SN 45.5 — What’s the Goal?

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 45.5

1. Ignorance

What’s the Goal?

At Sāvatthī.

Then several mendicants went up to the Buddha … and said to 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: ‘Is there a path and a practice for completely understanding that suffering?’ You should answer them like this: ‘There is.’

And what is that path? It is simply this noble eightfold path, that is: right view, right purpose, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right immersion. This is the path and the practice for completely understanding suffering. When questioned by wanderers of other religions, that’s how you should answer them.”