

## This Was Said: A Practice-Focused Encounter with the *Itivuttaka*

**Kodo Conlin**

**June 27, 2006**

---

**Kodo Conlin:**

Thanks so much, Rob. Real pleasure to be here. Wonderful to see all of these faces. As names were popping up in the waiting room, I thought, oh, look. My friends are in the waiting room. Anyway, nice to be with you. A lot of familiar faces and some new folks I haven't met yet. Looking forward to practicing with you today.

Maybe just a show of hands, how many of you are new to Sati Center? Just physical hand. Anybody new to Sati Center? Sankhe? Great. Great. And anyone new to this text, the *Itivuttaka*, that we're going to talk about today? Wouldn't be surprising if almost everyone raised their hand. Yeah. Yeah. We'll talk about that.

Great. So let me share a few slides. I want to show you our schedule for the morning. All these times are Pacific, but just to give you a sense of what we're up to today, happy to welcome you. Then we'll start with an introduction to the text, including why or how it is that so many hands raised when we're like, are we new to the *Itivuttaka*? We'll do a guided meditation that's pretty brief, and then we'll get into the first of the lectures on the text. We'll do two of those this morning.

There will be time for some small groups at 10:15. I want to say straight away, part of the schedule as I planned it is to have breakout rooms kind of throughout. If you are disinclined or don't want to participate in breakout rooms, it's totally fine to decline and just stay here in the main room, so know that's available for you. 10:35 California time, we'll have a break, come back for whole group Q and A. I think because it will probably be challenging for me to track the chat while moving through this material, I would suggest maybe have a sheet of paper or have a text editor open on your computer and just jot down your questions and then bring those to the group Q and A, and we can address those then.

Then at 11:00, we'll do another shorter lecture. More time for small groups, and then wrap up the day with whole group reflection and then a closing meditation. So that's the plan. So knowing that, knowing that so many of us are new to the text, I thought it would be interesting to start with actually getting folks in a breakout room straight away with just one other person, and only for two minutes. They're quite brief, low stakes. And the notion is to share, if you're already familiar with the text, what's

kind of your sense of it? And if you're brand new to it, what do you imagine? Or, like, what drew you to this text in particular? What might it be for you?

So let me get started here. Okay. I think we are all here. Welcome back. So let's start talking about the text a bit, how I came to know about this text. First thing is, for some years, I had a practice. Every summer, I would read one book of the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, the minor anthologies. In the summer of 2020, this happened to be the *Itivuttaka* for the sake of completeness. Was just making my way through.

And this text so captured my attention and interest that I continued to study it through the fall and into the next year, kind of drafting short essays and thinking about the thing. And part of what was so striking about it is, one, how infrequently it names some of the canonical lists while still presenting a really robust and clear articulation of the path. We'll get more into that. To introduce the text itself, the *Khuddaka Nikāya* is the fifth major collection of the Pāli Canon. This *Itivuttaka* sits in there, and it's a volume of 112 short teachings of the Buddha.

And as a short collection, one of the earliest translations, maybe 1906 by Woodward, the Pali Text Society translations, was called *Itivuttaka: As It Was Said*. And I'll say, the *Itivuttaka* might easily be overlooked. As comparison with its more famous neighbor in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, the *Dhammapada*, maybe that can provide a sense of the *Itivuttaka's* relative popularity. Of course, the *Dhammapada* is quite popular, quite well known. Any show of hands? Folks who they've heard of the *Dhammapada*, know of the *Dhammapada*? Yeah. Yeah.

So the *Dhammapada* has literally scores of English translations, compared to, give or take, about eight translations of the *Itivuttaka*. I decided to Google search. What happens if I Google search *Dhammapada*? And it provided 92,700 videos related to the text. That's a lot of material, more than 40 times the video content I was able to find for the *Itivuttaka*. So the text rests in this relative lacuna without the extensive research and teaching that's associated with many other Buddhist texts, especially ones that are canonical.

So I think this might well begin to be addressed in part by some of our time together and some further research and study. I'm starting to see just a few more classes on this text. As I said a few minutes ago, the value of the collection is that it provides a clear articulation of Buddhist practices, of qualities to be developed and others to be abandoned if one's aim is freedom. And it offers this inspiring vision of the experience and perspective of someone who's liberated.

So the term *Itivuttaka* in the sutta literature, it's used exclusively as a reference in a stock list. If you look in the Pāli Canon for the word *Itivuttaka*, it's just part of a stock list that talks about these divisions of the teaching, and we don't actually know the extent to which that word *Itivuttaka* represents the text that we have. That's a little bit of an aside.

So the name itself, *Iti vuttaka*, is related to one of the unique features of the text. *Iti vuttaka* is rendered from the Pāli into our contemporary English by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu as "This Was Said," as in this was

said by the Buddha, the title he gave to his translation. And while the tradition holds it that most of the Pāli Canon was repeated verbatim by Venerable Ānanda, beginning with this very well known phrase, the *Itivuttaka* has something different as introductory phrase. “This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant. So I have heard.”

This is more context. A few of the motivations for teaching this text. One, I think maybe just compared to the *Dhammapada*, as we’ve talked about, *Itivuttaka* is kind of a hidden gem, especially for a canonical text. Two, we might say it’s brief and it’s clear. Stylistically, *Itivuttaka* is quite straightforward most of the time. There’s some pretty cryptic suttas in there, but the teachings themselves are short. The collection’s also short. It could well be read in a sitting or two.

And Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu points out that the text is less shaped by rhetorical concerns and is more, as he puts it, straightforwardly didactic. So it’s brief. It’s clear. Third reason, maybe the earliness. There’s some scholarly debate about this, but Venerable Anālayo as well as Anagārika Mahendra reached the same conclusion that the *Itivuttaka* is among some of the earliest material that we have. They get there from different routes, these two scholars, but they both agree.

Fourth, it’s underrepresented. Fifth, I find it inspiring. Maybe that’s the most important point. It’s inspiring to see this articulation of practice, this articulation of instructions, and the vision of a person who is liberated in human terms. Sixth is the point of equity. The commentarial origin story tells that the *Itivuttaka* was memorized and taught bit by bit by a lay woman to lay women, and that the people who heard this teaching were liberated, or they were at least awakened.

So Khujjuttarā, and we’ll hear more about her soon, she was praised by the Buddha as an exemplar. He called her foremost among female lay disciples in terms of learning. I like this very much, foremost among female lay disciples in terms of learning. And then a seventh motivation, its usefulness. Two of the main themes, just for example, in the text are *kamma* and appropriate attention, a very solid foundation for the practices in terms of right view.

So one more motivation, just a plug from Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu, who offered the translation that I studied the most. He says that *Itivuttakas*, which is the term for the specific suttas in the *Itivuttaka* collection, cover the full range of Buddhist practice. He says, on the basic level, they focus on skillful and unskillful behavior. And on the advanced, they cover some topics found nowhere else in the canon. So motivations.

I thought at the outset, just to frame the conversation, it might be useful to say something more about the usefulness of these ancient texts, and this text in particular. And take the example of a topic like rebirth. There are many, many, many ways of relating to Buddhist texts. One movement in interpretation, of course, is to sort of deemphasize or ignore the many suttas that are, we might say, out of the ordinary for modern minds, far from our ways of thinking normally, like suttas where the Buddha is levitating or monks are walking through walls or the Buddha’s very well known awakening story of seeing his past lives.

So it's possible that included in this movement to ignore or deemphasize certain teachings includes the teachings on rebirth. In the *Itivuttaka*, rebirth is so part of that thought world, you can't really step outside of it, which means, you have to enter into some sort of conscious relationship with it, some clear understanding about, oh, how do I want to relate to this teaching. I can't say it's not there. It's so there. So it's a good opportunity for examining our assumptions.

Along those lines, Gil had this lovely piece introducing the study to *The Middle Length Discourses*. And he's writing this after over 20 years of teaching the *Majjhima Nikāya*. And he said something important that I think applies to the *Itivuttaka*, especially when we come up against teachings that are challenging. To highlight just a few points that he says, he says, "I hope that you will approach the text in multiple creative ways." Studying scripture is not just about acquiring knowledge. Those who consider the text sacred approach it with a willingness to be changed by it.

So, "I hope you find a wide variety of responses to the suttas," he says, "and emphasize at this point, perhaps the times you find yourself doubtful, uncomfortable, or disagreeing with what you read may be more valuable even than what you approve of or are inspired by." So I like this invitation, and I hope it helps us pick up the text in a way that generates some conversation.

Now let's turn to the origin story. Here we meet the laywoman who transmitted this text, Khujjuttarā, according to the commentary, sets the stage for us, and I'm going to read this passage from him in full. So we're going to find ourselves in the court of Queen Sāmāvātī.

Queen Sāmāvātī's life at the royal court fell into a harmonious pattern. Among her servants, there was one named Khujjuttarā. Every day, the queen gave her eight gold coins to buy flowers for the women's quarters of the palace. But Khujjuttarā always bought only four coins' worth of flowers and used the remaining four coins for herself.

One day when she went to buy flowers for her mistress, the florist informed her that this day he had invited the Buddha and his order of monks for a meal, and he urged Khujjuttarā to participate. Following the meal, the Buddha gave a discourse to his hosts, and as he spoke, his words went directly to Khujjuttarā's heart. Listening with total attention, tranquil and uplifted, she took in every word as though it was intended just for her.

And by the time the Buddha concluded his talk, she had attained the path and fruit of stream-entry. Without quite knowing what had happened to her, she had become a totally changed person, one endowed with unwavering faith in the Triple Gem and incapable of violating the basic laws of morality. The whole world, which had always seemed so obvious and real to her, now appeared as a dream.

The first thing she did after this spectacular inner transformation was to buy flowers for all of the eight coins, deeply regretting her former dishonesty. When the queen asked her why there were suddenly so many flowers, Khujjuttarā fell at the queen's feet and confessed her theft. After

Sāmāvātī forgave her magnanimously, Khujjuttarā told her what was closest to her heart, namely that she had heard a discourse by the Buddha which had changed her life.

She could not be specific about the contents of the teaching, but Sāmāvātī could see for herself what a wholesome and healing impact it had made on her servant. She appointed Khujjuttarā her personal attendant and told her to visit the monastery every day to listen to the *Dhamma* and then repeat it to her and the other women of the palace. Khujjuttarā had an outstanding memory, and what she had heard only once she was able to repeat verbatim.

So each day when she returned from the monastery, the hundred women of the palace would place her on a high seat as if she were the Buddha himself. And sitting down below, they would listen devotedly to a collection of the short discourses she'd heard from the Buddha, which became the book of the Pāli Canon now called the *Itivuttaka*, composed of 112 suttas.

Just lovely. I'm inspired by this story. Here we have Khujjuttarā, who is in the court of Queen Sāmāvātī, something of a dishonest person, or at least has this one dishonest action she tends to take. She's given eight coins for flowers, and she returns with four coins' worth of flowers and does something else with the others. Has this coincidental run-in with the Buddha and the monks, is awakened by virtue of the teaching, inspired and changed, goes back to the queen, apologizes, and is so changed that, what a wonder, what a magnanimous thing for the queen to do, to offer Khujjuttarā this task.

Okay. I want you to go back to the Buddha every day and then bring us back the teaching, one after the next after the next. It doesn't say so explicitly, but I've been assuming that she received one sutta a day. We'll see. We'll see.

When we bring ourselves into this context just a little bit with a short meditation. First, relax our way into a steady grounded posture. Maybe first feeling the support of the sitting base. Firmness of the earth underneath. Perhaps with a breath in, letting the spine grow long and tall, as it's comfortable. And relaxing, relaxing into this posture.

And as we relax into the posture, recognizing that we're aware. That we're aware. The attention may settle where it likes, maybe with the breathing, maybe moving freely. For now, to gently know one moment of experience after the next. Continuing to relax into the present. Letting go of any tension in the body.

Noticing if there's any tension in the mind. What else is here? What qualities are present? What qualities? If the mind is receptive, an invitation to reflect just briefly. And as we meditate here silently, we're doing no harm to any being. And as we meditate here, all beings are safe with us.

And finally to prepare the mind, might imagine as we continue meditating, and now the Buddha and the monastics have entered. Had the offered meal, washed their bowls, and are seated and still, about to offer the *Dhamma*. Sitting with the Buddha, who out of wisdom and compassion offers the

*Dhamma*. The *Dhamma* just for you, for the benefit of all. And with a deep breath instead of a bell, sense your way to the end of the meditation.

Thank you very much. Thanks so much for taking the time to prepare ourselves this way. It's so easy these days to just pick up a book. One almost forgets how much care went into giving and receiving the teaching. Let's pick back up here. Okay. Visible again. And we can get into the text proper.

So reading the text, reading the *Itivuttaka*, I'd like to propose that the contents of the text could well be organized into an emic organizing scheme, an internal organizing scheme. In the first of the four chapters, the Group of Ones makes it quite visible that the text emphasizes, I want to say, three things: qualities, actions, and destinations. That is, the actions to take or to renounce, qualities to cultivate or qualities to abandon, and then the destinations or the outcomes that follow on these things. The Group of Twos, I'll say, then takes the scheme and develops it more specifically around practices. And the Group of Threes dives, I'd say, even more deeply into insight. But we'll work through the *nipātas* together, these sections together, so you can see the architecture.

Very first thing that happens in the text, before we read the opening suttas, I want to say, maybe this is a courtesy to someone who's memorizing *Dhamma* and then taking it back to the community. But each of these first six suttas, they're nearly identical. Group of Ones opens this way. Only one word in each sutta changes each time. That is greed, then aversion in sutta two, then delusion, then anger, contempt, conceit, all qualities to be abandoned. So the name of one quality changes, and then one adjective about the person, how they're affected. That's the only change.

And with Khujjuttarā memorizing and reciting these in order, maybe we could say that the form of the prose and the verse was part of what was offered, part of what was transmitted. The form is part of the message. So she experienced this repetition. And to introduce this text, I'd really like us to experience it too. So let yourself sense the emphasis of the teaching as the same structure goes, one quality after the next. The patterning is significant.

This is the first sutta. "Abandon one quality, monks, and I guarantee you non-return. Which one quality? Abandon greed as the one quality, and I guarantee you non-return." And then the verse. "The greed with which beings go to a bad destination, coveting. From rightly knowing that greed, those who see clearly let go. Letting go, they never come to this world again." Simple. Profound.

The second sutta. "Abandon one quality, monks, and I guarantee you non-return. Which one quality? Abandon aversion as the one quality, and I guarantee you non-return. The aversion with which beings go to a bad destination, upset. From rightly knowing that aversion, those who see clearly let go. Letting go, they never come to this world again."

And then a third time. "Abandon one quality, monks, and I guarantee you non-return. Which one quality? Abandon delusion as the one quality, and I guarantee you non-return. The delusion with which beings go to a bad destination, confused. From rightly knowing that delusion, those who see clearly let go. Letting go, they never come to this world again."

And then the fourth and the fifth proceed similarly. The fourth sutta with anger, and beings who are angered are described as enraged. And then the fifth sutta, it's contempt. The quality is contempt, and folks are described as disdainful in the same form. And then six. So six in a row, the quality here being conceit, which ends up playing quite a big role. "Abandon one quality, monks, and I guarantee you non-return. Which one quality? Abandon conceit as the one quality, and I guarantee you non-return. The conceit with which beings go to a bad destination, proud. From rightly knowing that conceit, those who see clearly let go. Letting go, they never come to this world again."

So, again, if these were memorized, let's say one per day, like Khujjuttarā then reported back at the palace, I like this idea that it was a kindness of the Buddha's, that the first six are nearly identical. Really helps the memorization. And already, we're communicating these three threads, qualities, actions, and destinations, right from the outset.

To start at the bottom, the Buddha guarantees. It's a pretty powerful statement. He guarantees a destination or outcome of non-return. Maybe we could hear this as the language of assurance or cultivating confidence, encouragement. And it's repeated 12 times in these six suttas, so, twice in each sutta and six consecutive suttas.

And then how do we arrive at this outcome or destination? It's by abandoning a quality, abandoning a quality. And this is done through actions that ring some bells certainly of mindfulness practice. Rightly knowing, clearly seeing, letting go, abandoning. From that letting go, they never come to this world again.

And just a glance at what follows on from here, number seven, sutta number seven introduces the degree of discernment, another degree of discernment. This rightly knowing deepens into, oh yeah, it moves from rightly known and clearly seen to fully known and fully understood. So progression is visible in the language of the suttas, rightly known and clearly seen to fully known and fully understood. And then suttas eight through 13 repeat the very same qualities we just heard about in one through six, but they're reordered so that conceit is first.

So this is a taste of the Group of Ones. I wanted to continue to develop this theme, the actions that we take or we don't, qualities that are developed and abandoned, and they lead onward to these desirable or undesirable destinations. And to provide a brief selection, I clustered many of these actions or qualities into these six rough groups, and these are just my own clumpings. These categories don't come from the sutta, but it made sense to me to sort roughly into qualities and actions related to observation or discernment, like rightly knowing and clearly seeing, fully understanding; the family of letting go, abandoning, as we've already seen, abandoning greed and aversion and delusion, on and on.

The rough grouping of effort. We see the language of striving appropriately or taking action, doing what wise friends advise, or *kalyāṇa-mitta*, which edges right into the fourth category of beautiful

friendship. I always smile when I think of beautiful friendship. At sutta 17, we see a mention of admirable friendship, and sutta 19, bringing concord.

A fifth rough grouping in this Group of Ones might be acts of merit, spoken of generally or specifically, and then importantly, heedfulness. To jump back up to acts of merit, there's a couple of really well known suttas I wanted to just bring to our attention that may ring some bells. Maybe you've heard these before but didn't know they were from *Itivuttaka*. Acts of merit, sutta number 26. This is actually next to the front door at IRC where I live. "If beings knew, as I know, the results of giving and sharing, they would not eat without having given." That's such a well known passage.

Or sutta number 22. "Don't be afraid of acts of merit. This is a synonym for what is blissful, desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming." I like this very much, that it's meritorious action itself. That's what's blissful and endearing. Lovely. And then there's so much made of *mettā*, goodwill. We'll talk more about this.

Heedfulness, I will say, warrants some special mention, as it could well serve as the one-word summary of the whole approach all the way through the first chapter, maybe even beyond. As in sutta number 23, the quality is heedfulness with regard to skillful qualities. That's attentive to and caring for qualities that are beautiful, are skillful, that are onward-leading in the path, and taking care with and abandoning and letting go of those qualities that harm. So in a way, this word heedfulness could summarize all of this.

As an alternative summary, we find a line in sutta number 16. "A monk who attends appropriately abandons the unskillful and develops what is skillful." So this is deemed an appropriate use of attention. And then one more highlight for heedfulness. In sutta number 23, we see an explicit mention that the benefits that come from being heedful apply in this lifetime and extend to destinations beyond.

Oh, I did not mention already. I'm reading from Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu's translation. It was the one I started diving into when I started studying the text, and I just kept on. But not a critical apparatus in terms of my translation collection there.

So heedfulness, more about heedfulness. "Heedfulness with regard to skillful qualities. This is the one quality that, when developed and pursued, keeps both kinds of benefits secure, benefit in this life and in lives to come." And the verse. "They praise heedfulness, the wise, in doing acts of merit. When heedful, wise, you achieve both kinds of benefit, benefit in this life and benefit in lives to come. By breaking through to your benefit, you're called enlightened, wise."

So as I'm saying, heedfulness holds a special place in this text. It's a condition by which one's skillful qualities, *dhammic* qualities, grow, and a condition by which they're secured. Without it, what's been gained to a point, in theory, can be lost. But with heedfulness, what's been gained ripens and develops. So that's in this line, "keeps both kinds of benefits secure, benefit in this life and in lives to come."

So that's a nice segue into our next bit about destinations. So before we name the three destinations *Itivuttaka* articulates, just a word about what this teaching implies. So the Group of Ones teaches this collection of qualities and actions, and that it brings benefit at multiple scales, now and in the future. That is to say, just as heedfulness was shown to bring benefit in this life and in lives to come, the concluding sutta of the Group of Ones, number 27, points to three destinations.

It says that goodwill brings benefit in the present life. That's pretty easy to see. You do *mettā*, good things happen. Second, *mettā* conditions the re-arising in good destinations and good outcomes. Very traditional to link practice with positive rebirths. And three, this *mettā* practice, it says, wears through the fetters, which ultimately is the condition for liberation from the round of rebirths entirely. So one sutta, all three of these destinations.

My observation is that this text tends to present these three as part of one continuum, present life, heavens or good destinations, and liberation, all as one continuum. It seems like we will see examples of, say, in sutta 22 and 23, benefits in this life or long experiencing desirable, pleasing, endearing, charming results, or explicit mention of the heavens or good destinations, like rejoicing for an eon in heaven. And then liberation.

We find all sorts of synonyms for liberation in the *Itivuttaka*, but just a small handful to make the point for now. You'll find the phrasing something like gone beyond all stress, conquering the bond of conceit, going beyond all bonds, ending all fetters. As a subpoint relative to the heavens and the good destinations, suttas number 20 and 21, it's one of the cleanest contrasts of destinations we find in the Ones. And we'll come back to this theme of contrast again and again.

20 and 21 make the point that it's because of corrupt-mindedness that beings go to a bad destination, and it's because of clear-mindedness that beings go to a good destination. To me, this is another one of the explicit links of qualities, actions, and destinations, the quality of the mind linked directly to the destination or the outcome. Same teaching, opposite results dependent upon the quality of mind here.

So having emphasized present-life benefits and heavenly destinations, to highlight just a few suttas that point toward this third destination of liberation. Not here on the screen, but sutta number 24 is pretty striking in its imagery. It uses this really evocative imagery of piles of bones. For me, it harkens back to maybe the end of some sections of the *Samyutta Nikāya*, where you have these piles of bones, to produce a sense of urgency, *saṃvega*, one of these onward-leading qualities that's made much of in the text. It also has the first explicit mention of the *Four Noble Truths* that I could find in this text.

And then a couple of suttas that are explicit about this liberated destination, or nondestination as it were. This very well known passage from 43, the unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated. I wanted to read this in its full form.

“This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard. There is, monks, an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated. If there were not that unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated,

there would not be the case that escape from the born, become, made, fabricated would be discerned. But precisely because there is an unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated, escape from the born, become, made, fabricated is thus discerned.”

And here’s the verse. “The born, become, produced, made, fabricated, impermanent, fabricated of aging and death, a nest of illnesses, perishing, coming into being through nourishment and the guide that is craving, is unfit for delight. The escape from that is peaceful, permanent, a sphere beyond conjecture, unborn, unproduced, the sorrowless stainless state, the cessation of stressful qualities, stilling of fabrications, bliss.”

So the sutta names the born, the fabricated, etcetera, as something that’s unfit for delight. We’ll come back to this. And it names that the escape is the peaceful, unborn, unproduced, sorrowless, stainless state, the cessation of stressful qualities, again tying the destination to qualities. And then there’s sutta 44, also pointing to liberation, on the point of there being two *nibbāna* properties, one with fuel remaining and one without fuel remaining.

Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu points out that this topic is found nowhere else in the canon. That’s fascinating. That draws my attention. So I take my pen and I circle that for further research. It does definitely show up in the commentaries and then has implications for the later development of the Buddhist tradition.

So far, *Itivuttaka* has placed a pretty heavy emphasis on qualities to abandon and cultivate, actions to take and not take, and the destinations that are available in terms of these three: the benefits in this life, lives to come, or getting off the wheel of *saṃsāra* altogether. And this one really gets my attention. The text often defines the path by what it’s not. The qualities to abandon, of course. The actions to refrain from, sure.

At sutta 92, we see qualities and actions that actually block the possibility of good destinations and liberation. These sort of detrimental qualities, they sound familiar. Of course, they’re opposites to the qualities that are encouraged. But I want to make use of this sutta to highlight this pedagogy of contrast that we find throughout the *Itivuttaka*. It happens over and over. And this sutta 92, it names a few qualities that render one, quote, incapable of liberation.

“Even if a monk, taking hold of my outer cloak, my outer robe, were to follow right behind me, placing his feet in my footsteps, yet if he were to be greedy for sensual pleasures, strong in his passions, malevolent in mind, corrupt in his resolves, his mindfulness muddled, unalert, uncentered, his mind scattered, and his faculties uncontrolled, that he would be far from me and I from him. Why is that? Because he does not see the *Dhamma*. Not seeing the *Dhamma*, he does not see me.”

It’s such a vivid expression of this principle. Even proximity to the teacher, walking right in his footsteps, is not the *Dhamma*, not proximity to the *Dhamma*. Instead, the text associates the *Dhamma* itself with these qualities and actions internally, the qualities in your own heart, externally in the form of the Buddha.

Just a little aside as we take in that first discussion of the Group of Ones. This morning, we touched on the case for the *Itivuttaka* being among the earliest strata of the Pāli Canon, Venerable Anālayo making this point in the *Nibbāna Sermons* and Anagārika Mahendra's argument based on the earliness of the Pāli constructions at work. These folks place the *Itivuttaka* alongside the *Sutta Nipāta*, the *Dhammapada*, and the *Udāna* verses.

What's striking to me, if this is indeed an early text, as I said before, there's some debate about this, that the emphasis on qualities and actions leading to beneficial or unbeneficial destinations, the special place of heedfulness, all of this so far without the use of our standard lists, or at least hardly using them. It's interesting to me to think that this could well be one of the early representations of the Buddhist *Dhamma*, but without already having been shuffled or organized in a way that's so familiar to us.

For the integration of practice for this life with an orientation toward liberation, this benefit in the present life, the future life and lives to come, or finding our way to liberation, these are foundational, at least according to the understanding of this text. So as we go on and as we look at how the next chapter, the Group of Twos, extends this framework, we can keep that in view as a bridge from the Ones to the Twos, sutta number 27.

Let's go to 27. It does awareness release through goodwill, that's *mettā*, loving-kindness, surpass all, surpassing all other grounds for merit sixteenfold? It's where the Group of Ones culminates. It was noteworthy to me that the Group of Ones, the first chapter, concludes with a specific practice, the practice of *mettā*. Putting it this way, "If with uncorrupted mind, you feel goodwill for even one being, you become skillful from that."

And then it names explicit destinations, of course, benefits in this life, like having no hostility toward anyone at all. That's a palpable benefit. The heavens are pointed to, and then liberation is also gestured toward in the way that *mettā* wears through fetters. So the whole continuum of the destinations, just in this one sutta.

And then as the Twos pick up, the language begins to shift. We're going to start seeing this phrase, "Endowed with two things, monks." I'm very familiar with the *Āṅguttara Nikāya*. We see this formula, "Endowed with two things, monks." It becomes common in the Twos. And a key feature that I want to highlight is that the chapter puts greater emphasis on specific practices. You might also notice as we go along that the Group of Twos puts even more emphasis on liberation rather than beneficial rebirths. Same framework, qualities, actions, destinations, different emphasis.

So several of the practices in the Group of Twos, just briefly to illustrate the development from the Group of Ones. I put in bold just some ones that I wanted to emphasize. Guarding the sense doors, sense restraint as we know it. Moderation in food. It's put at sutta 29, "Endowed with these two things, one lives in ease in the present life, untroubled, undistressed, and unfeverish. And at the breakup of the body, after death, a good destination could be expected." Here, we're still emphasizing the good

destination.

Sutta 34, ardency, compunction, which is Thānissaro Bhikkhu's translation for *ottappa*, as in *hiri* and *ottappa*, the two guardians of the world. The sutta says, "A person ardent and compunctious is capable of self-awakening, capable of unbinding, capable of attaining unsurpassed safety from bondage." And here we see the emphasis on liberation.

And then more practices emphasized here: mindfulness, *jhāna*, heedfulness. 37, a sense of urgency. That's *saṃvega* we mentioned earlier, along with investigation. Awareness, tranquility. These are words in the family of *samatha*. 45, again, we see heedfulness. I love this one. "Delighting in heedfulness, calm, seeing danger in heedlessness, one of two fruits can be expected, either gnosis, knowledge, right in the here and now, or if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance, non-return."

And in 47, we see wakefulness emphasized, followed by the trainings in 46. He says, "Monks, live with the trainings in heightened virtue, heightened mind, and heightened discernment." We might know those as higher *sīla*, higher *samādhi*, higher wisdom. "Live with the trainings as your reward, with discernment uppermost, release the essence, and mindfulness the governing principle."

"As you live with the trainings as your reward, with discernment uppermost, release the essence and mindfulness the governing principle, then one of two fruits can be expected." Again, this formula we heard earlier. "Either a gnosis right in the here and now or, if there be any remnant of clinging-sustenance, non-return." So the destination that these practices unfold toward, liberation, is third destination on our list.

Then the Twos, again, it is named directly in a sutta we read before, 43, the unborn, unbecome, unmade, unfabricated. And then 44, again, the two *nibbāna* properties with fuel and without fuel. The point I want to make here is that this book of Twos does not shy away from the possibility of liberation. It emphasizes this destination of liberation.

To sort of pull together all of these different practices in ways that are worth noting, even though it's not in the Group of Twos, I'm going to pull a sutta from the Group of Fours, 111. We have one description of several of the recommended practices in one teaching. And here, it generalizes across all postures, walking, standing, sitting, and lying down, saying that if while walking, any greed in a monk is done away with, any ill will, any sloth and torpor, any restlessness and anxiety is done away with, any uncertainty is abandoned, if his persistence is aroused and not lax, if his mindfulness is established and unmuddled, body is calm and unaroused, if his mind is centered and unified, then a monk walking with such ardency and compunction is called continually and continuously resolute, one with persistence aroused.

I don't know about you. That's pretty inspiring to me. And then we see in sutta 104 how associating with a practitioner like this, someone who has made the trainings central, someone who is described as consummate in virtue, consummate in concentration, consummate in wisdom or discernment, re-

lease and knowledge and vision, but associating with someone like this is a cause for joy. It's a condition for joy.

As that verse says, "This is a condition creating joy for those who know, living the *Dhamma* of the noble ones, composed in mind. They brighten the true *Dhamma*, illuminate, shining brightly. They're makers of light, enlightened abandoners of strife. They have eyes that see. Having heard their message with right gnosis, the wise, directly knowing the end of birth, come to no further becoming." And that's admirable friendship, I will say.

You're noticing the closing lines, "directly knowing the end of birth, come to no further becoming." They're going to hint toward one of the central questions we'll come back to in the next lecture. Another theme, discernment, discernment and its ethical implications. There's a small cluster, and I see this throughout the text, that there are clusters on a theme. But suttas 30 through 33 show pretty strikingly that discernment in this text has important implications, particularly in that these suttas associate the quality of one's conduct with implications for one's future destinations, and it defines that conduct in terms of our level of discernment.

So to say that a different way, the quality of our speech, of our bodily action, or our mental conduct, it's linked to the quality of wisdom. If we're choosing wholesome conduct, wisdom may be at play. Or put the other way, if ignorance is at play, unwholesome conduct is the condition. And then sutta 30 links misconduct with appearing in difficult destinations. 31, appearing in what sound like very pleasant destinations in the heavens. 32 makes explicit the point are evil habits and evil views. That's a strong word. And 33, three types of conduct can be related to as actions we abandon or engage, of course.

And by sutta 31, "the discerning one" is the name for someone who's abandoned misconduct. That's actually the qualifier for someone who's discerning one, the quality of their conduct. And then to parallel it in 33, "Endowed with two things, monks, a person, as if carried off, is thus placed in heaven. Which two? Auspicious habits and auspicious views. Endowed with these two things, a person, as if carried off, is thus placed in heaven."

These two qualities, auspicious habits, auspicious views. Here, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu is translating the word habit and translating habits as a translation for *sīla*, what we usually know as virtue or ethical conduct, and auspicious views, the views there is *diṭṭhi*. Notice how much just those two cover, auspicious view, *diṭṭhi*, and *sīla* in just two words.

To zoom out a little bit pedagogically, again, suttas 30 through 33, they mark this teaching of the pedagogy of contrast. We saw this in one through six and nine through 13 in the Ones, and it's now pretty widely apparent. An argument could well be made that this pedagogy of contrast spans most or all of the *Itivuttaka*. And then there's this crucial qualification on the destinations teaching linked to discernment, which is 41, saying, "Look at the world, including its heavenly beings, deprived of discernment, making an abode in name-and-form. It conceives that this is the truth. The best discernment in the

world is what leads to penetration, for it rightly discerns the total ending of birth and becoming.”

Say this another way, this is the first sutta in this text, so far as I can see, that so clearly emphasizes that even the heavens have drawbacks, that heavenly destinations, they’re beneficial in this text, that’s for sure, but they’re not ultimately reliable. To make an abode in name-and-form, even to do that heavenly and make an abode, it’s surpassed by awakening.

And without this sutta number 41, this whole destinations teaching could well collapse into something that’s too simplistic. But 41 keeps the destinations framework oriented toward the final goal of liberation. So important. So important is discernment.

Just a couple more thoughts in this first bit. This is an issue that comes up in the *Itivuttaka* that is often relevant for some lay practitioners. In the *Itivuttaka*, we see that the Buddha declares that monastic ordination is not enough. It’s not sufficient. It’s not like one-to-one, monastic ordination equals liberation. The Buddha doesn’t see it this way. Rather, he emphasizes the development of qualities, of both monastics and the laity.

You can understand when reading this sutta that eating the almsfood of the country is a way to indicate monastic status. The Buddha says, “Better to eat an iron ball glowing aflame than that, unprincipled and unrestrained, you should eat the almsfood of the country.” That’s a very powerful statement. What we saw earlier is that proximity to the teacher is not the same as proximity to the *Dhamma*. And here we have a related concern in this very vivid image, that ordination isn’t sufficient for liberation, that the monastic robe is not enough.

This image powerfully brings together our fear of consequences. That is, maybe to put that in a different way that’s not so loaded, our sensitivity to cause and effect. Our actions have effects. It brings together *hiri* and *ottappa*, these two guardians of the world, conscience and prudence as Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu names them, and *saṃvega*, urgency, all in one visceral picture.

Sometimes the picture is worth the thousand words. That’s for sure. Reading this passage struck me that the Buddha didn’t limit himself to painting only pretty pictures. Sometimes he used an image that was pretty striking.

So to close this first discussion, I’d like to parse sutta 38. After saying monastic ordination is not enough, we get some encouragement from the Buddha and a glimpse into his mind in clear terms. He describes here his own practice and encourages others to practice similarly. So in this sutta, we see again the framework of qualities, actions, destinations, this time from the perspective of the Buddha’s practice.

Here, the Buddha himself enjoys safety, and he enjoys seclusion. He delights in seclusion. And there are two thoughts that often occur to him. So I’ll read the prose and the verse in full for you here.

“This was said by the Blessed One, said by the Arahant, so I have heard. Monks, two trains of thought often occur to the Tathāgata, worthy and rightly self-awakened, the thought of safety and that of seclu-

sion. The Tathāgata enjoys non-ill will, delights in non-ill will. To him, enjoying non-ill will, delighting in non-ill will, this thought often occurs: By this activity, I harm no one at all, whether weak or firm. The Tathāgata enjoys seclusion, delights in seclusion. To him, enjoying seclusion, delighting in seclusion, this thought often occurs: Whatever is unskillful is abandoned.”

“Thus, monks, you too should live enjoying non-ill will, delighting in non-ill will. To you, enjoying non-ill will, delighting in non-ill will, this thought will often occur: By this activity, we harm no one at all, whether weak or firm. You too should live enjoying seclusion, delighting in seclusion. To you, enjoying seclusion, delighting in seclusion, this thought will often occur: What is unskillful? What is not yet abandoned? What are we abandoning?”

And the verse. “For the Tathāgata awakened, who endured what is hard to endure, two thoughts occur: safety, the first thought mentioned; seclusion, the second declared. The dispeller of darkness, free of effluent, the great seer who has gone beyond, reached attainment, gained mastery, crossed over the poisons, who is released in the ending of craving, that sage bears his last body, has shaken off Māra, I tell you, has gone beyond aging. As one standing on a rocky crag would see the people all around below, so the wise one with the all-around eye, having scaled the tower made of *Dhamma*, having crossed over sorrow, gazes on those overwhelmed with sorrow, conquered by aging and death.”

So here again, the framework we’ve been working with, actions, qualities, destinations. We can see them active in this declaration by the Buddha of his own practice and then what he’s encouraging in others. In the next sutta, in 39, the Tathāgata is described as sympathetic to all beings, might be otherwise translated as compassionate to all beings or caring for all beings.

So this 38, it’s the *Itivuttaka*’s portrait of the Buddha as exemplar of this framework we’ve been working with, in a way that they’re fully realized. And just to close the point, it’s an image of the Buddha, the image from the early canon of a view of what awakening looks like as a person, as an actual person with these qualities. So we’ll need a companion portrait at the close of our next much shorter lecture of the *arahant* in general. And then we’ll come back a bit to the Buddha at the very end.

Thank you for your attention to this first section. That’s the longest of our lectures. Your attention has held up. I appreciate that. So let’s have some time for discussing in small groups, and then we’ll have a bit of a break. And then we’ll come back for some discussion together.

What I want to suggest for the small groups, and again, if you prefer not to be in a breakout group, you can just stay here in this group and reflect on these questions to yourself. One, is there any connection between something you noticed in the meditation this morning with a teaching from the text? Say you established yourself in relaxation, turned to check out the quality of the mind or the body. What did you notice? What was present? What was there? What was the quality? Is there anything that then echoed in the teaching from the text? Any specific lines or any memories you have?

And then the second for your small-group discussion, how is this three-part framework of qualities, actions, and destinations, how’s this landing for you so far? And then if you could, you can discuss

that freely. As a group, if you're able to generate one question or more, if you have them, per group about the text, we can bring them back into the whole-group discussion. So that's one way we can proceed.

If you have other questions, feel free to jot them down for now, and we'll come to as many of them as we can. Anything that I can't answer now, I'll try to pick up as best I can. So we'll spend about 15 minutes in groups before a 10-minute break. What I'm going to suggest is that maybe each person could have about three minutes to discuss their response to the first and the second question, or maybe just one of those. So about three minutes each, and then three more minutes for open discussion. I'll put you in groups of four, so that's a total of 15 minutes.

Remember to compose a question per group. Somebody write this down, please, and we'll discuss when we come back. Breakout groups will close in about 15 minutes at 10:40. Oh, let's see. Let's say 15 minutes, maybe 10:47, and then we'll go straight into a break for 10 minutes. So take care, and we'll see you back here at, let's say, 10:57 Pacific time. Let's get you set up.

I think we might have another minute as folks trickle back in. I once attended a workshop where the facilitator always showed up maybe one minute early and then offered what she called the secret teaching to encourage us all to be on time. Anyway, I'll see if I can think of a secret teaching to offer you right now. Maybe the secret teaching is that that's a possibility.

Great. And thank you for the notes about the font size and sharing the slides. I'm happy to share the slides after today. There's a lot of information on them, so it really does warrant another look. And I try to make my stuff a little larger. We'll see if that works. And if it doesn't, I'm sorry about that. Maybe that's the secret teaching for today. I learned about font sizes.

Okay. So I'm interested. Maybe a way to open the conversation for now. Maybe consider for yourself if there's one. Is there an idea or a sense or a feeling or anything you're carrying from the morning? Then you're welcome to put that in the chat or just something brief. And then I'm interested in what questions came up in your groups or impressions you want to share. Yeah, Karen, please.

**Questioner:**

Well, I have a question. I'm reading John Ireland's translation. Nice. I like Bodhi's for maybe the formality or the familiarity of his language, but they use really different words for sutta 34. For *hiri-ottappa*, Bodhi's, let's say Bodhi said without fear. No, Ireland said without fear, but Bodhi was using the word compunction.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Compunction.

**Questioner:**

I was trying to figure out how those two translations relate to each other.

**Kodo Conlin:**

You said 47, right?

**Questioner:**

34, sorry. The one, oh, 34. *Ātāpī*, sutta ardor.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Ardor. *Ātāpī*. Yeah. Yeah. The translation is urgency.

**Questioner:**

Urgency.

**Kodo Conlin:**

And you said how did Ireland translate *ātāpī*?

**Questioner:**

He says without fear. Fear of wrongdoing. And then Bodhi is calling that compunction.

**Kodo Conlin:**

That sounds like, and I suppose we could say my, maybe I'll say my understanding of the term first, and then you can see from it how the different translators will make a selection. And the notions of *hiri* and *ottappa*, of conscience and prudence, as how Ṭhānissaro does it, you're concerned about the consequences of an action. It's a sort of ethical quality where you're concerned about the consequences of an action, either within yourself or because you're a social animal, because there are consequences to your actions socially.

Those are *hiri* and *ottappa*, conscience and prudence. So your conscience is the inner orientation, and the prudence is the social orientation. And then to take that Pāli notion and then try to cover it in a single word, you have translators picking these different selections. So fear of wrongdoing is definitely one that I hear. Prudence is elegant because it's one word. And, yeah, there are other translations that are even more intense and a little more Victorian, like shame and moral dread, which is a little much, a little much for my ear.

So that's, yeah. You'll see how this whole territory has to be covered in a word, so they end up picking. How does that land for you, Karen?

**Questioner:**

Well, prudence is a really good word, but it is very old-fashioned. I mean, it reminds me, like forbearance, you know, like for patience. Yeah. Don't say prudence.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Yes.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. Maybe we should. But, yeah, it might be a—

**Kodo Conlin:**

Good idea in this culture. Prudence is definitely subject to the same critique. I wonder what another translation choice might be that rings a little more true to our ear.

**Questioner:**

Like moral restraint.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Moral restraint. That's nice. Yeah. That could well do it. And that's nice because it doesn't have the shaming quality of some of that other language.

**Questioner:**

Yeah, prudent sounds like a prude, you know, like moral, moral prude.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Yeah, I always think of my grandmother when I hear the word prudence.

**Questioner:**

Thank you, thank you.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Thanks for the question, Karen. Drew and Ed. Oh, let me ask you to unmute so I can hear you.

**Questioner:**

I have the cursor right there and forgot it. Our group understood the task to come up with a question about the talk so far. And our question was, collectively, we weren't all that fond of the idea of rebirth.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Sure.

**Questioner:**

So a question to be considered is, how do you square, how do you best take advantage of the teachings if you don't feel that the concept of rebirth applies to us in our lives? And one of the things that came up in the conversation is one of us had the idea that the destination is the path. The path is the destination. What else was that? Something else.

**Kodo Conlin:**

And consequences arise, mental states arise moment to moment in the next moment.

**Questioner:**

So that one way to consider rebirth is that you're continually reborn as a result of your past, comma, in every moment as you tread the path.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Nice. Nice. Nice. Nice. It's a great question. I'm glad the rebirth question comes up. It's part of why I wanted to raise it right at the beginning because it's, as you can see, all over this text. It's all over this text.

And then I'm going to touch on something Gil taught also in interpreting the suttas. There's a teaching, I think *Majjhima* 38, which says that the Buddha only taught what is beneficial. And that means that part of the task of understanding the suttas is to figure out how they're beneficial, even if we have to stretch ourselves in some kind of way. And then for us, I think this task of interpretation is part of that work of finding an interpretation that lands for us, that's serviceable.

And this notion of kind of moment to moment taking birth, moment after moment, is one of these very popular interpretations where people are making the suttas into something that's useful for them. And then we get into questions of values about how much can we push and pull the suttas and have them still represent what they are. And that, I think, to me, that's always got to be a live question. Whenever we're making an interpretation, it's to know what, ideally, to know what the suttas say in their own language, on their own terms, and then make conscious choices about how we want to interpret them.

And so I think this opens a door for us to work with some of these really difficult questions like rebirth. But the moment-to-moment interpretation, I mean, it's a very old interpretation. It's been serving the Theravāda tradition and other Buddhist traditions for a long time. And still worth knowing that there are, like, when we're challenged, when we're, say, challenged by a teaching like this, to be with that, to even take that as an object of mindfulness, fold that into our practice. And like, oh, I'm uncomfortable. I'm uncomfortable by this teaching. Or I straight up don't like this teaching, or I totally disagree with it. Then let that be part of what's folded in too.

So as I said at the beginning, lots of rich ways. Thank you very much. Thank you. Thank you.

Maybe there were some other thoughts. Debbie. Here, we'll ask you to—

**Questioner:**

Yeah, got to unmute. So I have to say, Kodo, I came because I so enjoy everything you teach, and when you've subbed for Gil and you've been one of our morning teachers. I was totally lost through a lot of it. I mean, but I got caught on a lot. And then when you were talking about the Ones and the Twos, I

thought, oh, he's talking about the book of Eights. So I finally made that connection. But I read it on my own. So I struggled with it on my own.

However, it became clear through your talk. And the question that Drew and Ed just asked about rebirth, is that what was meant in the beginning when you said, "letting go, they never come to this world again"? Is that what you're talking about? Like, they're reborn into the other realm. Now things really make sense.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. It's part of this broader cosmological picture that's represented in a lot of these suttas, but very strongly in the *Itivuttaka*, that there's a sort of possibility of a progression of liberation where you're liberated from this world, but might take birth in another world and then finish the job, so to speak. So not returning to this world again could mean either of those two things.

**Questioner:**

Yeah. So thank—

**Kodo Conlin:**

You so much. You're welcome, and thanks for hanging in there. This is, as we said about this text, this session is a lot more straightforwardly didactic than most of the things that I do, so it's a lot of detail.

**Questioner:**

Well, and you also spent a lot of time with it. I mean, I only spent, what, an hour and a half with it? It'll be fun to go back over it and learn it.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Great to do. You're welcome. And then Alan.

**Questioner:**

Thank you. So I was reflecting on, well, heedfulness and then how that's safety. And so I was thinking, well, I want to be safe, and I want to be in an environment that's safe, but I also want to exude safety. I want it to be reciprocal because I want, yeah, I want to represent myself as a safe person, not just practicing *mettā*, but safety to other folks. So I wonder if you have a comment on that.

**Kodo Conlin:**

I love this idea. I like this very much. It reminds me of one of the ways that *sīla*, the virtue or ethical conduct, is taught as offering the gift of fearlessness or offering the gift of safety to others, that no one needs to fear us. I think that's part and parcel of the path. It makes, doesn't it make a lot of sense? We take care of greed, hatred, and delusion in our own mind, and we become safe for others. Right. Alan, I'm inspired. I want to be safe. Thank you. Let's be safe. Great.

Other thoughts perhaps? Catherine.

**Questioner:**

Hi. Thank you, Kodo, for this. Yeah, and the book of Eights. Thank you for that, Deb, because I read that a long time ago as early Buddhist teachings. My reaction to this, and I wasn't in a breakout group because I had this deep emotional reaction to these teachings, was like, woah. It was lovely to start with the servant girl and how she translated and spread these teachings.

And so one of your questions for the group was, what in your meditation could you relate to in these teachings? You know, in the first meditation we did. And I just thought, well, something very simple. When the mind is distracted and going toward habits or thoughts, just abandoning that and being here, and then finding that new destination of peace and *samādhī*. So that sort of on a micro scale is what I related to, that these teachings were presenting. Thank you. This is really, this is great and so to the point. I love these because they're just so, like, to the point of things.

**Questioner:**

Thank you.

**Kodo Conlin:**

So clear, so clear, aren't they? Well, thank you so much for sharing that, Catherine. I really appreciate it, and glad to know you're connecting with these. Part of why I'm so inspired to share them is this, they struck me. So I'm glad to know that that experience is coming across.

Something I dropped in one of my last responses, I want to disambiguate, just to make sure we're clear. The book of Eights from the *Itivuttaka*, both of them are in the *Khuddaka Nikāya*, this minor discourses collection. The book of Eights is a subsection in what's called the *Sutta Nipāta*, one of those volumes. And then the *Itivuttaka* is something separate. It would be an interesting project to see, like, how they mesh, how they talk to each other. I haven't done that work, but just to keep clear that there are different volumes in that collection. So they're family.

Let's see. Oh, great. Someone shared the PDF of Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu's translation. And then Al's asking about the numbering. I have not looked up John Ireland's numbering. I'm not sure why that might differ. That's curious for me. I'd have to look into that. Let's see. Anything else at the moment? Linda.

**Questioner:**

There were two people in our group, and I just wanted to say that we had the same question about re-birth. But as the last person was mentioning, your other question about how we're connected with the meditation and the teachings. For me, the emphasis on *mettā*, especially as you were going through that portion and how important that is, I found that really a powerful statement in the meditation when you said, "As we sit here, we're causing no harm to any beings." It was just beautiful.

**Kodo Conlin:**

I'm glad that landed. We are so safe while we're meditating. Beautiful.

I know there were a couple of questions that came up during the presentation. It's a little hard for me to track both at the same time. I think if I understood those questions correctly, though, they should be addressed a little bit more in the next section. Right, maybe time for one more thought or share, question, comment, then we can move along.

**Questioner:**

Okay, thank you. Kodo. I wrote in the chat that I was trying to think of how I view reincarnation and all these lifetimes and that whole way of speaking of things. And what I find meaningful is that in a sense I feel reincarnated pretty much every instant of my life if I am fully aware because I am in this river of change and everything is extremely different from one moment to the next. And the more awareness you get of the fine detail of that, the truer it becomes.

So in a way, maybe for me reincarnation is continual. And then when we leave the body or the container, I love the Thích Nhất Hạnh saying these days, which is, "I am not this body. This body does not contain me. I'm life without limit. I was never born, and I never die." And that resonates with me almost in a scientific way, that our atoms and our quarks and everything goes into this huge empty universe way beyond human understanding. But the trees and I inter-are, we breathe each other, and all of that works for me, for reincarnation, for the word. Whereas the very literal, all these different lifetimes and maybe you get to another one before you get to total enlightenment, doesn't work as well. And I sort of love that fact. I love the mystery. Just wanted to throw all that in there.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Thank you so much. Yeah, beautiful expression of Thích Nhất Hạnh. There is a sutta, I think it is in the *Majjhima*, I have to double check now, where the Buddha is talking about rebirth and the teachings on *kamma*. And he's telling the person who's come to ask him about this question, he's like, don't believe me, but here are your options. It's a pretty safe bet because if you act as if there are going to be consequences for your actions even beyond this lifetime, your conduct's going to be pretty good. Good things are going to come in this life, but maybe lives to come. He calls it a safe bet. I like that.

**Questioner:**

Nice.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Great, thanks, Barbara. Right, Al, I see you're unmuted. Did you have something to add? Okay. Great. Great. Okay. Well, thanks for some conversation, folks. Good to know where you are, and we'll get into this next part of this next shorter lecture.

It's on the topic of three movements and the *Itivuttaka* held together by this one topic of becoming. Has everything to do with what we've been talking about. Becoming is, to clarify that term, as Ṭhānissaro notes in his footnote to *Anguttara* 3.77, the Buddha doesn't define this term, which is always interesting. But Ṭhānissaro says that a survey of its uses suggests that it means, as at the bottom of the slide, a sense of identity in a particular world of experience.

And what he explains is that there's a sense of what you're focused on. Say you really want a cup of coffee, and that coffee is across the room. You have this sense of what you're focused on, this particular desire. And then your mind, in its fantastic ways of constructing experience, orients toward getting that thing that it wants and creates a sense of you that is the coffee-getter or the coffee-drinker or establishes a self in relationship to getting that thing that you want. That's what he calls becoming, or in short, is just taking up an identity, taking up an identity. And so often that's done in relationship to things that we crave and cling. So it's an important topic for the *Itivuttaka*.

So how does this text teach us to relate to becoming, this identity? There are three parts to what I want to talk about. One is some interesting observations I found about the use of the word delight, Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu translated as delight. And then this connects directly with what we're asked to notice about becoming.

So here we go. This is the most detailed of the slides, and I'll speak the highlights. Here, just to notice that in this text, *Itivuttaka* uses the language of delight, and it uses it in two different directions. There are things that we delight in that actually obstruct the path. Makes sense. And there are things that we delight in that are onward-leading.

On the side of obstructing, some of the key examples, delighting in becoming, delighting in taking up an identity, or delighting in creating divisions, or delighting in, these are specific to the trainee's life, delight in activity or chatter or sleep, delighting in companions. The commentary says this means getting over-involved. It's not that we don't care for people. Other delights that obstruct, delights in sensual pleasures. This is the one we're probably most familiar with from *Dhamma* exposure. And then relishing in non-becoming. Those are delights that obstruct.

And then delights that support, things like delighting in the wholesome qualities, delighting in non-ill will, as the Buddha was said to do in that piece earlier. Delighting in concord, delighting in harmony, delighting in *jhāna*, delighting in heedfulness, etcetera, etcetera. And I like this one, 86. *Dhamma* his dwelling, *Dhamma* his delight. I love this.

So one of the key reasons to bring this up, that really struck me when I was reading the text, is that delight itself is not the problem. If we get this notion that Buddhist practice means no delight whatsoever, I need to become a flat zero with no affective quality, then we're maybe missing it. But we can know that we should take care with what we're delighting in. So much. We could well conclude that what we delight in shapes what we become.

So there's some interesting details getting into the Pāli here. They might be more specific than we

need to get. Maybe just as a placeholder, I found that Ṭhānissaro was translating several different words into the one English word delight. Several. When we look at delights that obstruct, it's several different terms for delight. But for delights that are onward-leading, he's always translating one word, which has variations on the word *rata* or *ramati*. So that's maybe a bookmark for myself or for some further research, like what's behind this difference here.

The thread we just noticed, that becoming itself, becoming and non-becoming, like taking up an identity or trying not to take up an identity, trying not to be, full stop, becoming itself, it's a central focus of what I want to call obstructing delight, delight that obstructs. In this thread and some of these suttas, including this from number eight and later in 49, both name delight in becoming as what keeps us bound, what keeps us bound to the round. 49 names its mirror, relish in non-becoming. So delight in becoming, relish in non-becoming. And then, thankfully, there's a third way. There's a way out of either taking up an identity or wishing not to be.

So the bond. So this is sutta number eight. "People are possessed by conceit, bound with conceit, delighted with becoming." Oh, and conceit here, sort of a Buddhist technical term that we encountered earlier in the text. Conceit is, maybe roughly we could just call it selfing, conceiving a self, especially relative to others.

"People are possessed by conceit, bound with conceit, delighted with becoming. Not comprehending conceit, they come to further becoming. But those who, letting go of conceit, are in its destruction released, conquering the bond of conceit, go beyond all bonds." This is a lot. This is a pretty dense passage.

To put it in different terms, we could say that the selfing is an obsession. It's a common obsession. It really obsesses the mind. The mind delights in fashioning up who I am and who I will be and who I've been. And am I better than, less than, or the same as, equal to others? And without knowing this, without seeing it or understanding it, we keep creating the conditions for suffering again and again. Maybe this is an illustration, if we want to pick up that moment-to-moment interpretation. This is creating the round of rebirths and deaths over and over, moment after moment.

But if we see, if we understand and we let go of this sort of conceiving, if we're not mastered by it, then we can be freed. There's room here for a little caveat about healthy sense of self, but that's a little bit of a digression from the text.

So there are these two viewpoints regarding becoming that we see in sutta 49. It picks up the same thread, and this is the shape of the rest of what I want to do. This text says, "Overcome by two viewpoints, monks, some human and divine beings adhere. Other human and divine beings flip right past, while those with vision see." So this is the Buddha using some of his poetic language to make a profound point.

He goes on. "How do some adhere? Human and divine beings enjoy becoming, delight in becoming, are satisfied with becoming. When the *Dhamma* is being taught for the sake of the cessation of becom-

ing, their minds don't take to it, are not calmed by it, don't settle on it, become resolved on it. This is how some adhere."

So to pause here, this is the mind of beings that's adhering to becoming, like fully investing and reinvesting. This is me. This is mine. This is who I am. It's conceiving. That's adhering, adhering to becoming.

And what's slipping right past? "How do some slip right past? Some feel horrified, humiliated, and disgusted with that very becoming. They relish non-becoming, saying, when this self, at the breakup of the body, after death, perishes and is destroyed and does not exist after death, that is peaceful, that is exquisite, that is sufficiency. This is how some slip right past." So the Buddha is naming another view, another perspective that isn't freedom. It's a sort of longing for non-becoming, this non-conceiving in a way that's kind of grasping and clinging and sets freedom up over there in an imagined world where we have not become. So this is slipping right past.

So it won't do to cling to becoming, to adhere. It won't do to slip right past, to go cling to its opposite. What's the third option? He says, "And how do those with vision see? There's the case where a monk sees what's come to be as what's come to be. Seeing what's come to be as what's come to be, he practices for disenchantment with what's come to be, dispassion toward what's come to be, cessation of what's come to be. That is how those with vision see."

Again, a lot there. A lot there. Those with vision see. So, again, there are these two stances toward becoming. There's adhering, which enjoys becoming, delights in becoming, and is satisfied with becoming. There's slipping right past, which relishes non-becoming. And then the third option is to see what's come to be as what's come to be, and to see in such a way that we practice for disenchantment. That is to say, to not be fooled, enchanted by, engrossed with what we know, what's come to be, what we're coming to experience, in a way that passion, clinging passion for it, fades.

So a bit more about this, what seeing means. It struck me as soon as I read number 49, oh, this is the *Samyutta Nikāya* again. We're back at 12.15. This was one of the first suttas that I really spent a lot of time with and committed to memory. I don't remember it all anymore, but it was important enough that I really wanted it internalized, the *Kaccānagotta Sutta*. And it's a canonical echo of exactly this move, and you see the Buddha doing the same thing.

And here's the setup. He tells Kaccāna, "By and large, this world is supported by a polarity, one or the other, that of existence and nonexistence," becoming and non-becoming. "But when one sees the origination of the world as it actually is," that is, to see things as they've come to be, just as it is, just arriving right now, "you see this with right wisdom, the notion nonexistence doesn't occur to one, doesn't occur to you. And when you see what's come to be right here, have this moment of experience pass away before your very eyes, when things change, then the notion of existence doesn't quite fit either. The notion exists doesn't quite occur to you."

To put this in other words, to see how things flow and shift and change, and to be in attunement with

that in your understanding, the mind won't come up with the notion this exists, this doesn't exist. It's a subtle point, but it doesn't make sense to the mind to say this fleeting, changing, shifting thing, this exists.

And then back to the Buddha's words. He says, "Everything exists, that is one extreme. Everything doesn't exist, that is a second extreme. Avoiding these two extremes, the Tathāgata teaches the *Dhamma* via the middle," the secret third option. And what does he teach via the middle? He teaches dependent arising. He teaches conditionality. Dependent on this, this arises, and moves through the classic 12-fold chain.

Why this is similar, what this is all about, the middle, the seeing, the middle, the third option about becoming or existence. It's not either this or its opposite. It's a third way of seeing, seeing things as they've come to be, conditionally arisen. And there's no need for staking our claim on an identity in that condition when everything is changing.

So this alternative to becoming and non-becoming, it's echoed in patterns elsewhere in the canon, if you go looking for them. Seeing what's come to be leading to dispassion, leading to disenchantment, on to dispassion, to cessation. It runs through the progression of liberative dependent arising. It's expressed in a lot of other suttas. So just to say, not a one-off.

And then there's a companion, a companion to this sutta in number 105 in the Group of Fours, where it describes what they call four birthplaces of craving, four places that craving is born, for a monastic. Craving with regard to cloth for robes, craving with regard to almsfood, craving with regard to lodging. I don't know if any of us can relate to having craving arising relative to our clothing, our food, or our lodging. Maybe this is relatable.

Those are three of the four birthplaces of craving. The fourth is becoming or non-becoming, this or that. It's named explicitly again. So they're associated with craving, with *taṇhā*, and this, of course, brings stress into play.

Question becomes, moving from the technical back to the personal, if seeing is the middle way, to not adhere to becoming, to not slip past relishing non-becoming, question for me is what does a person look like who's actually brought this to fruition? When the qualities and the actions are mature, what does it look like to live in a way that's beyond becoming?

And here in *Itivuttaka*, all over this text, we have several examples of the *arahant*, someone who's fully free, described in all kinds of ways. There's a fabulous portrait of the *arahant* in this text. And what qualities does it associate for those that have fulfilled the Buddhist path? Just a sampling. They're described as released, unbound, peaceful, clean or cleansed, composed, masterful, fulfilled, complete. I like this one, of integrity. That makes me think of the safe we were talking about earlier.

They're described as mature, as worthy ones, as attained, and even noble or sage. They're described this way, with these sorts of qualities. And they're freed from several qualities. They're freed com-

pletely from craving in this text, craving, longing. I like this one, perplexity. They're no longer confused about suffering and not suffering and the path. They're freed from hunger in a certain sense, bonds. They're freed from Māra's domain. They're freed from the *āsavas*, the effluents. And they're freed of all becoming.

As in sutta 53 here, "Whoever sees, from that he is there released, a master of direct knowing, at peace. He's a sage gone beyond bonds." And I want to mention here again, I noticed all of the pronouns in the English translation are masculine. I think in part this may have to do with the Buddha is always addressing the monks in this text, but I was very drawn to changing pronouns but didn't. Just to put that in there as a note of what's in my mind.

And then sutta 86, by my reading, that could indicate one who's either tasted awakening for the first time or is training for full release or is one who's completely liberated. This will have some echoes from earlier. "The *Dhamma* is his dwelling, *Dhamma* his delight. A monk pondering *Dhamma*, holding *Dhamma* to mind, doesn't fall away from true *Dhamma*. Whether walking, standing, sitting, or lying down, his mind inwardly restrained, he arrives right at peace."

And what these two show together, 53 and 86, 53 shows that this person sees, and as such, they've gone beyond all bonds. The *arahant's* not adhering to anything, and they're at peace. They're not slipping past either, gripping toward some wished-for something in the future. They're not caught in any view, in fact.

And then in 86, I don't know if you have this sense, when we read 86, I get this very clear sense of a peaceful abiding. The *Dhamma* is the place to dwell. The *Dhamma* is their dwelling. The *Dhamma* is their delight. This is interesting to me as a positive expression of one who's freed. Delight is not gone, but it is worlds away from delighting in becoming and non-becoming.

To emphasize this again, *arahant*, someone freed in this text, is not someone who has emptied themselves into a nothing, but they are totally freed of clinging. And they're delighting. So it's a short thing. Delight, becoming, and seeing.

Where I'd like to move the conversation now is in some way to harvest what we've been through, thought about, talked about, in ways that will serve your practice. I'm wondering if there are teachings from the day that you might take into your, say, next week, your next month. Is there something that struck you that you thought, oh yes, I bring this forward into my practice? I'm very curious. What would that be? What would it be, and how would you know? How would you know it's working? But I'd love to have a conversation like this if you're open for it, to a few minutes.

I'm sure there will be some responses to that one bubbling up. Another thing we might talk about for a few minutes, in addition to what can I bring into my practice, what would that look like, another might be, is there a part of the teaching or the text, maybe aside from rebirth since we've talked about rebirth a bit already, is there a part of the text or the teaching that you're finding difficult to relate to or

something that challenges your assumptions? As we said earlier, I think this is a fruitful place to look when we spend time with the suttas and they kind of push our buttons a little bit. That's worth an extra look. So either of these feel like conversation topics we can spend some time with. Barbara?

**Questioner:**

So on what pushes my buttons, sometimes Buddhism, and I'm a longtime practitioner. I'm not knowledgeable as many of you are in the Pāli language and the canons and the suttas specifically, but I have long meditated, gone to long retreats, and call myself to all my friends who are non-Buddhists a Buddhist practitioner. But, and certainly what pushes some of their buttons.

But, you know, it's somehow hard to take it all in and still view yourself as a person in this world who needs to, and I do like tying what I am about to say into compassion, needs to be aware of the suffering of the world, which is so huge. And of course it can totally take you down, and if you get preoccupied with it, you die along with everyone else if you are not careful, either literally or figuratively. So we don't want to do that, but I also don't want to disappear from it and just focus on my own wisdom, even though I think what I am about to say is wise.

So I like our talk of peace. That has really touched me today. And I am sitting here realizing that what I think I mean by peace is being peaceful internally as best I can, being safe. I loved it when, you know, I think it was Alan in our small group, safe for myself and safe for the people around me and safe for the broader world. And then at the same time being stronger, stronger. I remember I went to Green Gulch at the beginning of the Iraq war a hundred years ago, and Norman Fischer was speaking, and he gave the *Dharma* talk.

And he talked about an example, and there's been a movie made of this too, of monks who kept doing what they were doing. They were helping the nearby village, they were growing vegetables, they were working on their own enlightenment, but they ignored the war around them, and eventually they just got hauled off and killed. That was not an example of being a good practitioner in Norman Fischer's mind, as we started one of what has now turned into so many wars.

So for me, taking Buddhism into the outer world is what I want to do with it as long as I am here in this body, in a way that does not desert it while I am seeking my own. Now I'm repeating myself. Thank you for listening.

**Kodo Conlin:**

I appreciate that. I appreciate that very much, Barbara. I appreciate that share. And I appreciate that you now have 33 witnesses to your aspiration.

**Questioner:**

My God.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Bring the teachings into the world in a way, and whoever listens to the recording. Yeah. I think it's an important question for us, a little bit stepping out of the world of the texts into the world of our lives with this response. But I think in some way each of us is responsible for discerning how we want to live our deepest values in the actual life and world which we have.

And for some people, I mean, it looks very, very different for different people. A microcosm of this is, my Zen teacher is newly the abbot of Berkeley Zen Center. And you can imagine, just how many years? Fifty-year-old *sangha* now? All of these people, all of these different folks from all different walks of life, want to live a different response. They share that in common. They want to live something beautiful in the world. And each of them have different ideas about what's the best way to do that and how far their circle extends.

There are people like Ozan Alan Senauke, the last abbot, who really dedicated himself to service in the world through Buddhist practice and charity and going abroad and doing the work where it really matters, and that was his best expression. And then when it was time for him to come be abbot at Berkeley Zen Center, he abided at the temple and took care of business there, you know. Maybe all that's to say, it's a very worthwhile reflection what we want to do, how we want to do it. And sometimes it's the best thing we can do for the world is be still. And sometimes the best thing we can do for the world is to give someone a meal. But always taking care of the qualities. I think that's a through-line. Whatever we're doing, always taking care of the qualities of heart and mind. Thank you so much for your reflection. Remember, 33 witnesses. I hope that's okay with you.

**Questioner:**

Haven't thought of it that way.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Other notions. Either of these topics or anything that's coming up. Any questions that may have arisen through the day or something you'd like to share or bring into the room to help make it real? You too can have 33 witnesses. Catherine?

**Questioner:**

Heedfulness struck me, and you mentioned that's the whole thing of this teaching. And in my life, it's a big deal. And wondering if you want to talk about that and how it relates to effort and energy. It's a different quality, but similar in practice.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Nice, nice. My mind jumped out of the *Itivuttaka* straight into the *Eightfold Path* in response to this question, and then we could work our way back. But the short answer is that the effort that we make, classically defined, is the effort that knows a skillful quality when it's present and then recognizes the conditions for the furtherance and development of that quality. So it's like we're taking care, we're taking care of the wholesome qualities in us. That's part, that's our effort. That's half.

And then the other half is to recognize when there's some unskillfulness active in the heart and mind and the effort it takes to let that go and decondition it. So they're very closely related. Was there an aspect of that you wanted to play with or think about?

**Questioner:**

So they're very close, you're saying. Heedfulness is recognizing the unskillful qualities basically. Is that kind of what you just said?

**Kodo Conlin:**

Heedfulness covers the whole territory, both unskillful and skillful. Yeah. And it's kind of like we could say it's respect for and care for our skillful qualities, and a different kind of respect and care and carefulness with unskillful qualities. Yeah. Another little bit charged word for heedfulness is vigilance. It's like being vigilant about the mind, about the qualities that are present in it, whether they're skillful or unskillful, and then addressing those appropriately. All of that is called heedfulness.

**Questioner:**

And just having that awareness, having that mindfulness present at all times. And to me, I don't know, delusion is the word that I don't know. That's the third horrible quality. And I think heedfulness just, it's, I think they're both sort of overarching, I guess. Right?

**Kodo Conlin:**

Oh, sure. Sure. If, are you, wait, could you say that another way?

**Questioner:**

I'm sorry. Don't, go ahead, I'm sorry.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Oh, no, not at all. Not at all. Just wanted to make sure I understood you before I started responding. When I checked in with myself, I'm like, I don't think I totally—

**Questioner:**

Just that an overall question. A lot about my practice from the beginning has been a little bit diluted, and there's been some delusion. And I think just, I guess mindfulness is really, constant mindfulness and awareness of the moment and being here at all times is the antidote, and that is heedfulness. I don't know. I'm just—

**Kodo Conlin:**

It's a good connection. It's a good connection. Yeah, the power of that whole family of delusion and ignorance, the sort of qualities that kind of cover over or darken the clarity. What you're describing is a good aspirational way to orient. Something to take care with is, like, it's enough to recognize

delusion as present and to stay present with what's here just as often as you can. It doesn't have to be continuous. As continuous as possible is enough, or as continuous as effort and energy allow. The mind has its freedom to kind of grow into a different way of being.

**Questioner:**

Thank you.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Sure, thanks, Catherine. Sheila.

**Questioner:**

Good morning, Kodo.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Hi.

**Questioner:**

I registered because I'm unfamiliar with your teachings, and I so appreciate and am grateful for your teachings this morning on a portion of the Pāli Canon that I am equally unfamiliar with, the *Itivuttaka*. So thank you. And I appreciate the opportunity to be able to just lift up the portions that are really palpable for me this morning, particularly around heedfulness and sense pleasures and just that mind that vacillates despite right effort and just, you know, the theoretical knowing what to do, effort, heedfulness.

And so I just wanted to lift up that that's the piece that is my aspiration, to just really use this as an opportunity to—and I like the idea of maybe taking some of these shorter verses as daily affirmations or part of my daily practice and adding it to what I do on a daily basis in sharing the merit with myself and others. So I really appreciate today's teaching. Thank you so much.

**Kodo Conlin:**

Sheila, thank you so much. I'm inspired by the aspiration and then the care that it represents. And then this idea of bringing the text in as something you do with your regular practice. The suttas are short enough, you could well at the beginning or ending of a sitting take one of them and read it in a minute or two and see how it strikes you and hold it with you for the day.

In a certain kind of way, I hear that as kind of taking up the mantle, like Khujjuttarā's mantle, like getting close with her practice and making her practice part of our own. Really nice. Yeah. Thank you, Sheila.

Let's see. Yeah, I really appreciate hearing from all of you at the end. It's been a great opportunity for me to spend three hours with a text I love with a bunch of friends in the *Dharma*. Thank you for doing this together.

May our, why don't we say, may our morning together, may our turning of the teachings, sincere reflection on the teachings, may it be very good food for our hearts, and may it nourish us deeply. And then may any goodness, any merit that's come from all this, may it not be ours alone. May it be shared with all beings everywhere. May all beings be freed. May they be happy, and may they be peaceful. I hope we get a chance to practice together again.

If you want to follow along with me, check out the website that I keep, and I have retreats and things set up. But lovely to spend this morning with you. Please take good care.