

❖ Further selections from the *Sutta Piṭaka* ¹

From *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 22.59 ²

Discourse on Not-Self (The Second Sermon)

Bodily form, my friends, is not the self (*anattā*). If this body, friends, were the self, this body would not be subject to sickness, and it would be possible in the case of the body to say, “Let my body be thus, let my body not be thus.” Now, because the body is not the self, friends, therefore the body is subject to sickness, and it is not possible in the case of the body to say, “Let my body be thus, let my body not be thus.”

Feeling is not the self. . . Perception is not the self. . . Mental formations are not the self. . .

Consciousness is not the self. For if consciousness were the self, this consciousness would not be subject to sickness, and it would be possible in the case of consciousness to say, “Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness not be thus.” Now, because consciousness is not the self, therefore consciousness is subject to sickness, and it is not possible in the case of consciousness to say, “Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness not be thus.”

What think you, friends, is the body permanent or impermanent?

–Impermanent (*anicca*), Lord.

But is the impermanent painful or pleasant?

–Painful, Lord.

But is it fitting to consider what is impermanent, painful, and subject to change as, “this is mine, this am I, this is my self”?

–No indeed, Lord.

[And so of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.]

Therefore in truth, friends, whatever body, past, future, or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, low or eminent, near or far, is to be looked on by one who duly and rightly understands, as, “all this body is not mine, not this am I, not mine is the soul.”

[And so of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.]

Thus perceiving, friends, the learned noble disciple feels loathing for the body, for feeling, for perception, for mental reactions, for consciousness. Feeling disgust one becomes free from passion, through freedom from passion one is emancipated, and in the emancipated arises the knowledge of one’s emancipation. This disciple understands that destroyed is rebirth, the religious life has been led, done is what was to be done, there is naught beyond this world.

¹ The source-numbers below are the volume and page numbers from the Pāli Text Society’s standard edition. Small changes were made to the translations to improve style, to be gender-inclusive, etc.

² Translated by E.J. Thomas (1927), *The Life of the Buddha as Legend and History*. Alfred A. Knopf, pp. 88-89.

From *Samyutta-nikāya*, 22.45 ³

Three Marks of Existence

Friends, form is impermanent (*anicca*). What is impermanent is suffering (*dukkha*). What is suffering is nonself (*anattā*). What is nonself should be seen as it really is with correct wisdom thus: “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self.” When one sees this thus as it really is with correct wisdom, the mind becomes dispassionate and is liberated from this defilement by non-attachment.

[And so of feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness.]

By being liberated, the mind is steady; by being steady, it is content; by being content, a person is not agitated. Being unagitated, one personally attains *nirvāṇa*. One understands: “Destroyed is birth, the spiritual life has been lived, what had to be done has been done there is no more coming back to any state of being.”

From *Khuddaka-nikāya*, 18.4

Milinda Pañha: No Essences ⁴

Then the venerable Nāgasena spoke to Milinda the king as follows: Your majesty ... did you come afoot, or riding?

—*Bhante*, I do not go afoot: I came in a chariot.

Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot. Pray, your majesty, is the pole the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Is the axle the chariot?

—Nay...

Are the wheels the chariot?...Is the chariot-body the chariot? ...Is the banner-staff the chariot?...Is the yoke?... Are the reins?... Is the goading-stick?... Pray, your majesty, are pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, bannerstaff, yoke, reins, and goad unitedly the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.⁵

Is it, then, your majesty, something else besides pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, banner-staff, yoke, reins, and goad which is the chariot?

—Nay, verily, *bhante*.

Your majesty, although I question you very closely, I fail to discover any chariot. Verily now, your majesty, the word ‘chariot’ is a mere empty sound. What chariot is there here? Your majesty, you speak a falsehood, a lie: there is no chariot. Your majesty, you are the chief king in all the continent of India; of whom are you afraid that you speak a lie? Listen to me, my lords, ye

³ Translated by Bhikkhu Bodhi (2005). *In the Buddha’s Words: An Anthology of Discourses from the Pāli Canon*. Wisdom Publications, pp.342-343.

⁴ Translated by H.C. Warren (1915), *Buddhism in Translation*, Harvard UP, pp. 129-133.

⁵ A negative answer is not obvious in this case, but perhaps it is warranted by some kind of sorites argument.

five hundred Yonakas, and ye eighty thousand priests! Milinda the king here says thus: “I came in a chariot;” and being requested “Your majesty, if you came in a chariot, declare to me the chariot,” he fails to produce any chariot. Is it possible, pray, for me to assent to what he says?

When he had thus spoken, the five hundred Yonakas applauded the venerable Nāgasena... Then Milinda the king spoke to the venerable Nāgasena as follows: “*Bhante* Nāgasena, I speak no lie: the word ‘chariot’ is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, and name for pole, axle, wheels, chariot-body, and banner-staff.”

Thoroughly well, your majesty, do you understand a chariot. In exactly the same way, your majesty, in respect of me, Nāgasena, is but a way of counting, term, appellation, convenient designation, mere name for the hair of my head, hair of my body... brain of the head, form, feeling, perception, mental formations, and consciousness. But in the absolute sense there is no ego here to be found.

Then the priestess Vajira, your majesty, said in the presence of the Blessed One:

Even as the word of ‘chariot’ means
That members join to frame a whole;
So when the aggregates appear to view,
We use the phrase, ‘a living being.’

Milinda Pañha: Karma and Rebirth ⁶

Then the king asked:

–What is it, Nagasena, that is reborn?

Name-and-form is reborn.

–Is it the same name-and-form that is reborn?

No, but by this name-and-form deeds are done, good or evil, and by these deeds (*karma*) another name-and-form is reborn.

–If that be so, Sir, would not the new being be released from its evil *karma*?...

Just because it is reborn, O king, it is therefore not released from its evil *karma*.

–Give me an illustration.

Suppose, O king, some man were to steal a mango from another man, and the owner of the mango were to seize him and bring him before the king, and charge him with the crime. And the thief were to say: ‘Your Majesty! I have not taken away this man’s mangoes. Those that he put in the ground are different from the ones I took. I do not deserve to be punished.’ How then? Would he be guilty?

–Certainly, Sir. He would deserve to be punished.

But for what reason?

–Because in spite of whatever he may say, he would be guilty in respect of the last mango which resulted from the first one that the owner set in the ground.

⁶ Translated by T.W. Rhys Davids (1890). *The Questions of King Milinda, Part II*. Oxford UP, pp. 2, 6-9.

Just so, great king, deeds good or evil are done by this name-and-form and another is reborn. But that other is not thereby released from its *karma*.

—Give me a further illustration...

It is like the fire which a man, in the cold season, might kindle, and when he had warmed himself leave still burning, and go away. Then if that fire were to set another man's field on fire, and the owner of the field were to seize him and bring him before the king and charge him with the injury, and he were to say: 'Your Majesty! It was not I who set this man's field on fire. The fire I left burning was a different one from that which burnt his field. I am not guilty.' Now would the man, O king, be guilty?

—Certainly, sir.

But why?

—Because in spite of whatever he might say, he would be guilty in respect of the subsequent fire that resulted from the previous one.

And so, great king, deeds good or evil are done by name-and-form and another is reborn. But the other is not thereby released from *karma*...

The king said:

—You were talking just now of name-and-form. What does 'name' mean in that expression, and what does 'form' mean?

Whatever is gross is 'form'; whatever is subtle, mental is 'name'.

—Why is it, Nagsena, that name is not reborn separately, or form separately?

These conditions, great king, are connected one with the other; and spring into being together.

—Give me an illustration.

As a hen, great king, would not get a yoke or an egg-shell separately, but both would arise in one, they two being intimately dependent one on the other; just so, if there were no name there would be no form. What is meant by name in that expression being intimately dependent on what is meant by form; they spring up together. And this is, through time immemorial, their nature...

Where there are beings who, when dead, will be reborn, there time is. Where there are beings who, when dead, will not be reborn, there time is not; and when there are beings who are altogether set free (who, having attained *nirvāṇa* in their present life, have come to the end of that life), there time is not—because of their having been quite set free.

From *Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 12.15⁷

Dependent Origination (or Conditioned Co-Arising)

That things have being, O Kaccāna, constitutes one extreme of doctrine; that things have no being is the other extreme. These extremes, O Kaccāna, have been avoided by the Tathāgata, and it is a middle doctrine he teaches:—

⁷ Translated by Warren (op. cit.), p. 166.

On ignorance depends mental formations;
On mental formations depends consciousness;
On consciousness depend name and form;
On name and form depend the six organs of sense;
On the six organs of sense depends contact;
On contact depends sensation;
On sensation depends craving;
On craving depends attachment;
On attachment depends existence;
On existence depends birth;
On birth depend old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair.

Thus does this entire aggregation of misery arise. But:

On the complete fading out and cessation of ignorance ceases mental formations;
On the cessation of mental formations ceases consciousness;
On the cessation of consciousness cease name and form;
On the cessation of name and form cease the six organs of sense;
On the cessation of the six organs of sense ceases contact;
On the cessation of contact ceases sensation;
On the cessation of sensation ceases craving;
On the cessation of desire ceases attachment;
On the cessation of attachment ceases existence;
On the cessation of existence ceases birth;
On the cessation of birth cease old age and death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair.

Thus does this entire aggregation of misery cease.

***Saṃyutta-nikāya*, 43, 1-44, combined IV 359-73** ⁸

Thirty-three Synonyms for Nirvāṇa.

Friends, I will teach you the unconditioned and the path leading to the unconditioned. Listen...

And what, friends, is the unconditioned? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the destruction of delusion: this is called the unconditioned

And what, friends, is the path leading to the unconditioned? Mindfulness directed to the body: this is called the path leading to the unconditioned.

Friends, I will teach you the uninclined...the taintless...the truth...the far shore...the subtle...the very difficult to see...the unaging...the stable...the undisintegrating...the unmanifest...the unproliferated...the peaceful...the deathless...the sublime...the auspicious...the secure...the

⁸ Translated by Bodhi (op. cit.), pp. 364-365.

destruction of craving...the wonderful...the amazing...the unailing... the unailing state...
Nirvāṇa...the unafflicted...dispassion...purity...freedom...nonattachment...the island...the shelter...
the asylum...the refuge...the destination and the path leading to the destination. Listen...

And what, friends, is the destination? The destruction of lust, the destruction of hatred, the
destruction of delusion: this is called the destination.

And what, friends, is the path leading to the destination? Mindfulness directed to the body: this is
called the path leading to the destination.

Thus, friends, I have taught you the unconditioned...the destination and the path leading to the
destination. Whatever should be done, friends, by a compassionate teacher out of compassion for
her or his disciples, desiring their welfare, that I have done for you.

These are the roots of trees, friends, these are empty huts. Meditate, friends, do not be negligent,
lest you regret it later. This is my instruction to you.

From *Aṅguttara-nikāya*, 9.20⁹

Insight Surpasses All

[The Buddha said:] Once there was a brahmin named Velāma. He gave such a great alms
offering as this: eighty-four thousand bowls of gold filled with silver; eighty-four thousand
bowls of silver filled with gold; eighty-four bronze bowls filled with bullion; eighty-four
thousand elephants, chariots, milch cows, maidens, and couches, many millions of fine cloths,
and indescribable amounts of food, drink, ointment, and bedding.

As great as was the alms offering that the brahmin Velāma gave, it would be even more fruitful
if one would feed a single person possessed of right view. As great as the brahmin Velāma's
alms offering was, and though one would feed a hundred persons possessed of right view, it
would be even more fruitful if one would feed...a single Perfectly Enlightened Buddha. As great
as the brahmin Velāma's alms offering was,...it would be even more fruitful if, with a trusting
mind, one would go for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Saṅgha, and would undertake the
five precepts: abstaining from the destruction of life, from taking what is not given, from sexual
misconduct, from false speech, and from the use of intoxicants. As great as all this might be, it
would be even more fruitful if one would develop a mind of loving-kindness (*metta*) even for the
time it takes to pull a cow's udder. And as great as all this might be, it would be even more
fruitful still if one would develop the perception of impermanence (*annica*) just for the time it
takes to snap one's fingers.

⁹ Translated by Bodhi (op. cit.), pp. 178-179