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Anatta-lakkhana Sutta:

The Discourse on the Not-self Characteristic

translated from the Pali by

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Thus I heard. On one occasion the Blessed One was living at Benares, in the Deer Park at Isipatana (the Resort of Seers). There he addressed the bhikkhus of the group of five: "Bhikkhus." — "Venerable sir," they replied. The Blessed One said this.

"Bhikkhus, form is not-self. Were form self, then this form would not lead to affliction, and one could have it of form: 'Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus.' And since form is not-self, so it leads to affliction, and none can have it of form: 'Let my form be thus, let my form be not thus.'

"Bhikkhus, feeling is not-self...

"Bhikkhus, perception is not-self...

"Bhikkhus, determinations are not-self...

"Bhikkhus, consciousness is not self. Were consciousness self, then this consciousness would not lead to affliction, and one could have it of consciousness: 'Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness be not thus.' And since consciousness is not-self, so it leads to affliction, and none can have it of consciousness: 'Let my consciousness be thus, let my consciousness be not thus.'

"Bhikkhus, how do you conceive it: is form permanent or impermanent?" — "Impermanent, venerable Sir." — "Now is what is impermanent painful or pleasant?" — "Painful, venerable Sir." — "Now is what is impermanent, what is painful since subject to change, fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this is I, this is my self'?" — "No, venerable sir."

"Is feeling permanent or impermanent?..."

"Is perception permanent or impermanent?..."

"Are determinations permanent or impermanent?..."

"Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?" — "Impermanent, venerable sir." —
"Now is what is impermanent pleasant or painful?" — "Painful, venerable sir."
— "Now is what is impermanent, what is painful since subject to change, fit to
be regarded thus: 'This is mine, this is I, this is my self'?" — "No, venerable
sir."

"So, bhikkhus any kind of form whatever, whether past, future or presently
arisen, whether gross or subtle, whether in oneself or external, whether
inferior or superior, whether far or near, must with right understanding how it
is, be regarded thus: 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not myself.'

"Any kind of feeling whatever..."

"Any kind of perception whatever..."

"Any kind of determination whatever..."

"Any kind of consciousness whatever, whether past, future or presently arisen,
whether gross or subtle, whether in oneself or external, whether inferior or
superior, whether far or near must, with right understanding how it is, be
regarded thus: 'This is not mine, this is not I, this is not my self.'

"Bhikkhus, when a noble follower who has heard (the truth) sees thus, he finds
estrangement in form, he finds estrangement in feeling, he finds estrangement in
perception, he finds estrangement in determinations, he finds estrangement in
consciousness.

"When he finds estrangement, passion fades out. With the fading of passion, he
is liberated. When liberated, there is knowledge that he is liberated. He
understands: 'Birth is exhausted, the holy life has been lived out, what can be
done is done, of this there is no more beyond.'"

That is what the Blessed One said. The bhikkhus were glad, and they approved his
words.

Now during this utterance, the hearts of the bhikkhus of the group of five were
liberated from taints through clinging no more.

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