

SN 22.59

Khanda Saṃyutta (Collection of the Aggregates)

*Upaya Vagga
(The Group on Engagement)*

Anattalakkhaṇa Sutta

“Discourse on the Nature of Non-Substantiality”

Translated by Candana Bhikkhu

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This is what I personally heard.

Once, the Blessed One was living at Varanasi’s Deer Park, in Isipatana.

It was then, that the Blessed One addressed the group of Five Bhikkhus in this manner, and said the following:

“Bhikkhus”

“Yes, Bhante,” they all replied. And the Blessed One continued,

“Bhikkhus, form in its essence is non-substantial, because if form were to have a substantiality to it, then it would not disintegrate or fall apart, where one could even be driven to say: *‘May my form be this way or that, substantial and unchanging.’*

“But Bhikkhus, because form in its essence is non-substantial, it *does* disintegrate and fall apart, where one could not be able to say: *‘May my form be this way or that, substantial or unchanging.’*

“Bhikkhus, feeling in its essence is non-substantial, because if feeling were to have a substantiality to it, then it would not disintegrate or fall apart, where one could even be driven to say: *‘May my feeling be this way or that, substantial and unchanging.’*

“But Bhikkhus, because feeling in its essence is non-substantial, it *does* disintegrate and fall apart, where one could not be able to say: *‘May my feeling be this way or that, substantial or unchanging.’*

“Bhikkhus, mental associations in their essence are non-substantial, because if mental associations were to have a substantiality to them, then they would not disintegrate or fall apart, where one could even be driven to say: *‘May my mental associations be this way or that, substantial and unchanging.’*

“But Bhikkhus, because mental associations in their essence are non-substantial, they *do* disintegrate and fall apart, where one could not be able to say: *‘May my mental associations be this way or that, substantial or unchanging.’*

“Bhikkhus, mental habits in their essence are non-substantial, because if mental habits were to have a substantiality to them, then they would not disintegrate or fall apart, where one could even be driven to say: *‘May my mental habits be this way or that, substantial and unchanging.’*”

“But Bhikkhus, because mental habits in their essence are non-substantial, they *do* disintegrate and fall apart, where one could not be able to say: *‘May my mental habits be this way or that, substantial or unchanging.’*”

“Bhikkhus, sense-awareness in its essence is non-substantial, because if sense-awareness were to have a substantiality to it, then it would not disintegrate or fall apart, where one could even be driven to say: *‘May my sense-awareness be this way or that, substantial and unchanging.’*”

“But Bhikkhus, because sense-awareness in its essence is non-substantial, it *does* disintegrate and fall apart, where one could not be able to say: *‘May my sense-awareness be this way or that, substantial or unchanging.’*”

1. “Now, what do you think, Bhikkhus:

“Would you say that form is permanent or impermanent?”

“It is impermanent, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent be a cause for suffering or pleasure?”

“A cause for suffering, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent, unstable, and a cause for suffering, be looked upon as:

‘This is mine; this thing and I are one-and-the-same;’ or that ‘this is myself?’”

“No, Bhante, it could not.”

2. “Now, what do you think, Bhikkhus:

“Would you say that feeling is permanent or impermanent?”

“It is impermanent, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent be a cause for suffering or pleasure?”

“A cause for suffering, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent, unstable, and a cause for suffering, be looked upon as:

‘This is mine; this thing and I are one-and-the-same;’ or that ‘this is myself?’”

“No, Bhante, it could not.”

3. “Now, what do you think, Bhikkhus:

“Would you say that mental associations are permanent or impermanent?”

“They are impermanent, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent be a cause for suffering or pleasure?”

“A cause for suffering, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent, unstable, and a cause for suffering, be looked upon as:

‘This is mine; this thing and I are one-and-the-same;’ or that ‘this is myself?’

“No, Bhante, it could not.”

4. “Now, what do you think, Bhikkhus:

“Would you say that mental habits are permanent or impermanent?”

“They are impermanent, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent be a cause for suffering or pleasure?”

“A cause for suffering, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent, unstable, and a cause for suffering, be looked upon as:

‘This is mine; this thing and I are one-and-the-same;’ or that ‘this is myself?’

“No, Bhante, it could not.”

5. “Now, what do you think, Bhikkhus:

“Would you say that sense-awareness is permanent or impermanent?”

“It is impermanent, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent be a cause for suffering or pleasure?”

“A cause for suffering, Bhante.”

“And could that which is impermanent, unstable, and a cause for suffering, be looked upon as:

‘This is mine; this thing and I are one-and-the-same;’ or that ‘this is myself?’

“No, Bhante, it could not.”

In this manner, Bhikkhus, whenever you encounter any kind of forms whatsoever, whether it may be from the past, present, or future, whether witnessed internally or externally, whether of a gross or subtle nature, whether being of an inferior or superior quality, all these you must look upon as they truly are in reality, and with the correct understanding thus: *‘This is **not** mine;’ this thing and I are **not** one-and-the-same; this is **not** myself?’*

Similarly, Bhikkhus, whenever you encounter any kind of feelings whatsoever, whether it may be from the past, present, or future, whether witnessed internally or externally, whether of a gross or subtle nature, whether being of an inferior or superior quality, all these you must look

upon as they truly are in reality, and with the correct understanding thus: *‘This is **not** mine;’ this thing and I are **not** one-and-the-same; this is **not** myself?’*

Similarly, Bhikkhus, whenever you encounter any kind of mental associations whatsoever, whether they may be from the past, present, or future, whether witnessed internally or externally, whether of a gross or subtle nature, whether being of an inferior or superior quality, all these you must look upon as they truly are in reality, and with the correct understanding thus: *‘This is **not** mine;’ this thing and I are **not** one-and-the-same; this is **not** myself?’*

Similarly, Bhikkhus, whenever you encounter any kind of mental habits whatsoever, whether they may be from the past, present, or future, whether witnessed internally or externally, whether of a gross or subtle nature, whether being of an inferior or superior quality, all these you must look upon as they truly are in reality, and with the correct understanding thus: *‘This is **not** mine;’ this thing and I are **not** one-and-the-same; this is **not** myself?’*

Similarly, Bhikkhus, whenever you encounter any kind of sense-awareness whatsoever, whether it may be from the past, present, or future, whether witnessed internally or externally, whether of a gross or subtle nature, whether being of an inferior or superior quality, all these you must look upon as they truly are in reality, and with the correct understanding thus: *‘This is **not** mine;’ this thing and I are **not** one-and-the-same; this is **not** myself?’*

By seeing in this manner, Bhikkhus, the Noble Disciple in Training becomes naturally pulled away and disenchanted from all kinds of forms, disenchanted from all kinds of feelings, disenchanted from all kinds of mental associations, disenchanted from all kinds of mental habits, and disenchanted from all kinds of sense-awareness.

Being thus pulled away and disenchanted from all these, he becomes dispassionate. And as a result of his dispassion, his mind is freed and his heart released.

Being thus released, there arises within him Direct Knowledge and Understanding, as he knows for the first time: *‘It is now finally liberated!’*

And with this experience, he fully comprehends:

“Now, birth is finally destroyed. The Holy Life has been fully lived. What had to be done is now done and finished. There is no further coming to any state of rebecoming.”

This is what the Blessed One said.

And in hearing the words of the Blessed One, the group of Five Bhikkhus rejoiced in their hearts.

For while this discourse was being taught by the Tathāgata, the hearts of all Five Bhikkhus, through no longer grasping onto anything, suddenly were released from the contaminants, completely.

And now, there were six Arahants living in the world.

Sadhu Sadhu Sadhu