

Again, SA 104 uses the same eight terms, together with a ninth, “not belonging to self (非我所)”,⁸² but its counterpart SN 22. 85 describes the five aggregates more briefly as impermanent, suffering, not-self, compounded (saṅkhata), and deadly (vadhaka).⁸³

Finally, SA 110 also uses the eight terms, but it has no SN counterpart.⁸⁴

Thus, the second formulation (impermanent, suffering, empty, not-self) is not emphasised in SN. This indicates that the first formulation (impermanent, suffering, and not-self), being common to the two versions, is the more basic.

The two formulations of the insight that leads on to liberation draw attention to the following noteworthy details:

- (1) the reason why “impermanence is suffering”
- (2) the various terms for the notion of “not-self”

Regarding (1), the reason why “impermanence is suffering”, SN 22. 43 reports the Buddha as saying:⁸⁵

Herein, bhiksus, the untaught ordinary person ... views (samanupassati) material form as self (rūpam attato), self as possessed of material form (rūpavantam attānam), material form as being in self (attani rūpam), self as being in material form (rūpasmiṃ attānam). Such a person’s material form (body) changes and becomes different. Owing to the changing and becoming different (vipariṇāmaññathābhāvā) of material form, grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and despair come to exist in him. He views feeling ... perception ... activities ... consciousness as self ...

This text indicates that the origin of suffering lies in self-view, in self-attachment to the five aggregates, which are impermanent phenomena. When the five aggregates change or become different, this produces grief,

82 T 2, p. 31c (CSA i, p. 186).

83 SN iii, pp. 114-115.

84 T 2, p. 35b-c (CSA i, pp. 203-205). The Pāli counterpart of SA 110 is MN 35 (MN i, pp. 227-237); it mentions only “impermanence” and “not-self”. SA 110 has a Chinese counterpart, EA 37. 10 (T 2, p. 715b-c); it states that the five aggregates are “impermanent; impermanence is suffering; suffering is not-self; not-self is emptiness; emptiness is neither this nor self is this”, i.e. it treats emptiness and not-self as the same notion.

85 SN iii, pp. 42-43.

lamentation, pain, depression and despair in the one who holds the self-view. This is why impermanence is suffering for an unenlightened being.

The SA counterpart of the quoted section, SA 36, agrees in stating that suffering is caused by attachment to the impermanent five aggregates, but it does not mention how or why impermanence implies suffering.⁸⁶ However, clear explanations of why impermanence is suffering are found elsewhere in both versions. The following are examples.

In SN 22. 84 and its counterpart SA 271⁸⁷ the Buddha teaches that if one is not rid (avigata) of desire (rāga), excitement/impulse (chanda), love (pema), thirst (pipāsa), fever (parilāha), and craving (taṇhā)⁸⁸ for the five aggregates, then when those aggregates change and become different, there comes to exist the affliction of grief, lamentation, pain, depression, and despair.⁸⁹ Hence, impermanence is suffering.

Similarly, SN 22. 7 describes the effect of holding self-view with regard to the five aggregates:⁹⁰

... The material form of such a person changes and becomes different. His material form having become changed and different, his consciousness (viññaṇa) is occupied (anuparivatti) with the changing material form. From this being occupied with the changing material form, worried thoughts arise (paritassanā dhammasamuppādā), and remain gripping his mind (cittam pariyādāya tiṭṭhanti). From this gripping of his mind, he becomes fearful (uttāsavā), perplexed (vighātavā), full of longing (apekhavā), attached (upādāya), and worried (paritassati). (And similarly for the other aggregates.)

The corresponding SA 43 has similar content.⁹¹

Other texts with similar content are also found in both versions.⁹² Thus, with regard to the explanation of why impermanence is suffering, the two versions are in agreement.

86 T 2, p. 8a-b (CSA i, p. 141).

87 SN iii, pp. 107-108; T 2, p. 71a-b (CSA i, p. 80).

88 SA 271 has: desire, excitement/impulse, love, longing, and craving (T 2, p. 71a-b; CSA i, p. 80).

89 SA 271 has: depression, lamentation, despair and pain (T 2, p. 71b; CSA i, p. 80).

90 SN iii, p. 16.

91 T 2, pp. 10c-11a (CSA i, pp. 154-155).

92 SN 22. 8 = SA 44: SN iii, p. 18; T 2, p. 11a (CSA i, p. 155). SN 22. 1-2 = SA 107-108:

SN iii, pp. 3-4, 7; T 2, pp. 33b-34a (CSA i, pp. 194, 196). Cf. EA 13. 4: T 2, p. 573a-b (counterpart of SN 22. 1 and SA 107).