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## (Vaccha,gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta

The Sabhiya Kaccāna Discourse (to Vaccha,gotta) | S 44.11  
or, (Avyākata) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta The Sabhiya Kaccāna Discourse (on the Undeclared)

Theme: The after-death state of the awakened cannot be described

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### 1 Summary and highlights

**1.1 SUMMARY. The (Vaccha.gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta** (S 44.11) records Vaccha,gotta meeting the novice monk, Sabhiya Kaccāna [§1], of only 2 rains and asking him about the posthumous state of a saint (tathāgata) [§2]. When Vaccha,gotta asks Kaccāna why the Buddha is silent on this issue, Kaccāna [§3] replies that since the saint (here specifically referring to the arhat) *cannot be categorized in any known way*, how can anyone define a tathagata’s posthumous state [§4; 1.2.2]. Vaccha,gotta praises Kaccāna for his wisdom despite being only a novice monk [§5-6].

The Sabhiya of this Sutta is probably **Sabhiya 2** [1.3.2].

#### 1.2 THE TATHAGATA’S POSTHUMOUS STATE

**1.2.1 The 4 questions.** Usually, Vaccha,gotta would ask the Buddha or the monks about the 10 undeclared (avyākata) theses which are set aside by the Buddha.<sup>1</sup> In this Sutta, however, he asks only the 4 questions relating to the posthumous state of a tathagata [1.2.2]. This Sutta probably records a time when Vaccha,gotta is very new to the religious life as a wanderer and seeker, and probably still unfamiliar with all the 10 theses.

**1.2.2 The tathagata.** This term, *tathagata*, meaning “thus” (*tathā*) “gone” (*gata*), as used by Vaccha,gotta, in the context of the 4 questions and the 10 questions [1.2.1], clearly refers to any kind of “liberated saint.” However, to the Buddha and his disciples, it refers to **the arhat**, and this is the sense that is meant in Sabhiya’s answer [§4].

The term *tathagata* is also used by the Buddha as a self-reference. Hence, we can also include the Buddha (as an arhat) under this term. In fact, we can take Sabhiya’s answer as referring to the posthumous state of the Buddha, too.<sup>2</sup>

#### 1.3 SABHIYA KACCĀNA

There are at least 2 monks named Sabhiya in the suttas, whom we shall call Sabhiya 1 and Sabhiya 2. Kaccāna or Kaccayāna is a lineage (*gotra*) name.

##### 1.3.1 Sabhiya 1

**1.3.1.1** This Sabhiya’s mother was a nobleman’s daughter whose parents had left her in the care of a wanderer (*paribbājaka*) so that she might learn various doctrines and their uses. Unfortunately, the wanderer seduced her and, when she was with child, the sect abandoned her. Her child was born in the open (*sabhāyam*) while she was wandering about alone; hence, his name.

<sup>1</sup> See eg **Vaccha,gotta Sā** (S 44.7+8), SD 53.14.

<sup>2</sup> For details, see SD 6.15 (3.2).

When Sabhiya grew up, he, too, became a wanderer who gained fame as a dialectician. He had a hermitage by the city gate, where he gave lessons to the sons of noblemen and others. He devised 20 questions which he put before recluses and brahmins but none could answer them. These questions had been handed on to him by his mother who had developed insight and had been reborn in a brahma world.<sup>3</sup>

**1.3.1.2 The Sabhiya Sutta** (Sn 3.6) tells us that he visits the Buddha in Veḷuvana and, at the end of the discussion, joins the order. After cultivating insight, he gains arhathood (SD 77.8).

**1.3.1.3 The Thera,gātha** preserves the elder Sabhiya's verses (Tha 275-278).<sup>4</sup> Its Commentary says that they are spoken to admonish those monks who sided with Devadatta when he caused a schism (ThaA 2:114,13-20).<sup>5</sup>

**Yasa,datta** (Tha 360-364) of the Mallas was Sabhiya's companion when he visited the Buddha as wanderers to find flaws in the Buddha's teaching.

Dhammapāla mentions Sabhiya as an example of a wise wanderer (*paṇḍita paribbājaka*, SA 2:267,36).

**1.3.1.4** In the time of **Kakusandha Buddha**,<sup>6</sup> he was a householder and gave the Buddha a pair of sandals.

After Kassapa<sup>7</sup> Buddha's death, he, with six others, joined the order and lived in the forest. Failing to develop dhyana, they went to the top of a mountain, determined to reach some attainment or to die of starvation. The eldest became an arhat, the next a non-returner and was reborn in Suddhāvāsā. The remaining five died without achieving their aim.

These five were, in our age, Pukkusāti, Sabhiya, Bāhiya, Kumāra Kassapa, and Dabba Malla,putta.<sup>8</sup>

## **1.3.2 Sabhiya 2**

**1.3.2.1** A wanderer (*paribbājaka*), who may be identical with Sabhiya 1, of whose background we know almost nothing. **The (Vaccha,gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta** (S 44.11) records a discussion at Ñāti-ka between him and Vaccha,gotta on the tathagata's posthumous state. Here, Sabhiya is addressed as Kaccāna, his gotra name, and he says that he has then been a monk for only 3 years.

**1.3.2.2 The (Ceto,vimutti) Anuruddha Sutta** (M 127) mentions a certain monk named **Sabhiya Kaccāna** (in the Burmese and Sinhalese texts) but **Abhiya** in the European and Siamese texts.<sup>9</sup> It is possible that this is Sabhiya 2.

<sup>3</sup> See **Sabhiya S** (Sn 3.6), SD 77.8, where the details vary slightly.

<sup>4</sup> Tha 275 = Dh 6 (in connection with the Dīghāvu story during the Kosambī incident of the quarrelsome monks, DhA 1.5); Tha 277 = Dh 312 (the Buddha admonishing a presumptuous monk who gives bad advice to a monk who is guilt-ridden after he has broken a blade of grass, DhA 22.5).

<sup>5</sup> See also Mvst 3:389 ff.

<sup>6</sup> The 1<sup>st</sup> buddha in our world-cycle, the 3<sup>rd</sup> past buddha from our Buddha Gotama. See SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

<sup>7</sup> Kassapa was the buddha just before our buddha Gotama: see SD 36.2 (3.4.3).

<sup>8</sup> ThaA 2:112-116; SnA 2:419-436; Ap 2:473; DhA 2:212.

<sup>9</sup> M 127,13-18/3:148 f (SD 54.10).

## 2 Key terms

### 2.1 THE CATEGORIES OF BEING

#### 2.1.1 Missing category

**2.1.1.1** In Sabhiya’s reply to Vaccha,gotta’s question on the tathagata’s posthumous state, Sabhiya mentions these 5 categories of being, that is, the “form” being, the “formless,” the “percipient,” the “non-percipient” and the “neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient.” These terms refer to states of being in meditative or psychological terms. To the non-Buddhists, such as the wanderers, these are probably various mystical realms of states. To the Buddhists, however, they are a basic ascending hierarchy of meditative or existential “spheres” (*avacara*).

**2.1.1.2** Prominently missing from this list is the category of “**sense-based**” (*\*kāmī*) beings, which includes all the realms below the form world, that is, including the humans. This comprises realms that are physical in that the beings there are all “sense-based.” They depend on the 5 sense-faculties—the eye, ear, nose, tongue and body—and of course, the mind, as the 6<sup>th</sup> sense-base.

Understandably, this category is excluded from Sabhiya’s list because he is referring to the posthumous state of a liberated saint. Such a saint clearly would not, in the least, be reborn amongst humans or in any of the sense-realms, which are all regarded as mundane or worldly.

#### 2.1.2 The “form” being (*rūpī*)

**2.1.2.0** The term *rūpī*, “having form,” is the adjective form of *rūpa*, usually translated as “form,” and which has 3 important senses:

- (1) visual object (as a sense-base, *āyatana*);
- (2) corporeality or physical form (as the 1<sup>st</sup> aggregate, *khandha*); and
- (3) “fine-material” form (as dhyana, *jhāna*, or existential “sphere,” *avacara*).

**2.1.2.1** Most commonly, *rūpa* refers to limited, even mundane, states, that is, the shapes and colours that serve as objects of eye or visual consciousness (*cakkhu,viññāṇa*). Technically, the eye-faculty (*cakkhu*) works together with form (*rūpa*) and eye-contact (*phassa*) as conditions for the arising of eye-consciousness. “Form,” as the object of eye-consciousness, is counted amongst the 12 **sense-bases** (*āyatana*) (the 6 sense-faculties and their respective 6 sense-objects)<sup>10</sup> and the 18 **elements** (*dhātu*) (the 6 sense-faculties, the 6 sense-objects and the respective 6 sense-consciousnesses).

**2.1.2.2** On a deeper level, *rūpa* refers to materiality which serves as *objects* of the 5 sense-consciousnesses (*viññāṇa*): the visual, auditory, olfactory, gustatory and tactile, that is, those of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. This refers to *rūpa* as the 1<sup>st</sup> of **the 5 aggregates** (*pañca-k,khandha*), which includes all the physical constituents and aspects of the person.

In the formulations of a person as “**name-and-form**” (*nāma,rūpa*), there are 2 basic psychological levels to which these terms apply. On an analytical level, they refer to a person’s mental and physical constituents, where “**name**” subsumes the 4 mental aggregates of feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*),

<sup>10</sup> See **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1; **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,4+5), SD 29.5. They are also known as the 6 “internal sense-bases” (*ajjh’āyatana*) and the 6 “external sense-bases” (*bāhiddh’āyatana*) respectively: see **Saḷ-āyatana Vibhaṅga S** (M 137,4-5), SD 29.5.

formations (*saṅkhārā*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*); and where “**form**” (*rūpa*) refers to the materiality aggregate (*rūpa-k, khandha*), namely, the physical body, that is, the 5 physical senses or the 4 primary elements.<sup>11</sup>

On a synthetical level, how we view the world and react to it, **name** refers to our ideas, conceptions, preconceptions or projections towards a **form** we experience. In this sense, “form” broadly refers to any of the sense-objects. In short, there is the “form” (as a noun) out there, and what we “form” (as a verb) of it in our mind.

Broadly speaking, in an unawakened person, the 6 sense-faculties are the naming process (our means of knowing, *how* we know) while the 6-sense-objects are the forming process (or objects of knowledge, *what* we can know or *think* we know). This is the virtual reality we create for ourselves with the “**all**” (*sabba*) of our 6 sense-faculties and the 6 sense-objects, as laid out in **the Sabba Sutta** (S 35.23), SD 7.1.

**2.1.2.3** The 3<sup>rd</sup> meaning of form is what concerns us here, where it applies to the *rūpī* of this Sutta. This is the fourfold **form dhyanas** (*rūpa, jhāna*), that is, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> dhyanas. The dhyanas always arise in sequence beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> one. This is like the base of a pyramid (the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana), on which is built the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana, and on top of both arises the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana, and finally the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana at the top of them all. When emerging from dhyana it also occurs sequentially: first, we emerge from the 4<sup>th</sup> into the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana, then into the 2<sup>nd</sup>, and finally out of the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana back into ordinary consciousness.

**2.1.2.4** The 1<sup>st</sup> **dhyana** (*paṭhama jhāna*) is characterized by 5 dhyana-factors (*jhāna’āṅga*), that is, initial application (*vitakka*), sustained application (*vicāra*), zest or active joy (*pīti*), happiness or settled joy (*sukha*) all of which are “born of solitude” (*vivek, ja*),<sup>12</sup> that is, a mind free from all mental hindrances.<sup>13</sup>

As the dhyanic mind settles further, it “loses” its dhyana-factors in stages, further “lightening” itself, resulting in a more refined mind. With the settling away of initial application and sustained application, it attains **the 2<sup>nd</sup> dhyana**, where the mental solitude sublimates into one-pointedness of mind. With the disappearance of zest, the mind settles even more subtly joyful in **the 3<sup>rd</sup> dhyana**. Finally, with the disappearance of joy itself, the mind reaches **the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana**, where the peace is more sublime than any worldly joy.<sup>14</sup>

**2.1.2.5** The realm based on the form dhyanas is called “**the form-sphere**” (*rūpāvacara*), heavenly worlds inhabited by the form-sphere brahmas and devas. These divine beings have progressively longer lifespans, basically as follows:<sup>15</sup>

**The 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana** brahma worlds, up to 1 aeon;

**The 2<sup>nd</sup>-dhyana** deva worlds, up to 8 aeons;

**The 3<sup>rd</sup>-dhyana** deva world, up to 64 aeons;

**The 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana** comprises the devas of Abundant Fruit (*veha-p, phala*) and the **Non-percipient beings** (*asañña, sattā*), both lasting 500 aeons each.

The highest of **the 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana** devas are those of the pure abodes (*suddhāvāsa*), all of them at different stages of non-returning (*anāgāmitā*), heading towards full awakening. Their lifespans last from 1,000 aeons to 16,000 aeons.

<sup>11</sup> On the 5 sense-faculties (*pañc’indriya*), see SD 17.2a (9.2); on the 4 primary elements (*mahā, bhūta* or *dhātu*), see **Mahā Hatthi, pādōpama S** (M 28,6), SD 6.16.

<sup>12</sup> This is the mind in “sublime solitude”: see SD 8.4 (5.1.2).

<sup>13</sup> On 5 dhyana-factors, see SD 8.4 (6). On overcoming the hindrances, see SD 53.18 (2.1.1).

<sup>14</sup> On the 4 form dhyanas, see **Dhyana**, SD 8.4 (4-6).

<sup>15</sup> For a diagram of these realms, see SD 1.7 (App).

### 2.1.3 The “formless” (*arūpī*)

**2.1.3.1** While all the form-dhyanas are rooted in the 1<sup>st</sup> dhyana, refining themselves with the disappearance of the dhyana-factors [2.1.2.3], all the 4 formless attainments (*arūpa samāpatti*) are rooted in the 4<sup>th</sup> dhyana. The base of infinite space sutta-pericope describes it thus:

“By completely transcending the perceptions of form (*rūpa,saññā*), with the disappearance of the perceptions of sense-reaction [sense-impingement] (*patigha,saññā*), with non-attention to perceptions of diversity (*nānatta,saññā*), aware that ‘Space is infinite,’ he attains and dwells in **the base of infinite space.**” (S 40.5,4/4:265), SD 24.15

The sutta pericopes for the other 3 formless attainments describe how they arise, as follows:

(6) “By completely transcending *the base of infinite space*, aware that ‘Consciousness is infinite,’ he attains and dwells in **the base of infinite consciousness.**” (S 40.6,4/4:266), SD 24.16

(7) “By completely transcending *the base of infinite consciousness*, aware that ‘There is nothing,’ he attains and dwells in **the base of nothingness.**” (S 40.7,4/4:267), SD 24.17

(8) “By completely transcending *the base of nothingness*, he enters and dwells in **the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception.**” (S 40.8,4/4:268), SD 24.18

**2.1.3.2** The *arūpī* or “formless” refers to the formless attainments (*arūpa,samāpatti*)—they are not normally called “dhyana” because they arise differently—and the realm is known as “the formless sphere” (*arūpâvacara*). This sphere comprises 4 levels called “bases” (*āyatana*) [2.1.3.1] as mental or meditative states, and “spheres” (*avacara*) as inhabited worlds. The 4 bases, beginning with the lowest of them, are:<sup>16</sup>

**the base of infinite space** (*ākāśānanc’āyatana*), lasting 20,000 aeons;

**the base of infinite consciousness** (*viññāṇaṅc’āyatana*), lasting 40,000 aeons;

**the base of nothingness** (*ākāśānāññ’āyatana*), lasting 60,000 aeons; and

**the base of neither-perception-nor-non-perception** (*n’eva,saññā,nāsaññ’āyatana*), lasting 84,000 aeons.

**2.1.4 The “percipient” (*saññī*).** The term *saññī* simply means “conscious” in some way and technically covers all realms and worlds, except the “non-percipient” [2.1.5]. Hence, this category is too broad to be useful. We can, of course, limit the sense “percipient” to the sense-realm, which is not listed in the Sutta. However, as we have noted, the tathagata would clearly not be reborn in the sense-realm, which is the lowest of the 3 realms (*loka*)—the sense world, the form-world and the formless world—mentioned here [2.1.1].

It is likely that Sabhiya uses the term *saññī* to contrast it with the “non-percipient” (*asaññī*), which is also an odd-man-out [2.1.5]. The term *rūpī*, then, refers to all the realms, except the “non-percipient.”

**2.1.5 The “non-percipient” (*asaññī*).** We have already noted that the “non-percipient” beings, whose lifespan is 500 aeons, are part of the *form* sphere [2.1.2.4]. The non-percipient or non-conscious beings (*asañña,satta*) are those meditators who had cultivated dispassion towards “perception” or consciousness. According to **the Nava Satt’āvāsa Sutta** (A 9.24), they are “beings with neither perception nor feel-

<sup>16</sup> For a diagram of these realms, see SD 1.7 (App). On the 4 formless attainments, see SD 24.11 (5).

ing” (*sattā asaññino appaṭisaṃvedino*).<sup>17</sup> They are located in the 4<sup>th</sup>-dhyana heavens just below the pure abodes (*suddh’āvāsa*) (Vbh 1028/425). They fall from their world as soon as perception occurs in them.<sup>18</sup>

**2.1.6 The “neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient” (*n’eva,saññī,nāsaññī*)** have also been mentioned as the highest of the 4 formless bases, whose inhabitants last 84,000 aeons [2.1.3.2]. The consciousness of the beings in this realm is so subtle that it can neither be said to exist nor not exist. Despite their astronomically long lifespan, they still fall away (die), which means they will fare according to their past karma and be reborn in the lower realms, even in the hells.<sup>19</sup> In other words, all the realms are part of samsara, the cycle of rebirths and redeaths.

## 2.2 THE “ALL” (*sabba*)

### 2.2.1 Highlight of Sabhiya’s answer

**2.2.1.1** The highlight of Sabhiya’s answer to Vaccha,gotta’s question on the posthumous state of the tathagata goes thus:

“... when that cause, that condition, were all to have totally ceased in the all without any remainder at all, how would one, trying to describe him, do so, that is, as ‘having form,’ or as ‘formless,’ or as ‘percipient,’ or as ‘non-percipient,’ or as ‘neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient?’” [§4]

**2.2.1.2** In simple terms, this quote means this: When a saint has passed finally away into nirvana, there is no way that we can describe him in any way because he has attained the unconditioned—just like a flame that is extinguished cannot be described in any way except “extinguished.”<sup>20</sup> In other words, this state cannot be said to be any of the tetralemma of truth: *that he exists, does not exist, both, and neither*.

**2.2.2 Non-self.** In the (**Anattā**) **Udāyī S** (S 35.193), this passage [2.2.1.1] is used to describe the non-self nature of the 6 consciousness, that is, eye-consciousness, ear-consciousness, nose-consciousness, tongue-consciousness, body-consciousness and mind-consciousness. The import of this is that consciousness rises and falls away, and consciousness is also “of” something<sup>21</sup>—it cannot be fixed or eternal in any way, and we have no real control over them, except to understand their true nature. It is this proper understanding that frees us from our body and mind to become fully awakened.<sup>22</sup>

### 2.2.3 When the “all” ends

**2.2.3.1 “The all” (*sabba*)** in the passage [§4] refers to the 6 sense-faculties (the eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind) and their respective sense-objects (forms, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and thoughts [mind-objects]). While the 6 sense-faculties (the internal senses) are the means of knowing,

<sup>17</sup> See A 9.24/4:401 (SD 67.2). However, they are not those who attain the “cessation of perception and feeling” (*saññā,vedayita,nirodha*), ie, only the arhats and non-returns: see SD 48.7 (3.2).

<sup>18</sup> See **Brahma,jāla S** (D 1,68), SD 25.2; SD 23.14 (3.2.6). For their location in the 31 planes, see SD 1.7 (App).

<sup>19</sup> On how heavenly beings fall into the hells, see (**Nānā,karaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

<sup>20</sup> See **Aggi Vaccha,gotta S** (M 72,19) + SD 6.15 (4).

<sup>21</sup> On consciousness “of” something, see SD 17.8a (7.1.1).

<sup>22</sup> On the non-self characteristic of consciousness, see S 35.193,4/4:167 f, etc (SD 26.4).

the 6 sense-objects (the external senses) are the sources of knowledge—respectively, how we know and what we know. [2.1.2.2]

**2.2.3.2 How does this teaching fit into the passage here?** When the tathagata, that is, the arhat, has passed away, all his sense-faculties cease to be and, without them, no sense-objects arise. We are defined by our sense-activities: what we do, say and think. When all this ceases, what is there left to meaningfully describe us? Hence, the awakened being who has passed away *cannot be described*—he is unconditioned. This is the most significant aspect of the non-self teaching.

**2.2.3.3** It is not that the awakened *state* is “non-self”<sup>23</sup>—it has no characteristics—but rather how we understand this: the “principle” of it. We cannot say that it is an abiding state, or that it is some kind of universal essence, and so on. We can only say that, in principle, it is all *non-self*, but we must also remember that there is no “it” that is the awakened state. This is just a manner of speaking (*vohāra*), which is as far as human language can stretch without breaking down.

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## (Vaccha,gotta) Sabhiya Kaccāna Sutta

### The Sabhiya Kaccāna Discourse (to Vaccha,gotta)

S 44.11

**1** At one time, the venerable Sabhiya Kaccāna was staying in the Brick House<sup>24</sup> at Nātika.<sup>25</sup>

Then, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta approached the venerable Sabhiya Kaccāna, and exchanged friendly words and cordial greetings with the venerable Mahā Moggallāna. When the friendly greetings were concluded, he sat down at one side.

**2** Sitting at one side, the wanderer Vaccha,gotta said to the venerable Sabhiya Kaccāna:

(1) “How is it, master Kaccāna, **does the tathagata exist after death?**”

“Vaccha, this, the Blessed One has not declared, that ‘The tathagata exists after death.’”

(2) “How is it then, master Kaccāna, **does the tathagata not exist after death?**”

“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared, that ‘The tathagata does not exist after death.’”

(3) “How is it then, master Kaccāna, **does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**”

“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared, that ‘The tathagata both exists and not exist after death.’”

(4) “How is it then, master Kaccāna, **does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**”

“Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared, that ‘The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death.’”

<sup>23</sup> The translation “non-self” (*anattā*) is preferable to “not-self” because when we say “not” self, it implies that we accept that there *is* one, of which this is *not*. “Non-self” means “having nothing to do with a or the self.” See SD 2.16 (1.2).

<sup>24</sup> “The Brick House (or Hall),” *giñjakâvasatha* (*giñjakā*, “brick” + *âvasatha*, “abode, residence, rest-house, hall”), V 1:232,32 = D 2:91,21 ≈ M 1:205,16 = S 2:74,14, where Comy def it as “a great pinnacled house built of bricks” (*itṭhākāhi kate mahā,pāsāde*, SA 2:75,3). For details, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.5) n, SD 9.

<sup>25</sup> **Nādika** or **Nātika** (according to Buddhaghosa, two villages of the same name on the same river bank) was on the highroad between Koti,gāma and Vesālī (V 1:230 ff; D 2:90 f, 200; M 1:205). For details, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16,2.5) n, SD 9.

3 “Master Kaccāna,

(1) how is it when you are asked:

‘**Does the tathagata exist after death?**’ you say:

‘*Vaccha, this, the Blessed One has not declared, that “The tathagata exists after death”?*’

(2) And how is it, master Kaccāna, when you are asked:

‘**Does the tathagata not exist after death?**’ you say:

‘*Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared, that “The tathagata does not exist after death”?*’

(3) How is it, master Kaccāna, when you are asked:

‘**Does the tathagata both exist and not exist after death?**’ you say:

‘*Vaccha, this, the Blessed One has not declared, that “The tathagata both exists and not exist after death”?*’

(4) And how is it, master Kaccāna, when you are asked:

‘**Does the tathagata neither exist nor not exist after death?**’ you say:

‘*Vaccha, this, too, the Blessed One has not declared, that “The tathagata neither exists nor not exist after death”?*’

3.2 What is the reason, what is the condition, that this has not been declared by the recluse Gotama?”

4 “Vaccha, as to the cause and the condition for describing him

as ‘having form,’ or

*rūpī* [2.1.2]

as ‘formless,’ or

*arūpī* [2.1.3]

as ‘percipient,’ or

*saññī* [2.1.4]

as ‘non-percipient,’ or

*asaññī* [2.1.5]

as ‘neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient’—

*n’eva,saññī,nāsannī* [2.1.6]

when that cause, that condition, were all to have totally ceased in the all<sup>26</sup> without any remainder at all, how would one, trying to describe him, do so, that is,<sup>27</sup>

as ‘having form,’ or

as ‘formless,’ or

as ‘percipient,’ or

as ‘non-percipient,’ or

as ‘neither-percipient-nor-non-percipient’?”

5 “How long, master Kaccāna, have you gone forth?”

“Not long, avuso, only 3 rains [years].”

6 “A great thing indeed, avuso, for one to know so much in such a short time,<sup>28</sup> not to speak of the exceedingly profound!”<sup>29</sup>

— evaṃ —

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<sup>26</sup> On the “all” here, see **Sabba S** (S 35.23), SD 7.1. See (2.2.3).

<sup>27</sup> *So ca hetu so ca paccayo sabbena sabbam sabbathā sabbam aparisesam nirujjheyya, kena nam paññāpayamāno paññāpeyya*. The last phrase, lit: “describing him, how would one describe him.” See (2.2) & **(Anattā) Udāyī S** (S 35.-193,4/4:167 f) etc, SD 26.4.

<sup>28</sup> *Yassa p’assa āvuso etam ettakena ettakam eva, tam p’assa bahu\**. Be Ce Se *bahu*; Ee *bahum*. Comy: “For whom there would be an answer in this much time” (*Yassa pi etam ettakena kālena ... vyākaraṇam bhāveyya*, SA 3:115,9)

<sup>29</sup> *Ko pana vādo evam\* abhikkante’ti*. Be Ce *evam*; Ee *eva*. Vaccha, gotta is impressed; yet, Comy notes: “But not exceedingly delightful from the angle of teaching Dharma” (*na pana atikkante atimanāpe dhamma, desanā, naye*, SA 3:115,12).