

# **All Phenomena are Non-Self**

IBDSCL, July 21<sup>st</sup>, 22<sup>ed</sup>, 2018, by Nancy Yu

Good morning! Welcome to International Buddha Dharma Society for Cosmic Law to listen to today's Dharma talk! Today, we will focus on Non-Self, the second Dharma seal. We often say that the five aggregates/five Skandhas are non-self. Skandha means aggregate, accumulating. The five Skandhas are form/matter/body, sensations/feelings, perceptions, Mental formations and awareness/consciousness.

Form means all matters that have images and that occupy a space;

Sensation means the feelings generated when the humans contact the outside world with their sensing organs;

Perception means various of thoughts, psychological phenomena, risen under different conditions, such as kindness and evil, loving and hatred;

Mental formation means to do either good or evil out of mind movement;

Consciousness means discernment.

All five Skandhas are non-self and they exist/form under certain causes and conditions.

The body does not have a Self. If there was a Self, why the Self cannot control the birth, the aging, the sickness of it? Which part of the body is self?

So do the feelings, perceptions, mental formations and consciousness. If there was a Self, why this Self couldn't control what one thought and felt and instead everyone has various of sufferings, annoyances, hindrances and restraints?

When Sudatta was about to die, the Buddha came and gave teachings to him the last time. The Buddha said, "Sudatta, don't be afraid. You have dedicated all your life to others and you should not feel pain. Think about what I have told you and contemplate on what I have said. This will awake your courage to face the death. Close your eyes and think, "

My eyes are not me; my ears are not me; my nose is not me; my tongue is not me; my body is not me; my mind is not me.

What I see is not me; what I hear is not me; what I smell is not me; what I taste, what I touch, what I think are all not me.

I am neither the scene, nor the voice; I am neither the fragrance, nor the thoughts; I am neither the delicacy, nor the consciousness.

I belong neither to the earth, nor to the sky; I am neither the wind, nor the water, nor do I live in my heart. I am not restrained by any element and the death cannot reach me.

I smile because I have never been born nor will I die.

Birth will not make me exist and death will not make me non-exist.

My existence does not rely on birth and death, neither will it be chained by them."

It's a beautiful teaching and well worth to contemplate on.

Today, we will recite, learn and understand some sutras on Samyukta Agama. The Saṃyukta Āgama is a collection of over 1300 short texts which together represent the early collected core teachings of the Buddha.

### **Samyukta Āgama, 33**

Thus have I heard. At one time the Buddha was staying at Sāvattthī in Jeta's Grove, Anāthapindika's Park.

At that time the Blessed One said to the monks, "Bodily form is not self. If bodily form were the self, then it should not happen that disease and pain arise in relation to bodily form, and there should not be the wish for bodily form to be in this way and not to be in that way. Because bodily form is not self, there is the arising of disease and pain in relation to bodily form and one gets the wish for bodily form to be in this way and not to be in that way. Feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness *is also like this*.

"Monks, what do you think, is bodily form permanent or impermanent?" The monks said to the Buddha, "It is impermanent, Blessed One." The Buddha said, "Monks, what is impermanent, is it *dukkha*?"

The monks said to the Buddha, "It is *dukkha*, Blessed One." The Buddha said, "What is impermanent, *dukkha*, of a nature to change, would a learned noble disciple herein regard it as the self, as distinct from the self in the sense of being owned by it, as existing within the self, or the self as existing within it?"

The monks said to the Buddha, "No, Blessed One."

The Buddha said, "Feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness *is also like this*. Therefore, monks, whatever bodily form, whether past, future or present, internal or external, gross or subtle, sublime or repugnant, far or near, all of it is not self, is not distinct from the self in the sense of being owned by it, does not exist within the self, nor does a self exist

within it. In this way it should be examined. Feeling ... perception ... formations ... consciousness *is also like this*.

"Monks, a learned noble disciple examines these five aggregates of clinging as they really are as not self and not belonging to a self. Having examined them as they really are, he does not cling to anything in the whole world. Because of not clinging to anything, he is not attached to anything. Because of not being attached to anything, he personally realizes Nirvāṇa, knowing, 'Birth for me has been eradicated, the holy life has been established, what had to be done has been done, I myself know that there will be no receiving of further existence.'"

When the Buddha had spoken this discourse, the monks, hearing what the Buddha had said, were delighted and received it respectfully.

### **Samyukta Āgama, 34, the Buddha Speaks the Non-self of the Five Skandhas to the Five Bhiksus.**

Thus have I heard. At one time the Bhagavān was dwelling in Vārāṇasī, at the Deer Park of Rṣipatana. At that time, the Bhagavān told a group of five bhikṣus, "Form does not exist as a self. If form existed as a self, then form would not be associated with the arising of illness and suffering. Regarding form, it is also not possible to cause it to be like this, or not like this, because form is not oneself. From form and the arising of illness and suffering, one also grasps the desire to make form like this, or not like this. For sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness, it is also such as this.

"Bhikṣus, tell me what you think: is form permanent or impermanent?" The bhikṣus addressed the Buddha, saying, "Impermanent, Bhagavān." "Bhikṣus, is that which is impermanent, suffering?" The bhikṣus addressed the Buddha, saying, "It is suffering, Bhagavān." "Bhikṣus, regarding these impermanent and afflicting dharmas, easily subject to change, does a well-learned venerable disciple perceive in these a self or a non-self, and thereby dwell in appearances?" The bhikṣus addressed the Buddha saying, "No, Bhagavān, and for sensation, conception, synthesis, and discrimination, it is also such as this." "For this reason, bhikṣus, all form that exists — whether in the past, the future, or the present; internal or external; coarse or fine; appealing or unappealing; far or near — all these are not a self, not a true self. Correct contemplation of sensation, perception, mental formation, and consciousness is also such as this.

“Bhikṣus, regarding the Five Skandhas, a well-learned venerable disciple perceives they are not a self, not a true self, and contemplates thusly. Regarding the various realms, because there is no clinging, there is no suffering, and because there is no suffering, there is self-awakening and Nirvāṇa. ‘My births have come to an end, Brahmācārya has been established, what was to be done has been done, and there is the self-realization of no further suffering.’”

After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, the group of five bhikṣus did not give rise to outflows, and their minds attained liberation. After the Buddha had spoken this sūtra, then the bhikṣus heard what the Buddha had said, and blissfully practiced in accordance.

## **Samyukta Āgama, The Tip of the Fingernail**

Translated by Thanissaro Bhikkhu

At Savatthi. 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 as long as eternity? Is there any feeling... any perception... Is there any mental formation... Is there any consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is as long as eternity?"

"No, monk, there is no form... no feeling... no perception... there is no mental formation... there is no consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is as long as eternity."

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 as long as eternity. If there were even this much form that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is as long as 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 as long as 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 isn't even this much mental formation..."

"There isn't even this much consciousness that is constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that will stay just as it is as long as eternity. If there were even this much consciousness that was constant, lasting, eternal, not subject to change, that would stay just as it is as long as 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 as long as 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 mental formations 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 actually is 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 mental formations 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 actually is 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 mental formations, disenchanted with consciousness. Disenchanted, he becomes dispassionate.

Through dispassion, he is fully released. With full release, there is the knowledge, 'Fully released.' He discerns that 'Birth is ended, the holy life fulfilled, the task done. There is nothing further for this world.'"

Amitabha! Breaking down the Self is a great barrier on the road of Cultivation. If the Self exists, one will not get out of the cycle of birth and death. Wish everyone become dispassionate of the five Skandhas, get rid of all the desires, return to Nirvana! Thank you! See you next week!