

## Chapter II

### The Concept of Emptiness (Suññatā) in Tipiṭaka

An overview of Theravada Tipiṭaka, Suññatā or emptiness is said to be the most profound teaching ever to come from Buddhism as being said by the Buddha, “the Discourses proclaimed by the Tathāgata as regard to Suññatā (Suññatā-patisaṃyuttā) is deep in meaning, transcending the world and dealing with the emptiness or voidness.”<sup>1</sup>

The words ‘Suñña’ and ‘Suññatā’ correspond to the Sanskrit as ‘Sūnya’ and ‘Suññatā’. In Buddhist terminology, it means ‘empty’ or ‘emptiness’, ‘devoid’ or ‘devoidness’, or ‘void’ or ‘voidness’. The teaching of the Buddha is called ‘Suñña’ because it leads to a benefit that is the attainment of ‘voidness’ (free from worldly disturbances). Hence it tends to the path of release, and therefore it is called ‘Suññatā’.

According to its canonical usage and commentarial exposition, the word ‘Suññatā’ means the devoidness of ‘self’ or of anything belonging to self; or the other hand, the devoidness of all kinds of defilements, such as lust (rāga), hatred (dosa) and delusion (moha), or the three cankers (āsavā), namely, sensuous pleasure (kāmasavā), becoming (bhavāsavā), and ignorance (avijjāsava).

In Culla-suññatā-sutta, the term ‘Suñña’ is used for Vipassanā or Insight knowledge which overcomes the three cankers, viz., sensuous pleasure, becoming and ignorance. And with this critical knowledge one

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<sup>1</sup> S. ii. p. 267, S. v. p. 407, A. III. pp. 84-6 (P.T.S.).

is able to see things as they really are and realize the truth, unperverted, utterly purified, supreme and highest voidness, which leads to the attainment of nibbāna, the absolute freedom. The following gāthā refers to this fact:

He whose corruptions (āsava) are destroyed,  
he who is not attached to food,  
he who has deliverance which is void and signless as his object:  
his path cannot be traced, like that of birds in air.<sup>2</sup>

In Buddhist teaching, therefore, Suññatā is to be understood as both the path (magga) and the goal (nibbāna). With regard to the path, Suññatā means the revelation of things (mundane and supermundane) as they are, which is a necessary preliminary to the higher progress towards the final emancipation; and with regard to the goal, Suññatā means the absolute freedom from all kinds of defilements and attachment.

The outstanding characteristic of this state is the absence of the obstacles such as the wrong view with regard to self, etc., the equanimity of mind that rises with it as its essential function. The mindfulness and insight are its manifestation. Thus when this state has been attained, all the mists of passion and other evils are dissipated and replaced by the vision of insight which is the means of escaping from the grip of birth, decay, death, etc., i.e., that of saṃsāra. Thus in all respects the teaching of Suññatā represents an active state, as opposed to inactivity, and it is mindfulness as opposed to absentmindedness.

From the account given above, it is clear that Suñña or Suññatā in Theravada Buddhism, both in its literal and technical sense, means a

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<sup>2</sup> Dh. Verse. 93 (tr. by Nārada Mahā therā).

state of purity of mind not to be characterized by the worldly attributes of existence and non-existence and which is to be developed by systematic training. This training inculcates the habit of both mental concentration (samādhi) and spiritual insight (vipassanā) which results in spiritual progress experienced in and through a human being.

Over the investigation into the discourse, emptiness (Suññatā) in Theravada Buddhism could be defined into three contexts as meditative dwelling, the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā, and awareness release. Thus the concept of the three contexts will be further studied in this chapter.

## **2.1 Suññatā in the Context of Meditative Dwelling or Suññata-vihāra**

Emptiness in its first meaning, as a meditative dwelling, is most fully discussed in Majjhima Nikāya. Essentially, it boils down to the ability to center the mind in a particular mode of perception, to maintain it there, and then to notice the absence and presence of disturbance within that mode as said to Ānanda by the Blessed One, while staying among the Sākyans in a Sākyan town named Nagaraka at Sāvatti in the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother as saying :

Now, as well as before, I remain fully in a dwelling of emptiness. Just as this palace of Migāra's mother is empty of elephants, cattle, and mares, empty of gold & silver, empty of assemblies of women & men, and there is only this non-emptiness — the singleness based on the community of monks; even so, Ānanda, a monk — not attending to the perception of village, not attending to the perception of human being — attends to the singleness based on the perception of wilderness. His mind takes pleasure, finds satisfaction, settles, &

indulges in its perception of wilderness. "He discerns that 'Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of village are not present. Whatever disturbances that would exist based on the perception of human being are not present. There is only this modicum of disturbance: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' He discerns that 'This mode of perception is empty of the perception of village. This mode of perception is empty of the perception of human being. There is only this non-emptiness: the singleness based on the perception of wilderness.' Thus he regards it as empty of whatever is not there. Whatever remains, he discerns as present: 'There is this.' And so this, his entry into emptiness, accords with actuality, is undistorted in meaning, and pure.<sup>3</sup>

Also I can find the process of emptiness development which starts with the perception of one's external surroundings — village, wilderness, the earth property — and then moves internally to the four formless states, the 'themeless concentration of awareness', and finally to the release from all mental fermentation. Each step is compared to the one preceding it to see how its more refined perception engenders less disturbance. For instance, if we move from a perception of the wilderness to a perception of earth, the first step is to settle and indulge in that perception. Then you notice what types of disturbance have been abandoned in the move from the perception of wilderness to the perception of earth — for example, all thoughts regarding the dangers of wilderness are gone — and then to see what disturbances remain based on the latter perception. Then you abandon the perception causing those

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<sup>3</sup> M.121.

disturbances and move on to a more refined level of perception. This process is pursued until it arrives at the ‘themeless concentration of awareness’. When noting that even this refined level of concentration is fabricated, inconstant, and subject to cessation, one gains total release from all mental fermentations and the disturbances that would arise based on them. This is the level of emptiness that is ‘superior and unsurpassed’, and is apparently what the Buddha is referring to in this Sutta when he says that by "not attending to any themes, he enters & remains in internal emptiness."

Upon the analytical study, the internal emptiness he remains is the meditative dwelling or *Suññata-vihāra* which is a term technically used to express the abiding state of him who has succeeded in the religious training and experienced its results. Generally it is rendered as ‘the abiding in voidness’. In the highest sense, it signifies the abiding states of the great man, ie. Buddhas, Pacceka-Buddhas and Arahants, the disciples of Buddhas as being said by the Buddha to Sāriputta as sayings,

Sāriputta, your faculties are clear. The color of your skin is pure and bright. What abiding do you often abide in now, Sāriputta? “Now, venerable sir, I often abide in voidness (*suññatavihāra*).” “Good, good, Sāriputta! Now, indeed, you often abide in the abiding of a great man. For this is the abiding of a great man, namely, voidness.” “So, Sāriputta, if a bhikkhu would wish : “May I now often abide in voidness”, he should consider thus : “On the path by which I went to the village for alms, or in the place where I wandered for alms, or on the path by which I returned from the almsround, was there any desire, lust, hate, delusion, or aversion in my mind regarding forms cognizable by the eye?... regarding sounds

cognizable by the ear?... regarding odours cognizable by the nose?... regarding flavours cognizable by the tongue?... regarding tangibles cognizable by the body?... regarding mind-objects cognizable by the mind?” If, by reviewing, he knows thus : “On the path by which I went to the village for alms...there was desire, lust, hate, delusion, or aversion in my mind regarding mind-objects cognizable by the mind,” then he should make an effort to abandon those evil unwholesome states. But if, by reviewing, he knows thus: ‘On the path by which I went to the village for alms...there was no desire, lust, hate, delusion, or aversion in my mind regarding mind-objects cognizable by the mind,’ then he can abide happy and glad, training day and night in wholesome states.<sup>4</sup>

In Patisambhidāmagga, the term ‘Suññata-vihāra’ is used with reference to two kinds of knowledge (Ñāṇa), viz., the knowledge of fear (Bhayañāṇa) and the knowledge of passing away (Vyaññāṇa), leading to the abandoning of clinging to worldly phenomena by which one reaches the state of abiding in voidness. The relevant passage reads : “the aspirant, whose mind is leaning towards the state of voidness, while seeing clinging to ‘self’ as fearful, reflects again and again, and observes the passing away of phenomena. This is called ‘The abiding in Voidness’<sup>5</sup>. In other words it refers to the abiding state of him who is in the states of Jhāna (absorption), Samādhi (concentration), Vipassanā, etc. It is called ‘the abiding in voidness’ because it partakes of nothing other

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<sup>4</sup> M. 151.

<sup>5</sup> Ptsm. pp. 134-8 (Siamese Ed.).

than the voidness itself, that is “what is not remaining, this is voidness, while what is still remaining, there is ‘that being’, this is.”<sup>6</sup>

From these commentarial definitions and its use in the cannon, it can be seen that the term ‘Suññata-vihāra’ or ‘the abiding in voidness’ has a wider meaning, embracing Samādhi, Jhāna, Vipassanā and even Nibbāna the final goal of the religious life. In Buddhist teaching, therefore, the term ‘Suññata-vihāra’ should be understood as the abiding state of him who has trained himself through ‘Suññata-samādhi’ or void-concentration and succeeded in the religious training of Jhāna, and Vipassanā, thus enjoyed its fruits or Nibbāna.

Suññata-samādhi or void-concentration is a mode of perception adding nothing to or takes nothing away from the raw data of physical and mental events. This mode of perception based on emptiness means to look at events in the mind and the senses with no thought of whether there's anything lying behind them. This mode is called emptiness because it's empty of the presuppositions we usually add to experience to make sense of it, then the thought of ‘I’, ‘It is mine’, and ‘It is myself’, which springs from the former hereby of individuality as permanent, happy, and substantial entity, comes to an end because they are empty, vain, void and ownerless.

Over the investigation into Suññata-samādhi Sutta in Saṃyutta-Nikāya, three types of meditative composure are mentioned as the path leading to the not-fabricated as follows:

And what monks, is the path leading to the not-fabricated? The emptiness meditative composure (Suññata-samādhi), the signless

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<sup>6</sup> M. iii., p. 104 (P.T.S.).

meditative composure (Animitta-samādhi), the undirected meditative composure (Appaṇihita-samādhi). This is called the path leading to the not-fabricated.<sup>7</sup>

Also Suññata-samādhi, the void-concentration, is found in Asaṃkhatasamṃyatta being used with reference to an advanced form of Samādhi, the Samādhi leading to the Uncompounded state (asaṃkhatamagga), i.e., the Path leading to the destruction of the three passions, namely, lust (rāga), hatred (dosa), and delusion (moha). It has been said:

What, brethren, is the Uncompounded ? The destruction of lust, brethren, the destruction of hatred, and the destruction of delusion are called the Uncompounded”. And what, brethren, is the path that leads to the Uncompounded ? Concentration that is void. That, brethren, is called ‘the path that leads to the Uncompounded’.<sup>8</sup>

In Saddhammāpakāsinī, the commentary on Patisambhidāmagga, Mahānāma Thera designates void-concentration as ‘Ariyamagga-samādhi’ The concentration associated with the noble One.’ It has been guide :

When an aspirant contemplates upon compounded things as impermanent, suffering, and non-substantial in due order, and attains void emancipation (Suññata-vimokkha) through insight into ‘non-

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<sup>7</sup> S. 43.4.

<sup>8</sup> S. iv. p. 442 (Siamese Ed.).

self', his concentration is associated with the Noble Path of that Vimokkha. Thus it is called Suññata-samādhi.<sup>9</sup>

Suññata-samādhi leading an aspirant to the uncompounded is said in the Sutta the Ariyamagga-samādhi leading to Nibbāna or supreme Suññatā through insight into 'non-self' or Anattā. Thus Anattā should be regarded as a means to attain Nibbāna or supreme Suññatā as the highest aim. Upon the analytical study, an aspirant contemplates upon worldly things as impermanent, since they are limited by rise and fall, disintegrating, perishable and all that, he sees them as painful because they are oppressed, unbearable, the basis of disease and so on, then the thought of 'I', 'It is mine', and 'It is myself', which springs from the former hereby of individuality as permanent, happy, and substantial entity, comes to an end because they are empty, vain, void and ownerless. As a result of this contemplation, there arises in him the knowledge of the contemplation or reflection. And as the result of that knowledge, he does not find anything to be called 'I' or 'Mine' or 'Myself'. So he becomes indifferent towards them, and with this knowledge, he is said to have entered the state of of Nibbāna. That's why Suññata-samādhi is the Ariyamagga-samādhi or the void concentration on non-self which is associated with Vipassanā leading to the Noble Path.

## **2.2 Suññatā in the Context of the Lack of 'Self' or Anattā**

Thervada philosophy, by virtue of the doctrine and the concept contained in the Pali Tipiṭaka, has the world view and philosophical

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<sup>9</sup> Ptsma. p. 283 (Siamese Ed).

explanation culminated in the doctrine of ‘Anattā’ (selflessness or non-substantiality). Theravada Buddhists are acquainted to the concept of Anattā with philosophical point of view that all states are ‘non-self’ or ‘non-substantial’. In its second meaning, Suññatā in the context of the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā as an attribute of objects is most fully discussed in Saṃyutta Nikāya.<sup>10</sup> That Sutta describes emptiness as meaning the lack of ‘self’ or Anattā or not pertaining to ‘self’ in the internal and external sense media. Whatever sense of ‘self’ that may surround these objects is not inherent in them, and is instead simply the result of one's own penchant for "I-making" and "my-making." Seeing the artificiality of ‘I-making’ and ‘my-making’ in this way helps lead to a sense of disenchantment with these ‘makings’, thus helping to abandon any clinging associated with them. Thus emptiness in this sense relates directly to the third of the three characteristics, ie. ‘non-self’ or Anattā non-self. However, just as the three characteristics are not radically separate from one another — everything stressful is for that reason not-self as said in Kaccāyana Sutta as the Buddha’s sayings :

The world in general, Kaccāyana, inclines to two views, to existence or to non-existence. But for him who, with the highest wisdom, sees the uprising of the world as it really is, ‘non-existence of the world’ does not apply, and for him who, with highest wisdom, sees the passing away of the world as it really is, ‘existence of the world’ does not apply. The world in general, Kaccaayana, grasps after systems and is imprisoned by dogmas. But he does not go along with that system-grasping, that mental obstinacy and dogmatic bias,

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<sup>10</sup> S.35.85.

does not grasp at it, does not affirm : “This is my self.” He knows without doubt or hesitation that whatever arises is merely dukkha, that what passes away is merely dukkha and such knowledge is his own, not depending on anyone else. This, Kaccāyana, is what constitutes right view.<sup>11</sup>

The above Kaccāyana Sutta points out, when one no longer latches onto any idea of my ‘self’, one sees phenomena within and without simply as examples of stress arising and passing away.

With regard to its clear meaning, it has explicitly been mentioned in the Fifty Suttas of Salāyatana. The Suttas state that once Venerable Ānanda desiring to know the significance of voidness put this question to the Master, “Why is it that the world is said to be void?, and the Buddha told him thus : Because the world is void of self or of anything belonging to ‘self’, therefore, Ānanda, it is said that the world is void.”<sup>12</sup> The world said to be void in this definition refers to the eighteen dhātus or elements, viz., eye, ear, nose, etc., together with their contacts and their results of contacts. Thus in replying to the question “What, Ānanda, is void of self or of anything belonging to self?” the Buddha tells thus: “The eye is void of self or of anything belonging to self. Objects (of eye) ..... eye-consciousness .... eye-contact .... and whatever sensation pleasant or unpleasant or neutral, originates depending on the eye-contact, all these are void of self or of anything belonging to self.” The Buddha speaks in the same manner with regard to the remaining senses also, and says, “This is why, Ānanda, the world is said to be void.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> S. 12.15.

<sup>12</sup> S. iv. p. 54, Ps. ii. p. 177, Nd.i. p.439 (P.T.S.).

<sup>13</sup> S. iv. p. 54, Ps. ii. p. 177, Nd.i. p.439 (P.T.S.).

The term ‘void’ (Suñña) in the above definition implies two things : one is the voidness of ‘self’, and the other is voidness of whatsoever belonging to ‘self’. The former refers to ‘the voidness of the doer’ or one who feels, and the latter refers to ‘the voidness of its property’. The former, however, seems to be the cause in the sense of which the latter springs from or belongs to, Yet both of them are devoid of any substantial entities, since, as already said, they arise in dependence on proper conditions over which we have no power or control. Thus, in the light of ‘Suñña’ or ‘void’, none of them can be regarded as self, and therefore none of them ‘belongs’ to us.

By analytical reflection (anupassanā) upon these elements, one will realize the fact that there is not anything belonging to him. But for those who are lacking the understanding of this fact, will think that everything is belonging to him. Thus, having known this fact, one is capable of comprehending how everything is ‘Suñña’ (void), and so he remains without clinging in regard to anything which is either ‘Mundane’ (lokiya) or ‘Supermundane’ (lokuttara), since all of them are devoid of self or of anything belonging to ‘self’, as it is said : “The mundane states or worldly things such as eye, ear, nose, etc., are said to be void since there is no ‘self’ or anything belonging to ‘self’ in themselves. Even the Supermundane states are devoid of ‘self’ or of anything belonging to ‘self’.”<sup>14</sup>

According to the above explanations though voidness with regard to ‘Mundane and Supermundane things’ seems to be identical in the sense that both of them are devoid of self or of anything belonging to

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<sup>14</sup>Saddhammapakāsinī, The Commentary on Patisambhidhāmagga, iii. p. 632 (P.T.S.).

‘self’, yet they differ from each other in the sense that the former refers to the voidness of their essential nature, since they, arise depending on conditions, whereas the latter refers to the truth of things, i.e., the uncompounded things, which are by nature devoid of self or of anything belonging to self, and by seeing the true natures of both one is said to attain Nibbāna.

Over the investigation into the doctrine, Anattā or non-self is experienced through the aspect of impermanence, through the aspect of unsatisfactoriness, and through the aspect of emptiness. Empty of what? The word ‘emptiness’ is so often misunderstood because when one only thinks of it as a concept, one says "what do you mean by empty?" Everything is there : there are the people, and there are their insides, guts and their bones and blood and everything is full of stuff — and the mind is not empty either. It's got ideas, thoughts and feelings. And even when it doesn't have those, what do you mean by emptiness? The only thing that is empty is the emptiness of an entity. It means that there is no specific entity in anything. That is emptiness. That is the nothingness. That nothingness is also experienced in meditation. It is empty, it is devoid of a specific person, devoid of a specific thing, devoid of anything which makes it permanent, devoid of anything which even makes it important. The whole thing is in flux. So the emptiness is that. And the emptiness is to be seen everywhere; to be seen in oneself. And that is what is called Anattā, non-self. Empty of an entity. There is nobody there. It is all imagination. Hence approaching Anattā through the three kinds aspects mentioned above, Anattā is thus regarded as a means to enter Suññata-vimokkha (void-emancipation) for the attainment of Nibbāna.

### 2.3 Suññatā in the Context of Awareness-release or Full Awareness

Emptiness in its third meaning, as a type of awareness-release or full awareness, is most fully discussed in Majjhima Nikāya which describes this state of awareness-release or full awareness as follows, "there is the case where a monk — having gone into the wilderness, to the root of a tree, or into an empty dwelling — considers this : This is empty of self or of anything pertaining to self. This is called the emptiness awareness-release or full awareness."<sup>15</sup> Majjhima Nikāya further adds, "if one frequently abides in the emptiness awareness-release, one may either attain the dimension of nothingness — one of the formless states — or be committed to the discernment that will lead to awakening."<sup>16</sup> As Majjhima Nikāya notes :

When one attains full awareness, the themeless awareness-release and the emptiness awareness-release which come to differ only in name, and not in actuality. Still, it is important to remember that in the course of practice, all these three meanings are related and all will inevitably play a role in awakening.<sup>17</sup>

An overview of Suññatā in the context of awareness-release or full awareness in Mahā-sunnatā Sutta of Majjhima Nikāya<sup>18</sup>, the method of contemplation upon the internal-external voidness or the voidness of both sides becomes two aspects: the analytical and synthetical aspect is suggested. Of these, analytical aspect is twofold: internal and external.

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<sup>15</sup> M.43.

<sup>16</sup> M.106.

<sup>17</sup> M. 43.

<sup>18</sup> M.122.

(i) In the case of internal aspect, the aspirant analyses and contemplates on the six internal sense-spheres in the light of experience and sees them to be void of ‘self’, etc.

(ii) In the case of external aspect, he analyses and contemplates on the six external sense-spheres in the light of experience and sees them to be void of ‘self’, etc.

(iii) In the case of synthetical aspect, he contemplates upon both the sense-subject of the six internal sense-spheres and the six external sense-spheres of the six different kinds of experience in a combined way of both, and sees them as they really are, i.e., as void of self, etc.

Here the synthetical aspect of the contemplation upon both sense-subject and sense-object is applied by breaking down wrong differentiations between the sense-subject and the sense-object as self-possessed entities and by showing that the life-process which is void in nature is represented by both the six internal sense-spheres and the six external sense-spheres. Thus, in the course of the practice of internal-external voidness or the voidness of both sides, both aspects, the analytical and the synthetical methods gradually purge one’s mind of all delusions in regard to ‘self’ and the universe of phenomena, thus leading to the attainment of Sotāpanna-hood, the first stage of sainthood. Having attained such internal-external voidness, the aspirant, in order to promote himself to the attainment of all eight meditative states as well as the higher spiritual stages, or as the commentary says : “I will become one who is both ways released,”<sup>19</sup> which is advised by the Buddha to attend to

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<sup>19</sup> M. iii. p. 112 (P.T.S.).

the ‘Imperturbability’ (Ānenja), as it is said, “He attends to imperturbability.”<sup>20</sup>

Thus the attainment of the stage of imperturbability, being the stages of release, is recommended by the Buddha, after one’s attaining the internal-external voidness, in order that he may be able to attain the higher spiritual stage called Sotāpattimagga, the first stage of sainthood. In the course of one’s cultivation of the four stages of imperturbability, if one’s mind does not delight in them, nor set on their practice, nor attach itself to their cultivation, then one should not give up one’s effort but be fully aware of one’s failure in regard to fixing one’s mind on these four stages of imperturbability on the one hand, and apply one’s mind to the same basic Jhānas, internal voidness, external voidness and internal-external voidness again and again as one has done before, that is to say:

(i) to continue to settle, steady, unify and concentrate his mind internally in regard to that same subject of concentration till he attains to the internal voidness.

(ii) to attend to voidness internally,

(iii) to attend to voidness externally,

(iv) to attend to voidness internally and externally, and

(v) to attend to the four stage of imperturbability till the mind gets firmly established on them.<sup>21</sup>

And if in the course of one’s cultivation of the four stages of imperturbability, the mind is firmly established on them, then one should also become fully aware of one’s success in regard to fixing one’s mind

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<sup>20</sup> Op.Cit.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., pp. 112-13.

on these four stages of imperturbability. With the mind that is fully aware of what he has attained, the aspirant lives emancipated from dependence on wrong view regarding ‘self’ and matter, and clings to naught in the world. Thus with this attainment whether one is walking, or standing, or sitting, or even lying down, one will not be invaded and disturbed by the evil unwholesome states of covetousness and grief, as it is said:

If, Ānanda, dwelling in this way, a monk’s mind inclines (*nāmati*) to walking, he walks; knowing: “While I am thus walking up and down, no evil state, no unwholesome states of covetousness and grief do invade.” Thus he is fully aware in regard to it. (And so of standing, sitting and lying down).<sup>22</sup>

Whenever such a person speaks and talks with others, since his mind has entered into the internal-external voidness and abides in the four states of imperturbability with awareness-release or full awareness, so he will not talk of things that are not concerned with or related to ending of and deliverance from suffering. He will not talk about kings, robbers, etc.,<sup>23</sup> for such talks are considered by him to be lower and vulgar; they are the ordinary and everyday topics of the ordinary folk (*puttujjanika*), they are not noble, for they are unable to lead one who is associated with

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>23</sup> “If, Ānanda, abiding in this way, a monk’s mind inclines to talking, he resolves: ‘Such talk is low, vulgar of the ordinary fold, unnoble, unconcerned with the well-being not leading to revulsion, to dispassionateness, to cessation, to calmness, to super-knowledge, and to Nibbāna; that is to say, talk of kings, robbers, ministers, armies, alarms, battles, food, drink, clothing, beds, garlands, perfumes, relatives, vehicles, villages, towns, cities, countries, women, heroes, street inhabitants, wells, the dead, trivialities, speculation about the world and sea, whether things are or are not-in such talk I shall not indulge.’ Thus he is fully aware in regard to this.”

them, to revulsion (Nibbidā), to dispassionateness (virāga), to cessation (nirodha), to calmness or pacification (upasama), to super-knowledge (abhiññā) and to Nibbāna. On the contrary they are only able to lead one who is associated with them, to prolong one's continued existence, i.e., to repeat the cycle of birth, decay and death. For these reasons, whatever the aspirant talks, would be related to ten kinds of topics namely, (i) having only a few wants (appicchatā), (ii) contentment (santuṭṭhitā), (iii) seclusion (paviveka), (iv) aloofness from company (asaṃsagga), (v) strenuousness (viriyārambha), (vi) virtuous conduct (sīla), (vii) concentration (samādhi), (viii) wisdom (pañña). (ix) deliverance (vimutti), and (x) knowledge and vision concerning deliverance (vimuttiñāṇadassana).<sup>24</sup> These ten kinds of topics are considered to be noble, for they are able to lead one who has thoroughly practised and realized them, to the destruction of continued existence. Moreover, whenever he knows that his mind is detached from the lower and more easily excited matters and well under his control, he will not think of thoughts related to three kinds of things, namely, (i) thought of sense-pleasure (kāma-vitakka), (ii) thought of malevolence (vyāpādavitakka), and (iii) thought of harming (vihiṃsāvitakka), but, on the contrary, he will think of thoughts related to three kinds of things namely, (i) thought of renunciation (nekhammavitakka), (ii) thought of non-malevolence (avyāpādavitakka), and (iii) thought of harmlessness (avihiṃsāvitakka).

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<sup>24</sup> “But, Ānanda, he resolves: ‘Such talk as is concerned with austers penance, as favours the mind's release, as leads to complete revulsion, to cessation, to calmness, to super-knowledge, to enlightenment, and to Nibbāna. That is to say, he talks having only a few wants, on contentment, on seclusion, on aloofness from company on strenuousness, on virtuous conduct, on concentration, on wisdom, on deliverance, and on knowledge and vision concerning deliverance, in such talk I shall indulge.’ Thus he is fully aware in regard to this.” Ibid., p. 113.

Upon the analytical study of Suññatā in the context of awareness release or full awareness, it can keep one always awakened or fully aware of what one is doing, thus no unwholesome states of covetousness and grief do invade. Thus it will protect (i) one's mind from being invaded and disturbed by the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and grief, (ii) one's talk not to be associated with lower and vulgar talk but to be associated with ending or releasing from suffering, and (iii) one's thought not to be associated with lower and vulgar thought but to be associated with noble thoughts, leading forwards to salvation.

## 2.4 Conclusion

Over the thorough study of emptiness (Suññatā) in the Tipiṭaka, Suññatā is meant in the three context; that is meditative dwelling or Suññata-vihāra, the lack of 'self' or Anattā and awareness-release or full awareness. Emptiness (Suññatā) in the context of 'Suññata-vihāra' or 'the abiding in Voidness' has a wider meaning, embracing Jhāna, Samādhi, Vipassanā and even Nibbāna, the final goal of the religious life. In Buddhist teaching, therefore, the term 'Suññata-vihāra' should be understood as the abiding state of him who has succeeded in the religious training and enjoyed its fruits. Emptiness (Suññatā) in the context of the lack of 'self' or Anattā refers to the emptiness of 'self' or things pertaining to 'self' both in the internal and external sense media. Whatever sense of 'self' that may surround these objects is not inherent in them, and is instead simply the result of one's own penchant for 'I-making' and 'my-making'. Seeing the artificiality of 'I-making' and 'my-making' in this way helps lead to a sense of disenchantment with

these ‘makings’, thus helping to abandon any clinging associated with them. Thus emptiness in this sense relates directly to the third of the three characteristics, ie. Anattā or non-self. Emptiness (Suññatā) in the context of awareness-release or full awareness is the awareness-release by method of contemplation upon the internal-external voidness with full awareness which can keep one always awakened or fully aware of what one is doing, thus no unwholesome states of covetousness and grief do invade. Thus it will protect (i) one’s mind from being invaded and disturbed by the evil, unwholesome states of covetousness and grief, (ii) one’s talk not to be associated with lower and vulgar talk, but to be associated with ending or releasing from sufferings, and (iii) one’s thought not to be associated with lower and vulgar thought, but to be associated with noble thoughts, leading forwards to salvation.