

Anattalakkhana Sutta

Thus have I heard: The Exalted One was at one time residing at Benares in the Deer Park at Isipatana. There the Exalted One addressed the group of five monks saying: “Monks,” and they replied to Him, “Venerable Sir”

Then the Exalted One said:

“Form (rūpa or matter) is not soul (anatta). If form, monks, were soul, then this form would not lead to affliction, and one would be able to say, ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form not be thus.’ But since form is not soul, so it leads to affliction, and no one can say ‘Let my form be thus. Let my form be not thus.”

“Feeling (vedana) is not soul. If feeling, monks, were soul, then this feeling would not lead to affliction, and one would be able to say, ‘Let my feeling be thus. Let my feeling not be thus.’ But since feeling is not soul, so it leads to affliction, and no one can say ‘Let my feeling be thus. Let my feeling not be thus.”

“Perception (Sañña) is not soul. If perception, monks, were soul, then this perception would not lead to affliction, and one would be able to say, ‘Let my perception be thus. Let my perception not be thus.’ But since perception is not soul, so it leads to affliction, and no one can say, ‘Let my perception be thus. Let my perception not be thus.”

“Mental formations (sankharas) are not soul. If mental formations, monks, were soul, then these mental formations would not lead to affliction, and one would be able to say, ‘Let my mental formations be thus. Let my mental formations not be thus.’ But since mental formations are not soul, so they lead to affliction, and no one can say, ‘Let my mental formations be thus. Let my mental formations not be thus.”

“Consciousness (Viññana) is not soul. If consciousness, monks, were soul, then this consciousness would not lead to affliction, and one would be able to say ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.’ But since consciousness is not soul, so it leads to affliction, and no one can say ‘Let my consciousness be thus. Let my consciousness not be thus.”

“Monks, what do you think? Is form permanent or impermanent?”

“Impermanent, Venerable Sir.”

“Now what is impermanent, is it unsatisfactory (dukkha) or satisfactory (sukha)?”

"Unsatisfactory Venerable Sir"

"Now what is impermanent, what is unsatisfactory, what is transitory - is it fit to be perceived thus: 'This is mine; this is I; this is my soul?'"

"No, Venerable Sir"

"Monks, what do you think? Is feeling permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable Sir"

"Now, what is impermanent is it unsatisfactory or satisfactory?"

"Unsatisfactory, Venerable Sir"

"Now what is impermanent, what is unsatisfactory what is transitory - is it fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine. This is I. This is my soul?'"

"No, Venerable Sir"

"Monks, what do you think? Is perception permanent or impermanent?"

"Impermanent, Venerable Sir."

"Now what is impermanent, is it unsatisfactory or satisfactory?"

"Unsatisfactory Venerable Sir "

"Now what is impermanent, what is unsatisfactory what is transitory - is it fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine. This is I. This is my soul?'"

"No, Venerable Sir"

"Monks, what do you think? Are mental formations permanent or impermanent."

"Impermanent, Venerable Sir "

"Now what is impermanent, is it unsatisfactory or satisfactory?"

"Unsatisfactory, Venerable Sir."

"Now what is impermanent, what is unsatisfactory what is transitory - is it fit to be regarded thus: 'This is mine. This is I. This is my soul'"

"No, Venerable Sir."

"Monks, what do you think? Is consciousness permanent or impermanent?"

“Impermanent, Venerable Sir “

“Now what is impermanent is it unsatisfactory or satisfactory?”

“Unsatisfactory, Venerable Sir”

“Now what is impermanent, what is unsatisfactory, what is transitory is it fit to be regarded thus: ‘This is mine. This is I. This is my soul?’”

“No, Venerable Sir.”

“So, monks, whatever perception, whether past, future, or present: whether gross or subtle; whether in oneself or in others; whether inferior or superior; whether far or near; must with right understanding of things as they really are, be regarded thus:

‘This is not mine. This is not I. This is not my soul.’”

“So, monks, whatever mental formations, whether past, future, or present; whether gross or subtle; whether in oneself or in others; whether inferior or superior; whether far or near; must, with right understanding of things as they really are, be regarded thus: ‘This is not mine. This is not I. This is not my soul.’”

“So, monks, whatever consciousness, whether past, future, or present; whether gross or subtle; whether in oneself or in others; whether inferior or superior: whether far or near; must, with right understanding of things as they really are, be regarded thus: ‘This is not mine. This is not I. This is not my soul.’”

“Seeing thus, monks, the learned disciple of the Noble Ones becomes weary of form, weary also of feelings, weary also of perception, weary also of mental formations, and weary also of consciousness. Being weary, he becomes detached; being detached, he becomes free; being free, the knowledge arises, ‘I am free.’”

“And he knows, ‘Rebirth is no more; I have finished practicing the life of purity; done is what should be done; of this there is no more beyond.’”

This is what the Exalted One said. Delighted, the group of five monks rejoiced at the Exalted One’s words.

And while this discourse was being given, the minds of the group of five monks were liberated from defilements through clinging no more.

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