SN 11.4 — With Vepacitti

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 11.4

Chapter One

With Vepacitti

At Sāvatthī.

“Once upon a time, mendicants, a battle was fought between the gods and the titans.

Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, addressed the titans, ‘My good fellows, if the titans defeat the gods in this battle, bind Sakka, the lord of gods, by his limbs and neck and bring him to my presence in the citadel of the titans.’

Meanwhile, Sakka, lord of gods, addressed the gods of the thirty-three, ‘My good fellows, if the gods defeat the titans in this battle, bind Vepacitti by his limbs and neck and bring him to my presence in the Hall of Clear Right of the gods.’

In that battle the gods won and the titans lost. So the gods of the thirty-three bound Vepacitti by his limbs and neck and brought him to Sakka’s presence in the Hall of Clear Right of the gods.

And as Sakka was entering and leaving the hall, Vepacitti abused and insulted him with rude, harsh words. So Mātali the chariot handler addressed Sakka in verse:

‘O Maghavā, O Sakka,

is it from fear or from weakness

that you endure such harsh words

in the presence of Vepacitti?’

‘It’s not out of fear or weakness

that I’m patient with Vepacitti.

For how can a sensible person like me

get in a fight with a fool?’

‘Fools would vent even more

if there’s no one to put a stop to them.

So an attentive one should stop
a fool with forceful punishment.’
‘I think that this is the only way
to put a stop to a fool,
when you know that the other is upset,
be mindful and stay calm.’
‘In this mere endurance, Vāsava,
I see a flaw.
When a fool thinks,
“He endures me out of fear,”
the simpleton will go after you even harder,
like a cow chasing someone who runs away.’
‘Let him think this if he wishes, or not—
“He endures me out of fear.”
For the highest goal, one’s own,
naught better than patience is found.
When a strong person
endures a weakling,
they call that the ultimate patience,
for a weakling must always be patient.
The strength of folly
is really just weakness, they say.
But no one can challenge a person
who’s strong, guarded by the teaching.
When you get angry at an angry person
you just make things worse for yourself.
When you don’t get angry at an angry person
you win a battle hard to win.
When you know that the other is angry,

you act for the good of both

yourself and the other

if you’re mindful and stay calm.

People inexpert in the teaching

consider one who heals both

oneself and the other

to be a fool.’

Since, mendicants, even that Sakka, lord of gods—while living off of the fruit of his good deeds, and ruling as sovereign lord over these gods of the thirty-three—will speak in praise of patience and gentleness, you can excel at this, for you who have gone forth in such a well explained teaching and training can develop patience and gentleness.”