

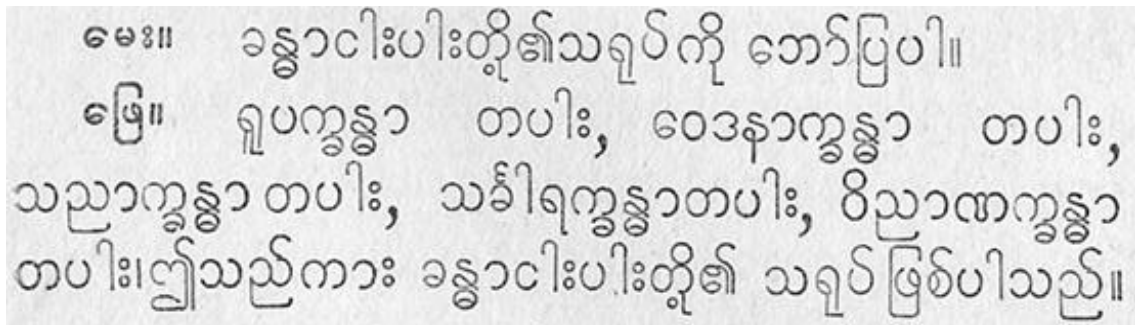
Samyutta Nikaya XXII.122

Silavant Sutta

Virtuous

Translated from the Pali by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.
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Introduction: Silavant Sutta tells us the many stages of holiness and its practice on the perception and realization of “**Five Aggregates: (Panca Khandha)- (Khandha Ngar Par)**”



To attend to five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self

As house holders, we should also try our best to understand the five clinging aggregates and attend to it appropriately in the same manner as Monk.

The Five Aggregates - Panca Khandha -(Khandha Ngar Par) is an analysis of personal experiences and view on cognition from a Buddhist perspective. The Five Aggregates teaches us the logical and thorough approach to understand the Universal Truth of No-Self (Anatthalakkhana) .Self is only a Buddhist term for “ a collection of physical and mental personal experiences, like as feelings, ideas, thoughts, habits, attitude, etc. We should, however, analyze all our personal experiences in terms of The Five Aggregates.

Five Aggregates - Panca Khandha

Human	
Matter (Rupa) 	Mind (Nama)
Element Of Extension (Earth) Pathavi	Feeling Vendana
Element Of Cohesion (Water) Apo	Perception Sanna
Element Of Heat (Heat) Tejo	Mental Formations Sandkhara
Element Of Motion (Wind) Vayo	Consciousness Vinnana

1. Matter or **Form (rupa)** - the physical form that responded to the five organs of senses, i.e., eye, ear, nose, tongue and body
2. Sensation or **Feeling (vedana)** - the feeling in reception of physical things by the senses through the mind
3. Recognition or **Conception (sanna)** - the functioning of mind in distinguishing and formulating the concept
4. **Volition** or **Mental Formation (sandkhara)** - habitual action, i.e., a conditioned response to the object of experience, whether it is good or evil, you like or dislike
5. **Consciousness (vinnana)** - the mental faculty in regard to perception, cognition and experience

The five aggregates work together to produce a mental object or being. Inherent to a mental being, its characteristics is impermanence and emptiness and is governed by the principle of impermanence. Hence the five aggregates are but dynamic processes. Understanding its true nature we then attain the wisdom of not-self. (**Anatta**). Thus, we will come to know the world we experience is constructed of idea of impersonality process. So we look at everything in terms of impersonality – **No-Self**. We then could look at happiness and suffering, praise and blame, and all the rest with a balanced mind – equanimity. This is how we Buddhist should look at all experiences with a balanced mind and thus we are not subject to the imbalance of alternating between hope and despair.

Form (Rupa)

ရူပက္ခန္ဓာ

The aggregate of form corresponds to all material or physical factors. It includes our own bodies, and material objects. Specifically, the aggregate of form includes the five physical organs (**eye, ear, nose, tongue, body**), and the corresponding physical objects of the sense organs (**sight, sound, smell, taste and tangible objects**).

Sensation (Vedana)

ဝေဒနာက္ခန္ဓာ

The aggregate of sensation or feeling is of three kinds - pleasant, unpleasant and indifferent. When one experiences an object, that experience takes on one of the three emotional responses: the reaction of **pleasure**, the reaction of **displeasure**, or the reaction of **indifference**.

Conception (Sanna)

သညာက္ခန္ဓာ

The function of perception is to turn an indefinite experience into a definite, recognized and identified experience. It is the formulation of a conception of an idea about a particular object of experience.

Mental Formation (Sandkhara)

သင်္ခါရက္ခန္ဓာ

The aggregate of mental formation is your conditioned response to the object of experience. It is not just the impression created by previous actions of your past, but also the responses here and now motivated and directed in a particular way. In short, **mental formation or volition** has a moral dimension; perception has a conceptual dimension; feeling has an emotional dimension.

Consciousness (Vinnana)

ဝိညာဏက္ခန္ဓာ

Both the eye and the visible object are the physical elements, therefore they are not enough to produce experience by themselves. Only the co-presence of consciousness, the three factors – **consciousness, the eye and the visible object** produce experience. Similarly, ear, nose, tongue and body are the same. Consciousness is therefore an indispensable element that produces an experience.

e.g. the eyes and visible objects come in contact, and when consciousness also becomes associated with the physical factors of experience, visual consciousness arises. It is not just the personal experience. The way that our personal experience is produced is through the functioning of the three major mental factors of experience, i.e. the aggregate of perception and mental formation. There are:

1. **eye** consciousness
2. **ear** consciousness
3. **nose** consciousness
4. **tongue** consciousness
5. **body** consciousness
6. **mind** consciousness

Note that there is the sixth sense, the mind. For the mind, the corresponding *object* is not a physical one; but is an idea. The mind consciousness plays an important role in all mental activities.

Silavant Sutta **Virtuous**

On one occasion **Ven. Sariputta & Ven. Maha Kotthita** were staying near **Varanasi** in the **Deer Park at Isipatana**. Then Ven. Maha Kotthita, emerging from seclusion in the late afternoon, went to Ven. Sariputta and, on arrival, exchanged courteous greetings with him. After an exchange of friendly greetings & courtesies, he sat to one side. As he was sitting there, he said to Ven. Sariputta,

"Sariputta my friend, which things should a virtuous monk attends to in an appropriate way?"

Virtuous Monk

"A virtuous monk, Kotthita my friend, should attend in an appropriate way to the **five clinging-aggregates** as **inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, a dissolution, an emptiness, not-self.**

Which five?

- ? **Form** as a clinging-aggregate,
- ? **feeling**. as a clinging-aggregate..
- ? **perception**. as a clinging -aggregate..
- ? **fabrications**. as a clinging -aggregate..
- ? **consciousness** as a clinging-aggregate

as a clinging-aggregate. A virtuous monk should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates¹ as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, dissolution, and emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a virtuous monk, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of stream-entry."²

Sotapanna Monk

"Then which things should a monk who has attained stream-entry (Sotapanna) attend to in an appropriate way?"

"A monk who has attained stream-entry should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, dissolution, and emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained stream-entry, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of once-returning."

Anagami³ Monk

"Then which things should a monk who has attained once-returning (Anagami) attend to in an appropriate way?"

"A monk who has attained once-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, dissolution, and emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained once-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of non-returning."

"Then which things should a monk who has attained non-returning attend to in an appropriate way?"

Arahant Monk

"A monk who has attained non-returning should attend in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, dissolution, and emptiness, not-self. For it is possible that a monk who has attained non-returning, attending in an appropriate way to these five clinging-aggregates as inconstant... not-self, would realize the fruit of arahantship."

¹ Five Aggregates – Khan Thar Ngar Par – form, feeling, perception, fabrication and consciousness

² Stream entry – Sotapanna – assured of attainment after seven more rebirths

³ Anagami – non-returner – has escaped the samsara – cycle of rebirth

"Then which things should an arahant attend to in an appropriate way?"

"An arahant should attend in an appropriate way to these **five clinging-aggregates as inconstant, stressful, a disease, a cancer, an arrow, painful, an affliction, alien, dissolution, and emptiness, not-self. Although, for an arahant, there is nothing further to do, and nothing to add to what has been done, still these things -- when developed & pursued -- lead both to a pleasant abiding in the here-&-now and to mindfulness & alertness."**

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THE SURANGAMA SUTRA

Fusing the five aggregates

1. The first aggregate: **rupa**

"Ananda, why are the five aggregates fundamentally the wondrous nature of the Absolute of the Tathagata store? Ananda, for instance, when a man looks at a clear sky with clear eyes, he sees only the void which contains nothing. If suddenly without any apparent reason he steadies his seeing, it will be disturbed and he will see flowers dancing and other objects moving in the sky. It is the same with the aggregate rupa. Ananda, these dancing flowers come neither from the void nor from his eyes. If they came from the void, they would return to it; if there was really such a coming and going of these flowers, the void would not be empty. If voidness was really not empty (i.e. if it was solid), then they could not appear and vanish in it. This is like Ananda's (solid) body which does not allow (another) Ananda to enter it. If these flowers come from the eyes, they should be able to return to the eyes, and because they come from (the faculty of) seeing, they should be able to see (things). Thus when they leave the eyes, they become flowers in the sky and when they return, they should see the organ of sight. If they cannot see (things), then when they leave, they should screen the sky and when they return, they should veil the eyes; but when the man sees these flowers, his eyes are not veiled. Then why do you wait until the sky is clear (of these flowers) to say that your eyes are really clear? Therefore, you should know that **the aggregate form is unreal for it is neither causal nor conditional nor self-existent.** (Note 1)

Note 1 by Han Shan

Steadying stands for *ignorance*; troubled seeing for false *perception*; and dancing flowers for illusory *form*; this is the origin of form. The Buddha used the void and eyes to reveal the unreality of the first aggregate. **Therefore, he who understands that dancing flowers come from neither the void nor the eyes, realizes the non-existence of form which is an illusion.**

2. The second aggregate: **vedana**

"Ananda, when, for instance, a man is in good health and his limbs are in good condition, he does not feel anything. But if suddenly, without any reason, he rubs his palms together, he feels coarseness, smoothness, cold and warmth. It is the same with the second aggregate vedana. Ananda, these sensations come from neither the

void nor his palms. If they come from the void, why are they felt by his palms only and not by his body? it should not be up to the void to choose his palms to feel them. If they come from his palms, they should not wait for the palms to be brought together to be felt. Moreover, if they really come from his palms and are felt when the latter are brought together, when they are separated, these sensations should re-enter the palms, shoulders, bones and marrow which should also feel their re-entry. They should also be felt by the mind as coming in and out, as if something had moved in and out of the body. If so, there is no need to bring the two palms together to feel these sensations. **Therefore, you should know that the aggregate vedana is unreal and is neither causal nor conditional nor self-existent."**

3. The third aggregate: *sanna*

"Ananda, if someone speaks of sour plums, your mouth will water, and if you think of walking above an overhanging cliff, you will have the sensation of shivering in the soles of your feet. This is the same with the third aggregate *sanjna*. Ananda, this talk of sourness does not come from the plum, nor does it enter your mouth. If it comes from the plum, it should be spoken of by the plum itself; then why does it wait for someone to speak of it?

If it enters your mouth, it should be your mouth which actually talks about it; then why does it wait until your ears hear of it? If it is your ears which alone hear it, why does not that water come out of them? This is the same with your thought of (walking above) an overhanging cliff. **Therefore, you should know that the third aggregate *sanjna* is neither causal nor conditional nor self-existent."**

4. The fourth aggregate: *sandkhara*

"Ananda, the fourth aggregate *sandkhara* is like water which flows in a torrent endlessly and in good order over a fall. Ananda, this flow does not come from the void nor is it due to the water; it is neither the water itself nor does it exist apart from the void and the water. If it is created by the void, boundless space would become an endless flow of water and the whole world would be submerged. If it is due to the water, then it should not be water and should have its own form and location which should be apparent. If it is water, then still and clear water should not be water. If it exists apart from the void and water, (this is impossible because) space (is all-embracing and) has (nothing) outside (it) and because there is no flow without water. **Therefore, you should know that the fourth aggregate *samskara* is false and is neither causal nor conditional nor self-existent."**

5. The fifth aggregate: *vinana*

"Ananda, the (fifth) aggregate consciousness is like the void in an empty pitcher with two mouths. (Note 2) If someone blocks both mouths and carries it to another country, the void does not go from one place to another. If the void comes from somewhere, that place should lose some of its voidness, and on arrival elsewhere,

when the mouths are opened and the pitcher reversed, one should see the void poured out of it. Therefore, you should know that consciousness is unreal and is neither causal nor conditional nor self-existent. (Note 3)

Notes 2 and 3 by Han Shan

2: A kavalinka [kalavinka?] pitcher.

3: The pitcher stands for the body in the intermediate state after man's death; the void for consciousness, and the two mouths for the man's hearing and seeing. At death, his seeing and hearing cease to function, hence the two blocked spouts. His karma causes him to be reborn in another country. If consciousness is thought of as following the man to come at birth and go at death, then it should die in one country to be reborn in another, like the pitcher full of air carried from one place to another; if so, the place the man leaves should lose some of its air and the place where he arrives should gain some new air that is poured from the pitcher. Hence we know that the void is immutable and that consciousness neither comes nor goes. Therefore, the concept of a consciousness that comes and goes to follow birth and death is groundless, because consciousness fundamentally does not exist. The above wipes out the falseness of the five aggregates to reveal the absolute voidness of the nature of the Tathagata store.