

Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta

The Lesser Discourse on Saccaka

[The conversion of a boastful debater]

(Majjhima Nikāya 35/1:227-237)

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1 Saccaka

According to Buddhaghosa, both Saccaka's parents were nirgranthas (Jains), and skilled debaters, who married at the suggestion of the Licchavīs, because they were unable to defeat one other in debate.¹ The Licchavīs provided for their maintenance. Hence, he was known as Saccaka Nīganthī,putta, or Saccaka the nirgranthi's son. (*Nirgranthi* refers to a female nirgrantha.)²

The nirgrantha couple (Saccaka's parents) had four daughters: Saccā, Lolā, Paṭācārā and Sivā,vatikā. The four sisters and Saccaka learned a thousand doctrines from their parents (MA 2:268). The sisters engaged in a debate with Sāriputta, but were defeated by him. After entering the order, they became arhats. The brother, Saccaka, was the youngest of them. He was a teacher of the Licchavīs and lived at Vesālī.

The Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) reports Saccaka as having engaged the six heterodox teachers³ in debate. They are said to have “drifted away from the topic of discussion” (*bahiddhā katham apanesi*), and so are defeated.⁴

In the Suttas, Saccaka is addressed as **Aggi,vessana**, his ancient gotra (clan) name, which is the Pāli form of the Sanskrit *Āgni,veśyāyana* or *Āgni,veśya*, meaning, either a descendent (1) of Agni, the fire god, (2) of the sage Agni,veśa dynasty, or (3) of the Agni,veśya dynasty of ancient rulers.⁵ In the early Canon, amongst those addressed as Aggi,vessana are Saccaka the nirgranthi's son (M 35 & 36), the wanderer Dīgha,nakha, Sāriputta's nephew (M 74), and the novice Acira,vata (M 125).⁶

The Majjhima Nikāya preserves two interviews that Saccaka has with the Buddha, that is, in **the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta** (M 35) [2] and **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36). In both discourses, he is addressed as Aggi,vessana (Skt *Āgni,veśyāyana*), which is his gotra or clan name, and is an ancient Jain clan. The Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta records how the Buddha defeats Saccaka in debate. The Mahā Saccaka Sutta records Saccaka's visits to the Buddha at the Kūt'āgāra,sālā, and his questioning the Buddha on the disciplining of the body and the mind. The Buddha recounts his life as the Bodhisattva, from the time of renouncing the world to that of the Great Awakening.

The Mahā Saccaka Sutta is a valuable document on the Buddha's life, giving graphic details of his asceticism, climaxing with the realization that his weakened body is unable to support his mind in his spiritual quest. When the Bodhisattva decides to take the middle way, beginning with taking a meal to regain his physical strength, the group of five monks (*pañca,vaggiya*) leaves him in disappointment. But the Bodhisattva perseveres, and in the end attains Buddhahood. Saccaka expresses his great admiration for the Buddha and acknowledges his superiority over other teachers.⁷

¹ MA 1:268; cf J 3:1, where Sivā,vatikā is called Avavādakā.

² See **Upāli S** (M 56) = SD 27.1 Intro (2.1).

³ See **Sāmañña,phala S** (D 2.16-32/1:52-59) = SD 8.10.

⁴ M 36.48/1:250 f = SD 49.4. According to KN Jayatilleke, this debating fault is identical with the *nigraha,sthāna* (“occasion for censure”) of *arthāntaram* (“shifting the topic”) (*Nyāya Sūtra*, SBH ed, 5.2.1): see *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 219, 238.

⁵ See Śatapatha Brahmana 14 (cf Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad), Taittiriya Upaniṣad, Mahābhārata 14.

⁶ See respectively **Cūḷa Saccaka S** (M 35.4/1:228) = SD 26.5, **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.5/1:238) = SD 49.4, **Dīgha,nakha S** (M 74.2/1:497) = SD 16.1 & **Danta,bhūmi S** (M 125.2/3:128) = SD 46.3.

⁷ M 36.48/1:250 f = SD 49.4; see EJ Thomas, *Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*, 1949: 58.

In the Commentaries, Saccaka, is identified with Senaka of the Mahā Ummagga Jātaka (J 6:478). Sinhalese tradition has it that, in a later birth, long after the Buddha's death, Saccaka was born in Sri Lanka as the elder Kāla Buddha, rakkhita and attained arhathood (MA 2:293 f).

2 Saccaka Sutta versions and summary

The Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta recounts the Buddha's exposition on *the not-self nature of the five aggregates* to the arrogant and self-righteous debater Saccaka Nigaṇṭhī,putta. The discourse has two **Chinese Āgama** parallels, that is, SĀ 110 (T2.35a-37b) and EĀ 37.10 (T2.715a-717b).⁸

2.1 SACCACA MEETS ASSAJI AND THE BUDDHA. Saccaka Nigaṇṭhī,putta lives in Vesālī where he boasts that everyone, even the Buddha, is no match for him in debate [§2]. He meets Assaji, one of the five monks attending to the Bodhisattva just before the Great Awakening, but is unimpressed, even troubled, by Assaji's teaching, [§3], and decides to meet the Buddha himself [§4].

Being highly respected by the Licchavīs, Saccaka announces his impending visit to the Buddha, again boasting in a series of hyperbolic similes that he could easily defeat the Buddha [§5], and many of the Licchavīs applaud him [§6].

2.2 THE BUDDHA ANSWERS SACCACA. Upon meeting the Buddha, Saccaka asks the Buddha the same question he has asked Assaji [§§7-8], and the Buddha gives the same answer again [§9]. Saccaka, using the simile of the great earth, declares to the effect that the five aggregates are the self [§10]. On being questioned by the Buddha, Saccaka confirms his view, claiming that it is a popular opinion, but the Buddha warns him not to over-generalize [§11].

Then, using the parable of a rajah who has absolute power over his subjects, the Buddha says that such a rajah basically could do what likes with them—a notion to which Saccaka fully agrees [§12]. In an anticlimactic way, the Buddha then questions Saccaka if anyone could have such power over his five aggregates, so that they would obey his command to be such, or not to be such. Saccaka, unable to rebut, falls silent [§13a].

2.3 SACCACA'S SILENCE. Even after being asked by the Buddha twice, he still remains silent, so that the Buddha has to invoke a popular conventional expression, charging that Saccaka's head would split into seven pieces if he insists on remaining silent on the third occasion [§13b]. Then, it is said that Vajrapani, a fierce thunderbolt-wielding yaksha, appears mid-air, threatening to hurl the fiery thunder-bolt at Saccaka. This vision, interestingly, only appears to the Buddha and Saccaka, who then yields [§14].

Saccaka, then earnestly answers the Buddha's questions, which is an instruction that *the five aggregates are impermanent and suffering* [§§15-20]. Then, using the simile of the plantain tree, the Buddha explains to Saccaka how *the aggregates are also not-self* [§§21-22a].

2.4 THE BUDDHA ADMONISHES SACCACA. Finally, the Buddha chides Saccaka over his boasts, showing that while the Buddha shows “no sweat” over the debate, it is Saccaka who is uncomfortably sweating. The embarrassed Saccaka falls silent [§22b]. At this point, Dummuka, a young Licchavī, compares Saccaka to a limbless crab! [§23]. In an almost humorous turn, Saccaka retorts Dummukha that the conversation is not with him, but with the Buddha. He then asks the Buddha about how he trains his disciples [§24a].

The Buddha explains how his disciples train to become streamwinners [§24b]. Then in answer to a following question by Saccaka, the Buddha explains how his disciples become arhats [§§25-26a] and their three supremacies [§26b].

Saccaka finally confesses his arrogance (but does not seek forgiveness from the Buddha), and invites the Buddha and the order for a meal on the following day [§27]. Saccaka also invites the Licchavīs to join him in the offering [§§28-29]. At the end of the offering (where *no* thanksgiving discourse is given), the Buddha explains how the merits of the offerings of the two parties bring their own benefits [§30].

⁸ Also, a few corresponding words have been identified amongst the Skt fragments discovered in Central Asia: cf Cat no 997A in *Sanskrihandshriften aus den Turfanfunden* (edd Waldschmidt, Sander & Wille, 1971) 3:258. See Analayo, 2007: sv M 35.

3 Sutta highlights

3.1 SACCAKA BOASTS. As a successful debater, Saccaka, is said to have defeated the six heterodox teachers in debate⁹ [1]. His fame apparently gets the better of him since he is boastfully over-confident, claiming everyone, even the Buddha, would tremble and sweat before him in debate! Adding a ironic touch of humour, the narrators add that even an animate post would tremble before him in debate [§2]! All this hyperbole is to prepare him for a great fall when he later actually debates with the Buddha [§5].

One day, on a leisurely stroll, Saccaka, meets Assaji (one of the first five monks and Sāriputta's first teacher), and questions him about how the Buddha instructs his disciples. Assaji says that the Buddha teaches that the five aggregates are impermanent, that all formations are impermanent, and that all things are not self [§4].

He takes special care to omit stating the characteristic of “suffering” (*dukkha lakkhaṇa*), notes the Commentary, to prevent Saccaka from making any negative remark against the Buddha's Teaching which would earn him (Saccaka) very negative karma (MA 2:271). We are reminded of a similar skillful means mentioned in **the (Dvi,lakkhaṇa) Channa Sutta** (S 22.90), when the monks answer the irascible Channa (the Bodhisattva's erstwhile charioteer) with a similar omission; that is, until Channa receives the complete instructions from Ānanda and benefits from it.¹⁰ [3.2]

Saccaka's boastful manner is reminiscent of another evangelical figure, that is, the wanderer, Nigrodha, who, in **the Udumbarika Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25), boastfully claims that “we will baffle him with a single question, we will knock him over like an empty pot!” The Buddha meets him in debate before an assembly of wanderers, but instead of taking an adversarial role, invites Nigrodha to present his view, and the Buddha, in a Socratic manner, questions him, and so dismantling his wrong views.¹¹

3.2 THE THREE CHARACTERISTICS FORMULA.

3.2.1 Why “the characteristic of suffering” is omitted. When Saccaka meets the Buddha and asks the same question that he has asked Assaji, the Buddha, too, gives the same answer, that is, omitting mention of the characteristic of suffering (*dukkha,lakkhaṇa*). The Sutta Commentary explains that this is to prevent any ill will (*āghāta*) arising from Saccaka's objection to such a notion, which would cause him to create very bad karma resulting in a hellish birth. Hence, instead of giving **the formulaic reply** (*pariyāya*), both Assaji and the Buddha give **a provisional teaching** (*nippariyāya*) (MA 2:271).¹²

Analayo, in *A Comparative Study of the Majjhima Nikāya*, thinks that the Buddha's repeating Assaji's statement of the two characteristics verbatim is “improbable,” noting that the Buddha would “usually” include the characteristic of *dukkha* in his exhortation. Furthermore, it is the characteristic of not-self (*anattā,lakkhaṇa*) that should be omitted; for, this is the characteristic that the Buddha takes pains to explain to Saccaka [§§12 f].¹³

It is not difficult to imagine *why the Buddha repeats Assaji's provisional reply to Saccaka*. In fact, it would be more problematic had the Buddha replied giving the *full* threefold formula, which would imply Assaji's oversight, as it were, and probably even further confuse Saccaka. It is a common practice that someone like Assaji would, upon seeing the Buddha, recount his meeting with Saccaka.¹⁴

The Ekottara Āgama account (EĀ 37.10) gives an interesting clue to Saccaka's personality. It records that on hearing Assaji's reply, Saccaka at once expresses his displeasure by covering his ears, and tells

⁹ M 36.48/1:250 f = SD 49.4. See *Early Buddhist Theory of Knowledge*, 1963: 238.

¹⁰ S 22.90/3:132-135 = SD 56.5 & its Āgama parallel, SĀ 262 (T2.66b14).

¹¹ D 25/3:36-57 = SD 1.4.

¹² **Analayo** thinks that this “commentarial explanation seems less convincing...[and] could even be just a mechanical repetition of the commentarial gloss to the Saṃyutta Nikāya discourse, since one would not expect Assaji to be worried about the possibility that Saccaka might consider path and fruit in negative light.” (Analayo, 2007: sv Cūḷasaccaka Sutta, 1:228) It should be noted that the terms *pariyāya* and *nippariyāya* are used in the commentarial senses here, and that they have the **reverse senses** in the Canon: see R Gethin, *The Buddhist Path of Awakening*, 2001: 134 f & also **Pariyāya and Nippariyāya** = SD 30.16.

¹³ Analayo, 2007: sv Cūḷasaccaka Sutta, M 1:228.

¹⁴ See the cases of Ariṭṭha (erstwhile vulture killer), **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.3/1:130) = SD 3.13 & of Sāti (the fisherman's son), **Mahā Taṇhā,saṅkhāya S** (M 38.4/1:257) = SD 7.10.

Assaji to stop talking!¹⁵ Clearly, here Saccaka dislikes hearing about impermanence, but probably even more so about not-self, of which he expressly has strong views [§10]. As such, it is clearly understandable why Assaji and the Buddha do not at first mention the characteristic of suffering to Saccaka. The idea is not to prevent him from reacting negatively to the notion of suffering. Moreover, to openly declare that the Buddha teaches *not-self* is more likely to motivate Saccaka to meet the Buddha challenge him on this point, which Saccaka actually does!

3.2.2 Saṅkhāra and dhamma. The usual formula for *the three universal characteristics*, as for example, given in **the Dhamma,niyāma Sutta** (A 3.134), is as follows:

<i>sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā</i>	all formations [samskaras] are impermanent.
<i>sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā</i>	all formations [samskaras] are suffering.
<i>sabbe dhammā anattā</i>	all things [dharmas] are not self.

(A 3.134/1:285) = SD 26.8; Dh 277-279; also SD 17.6 (6)

Here in the statement, “all formations are suffering” (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*), “formations” (*saṅkhārā*) refers to all *constructed things*, that is, our mind-made world; “things” (*dhammā*) refers to *all things*, that is, our constructed mind-made world and the temporal-spatial world.

Popular Buddhism often misinterprets the last line, for example, that “*Dhamma* can be applied to both conditioned and unconditioned things and states. It embraces both conditioned and unconditioned things including Nibbāna. In order to show that even Nibbāna is free from a permanent soul the Buddha used the term *dhamma* in the third verse.”¹⁶ From a careful study of the Suttas, we must say that *sabbe dhammā anattā* can only be rendered as “all dharmas (phenomena *and* the principles behind their conditionality) are not self.”¹⁷

The reason for this is a simple but important one: *nirvana has neither characteristics nor predicates*. We might refer to nirvana by way of provisional terms (happy, cool) or images (the cave, the quenched), but it is impossible to describe it. Although we can attain nirvana, it is beyond any linguistic definition.¹⁸

3.3 SACCAKA’S WRONG VIEWS.

3.3.1 Comparative study. Saccaka’s wrong views are listed in §10, which opens with his view that sentient life is dependent on the earth. **Jayatilleke** notes this view in connection with the five-soul view that Saccaka holds:

Even the argument that the first *ātman* [see below] is composed of the essence of food since all life that dwells on the earth (*prajāḥ...yaḥ kāś ca pṛthivīm śritāḥ*) [Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.3.1] depend on food (*annād jāyante...annena vardhante*, loc cit) is similar to Saccaka’s argument that man has his body as *ātman* (*rūp’attā*) because among other things all organic and sentient life (*bīja.gāma, bhūta.gāma*, M 1:230) grows to maturity in dependence on the earth (*paṭhavim nis-sāya*, loc cit). (Jayatilleke 1963: 220)

Saccaka’s wrong view is that there is an abiding self or soul (*attā*), that is to say, he holds that an individual (*purisa, puggala*) is composed of five souls, namely, the physical soul (*rūp’attā*; Skt *rūp’-ātmā*),¹⁹ the feeling soul (*vedan’attā*), the percipient soul (*saññ’attā*), the karmic soul (*saṅkhār’attā*), and the cognitive soul (*viññāṇ’attā*), “on the grounds that all activities including the possibility of moral behaviour depend on their substantial existence [§10].”²⁰

¹⁵ EĀ 37.10 (T2.715b11).

¹⁶ Narada Thera in Dh:N 4th ed 1993: 225.

¹⁷ For an important discussion, see **Dhamma,niyāma S** (A 3.134/1:285) = SD 26.8 & **Saṅkhāra** = SD 17.6 (6).

¹⁸ See **Aggi Vaccha, gotta S** (M 72/1:483-489) = SD 6.15, esp the fire simile (M 72.19/1:487).

¹⁹ *Rūpam me attā*; Comy glosses as “Form is his soul, therefore it is ‘bodily self’ (Skt *rūp’ātma*)” (*rūpam attā assā ti rūp’attā*, MA 2:275).

²⁰ Jayatilleke 1963: 220. Jayatilleke lists the five “selves” as the bodily self, the hedonic self, the mental self, the active self, and the cognitive self (id).

Jayatileke notes that this theory resembles the Vedic theory that the person (*puruṣaḥ*) is composed of five selves or souls (*ātmā*), and is propounded in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad. Although the concepts of the selves and their order are not identical, but the similarities of the two theories are evident from this table:²¹

<u>Saccaka Sutta [§10]</u>	<u>Taittirīya Upaniṣad</u>
<i>rūp'attā</i> , the bodily soul	<i>anna.rasa,maya (ātmā)</i> , the soul as the essence of food; ²²
<i>saṅkhār'attā</i> , the karmic soul	<i>ātmā prāṇa,mayaḥ</i> , the soul consisting of organic activity; ²³
<i>saññ'attā</i> , the percipient soul	<i>ātmā mano,mayaḥ</i> , the soul consisting of the mind [the mind-made soul];
<i>viññāṇ'attā</i> , the cognitive soul	<i>ātma vijñāna,mayaḥ</i> , the soul consisting of cognition [consciousness];
<i>vedan'attā</i> , the feeling soul	<i>ātmā ānanda,mayaḥ</i> , the soul of bliss.

(Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.2.5)

Jayatileke further makes this comparative observation of an alternative source of Saccaka's views, that is, the Jain five "bodies of existence" (*asti,kāya*):

If this Upaniṣadic teaching was not the source of Saccaka's inspiration and he was in fact a strict adherent of Nigaṇṭha's doctrine [DPPN sv Saccaka], then the closest teaching to the one that he propounds would be the theory of the five *asti-kāyas* (*jīva, ākāśa, dharma, adharma, pudgala*) all of which have a substantial existence, being *dravyas*,²⁴ although in that case only two of the *asti,-kāyas* (ie *jīva* and *pudgala*) would in any way correspond with his five selves (ie with *viññāṇa* and *rūpa* respectively).²⁵ (Jayatileke 1963: 220 f)

What is the significance of this comparative study? It gives us the historical context of the Buddha's teaching, how the Buddha connects his teachings with his times, reaching out to others and changing their lives. The Dharma may be timeless, but its expression is in time and space. Understanding this time-space interconnection, we will understand better what the Buddha is trying to say, so that we can relate to the Dharma in our own times.

3.3.2 Saccaka's silence. The high point of the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta, like that of the **Ambaṭṭha Sutta** (D 3), is the debate, traditionally known as a *brahmodya* (brahminical philosophical debate), in which reasonable questions have to be duly answered. The narrative turning-point of both Suttas is when Vajrapani, the thunderbolt-wielding yaksha,²⁶ appears, visible only to the Buddha and Saccaka, ready to hurl his blazing iron hammer (*ayo,kūṭa*) at him if he fails to answer the Buddha's "reasonable question" (*saha,dhammika pañha*) after the third time [§13b]. The Commentaries gloss *saha,dhammika* as *sa,karaṇam*, "with reason" (AA 2:268), or as *sa,hetuko sa,kāraṇo*, "with cause, with reason" (DA 1:263). The Ambaṭṭha Sutta commentary notes that "even if he (Ambaṭṭha) himself does not desire to answer, it must necessarily be clarified"²⁷ (id). In other words, it is a fair and fundamental question, relevant to the discussion at hand, especially one that must be clarified before the discussion could usefully continue and conclude.

²¹ The comparison is from Jayatileke, 1963:220, but I have used my own terms under "Saccaka."

²² Note that *rūpa* (bodily form) is described as "formed of the four great elements and *thriving on gross food*" (*cātum,mahā.bhūtiko kabaliṅkār'āhāra,bhakkho*, D 1:186), ie *anna,maya* (made of food). (Jayatileke's fn)

²³ The *saṅkhāras* include "in and out breathing" (*assāsa,passāsa...kāya,saṅkhāro*, M 1:301), which is equivalent to *prāṇa* in the Upaniṣads (v Brhad-Aranyaka U 3.9.26; Kathā U 2.2.5). (Jayatileke's fn)

²⁴ Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, 1932: 161.

²⁵ Cf *sakkāya,dīṭṭhi* (*sakkāya = sat kāya? = asti,kāya?*). See RO Franke, *Dīghanikāyo* 1913: 45; W Geiger, *Pali Grammar* 1943 (rev 1994) §24 n3; H Kern, *Toevoegselen op't Woordenboek van Childers* 1916 2:52; *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1894: 324.

²⁶ Vajra,pāṇī (Skt) (*Vajira,pāṇī*, lit "thunderbolt in hand"). Comy says that he is Shakra, king of the gods (*Sakka deva,rāja*, MA 2:277).

²⁷ *Attanā anicchantena pi vyākariṭabbo, avassam vissajetabbo* (DA 1:263).

The Buddha's humour is at work here, and with his favourite audience, too!²⁸ This Sutta is clearly directed at a brahmin audience. The head-shattering threat is well known to the brahmins and, as evident here, to the early Buddhists and commentators.²⁹ But this is only a sort of comic relief; for, the real action is to come, when the Buddha convinces Saccaka of the truth (which we will now turn to).

3.4 THE BUDDHA OUTWITS SACCACA.

3.4.1 The Buddha's instructions. Jayatilleke has noted that the Buddha, in reply to Saccaka, advocates the theory of not-self (*anattā*) which follows a pattern of argument very similar to that used by Prajāpati in the earlier part of his theory, as recorded in the Chāndogya Upaniṣad. However, unlike the god Prajāpati, the Buddha, takes the various aspects of a person and shows that none of them can be identified with the *ātman*, since they do not have the characteristics of the *ātman*. Let us examine the Buddha's opening argument, on *impermanence* and its connection to suffering:

“What do you think, Aggi,vessana? Is form permanent or impermanent?”	<i>Tam kiṃ maññasi aggi,vessana Rūpaṃ niccaṃ vā aniccaṃ vā ‘ti Aniccaṃ ti bho gotama</i>
“Impermanent, master Gotama.”	<i>Yam panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vā taṃ sukhaṃ vā ‘ti</i>
“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”	<i>Dukkhaṃ bho gotamā ‘ti Yam panāniccaṃ dukkhaṃ vipariṇāma,- dhammaṃ, kallaṃ nu taṃ samanupassitūṃ</i>
“Suffering, master Gotama.”	<i>Etam mama, <u>eso ‘ham asmi</u>, <u>eso me attā</u> ‘ti</i>
“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, <u>this I am</u> , this is my self.’?” ³⁰	<i>No h ‘idaṃ bho gotamā ‘ti. [§20]</i>
“No, master Gotama.”	

The same argument is then repeated for the other four aggregates, namely, feeling (*vedanā*), perception (*saññā*), formations (*sankhāra*) and consciousness (*viññāṇa*). Of special interest here is the statement, “This I am” (*eso ‘ham asmi*), indicating the identification, with the corresponding Upaniṣad expression, *ayam aham asmi* (ChU 8.11.1) used for the same purpose. The main difference between the attitudes of Prajāpati and the Buddha is that

the former assumes the existence of an *ātman* and on failing to identify it with any of the aspects of a person, continue to assume that it must exist within it, and is not satisfied with the results of the purely empirical investigation, while the latter as an Empiricist makes use of the definition of the concept of an *ātman* without assuming its existence (or non-existence) and is satisfied with the empirical investigation which shows that no such *ātman* exists because there is no evidence for its existence. (Jayatilleke 1963: 39)

When Saccaka has understood and accepted the nature of *impermanence* and its connection with *suffering*, the Buddha goes on to explain the deeper nature of *suffering*, and its connection with not-self, to him [§§21ab]. To ensure that Saccaka has understood this teaching both intellectually and experientially, that is, he also sees it for himself, the Buddha uses the plaitain tree simile [§22a].

²⁸ Most of the Buddha's humour is directed at the brahmins' pride, arrogance and immorality: see eg **Kevalāḍḍha S** (D 11.67-85/1:215-223): even Brahmā does not know the answer; **Aggañña S** (D 27.3-4/3:81 f), brahmins, like humans, are not born of God's mouth, but of a woman's womb; **Akkosaka S** (S 7.2/1:161-163): the gift not taken belongs to the giver; **Vasala S** (Sn 116, 117): the truly twice-born. See **The Buddha's Humour** = SD 43.1.

²⁹ For details, see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3) = SD 21.3 Intro (4).

³⁰ *Etam mama, eso ‘ham asmi, eso me attā ti*. These are “the 3 grasplings” (*ti,vidha gāha*), ie, of view (*diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) (MA 2:111, 225). The notion “This is mine” arises through craving (*taṇhā*); the notion “This I am” arises through conceit (*māna*); the notion “This is my self” arises through views (*diṭṭhi*). These three considerations represent respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), and of conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). The opposite formula, *n ‘etaṃ mama, n ‘eso ‘ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*, is applied below to the 5 aggregates [§§15-19]. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

3.4.2 Dramatic moments. Finally, seeing that Saccaka has fully understand his instructions and accepted them, the Buddha chides him for boasting earlier, pointing out that it is Saccaka now who is sweating! In a coup de grâce, the Buddha removes his outer robe to show that he has not sweated on account of the debate, that is, he is comfortable with the whole procedure! [§22b] This is probably the first recorded case we have of the saying, “no sweat” (a slang referring to something that is easily done)!

At this point, Dummukha, either an erstwhile supporter of the Buddha or impressed at the whole proceeding, proclaims a simile, comparing the defeated Saccaka to a limbless crab [§23]! Apparently, it could have been Dummukha who speaks the second remark at §6 (“How could he, being Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, refute the recluse Gotama?” etc).

Evidently, Saccaka still has some pride left. (In fact, as we will see [3.6], Saccaka still considers himself a saint.) In an uncharacteristic tone, reflecting both humility and exasperation, but with a humorous effect, he tries to remind Dummukha that he has no quarrel with him! Then turning to the Buddha, he finally admits defeat and closes the debate. He now earnestly asks the Buddha a question on the higher training [§24a].

3.5 THE TRAINING OF THE DISCIPLES.

3.5.1 The learner’s training. Saccaka asks the Buddha to talk about a disciple “who has crossed beyond doubt, become free of uncertainties, gained fearless confidence, and dwells in the Teaching independent of others?”³¹ This is actually a stock description of a streamwinner (*sotāpanna*),³² but here also applies to other learners (*sekha*), that is, saints on the path to awakening, short of the full-fledged arhat, the non-learner (*asekha*).³³

The Buddha answers with a description of the learner’s training, that is, with a similar instruction as given to the five monks as recorded in **the Anatta,lakkhaṇa Sutta** (S 22.59).³⁴ The totality formula³⁵ is applied to each of the five aggregates, which the trainee does not own, nor identifies with, nor externalizes: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” [§24b].

Such a disciple clears his doubts, cultivates wise faith in the Dharma, and becomes emotionally independent.³⁶ He is a true individual (*sappurisa*)³⁷ on the way to become a noble individual (*ariya,puggala*), or already one, but not yet a full-fledged arhat.

3.5.2 The arhat’s supremacies. Having heard the Buddha’s explanation of nature of the trainee, Saccaka goes on to ask about the arhat. The Buddha explains that the arhat is one who *has seen* all the five aggregates “as they really are with right wisdom thus, ‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’” and so “is liberated through not clinging” [§25] and reached his spiritual goal [§26a].

The Buddha then explains that the arhat has the three supremacies (*ānuttariya*),³⁸ that is,

- | | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------|
| (1) in the supremacy of vision | (<i>dassanānuttariya</i>), | |
| (2) in the supremacy of practice | (<i>paṭipadā’nuttariya</i>), and | |
| (3) in the supremacy of liberation | (<i>vimuttānuttariya</i>). | [§26b] |

Considering that the Buddha immediately goes on to state that such a liberated saint with the three supremacies sees the Buddha’s true qualities and teaches them for the purpose of spiritual liberation, we can safely say that these are *supramundane* qualities.

³¹ *tiṇṇa,vicikiccho vigata,katham.katho vesārajjā-p,patto apara-p,paccayo satthu,sāsane viharatī ti*, as in **Mahā Vaccha,gotta S** (M 73.10/1:491).

³² On the streamwinner, see **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3.

³³ On the types of saints, see **Kiṭṭā,giri S** (M 70.14/1:473-481) & SD 11.1 Intro (5).

³⁴ S 22.59:17-21/3:68 = SD 1.2.

³⁵ “Totality formula,” see §24b(1) n below, & also **Mahā Rāhul’ovāda S** (M 62.3/1:421) = SD 3.11.

³⁶ On emotional independence, see **Atammayātā** = SD 19.13 (7.6).

³⁷ On *sappurisa*, see **Sappurisa S** (M 113/3:37-45) & SD 23.7 Intro (1+3).

³⁸ At M 1:235 (MA 2:281 f); D 3:219, 250; cf the 6 supremacies: *dassanānuttariya, savanānuttariya, lābhānuttariya, sikkhā’nuttariya, pāricariyānuttariya*, and *anusatānuttariya* (D 3:281; (**Saṅkhitta**) **Ānuttariya Sutta**, A 6.8/3:284 in brief, also at **Rāga,peyyāla** A 6.121/3:451; details at (**Vitthāra**) **Ānuttariya Sutta**, A 6.30/3:325-328 = SD 14.15).

Buddhaghosa, in his Sutta commentary, however, gives scholastic interpretations of the three supremacies. According to him, these three supremacies are *both mundane and supramundane* wisdom, practice, and liberation. Or, they are entirely *supramundane*, that is, the first is the right view of the path of arhathood; the second, the remaining seven path factors (of the eightfold path); and the third, the foremost fruit (of arhathood). Or, the first is the vision of nirvana; the second, the path factors; and the third, the highest fruit. (MA 2:281). Buddhaghosa is here interpreting the three supremacies in a broad sense, that is, the training of one ending in arhathood. But it is clear that the Sutta refers exclusively to *the qualities of a full-fledged arhat*, without the need for scholastic elaborations.

3.6 SACCAKA DOES NOT GO FOR REFUGE. Convinced with the Buddha’s explanations, and with no more elocutionary boasts or debatable options left, Saccaka finally admits that he has been “bold and arrogant in thinking that we could attack master Gotama in debate,” this time adding three colourful similes in praise of the Buddha [§27].

As a gesture of repentance, diplomacy, or goodwill, he invites the Buddha and the order to a meal on the following day. Clearly, Saccaka the debater is also a man of means. And he makes a very positive Buddhist gesture, too.³⁹ he invites the 500 Licchavīs, most of whom are his supporters and admirers, to join him in his merit-making. And they oblige [§28].

After the meal has been offered [§29], Saccaka apparently makes another generous gesture: he declares, “May the merit and the mass of meritorious fruit be for the happiness of the donors!” But why really does he say this? This is because the Licchavīs have brought the gifts (probably obligingly) for Saccaka, not specifically for the Buddha or the Sangha. But, notes the Commentary, it is Saccaka who gives to the Buddha (MA 2:283). Apparently, Saccaka wants to present himself as a gracious person who is magnanimous in defeat, so that he can at least salvage whatever respect he has left.

The Sutta hints at the possibility that Saccaka is not really repentant. After all, he has neither taken refuge, nor does he request for a postprandial (after-meal) discourse from the Buddha. He merely admits defeat and is doing what he sees as politically correct in presenting almsfood to the Buddha. In fact, this is also the case when Saccaka meets the Buddha again, when he is given a longer discourse by the Buddha, that is, as recorded in **the Mahā Saccaka Sutta** (M 36).⁴⁰

The Commentary to the Cūḷa Saccaka Sutta gives an interesting reason for Saccaka’s not going for refuge: despite his defeat, Saccaka still considers himself a saint, and as such does not deem it necessary to go for refuge in the Three Jewels! For this reason, too, he thinks that it is improper (or unnecessary) for him to dedicate the merit of his giving to himself, and so he dedicate them to the Licchavī.

The Buddha, however, replies that the Licchavīs will gain the merit of providing Saccaka with food to offer to the Buddha and his order, but Saccaka himself has gained the merit of his own giving (MA 2: 283). The merit of both types of giving, of course, differs, as explained in **the Dakkhina Vibhaṅga Sutta** (M 142),⁴¹ that is, Saccaka’s giving to the order headed by the Buddha is much more meritorious than those of the Licchavīs’ giving to Saccaka, one who is outside the teaching.

The Commentary to the Mahā Saccaka Sutta (M 36) explains that, even though Saccaka—as in the case of the wanderer Nigrodha, as reported in **the Udumbarika Sīha,nāda Sutta** (D 25)⁴²—does not reach any attainment, nor does he take refuge, the Buddha still gives him two long discourses (M 35-36). This is done so as to place in him a “mental impression” (*vāsanā*), that is, the seeds of good karma, that would mature in the future. According to the Commentary, the Buddha foresees that in due course, when his Dispensation is established in Sri Lanka, Saccaka will be reborn there and attain arhathood, that is, he would become as the great arhat, the elder Kāḷa Buddha, rakkhita. (MA 2:293 f).

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³⁹ Buddhaghosa credits Sāriputta with saying that if we were to give and also encourage others to give, we would be blessed with both wealth and a good following (DhA 1.71/1:78): see **Group Karma** = SD 39.1 (2.5).

⁴⁰ M 36/1:237-251 = SD 49.4.

⁴¹ (M 142.6/3:255) = SD 1.9.

⁴² D 25.24/3:57 = SD 1.4.

The Lesser Discourse on Saccaka

(M 35/1:227-237)

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the Pinnacled Hall⁴³ in the Mahāvana [the Great Forest] near Vesālī.

Saccaka's boast

2 At that time, Saccaka the nirgranthi's son⁴⁴ was dwelling near Vesālī—he was a debater and a clever speaker, regarded as a holy man [a sadhu] by the masses.⁴⁵

He made this statement before the Vesālī congregation:

“I see neither recluse nor brahmin, the head of an order, leader of a group [congregation], or congregation teacher,⁴⁶ even those who claim to be an arhat, fully self-awakened,⁴⁷ who would not shake, shiver, shudder, and sweat under the armpits,⁴⁸ if he were to debate with me. Even if I were to debate with a senseless post, it would shake, shiver, and shudder, what more to speak of a human being debating with me!”

Saccaka meets Assaji

3 Then in the morning, the venerable Assaji,⁴⁹ having dressed himself, taking robe and bowl, entered Vesālī for alms.

As Saccaka the nirgranthi's son was walking about on a stroll⁵⁰ in Vesālī, [228] he saw the venerable Assaji coming from afar.

⁴³ *Kūṭ'āgāra, sālā*. LS Cousins that the *kūṭ'āgāra* was “[o]riginally, this was a “gabled house,” ie, one with a horseshoe-shaped gable—probably outside a village and used for ritual purposes. Later, the same type of design was used for (Buddhist) shrine halls and even for palanquins and elaborate biers and (in a secular context) for any chamber in a pāsāda with a gable of similar design.” (Review of M:ÑB, in *Journal of Buddhist Ethics* 14, 1997: 267 f). See Willem B Bollée, “The *kūṭ'āgāra* or From Men's House to Mansion in Eastern India and South-East Asia,” in *Shastric Traditions in Indian Arts*, (edd) Anna Libera Dallapiccola, Christine Walter-Mendy & Stephanie Zingel-Avé Lallemand, vol 1, Texts, pp. 143–149; XXXVI-XLI Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag Wiesbaden GMBH, 1989.

⁴⁴ Comy says his parents are both nirgranthas (Jains) (MA 2:268), but throughout this Sutta, he is called *Nigān-thī,putta*, “the son of the nirgranthi (a Jain woman).”

⁴⁵ *Bhassa-p, pavādako paṇḍita, vādo sādhu, sammato bahu, janassa*, as at **Mahā Saccaka S** (M 36.3/1:237) = SD 49.4.

⁴⁶ *Samaṇam vā brāhmaṇam vā, saṅghim gaṇim gaṇ'ācariyam*. Omitting the first pair, *saṅghim gaṇim gaṇ'ācariyam*, is stock, often spoken of the six teachers, as in **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.2/1:47) = SD 8, **Mahāparinibbāna S** (D 16.5.26a/2:150) = SD 9; **Cūḷa Sāropama S** (M 30.2/1:198), **Mahā Sakul'udāyi S** (M 77/2:2) = SD 49.5; also S 1:68, Sn p92 f; more rarely, of the Buddha himself: **Kutūhala, sāla S** (S 44.9/4:399) = SD 23.15, **Sabhiya S** (Sn p92 f). At D 2 & 16, we have more details: *saṅghī c'eva gaṇī ca gaṇ'ācariyo ca nāto yasassī titthakaro sādhu, sammato bahu, janassa rattaññū cira, pabbajito addha, gato vayo anuppatto* (“who are accomplished... well known and famous, ford-maker [who brings one across the river of suffering], esteemed as good by the masses, one of great experience, long gone forth, advanced in years”) (D 2.2/1:47 = SD 8; D 16.5.26/2:150 = SD 9). Cf foll n.

⁴⁷ *Nāham taṃ passāmi samaṇam vā brāhmaṇam vā, saṅghim gaṇim gaṇ'ācariyam, api arahantaṃ sammā, sambuddham paṭijānamānam*.

⁴⁸ Sweating, also called perspiration, sometimes transpiration. There are two situations in which our nerves will stimulate sweat glands making us sweat: during physical heat, and emotional stress. Emotionally induced sweating is generally restricted to palms, soles, armpits, and the forehead, while physical heat induced sweating occurs throughout the body. See [Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique](http://www.centre-national-de-la-recherche-scientifique.fr/).

⁴⁹ Assaji, one of the first five monks, is Sāriputta's teacher (MA 2:270): for their first meeting, see V 1:39 f.

⁵⁰ “Walking about on a stroll,” *jaṅghā, vihāram anucaṅkamāno anuvicaramāno*, lit “wandering to and fro on foot and walking up and down” (KR Norman, *Group of Discourses II*, 1992: 63). Stock phrase as at D 1:235; M 1:108, 227, 2:118, 3:128; A 1:136, 138, 3:76; Sn p105, p115. Comy: “For the sake of seeing parks, woods, mountains” (MA 2:73). Cf “walking up and down in the open” (*abbhokāse caṅkamanti*), usu in walking meditation [§7].

Seeing the venerable Assaji coming from afar, he approached him, and then exchanged greetings with the venerable Assaji. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, Saccaka the nirgranthi's son stood at one side. Standing thus as one side, Saccaka the nirgranthi's son said this to the venerable Assaji:

4 “Master Assaji, how does the recluse Gotama discipline his disciples? And how is instruction apportioned amongst the disciples of the recluse Gotama?”⁵¹

“Yes, Aggī, vessana,⁵² the Blessed One disciplines his disciples. Instruction is apportioned amongst the disciples of the Blessed One in this manner:

‘Form, bhikshus, is impermanent; feeling is impermanent; perception is impermanent; formations are impermanent; consciousness is impermanent.

Form, bhikshus, is not-self; feeling is not-self; perception is not-self; formations are not-self; consciousness is not-self.

All formations are impermanent (sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā).

All things are not self (sabbe dhammā anattā).⁵³

Thus, Aggī, vessana, the Blessed One disciplines his disciples. Instruction is apportioned amongst the disciples of the Blessed One in this manner.”

“Master Assaji, this is unfit for hearing⁵⁴ indeed for us, that the recluse Gotama speaks thus!⁵⁵ Perhaps we could meet the master Gotama, somewhere, sometime; perhaps there might be some conversation; perhaps we could detach [dissuade] him from that evil wrong view!”

Saccaka challenges the Buddha

5 Now at the time, some five hundred Licchavīs had gathered in the assembly-hall on some business or other.

Then Saccaka the nirgranthi's son approached the Licchavīs, and said this:

“Come on, good Licchavīs! Come on, good Licchavīs! Today, there will be a conversation between the recluse Gotama and me.

If the recluse Gotama maintains this before me just as one of his well known disciples, the monk named Assaji, has done,

it would be just as⁵⁶ a strong man, having taken hold of the fleece of a large long-fleeced ram, were to haul it forwards (towards himself), might haul it backwards, might haul it forwards and backwards,

even so, shall I, word by word, haul the recluse Gotama forwards, might haul him backwards, might haul him forwards and backwards.

Just as a strong brewer's workman, [229] having taken a brewer's strainer and plunged it into a deep tank of water, and taking it by the corner, were to toss it forwards (towards himself), might toss it backwards, might toss it forwards and backwards,

even so, shall I, word by word, toss the recluse Gotama forwards, toss him backwards, toss him forwards and backwards.

Just as a sixty-year-old elephant might plunge into a deep pool and enjoy a game of hemp-washing,⁵⁷

⁵¹ *Katham, bhāgā ca pana samaṇassa gotamassa sāvakesu anusāsani bahulā pavattati 'ti.*

⁵² Skt Āgni, veśyāyana or Āgni, veśya, a descendent (1) of Agni, the fire god, (2) of the sage Agni, veśa dynasty, or (3) of the Agni, veśya dynasty of ancient rulers. See Śatapatha Brahmana 14 (cf Bṛhad Āraṇyaka Upaniṣad), Taittiriya Upaniṣad, Mahābhārata 14. In the early Canon, amongst those addressed as Aggī, vessana are: Saccaka the nirgranthi's son (M 35.4/1:228, M 36.5/1:238), the wanderer Dīgha, nakha, Sāriputta's nephew (M 1:497), and the novice Acira, vata (M 3:128).

⁵³ Dh 277a, 279a; with omission of Dh 278a: “All formations are suffering” (*sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā*). Comy explains that Assaji omits the *dukkha* statement to prevent Saccaka from attacking the Buddha's teaching, and so create bad karma for himself (MA 2:271). See Intro (3.2).

⁵⁴ *Dussutam*, which Comy glosses as “unfit for the ear,” meaning improper, impossible (*sotum ayuttam*, MA 2:271).

⁵⁵ *Dussutam vata, bho assaji, assumha ye mayam evam, vādim samaṇam gotamam assumha.*

⁵⁶ The foll 4 similes as in **Upāli S** (M 56.7/1:374 f) = SD 27.1.

even so, I shall sport with the recluse Gotama in a game of hemp-washing.

Come on, good Licchavīs! Come on, good Licchavīs! Today, there will be a conversation between the recluse Gotama and me.

6 Then some Licchavīs spoke thus:

“How could the recluse Gotama refute Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son? But indeed it is Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son who would refute the recluse Gotama’s word!”

Some Licchavīs spoke thus:

“How could he, being Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, refute the recluse Gotama?⁵⁸ But indeed it is the recluse Gotama who would refute Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son’s word!”

Then Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, surrounded by the five hundred Licchavīs went to the Pinnacled Hall in the Mahā,vana [the Great Forest].

Saccaka questions the Buddha

7 Now at that time, some monks were walking up and down in the open.⁵⁹ Then Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son approached the monks, and said this to them:

“Sirs, where is master Gotama staying now? We want to see the master Gotama.”

“The Blessed One, Aggī,vessana, has gone into the Mahā,vana, sitting under at the root of a certain tree for his midday rest.”

8 Then Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, with a great company of Licchavīs plunged into in the Mahā,-vana [the Great Forest], and approached the Blessed One.

Having approached the Blessed One, he exchanged greetings with him. When this courteous and friendly exchange was concluded, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son sat down at one side.

As regards the Licchavīs, some greeted the Blessed One with lotus-palms; some exchanged greetings and cordial talk with him; some announced their name and clan before the Blessed One—and then sat down at one side. Some kept silent and sat down at one side.

9 Seated thus at one side, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son said this to the Blessed One:

“May I ask master Gotama a question about a certain matter. If master Gotama permits me, I would like to ask a question.”⁶⁰

“Ask, Aggī,vessana, whatever you wish.” [230]

“How, master Gotama, does master Gotama discipline his disciples? And how is instruction apportioned amongst the disciples of master Gotama?”

“Yes, Aggī,vessana, I discipline disciples. Instruction is apportioned amongst my disciples in this manner:

‘Form, bhikshus, is impermanent; feeling is impermanent; perception is impermanent; formations are impermanent; consciousness is impermanent.

Form, bhikshus, is not-self; feeling is not-self; perception is not-self; formations are not-self; consciousness is not-self.

⁵⁷ This simile as in **Upāli S** (M 56.7/1:374 f); **Anicca,saññā S** (S 22.101/3:155); **Appamāda S** (A 6.53/3:365), 2nd simile. “Hemp-washing” (Ee *saṇa,dhovika*; Be Se *sāṇa,dhovika*). Comy says that men played this game while preparing hemp. They tied up handfuls of rough hemp (*saṇa,vāka*), immersed them in water; then beat them on planks (*phalaka*) to the left, to the right, to the middle. A royal elephant saw this game, and plunging into the water, took water in his trunk and sprayed it on his belly, his body, both sides, and the groin (MA 2:272). In the Brahma-jāla S comy, *sāṇa,dhovana* refers to a game of the outcastes (*caṇḍāla*), played with an iron ball (*ayo,guḷa,kīḷā*) (DA 84). See PED: nichchodeti & *Journal of the Pali Text Society* 1917: 53.

⁵⁸ *Kim so bhavamāno saccako niganthaputto yo bhagavato vādāṃ āropessati*. Comy: The meaning is that it is not possible for an ordinary human being to refute the Blessed One (MA 2:272). This is probably spoken by someone familiar with the Buddha, such as Dummukha: cf §24a.

⁵⁹ “Walking up and down in the open” (*abbhokāse caṅkamanti*), usu doing mild exercise or doing walking meditation. Cf §3: “walking about on a stroll” (*jaṅghā,vihāraṃ anucaṅkamāno anuvicaramāno*).

⁶⁰ *Puccheyyāhaṃ bhavantaṃ gotamaṃ kiñcid eva desaṃ, sace me bhavaṃ gotamo okāsaṃ karoti pañhassa veyyākaraṇāyā ti*. Stock, as at D 1:51; M 3:15; A 5:39.

All formations are impermanent. All things [dharmas] are not self.’

Thus, Aggi,vessana, the Blessed One disciplines his disciples. Instruction is apportioned amongst the disciples of the Blessed One in this manner.”

Saccaka’s wrong view

10 “A simile comes to mind, master Gotama.”⁶¹

“Let it come to mind, Aggi,vessana,” said the Blessed One.

“Master Gotama, just as every seed and plant grow and mature, becoming abundant, they all depend on the earth, stand in earth, even so, these seeds and plants grow and mature, becoming abundant.”⁶²

And just as when heavy work that needs to be done, they all depend on the earth, stand in earth, even so, do these heavy works that need to be done.

Even so, master Gotama,

an individual⁶³ has physical form as self,⁶⁴ and standing in physical form produces merit and demerit;

an individual has feeling as self, and standing in feeling produces merit and demerit;

an individual has perception as self, and standing in perception produces merit and demerit;

an individual has formations as self, and standing in formations produces merit and demerit;

an individual has consciousness as self, and standing in consciousness produces merit and demerit.”⁶⁵

11 “Aggi,vessana, are you not saying thus:

‘Physical form is my self; feeling is my self; perception is my self; formations are my self; consciousness is my self.’?”

“Yes, master Gotama, I am saying so, that physical form is my self; feeling is my self; perception is my self; formations are my self; consciousness is my self. And so does this great gathering!”

“What has this great multitude to do with you, Aggi,vessana? Come now, Aggi,vessana, restrict your own view to just yourself!”⁶⁶

“Yes, master Gotama, I am saying so, that physical form is my self; feeling is my self; perception is my self; formations are my self; consciousness is my self.”

Counterquestion: Why there is no self

12 “In that case, Aggi,vessana, I will ask you regarding just this. Answer it in any way you wish.

[231] Now what do you think, Aggi,vessana? Would a head-anointed kshatriya rajah—such as the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala, or the rajah Ajāta,sattu Vedehī,putta [the son of the lady Videhā]—wield power over their subjects so as to execute those who should be executed, to penalize [amerce] those who should be penalized [amerced], and to banish those who should be banished?”

“Yes, master Gotama, a head-anointed kshatriya rajah—such as the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala, or the rajah Ajāta,sattu Vedehī,putta—wield power over their subjects so as to execute those who should be executed, to penalize [amerce] those who should be penalized [amerced], and to banish those who should be banished.

For, master Gotama, even those republics (*saṅgha*) and tribes (*gaṇa*)—that is to say, the Vajjī and the Mallas—wield power over their subjects so as to execute, that is, to execute those who should be executed, to penalize [amerce] those who should be penalized [amerced], and to banish those who should be banished.

⁶¹ Saccaka is apparently being sarcastic here; cf §23, where Dummukha does a tit for tat.

⁶² As at Miln 33.

⁶³ *Purisa,puggala*. See V:H 3: xxv ff.

⁶⁴ *Rūpaṃ me attā*; Comy glosses as “Form is his soul, therefore it is ‘bodily self’ (Skt *rūp’ātma*)” (*rūpaṃ attā assā ti rūpattā* (MA 2:275). See Intro (3.3).

⁶⁵ See Intro (3.3.2).

⁶⁶ *Ayañ ca mahatī janatā ti*. This is an argumentum ad populum (appealing to the public): an argument aimed to sway popular support by appealing to sentimental weakness rather than facts and reasons. It is based on the wrong notion that if the majority believes it, it must be true, or that “the majority cannot be wrong.”

What more to speak of a head-anointed kshatriya rajah—such as the rajah Pasenadi of Kosala, or the rajah Ajāta, sattu Vedehī, putta—they would exercise it, master Gotama, and they would be worthy of it.⁶⁷

Saccaka falls silent

13a “What do you think, Aggi, vessana? When you said thus: ‘Physical form is my self’—do you have power over your physical form, as to say,

‘Let my form be such! Let my form not be such!’?”⁶⁸

13b When this was said, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son remained silent.

For the second time, the Blessed One said this to Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son:

“What do you think, Aggi, vessana? When you said thus: ‘Physical form is my self’—do you have power over your physical form, as to say,

‘Let my form be such! Let me form not be such!’?”

For the second time, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son remained silent.

Then, the Blessed One said this to Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son:

Vajrapani

13c “Answer now, Aggi, vessana, now is *not* the time for your silence! If anyone, when asked a reasonable question up to the third time by the Tathagata, still does not answer, his head would split right there into seven pieces!”⁶⁹

14 Now at that time, the yaksha Vajrapani [Thunderbolt-bearer],⁷⁰ wielding a great blazing club of glowing iron,⁷¹ standing in the air above Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, thinking:

“If this Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son does not answer the Blessed One regarding the reasonable [Dharma-based] question, then I will surely split his head into seven pieces!”⁷²

Then the Blessed One saw the yaksha Vajrapani, and Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, too, saw him.

Then Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son was terrified, filled with samvega [a sense of urgency],⁷³ his hairs standing on ends. [232] He sought safety in the Blessed One; he sought shelter (like a cave) in the Blessed One; he sought refuge in the Blessed One.⁷⁴ Sitting very close⁷⁵ to the Blessed One, he said this:

‘Ask me, master Gotama, I will answer!’

The Buddha points out Saccaka’s wrong views

⁶⁷ *Vattheyya, bho gotama, vattituñ ca-m-arahatī ti.*

⁶⁸ *Tam kim maññasi, Aggi, vessana, yaṃ tvam evaṃ vadesi, rūpaṃ me attā ti, vattati te tasmim rūpe vaso; evaṃ me rūpaṃ hotu, evaṃ me rūpaṃ mā ahoṣi ti?* A similar teaching on “form” (*rūpa*) is found in **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.3-4/3:66 = V 1:13) = SD 1.2, but where the other four aggregates are also listed. Here the Buddha is stating that the aggregates are not self because “they lack one of the essential characteristics of selfhood—being susceptible to the exercise of mastery. What cannot come under my mastery or perfect control cannot be identified as ‘my self.’” (M:ÑB 1227 n374). See Intro (3.3).

⁶⁹ *Eth’eva’ssa sattadhā muddhā phalatī ti.* On this head-splitting comment, see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.1.20/1:94) = SD 21.3 Intro (4.1).

⁷⁰ *Vajra, pāṇī* (Skt) (*Vajira, pāṇī*, lit “thunderbolt in hand”). Comy says that he is Shakra, king of the gods (*Sakka deva, rāja*, MA 2:277). See Intro (3.3.2) & **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.1.21a/1:94) = SD 21.3 Intro (4.2).

⁷¹ *Ayo, kūta*, “iron club”: see **Ambaṭṭha S** (D 3.1.21a/1:94) = SD 21.3 Intro (4.2).

⁷² *Sacāyaṃ saccako niḡaṇṭha, putto bhagavatā yāva, tatiyaṃ saha, dhammikaṃ pañham puṭṭho na byākarissati eth’eva’ssa sattadhā muddham phālessāmī ti.* On head-shattering, see Intro (3.3.2).

⁷³ *Samvega*: see SD 9 Intro (7f).

⁷⁴ *Bhagavantam yeva tāṇam gavesī bhagavantam yeva leṇam gavesī bhagavantam yeva saraṇam gavesī.* D 1:95. Cf S 4:315, 4:372; A 1:155 f; J 2:253.

⁷⁵ “Sitting very close (to),” *upanisīditvā*, from *upanisīdati* [*upa* + *nisīdati* (from √SAD, “to sit”) to sit close to or sit down near to (D 1:95; A 4:10; J 2:347; Pv 4.163 (ger *upanisajja* = *upanisīditvā*, PvA 242); Vism 269. There is a hint of humour here alluding to the Upanishad tradition that was prevalent during the Buddha’s time.

15 “What do you think, Aggi,vessana? When you said thus: ‘Form is my self’—do you have power over your form, as to say,

‘Let my form be such! Let my form not be such!’?”

“No indeed, master Gotama.”

16 “Pay attention, Aggi,vessana! Having paid attention, Aggi,vessana, then answer. What you said earlier, Aggi,vessana, is not connected with what you said later, nor what you said later with what you said earlier!⁷⁶

What do you think, Aggi,vessana? When you said thus: ‘Feeling is my self,’—do you have power over your feeling, as to say,

‘Let my feeling be such! Let my feeling not be such!’?”

“No indeed, master Gotama.”

17 “Pay attention, Aggi,vessana! Having paid attention, Aggi,vessana, then answer. What you said earlier, Aggi,vessana, is not connected with what you said later, nor what you said later with what you said earlier!

What do you think, Aggi,vessana? When you said thus: ‘Perception is my self,’—do you have power over your perception, as to say,

‘Let my perception be such! Let my perception not be such!’?”

“No indeed, master Gotama.”

18 “Pay attention, Aggi,vessana! Having paid attention, Aggi,vessana, then answer. What you said earlier, Aggi,vessana, is not connected with what you said later, nor what you said later with what you said earlier!

What do you think, Aggi,vessana? When you said thus: ‘Formations are my self,’—do you have power over your formations, as to say,

‘Let my formations be such! Let my formations not be such!’?”

“No indeed, master Gotama.”

19 “Pay attention, Aggi,vessana! Having paid attention, Aggi,vessana, then answer. What you said earlier, Aggi,vessana, is not connected with what you said later, nor what you said later with what you said earlier!

What do you think, Aggi,vessana? When you said thus: ‘Consciousness is my self,’—do you have power over your consciousness, as to say,

‘Let my consciousness be such! Let my consciousness not be such!’?”

“No indeed, master Gotama.”

The three characteristics⁷⁷

20 “Pay attention, Aggi,vessana! Having paid attention, Aggi,vessana, then answer. What you said earlier, Aggi,vessana, is not connected with what you said later, nor what you said later with what you said earlier!

(1) What do you think, Aggi,vessana? Is **form** permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”⁷⁸

“Suffering, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, [233] this is my self.’?”⁷⁹

⁷⁶ *Na kho te sandhiyati purimena vā pacchimaṃ pacchimena vā purimam*, lit “Your rear is not linked with your front, nor your front with your rear.”

⁷⁷ This section is mutatis mutandis at **Anatta,lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-16/3:67-69) = SD 1.2.

⁷⁸ *Dukkhaṃ vā sukhaṃ vā*.

⁷⁹ *Etam mama, eso ‘ham asmi, eso me attā ti*. These are “the 3 graspings” (*ti,vidha gāha*), ie, of view (*diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), of conceit (*māna*) (MA 2:111, 225). The notion “This is mine” arises through craving (*taṇhā*); the notion “This I am” arises through conceit (*māna*); the notion “This is my self” arises through views (*diṭṭhi*). These

“No, master Gotama.”

(2) “Now, what do you think, Aggi,vessana, is **feeling** permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”

“Suffering, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’?”

“No, master Gotama.”

(3) “Now, what do you think, Aggi,vessana, is **perception** permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”

“Suffering, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’?”

“No, master Gotama.”

(4) “Now, what do you think, Aggi,vessana, are **formations** permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”

“Suffering, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’?”

“No, master Gotama.”

(5) “Now, what do you think, Aggi,vessana, is **consciousness** permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent suffering or pleasurable?”

“Suffering, master Gotama.”

“Is what is impermanent, suffering and subject to change fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self.’?”

“No, master Gotama.”

The disadvantage of suffering

21a “What do you think, Aggi,vessana? *When one sticks to suffering*, undergoes suffering, grasps suffering, and regards what is suffering, thus:

‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self,’

could one ever fully understand suffering oneself or abide with suffering totally destroyed?”⁸⁰

“How could one, master Gotama? Not at all, master Gotama.”⁸¹

21b⁸² “What do you think, Aggi,vessana? That being the case, *would you stick to suffering*, undergo suffering, grasp suffering, and regard what is suffering, thus:

three considerations represent respectively the 3 kinds of mental proliferation (*papañca*) of self-view (*sakkāya diṭṭhi*), of craving (*taṇhā*), and of conceit (*māna*) (Nm 280; Vbh 393; Nett 37 f). The opposite formula, *n’etaṃ mama, n’eso ’ham asmi, na mēso attā ti*, is applied below to the 5 aggregates [§24b]. See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

⁸⁰ “*Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, aggi,vessana, yo nu kho dukkhaṃ allīno dukkhaṃ upagato dukkhaṃ ajjhosito, dukkhaṃ ’etaṃ mama, esohamasmī, eso me attā ’ti samanupassati, api nu kho so sāmāṃ vā dukkhaṃ parijāneyya, dukkhaṃ vā parikkhepetvā vihareyyā ’ti?*”

⁸¹ *Kiñ hi siyā, bho gotama? No h’idaṃ, bho gotamā ’ti.*

⁸² “*Taṃ kiṃ maññasi, aggi,vessana, nanu tvaṃ evaṃ sante dukkhaṃ allīno dukkhaṃ upagato dukkhaṃ ajjhosito, dukkhaṃ, ’etaṃ mama, eso ’ham asmi, eso me attā ’ti samanupassasi ’ti?*” “*Kiñ hi no siyā, bho gotama? Evaṃ etaṃ, bho gotamā ’ti.*” This passage is missing from Ee, but found in Be Ce Se. The aggregates are here said to be suffering because they are impermanent and not under our control. M:ÑB’s rendition does not seem to make sense (M:ÑB 327).

‘This is mine, this I am, this is my self?’”

“How could one not, master Gotama? Such is the case, master Gotama.”⁸³

22a THE PLAIN TAIN TREE SIMILE. “It is as if, Aggī, vessaṇa, a person in need of heartwood, in search of heartwood, wandering about seeking heartwood, were to take a sharp axe and enter a forest. Therein he would see the trunk of a huge plantain tree,⁸⁴ straight, young [fresh], without a solid pith.⁸⁵ He would cut it down at the root, cut off the crown, and unroll the coil. Therein he would not find even sapwood, let alone heartwood.⁸⁶

22b Even so, Aggī, vessaṇa, when you are pressed, questioned, and cross-questioned by me about your own word, you turn out to be empty, hollow, guilty.⁸⁷

But it was you, Aggī, vessaṇa, who made this speech before the Vesālī assembly:

‘I see neither recluse nor brahmin, the head of an order, leader of a group [congregation], or congregation teacher, even those who claim to be an arhat, full self-awakened,⁸⁸ who would not shake, shiver, shudder, and sweat under the armpits, if he were to debate with me. Even if I were to debate with a senseless post, it would shake, shiver, and shudder, what more to speak of a human being debating with me!’

Now, Aggī, vessaṇa, there are some drop of sweats on your forehead, and they have soaked through your upper robe, and fallen to the ground. But there is no sweat on my body now.”

And the Blessed One uncovered his gold-coloured body before the assembly. [234]

When this was spoken, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son sat silent, dismayed, his shoulders drooping, hanging his head, downcast, at a loss for words.

Dummukha’s crab simile

23 Then, Dummukha⁸⁹ the young Licchavī, knowing [seeing] that Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son was sitting silent, dismayed, his shoulders drooping, hanging his head, downcast, at a loss for words, said this to the Blessed One:

“A simile comes to mind, Blessed One.”⁹⁰

“Let it come to mind, Aggī, vessaṇa,”⁹¹ said the Blessed One.

“It is as if, bhante, there were a lotus pond not far from a village or market town, where there is a

⁸³ *Kiñ hi no sīyā, bho gotama? Evam etaṃ, bho gotamā’ ti.*

⁸⁴ The plantain [rhymes with *lantern*], native to India, is a non-woody plant of the genus *Musa*, and is generally used for cooking, unlike the soft, sweet banana (which is sometimes called the dessert banana). It has a soft trunk than can be cut and peel off like an onion, and flowers and fruit only once. Since it has no pith, it is often used as a simile for not-self and emptiness.

⁸⁵ *So tattha passeyya mahantaṃ kadali-k, khandhaṃ ujum̐ navaṃ akukkuka, jātaṃ.* “Without shoots” (*akukkuka, jātaṃ*), as at M 1:233, 18 = S 3:141, 28 = 4:167, 32 ≠ A 2:220, 22; cf M 1:193 SA: there is no pith growing inside (*anto asañjāta, ghana, daṇḍakam̐*, SA 2:323); MA: at flowering time, the inside of a single solid core (pith) grows the size of a thumb; the meaning is that this is not the case (*akukkuka, jātan ti puppha, gahana, kāle anto aṅgutṭha-p, pamāṇo eko ghana, daṇḍako nibbattati, tena virahitan ti attho*, MA 2:279). See **Pheṇa, piṇḍa S** (S 22.95.9/3:141) = SD 17.12.

⁸⁶ This whole simile as at (**Anattā**) **Udāyī S** (S 35.234.10/4:167 f) = SD 26.4.

⁸⁷ *Evam eva kho tvaṃ, Aggī, vessaṇa, mayā sakasmim̐ vāde samanuyuñjīyamāno samanugāhiyamāno samanubhāsiyamāno ritto tuccho aparaddho.* The whole sentence before *ritto* is as at **Alagaddūpama S** (M 22.3/1:130) = SD 3.13. “Guilty” (*aparaddha*) means *pārājita* (“defeated”) (MA 2:279): as at M 1:440.

⁸⁸ *Nāhaṃ taṃ passāmi samaṇaṃ vā brāhmaṇaṃ vā, saṅghim̐ gaṇim̐ gaṇ’ācariyaṃ, api arahantaṃ sammā, sambuddhaṃ paṭijānamānaṃ.* Cf similar, but more common (less emotionally charged) pericope at **Sāmañña, phala S** (D 2.2/1:47) = SD 8.10, **Mahāparinibbāna S** (D 16.5.26/2:150) = SD 9.

⁸⁹ The name means “bad-faced,” but in spite of his name, he is handsome (MA 2:280).

⁹⁰ On the humour of this response, see §10 & n.

⁹¹ *Upamā maṃ, bhagavā, paṭibhātī ti* (all MSS so). It is interesting that Dummukha addresses the Buddha as *bhagavā*, and this is perhaps the only place this occurs (a hapag legomenon). It could be that Dummukha is deeply devoted to the Buddha to address him so, but the term is as a rule used in the third person to refer to the Buddha. As such, we could read *bhante* here instead (as suggested by M:H 1:187 n5).

crab.⁹² Then, bhante, some boys or girls, having gone out of the village or market town, were to approach the lotus pond. Then plunging into the lotus pond, were to draw out the crab from the water, and place it on dry land.

And whenever the crab extended a claw, they hacked it, broke it off, and smashed it, with a stick or potsherd. Thus, bhante, the crab with all its claws hacked, broken off, and smashed, with a stick or potsherd, would be unable to return to the lotus pond again, that is to say, like before.

Even so, bhante, all of⁹³ Saccaka the nirgranthi's son's twisting, turning and wriggling⁹⁴ have been hacked, broken off, and smashed by the Blessed One, and now he cannot approach the Blessed One again for the purpose of debate!⁹⁵

Saccaka relents

24a When this was said, Saccaka the nirgranthi's son said this to Dummukha the young Licchavī: "Come now, Dummukha! Come now, Dummukha! We are not consulting with you here, but with master Gotama.

Master Gotama, let me stop this talk of ours, and of other ordinary ascetics and brahmins. It was mere idle talk, I must admit!

But, master Gotama, in what way is master Gotama's disciple a doer of the Teaching (*sāsana, kara*), follower of instructions (*ovāda, paṭikara*) who has crossed beyond doubt, become free of uncertainties, gained fearless confidence, independent of others, dwells in the Teaching?"⁹⁶

The streamwinner and other learners⁹⁷

24b "Here, Aggi, vessana, my disciple,

(1) with regards to any kind of **form** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near⁹⁸—all forms, sees (*passati*) as they really are with right wisdom thus:

'This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.'⁹⁹ [235]

⁹² *Kakkaṭaka*, vñ *kakkaṭa* (M 1:234,8 = S 1:123,20; M 1:234,12 = S 1:123,23; M 1:234,16 = S 1:123,27).

⁹³ "All of," reading *tāni'pi sabbāni* (Be Ce Se), for *Ee kānici kānici tāni*

⁹⁴ "Contortions, etc," *visūkāyitāni visevitāni vipphanditāni*, used of a horse being broken in in **Bhaddāli S** (M 65.33/1:446).

⁹⁵ The same crab simile is used of Māra in **Satta, vassāni S** (S 42.24/1:122-124).

⁹⁶ *Kittāvata ca nu kho bhoto gotamassa sāvako sāsana, karo hoti ovād, apatikaro tiṇṇa, vicikiccho vigata, katharin. - katha vesāraja-p, patto apara-p, paccayo satthu, sāsane viharatī ti*, as in **Mahā Vaccha, gotta S** (M 73.10/1:491). This actually refers to a streamwinner, a description of whom follows.

⁹⁷ This whole section is mutatis mutandis at **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59:17-21/3:68) = SD 1.2. These are the characteristics of a learner (*sekha*). The arhat, on the other hand, not only has the right view of not-self, but has also abandoned all clinging, as the Buddha explains in the foll §25.

⁹⁸ This is the "totality formula": see S 22.48/3:47. This classification of the five aggregates (by way of the totality formula) is explained in detail in the Vibhaṅga and briefly in the Visuddhimagga: "**internal**" = physical sense-organs; "**external**" = physical sense-objects; "**gross**" = that which impinges (physical internal and external senses, with touch = earth, wind, fire); "**subtle**" = that which does not impinge (mind, mind-objects, mind-consciousness, and water); "**inferior**" = unpleasant and unacceptable sense-experiences [sense-world existence]; "**superior**" = pleasant and acceptable sense-experiences [form & formless existences]; "**far**" = subtle objects ("difficult to penetrate"); "**near**" = gross objects ("easy to penetrate") (Vbh 1-13; Vism 14.73/450 f; Abhs 6.7). "Whether or not the details of the Vibhaṅga exposition are accepted as valid for the *nikāyas*, it seems clear that this formula is intended to indicate how each *khandha* is to be seen as a class of states, manifold in nature and displaying a considerable variety and also a certain hierarchy" (Gethin 1986:41).

⁹⁹ *N'etañ mama, n'eso 'ham asmī, na mēso attā ti*. A brief version, "There can be no considering that (element) as 'I' or 'mine' or 'I am'" (*ahan ti vā maman ti vā asmī ti vā*) is found in **Mahā Hatthi, padōpama S** (M 28/1:184-191 §§6b-7, 11b-12, 16b-17, 21b-22). This is opp of "the 3 grasplings" (*ti, vidha gāha*) formula: *etam mama, eso 'ham asmī, eso me attā ti* [§§20-21]. In **Anatta, lakkhaṇa S** (S 22.59.12-16/3:68), these formulas is applied to the 5

(2) With regards to any kind of **feeling** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all feelings, he sees as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

(3) With regards to any kind of **perception** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all perceptions, he sees as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

(4) With regards to any kind of **formations** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all formations, he sees as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

(5) With regards to any kind of **consciousness** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—all consciousness, he sees as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.’

In this way, Aggi, vessaṇa, my disciple is a doer of the Teaching, a follower of instructions who has crossed beyond doubt, become free of uncertainties, gained fearless confidence, and dwells in the Teaching independent of others.

The full-fledged arhat

25 “And, master Gotama, in what way is a monk *an arhat with influxes*¹⁰⁰ destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal, destroyed the fetters of being, liberated through his own direct knowledge?”¹⁰¹

“Here, Aggi, vessaṇa, a monk,

(1) with regards to any kind of **form** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near¹⁰²—having seen (*disvā*) all forms as they really are with right wisdom, thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’—is liberated through not clinging.¹⁰³

(2) With regards to any kind of **feeling** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—having seen all feelings as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’—is liberated through not clinging.

(3) With regards to any kind of **perception** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—having seen all perceptions as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’—is liberated through not clinging.

aggregates & in **Pārīleyya S** (S 22.81/ 3:94-99) to the 4 primary elements. See also **Rāhula S** (A 4.177/2:164 f). See **Pārīleyya S**, SD 6.16 Intro (5). See Peter Harvey, *The Selfless Mind*, 1995:32 f.

¹⁰⁰ *Āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously tr as “taints” (“deadly taints,” RD), “corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), influx,” or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma’āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence or becoming (*bhava’āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh’āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjā’āsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) is prob older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict under *āsava*.

¹⁰¹ *Arahaṃ hoti khīṇ’āsavo vusitavā kata, karaṇīyo ohita, bhāro anuppatta, sadattho parikkhīṇa, bhava, saṃyojano samma-d-aññā, vimutto*, This is stock: see eg **Aggañña S** (D 27.7/3:83) = SD 2.19.

¹⁰² This is the “totality formula”: see §24b (1) n.

¹⁰³ *Anupādā vimutto hoti*.

(4) With regards to any kind of **formations** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—having seen all formations as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’—is liberated through not clinging.

(5) With regards to any kind of **consciousness** whatsoever—whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near—having seen all consciousnesses as they really are with right wisdom thus:

‘This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self,’—is liberated through not clinging.

26a In this way, Aggi,vessana, is a monk an arhat with influxes destroyed, who have lived the holy life, done what had to be done, laid down the burden, reached their own goal, destroyed the fetters of being, liberated through his own direct knowledge.

The three supremacies

26b Being thus liberated, Aggi,vessana, the monk is accomplished in these three supremacies (*ānuttariya*), namely:¹⁰⁴

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (1) in the supremacy of vision | (<i>dassanānuttariya</i>), |
| (2) in the supremacy of practice | (<i>paṭipadā'nuttariya</i>), and |
| (3) in the supremacy of liberation | (<i>vimuttānuttariya</i>). |

With the mind liberated in this manner, Aggi,vessana, the monk honours, respects, reveres, worships, or esteems the Tathagata,¹⁰⁵ thus:¹⁰⁶

‘The Blessed One is <u>awakened</u> (<i>buddho</i>)	and he teaches the Dharma for awakening.
The Blessed One is <u>mentally tamed</u> (<i>danta</i>)	and he teaches the Dharma for mental taming.
The Blessed One is <u>stilled</u> (<i>santa</i>)	and he teaches the Dharma for stilling.
The Blessed One has <u>crossed over</u> (<i>tiṇṇa</i>)	and he teaches the Dharma for crossing over.
The Blessed One is <u>quenched</u> (<i>parinibbuta</i>)	and he teaches the Dharma for quenching.”

Saccaka confesses

27 When this was said, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son said this to the Blessed One: **[236]**

‘Master Gotama, we were bold and arrogant in thinking that we could attack master Gotama in debate [word for word].

A person, master Gotama, might attack a rutting elephant and find safety; yet he could not attack master Gotama and find safety.

A person, master Gotama, might attack a blazing mass of fire and find safety; yet he could not attack master Gotama and find safety.

A person, master Gotama, might attack a terrible venomous snake and find safety; yet he could not attack master Gotama and find safety.

Master Gotama, we were bold and arrogant in thinking that we could attack Master Gotama in debate. May the Blessed One and the order of monks consent to accept a meal tomorrow from me.”

The Blessed One consented by his silence.

The offerings of Saccaka and the Licchavīs

28 Then, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, knowing that the Blessed One had consented, addressed the Licchavīs:

“Listen to me, good Licchavīs! Master Gotama together with the order of monks have been invited by me for a meal tomorrow.

¹⁰⁴ M 1:235 (MA 2:281 f); D 3:219, 250. See Intro (3.5).

¹⁰⁵ See **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16), where the Buddha declares that he is not to be honoured in an ostentatious or miraculous manner, but through “the supreme worship” (*paramā pūjā*), ie the practice of the Dharma (D 16.5.3b/-2:138) = SD 9.

¹⁰⁶ The foll as at D 3:54; qu at MA 2:134.

As such, you may bring along whatever you think is suitable for him!”¹⁰⁷

29 Then, when the night had ended, the Licchavīs brought along five hundred dishes of boiled milk-rice as food offerings.¹⁰⁸

Then, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, prepared exquisite foods, hard and soft, at his own park and when the night had passed [at dawn], announced the time to the Blessed One:

“Master Gotama, it is time for the meal.”

30 Then, the Blessed One, having dressed himself in the morning and taking robe and bowl, went, along with the order of monks, to Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son’s park. Having arrived there, he sat down on the prepared seat.

Then Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son, with his own hands, served the order of monks headed by the Buddha, exquisite food, hard and soft, and satisfied them. When the Blessed One had finished his meal and taken his hand out of his bowl, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son sat on a low seat at one side.

Seated thus at one side, Saccaka the nirgranthi’s son said this to the Blessed One:

“Master Gotama, may this merit and the mass of meritorious fruit be for the happiness of the donors!”¹⁰⁹

“Aggi, vessana, whatever comes from a giving to a recipient such as yourself—one who is *not* free from lust, *not* free from hate, *not* free from delusion—[237] *that* will be for the givers.”¹¹⁰

And whatever comes about from giving to a recipient such as myself—one who *is* free from lust, free from hate, free from delusion—*that* will be for you!”¹¹¹

— evaṃ —

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¹⁰⁷ *Tena me abhicareyyātha yam assa patirūpaṃ maññeyyāthā ti*. The tone of Saccaka’s instruction suggests that he thought the Licchavīs were not sure of what is proper to be offered to the Buddha, but to bring them anyway, so that he would see which is allowable (*kappiya*) and which not (MA 2:283).

¹⁰⁸ “Five hundred...offerings,” *pañca, mattāni thāli, pāka, satāni bhattābhihāraṃ abhiharimsu*. The word *bhattābhihāra* occurs in **Doṇa, pāka S** (S 3.13/1:82) = SD 37.13.

¹⁰⁹ *Yam idaṃ, bho gotama, dāne puññaṃ ca puññamahī ca taṃ dāyakānaṃ sukhāya hotū ti*. Comy explains *puññamahī* as that which accompanies (the deed) as a mass of karmic fruits (*vipāka-k, khandhānaṃ yeva parivāro*). (MA 2:283). Saccaka evidently still thinks he is a saint and not in need of merit. It is also possible that “donors” here refers to both Saccaka himself and the Licchavīs: see Intro (3.6).

¹¹⁰ This is because the Licchavīs have brought the gifts (probably obligingly) for Saccaka, not specifically for the Buddha or the Sangha. But it is Saccaka who gives to the Buddha. (MA 2:283). Note also that the Buddha is apparently subtly hinting that Saccaka is no awakened saint, and still needs to liberate himself.

¹¹¹ Note that Saccaka does *not* go for refuge (as he still regards himself as a saint): see Intro (3.6).