SN 35.81 — Several Mendicants

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 35.81

8. Sick

Several Mendicants

Then several mendicants went up to the Buddha … and asked him, "Sir, sometimes wanderers of other religions ask us: 'Reverends, what's the goal of leading the spiritual life under the ascetic Gotama?' We answer them like this: 'The goal of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is to completely understand suffering.'

Answering this way, we trust that we repeat what the Buddha has said, and don't misrepresent him with an untruth. We trust our explanation is in line with the teaching, and that there are no legitimate grounds for rebuttal or criticism."

"Indeed, in answering this way you repeat what I've said, and don't misrepresent me with an untruth. Your explanation is in line with the teaching, and there are no legitimate grounds for rebuttal or criticism. For the goal of leading the spiritual life under me is to completely understand suffering.

If wanderers of other religions were to ask you: 'Reverends, what is that suffering?' You should answer them: 'Reverends, the eye is suffering. The goal of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is to completely understand this. Sights … Eye consciousness … Eye contact … The pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on eye contact is also suffering. The goal of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is to completely understand this.

Ear … Nose … Tongue … Body … Mind … The pleasant, painful, or neutral feeling that arises dependent on mind contact is also suffering. The goal of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is to completely understand this.

This is that suffering. The goal of leading the spiritual life under the Buddha is to completely understand this.' When questioned by wanderers of other religions, that's how you should answer them."