SN 15.6 — A Mustard Seed

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/sn15.6/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
License: CC0-1.0 — https://creativecommons.org/publicdomain/zero/1.0/

Text

Linked Discourses 15.6

Chapter One

A Mustard Seed

At Sāvatthī.

Then a mendicant went up to the Buddha ... and asked him, “Sir, how long is an eon?”

“Mendicant, an eon is long. It’s not easy to calculate how many years, how many hundreds or thousands or hundreds of thousands of years it lasts.”

“But sir, is it possible to give a simile?”

“It’s possible,” said the Buddha.

“Suppose there was an iron citadel, a league long, a league wide, and a league high, full of mustard seeds pressed into balls. And as each century passed someone would remove a single mustard seed. By this means the big heap of mustard seeds would be used up before the eon comes to an end. That’s how long an eon is. And we’ve transmigrated through many such eons, many hundreds, many thousands, many hundreds of thousands.

Why is that? This transmigration has no known beginning. ... This is quite enough for you to become disillusioned, dispassionate, and freed regarding all conditions.”