SN 35.153 — Is There a Method?

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
Source: https://suttacentral.net/sn35.153/en/sujato
Source revision: 3bc8665e0e28e70518eba94304a2fafcab80f933
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Text

Linked Discourses 35.153

15. The Old and the New

Is There a Method?

“Mendicants, is there a method—apart from faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment? That is: ‘I understand: “Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.”’”

“Our teachings are rooted in the Buddha. He is our guide and our refuge. Sir, may the Buddha himself please clarify the meaning of this. The mendicants will listen and remember it.”

“Well then, mendicants, listen and apply your mind well, I will speak.”

“Yes, sir,” they replied. The Buddha said this:

“There is a method—apart from faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment. That is: ‘I understand: “Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.”’

And what is that method? Take a mendicant who sees a sight with their eyes. When they have greed, hate, and delusion in them, they understand ‘I have greed, hate, and delusion in me.’ When they don’t have greed, hate, and delusion in them, they understand ‘I don’t have greed, hate, and delusion in me.’ Since this is so, are these things understood by faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation?”

“No, sir.”

“Aren’t they understood by seeing them with wisdom?”

“Yes, sir.”

“This is a method—apart from faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment. That is: ‘I understand: “Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey

has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.’”

Furthermore, a mendicant hears a sound … smells an odor … tastes a flavor … encounters a touch … knows an idea with their mind. When they have greed, hate, and delusion in them, they understand ‘I have greed, hate, and delusion in me.’ When they don’t have greed, hate, and delusion in them, they understand ‘I don’t have greed, hate, and delusion in me.’ Since this is so, are these things understood by faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation?”

“No, sir.”

“Aren’t they understood by seeing them with wisdom?”

“Yes, sir.”

“This too is a method—apart from faith, endorsement, oral transmission, reasoned train of thought, or acceptance of a view after deliberation—that a mendicant can rely on to declare their enlightenment. That is: ‘I understand: “Rebirth is ended, the spiritual journey has been completed, what had to be done has been done, there is nothing further for this place.”’”