THE SIMILE OF THE PITH (SĀRA) IN THE NIKĀYAS AND ITS BEARING ON THE ANATTAVĀDA

It is commonly held that the Buddha taught the absolute absence in man of any self (ātman or attā). Any current manual of Indian philosophy will testify to it. Thus we read,

"The law of change is universal; neither man, nor any other being, animate or inanimate, is exempt from it. It is commonly believed that in man there is an abiding substance called the soul (ātmā), which persists through changes that overcome the body, exists before and after death, and migrates from one body to another. Consistently with his theories of conditional existence and universal change, Buddha denies the existence of such soul"\(^1\).

"Buddha said that everything is impermanent and so the Self (Attā or Ātman) being the mind-body-complex, is also impermanent"\(^2\).

Not so. The Nikāyas, being the texts that bring us closest to the original teachings of the Buddha, teach both clearly and insistently that whatever is mutable by nature is not the self, that the mind-body-complex is not the self, making of it a compelling reason to feel disgust for, and to repudiate, whatever is mutable by nature or is a factor of the mind-body-complex, precisely because it is not the self. It is better said that such position is at least an implicit avowal of the reality of the self. In this respect, the manuals of Indian Philosophy rest content with repeating what specialists in the matter have been saying after studying the Pāli texts.

In this article, we are going to examine the question focussing our attention on a beautiful simile and inquiring as to how is it used in relation to the reality of the self.

\(^1\) SATTschANDRA CHATERjee AND DHIRENDRAMOHAN DATTA, An Introduction to Indian Philosophy, University of Calcutta, 1968, p. 137.

\(^2\) SWAMI PRAJNANANDA, Schools of Indian Philosophical Thought, Calcutta, 1973, p. 124-125.
The key word of the simile is the word sāra. At times it is used with the adjectival meaning of excellence, but most frequently it is a noun meaning: pith, essence. In the simile alluded to here, sāra means the heart or pith of a tree, that part of the trunk that yields a solid kind of wood, as distinguished from other parts of the trunk that are less compact and durable. Thus the simile distinguishes between three parts apparent in a sectional cutting of a trunk: bark (taca), sap-wood (pheggu), and pith-wood (sāra).

I. THE SIMILE APPLIED TO PERSONS AND DOCTRINES

The first person to whom the simile of the pith-wood in the tree is applied is obviously the Buddha.

In the Mahākaccānabhadekarattasutta of the Majjhima, the Buddha is questioned by the bhikkhu Samidhi about the teaching that went by the name of “One in love only with what is auspicious (bhaddekaratta)”. The Buddha proffers his teaching in verse, expressing his thought in a very succinct manner, and withdraws. Then Samidhi accosts Kaccāna the Great begging of him to explain in detail what had been expounded in short by the Buddha. Kaccāna the Great introduces his discourse with the words,

“It is as if a man being in search of pith-wood, looking for pith-wood, walking about in quest of pith-wood, going past the root of a big stable pithy tree, going past the trunk, were to think that the pith-wood was to be looked for in the branches and foliage. Similar is this perfomance of your reverences, who, having had the Master face to face, passing over the Blessed One, think that this matter should be inquired from me...”

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3 Pācittiya, p. 286 (1, 1, 3), Sāra bhikkhunī. All quotations in this article will match with the divisions in volume, pagination and marginal numbers of the Nālandā Edition, Pāli Publication Board (Bihar Government).


5 M III, p. 270, Mahākaccānabhadekarattasutta, 4. The same simile is used in similar circumstances in M I, Madhupiṅḍikasutta, 6; S IV, p. 87-88, Salāyatanasamīyutta, 116; A IV, Dasakanipāta, 12, 3, 6; Ibid. p. 310, Dasakanipāta, 17, 7, 6.
In the same trend of mind, the Paccekasambuddhas who once-inhabited the Isigili mountain are called sattasārā, “the best of beings”, lit. “the essences of beings”.6

The teaching of the Buddha is also such as to deserve to be described as “standing on the pure pith”.

“Even as a big sāl tree, good Gotama, [standing] not far from a village or market town; if by reason of its impermanence the branches and foliage were to crumble down, the bark and boughs were to crumble down, the sap-wood was to crumble down; after a time, devoid of branches and foliage, devoid of bark and boughs, devoid of sap-wood, that tree would be established on the pith. Even so the teaching of the venerable Gotama, devoid of branches and foliage, devoid of bark and boughs, devoid of sap-wood, is established on the pure pith”7.

It is to be noted that the teaching to which these words refer concerns the Tathāgata who has abandoned material form, feeling, perception, inner complexes and consciousness, which are the existential factors by which one trying to designate him would do it. That is why the Tathāgata is beyond all designation and therefore rebirth cannot be predicated of him, non-rebirth cannot be predicated of him, etc. One might think that the one who thus worded the simile was unconsciously at least having before his eyes the Tathāgata standing on the pure pith with all existential factors crumbled down. But as a matter of fact the simile is not applied to the Tathāgata thus freed, but to the teaching that so describes the Tathāgata. We will nevertheless see later on how liberation is at times likened to the pith-wood in the tree and that nibbāna and the very self (attā) are designated as sāra. No simile is bound to be applied always in the same or a parallel way. The application of a simile depends on the point of view taken by the user and on the matter that is to be illustrated.

It was but natural that the Sāṅgha should share in the qualities of the Master and of his teaching, especially while the Buddha was still alive and could stir up fervour in the monks, inciting them to ever higher achievements. That is why the Majjhima presents the Buddha in the midst of his bhikkhus, praising the way to perfection he had taught them, so that they might “put up energy for the attainment of what was not yet attained, for the acquisition of what was not yet acquired, for the realization of what was not yet realized”. And the elder bhikkhus were ex-

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7 M II, p. 163, Aggivacchagottasutta, 8. We follow in the translation the Siamese version. Other versions say, “That tree would be clean, standing on the pure pith”.
horing the junior ones, and these were profiting by the exhortation of their elders, going there and then through successively higher achievements.

"At that time, the Blessed One, observing the Order of bhikkhus that had become quite silent, addressed the bhikkhus thus, 'Clear of idle prattling, bhikkhus, is this assembly, established on the pure pith'". 8

The Buddha goes on then enumerating the different degrees of perfection of the bhikkhus there present.

With the aim in view that what is the pith should stand firm in his bhikkhus, the Buddha says that he will deal with them as with thoroughly baked pots, rubbing and polishing them, not as with unbaked pots which would not stand the rubbing and polishing, but would on the contrary crumble down.

"I will not, Ananda, proceed with you as the potter in the case of raw unbaked pots. I shall speak, Ananda, constantly reproving; I shall speak, Ananda, constantly cleansing. That which is the pith will stand firm". 9

For all that, it was to be expected that some of the bhikkhus would not come up to the standards pointed out to them by the Master, and become liable to reproval by the genuine bhikkhus. Thus, in another passage, the Buddha advises the bhikkhus to expel such deficient persons, lest they should corrupt the other monks. One of the similes applied to such imperfect bhikkhus is the following,

"It is as if a man, bhikkhus, who is in search of pipes for a place for drinking water, taking a sharp axe were to enter into the forest. Whatever is the tree therein that he strikes with the axe, all those trees that are solid and pithy, struck by the edge of the axe, give out a sharp sound; but all those trees that are rotten within, oozing, corrupted, when struck by the edge of the axe, give out a hollow sound. He cuts such a tree at the root; having cut it at the root, he cuts it at the top; having cut it at the top, he cleanses thoroughly its inside, and, having cleansed thoroughly its inside he applies it as a pipe for a place for drinking water". 10

Thus bad monks who are corrupted and hollow within, should be cast away like the rotten inside of a tree, lest they should co-

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8 M III, p. 143, Anāpānasatisutta, 2. For another passage, where "the pith" is contrasted with idle words, see M II, p. 361, Bāhitikasutta, 2.
9 M III, p. 182, Mahāsūṇāvatassutta, 12.
10 A III, p. 286, Āṭṭhakānicca, 1, 10, 6.
rupt their colleagues in the Order. Similarly, a sham ascetic is said to be a cheat and compared to a heap of husk without grain, to a tree hollow within, without pith-wood

In stark contrast with the Buddha and the members of the Buddhist Order, people belonging to other creeds are compared to pithless trees,

"Even as a man in search of pith-wood, cutting a plantain tree would split it, without finding any pith therein, since it is empty of any pith;

Even thus, persons belonging to other sects, a mass of people addicted to various views, are lacking in what is uncaused, as the plantain tree is devoid of pith".

Another passage refers to the impossibility of falling back on "the observances and curious ceremonies for bringing good luck", practised by the members of other sects, "as if they were the pith"

The opinion that the followers of other ways are heresy-ridden, identifying the self with the existential factors, and that, for that very reason, their words are pithless, is illustrated again in another passage of the Majjhima. Aggivesana is presented there as saying explicitly, "Material form is my self, feeling is my self, perception is my self, the inner complexes are my self, consciousness is my self". After arguing with him and making him confess the opposite view, the Buddha tells him,

"It is as if a man, Aggivesana, in search of pith-wood, looking for pith-wood, walking about in quest of pith-wood, laying hold of an axe, should enter the forest. He would see there a big straight young plantain tree of great height. He would cut it at the root; having cut it at the root, he would cut it at the top; having cut it at the top, he would cut into the layer of bark. Then cutting into the layer of bark he would not find even sap-wood, much less pith-wood. Even thus you, Aggivesana, questioned by me, pressed by me, addressed by me regarding one opinion [are found] empty, vain, mistaken".

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11 K VII, p. 409, Cariyāpiṭaka, 3, 2, 10.
12 K VI, Apadāna, 1, p. 29 (1, 3, 272-273).
13 M I, p. 326, Mahāṭaṇhāsāṅkhāyasutta, 12.
II. THE SIMILE APPLIED TO MORAL CONDITIONS

With the intention of giving a complete picture of the value of the word sāra in the simile, we are going to refer now to passages where different parts of the tree are made to stand for divers moral conditions, the best of which will correspond with sāra. Thus,

"Finding support in the Himālaya, the king of mountains, the great sāl trees grow in five growths. What five? They grow in branches and foliage, they grow in boughs, they grow in bark, they grow in sap-wood, they grow in pith-wood... In the same way, bhikkhus, finding support in a believing man the members of a family grow in five growths. What five? They grow in faith, they grow in moral practice, they grow in learning, they grow in charity, they grow in insight" 15.

A superficial analysis of the text will bear out that faith is compared to the branches and foliage; moral practice, to the boughs or primary branches of the tree; learning, to the bark of the trunk; charity, to sap-wood; insight, to pith-wood 16.

15 A II, p. 309, Pañcakānipāta, 4, 10. This is the prose introduction for the metrical part of the sutta. The latter is more in consonance with the spirituality of a man who has not renounced the world. In the prose introduction the most perfect condition is insight (paññā), which rather belongs to those who have abandoned the family life bent upon perfection. The metrical part speaks only of faith, virtue, charity and, as the end of it all, heaven, where the faithful ones find their joy in sensual pleasures (modanti kāmakāmino). The only word in the metrical part that would warrant the introduction of paññā is vicakkhāna, but it refers to people who reflect, who are watchful, attentive. The bhikkhu does not long for heaven, but for liberation, and this is based on insight (paññā).

16 The same metrical part occurs in A I, p. 140, Tikānipāta, 5, 9, but the prose introduction reduces the growths in question to three: branches and foliage, bark and boughs, sap-wood and pith. They correspond respectively with: faith, moral practice and insight. In this case, A II seems to preserve the sutta in its original form, of which A I is a somehow artificial abbreviation. The series: faith, moral practice, learning, charity and insight is of frequent occurrence. Cfr. S I, p. 233, Sakkasamuyutta, 14, where, in the prose part of the sutta, it is said that a man reborn in the Heaven of the Thirty-three Gods outshines all of them because he had acquired in life those five spiritual endowments. In M III, p. 162 ff, Saṅkhārapapattisutta, 2 ff, it is said of a monk endowed with those five, that he can aspire to any noble uprising, either in this world or among the gods, and even he can aspire to nībūna, not to uprise anywhere. The last possibility is doubtless due to the presence of insight in the monk. In D III, p. 126-127, the Bodhisattva is shown taking care that others may grow in those five qualities and how himself born later on as a Tathāgata does not suffer loss in those virtues. In A I, p. 195, Tikānipāta, 7, 10, the text also refers to gods that possess those five virtues.
In the *Aṅguttara*, the simile of the tree and its different parts is used several times as an illustration of the comparative value of divers spiritual conditions, the best of which corresponds with the pith-wood in the tree. In the first case there is an exact correspondence in number—five in all—between the spiritual conditions detailed in the *sutta* and the parts of the tree enumerated in the simile. Thus, with a kind of *patīcchasamuppāda* reasoning, so often found in the Canon, we are told that without moral practice, there is no right concentration; without right concentration, there is no true knowledge and vision; without true knowledge and vision, there is no disgust and dispassion for the world; without disgust and dispassion for the world, there is no knowledge and vision of liberation. The simile, in this case, is as follows,

"Even as when a tree, bhikkhus, is devoid of branches and foliage, its boughs do not reach maturity; its bark, and sapwood, and pith-wood (sāra) do not reach maturity; in the same way, bhikkhus, for a wicked man devoid of moral practice the necessary condition for right concentration is destroyed, etc."  

The exact correspondence in number between the spiritual conditions and the parts of the tree suggests that the pith of the tree symbolizes the knowledge and vision of liberation.  

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17 A II, p. 288-289, *Pañcakanipāta*, 3, 4. The opposite case is next described with an adaptation of the simile to it.  
18 The exact numerical parallelism between the spiritual conditions referred to and the parts of the tree proves that this was the original wording of the *sutta*, which was enlarged later on, so as to include some more additional conditions, but keeping the simile in the same form. Thus in A III, p. 73, *Chakkaniṇīpāta*, 5, 8, the enumeration of spiritual conditions begins with control of the senses, proceeding then as before. In A III, p. 229, *Sattakanipāta*, 7, 1, one further initial condition is added before control of the senses, namely virtuous shame (*hiri*) and fear of blame (*ottapa*). A III, p. 418-419, *Aṭṭhakanipāta*, 9, 1, begins with watchfulness (*sati*) and circumspection (*sampajañña*), and goes on as in *Sattakanipāta*, 7, 1. The same simile is introduced in A IV, p. 101-102, *Dasakanipāta*, 1, 3, but the factors here involved are: moral practice, absence of regret, joy, delight, calmness, happiness, right concentration, right knowledge and vision, disgust and dispassion for worldly life, knowledge and vision of liberation. Every preceding item is considered, in a kind of *patīcchasamuppāda* reasoning, a necessary condition for the existence of the following one. This passage is interesting inasmuch as it indicates the comparative value of certain mental states such as *pāmojja*, *pātī*, *passaddhi*, *sukha*. The same teaching is repeated in the two *suttas* that follow, namely *Dasakanipāta*, 1, 4-5, but the teaching is attributed in them not to the Buddha, but to Sāriputta and Ananda respectively. In such cases it seems natural to suppose that the original version is the one attributing the teaching to Buddha's disciples. It is more appropriate to conceive that a teaching proclaimed by some outstanding disciple was later on enhanced by being ascri-
That liberation is the pith of Buddhist teaching and practice is clearly expounded in the *Mahāsāropamasutta* and the *Cūlasāropamasutta*. The starting point in both the suttas is the same: a man finds himself submerged in existential pain and desires to bring about its destruction. He renounces the world and he finds himself respected, honoured, and the recipient of some temporal advantages. He rests satisfied with that and becomes indolent and slothful, abandoning all further striving after perfection. He is like a man who would mistake the branches and foliage for the pith-wood of the tree. Another man, having renounced the world, and having come to the same comfortable condition as the former one, does not rest satisfied with the honour and gifts offered him. He strives to signalize himself in moral practice. He finds satisfaction in that, exalting himself and despising others, not trying to advance further. He is likened to a man who would take the boughs of the tree for the pith-wood thereof. A third man, having renounced the world does not care for the advantages that accrue to him on account of that, he gives himself to moral practice, without being satisfied with it. Striving further, he succeeds in concentration and stops at that, esteeming himself above others, thinking that his purpose is thereby fulfilled. He is likened to a man who deludes himself thinking that the bark is the pith—bed to the Buddha, than to imagine that a teaching traditionally attributed to the Buddha could be consciously submitted to the relative degradation of being ascribed to a disciple. The last three suttas, with the teaching attributed again successively to the Buddha, to Sāriputta and to Ananda appear at A IV, p. 359 ff, *Ekūdasakanipāta*, 1, 3-5, where in order that the items may come up to eleven, disgust for worldly life and dispassion are counted as two, thus showing that the *sutta* appears in its original form in the *Dasakanipāta*. We are offered here a bright vision of Buddhist perfection—at times branded as barren and negative— which does not admit of any kind of regret and is entirely suffused with spiritual joy, calmness and happiness. Even though in these cases there is no exact correspondence in number between the mental conditions first enumerated and the parts of the tree singled out in the simile, it can be safely advanced that the pith of the tree becomes in every case the symbol for the most perfect spiritual condition, namely, the knowledge and vision of liberation.

19 M I, p. 243 ff.

20 M I, p. 245 ff. The appellations *mahā* and *cūla* in this case seem to be somehow displaced. It seems that the second *sutta* should be called *Mahāsāropamasutta* while the first should be entitled *Cūlasāropamasutta*. In the first place, the second *sutta* is more extensive than the first. Secondly, the first *sutta* distinguishes between *samayavimutti* or “occasional liberation” from which it is proper that one could fall away, and *asamayavimutti* or “definite liberation” from which it is impossible to relapse. The second *sutta*, even without stating it in so many words, describes both ways of liberation. The first, partial and temporal, is attained by the four *jhānas* and the first seven *vimokkhas*, while the second will be attained only with the eighth *vimokkha*, to wit “the absolute cessation of perception and feeling”.
wood of the tree. A fourth man, avoiding the pitfalls into which all the others fell, progresses further towards knowledge and vision, but his yearning for perfection is thus stilled, extolling himself for that and despising others. He is likened to a man who mistakenly conceives the sap-wood of the tree to be pith-wood. Finally, a fifth man goes to the very end of the road towards perfection, avoiding all the traps into which all the others fell, and attains liberation. To this one the simile is applied in the following way,

“Even as a man, bhikkhus, searching for pith-wood, looking for pith-wood, walking about in quest of pith-wood, cutting precisely the pith-wood of a big stable pithy tree, should walk away taking it along, knowing that it is the pith. An understanding man, seing him, would speak like this, ‘Indeed this good man knows the pith-wood, knows the sap-wood, knows the bark, knows the boughs, knows the branches and foliage. Because thus this good man searching for pith-wood... cutting precisely the pith-wood of a big stable pithy tree, walks away taking it along, knowing that it is the pith. He will experience the profit of what can be done with the pith as such’” 21.

The conclusion of both the suttas is the same,

“Thus, bhikkhus, this holy life (brahmacariya) is not for the advantage of gains, honour and fame, for the advantage of the attainment of moral practice, for the advantage of the attainment of concentration, for the advantage of the attainment of knowledge and vision. That, bhikkhus, which is this unshakable liberation of the mind, that is the purpose of this holy life, that is the pith, that is the culmination” 22.

The Paṭisambhidāmagga echoes the same doctrine when it states,

“Liberation should be intuitively known as being the pith” 23.

If liberation (vimutti) is considered the pith and essence of Buddhist doctrine and practice, the same will apply to nibbāna,

21 M I, p. 247, Mahāsāropamasutta, 14. The same, in a shorter form, in M I, p. 255, Cūḷasāropamasutta, 13. Perhaps this is the reason to justify the qualifications of mahā and cūḷa as given in the text, even though we have pointed out reasons to the contrary.

22 M I, p. 247, Mahāsāropamasutta, 16; Ibid., p. 255, Cūḷasāropamasutta, 14. See also A II, p. 158, Catukkaniṭṭhā, 25, 3; A II, p. 149, Catukkaniṭṭhā, 15, 10, where the appellation of “pith or substance” is made extensive to what leads ultimately to liberation: moral practice, concentration, intuitive knowledge, liberation.

23 K V, p. 26 (1, 1, 1, 54), Vimutti sāraṭṭhena abhiññeyyā.
which is but another name for the same reality. The importance of nibbāna bearing such designation is in that by it the positive value of the last end of man is properly emphasized, against the negative etymological meaning of the word nirvāṇa. This is clearly stated in the Paṭisambhidāmagga, one of the latest productions of the Pāli Canon,

“Viewing the five existential factors (khandhās) as pithless (asārakato) they accomplish a favourable forbearance (khanti). Viewing the cessation of the five existential factors as the pith which is nibbāna (sāram nibbānam) he enters into the right way”\(^{24}\).

The Udāna, taking up a pet Buddhist thesis that brahmanhood is based on virtue rather than on birth, transmits the following two verses, where the words, “established on the pith”, are applied to a Paccekasambuddhā\(^{25}\), who is thereby considered to be a genuine brāhmaṇa,

“[The man] not supporting another, unknown, tamed, established on the pith,
whose āsavas are destroyed, who has expelled all ill-will, him I call a brāhmaṇa”\(^{26}\).

These words are uttered by the Buddha in praise of Kassapa the Great, while the latter was going on his alms round. That the expression, “established on the pith”, implies the attainment of nibbāna is placed beyond doubt by the words, “whose āsavas are destroyed”\(^{27}\).

\(^{24}\) K V, p. 505 (3, 9, 2, 17). Khanti and nibbāna are mentioned side by side also at D II, p. 39, Mahāpadānasutta, 71. Repeated at K I, p. 35, Dhammapada, 14, 184. An equivalent of sāra is rasa. Rasa means juice or essence and taste or flavour. The Aṅguttara speaks of the essence (rasa) of the meaning, the essence of the Doctrine, the essence of liberation. A I, p. 37, Ekakanipāta, 1, 16, 14.

\(^{25}\) This is established as a fact in K IV 2, Cūlanidāsa, 3, 0, 31, where the verses are quoted to illustrate the condition of a Paccekasambuddhā, and where the term anānāposi is interpreted as “so paccekasambuddhā attānaṉaṇeva poseti na paraṁ”.

\(^{26}\) K I, p. 67, Udāna, 1, 6.

\(^{27}\) It does not contradict this conception of liberation and nibbāna as symbolised by the pith-wood of the tree the fact that the attainment of nibbāna by Gotami be compared in the Therīpadāna to the crumbling down, by reason of its impermanence, of a “big, pithful, standing tree”, where even the pith-wood seems to be contemplated as crumbling down,

“Even as the big trunk of a big, pithful, standing tree (sāravantassa... rukkhassa) crumbles down, by reason of its impermanence,
III. THE SIMILE APPLIED TO THE SELF

In the texts presently to be analysed, the pith, used as a simile, has, we venture to say, a metaphysical import, as it refers to the very self in man. This might me a shock to those who take for granted that the Buddha preached the doctrine of absolute anatta, but we are confident we shall find enough evidence to substantiate our contention.

Whatever is non-self is pithless

We shall adduce, first of all, in order to prove our thesis, some negative statements which are none the less eloquent and convincing.

The text to be cited now deals expressly with consciousness. That consciousness is not the self in man was a point of Buddha’s doctrine difficult to understand not only by the followers of other sects, but even by some of the bhikkhus. Such is the subject discussed in the following passage,

"Even as, friend Ānanda, this body has been proclaimed, revealed, set forth in divers ways by the Blessed One as, ‘This body also is non-self (anattā);’ is it possible in the same way to describe, to set forth, to propose, to establish, to reveal, to analyze, to manifest even this consciousness as, “This consciousness also is non-self?””.

Ānanda gives an affirmative answer to Udāyin’s query, and continues,

"Is it not so that sight-consciousness arises conditioned by the eye and visible matter?".

“Yes, friend”.

"If that which is the cause, that which is the condition for the arisal of sight-consciousness -if that cause and condi-

In the same way, Gotamī, a member of the Order of Bhikkhunīs has attained complete nibbāna (parinibbutā).

As pointed out before, the application of the simile cannot be a rigid one. The description of the tree in this context as a “big, pithful, standing tree” does not seem to deny the relative permanence of the pith-wood as compared with the sap-wood and the bark; it seems rather to emphasize the importance of the person alluded to. Otherwise the phrase would imply a special difficulty in Gotamī’s attainment of nibbāna, even as it becomes more difficult for the trunk of a pithful tree to crumble down in comparison with other trees. There is nothing to vouch for such special difficulty in Gotamī’s case. The contrary should be the case. The simile of the “big, pithful tree” is applied also in a different way in M III, p. 362-367, Nandakovādasutta, 4-7.
tion were to cease in every way, utterly and without remainder, would even then sight-consciousness be demonstrable?".  
"Not for sure, friend".

"Well then, friend, it is in this way that this has been proclaimed, revealed, set forth by the Blessed One, namely, 'This consciousness is also non-self'".

The same kind of argument is then applied to every kind of consciousness arising in connection with the rest of the senses. The simile is then introduced,

"It is as if a man, friend, in search of pith-wood, looking for pith-wood, walking about in quest of pith-wood, getting hold of an axe should enter into the forest. He would see there a big plantain-trunk, straight, new, of great height. He would cut it at the root; having cut it at the root, he would cut it at the top; having cut it at the top, he would remove the outer bark layer. He would not get there even sap-wood, still less pith-wood. In this very way, friend, a bhikkhu does not see in the six spheres of sensorial contact either the self or what belongs to the self. Thus seing, he does not cling to anything in the world; not clinging, he has no longing; not having any longing, he attains nibbāna regarding his very self (paccat-taṁṇeva parinibbayaṇi). He knows, 'Birth is destroyed, lived is the holy life, what was to be done is done, there will be no future destiny in these worldly conditions'" 28.

Through an analysis of this passage we can come to the following conclusions:

1. Empirical consciousness, being a product of things that are non-self (anattā) ought to be considered also as non-self. And, according to early Buddhism, the only consciousness we know and of which we can speak is empirical consciousness. Herein lies the absolute originality of early Buddhism as compared with other systems, which even though admitting a transcendent self, and denying self-hood to empirical factors, admit nevertheless consciousness as an attribute of the self.

2. The simile of the pith-wood in its application to the point in question propounds a clear parallelism between the absence of pith-wood in the plantain-trunk and the absence of self or what belongs to the self in the six spheres of sense, consciousness included. The fact that pith-wood is denied of the plantain-tree does not imply an absolute denial of pith-wood. In the same way, the denial of the self or what belongs to the self in the six spheres.

28 S IV, p. 151-152, Saḷāyatanasamyutta, 234.
of sense does not constitute in itself an absolute denial of the reality of the self. If something is found missing somewhere, it is because it exists somewhere else.

3. One might object that what is found missing in this case is not something that was expected to be there, but something that is supposed to be there only by he heretics who wrongly identify the existential factors with the self. The reply might be in the first place that if the Buddhists think that the heretics wrongly identify the existential factors with the self, it means that the right vision of things will manifest the existential factors as different from the self, which thus are two different kinds of reality. But a reply more in tune with the passage being discussed is that even if no kind of expectancy can be admitted on the Buddhist side regarding the selfhood of the existential factors, the non-selfhood of the existential factors is in the text just quoted the reason given to suppress all clinging to and longing for such things as are neither the self nor something belonging to the self. By reference to the dynamics implied in the simile, can we not say that the man here concerned divests himself of all clinging to what is not the self nor belongs to the self just because his expectancy is only for the self, even as the expectancy of the man in the simile is only for pith-wood? This expectancy for the self is at least implicitly contained in the text, and in the Pāli Canon is rarely made explicit doubtless for fear of exposing people to the danger of asmimāna. Even so we find this attitude positively expressed as attānaṁ gavesetyatha, “You should look for the self”, in the Mahāvagga ²⁹, as well as in other passages ³⁰.

4. As said in the last footnote the result of looking for the self was in those two cases, respectively, the attainment of Arahatship and nibbāna. Similarly in the passage we are analysing, the result of rejecting the six spheres of sensorial contact, consciousness included, just because the practitioner does not find in them either the self or what belongs to the self, is ultimately the attainment of nibbāna regarding the very self (paccattaṁneva parinibbatthi). A rather stark and eloquent contrast between non-attachment to what is not the self or belongs to the self just for

²⁹ Mahāvagga, p. 25, Mahākkhandhaka, 13, 36.
³⁰ See K VII, Apadāna 2, p. 233, Theriāpadāna, 2, 10, 500, attānam te gavesasu, “Look for your own self”; K II, p. 411, Therigāthā, 3, 5, 51, attānam adhigaccha, “Find the self”. The result of this quest for the self is in the first case the attainment of Arahatship, arahattam appunim (K VII, Apadāna, 2, p. 233, Theriāpadāna, 2, 10, 502, and, in the second case, the attainment of nibbāna, nicchātā parinibbutā, “Without craving, I have attained nibbāna” (K II, p. 412, Therigāthā, 3, 5, 53).
that very reason, and the attainment of nibbāna regarding the very self!

It is no fair play to see such passages as this one and to contend without any kind of misapprehension that early Buddhism preached anattavāda pure and simple. Just the contrary is the case.

The passage we have just analysed seems to reflect conditions prevailing in the Buddhist community, after Buddha's death, when the more prominent bhikkhus held the rank of authoritative interpreters and expounders of the Master's original teaching. Ananda is in the sutta the main figure, while Udāyin, another bhikkhu, is the questioner. We are confronted in suttas like this one with the first generation of teachers, closest to the deceased Master and by far more trustworthy than the elders of the later theravāda school. It is plain that this first generation of masters felt no kind of partiality for the doctrine of absolute anattā, a partiality that, later on, in the scholastic period, would become a veritable obsession.

The sutta to be analysed next takes us back to the time when the Buddha was still alive. We shall thus see that the first generation of masters was only transmitting a teaching issued from the Buddha himself.

The sutta we are referring to discusses the unsubstantiality of the factors of existence, an unsubstantiality that is such only from the metaphysical point of view of the reality of the self, i.e. from a comparative point of view, not meaning that the world is unsubstantial in its own material entity. The suññatā propounded in the Pāli Canon is based on the fact that all worldly phenomena are in themselves void of the self or of what belongs to the self, as will become clear from testimonies to be quoted later on in this article.

The first simile proposed is that of a huge lump of foam, which to an understanding man appears to be void (rittaka), vain (tucchaka), lacking in essence (asāra). The text continues,

“In this very way, bhikkhus, all material form, be it past, future or present, be it internal or external, be it gross or subtle, be it low or excellent, be it remote or near, such material form the bhikkhu sees, observes, and thoroughly investigates. To him so seeing, observing and thoroughly investigating, it appears as void, vain, lacking in essence. How could there be any essence (sāro), bhikkhus, in material form?” 31.

The second simile is that of bubbles forming at the falling of big drops of rain on water and suddenly bursting. The structure

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31 S II-III, p. 158, Khandhasamjñutta, 95.
of the exposition follows on the lines of the previous one, as do all others to come, and the simile is applied this time to feeling (vedanā), concluding with the words, “How could there be any essence in feeling?”

The third simile is that of a mirage glittering at midday during the dry season. The simile is applied to perception (saññā), with the final question, “How could there be any essence in perception?”

The fourth simile is precisely that of a man in quest of pith-wood, who cutting down a plantain-tree and breaking into its trunk does not find there any sap-wood, still less does he find pith-wood. The simile refers this thyme to the inner complexes (sankhārā), ending again with the question, “How could there be any essence in the inner complexes?”

The fifth simile mentions the illusory creation of a juggler and is used to illustrate the lack of essence in consciousness (viññāna). The conclusion is the same, “How could there be any essence in consciousness?”

The sutta concludes,

“Thus seing, bhikkhus, a learned noble disciple feels disgust regarding material form, feels disgust regarding feeling, feels disgust regarding perception, feels disgust regarding the inner complexes, feels disgust regarding consciousness. Feeling disgust, he is detached; through detachment he is liberated. On being liberated, he has the knowledge of being liberated...”

Here again the unsubstantiality of the existential factors is the reason to feel disgust at them, to become thereby detached, and be consequently liberated. But this attitude of disgust for, of detachment and liberation from, what is pithless and essenceless, does or does not show that the practitioner is a sāratthiko sāragavesi sārapariyesanam caramāno, that is, “One in search of the pith, looking for the pith, walking about in quest of the pith?” That the pith or essence (sāra) in this passage bears some relation to the self is born out by the concluding verses of the metrical part of the sutta,

“Let him cast away all fetters, let him make a refuge for the self (kareyya saranattano),
let him proceed as if his head were all ablaze, aspiring to the unfailing state” 32.

32 The theme of the burning head as requiring instant action occurs frequently in the Canon. See, for instance, “What will another do for me, when my own head is burning? When old-age and death are pursuing me, I have to exert myself for their destruction”. K II, p. 464, Therīgāthā, 16, 1, 495.
Abounding in the same ideas the *Suttanipāta* tells us,

"The world is essenceless (*āsāra*) all around, the quarters are quaking, desiring an abode for the self, I saw none unoccupied" 33.

Here, the reason why worldly things cannot furnish the self with a suitable abode is that the world is *āsāra*, "essenceless", this meaning that is void of what is the self or belongs to the self, and already occupied by what is the non-self. The emphasis here is on impermanence, this being a consequence of lack of essence. We well know that, "As regards what is impermanent, painful, mutable by nature, it is not befitting to regard it as, ‘That is mine, that I am, that is my self’. Impermanence and pain are utterly repellent to the self, and the occupancy that prevents the self from finding an abode in the world is something wherein impermanence and pain are intimately blended, as explained in the *Mahāniddesa* 34.

The *Paṭisambhidāmagga* provides us with a suitable testimony for finishing up this section. It tells us that essencelessness is the reason for something being viewed as non-self,

"By pondering, by clearly understanding, by explaining material form, be it past, future or present... as impermanent by reason of decay, as painful by reason of peril, as non-self by reason of its lack of essence (*anattā asārakaṭṭhena*), one goes fast to *nībāna* consisting in the cessation of material form" 35.

The same reasoning is applied then to the rest of the *khandhas*, the senses, etc.

We can, therefore, assert that what is non-self is something lacking in essence (*asāra*), precisely because it is non-self.

**Sūtra and attā**

There is a *sutta* wherein the pith, the essence, the real that is *sūra* is explicitly connected with *attā*, "the self". The *sutta* consists of a metrical part preceded by a prose introduction. Likely,

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33 K I, p. 413, *Suttanipāta*, 4, 15, 172. See also K VII, *Apadāna* 2, p. 205, *Therīpatāna*, 2, 7, 258, "One should hold the world (following the Siamese version, other versions give here the world *loiām*) to be a compound thing, a pithless thing like a plantain-tree, similar to an illusion and a mirage, changeable, unstable".

34 "All youth is tenanted by old-age, all health is tenanted by illness, all life is tenanted by death, all acquisition is tenanted by loss, all glory is tenanted by defamation, all praise is tenanted by blame, all happiness is tenanted by pain". K IV, pt. I, *Mahāniddesa*, 1, 15, 172.

in this kind of suttas —there are a number of them in the Canon— the metrical part is the older one. The Indian mind had always the knack of condensing theory into verse, which being a more dignified way for transmitting a doctrine, made it also easier to learn by heart and to remember. Moreover in most cases, the prose introduction lacks inspiration and exhibits a drab sort of formality, showing that the metrical part was already in existence, and that the prose introduction was composed in order to integrate the metrical teachings in a body of doctrine expounded mainly in prose. The sutta we now want to examine runs as follows,

"Progressing in five kinds of progress, bhikkhus, a noble woman disciple progresses with a noble progress and becomes a recipient of the essential (sārādāyini) and a recipient of the best for herself (varādāyini ca kāyassa). What five? She progresses in faith, she progresses in moral practice, she progresses in learning, she progresses in charity, she progresses in intuition (paññā). Progressing just in these five kinds of progress, a noble woman disciple progresses with a noble progress and becomes a recipient of the essential and a recipient of the best for herself".

The concluding part of the sutta is given in verse,

"One who thrives even here [in this world] in faith and moral practice,
in insight, and both in learning and charity,
A virtuous woman disciple, such as this, attains here only the essential for self (sāram attano)".\(^{36}\)

The prose part interprets sāra as vara, i. e. "the best, the choicest", and attano as kāyassa. Both explanations seem to dilute the expressive force of the original terms. "The best" is not exactly the same as "what is essential", even though in a given case it may coincide with it. The right interpretation of sāra in this case ought to run in the lines shown above, according to which sāra may stand either for an excellent moral condition, nibbāna included, or else it may refer to "what is real". The term kāya, as an explanation of attā, obviously refers not to the body as a mere component of the individual, but to the individual as such\(^{37}\).

\(^{36}\) S IV, p. 222. Mātugāmasamīyutta, 34. The sutta obtains a double repetition in A II, p. 342, Pañcakānīpāta, 7, 3, where the teaching refers to a male noble disciple (ariyasāvako) in the prose introduction, and to a good ever watchful man (sappuriso vicakkhano) in the metrical component of the sutta, and Ibid., Pañcakānīpāta, 7, 4, where again the teaching applies to a noble woman disciple.

F. L. Woodward translates the last verse as, “She wins what is essential for herself”\(^{38}\), while E. M. Hase gives the following renderings, “Lays hold e’en here upon the real in himself”, and “That woman, good, devout, heeds here the best for self”\(^{39}\).

We have given the verse a literal translation, “Attains here only the essential for self”. We will not give attano an adjectival or appositional meaning, translating sāram attano as “the essence of the self”, equivalent to sāram attānam, “the essence that is the self”. The text demands a translation of attano as being in the dative case. But we are in no way ready to give attano a mere reflexive meaning, as if no reference to the true self was contained in the text.

Those addicted to the view that the Buddha preached the doctrine of absolute anattā maintain that the word attā in the Pāli Canon has a purely reflexive meaning, and does not stand in any way for the self as such. This interpretation is clearly unaccepta-

ble in many a context. We call the attention of the reader to the well known dictum, “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self (me attā)”. Me attā, here, may be translated either as “my self” or “the self for me”, while the rendering “this is not myself”, merely with a reflexive meaning and without any reference to the true self, is to be discarded. Here, in me attā, attā connotes the true self as opposed to what the heretics consider the self in man, to wit the existential factors, the empirical man, which they falsely identify with the self. This is corroborated by the preceding phrases, “This is not mine”, where the adept isolates himself from the existential factors, denying them any ontological relation with what he essentially is or possesses, and, “This I am not”, where he points by contrast to what he essentially is, never to be mistaken for the existential factors, which he utterly repudiates, thus attaining liberation.

Something similar is to be said of the expression already quoted, attānam gaveseyyatha, to be translated as, “Look for the self”. Translating this expression as, “Look for yourselves”, in addition to the use of an expression that smacks of conceit, would be rather the translation of attāno (plural!) gaveseyyaha”. Here the word attānam is singular in number, but having obviously a distributive meaning.

Our position in this matter is based on the authority of the composer or composers of the Niddesa to whom we shall refer again in the following section. In their commentary of the Sutta-
nipāta they are called to give their opinion as to the meaning of


attā in the oblique cases, for which the anattavādins demand outright a merely reflexive sense. Their comment in such cases is attā vuccati diṭṭhigatam, which may be translated as, “attā is uttered [here] with a heretical sense”, that is to say, identifying it with what is not the self, the existential factors ⁴⁰.

This evinces the fact that the only distinction regarding attā of which the Niddesa knows refers to whether the term attā is used with a heretical sense or referring to the true self. If they had been called to comment upon sāram attano in our text, would they have said, attā vuccati diṭṭhigatam? The import of the sutta is that the disciple is progressing on the way to perfection, but no progress in that direction is possible when one has a heretical feeling about the self. Now then, if the word attano here has no heretical resonance, it means that it refers to the true self. That is why our translation, “Attains here only what is essential for self”, should be understood as, “Attains here only what is essential for the self”, thus connecting sāra with the true self.

The quintessence that is the self

We reflected above on texts which refer to the point we are discussing in a negative manner, inasmuch as they consider pitiless or essenceless (asāra) whatever is not the self or something belonging to the self. They suggest by way of contrast that the self (attā) is the pith, the essence, the core of man’s personality. Are there any texts stating positively that the self is the true essence in man? We claim we found them.

Commenting upon a śiṅka quoted above, and more particularly on the words samantam asāra loko, “The world is essenceless all around”, the Mahāniddesa enumerates all kinds of worlds: hell, birth as an animal, the world of the manes, the world of men, the world of gods, the world of the existential factors (khandhas), the world of the dhātus, the world of the spheres of sensorial contact, this world, the other world, the world of Brahmā together with the world of the gods, ending with the words, “This is the meaning of the world loko”. Then the following is repeated of everyone of those worlds,

“[Such a world] is without essence (asāro), lacking in essence (nissāro), deprived of essence (sārapagato), either regarding the quintessence of what is permanent (nīcasaḷasārenā), or regarding the quintessence of happiness (sukhasārasārenā), or regarding the quintessence that is the self (attasārasārenā), or regarding what is permanent, stable, eternal, unchangeable” ⁴⁰.

⁴⁰ See K IV, pt. I, p. 61, Mahāniddesa, 1, 3, 19; Ibid., p. 87 (1, 5, 32) etc.
That the occurrence of attasārasārena, "The quintessence that is the self", is not a casual one is evinced from the fact that the passage just quoted is resumed in the Culaniiddesa 41. The position of the passage in the Culaniiddesa is significant inasmuch as it appears in a context where the doctrine of relative anattā is explicitly and emphatically proclaimed, thus achieving a more forceful contrast.

The context unfolds a commentary upon the words of the Suttaniipata, suññato lokani avekkhasu, “Let him consider the world as void”. It begins by saying that the world is to be considered void for two reasons: (1) “on the strength of discernment regarding its proceeding out of necessity”, that is, without being controlled at will, and (2) “on the strength of the consideration of the vanity of all things composite”. The first reason is confirmed adducing a passage from the Mahāvagga, beginning with the words, “Material form, bhikkhus, is non-self...” 42. The elucidation of the second reason is introduced with the words,

“Pith or essence (sāro) is not found in material form, pith or essence is not found in feeling, ...in perception, ...in the inner complexes, pith or essence is not found in consciousness”.

And the text continues,

“Material form is without essence, lacking in essence, deprived of essence, either regarding the quintessence of what is permanent, or regarding the quintessence of happiness, or regarding the quintessence that is the self (attasārasārena), or regarding what is permanent, stable, eternal, unchangeable”.

The same is stated of the rest of the khandhas. The text continues, as in the Mahāniiddesa, affording examples of trees and other things lacking in essence or pith, reiterating the same statement already quoted. Then six reasons are given to show that the world is void, stating of everyone of the senses that it is void of the self or of what belongs to the self, etc.

We are mainly interested in the word attasārasārena, where the repetition of the word sāra is meant to convey an intensive meaning, and that is our reason for translating it not merely as "essence", but as "quintessence", i. e. "the essence of the essence", the whole attasārasāra being then an appositional compound. We therefore see here that the self (attā) is qualified as "quintessence", not merely with a positive meaning —that would be already much— but with an intensive meaning. No one in his senses would

speak of “quintessence” regarding something deemed to be utterly unreal. Furthermore, the word attasārasārena is brought into a series with niccasārasārena and sukhasārasārena, referring to concepts highly valued by Buddhism, and having obviously a positive connotation and a real denotation. This suggests that the concept of self (attā) shares in the qualitative worth of permanence (nicca) and happiness (sukha). Nay more, if early Buddhism does not deny permanence and happiness in an absolute way, even when denying them of all existential factors, of all that is not the self or belongs to the self, the same ought to apply to the self (attā). Let us keep in mind that the reasoning mostly used in the Nikāyas runs like this,

“What do you think of this, is material form permanent or impermanent?”
  “Impermanent”.
  “And what is impermanent, is it painful or pleasant?”
  “Painful”.
  “And as regards what is impermanent, painful, mutable by nature, is it befitting to regard it as, ‘That is mine, that I am, that is my self (me attā)?’
  “Not so”.

The conclusion of this reasoning being,

“Thus seing, the noble ariyan disciple becomes disgusted at material form, becomes disgusted also at feeling, becomes disgusted also at perception, becomes disgusted also at the inner complexes, becomes disgusted also at consciousness. Becoming disgusted he grows detached; through detachment he is liberated. At being liberated, he has the knowledge of being liberated. He knows, ‘Destroyed is birth, lived is the holy life, what was to be done is done, there will be no further living in these conditions’” 43.

Thus the criterion to settle that something is non-self is precisely its share in the negative attributes of impermanence and painfulness. This yields a series of homogeneous concepts, namely impermanence, painfulness and non-self, which presents the reverse side of the series of the Niddesa: niccasārasārena, sukhasārasārena and attasārasārena.

Now, if material form and the rest are rejected for being impermanent, painful, mutable by nature, does this not show that the quest of the genuine Buddhist goes in the direction of what is permanent, pleasant, immutable? And by the same token, does not the rejection of what is non-self, precisely because it is non-

43 Mahāvagga, p. 16-17, Mahākkhandhaka, 1, 8.
self, show that the self is, implicitly at least, the ideal pursued by the same genuine Buddhist? And, insisting once more, if the denial of permanence, happiness, immutability, in texts such as the one just quoted, is not an absolute one, why should the denial of self, held within the same mental frame, be unrestricted? The only self absolutely disowned in the Pāli Canon is the self of the heretics, falsely identified with the empirical factors.

Regarding the Niddesa, where the word attasārasāraṇa is found, it should be noted that it belongs to the third layer of texts in the Pāli Canon. We have already indicated what the two first layers could be: (1) the suttas that preserve he early Buddhist teaching set within the period of the Master’s life, and (2) the suttas that transmit the teaching as imparted by prominent disciples of the Buddha, presumably because the Buddha was already dead. The Niddesa belongs to the third layer. It is the first authoritative commentary to the doctrine of the Nikāyas, whose authority is enhanced by its being included in the Canon. The author or authors of the book were close enough to the Buddha in the line of traditional transmission as to know perfectly well the gist and substance of the Dhamma. The book shows no partiality or one-sidedness regarding the doctrine of absolute anattā, as will be the case with more recent scholastic tradition.

In these passages of the Niddesa, as well as in those passages analysed further above in this article, where the existential factors etc. were said to be essenceless (asāra) because they are not the self or something belonging to the self, the term sāra points to the metaphysical self, which is beyond the reach of what is empirical and untainted by it. We are about to adduce a passage where sāra, “the essence”, stands for the existential self. The acceptance or refusal of the truth of both the metaphysical and the existential self go hand in hand. The denial of the metaphysical self led later Buddhism to the denial of the existential self as true agent in the struggle for liberation. The truth of this existential self is uncontroversedly stated in the following text, where sāra stands for attā. We are referring to a distich extolling Sāriputta which is uttered by a devaputta whose words find a confirmatory echo in Buddha’s utterance. Says the devaputta,

“Well known as a sage, free from anger, Sāriputta, of few wants, tamed as to the essence (sārato danto), a recipient of the Master’s praises” 44.

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44 See: S II-III, p. 280-281, Khandhasamāyutta, 49; M III, p. 81-82, Mahā-puṇṇamasutta, 5, etc., etc.
MRS. RHYS DAVIDS translates sārato danto as “self-mastered” thus connecting the mastery with the self. Such translation is quite appropriate, because the essence of man can be no other than his self. Here, as in other similar cases, attā, “the self”, is at the same time the taming agent and what is tamed, because all actions by the self or regarding the self must needs have a “reflexive meaning”, since all of them bear some kind of fruit for the very self that is their agent. This means to say that such actions of the self are immanent. This immanence shines forth without any sort of ambiguity in,

“Impel self by means of self, control self by means of self, Being with guarded self, mindful, you, bhikkhu, will dwell in bliss”.

Doubtless the self here is the moral agent, whose agency and consequently its reality were denied later on, when the doctrine of absolute anattā reigned supreme. This agency and reality are implicitly and explicitly stated in many parts of the Canon. Now the self set forth in the passages discussed in this article is by no means the self of the heretics, the one identified with things alien to it. In all such cases the self is striving for perfection and perfection lies ultimately in the isolation of the self from what is non-self. This isolation is eloquently expressed, we insist once more, in the well known saying, “This is not mine, this I am not, this is not my self”, leading to the attainment of nibbāna.

Bilbao

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45 S I, p. 64, Devaputtasamyutta, 29. In the Buddha’s corroborating reply the last pāda reads, “Perfectly tamed, awaits his time”, indicating that Sāriputta had attained nibbāna.

47 Thus this sārato danto is equivalent to attadanto in K I, p. 47, Dhammapada, 23, 322. Cfr. also: attānam damayanti pāṇidā, in a passage that must have been very popular, since it is often repeated, K I, p. 24, Dhammapada, 6, 80; Ibid., p. 31, Dhp, 10, 45; K II, p. 238, Theragāthā, 1, 19, etc.; attavasi in K II, p. 320, Theragāthā, 10, 2, 539; attaputto in K I, p. 53, Dhammapada, 25, 379, etc. etc.

48 K I, p. 53, Dhammapada, 25, 379. Would it be right to translate this passage giving attā a merely reflexive sense? The translation would then sound as follows, “Impel yourself by yourself, control yourself by yourself; being yourself guarded, mindful, you, bhikkhu, will dwell in bliss”. We have given a rather neutral though literal translation: the appropriate translation would simply say, “Impel the self by means of the self, control the self by means of the self; being with a guarded self...”. We find that saying, attā hi kira duddano, “because the self, so they say, is difficult to tame”, where attā, in the nominative case, can be translated only as “the self”. K I, p. 32, Dhammapada, 12, 159. These and other questions touched in this article are discussed in detail in our book Self and Non-Self in Early Buddhism, whose publication by Mouton Publishers, The Hague, has been announced for Spring 1979.