SN 11.5 — Victory by Good Speech

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Text

Linked Discourses 11.5

Chapter One

Victory by Good Speech

At Sāvatthī.

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

Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, said to Sakka, lord of gods, ‘Lord of gods, let there be victory by fine words!’

‘Vepacitti, let there be victory by fine words!’

Then the gods and the titans appointed a panel of judges, saying, ‘These will understand our good and bad statements.’

Then Vepacitti, lord of titans, said to Sakka, lord of gods, ‘Lord of gods, recite a verse!’

When he said this, Sakka said to him, ‘Vepacitti, you are the elder gods here. Recite a verse.’

So Vepacitti spoke this verse:

‘Fools would vent even more

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

So an intelligent person should stop

a fool with forceful punishment.’

The titans applauded Vepacitti’s verse, while the gods kept silent.

Then Vepacitti said to Sakka, ‘Lord of gods, recite a verse!’ So Sakka spoke this verse:

‘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.’

The gods applauded Sakka’s verse, while the titans kept silent.

Then Sakka said to Vepacitti, ‘Vepacitti, recite a verse!’ So Vepacitti spoke this verse:

‘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.’

The titans applauded Vepacitti’s verse, while the gods kept silent.

Then Vepacitti said to Sakka, ‘Lord of gods, recite a verse!’ So Sakka spoke this verse:

‘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.’

The gods applauded Sakka’s verses, while the titans kept silent.

Then the panel of judges consisting of both gods and titans said this, ‘The verses spoken by Vepacitti evoke punishment and violence. That’s how you get fights, arguments, and quarrels. The verses spoken by Sakka don’t evoke punishment and violence. That’s how you stay free of fights, arguments, and quarrels.

Sakka, lord of gods, wins victory by fine words!’

And that’s how Sakka came to win victory by fine words.”