



EMPTINESS - VOIDNESS

Suñña

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With parallels in SA:

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Whatever kind of form there is, whether past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, inferior or superior, far or near: a bhikkhu inspects it, ponders it, and carefully investigates it, and it would appear to him to be void, hollow, insubstantial. For what substance could there be in form?

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When vitality, heat, and consciousness

Depart from this physical body,

Then it lies there cast away:

Food for others, without volition.

Āyu usmā ca viññāṇaṃ,

yadā kāyaṃ jahantimaṃ;

Apaviddho tadā seti,

parabhattaṃ acetanaṃ.

Such is this continuum,

This illusion, beguiler of fools.

It is taught to be a murderer;

Here no substance can be found.

Etādisāyaṃ santāno,

māyāyaṃ bālalāpinī;

Vadhako esa akkhāto,

sāro ettha na vijjati.

make a refuge for yourself;

kareyya saraṇattano

Yearning for the imperishable state.

patthayaṃ accutaṃ padan”ti.

SN 22.95

"It is said that the world is empty, the world is empty, lord. In what respect is it said that the world is empty?"

"Insofar as it is empty of a self or of anything pertaining to a self: Thus it is said, Ananda, that the world is empty.

Eye is empty of self and of what belongs to self.

Forms ...

Eye-consciousness ...

Eye-contact ...

Whatever feeling arises with eye-contact as condition is empty of self and of what belongs to self.

The ear is empty...

...

The Mind is empty..."

SN 35.85

Friend Koṭṭhita, a virtuous bhikkhu (also a stream-enterer, a once-returner, a nonreturner, an arahant,) should carefully attend to the five aggregates subject to clinging as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as misery, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as empty, as nonself.

SN 22.122 & 123

"Now, Aggivessana, this body made of material form, consisting of the four great elements, procreated by a mother and father, and built up out of boiled rice and porridge, is subject to impermanence, to being worn and rubbed away, to dissolution and disintegration. It should be regarded as impermanent, as suffering, as a disease, as a tumour, as a dart, as a calamity, as an affliction, as alien, as disintegrating, as void, as not self. When one regards this body thus, one abandons desire for the body, affection for the body, subservience to the body.

Ayaṃ kho panaggivessana, kāyo rūpī cātumahābhūtika mātāpettikasambhavo odanakummāsūpacayo aniccucchādanaparimaddanabhedanaviddhaṃsanadhammo, aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassitabbo. Tassimaṃ kāyaṃ aniccato dukkhato rogato gaṇḍato sallato aghato ābādhato parato palokato suññato anattato samanupassato yo kāyasmimṃ kāyachando kāyasneho kāyanvayatā sā pahīyati.

MN 74

And what, venerable sir, is the liberation of mind by emptiness? Here a bhikkhu, gone to the

forest or to the foot of a tree or to an empty hut, reflects thus: ‘Empty is this of self or of what belongs to self.’ This is called the liberation of mind by emptiness.

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Now that unshakable liberation of mind is empty of lust, empty of hatred, empty of delusion.

SN 41.7

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MN 151

Note: definitely the sutta that delineate the true meaning of emptiness/void.

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So too, bhikkhus, the same thing will happen with the bhikkhus in the future. When those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata that are deep, deep in meaning, supramundane, dealing with emptiness, are being recited, they will not be eager to listen to them, nor lend an ear to them, nor apply their minds to understand them; and they will not think those teachings should be studied and mastered. But when those discourses that are mere poetry composed by poets, beautiful in words and phrases, created by outsiders, spoken by [their] disciples, are being recited, they will be eager to listen to them, will lend an ear to them, will apply their minds to understand them; and they will think those teachings should be studied and mastered. In this way, bhikkhus, those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata that are deep, deep in meaning, supramundane, dealing with emptiness, will disappear.

Evameva kho, bhikkhave, bhavissanti bhikkhū anāgatamaddhānaṃ, ye te suttantā tathāgatabhāsītā gambhīrā gambhīratthā lokuttarā suññatappaṭisaṃyuttā, tesu bhaññamānesu na sussūsissanti na sotaṃ odahissanti na aññā cittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti na ca te dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti”. Ye pana te suttantā kavikatā kāveyyā cittaṃkharā cittabyañjanā bāhirakā sāvakabhāsītā, tesu bhaññamānesu sussūsissanti, sotaṃ odahissanti, aññā cittaṃ upaṭṭhāpessanti, te ca dhamme uggahetabbaṃ pariyāpuṇitabbaṃ maññissanti. evametesam, bhikkhave, suttantānaṃ tathāgatabhāsītānaṃ gambhīrānaṃ gambhīratthānaṃ lokuttarānaṃ suññatappaṭisaṃyuttānaṃ antaradhānaṃ bhavissati.

SN 20.7

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A simile ++ where the six internal sense bases (ajjhatikāni āyatanāni,) are characterized as empty/void.

SN 35.238

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Householder, when a bhikkhu has emerged from the attainment of the cessation of perception and feeling, three kinds of contact touch him: emptiness-contact, signless-contact, undirected-contact.

“Saññāvedayitanirodhasamāpattiyā vuṭṭhitam kho, gahapati, bhikkhum tayo phassā phusanti — suññato phasso, animitto phasso, appaṇihito phasso”ti.

SN 41.6

Emptiness concentration as one of the path leading to the unconditioned:

And what, bhikkhus, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Emptiness concentration....

SN 43.12

“Bhikkhus, this assembly appears to me empty now that Sāriputta and Moggallāna have attained final Nibbāna. This assembly was not empty for me [earlier], and I had no concern for whatever quarter Sāriputta and Moggallāna were dwelling in.

Api myāyaṃ, bhikkhave, parisā suññā viya khāyati parinibbutesu sāriputtamoggallānesu. asuññā me, bhikkhave, parisā hoti, anapekkhā tassaṃ disāyaṃ hoti, yassaṃ disāyaṃ sāriputtamoggallānā viharanti.

SN 47.14

“Therefore, Dhammadinna, you should train yourselves thus: ‘From time to time we will enter and dwell upon those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata that are deep, deep in meaning, supramundane, dealing with emptiness.’ It is in such a way that you should train yourselves.”

“Venerable sir, it is not easy for us—dwelling in a home crowded with children, enjoying Kāsian sandalwood, wearing garlands, scents, and unguents, receiving gold and silver—from time to time to enter and dwell upon those discourses spoken by the Tathāgata that are deep, deep in meaning, supramundane, dealing with emptiness. As we are established in the five training rules, let the Blessed One teach us the Dhamma further.”

“Therefore, Dhammadinna, you should train yourselves thus: ‘We will possess confirmed confidence in the Buddha ... in the Dhamma ... in the Saṅgha.... We will possess the virtues dear to the noble ones, unbroken ... leading to concentration.’ It is in such a way that you should train yourselves.”

SN 55.53

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PARALLELS, BUT NOT IN SA:

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Three perspectives, treating it

(1) as a meditative dwelling, (2) as an attribute of objects, and (3) as a type of awareness-release.

awareness-release that is temporary and pleasing

or in the awareness-release that is not-temporary and beyond provocation.

there is this (mental) dwelling discovered by the Tathagata where, not attending to any themes, he enters & remains in internal emptiness.

if a monk should wish, 'May I enter & remain in internal emptiness,' then he should get the mind steadied right within, settled, unified, & concentrated. And how does the monk get the mind steadied right within, settled, unified, & concentrated? There is the case where a monk — quite withdrawn from sensual pleasures, withdrawn from unskillful qualities — enters & remains in the first jhana... the second jhana... the third jhana... the fourth jhana

He attends to internal emptiness. While he is attending to internal emptiness, his mind does not take pleasure, find satisfaction, grow steady, or indulge in internal emptiness. When this is the case, he discerns, 'While I am attending to internal emptiness, my mind does not take pleasure, find satisfaction, grow steady, or indulge in internal emptiness.' In this way he is alert there.

"He attends to external emptiness...

"He attends to internal & external emptiness...

"He attends to the imperturbable. While he is attending to the imperturbable, his mind does not take pleasure, find satisfaction, grow steady, or indulge in the imperturbable. When this is the case, he discerns, 'While I am attending to the imperturbable, my mind does not take pleasure, find satisfaction, grow steady, or indulge in the imperturbable.' In this way he is alert there.

"When that is the case, he should get the mind steadied right within, settled, unified, & concentrated in his first theme of concentration.

"He then attends to internal emptiness. While he is attending to internal emptiness, his mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, grows steady, & indulges in internal emptiness. When this is the case, he discerns, 'While I am attending to internal emptiness, my mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, grows steady, & indulges in internal emptiness.' In this way he is alert there.

"He attends to external emptiness...

"He attends to internal & external emptiness...

"He attends to the imperturbable. While he is attending to the imperturbable, his mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, grows steady, & indulges in the imperturbable. When this is the case, he discerns, 'While I am attending to the imperturbable, my mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, grows steady, & indulges in the imperturbable.' In this way he is alert there.

If, while the monk is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to walking back & forth, he walks back & forth [thinking,] 'While I am walking thus, no covetousness or sadness, no evil, unskillful qualities will take possession of me.' In this way he is alert there.

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to standing... to sitting... to lying down, he lies down, [thinking,] 'While...

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to speaking,

If, while he is dwelling by means of this dwelling, his mind inclines to thinking

Ananda, there are these five strings of sensuality. Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye — agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable via the ear...

These are the five strings of sensuality where a monk should reflect on his mind repeatedly: 'Is there within me, in any circumstance or another, any engagement of awareness that arises with regard to these five strings of sensuality?' If, on reflection, the monk discerns, 'There is within me, in one circumstance or another, an engagement of awareness that arises with regard to these five strings of sensuality,' then — this being the case — he discerns that 'Desire-passion for the five strings of sensuality has not been abandoned by me.'

There are these five clinging-aggregates where a monk should stay, keeping track of arising & passing away (thus): 'Such is form, such its origination, such its disappearance. Such is feeling...

As he stays keeping track of arising & passing away with regard to these five clinging-aggregates, he abandons any conceit that 'I am' with regard to these five clinging-aggregates.

This being the case, he discerns, 'I have abandoned any conceit that "I am" with regard to these five clinging-aggregates.' In this way he is alert there.

"These qualities, Ananda, are exclusively skillful in their grounding, noble, transcendent, inaccessible to the Evil One.

MN 122

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Now, as well as before, I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness. Just as this palace of Migara's mother is empty of elephants, cattle, & mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of

assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness — the singleness based on the community of monks

Ananda, a monk — not attending to the perception[1] of village, not attending to the perception of human being — attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, & indulges in its perception of wilderness.

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

The Perception of Earth

The Infinitude of Space

The Infinitude of Consciousness

Nothingness

Neither Perception nor Non-Perception

Theme-Less Concentration

And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of nothingness. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of the dimension of neither perception nor non-perception. There is only this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, & pure.

Release

He discerns that 'This theme-less concentration of awareness is fabricated & mentally fashioned.' And he discerns that 'Whatever is fabricated & mentally fashioned is inconstant & subject to cessation.' For him — thus knowing, thus seeing — the mind is released from the effluent of sensuality, the effluent of becoming, the effluent of ignorance. With release, there is the knowledge, 'Released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'

"He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the effluent of sensuality... the effluent of becoming... the effluent of ignorance, are not present. And there is only this modicum of disturbance: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very

body with life as its condition.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the effluent of sensuality... becoming... ignorance. And there is just this non-emptiness: that connected with the six sensory spheres, dependent on this very body with life as its condition.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, pure — superior & unsurpassed.

MN 121

There are these five strings of sensuality aka

Five cords of sense-pleasure (pañca kāma guṇa):

Which five? Forms cognizable via the eye — agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. Sounds cognizable via the ear... Aromas cognizable via the nose... Flavors cognizable via the tongue... Tactile sensations cognizable via the body — agreeable, pleasing, charming, endearing, fostering desire, enticing. These are the five strings of sensuality. Now, any pleasure & happiness that arises dependent on these five strings of sensuality is called sensual pleasure, a filthy pleasure, a run-of-the-mill pleasure, an ignoble pleasure. And of this pleasure I say that it is not to be cultivated, not to be developed, not to be pursued, that it is to be feared.

Word: Guna

The imperturbable:

Not first or second or third jhana; but the fourth:

"There is the case where a monk, with the abandoning of pleasure & pain — as with the earlier disappearance of elation & distress — enters & remains in the fourth jhana: purity of equanimity & mindfulness, neither pleasure nor pain. Now that, I tell you, comes under the imperturbable

MN 66

With the purified intellect-consciousness (parisuddhena manoviññāṇena) divorced from the five faculties (pañcahi indriyehi) the dimension of the infinitude of space can be known [as] 'infinite space.' The dimension of the infinitude of consciousness can be known [as] 'infinite consciousness.' The dimension of nothingness can be known [as] 'There is nothing.'

MN 43

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Sanskrit:

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śūna-शून्य : emptiness (originally "swollen state","hollowness"), lack, want, absence (RV.).
śūnya-शून्य : empty, void, hollow, barren, desolate, deserted (Br.)

NOTES

There are three major kinds of emptiness in Eht Buddhism (viz. Suttas & Sutras, with commonalities across different schools).

Note that the two last ones cover almost the same principle.

The first, is the realization of the three marks of existence:

- All synergies (saṅkhāras) are impermanent (sabbe saṅkhārā aniccā).
- All synergies lead to suffering (sabbe saṅkhārā dukkhā).
- Therefore, what is considered "Self/self by the middle & late Vedic creed - that is to say a continuous, as well as blissful Self/self, is not assertable. (sabbe dhammā anattā) - "all dhammas (conditioned or unconditioned things) are not self".

The Self/self (Atta/atta), was considered as pervasive and continuous, in late Vedic philosophy - and the Buddha did raise against this view.

Buddha's rationale was that the Self/self of the Upaniṣadic creed, (supposedly pervasive and continuous throughout the different late Vedic dharmas,) could not be continuous, because the khandhas (and their subsequent dhammas) are impermanent. Something he realized by Himself.

So "anatta" means a "not continuous" self (or simply, just not a self at all); unlike the Self/self of the Upaniṣadic creed, at the time of Buddha.

There is nothing as a continuous and pervasive Self/self in paṭiccasamuppāda, says Buddha. In other words, the Buddhist Dhamma, the dhammas, etc., are "empty of self, and what belongs to self", due to the impermanence of all saṅkhāras.

And what is "atta"?

- atta in Vedic terms, is the person, the individuality, that has an inherent character of continuity.
- atta in Buddhist terms, is the person, the individuality, that has no inherent character of continuity - The Buddhist atta is empty of self, and what belongs to self.

There is also another form of emptiness in common texts, among different schools, that can

be said to also help towards the liberation:

It is the realization, the distinction (pañña) that there is an emptiness of the ajjhatikāni āyatanāni (internal fields of experiences - aka sense bases) of the satta, described in <https://suttacentral.net/en/sn35.238/11> , with a perfect parallel (SA 1172) - An emptiness that is filled by the external fields of experience "that are not 'yours'", says the Buddha (SN 22.33-SN 35.138). Something one should realize also.

Then there is another form of emptiness in common texts, among different schools, that can be said to also help towards the liberation:

It takes place in MN 151, with a quite perfect parallel (SA 236), as far as the notion of this kind of emptiness is concerned.

It is about how a monk should train to reach a sound emptiness-concentration.

Buddha says that, when a monk is on his way in and out for alms-food - and while receiving alm-food - he should be mindful all the way of the emptiness of any desire, lust, hate, delusion, or aversion (desire, love, craving, attachment - in SA).

Then there is another form of emptiness in common texts, among different schools - that looks a bit like the precedent concept - and that can be said to also help towards the liberation:

It takes place in sutta MN 121 with a perfect parallel in MA 190.

It sums up as: "*whatever is not present, I therefore see as empty*".

However, no mention of an emptiness upstream the conditionality, as it appears in Nagarjuna's philosophical interpretation of Buddhism.

The Buddha's message in Texts common to more than one school, speaks about the downstream of conditionality (viz. impermanence of the khandhas); but not about an emptiness, upstream the conditionality.

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