

Whatsoever recluses or brahmins, in regard to the impermanent material form, the changing unstable material form, declare “superior am I” (我勝), “equal am I” (我等), or “inferior am I” (我劣) – why have they such a perception, not seeing the truth? (and similarly for feeling, perception, activities, and consciousness)

Śāriputra replies that well-taught disciples do not have this view, but instead see, with regard to material form etc., “This is not self, this is not other than self, neither is self in this nor this is self”.

Thus, both versions express not-self in terms of not having the view “I am superior”, “I am equal”, or “I am inferior”.

To conclude, in regard to the notion of seeing the five aggregates *as they really are*, this section has identified two formulations of the insight, namely: (1) “impermanent, suffering, not-self”, and (2) “impermanent, suffering, empty, not-self”. Formulation (1) is common to the two versions, whereas formulation (2) is emphasised in SA. This suggests that the first formulation of the insight is the more basic teaching, since it is widely shared by the two versions. Regarding the connection between impermanence and suffering, and the various expressions for the teaching of not-self, there is no significant difference between the two versions, despite some unshared wording.

## 6. The middle way

As mentioned above, seeing the five aggregates as *impermanent, suffering, and not-self* is identified, in both versions, as *right view* (sammādiṭṭhi 正見). The two versions also identify *right view* with *the middle way*. That teaching will be investigated in this section.

In SN 22. 90 Ānanda tells Channa (Skt. Chanda) that he heard the Buddha teach Kaccāna<sup>107</sup> as follows:<sup>108</sup>

Indeed, Kaccāna, this world usually depends on two [extremes]: *existence* (or eternalism: atthitā) and *non-existence* (or nihilism: natthitā).

Now, Kaccāna, one who with *right wisdom* (sammappaññāya) sees the arising of the world as it really is, does not hold to the non-

107 = Kaccāyana in SN 12. 15: SN ii, p. 17.

108 SN iii, pp. 134-135. See also Chapter 6, pp. 192-195.

existence of the world (loke natthitā). Kaccāna, one who with *right wisdom* sees the cessation of the world as it really is, does not hold to the existence of the world (loke atthitā).

Surely, Kaccāna, this world mostly is attached to methods, bound to biases (upāyupādānābhinivesavinibandho). But one who does not approach attachment to means, mental obstinacy, and tendency towards bias, who does not cling to it, he does not insist on: “*It is my self*” (Attā me ti). Then, [one knows]: when suffering arises, it arises; when suffering ceases, it ceases. One is not in doubt, is not perplexed. Here, one comes to have knowledge/insight (ñāṇam) independently of others. Thus this, Kaccāna, is *right view* (sammādiṭṭhi).

“Everything exists” (sabbam atthīti), Kaccāna, this is one extreme. “Everything does not exist” (sabbam natthīti), this is the other extreme. Kaccāna, not approaching either extreme, the Tathāgata teaches the Dharma by *the middle* (majjhena): Conditioned by ignorance are activities, conditioned by activities is consciousness, and so forth. Thus arises this whole mass of suffering. By the total fading away and cessation of ignorance, activities cease, and so forth. Thus ceases this whole mass of suffering.

The counterpart, SA 262, has very similar content,<sup>109</sup> though instead of *the middle* (majjhena) it has *the middle way* (中道).<sup>110</sup> The two versions state in common that the Buddha taught *right view* (sammādiṭṭhi 正見) in terms of *the middle (way)*.

Both versions of this discourse give background on why Channa asks Ānanda about the teaching.<sup>111</sup> According to the SN version, Channa says he already knows the teaching that “material form and so on are impermanent; material form and so on are not-self; all activities (saṅkhārā) are impermanent; all phenomena (dhammā) are not-self”. The SA version has the same, but adds “*nirvana is cessation* (涅槃寂滅)”. SN states that Channa does not find this knowledge leads him to: “the *calming* (samathe) of all activities, renunciation of all attachment, the destruction of craving, the

109 T 2, pp. 66c-67a (CSA i, pp. 55-56). See also Chapter 6, pp. 192-195.

110 Skt. madhyama-pratipad (P. majjhima-paṭipadā).

111 SN iii, pp. 132-134; T 2, p. 66b-c (CSA i, pp. 54-55).

fading away of desire, cessation, nirvana”; SA has instead “the *emptiness* (空寂) of all activities, ...”.<sup>112</sup> In SN, Channa then says:<sup>113</sup>

“My mind does not spring forward (*cittaṃ na pakkhandati*), does not become calm (*nappasīdati*), does not settle (*na santiṭṭhati*), is not liberated (*na vimuccati*), but fear and attachment arise (*paritassanā upādānam uppajjati*), and my mind returns again [to think] (*paccudāvattati mānasam*): ‘*Who then is the self* (atha ko carahi me attāti)?’ Then, it certainly does not see the dharma (*na kho panetaṃ dhammam passato hoti*).”

According to SA, he simply says:<sup>114</sup>

“Herein, *what is the self* which says that it knows thus and sees thus, that is, which *sees the Dharma* (此中云何有我, 而言如是知, 如是見, 是名見法)?”

These various differences do not amount to significant doctrinal disagreement, though they do show again the SA emphasis on *emptiness*.

Teachings about *right view* and *the middle way* in relation to the non-selfhood of the *five aggregates* are expressed in the two traditions in a variety of ways, as shown in the following four examples:

(1) SN 22. 47 states:<sup>115</sup>

... with the fading away of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, he does not have the view “I am”, “this is I”; “I will exist”,<sup>116</sup> “I will not exist”; “I will have material form” (*rūpī*), “I will not have material form” (*arūpī*); “I will have perception” (*saññī*), “I will not have perception” (*asaññī*); “I will have neither-perception-nor-non-perception” (*nevasaññī nāsaññī*).

112 SN iii, pp. 133-134; T 2, p. 66b-c (CSA i, pp. 54-55)

113 SN iii, pp. 133-134. According to both the readable meaning and Nālandā Devanāgarī edition: vol. 2-3, p. 352, the wording (in SN 22. 90: SN iii, p. 133) “na vimuccati paritassanā // upādānam uppajjati ...” should read as follows: “na vimuccati, paritassanā upādānam uppajjati ...”.

114 T 2, p. 66b-c (CSA i, pp. 54-55).

115 SN iii, p. 47.

116 Following the CD-ROM Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana (*bhaviṣṣan ti*) and Nālandā (vol. 2-3, p. 278) (*bhaviṣṣam ti*) rather than PTS (*bhaviṣṣanti*), which WOODWARD implausibly translates as “things will be” (p. 41).

Of the two corresponding SA discourses, SA 45 reads:<sup>117</sup>

... with the fading away of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, he does not give rise to perception of existence, perception of non-existence, perception of both existence and non-existence; perception of superiority, perception of equality, perception of inferiority; the perception that “I know, I see”.

The other counterpart, SA 63, reads:<sup>118</sup>

... with the fading away of ignorance and the arising of knowledge, he does not [give rise to these views]: existence, non-existence; both existence and non-existence; neither existence nor non-existence; “I am superior”, “I am inferior”, “I am equal”, “I know, I see.”

The expressions “I am superior” and so on are lacking in the SN version, but have been seen earlier in this connection in other SN discourses.<sup>119</sup> The different versions indicate some confusion about whether the reference is to “neither-perception nor non-perception” or to “non-perception of both existence and non-existence”.

(II) Both traditions contain discussion about extreme views on what happens after death to one whose mind has been totally emptied of self-view or influxes (*āsavā*).

In SN 22. 85 Sāriputta tells Yamaka that it is “an evil view” (*pāpakam diṭṭhigataṃ*) to believe that when the body breaks up after death, a bhikṣu who has “destroyed the influxes” (*khīṇa-āsava*) “is broken up, perishes, and does not exist” (*ucchijjati vinassati no hoti*). He points out that since the five aggregates are impermanent etc., and since one cannot regard the Tathāgata as *material form* (*rūpaṃ*), or as in *material form* (*rūpasmiṃ*), or as distinct from *material form* (*aññātra rūpā*); or as without *material form* (*arūpī*) (and similarly for feeling, perception, activities and consciousness); therefore, it is not right to consider that when the body breaks up after death, a bhikṣu who has destroyed the influxes is broken up, perishes, and does not exist.<sup>120</sup> The corresponding SA 104 has almost the same content.<sup>121</sup>

117 T 2, p. 11b (CSA i, p. 157).

118 T 2, p. 16b-c (CSA i, p. 100).

119 E.g. SN 22. 49; SN iii, pp. 48-49 (its counterpart SA 30: T 2, p. 6a-b; CSA i, p. 38).

120 SN iii, pp. 111-112.

121 T 2, p. 31a-b (CSA i, p. 185).

Another discourse, SN 22. 86 along with its counterpart SA 106, goes further, stating that one cannot proclaim in regard to these views: After death the Tathāgata exists; does not exist; both exists and does not exist; neither exists nor does not exist.<sup>122</sup>

SA 105 (no SN counterpart) shows that, regarding the Tathāgata and the five aggregates, there are two extreme views about what happens after death: the annihilationist view (斷見) and the eternalist view (常見);<sup>123</sup> and it states that after death there is no condition (因緣) to declare in those who have fully understood and cut off all conceits.<sup>124</sup>

Similarly, SA 72 states:<sup>125</sup>

The Arhant does not have existence after death in another world; does not have non-existence after death in another world; does not have both existence and non-existence after death in another world; does not have neither existence nor non-existence after death in another world; [of these extreme views] detailed explanations are innumerable, but the enumeration [of extreme views] has all ceased completely [in the Arhant].

This discussion about the two extreme views of existence and non-existence after death is not found in the corresponding SN 22. 106.<sup>126</sup>

(III) SA 272 identifies these three extreme views:<sup>127</sup>

1. life/soul (命) is body (身);
2. life/soul is one thing and body is another;
3. material form is self, they are one and are eternal and unchanging.

The corresponding SN 22. 80 identifies just two:<sup>128</sup>

122 SN iii, pp. 116-119; T 2, pp. 32c-33a (CSA i, pp. 192-193).

123 SN 22. 81 and its counterpart SA 57 also mention these two views: the eternalist view (sassata-ditṭhi 壞有見), and the annihilationist view (uccheda-ditṭhi 斷見). SN 22. 81 and SA 57 state that these two views are connected with self-view and are *the activities* (saṅkhāra 行). SN iii, pp. 98-99; T 2, p. 14b (CSA i, p. 172).

124 T 2, p. 32a-b (CSA i, pp. 189-190).

125 T 2, p. 19a (CSA i, p. 119).

126 SN iii, pp. 159-160. Both versions have the Buddha teaching bhiksus about: 1. dharmas to be known (pariññeyyā dhammā 所知法), 2. knowledge (pariññā 智), and 3. the one who has knowledge (pariññātāvī puggalo 智者).

127 T 2, p. 72b (CSA i, p. 84).

128 SN iii, pp. 93-94.

1. the view of existence (bhava-diṭṭhi), and
2. the view of non-existence (vibhava-diṭṭhi).

Despite the different wording, the two versions can be seen to present similar teachings. The view that “life/soul is body” corresponds to “the view of non-existence”, because it implies that when the body breaks up (after death), life (or soul or self) also breaks up, perishes, and ceases to exist. The view that “life/soul is one thing and body another” corresponds to “the view of existence”, because it implies that when the body breaks up, life (or soul or self) does not break up or perish but continues to exist. The view that “material form is self and they are eternal and unchanging” amounts to another form of “the view of existence”. Thus, the two versions give different accounts of the same extreme views.

(IV) SN 22. 79 says, of one who sees the five aggregates as not-self:<sup>129</sup>

He, bhikusus, is to be called a noble disciple who reduces [the five aggregates], and does not increase them (apacināti no ācināti); who abandons, and does not attach to them (pajahati na upādiyati); who discards, and does not bind to them (viseneti no ussenēti); who is dispassionate, and not impassioned by them (vidhūpeti na sandhūpeti).

Such a well-taught noble disciple develops, with respect to the five aggregates, “disgust” (nibbidā), “fading of desire” (virāga), “liberation” (vimutti), and “knowledge of liberation” (vimutti-ñāṇa). The text then goes on to say:<sup>130</sup>

He, bhikusus, is to be called a bhikṣu who neither reduces nor increases [the five aggregates] ... neither abandons nor attaches to them ... neither discards nor binds them ... is neither dispassionate nor impassioned regarding them.

This negates both of the opposed actions in each case. Such double-negative expressions appear to be saying that in liberation there is neither existence nor non-existence of the five aggregates.

However, the corresponding SA 46 does not confirm this. It has only the first set with slightly different wording: “reduces, and does not increase” (減

129 SN iii, p. 89.

130 SN iii, p. 90.

而不增); “retreats, and does not move ahead” (退而不進); “extinguishes, and does not give rise” (滅而不起); “detaches, and does not attach” (捨而不取)”.<sup>131</sup>

However, another SA discourse, SA 60, which has no SN counterpart, does contain this kind of double negation. It states:<sup>132</sup>

If a bhikṣu does not delight in the five aggregates, his mind is liberated; he abides equanimous and detached (平等捨住), *neither extinguishing nor generating* (不滅不生), with right mindfulness (正念) and right knowledge (正智).

Thus, the two traditions indicate, in different discourses, that liberation is devoid of the two extremes with regard to the five aggregates: existence (arising) and non-existence (ceasing).

To summarise this section, the two traditions agree in speaking of *right view as the middle way*, devoid of the two extremes of existence and non-existence. The reference is to existence or non-existence after death of one who has ended the influxes, existence or non-existence of life (physical and mental), and existence or non-existence of the five aggregates in the state of *liberation* (vimutti).

## 7. Not-self and karmic effect

SN 22. 82 and its counterpart SA 58 record the Buddha’s answer to a question regarding not-self and the effects (or results) of karma. According to the SN version, a certain bhikṣu had this thought:<sup>133</sup>

... So then you (the Buddha) say that material form is not-self (anattā); feeling ...; perception ...; activities ...; consciousness is not-self. How can *karmas* that are performed by the *not-self*, affect the *self*? (anattakatāni kammāni katham attānaṃ phusissanti ti).

The SA version reads:<sup>134</sup>

131 T 2, p. 11c (CSA i, p. 158).

132 T 2, p. 15c (CSA i, p. 90).

133 SN: iii, p. 103, reading “katham” (Nālandā edition, vol. 2-3, p. 326, and Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana) instead of “katam” (PTS).

134 T 2, p. 15c (CSA i, p. 177).