

- this is not mine, I am not this, this is not my self (netam mama, neso ham asmi, na meso attā).⁷² I (ahaṃ), mine (mama), and I am (asmi) do not exist.⁷³
- this is not self, this is not other than self, neither is self in this nor this in self (非是我，非異我，不相在).⁷⁴

Insight into the four characteristics of impermanence, suffering, emptiness, and not-self finds frequent mention only in SA.⁷⁵ However, “empty” or “emptiness” does occur in SN, though it is particularly characteristic of SA. The following five occurrences are attested in Saḷāyatana Saṃyutta:

(1) SN 35. 197:⁷⁶

Now, bhiksus, I have made this simile to illustrate my meaning, and the interpretation of it is this. ... The empty village (suñño gāmo), bhiksus, is a term (adhivacana) for the six internal sense spheres. If a wise, experienced, intelligent person investigates it with the eye, he finds it just *void* (rittaka), just *vain* (tucchaka), just *empty* (suññaaka). ... with the tongue, ... with the mind, ...

Thus, the six internal sense spheres are said to be simply “empty”.

The corresponding SA 1172 states:⁷⁷

I have spoken this simile, and you should understand the meaning. Bhiksus! ... The empty village is a simile for the six internal sense spheres. Good clansman, one observes thus: The eye-sphere is *impermanent-and-decaying* (無常變壞); the one who attaches to eye

72 SN 35. 1-6, 32, 86-87, 89, 121, 149, 179-184: SN iv, pp. 1-3, 25, 54-55, 58-59, 63-64, 106-107, 135, 153-155.

73 SN 35. 205: SN iv, p. 198.

74 SA 198-199, 209, 248, 273-274, 276: T 2, pp. 50c-51a, 52c-53a, 59c, 72c-73a, 74a-c (CSA i, pp. 222-223, 254, 297, 354, 356, 361-363. Cf. SA 226-227: T 2, p. 55a (CSA i, pp. 271-272).

75 E.g. where SA 1175 has: “One observes the five aggregates as ill, as swelling, as arrow, as painful; as *impermanent*, as *suffering*, as *empty*, as *not-self*”, the corresponding SN 35. 204 has only: “One fully knows the arising and the cessation of the five aggregates” (T 2, p. 315b; CSA i, p. 342. SN iv, p. 192). Other SA occurrences at SA 188, 195, 196, 208, 333: T 2, pp. 49b, 50a-b, 52c, 92b (CSA i, pp. 215, 218-219, 253, 411).

76 SN iv, pp. 174-175.

77 T 2, p. 313c (CSA i, p. 334).

is also an *impermanent and vain phenomenon* (無常虛偽之法). The ear, nose, tongue, body and mind-spheres are also thus.

This teaches that the six internal sense spheres are impermanent, decaying and vain phenomena.

Thus, despite different wording, the two versions state in common that the six internal sense spheres are empty of any permanent entity.

(2) SN 35. 85 records the following conversation between Ānanda and the Buddha:⁷⁸

Venerable Sir, it is said “The world is empty! The world is empty!” (suñño loko) But in what regard, venerable Sir, is it said that the world is empty?

Ānanda, because of being *empty of self or of anything belonging to self* (suññam attena vā attaniyena vā), the world is said to be empty. And what, Ānanda, is empty of self or of anything belonging to self?

Ānanda, eye is empty of self or of anything belonging to self. Visible forms are empty of self or of anything belonging to self. Eye consciousness ... Eye contact is empty of self or of anything belonging to self. Ear ... nose ... tongue ... body ... mind ... Whatever feeling (vedayitaṃ) pleasant or unpleasant or neither-pleasant-nor-unpleasant arises conditioned by mental contact is also empty of self or of anything belonging to self.

The corresponding SA 232 has rather different wording. Here the questioner is Samiddhi (三彌離提, P. Samiddhi), and the Buddha’s answer to the question is:⁷⁹

Eye is empty, empty of eternal and unchanging nature (常恆不變易法空),⁸⁰ empty of anything belonging to self. Why is this? This is

78 SN iv, p. 54.

79 T 2, p. 56b (CSA i, pp. 276-277). The Sanskrit of this discourse has been reconstructed from the Chinese by Étienne LAMOTTE, *Le Traité de la Grande Vertu de Sagesse de Nāgārjuna (Mahā-prajñāpāramitā-śāstra) avec une étude sur la Vacuité*, tome IV (Louvain, 1976), pp. 2112-2113. See also the same author’s “Trois Sūtra du Saṃyukta sur la Vacuité”, BSOAS, 36 (1973), pp. 313-323.

80 LAMOTTE: śāsvatenāvīpariṇāmadharmaṇa śūnyam.