

Frontispiece: the calligraphy in Sino-Vietnamese characters (Nôm) by Ven Thích Huyền-Vi reads:

*"No old age and death,  
and no cessation of old age and death."*

The seals engraved by Ven. Bhikkhu Dhamma-viro, Thailand, convey the same meaning as the calligraphy.

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### THREE SŪTRAS FROM THE SAMYUKTĀGAMA CONCERNING EMPTINESS\*

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Three sūtras in the Saṃyuktāgama (Taishō Issaikyō (T) 99) which deal, under various titles, with emptiness especially attracted the attention of the author of the Mahāprajñā-pāramitopadeśa (abbrev. Upadeśa, T 1509), an authoritative interpreter of the Madhyamaka or Philosophy of the Middle. These are the Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra 'Sūtra on Emptiness in the True Sense of the Word', the Mahāśūnyatāsūtra 'Sūtra on Great Emptiness' and the Saṃṛddhisūtra 'Sūtra of Saṃṛddhi', named after one of the Buddha's disciples. Here are some quotations, accompanied by the explanations devoted to them by the Upadeśa.

#### I

Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra  
(T 99, ch.13, p.92c 12-26)

In the Chinese translation of the Saṃyuktāgama made between 436 and 443 by Guṇabhadra, this Sūtra is entitled *Ti yi yi k'ung ching* 第一義空經, which presupposes the Sanskrit Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra. The early authors referred to it frequently

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while leaving aside the final section of the work<sup>1</sup>.

As far as I know, this Sūtra has no parallel in the Pāli Saṃyutta Nikāya; conversely, it is reproduced, with some variants, at the beginning of a sūtra which appears in the Chinese version of the Ekottarāgama (T 125, ch.30, pp.713c 12-714a 3), and the Abhidharma masters quoted several extracts from it in their original Indian text<sup>2</sup>.

1. *Evaṃ mayā śrutam / ekasmin samaye bhagavān kuruṣu viharati kalmāśadamyē nigame<sup>3</sup> /*

2. *tatra bhagavān bhikṣūn āmantrayati /*

3. *dharmam vo deśayiṣye adau kalyāṇam madhye kalyāṇam paryavasāne kalyāṇam svartham suvyañjanam kevalam paripūrṇam parisuddham paravadātam brahmacaryam prakāśayiṣye<sup>4</sup> / yad uta paramār-*

1. Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was residing with the Kurus, in the village of Kalmāśadamyā.

2. Then the Blessed One addressed the monks.

3. I will teach you the Dharma which is good at the beginning, good in the middle, good at the end, of which the meaning is good, of which the letter is good, unique of its kind, quite

1 Their quotations are introduced by this formula: *Paramārthaśūnyatāyām uktaṃ bhagavatā*, or merely *Paramārthaśūnyatāyām*.

2 Several of these have been noted by L. de La Vallée Poussin in his translation of the Abhidharmakośa (Kośa) (Paris, 1923-31, repr. Brussels 1971), III p.57; V, p.59; IX, p.260.

3 The same *nidāna* appears in *Dīvyā*, p.516; D II, pp.55, 290; M I p.55; S II, pp.92, 107 (cf. Ch. Tripāṭhi, ed., *Nidānasamyukta*, *Sanskrittexte aus dem Turfanfunden* 8, Berlin 1962, p.152, n.7). Conversely, the Ekottara (T 125, p.713c 12) locates the Sūtra in Śrāvastī, in Anāthapiṇḍada's park.

4 A canonical formula. For the Sanskrit wording, cf. *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, ed. E. Waldschmidt (Berlin 1950-1), p.296; *Nidānasamyukta*, p.153; *Mahāvīyut* (ed.

*thaśūnyatāsūtram / tac chr̥ṇuta sādhu ca suṣṭhu ca manasikuruta bhāṣiṣye<sup>5</sup> /*

4. *paramārthaśūnyatāsūtram katamam / cakṣur bhikṣava utpadyamānaṃ na kutaś cid āgacchati / nirudhyamānaṃ ca na kva cit samnicayaṃ gacchati<sup>6</sup> /*

5. *iti hi cakṣur abhūtvā bhavati bhūtvā ca pratigacchati<sup>7</sup> /*

complete; I will explain to you the most pure and correct brahmanic conduct, namely the Sūtra on Emptiness in the True Sense of the Word. So listen; reflect well and as is fitting. I shall speak.

4. What is this Sūtra on Emptiness in the True Sense of the Word? The eye, O monks, when it arises does not come from anywhere, and when it perishes does not go anywhere.

5. Hence the eye is not real but arises nonetheless;

Sakaki, Kyoto 1916-25), No.1280-9. The Pāli phrasing is simpler: *So dhammaṃ deseti ādikalyāṇam majjhe kalyāṇam pariyosānakalyāṇam sāttham savyañjanam kevalaparipūrṇam parisuddham brahmacariyaṃ pakāseti* (cf. Vin. I, p.21; D I, p.62; M I, p.179; S V, p.352; A I, p.18).

5 Cf. *Mahāparinirvāṇa*, pp.120, 122, 126, 170; *Nidānasamyukta*, pp.147, 153, 157. The Pāli has: *taṃ suṇātha sādhukaṃ manasikarotha bhāsissāmi* (cf. D II, p.77).

6 A reading attested in the *Kośabhāṣya*, ed. P. Pradhan (Patna 1967), p.209, 11.12-13, and the *Bodhicaryāvatārapañjikā*, ed. L. de La Vallée Poussin (Calcutta 1902), p.582, 11.1-2.

7 Reading attested in the *Kośabhāṣya*, p.299, 11.13-14, and, with the variant *prativigacchati*, in the *Pañjikā*, p.582, 11.2-3. My translation is based on that of Guṇabhadra in his Chinese version (T 99, p.92c 17-18): 如是眼不實而生·生已盡滅, but we can understand: 'Hence the eye exists after having been non-existent and, after having existed, it disappears', and make use of this interpretation to affirm the existence of the past (cf. Kośa, V, p.59).

6. *asti karmāsti vipākaḥ kāra-  
kas tu nopalabhyate ya imāṃś  
ca skandhān nikṣipaty anyāṃś  
ca skandhān pratisaṃdadhāty  
anyatra dharmasaṃketāt*<sup>8</sup> /

having arisen, it perishes.  
6. There is action, there is  
fruition, but no agent exists  
which rejects these aggre-  
gates and assumes other ag-  
gregates, unless a metaphor

8 Reading attested in the *Kośabhāṣya*, p.129, 11.9-11; p.468, 11.20-2, and the *Mahāyānasūtrālamkāra*, ed. S. Lévi (Paris 1907), p.158, 11.21-2. The *Pañjikā*, p.474, 11.15-17, presents variants: *iti hi bhikṣavo 'sti karma / asti phalaṃ / kāra-  
kas tu nopalabhyate ya imān skandhān vijahāti / anyāṃś ca skandhān  
upādāte / anyatra dharmasaṃketāt /*. This text should be compared to  
another canonical passage which appears in several sources.

*Bimbasārasūtra*. in E. Waldschmidt, *Bruchstücke buddh. Sūtras* (Leipzig 1932),  
p.131, and *Catuṣpariṣat*, ed. E. Waldschmidt (Berlin 1952-62), p.358: *ayaṃ sa  
ātmā vā satvo (vā) pūrvavad yavat pratisaṃvedako . . . na bhaviṣyati / yas  
tatra tatra kṛtākṛtānāṃ kalyāṇapāpakānāṃ vipākaṃ pratisaṃvedayisyati / iti  
ya imāṃś ca skandhān nikṣipaty anyāṃś ca skandhān pratisaṃdadhāty  
anyatra dharmasaṃketāt /*.

*Mahāvastu*, ed. E. Senart (Paris 1882-7), III, p.448, 11.4-6: *ahaṃ so atra  
kāraḥ vā kārapako vā utthāpako vā samutthāpako vā ādīyako vā nikṣepako vā  
yo imāṃś ca saṃskārā nikṣipati anyāṃś ca upādīyati anyatra*.

All these texts deny the existence of the *Ātman* and its synonyms  
*jīva*, *jantu*, *poṣa*, *pudgala*, *manuja*, *māṇava*, *kartā*, *kāraka*, *janaka*,  
*saṃjanaka*, *utthāpaka*, *samutthāpaka*, *vadaka*, *vedaka*, *pratisaṃvedaka*. The  
being (*sattva*) has no substantial existence; it is only a name, a metaphor  
(*saṃketa*), to designate dharmas which have arisen from causes and conditions  
(*pratītyasamutpanna*, *saṃskṛta*). The *paramārthaśūnyatā* of which the *Sūtra*  
speaks here is none other than the *sattvaśūnyatā*.

The *Kośavyākhyā*, ed. U. Wogihara (Tokyo 1932-6), p.707, 11.13-16, has a  
good commentary on the present passage: *kāraḥ tu nopalabhyate iti vistaraḥ  
/ karmaṇaḥ kāraḥ nopalabhyate / kīdrśo 'sāv iti / āha / ya imāṃś c' aihikān  
skandhān nikṣipati tyajaty anyāṃś ca pāratirikān skandhān pratisaṃdadhāty  
upasaṃgrhṇāti dravyasann avasthita iti / anyatra dharmasaṃketāt iti  
pratītyasamutpādalakṣaṇānt(ar)ena / 'No agent exists: there is no author of*

7. *evaṃ śrotraṃ ghrāṇaṃ jihvā  
kāyo mano vācyam*<sup>9</sup> /

of the Dharma is involved  
there.

7. With regard to the ear,  
nose, tongue, body and  
mind, the same should be  
said.

8. *anyatra dharmasaṃketāt iti  
/ atrāyaṃ dharmasaṃketo yad  
utaśmin satīdaṃ bhavati / as-  
yotpādād idam utpadyate /  
yad idam avidyāpratya-  
yaṃ saṃskārāḥ / saṃskārāpraty-  
yaṃ vijñānam / yāvad evam*

8. I said: 'Unless a metaphor  
of the Dharma is involved  
there'. Here, the metaphor  
of the Dharma means (only)  
this: This being, that is; from  
the arising of this, that ari-  
ses, that is to say the forma-

action. Of what kind would he be? Answer: an agent *who rejects*, who  
abandons, *these aggregates*, the aggregates of present existence, *and assumes*,  
takes on, *other aggregates*, the aggregates of future existence: an agent who  
would be presented as existing substantially. *Unless a metaphor is concerned  
there: unless as a (simple) designation of dependent origination*'.

In the present passage *saṃketa* means metaphor, metaphorical designation,  
symbol. The early translators made no mistake over this and all of them  
rendered it in a manner equivalent to the expression *anyatra  
dharmasaṃketāt* 'unless in the case of a metaphor of the Dharma (in this  
instance the *Pratītyasamutpāda*)'.

Tibetan version in *Catuṣpariṣat*, p.539: *chos su* (or *chos kyi*) *brdar btags pa  
ma glog pa*.

Guṇabhadra (T 99, p.92c 19): *ch'u su shu fa* 除俗數法

Samghadeva (T 125, p.713c 17-18): *ch'u chia hao fa* 除假號法

Hsüan-tsang (T 1558, p.155b 27): *wei ch'u fa chia* 唯除法假

Paramārtha (T 1559, p.306c 28-29): 唯除於法世流布語所立人

'except when, according to worldly usage to designate dharmas, it is said that  
they are a person (*pudgala*)'.

9 *Evaṃ . . . vācyam* is an abbreviating method frequently used in Buddhist  
Sanskrit; cf. *Nidānasamyukta*, pp.108, 171, 187.

*asya kevalasya mahato duḥkhaskandhasyotpādo bhavati*<sup>10</sup> /

9. *tatrāsminn asatīdam na bhavati / asya nirodhād idam nirudhyate / yad utāvidyānirodhāt saṃskāranirodhaḥ / saṃskāranirodhād vijñānanirodhaḥ / yāvad evam asya kevalasya mahato duḥkhaskandhasya*

tions are conditioned by ignorance, consciousness is conditioned by the formations', etc., up to: 'Such is the origin of this whole great mass of suffering'.

9. Moreover, 'This not being, that is not; through the cessation of this, that ceases, that is to say the cessation of ignorance results in the cessation of the formations; the cessation of the forma-

10 The unabridged formula of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* in terms of 'arising' or 'origination' (*samudaya*) is well-known.

The Sanskrit wording is found in the *Catuṣpariṣat*, pp.102, 358-60; Śālistamba, ed. N. A. Sastri (Adyar Library, 1950), p.2; *Avadānaśataka*, ed. J. S. Speyer (St. Petersburg 1902-9), II, pp.105-6; *Arthavinīscaya*, ed. N. H. Samtani (Patna 1971), p.5, *Mahāvastu* II, p.285, and III, p.448: *asmin satīdam bhavaty asyotpādād idam utpadyante / yad utāvidyāpratyayāḥ saṃskārāḥ / saṃskārapratyayaṃ vijñānam / vijñānapratyayaṃ nāmarūpaṃ / nāmarūpa-pratyayaṃ ṣaḍāyatanaṃ / ṣaḍāyatana-pratyayaḥ sparśaḥ / sparśa-pratyayā vedanā / vedanā-pratyayā tṛṣṇā / tṛṣṇā-pratyayaṃ upādānam / upādāna-pratyayo bhavaḥ / bhava-pratyayā jātiḥ / jāti-pratyayaṃ jarāmaraṇaṃ śoka-paridevaduḥkhadaurmanasyo pāyāsā saṃbhavanti / evam asya kevalasya mahato duḥkhaskandhasya samudayo bhavati /*

For the Pāli wording see, among other sources, *Vin.* I, p.1; *M* III, p.63; *S* II pp.1, 25, etc.

*nirodho bhavati*<sup>11</sup> /

10. *ayaṃ bhikṣava ucyate paramārthaśūnyatā nāma dharmaparyāyaḥ /*

11. *idaṃ avocad bhagavān ātmanasas te bhikṣavo bhagavato bhāṣitaṃ abhyanandan*<sup>12</sup> /

tions results in the cessation of consciousness', etc., up to: 'Such is the cessation of this whole great mass of suffering'.

10. Such is, O monks, the religious discourse called 'Emptiness in the True Sense of the Word'.

11. Thus spoke the Blessed One; the monks, delighted in mind, rejoiced greatly at the discourse of the Blessed One.

In this Sūtra, *paramārthaśūnyatā* is none other than the emptiness of beings (*sattvaśūnyatā*), the fundamental teaching of the Buddhism of the Śrāvakas. Taking this text as a basis, it

11 The unabridged formula of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* in terms of 'cessation' (*nirodha*) generally follows the preceding one (see the references above): *asminn asatīdam na bhavaty asya nirodhād idam nirudhyate / yad utāvidhyānirodhāt saṃskāranirodhaḥ / saṃskāranirodhād vijñānanirodhaḥ / vijñānanirodhād nāmarūpanirodhaḥ / nāmarūpanirodhāt ṣaḍāyatana-nirodhaḥ / ṣaḍāyatana-nirodhāt sparśanirodhaḥ / sparśanirodhād vedanānirodhaḥ / vedanānirodhāt tṛṣṇānirodhaḥ / tṛṣṇānirodhād upādānanirodhaḥ / upādānanirodhād bhavanirodhaḥ / bhavanirodhāj jātinirodhaḥ / jātinirodhāj jarāmaraṇanirodhaḥ śoka-paridevaduḥkhadaurmanasyo pāyāsā nirudhyante / evam asya kevalasya mahato duḥkhaskandhasya nirodho bhavati /*

It should be noted that, in the phrase *evam asya kevalasya mahato duḥkhaskandhasya samudayo . . . nirodho bhavati*, the *Kośabhāṣya*, p.140, 11.21-2, glosses *kevala* 'only, whole' with *ātmīyarahita* 'devoid of a self', and *mahat*, 'great' with *anādyanta* "without beginning or end". The underlying teaching of the *Pratītyasamutpāda* is essentially a teaching on Non-self.

12 Customary conclusion at the end of Sanskrit sūtras.

might be wondered if the Buddha ever taught anything but the emptiness of beings in the Tripiṭaka or, if he spoke of the emptiness of phenomena (*dharmasūnyatā*), why he spoke of it so little. It is this question that the Upadeśa will attempt to answer.

Commentary in the Upadeśa\*

(T 1509, ch.31, pp.294c 29 - 295a 17)

Question: If the emptiness of all dharmas (*sarvadharmasūnyatā*) is truly true, why, in the Tripiṭaka, did the Buddha especially speak of impermanent (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), empty (*sūnya*) and impersonal (*anātman*) dharmas? See the [Paramārthaśūnyatā]sūtra in which the Buddha says to the bhikṣus: 'I will propound to you the Dharma teaching (*dharmaparyāya*) entitled Paramārthaśūnyatā. What is that Paramārthaśūnyatā? The eye (*cakṣus*), when it arises, does not come from anywhere, and when it perishes, does not go anywhere. There is only action (*karman*) and fruition of action (*karmavipāka*); the agent (*kāraka*) does not exist. For the ear, nose, tongue, body and mind, it is also the same'. Here, to affirm that on arising (dharmas) do not come from anywhere and on perishing do not go anywhere, is to say that there are no eternal (*nitya*) dharmas and that they are all impermanent (*anitya*); there is only action and fruition of action, but the agent does not exist. Such is, in the Śrāvaka system, *paramārthaśūnyatā*. Why do you still speak to us of a *sarvadharmasūnyatā* 'emptiness of all dharmas'?

Answer: The self (*ātman*) is the root of all the passions (*kleśa*). At first one becomes attached to the five aggregates (*skan-*

\* [Tr.'s note] - See É. Lamotte, *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* IV, Louvain 1978, pp.2135-8.

*dha*) as if they were a self (*ātman*); then one becomes attached to external objects (*bāhyavastu*) as if they pertained to the self (*ātmīyā*). Bound by the self, one arouses craving (*rāga*) and hatred (*dveṣa*), and because of that craving and hatred, one performs actions (*karman*). When the Buddha says (in the Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra) that 'the agent does not exist', he is destroying the Ātman in every dharma. When he says: 'The eye, when it arises, does not come from anywhere, and when it perishes, does not go anywhere', he is affirming the impermanence (*anityatā*) of the eye, etc. Indeed, 'that which is impermanent is suffering, and that which is suffering is devoid of self and anything pertaining to a self'<sup>13</sup>. Self and anything pertaining to a self not existing, the mind is no longer attached to any dharmas, and the mind having no more attachment (*abhiniveśa*)<sup>14</sup> no longer incurs fetters (*saṃyojana*). Since it no longer incurs fetters, what point is there in propounding emptiness? That is why, in the Tripiṭaka, the Buddha especially speaks of the impermanent (*anitya*), suffering (*duḥkha*), empty (*sūnya*) and impersonal (*anātman*), but speaks much less of the emptiness of all dharmas.

II

Mahāsūnyatā nāma dharmaparyāya

(T 99, ch.12, pp.84c 11 - 85a 10)

Prof. E. Waldschmidt, who rendered such eminent service to Buddhist studies, identified the original text of this Sūtra in a

13 Cf. S III, pp.22, 82, 84; IV, p.1: *yad aniccaṃ taṃ dukkhaṃ, yaṃ dukkhaṃ tad anattā, yad anattā taṃ netaṃ mama neso haṃ asmī na meso attā ti.*

14 *Abhiniveśa*, *mōn par zen*, 執著, or *chih chu* 執著, is a mental attachment to non-existent things.

manuscript from Turfan.

'Sūtra 15 (Tsa-a-han ching 297). Schauplatz: Dorf im Lande der Kurus. Das Stichwort *sūnyatā* kommt zu Eingang vor, wo der Buddha erklärt, er wolle eine Lehrverkündigung (*dharmaparyāya*) names Mahāsūnyatā zu Gehör bringen. Pāli-Entsprechung zu einzelnen Teilen: Nidānasamyutta, Sutta 35 (*avijjāpaccayā*, Geiger: "Aus dem Nichtwissen als Ursache entstanden"); Schauplatz: Sāvattihī<sup>15</sup>.

This Sūtra was subsequently published, translated and profusely annotated by Chandrabhāl Tripāthī, *Fünfundzwanzig Sūtras des Nidānasamyukta*, Berlin 1962, pp.152-7. I venture to refer the reader to this excellent edition and will limit myself to translating a few extracts from this Nidānasamyukta (*loc. cit.*) and the Avijjāpaccayā (S II, pp.60-3).

#### Nidānasamyukta

4. *mahāsūnyatādharmaparyāyah katamāḥ / yad utāsmīn satīdam bhavaty asyotpādād idam utpadyate / yad utāvidyāpratyayāḥ saṃskārā yāvat samudayo bhavati /*

4. What are these Dharma teachings called Great Emptiness? They are expressed thus: 'This being, that is, from the arising of this, that arises, that is to say the formations are conditioned by ignorance; up to: 'Such is

15 [Eng. summary: 'Sūtra 15 (Tsa-a-han ching 297). Setting: Village in Kuru country. The keyword *sūnyatā* appears at the beginning, where the Buddha explains that he wishes to make known a teaching (*dharmaparyāya*) called Mahāsūnyatā. Corresponding Pāli to certain portions: Nidānasamyutta, Sutta 35 (*avijjāpaccayā*); setting: Sāvattihī.] E. Waldschmidt, 'Identifizierung einer Handschrift des Nidānasamyukta', ZDMG CVII, 2, 1957, p.379.

the origin . . . ?

5. *jātipratyayaṃ jarāmarāṇam iti / tatra ko jarāmarāṇam kasya vā jarāmarāṇam iti hi syuḥ praṣṭāra iti ya evam vaded ayaṃ jarāmarāṇam asya vā jarāmarāṇam / yaś caivam vadet taj jīvaṃ tac cārīram anyaj jīvaṃ anyac cārīram / ubhayam etad ekam / vyañjanam atra nānā /*

5. It is said that old-age-death is conditioned by birth, and concerning this certain people might wonder what is old-age-death and to whom does old-age-death pertain. Someone might answer, 'This is old-age-death', or 'It is to this one that old-age-death pertains'. Another person might answer, 'The life-principle<sup>16</sup> is identical to the body', or 'The life principle is different from the body'. These two answers would be identical (in error) and different (only) in the letter.

*taj jīvaṃ tac cārīram iti drṣṭau satyāṃ brahmacarya-vāso na bhavati /*

As long as the false view which consists in saying that the life principle is identical to the body persists, the spiritual life is impossible.

*anyaj jīvaṃ anyac cārīram iti bhikṣavo drṣṭau sat-*

O monks, as long as the false view which consists in

16 *jīva* should not be rendered by 'Leben', but by 'life principle' or 'living being'. *ātman, sativa, jīva, poṣa, puruṣa, pudgala, manuja, māṇava, kāraka, vedaka, jānaka, paśyaka*, etc., are so many synonyms designating the self. Cf. Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā, ed. N. Dutt (London 1934), p.39, ll.2-3; p.99, ll.17; p.115, ll.18, etc.

*yāṃ brahmacariyavāso na bhavati /*

*ity etāv ubhāv antāv anupagamyāsti madhayamā prati-pad āryā lokottarā yathābhūtā aviparītā samyagdr̥ṣṭih / yad uta jātipratyayam jarāmaranam /*

#### Avijjāpaccayā

2. *avijjāpaccayā bhikkhave / saṅkhārā / saṅkhārapaccayā viññānam / pe / evam etassa kevalassa dukkhakkhandhassa samudayo hoti ti /*

3. *katamaṃ nu kho bhante jarāmaranam / kassa ca panidaṃ jarāmaranam ti / no kallo pañhoti bhagavā avoca /*

*katamaṃ jarāmaranam kassa ca panidaṃ jarāmaranam ti itī vā bhikkhu yo vadeyya / aññam jarāmaranam aññassa ca panidaṃ jarāmaranam ti itī*

saying that the life principle is different from the body persists, the spiritual life is impossible.

There is a middle path which avoids these two extremes: it is the noble, transcendental, correct and right unperverted view, which affirms (simply) that old-age-death is conditioned by birth.

2. O monks, the formations are conditioned by ignorance, consciousness is conditioned by the formations, etc., up to: 'Such is the origin of this whole mass of suffering'.

3. O Blessed One, what then is old-age-death and, furthermore, to whom does that old-age-death pertain? That question is not correctly put, answered the Blessed One.

O monk, if one were to ask: 'What is old-age-death and, furthermore, to whom does old-age-death pertain', or if one were to say: 'Other

*vā bhikkhu yo vadeyya / ubhayaṃ etam ekattham vyañjanam eva nānam /*

*tam jīvam taṃ sarīran ti vā bhikkhu diṭṭhiyā sati brahmacariyavāso na hoti / aññam jīvam aññam sarīran ti vā bhikkhu diṭṭhiyā sati brahmacariyavāso na hoti /*

*ete te bhikkhu ubho ante anupagamma majjhena tathāgato dhammaṃ deseti / jātipaccayā jarāmaranam ti /*

is old-age-death, and other is he to whom old-age-death pertains', the two propositions would be the same in meaning (in error) and different only in the letter.

O monk, as long as the false view which consists in saying that the life principle is identical to the body persists, the spiritual life is impossible. O monk, as long as the false view which consists in saying that the life principle is different from the body persists, the spiritual life is impossible.

O monk, the Tathāgata, having avoided those two extremes, teaches the Dharma by means of the middle in saying that old-age-death is conditioned by birth.

In short, to claim that old-age-death pertains to someone is a false view because there is an emptiness of beings (*sattva-sūnyatā*) in the sense that all the formations are devoid of self (*ātman*) and anything pertaining to a self (*ātmiya*). To claim that old-age-death is something is a false view because there is an emptiness of things (*dharmasūnyatā*) in the sense that all dharmas are devoid of a self-nature (*svabhāva*) and marks (*lak-*

*ṣaṇa*), whether general (*sāmānyalakṣaṇa*) or specific (*sva-lakṣaṇa*). The Upadeśa is categoric in this respect.

Commentary in the Upadeśa<sup>17</sup>  
(T 1509, ch.18, pp.192c 26 - 193 a 6)

The Buddha says in the *Ta ch'ung ching* (Mahāsūnyatāsūtra): 'The twelve causes (*dvādaśanidāna*) go from ignorance (*avidyā*) to old-age-death (*jarāmaraṇa*). To say: "This is old-age-death" (*ayaṃ jarāmaraṇam*), to ask "To whom does old-age-death pertain?" (*kasya jarāmaraṇam*): all that consists of a false view (*drṣṭi*). With regard to birth (*jāti*), the action of existence (*bhava*), clinging (*upādāna*), thirst (*trṣṇā*), feeling (*vedanā*), contact (*sparśa*), the six bases of consciousness (*saḍāyatana*), name-and-form (*nāmarūpa*), consciousness (*viññāna*), the formations (*saṃskāra*) and ignorance (*avidyā*), it is the same. To say that the life principle is identical to the body (*taj jīvaṃ tac charīram*), to say that the life principle is different from the body (*anyaj jīvaṃ anyac charīram*), both propositions, although different (in the letter), are false views'. The Buddha continued: 'That the life principle is identical to the body constitutes a false view which is not that of my disciples. That the life principle is different from the body also constitutes a false view which is not that of my disciples'.

In this Sūtra, the Buddha proclaims the emptiness of things (*dharmasūnyatā*). If one asks to whom old-age-death pertains, it should be known that that question is erroneous (*mithyā*) and that there is an emptiness of beings (*sattvasūnyatā*). If one asks

17 This passage is translated in the *Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* II, Louvain 1949, pp.1079-81, in which the close relationship between the Mahāsūnyatāsūtra and the Avijjāpaccayā has already been noted.

what is old-age-death, it should be known that that question is erroneous and that there is an emptiness of things (*dharmasūnyatā*). It is the same for the other (links of the causal chain), up to and including ignorance (*avidyā*).

Elsewhere, the Upadeśa (ch.31, p.295b 27-8) classes the Mahāsūnyatāsūtra of the Saṃyuktāgama among certain sūtras in the Tripiṭaka which categorically teach the *dharmasūnyatā*.

## III

Suññasutta and Saṃvādasutta  
(S IV, p.54; T 99, p.56b 21-c 1)

This point is not made by the Suññasutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya (IV, p.54) which, when asserting that the world of beings (*loka*)<sup>18</sup> is empty, merely means that it is empty of self (*ātman*) and anything pertaining to a self (*ātmīya*). This text narrates a short dialogue between the Buddha and Ānanda, which takes place in Sāvattī. It is often evoked as proof of the non-existence of the Ātman<sup>19</sup>.

1. *sāvattī nidānaṃ* /

2-3. *atha kho āyasmā Ānando /  
la / bhagavantam etad avoca /  
suñño loko suñño loko ti  
bhante vuccati / kittāvatā  
nu kho bhante suñño loko ti  
vuccati /*

1. The event took place in Sāvattī.

2-3. Then the venerable Ānanda said this to the Blessed One: 'Empty is the world, empty is the world', it is said, O Lord. Of what significance then, O Lord, is

18 *loka*, understood as *sattaloka* 'world of beings'.

19 Cf. Mahānidāna II, p.439; Cullānidāna, p.279; Kathāvatthu, p.67; Visuddhimagga, ed. H.C. Warren (and Dh. Kosambi, Cambridge, Mass, 1950), p.561.

4. *yasmā ca kho Ānanda suñ-  
ñam na vā attaniyena vā<sup>20</sup> /  
tasmā suñño loko ti vuccati /  
kiñca Ānanda suññam attena  
vā attaniyena vā /*

5-10. *cakkhuṃ kho Ānanda  
suññam attena vā attaniyena  
vā / rūpā suññā attena vā  
attaniyena vā / cakkhuvīññā-  
ṇam suññam attena vā attani-  
yena vā / cakkhusamphasso  
suñño attena vā attaniyena vā /  
/ pe / yampidaṃ manosam-  
phassapaccayā uppajjati ve-  
dayitaṃ sukhaṃ vā dukkhaṃ  
vā adukkhaṃ asukhaṃ vā /  
tam pi suññam attena vā  
attaniyena vā /*

11. *yasmā ca kho Ānanda  
suññam attena vā attaniyena*

the affirmation that the world is empty?

4. O Ānanda, because there is an emptiness of self or of anything pertaining to self, it is said that the world is empty. What is, O Ānanda, the emptiness of self or anything pertaining to self?

5-10. The eye, O Ānanda, is empty of self or anything pertaining to self, visibles are empty of self or anything pertaining to self, eye-consciousness is empty of self or anything pertaining to self, eye contact is empty of self or anything pertaining to self, and so on. And to end, pleasant, unpleasant or neither unpleasant nor pleasant feeling which arises from mental contact is also empty of self or anything pertaining to self.

11. Therefore since, O Ānanda, there is emptiness of

*vā / tasmā suñño loko ti vuccati /* self or of anything pertaining to self, it is said that the world is empty.

In his *Comparative Catalogue of the Chinese Āgamas and Pāli Nikāyas*, p.223, Ch. Akanuma has compared the Suññasutta of the Saṃyutta Nikāya with the Saṃṛddhisūtra of the Chinese Saṃyuktāgama (T 99, No.22, ch.9, p.56b 21-c 1). However, despite an obvious relationship, the Saṃṛddhisūtra differs notably from the former. It makes Saṃṛddhi (the Saṃiddhi of the Pāli sources) the questioner of the Buddha; it multiplies the aspects (*ākāra*) of emptiness; finally and above all, it introduces a stock phrase on the essential nature (*prakṛti*) of things which never appears in the Nikāyas, but which is common in the Prajñāpāramitā texts. Here again, we can attempt a reconstruction of the original Indian text.

1. *evaṃ mayā śrutam / ekasmin  
samaye bhagavāñ chrāvastyāṃ  
viharati sma jetavane 'natha-  
piṇḍadasyārāme /*

2. *atha saṃṛddhir nāma bhik-  
ṣur yena bhagavāṃs tenopaja-  
gāma / upetya bhagavatpāda-  
śirasā vanditvaikānte nyaṣi-  
dat / ekāntaniṣaṇṇo bhagavan-  
tam idam avocāt /*

3. *sūnyo loka iti bhadanta uc-*

1. Thus have I heard. At one time the Blessed One was residing in Śrāvastī, at the Jeta grove, in Anāthapiṇḍa-  
da's park.

2. Then a monk named Saṃṛddhi went to where the Blessed One was to be found, saluted with his head the feet of the Blessed One then sat to one side. Seated to one side he said this to the Blessed One.

3. It is said, O Lord: 'Empty

20 Compare the formula *suññam idaṃ attena vā attaniyena vā*; cf. M I, p.297; II, p.263; S IV, p.296; Paṭisambhidā II, p.36; Kathāvatthu, p.579. In this last passage: *suññam saṃkhārā attena vā attaniyena vā*.

yate / kiyatā<sup>21</sup> śūnyo loka iti  
bhadanta ucyate /

4. *evam ukto bhagavān sam-  
rddhiṃ bhikṣum idam avocat /*

5. *cakṣuḥ śūnyam / śāśvatenā-  
vipariṇāmadharmeṇa śūnyam /  
ātmīyena śūnyam<sup>22</sup> /*

6. *tat kasya hetoḥ / prakṛtir  
asyaiśā<sup>23</sup> /*

is the world'. To what extent  
is it said, O Lord, that the  
world is empty?

4. Thus questioned, the Bles-  
sed One said this to the  
monk Samrddhi:

5. The eye is empty; it is  
empty of perpetuity and  
changelessness; it is empty  
of self.

6. Why? Because such is its  
essential nature.

21 *kiyatā*, corresponding to the Pāli *kittāvatā*, is found in the *Nidānasamyukta*, pp.127, 168, 188.

22 The Pāli *Suññasutta* reproduced above merely says: *cakkuṃ suññam attena vā attaniyena vā*. Here the formula is more developed and the Chinese version (T 99, p.56b 24-5) renders it by 眼空常恒不變易法空我所空, representing in Sanskrit *cakṣuḥ śūnyam, śāśvatenāvipariṇāmadharmeṇa śūnyam, ātmīyena śūnyam*. This is a shortened formula of which the Pāli sources (*Paṭisambhidā* I, p.109; II, p.178; *Mahāniddeśa* I, p.222; *Cullāniddeśa*, p.279, *Visuddhimagga*, ed. Warren, p.561) give the full wording: *cakkuṃ suññam attena vā attaniyena vā niccena vā dhuvena vā sassatena vā avipariṇāmadhammena vā*, 'the eye is empty of self, anything pertaining to self, eternity, solidity, perpetuity or changelessness'. According to the *Cullāniddeśa*, pp.278-80, and the *Visuddhimagga*, pp.561-2, emptiness can be understood under two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve or forty-two aspects. The *Paṭisambhidā* II, p.178, adds that the *suññasuññam*, 'emptiness of emptiness', is precisely the emptiness in six aspects which has just been mentioned. According to the *Paṭisambhidā Commentary* III, p.632, emptiness formed by emptiness and which is not specified by another accessory word is *suññasuññam (suññasasaṅkhātāṃ suññam, na aññena upapadena visesitā 'ti suññam suññam)*.

23 In Chinese 所以者何此性自爾. The term *prakṛti* (in Tibetan *rā bñin*, in Chinese *hsing* 性) which plays such an important role in Brahmanic and

7. *rūpaṃ cakṣurvijñānaṃ yad  
apīdaṃ cakṣuḥsaṃsparśa  
pratyayam udpadyate vedayi-  
taṃ duḥkhaṃ vā sukhaṃ vā-  
duḥkhāsukhaṃ vā / tad api  
śūnyam / śāśvatenāvipariṇā-  
madharmeṇa śūnyam / ātmī-  
yena śūnyam /*

8. *tat kasya hetoḥ / prakṛtir  
asyaiśā /*

9. *evam eva śrotraṃ ghrāṇaṃ  
jihvā kāyo manaḥ /*

10. *tasmāt śūnyo loka ity uc-  
yate /*

11. *idam avocad bhagavān /  
samrddhir bhikṣur bhagavato  
bhāṣitam abhinandyānumo-*

7. The visible, eye-conscious-  
ness and also that unpleasant,  
pleasant, or neither unpleas-  
ant nor pleasant feeling  
which arises with eye con-  
tact as its condition, is also  
empty, empty of perpetuity  
and of changelessness,  
empty of self.

8. Why? Because such is its  
essential nature.

9. It is the same for the ear,  
nose, tongue, body and mind.

10. That is why it is said that  
the world is empty.

11. Thus spoke the Blessed  
One; the monk Samrddhi,  
having expressed his satisfac-

Hindu philosophical systems is, in the meaning of essential or original nature (or matter), practically unknown to the early canonical writings, but frequently appears in the Mahāyāna sūtras, particularly in the *Prajñāpāramitā* literature.

The phrase *tat kasya hetoḥ, prakṛtir asyaiśā* which appears here in §§ 6 and 8 of the *Samrddhisūtra*, plays the part of a refrain in the definitions of the sixteen, eighteen or twenty *śūnyatās* proposed by the large *Prajñāpāramitā* sūtras; Cf. *Aṣṭadaśasāhasrikā* (Tib. Trip. XIX, No.732, p.260, fol.135a 8-137b 5; T 220, ch.488, pp.480b 6-481a 1); *Pañcaviṃsatisāhasrikā*, ed. N. Dutt, pp.195, 112-197, 120; *Śatasāhasrikā*, ed. P. Ghosa (Calcutta 1914), pp.1407, 110-1411, 114.

The presence of this phrase in the *Samrddhisūtra* of the *Saṃyuktāgama* and its absence in the *Suññasutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya* raises a text-critical problem, and I would willingly believe that this phrase was introduced into the *Samrddhisūtra* by a Mahāyānist interpolator. We know the degree to which the Chinese *Ekottarāgama* was also subjected to similar intervention.

*dhya prakrāntaḥ*<sup>24</sup> /

tion and rejoiced at the discourse of the Blessed One, went away.

The Pāli Suññasutta and the Sanskrit Samṛddhisūtra have exactly the same significance. Both teach the *sattvaśūnyatā* by presenting the six internal bases of consciousness (*adhyāt-māyatana*) as being empty of self and anything pertaining to self. The latter also stresses the impermanence (*anityatā*) of those same bases by giving them as 'empty of permanence and changelessness'. Nevertheless, the author of the Upadeśa, allowing himself to be impressed by the phrase, *tat kasya hetoḥ, prakṛtir asyaiṣā*, sees in the second of these sūtras an affirmation of that emptiness of essential natures (*prakṛtiśūnyatā*) referred to by the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras.

Commentary in the Upadeśa\*  
(T 1509, ch.31, p.282a 28 - b 11)

*Prakṛtiśūnyatā*, 'The Emptiness of Essential Natures'. The Prakṛti of dharmas is eternally empty, but by assuming the karmic series (*karmaprabandha*), it appears not to be empty. Thus the Prakṛti of water (*udaka*) is cold (*śīta*) in itself, but if it is taken near fire (*agni*) it becomes hot (*uṣṇa*), and if the fire is put out it becomes cold again. It is the same with the Prakṛti of dharmas: as long as the [karmic conditions] are not present, it is empty (*śūnya*) and imperceptible (*anupalabdha*), like the Prakṛti of permanently cold water; but when the conditions (*pratyaya*) are assembled, the dharmas exist like water which becomes hot

24 With regard to this ending, compare Mahāparinirvāṇa, pp.118, 152, 186; Nidānasamyukta, pp.114, 176, 197.

\* [Tr.'s note] - Translated by the author in *Le Traité IV* (op. cit), pp.2110-15.

near fire. If the conditions lessen or disappear, there is no more dharma, like boiling water which becomes cold when the fire is extinguished. See what is said in the Sūtra<sup>25</sup>: 'The eye (*cakṣus*) is empty (*śūnya*), devoid of self (*anātman*) and of anything pertaining to a self (*anātmīya*). Why? Because that is its essential nature (*prakṛtir asyaiṣā*). The ear (*śrotra*), nose (*ghrāṇa*), tongue (*jihvā*), body (*kāya*) and mind (*manas*), colour (*rūpa*), [sound (*śabda*), odour (*gandha*), taste (*rasa*), tangibility (*spra-ṣṭavya*)] and dharmas are also like that'.

Objection: That Sūtra says that [the twelve *āyatanas*] are empty of self and anything pertaining to a self (*śūnyāny ātmanā vātmīyena vā*), in other words it is referring to the emptiness of beings (*sattvaśūnyatā*), and not to the emptiness of things (*dharmasūnyatā*). How do you see evidence in this in favour of the emptiness of essential natures (*prakṛtiśūnyatā*)?

Answer: In that Sūtra, it is only a matter of *Prakṛtiśūnyatā*; it does not speak of the emptiness of beings (*sattvaśūnyatā*) or of the emptiness of things (*dharmasūnyatā*).

The *Prakṛtiśūnyatā* is of two kinds:

1. In the twelve bases of consciousness (*āyatana*), there is no self (*ātman*) or anything pertaining to a self (*ātmīya*). The emptiness proper to the twelve *āyatanas* consists of the absence of self and the absence of anything pertaining to a self. That is what is said in the Śrāvaka system.

2. As for the Mahāyāna system, it says this: The twelve *āyatanas*, having no self or anything pertaining to a self, are empty, and the Prakṛti of the twelve *āyatanas* not existing, is

25 The Samṛddhisūtra quoted immediately above.

(itself) empty [of Prakṛti].

In short, in the opinion of the Upadeśa, the Paramārthaśūnyatāsūtra teaches only the emptiness of beings; the Mahāśūnyatāsūtra proclaims both the emptiness of beings and the emptiness of things; as for the Samṛddhisūtra, it affirms the emptiness of essential natures (*prakṛti*).

The shifts in meaning undergone in the course of time by the technical vocabulary of Buddhism did not escape the author of the Upadeśa. In the canonical works, *paramārthaśūnyatā* is emptiness in the proper sense of the word, namely Anātman or the emptiness of beings (*sattvaśūnyatā*) devoid of self and anything pertaining to a self, while *mahāśūnyatā* is the great emptiness relating to both things and beings. In the Prajñāpāramitā sūtras of the Mahāyāna, *paramārthaśūnyatā* is the emptiness of the Absolute, i.e. of Nirvāṇa; *mahāśūnyatā* is quite simply the emptiness of the spatial regions. This is what results from the definitions supplied by the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā and the Śatasāhasrikā:

'What is the emptiness of the Absolute? Here the Absolute means Nirvāṇa, and that Nirvāṇa is empty of Nirvāṇa because it is neither eternal nor transitory. Why? Because such is its essential nature. That is called the emptiness of the Absolute'<sup>26</sup>.

'What is great emptiness? The eastern region is empty of eastern region; the southern region is empty of southern region .

26 Emended text of the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā, p.196, 11.9-10, and of the Śatasāhasrikā, pp.1408, 120 - 1409, 121: *tatra katamā paramārthaśūnyatā / tatra paramārtha ucyaṇa nirvāṇam / yac ca nirvāṇam nirvāṇena śūnyam akūṭasthāvināśītām upādāya / tat kasya hetoḥ prakṛtir asyaiṣā iyaṃ ucyaṇa paramārthaśūnyatā /*

. . . , etc., up to: the intermediate regions are empty of intermediate regions, because they are neither eternal nor transitory. Why? Because such is their essential nature. That is called Great Emptiness'<sup>27</sup>.

27 Emended text of the Pañcaviṃśatisāhasrikā, p.196, 11.7-8; Śatasāhasrikā, p.1408, 11.15-20: *tatra katamā mahāśūnyatā / pūrvā dik pūrvayā diśā śūnyā / dakṣiṇā dig dakṣiṇayā diśā śūnyā / yāvad vidiṣo vidigbhiḥ śūnyā akūṭasthāvināśītām upādāya / tat kasya hetoḥ / prakṛtir asyaiṣā / iyaṃ ucyaṇa mahāśūnyatā /*

[Ed.] – A more detailed bibliography can be found in the author's five volumes of *Le Traité de la grande vertu de sagesse* (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste, Louvain and Louvain-la-Neuve 1949-80), the English version of which is virtually completed by the present translator and awaits publication in the same series.

Note: The above article originally appeared prior to the publication of *Traité IV*, the longest section of which is devoted to the 'Eighteen kinds of śūnyatā'.

## NOTICE

Just as we were going to press, we learnt with deep regret of the death of the French scholar André BAREAU, aged 71, on 2 March 1993. An appreciation of this Professor at the Collège de France and world renowned writer on Buddhism will follow in the next issue.