SN 22.97 — SN 22:97 The Tip of the Fingernail | Nakhasikhā Sutta

English translation by Ṭhānissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

The Tip of the Fingernail

Nakhasikhā Sutta (SN 22:97)

Near Sāvatthī. Sitting to one side, a monk said to the Blessed One, “Lord, is there any form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity? Is there any feeling… any perception… Are there any fabrications… Is there any consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity?”

“No, monk, there is no form… no feeling… no perception… there are no fabrications… there is no consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay

just as it is for eternity."1

Then the Blessed One, picking up a tiny bit of dust with the tip of his fingernail, said to the monk, "There isn't even this much form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity. If there were even this much form that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is for eternity, then this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress would not be discerned. But because there isn't even this much form that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity, this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress is discerned.

"There isn't even this much feeling....

"There isn't even this much perception....

"There aren't even this many fabrications....

"There isn't even this much consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity. If there were even this much consciousness that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is for eternity, then this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress would not be discerned. But because there isn't even this much consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is for eternity, this living of the holy life for the right ending of suffering & stress is discerned.

"What do you think, monk? Is form constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant, lord." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful, lord." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

"... Is feeling constant or inconstant?"—"Inconstant, lord." ...

"... Is perception constant or inconstant?"—"Inconstant, lord." ...

"... Are fabrications constant or inconstant?"—"Inconstant, lord." ...

"What do you think, monk? Is consciousness constant or inconstant?" "Inconstant, lord." "And is that which is inconstant easeful or stressful?" "Stressful, lord." "And is it fitting to regard what is inconstant, stressful, subject to change as: 'This is mine. This is my self. This is what I am'?"

"No, lord."

“Thus, monk, any form whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every form is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Any feeling whatsoever….

“Any perception whatsoever….

“Any fabrications whatsoever….

“Any consciousness whatsoever that is past, future, or present; internal or external; blatant or subtle; common or sublime; far or near: Every consciousness is to be seen as it has come to be with right discernment as: ‘This is not mine. This is not my self. This is not what I am.’

“Seeing thus, the instructed disciple of the noble ones grows disenchanted with form, disenchanted with feeling, disenchanted with perception, disenchanted with fabrications, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate. Through dispassion, he is released. With release, there is the knowledge, ‘Released.’ He discerns that ‘Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.’”

Note

1. See MN 109, note 2.