, I see similarities with other traditions. And so I just thought that was really fascinating how you could maybe track between these stories and the different traditions that exist.

Diana Clark

That's very interesting. Thank you for asking that, Jessica. So it is, I believe, that this Aśvaghōṣa and this *Buddha Carita*, Aśvaghōṣa is the person, *Buddha Carita* is the text, is really early Mahāyāna, which is like, you know, Mahāyāna is like more Zen and Tibetan teachings. They have a lot of distinct differences than what we're doing the Theravāda so it feels like it's different and part of what's different is a lot of what I didn't talk about tonight is there's a lot of devotion there's a lot of uh um yeah hyperbole but also um elevation of the Buddha and like what we would see in the Pāli Canon. So yes, I would say so. Yes, that is forming some other traditions.

But having said that, maybe I'll share this slide that will make something a little bit more clear that I want to say here. Okay. I don't know if this is big enough. Can you guys see this? Well, maybe that's too much. Okay. So the *Padhāna Sutta* is what we did the first class. *Buddha Carita*, this is what we just did. And then *Nidāna Kathā* is last time. I did it in this order because this is the order with time. This is 3rd to 4th century BCE. This is around the time of the Buddha. And then a few, you know, maybe 600 years later, who knows exactly, is the *Buddha Carita*. This one's written in Sanskrit. And the *Nidāna Kathā*, which is, you know, maybe right, I don't know, the 800 900 years after the time of the Buddha.

Here's what's interesting. Theravāda is for the sutta. Theravāda is for this for the *Nidāna Kathā*. So they're the same lineages. So the suttas eight nine hundred years later had commentaries written and what I mean by a commentary is the commentaries go through every single word of the sutta and says this means that and this means this and they provide backstory or definitions or all this kind of stuff so they're definitely in the same tradition and maybe I'll just say today literally today Theravāda Buddhism that comes from Sri Lanka and Burma relies a lot on the commentaries. Theravāda Buddhism that comes from Thailand does not. This is why there's a difference in Ajahn Chah teachings and Mahāsi Sayādaw teachings. They're not the same because even though they're both Theravāda Buddhism, there's whether they are emphasizing more the commentaries or more the suttas. I'll just say that.

So then, not only that, of course, the different flavors of these have to do with who they're attributed to. Ānanda, who's, or slash the Buddha. And then we just read something that was written by a poet, Aśvaghoṣa. And the commentaries are written by Buddhaghosa. You'll notice that both of these people have Ghoṣa at the end of their names. Ghoṣa means something like the voice of. And it's interesting. So this is the voice of the Buddha is what his name was for the commentaries, Buddhaghosa. Aśvaghoṣa. Aśva means horse. So it's not clear that voice of a horse, of a horse, that's kind of a little bit lost, like exactly how this is.

But maybe we just have a few minutes left. I want to just highlight a few things here. In the Sutta, Māra is called the non-releaser, kinsman of the heedless and the evil one. And then in the *Nidāna Kathā*, he's the evil one also. But what we just saw, just as Bess was saying, you know, he's the foe of true Dharma. The one with flower arrows, one who oversees the workings of passions. This is really different than being evil. This is just a being who wants to entice humans to just follow sensual pleasures all the time. This isn't so important whether he's a yajña devaputta. That's not so important.

But what also I think is interesting is that these armies, The things that get brought to ask the Buddha to be, or not ask, but threaten the Buddha to be with his resolve, are in the *Padhāna Sutta*, the earliest version, is unhelpful qualities. There was a sloth and torpor, infatuation with sensual desire, doubt. I don't remember. I don't have a list of 10 in my head right now. Whereas for *Buddha Carita* it's fiends and demons and this long list of I mean it was quite something if you read the text you'll see and that *Nidāna Kathā* it's these storms remember there was like a mud being thrown and then it turns into flowers or you know there's these fiery storms being thrown into the flowers. So it's interesting that not only is Māra different, but his army is different.

And if we take Māra and his army as what gets in the way of awakening, I don't know, there's maybe some interesting things to be discovered here. What does it say about the society at that time? What does it say about what people thought the purpose of practice was or what was important to overcome in order to become awakened? There's a lot that we can, just by noticing these different things, it can be interesting.

And then there's another point, the conversations. What's happening between Māra and the Buddha-to-be? So early in the *Padhāna Sutta*, Māra says, you are thin. Hail, you're on the verge of death. Live, sir, and while living, make merit. Why devote yourself to striving? So he's saying, don't work so hard. Just do good stuff. And then the Buddha replies, I don't have any need for even the slightest merit. Et cetera.

And then in the *Buddha Carita*, which we just saw, rise up, oh warrior, afraid of death. Follow the Dharma that's your own. Abandon the Dharma of release. He says a few other things too. The Buddha doesn't respond at all. And then here we are in the *Nidāna Kathā*. Rise, Siddhartha, from that seat. It is not meant for you. It goes to me. This is fascinating. Now all of a sudden, right, here's a small little thing that feels like it doesn't fit in at all with the whole story. But like, no, Māra wants to, maybe Māra, what did Māra think that seat was for? Was it, does Māra want to be released from saṃsāra as well? I don't know. Honestly, I don't know how to interpret that.

But interestingly, right, the Buddha says to him, you have not practiced the ten perfections, made the great sacrifices, nor fulfilled the three quests. Like no you have to do all these things this seed is not meant for you i alone have the right to it so this is interesting too just to look at the interaction between Māra and the Buddha and way that we might interpret it and then maybe one last thing we're right at time i'll just do one thing here resolve is different the practices are different and the awakenings are different I just want to, the resolve is maybe the only thing that stays the closest the same. But the practices are the faculties or mettā or the pāramī. And then the awakening. We have the three knowledges and compassion for the *Buddha Carita*. Four knowledges for the *Nidāna Kathā* and the *Padhāna Sutta*. There isn't anything like these knowledges, but it's just this idea of wisdom.

So maybe that's more of academic interest or maybe it's of interest just to notice that texts well my view is that texts are written by humans and they're written in context of they're just written in context of all kinds of things and so we might understand something about the context and the humans by seeing what they write. And then, importantly, I would say, each of us to find our own relationship to these texts and what they mean. Yes, Jerry.

Questioner

I think that I'm in the right place. I've been mostly anti-religious, and I never used to read spiritual until I started to move to California and practice. I'm much more comfortable, I'm totally comfortable, much more, being on a path that's moving towards something rather than avoiding something. And the hell and damnation never worked for me. It's like I'm in a burning hell forever. Well, forever doesn't really exist. And we all get used to things as humans. That just didn't frighten me. It seems preposterous.

And rightly or wrongly, I really, from this presentation from the first evening, I do see Māra as much more knowing that he's helping us move towards. And I'm not very, I mean, anybody who would know me in detail would laugh at this. But once you start to break some habits that you thought you could

never break, and they're no longer really tempting. You could try to tempt me with things that were hard to give up, but there is a passing point where they have no more effect on me. And that movement expands and has a very positive effect. and I want to keep going towards that positive effect instead of running away from something.

Diana Clark

Thank you. Thank you. Okay, so we're at the end of our time together. Thank you for joining me on this journey as we talked about victory over Māra a little bit different than I think often what's getting offered at the Sati Center here but I just wanted to have a little offer a little Buddhist studies with some Dharma and this interesting story that shows up in different versions that all of us have probably heard or some version of it.

And I feel kind of inspired. There's a lot more to say about Māra. There's a lot. Buddha's interactions with him, the teachings he gives about him, and all this kind of stuff. This is just one portion of the story.

So maybe I'll do something more. Who knows? But thank you, thank you all and wish you a wonderful rest of your day or time and if you'd like you can unmute and we'll say goodbye together in an unruly way bye bye and thank you