

- (1) impermanent, suffering, not-self (anicca, dukkha, anatta, 無常, 苦, 無我/非我)
- (2) impermanent, suffering, empty (suñña, 空), not-self

The more common of the two is formulation (1): one sees the five aggregates as *impermanent, suffering, and not-self*. The two versions contain frequent references to the attainment of liberation through this insight.⁷¹ Commonly the progression from seeing impermanence etc. to attaining liberation is described in terms of the following series of five stages:⁷²

1. seeing (the five aggregates as impermanent etc.) – passati, sammā-passaṃ, sammādiṭṭhi, 觀, 正見⁷³
2. disgust (with the five aggregates) – nibbidā, 厭
3. destruction of delight and desire, fading away or absence of desire – nandirāgakkhaya, virāga, 喜貪盡, 離欲
4. liberation, cessation – vimutti (vimuccati, suvimutta), nirodha, ceto-vimutti, paññā-vimutti, 解脫, 滅盡, 心解脫, 慧解脫
5. knowledge of liberation – vimutti-ñāṇa, 解脫知見

The practising monk sees the five aggregates as **impermanent**; seeing them as impermanent, he sees them as **suffering**; seeing them as suffering, he sees them as **not-self**; seeing them as not-self, he attains, in the words of one discourse, “the calming of all activities, renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, the fading away of desire, cessation, **nirvana** (sabbasaṅkhārasamathe, sabbūpadhipaṭinissagge, taṇhakkhaye, virāge, nirodhe, nibbāne)”.⁷⁴ Other discourses in SN and SA, while using different wording, describe essentially the same series. This teaching on *seeing* the five aggregates as *impermanent, suffering, and not-self*, thus leading to nirvana, is therefore common to the two versions.

71 E.g. SN 22. 15, 45-46, 49, 59, 76-77, 79-80, 158; SN iii, pp. 22, 44-46, 48-50, 67-68, 82-84, 88-89, 94, 187, etc. SA 9-12, 33-34, 82-87, 104, 110, 264, 269; T 2, pp. 2a-2b, 7b-8a, 21b-22b, 31a, 36a, 68b, 70b, etc. CSA i, pp. 13-15, 63-64, 75, 133-139, 184, 206.

72 E.g. SN 22. 51-52, 12; SN iii, pp. 51-52, 21 = SA 1-2; T 2, p. 1a (CSA i, pp. 2-3); SN 22. 9; SN iii, p. 19 = SA 8; T 2, p. 1c (CSA i, pp. 10-11); SN 22. 49; SN iii, p. 50 = SA 30; T 2, p. 6b (CSA i, p. 39); cf. SN 22. 58; SN iii, p. 65 = SA 75; T 2, p. 19b (CSA i, p. 123), etc.

73 According to CSA: i, pp. 2, 6, the word 正觀 (rightly seeing or right insight) in SA 1: T 2, p. 1a (counterpart of SN 22. 12, 51; SN iii, pp. 21, 51) should read 正見 (right view). See also SA 58: T 2, p. 15a (CSA i, p. 177).

74 SN 22. 90 = SA 262; SN iii, pp. 132-135; T 2, pp. 66b-67a (CSA, pp. 54-56).

The second formulation – seeing the five aggregates as impermanent, suffering, **empty**, and not-self – is frequent in SA but rare in SN.⁷⁵ For example, SA 1 has: “As one sees impermanence, so also with suffering, emptiness, and non-selfhood. ...”⁷⁶ Its Pāli counterparts SN 22. 12-14, 51 have only impermanence, suffering, and non-selfhood.⁷⁷

However, the formulation with four terms (impermanent, suffering, **empty**, not-self) is not entirely absent from SN. In SN 22. 122-123, Sāriputta tells Mahā-kotṭhita that the *five aggregates with attachment* should be thoroughly reflected upon by a virtuous (or well-taught) monk thus:⁷⁸

... as *impermanence* (aniccato); as *suffering* (dukkhato), as sickness, as swelling, as arrow, as pain, as illness, as alien, as decay; as *emptiness* (suññato); as *not-self* (anattato).

In the corresponding SA 259 Śāriputra states that the five aggregates with attachment should be thoroughly reflected upon thus:⁷⁹

... as sickness, as swelling, as arrow, as pain; as *impermanence* (無常); as *suffering* (苦); as *emptiness* (空); as *not-self* (非我).

Here the four terms – impermanence, suffering, emptiness, not-self – are accompanied by extra words which graphically express the concreteness of suffering. The extra words are seven in SN (sickness, swelling, arrow, pain, illness, alien, decay), and four in SA (sickness, swelling, arrow, pain); and they are placed differently in the two versions.

The set of eight terms used in SA 259 (sickness, swelling, arrow, pain, *impermanence*, *suffering*, *emptiness*, *not-self*) is also found in other discourses of the SA, but nowhere else in the SN. For example, SA 265 uses the same eight terms in describing the five aggregates;⁸⁰ but its counterpart, SN 22. 95, says instead that the five aggregates are seen as *void* (without reality, rittaka), *insubstantial* (tucchaka), and *lacking essence* (asāra).⁸¹

75 E.g. SA 1, 8, 104, 109, 110, 259, 265: T 2, pp. 1a, 1c, 31a-c, 35a-c, 65b-c, 68c-69a (CSA i, pp. 2, 10, 48, 65, 184, 200, 203-205).

76 T 2, p. 1 (CSA i, p. 3).

77 SN iii, pp. 21, 51.

78 SN iii, p. 167.

79 T 2, p. 65b; see also EA 34. 1: T 2, p. 689a (CSA i, p. 48).

80 T 2, pp. 68c-69a (CSA i, pp. 65-66).

81 SN iii, pp. 140-143.