

# 6

## The Vepacitti Suttas

The Discourses on Vepacitti

(Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta The (Sakka) Discourse on Vepa,citti | S 11.4, SD 54.6a

Subhāsita,jaya Sutta The Discourse on the Victory by the Well-spoken | S 11.5, SD 54.6b

Theme: Victory by patience

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### 1 Summaries and highlights

#### 1.1 DUELS

**1.1.1 The Vepa,citti Suttas**, the discourses on Vepa,citti, are 2 closely parallel suttas each recounting a duel between Sakra,<sup>1</sup> the lord of the devas, and Vepa,citti,<sup>2</sup> the lord of the asuras:<sup>3</sup>

<b>(Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta</b>	The Vepa,citti Discourse (on patience)	<b>S 11.4</b>	SD 54.6a
<b>Subhāsita,jaya Sutta</b>	The Discourse on the Victory by the Well-spoken	<b>S 11.5</b>	SD 54.6b

#### 1.1.2 The (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta (S 11.4), SD 54.6a

**1.1.2.1** The Vepa,citti discourse on patience (S 11.4) [SD 54.6a] recounts a battle between the asuras, led by Vepa,citti, and the devas, led by Sakra. The devas defeat the asuras and Vepa,citti is bound arms, legs and neck. As he is entering and leaving the Sudhamma hall in Tāvātimsa (to be judged before the deva council), he verbally abuses Sakra. [§§6-8]

**1.1.2.2** Mātali, Sakra’s charioteer, questions Sakra regarding why he (Sakra) tolerates Vepa,citti’s vile abuses, and that doing so only encourages Vepa,citti to be bolder in his rudeness [872\*]. Sakra replies that he fears not Vepa,citti [873\*]. When Mātali warns Sakra that this would only embolden a fool [874\*], Sakra replies that knowing the mind of another makes one stronger [875\*].

**1.1.2.3** When Mātali still disapproves of Sakra’s gentleness (*soracca*) [876\*], Sakra gives the following **lesson**:

[877\*] Patience ultimately benefits oneself.

[878\*] While to Sakra patience is a virtue, to Vepa,citti (or one angry) patience is only a necessity.

[879\*] Patience is one’s real strength.

[880\*] The impatient only harms himself.

[881\*] Patience benefits both sides.

[882\*] Only those who lack Dharma think it foolish to heal both sides (of those in conflict).

#### 1.1.3 The Subhāsita,jaya Sutta (S 11.5), SD 54.6b

**1.1.3.1** Structurally, **the Subhāsita,jaya Sutta** (S 11.5) closely parallels the (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta [1.1.2]. The account opens with an ongoing battle between the asuras and the devas, followed by a duel

<sup>1</sup> On Sakra, see SD 54.2 (3.2.3.6). On his other qualities, see SD 54.21 (1.2.3.3).

<sup>2</sup> On Vepa,citti, see SD 39.2 (2).

<sup>3</sup> On the origins of the asuras, see SD 15.5 (3.7.1); SD 39.2 (1).

between their respective leaders, Vepa,citti and Sakra. In this case, it is a peaceful duel of words and wits: who proves himself to be the best “well-spoken” (*subhāsita*) wins (*jaya*) [§3.2]. The duel closes with the council of judges of both asuras and devas declaring Sakra as the winner—he speaks of non-violence, peace and friendship [§19].

**1.1.3.2** We must imagine this peaceful deva-asura gathering filling to capacity an ancient Greek amphitheatre or some commodious celestial hall, where the ambience is calm and quiet enough for all parties to hear both Vepa,citti and Sakra. Both the (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta (**S 11.4**) and the Subhāsita,jaya Sutta (**S 11.5**) share the same set of verses. There are only 2 differences:

(1) The opening verses **872\*** and **873\*** of S 11.4 are omitted from S 11.5. This is understandable because Mātali, Sakra’s confidant and charioteer actually asks Sakra why he tolerates Vepa,citti’s vile abuses [872\*] and Sakra replies that he is wise enough not to engage with a foolish person [873\*].

(2) Otherwise, the same verses spoken by **Mātali** in S 11.4, are also spoken by **Vepa,citti** in S 11.5. We will later discuss this interesting matter of the verses and who speaks them [2].

**1.1.3.3** Here is a comparative table of the same set of verses that appear in **the (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4) and **the Subhāsita,jaya Sutta** (S 11.5):

	<b>S 11.4</b>	<b>S 11.5</b>	
Verses 1-2	(872* 873*) <sup>4</sup>	—	(Unrestrained, a fool gets bolder); Sakra fears not Vepa,citti;
Verses 3-4	874* 875*	883* 884*	a person’s true strength is not reacting to anger with anger;
Verses 5-6	876* 877*	885* 886*	the wise gives the fool the benefit of the doubt;
Verse 7	878*	887*	the patience of the weak is a necessity not a virtue;
Verse 8	879*	888*	true strength is when one does not retaliate with anger;
Verse 9	880*	889*	self-restraint is true victory;
Verse 10	881*	890*	one who is calm in the face of anger benefits everyone;
Verse 11	882*	891*	only the foolish, ignorant of Dharma, thinks otherwise.

The verses with *italicized* numbers are spoken by Mātali (S 11.4) and by Vepa,citti (S 11.5) respectively. They are identical verses that recur in the two Suttas spoken by the 2 speakers. The verses of **the well-spoken** are verses 886\*-891\* of S 11.5, but they also occur in S 11.4 [877\*-882\*]—spoken by Sakra on both occasions. [2.3]

#### **1.1.4 The council of judges**

**1.1.4.1 The Subhāsita,jaya Sutta** (S 11.5), SD 54.6b, tells us that when Vepa,citti and Sakra agree to a duel of wits [1.1.3.1] to see who comes up with the best of the “well-spoken” (*subhāsita*), they form a council of judges from both sides, the asuras and the devas [§4]. Understandably, these judges are unlikely to be warriors but are probably the older and wiser asuras and devas. [1.1.4.2]

**1.1.4.2 The council of judges** (comprising both asuras and devas) overseeing the duel of wits is likely to comprise what traditionally are called “the wise” (*viññū*). These wise ones are not only the morally virtuous but also understand and uphold universal values, that is, the respect for *life, property, freedom, truth and goodness*.<sup>5</sup> As judges, they also have to be unbiased in terms of persons and able to evaluate the truth and quality of the presentations of both sides.

<sup>4</sup> These verses are not found in S 11.5.

<sup>5</sup> On these 5 universal values, see SD 1.5 (2.7+2.8); SD 51.11 (2.2.3.4); SD 54.2e (2.3.2.5).

**1.1.4.3** At the end of the duel the council declares that Vepa,citti's verses are "in the sphere of punishment and violence, of conflict, of dispute, of quarrel" (*sa,daṇḍāvacaṛa satthā'vacara iti bhaṇḍanam iti viggaho iti kalaho iti*) while **Sakra's** is that "in the sphere of non-punishment and non-violence, of non-dispute, of non-quarrel" (that is, of justice and compassion, of peace, harmony, friendship). They declare Sakra the champion of the "victory of the well-spoken" (*subhāsita,jaya*) [§§18+19].

## 2 Who is debating with Sakra?

### 2.1 THE (SAKKA) VEPA,CITTI SUTTA (S 11.4)

**2.1.1 Friends.** S 11.4 is an account of a friendly dialogue between Sakra and Mātali, his charioteer, confidant and junior. Mātali, it seems, plays "Māra's advocate," that is, reminding Sakra the consequences (as Mātali sees it) when Sakra takes such a patient, gentle and reconciliatory approach to a captured enemy who is spewing vile abuses at him.

#### 2.1.2 The 3 verses

**2.1.2.1** Mātali speaks only **3 verses** [872\* 874\* 876\*] but, coming from him, they sound rather awkward that such a close, loyal and junior (a charioteer) companion of Sakra, speaks in such an almost condescending tone to his master and lord of the devas himself. It also makes Mātali appear to be as foolish as Vepa,citti in S 11.5.

**2.1.2.2** It is, however, interesting that in **876b\***, Mātali familiarly addresses Sakra as "**Vāsava**," "lord of the Vasus." **Vasū** another name for the 33 gods, as evident from **the Mahā,samaya Sutta** (D 20): "Vāsava, the best of the Vāsus" (*vasūnam vāsavo seṭṭho*).<sup>6</sup> The Vāsū are so called because they built a rest-house (*āvasatha*) for the public<sup>7</sup> and Vāsava is their leader.<sup>8</sup>

"Vāsava," is, however, a name of familiarity and endearment, which Vepa,citti is either unfamiliar with or unlikely to use, except with a sense of irony or sarcasm [2.1.2.3]. We shall examine the significance of the name Vāsava below [2.3.3.2].

### 2.2 THE SUBHĀSITA,JAYA SUTTA (S 11.5)

**2.2.1** The duel of wits between Vepa,citti and Sakra of **S 11.5** is what we would today describe as a "political statement" by the Buddha. The duel, it seems, reflects a contest between the two prevalent **political models of governance**: kingly absolutism and republican tribalism. While Vepa,citti represents the tyrant or king of absolute despotism of the central Gangetic plain, Sakra stands for that of the benevolent tribal ruler of the republics (Sakya, Vajjī, Assaka, etc).<sup>9</sup> It is clear which model the Buddha favours, but as we well know, the days of empires had already well begun in ancient India.<sup>10</sup>

**2.2.2** **The 2 preliminary verses** of Mātali (874\* = **883\***; 876\* = **885\***; 872\* is not found in S 11.5) seem to sound more natural when spoken by **Vepa,citti** [§§7.2, 12.3]. The tone of these 2 verses are unfriendly,

<sup>6</sup> D 20,14i (42e\*), SD 54.4.

<sup>7</sup> **Sakka,nāmā S** (S 11.12/1:229), SD 54.19.

<sup>8</sup> DhA 2.7a/1:264 (DhA:B 1:314).

<sup>9</sup> On the 16 states, see **SD 4.18** App; SD 9 (16): map (16.3)

<sup>10</sup> See SD 9 (16.2.2; 16.3.1).

even condescending: he is telling Sakra what to do, something inappropriate even from a charioteer to his lord. Further, he also addresses Sakra by name, as **Vāsava** [2.1.2.2], in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse [885b\*]. [2.3.3]

### 2.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MĀTALI/VEPA,CITTI VERSES

**2.3.1 The preliminary verses** with *italicized* numbers—**872\* 874\* 876\***—are spoken by Mātali (S 11.4), and **874\* 876\*** by Vepa,citti (S 11.5), too. They are identical verses that recur in the two Suttas but spoken by the two different speakers, by Mātali [2.1.2] and by Vepa,citti [2.2.2] respectively in different circumstances. We can only surmise that the recurrence of the same verses in two disparate incidents has a didactic purpose.

#### 2.3.2 Vepacitti's verses and Sakra's response

**2.3.2.1** Firstly, the recurrence of the preliminary verses [2.3.1] in the two Suttas (S 11.4 + 11.5) implies *a mythical element* in both the accounts. **The mythical**, in early Buddhism, is, as a rule, didactic.<sup>11</sup> These verses are instructive in presenting to us, often in profound terms, the qualities of **patience** (*khan-ti*). Since they are spoken by Sakra, the lord of the devas himself, they carry an element of divinity. [2.3.2.3]

**2.3.2.2** The Sutta verses are organized in two sections in each of the Suttas:

- (1) The 5 preliminary verses of **S 11.4** [872\*-876\*]: Mātali debates with Sakra that he should not be lenient with Vepa,citti [872\* 874\*]. Sakra explains the nature of patience [873\* 875\*-876\*]. Then, follows Sakra's full teaching on *patience* [877\*-882\*].
- (2) The 3 preliminary verses of **S 11.5** [883\*-885\*]: Vepa,citti [883\* 885\*] opening gambit on the use of force on one's opponent [883\* 885\*]. Sakra diplomatically invites Vepa,citti to make the opening remark, asserting that he "is the senior deva" [§6]. Sakra shrewdly sizes up Vepacitti with the opening verse [883\*].

After Vepacitti's 2<sup>nd</sup> verse [885\*], Sakra confidently delivers his full volley of wisdom, which Vepa,citti is unable to rebut. These are the "well-spoken" verses (*subhāsita*) [886\*-891\*] which seals his victory (*jaya*).

**2.3.2.3** Although **Sakra** is only a sense-world deva, not a dhyanic-world brahma, we can see elements of the 4 divine abodes (*brahma, vihāra*)<sup>12</sup> in his verses, thus: 886\* (lovingkindness), 887\*-889\* (compassion), 890\* (equanimity) and 891\* (gladness) [3.2.1.3(4)]. Sakra's virtue is remarkable and saintly, which is clearly because he is a streamwinner.<sup>13</sup>

#### 2.3.3 Mātali and his verses

**2.3.3.1** We have already noted that **the 3 preliminary verses** of Mātali (872\* 874\* 876\*) seem out of place in **the (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4), and, even with the omission of 872\* [2.2.2], spoken by Vepacitti (S 11.5), fit better in **the Subhāsita,jaya Sutta** (S 11.5). The tone of these verses is unfriendly,

<sup>11</sup> See SD 53.1 (1), esp (1.2).

<sup>12</sup> On the 4 divine abodes, see *Brahma, vihāra*, SD 38.5.

<sup>13</sup> SD 54.2 (3.2.3.6(5)).

even condescending. Spoken by Mātali, it seems as if he is telling Sakra what to do, something inappropriate for a charioteer to say to his master and lord of the devas. At least, this is how it all appears to be.

**2.3.3.2** Furthermore, he addresses Sakra by name, as **Vāsava** [2.1.2.2] in the 2<sup>nd</sup> verse [885b\*]. Vāsava, “lord of the Vasūs,” the builders of a resthouse (*āvasatha*) as a public act in their previous life.<sup>14</sup> This title is not as glorious as many of his many other names, as listed in **the Sakka, nāma Sutta** (S 11.12)<sup>15</sup> but it is deeply significant for his followers.

**Mātali** is Sakra’s constant companion and accompanies him everywhere, often more as his confidant than a servant. Mātali’s deep respect for Sakra is recorded in **the Gahaṭṭha Vandanā Sutta** (920\* 924\*)<sup>16</sup> and **the Pīta Vimāna, vatthu** (Vv 4.9,8-13).<sup>17</sup> These verses also attest to Sakra’s respect and love for Mātali.

Applying the logic of *lectio difficilior potior* (the more difficult reading is the stronger),<sup>18</sup> we may argue that the unusualness of the Mātali verses [872\* 874\* 876\*] only attests to the fact it is the original reading. This argument is further supported by the explanation given here, of the warm friendship between Sakra and Mātali.

The dialogue between Mātali and Sakra in **the (Sakka) Vepa, citti Sutta** (S 11.4) testifies to the openness and respect that these loving friends, despite their being servant and lord respectively. Mātali seems to be deeply concerned over a captured enemy whom they often battle with, but whom Sakra treats honourably; Sakra, however, explains why to Mātali by way of a lesson.

### 3 Related verses

#### **3.1 SELF-BENEFIT**

**3.1.1** The lines, “**Of benefits, self-benefit is supreme. | Nothing surpasses patience**” (*sad-attha, paramā atthā | khantiyā bhiiyyo na vijjati*) [877cd\* = 886cd\*], which is quoted in **the Netti-p, pakarana**<sup>19</sup> (Nett 173,11) and elsewhere [3.3.1; 3.3.2], needs some explanation. I have taken lines cd as two separate sentences, just as Ñāṇamoli has taken them as separate clauses in the Netti-p, pakaraṇa quote, thus: “One’s own good is the best of all, | And there is none surpasses patience” (Nett:Ñ 227).

These important lines are found elsewhere in the suttas, too. But first, we will examine them a little closer.

#### **3.1.2 “Of benefits, self-benefit is supreme”** (*sad-attha, paramā atthā*)

**3.1.2.1** *Sad-attha, paramā atthā* can be translated as “of benefits, self-benefit is supreme,” or “self-benefit is the supreme benefit.” The word “benefit” or “purpose, goal” (*attha*) here refers to both whole-

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<sup>14</sup> I have interpreted **vāsava** to include the qualities of both Sakka (*āvasatham adāsi*, S 11.12/1:229,12, SD 54.19) and his group of 33 friends, whom he leads (*vasūnam vāsavo seṭṭho*, D 20,260 @ 42e\*, SD 53.4) [2.1.2.2].

<sup>15</sup> S 11.12/1:229 (SD 54.19).

<sup>16</sup> S 11.18/1:234 (SD 86.2).

<sup>17</sup> Vv 4.9/47,8-13/69.

<sup>18</sup> In textual criticism and translation, *lectio difficilior potior* is the key principle where there are a number of conflicting readings, the more unusual one is more likely to be the original. In the case of Mātali’s verses in S 11.4, its unusualness suggests that it may well be the original reading.

<sup>19</sup> A paracanonical Pali work on exegesis, ie, a guide to writing commentaries or explaining the suttas. See Hinüber, *A Handbook of Pāli Literature*, 1996: III.2. Tr Ñāṇamoli, *The Guide*, London, Pali text Soc, 1962.

some happiness in this world, that is, long life, beauty, happiness, strength (*āyu,vaṇṇa,sukha,bala*);<sup>20</sup> and to happiness hereafter, that is, a blessed rebirth that conduces to spiritual training that can lead to the path.

**3.1.2.2** Of course, the greatest benefit in this life itself is that of awakening to **arhathood** itself, if not at least to be able to aspire to the path, that is, attaining streamwinning in this life itself.<sup>21</sup> This point can never be over-stressed, since without attaining the path, we are likely to fall into any of the subhuman states and spend an interminably long period amongst asuras, animals, pretas or hell-beings.<sup>22</sup>

Even when we are, on account of some good karma, reborn in the heavens, no matter how long we remain there, with the exhaustion of our karma, we will surely fall straight down into the subhuman realms, especially amongst the hell-beings.<sup>23</sup> Samsara is the reality on which is based the ancient Indian game of Snakes-and-Ladders.<sup>24</sup>

Only the saints who are reborn in the heavens, when they fall from those states, do not fall into any subhuman realms or suffering states. When born amongst humans, the unawakened saint finds himself in states conducive to Dharma living. The arhats are, of course, not reborn any more.<sup>25</sup>

## 3.2 PATIENCE

### 3.2.1 The one Dharma: heedful diligence

**3.2.1.1** The one quality (*eka,dhamma*), that is, a singularly significant teaching for practice, that the Buddha holds foremost is not patience but diligence or heedfulness, that is, **heedful diligence** (*appamāda*). **The (Ekaka) Appamāda Sutta** (A 1.6.9) preserves this seminal declaration by the Buddha on diligence:

I do not see a single thing on account of which un arisen unwholesome states arise and arisen unwholesome states decline, that is to say **diligence**. For one who is diligent [heedful], bhikshus, un arisen wholesome states arise and arisen unwholesome states decline. (A 1.6.9/1:11,18-23)<sup>26</sup>

<sup>20</sup> Dh 190: *vaḍḍhanti āyu vaṇṇo sukhaṃ balaṃ*, “life, beauty, happiness and strength will grow”: SD 22.13 (1.1) for details. Also *aggam āyu ca vaṇṇo ca yaso kitti sukhaṃ balaṃ*, “the foremost blessings of longevity, beauty, fame, glory, happiness and strength [power]”: (Catukka) **Agga-p,pasāda S** (A 4.34,5/2:35), SD 45.13 = **Cundī S** (A 5.32/-3.34), SD 66.4 = (Tika) **Agga-p,-pasāda S** (It 90,10/89), SD 45.17. Also: **Suppavāsā S** (A 4.57,2/2:63), SD 22.13; (**Catukka**) **Sudatta S** (A 4.58/2:64), SD 87.11a; (**Catukka**) **Bhojana S** (A 4.59/2:64), SD 87.11b; (**Pañcaka**) **Bhojana S** (A 5.37/3:42), SD 87.14; **Latā Vv** (Vv 32,7\*/41); **Mahā,ratha Vv** (Vv 64,32\*/97); **Vinaya** (the 10 benefits of giving porridge, *yāgu*, V 1:221,22-26 + 221,29-30\*); **Sivi J** (J 499/4:405,22\*). See also **Cakka,vatti Sīha,nāda S** (D 26,28/3:77), SD 36.10; **Lakkhaṇa S** (D 30,1.4.2/3:146, etc), SD 36.9; **Sakka S** (S 40.10/4:275-280 passim); **Deva,loka S** (A 3.18/-1:115); **Sumanā Rāja,kumārī S** (A 5.31/3:33 f), SD 22.14; (**Pañcaka**) **Iṭṭha S** (A 5.43,2/3:47), SD 47.2; **Puñña,kiriya,-vatthu S** (A 8.36,5.2/4:242, etc), SD 22.17; **Añkura Pv** (Pv 21,60\*/36) @ Pv 316\*; **Pilinda,vaccha ThaAp** (Ap 388,-140\*/1:311, 200\*/316), **Gotamī ThīAp** (Ap 17,108\*/2:537), **Abhirūpa,nandā ThīAp** (Ap 36,7\*/608). Cf (**Brahmā**) **Tissa S** (A 7.53,11.2/4:76), SD 54.5, brahma Tissa’s blessings; **Tiṭṭhāna S** (A 9.21/4:396, *āyu vaṇṇa sukha* of humans and devas).

<sup>21</sup> See eg (**Anicca**) **Cakkhu S** (S 25.1), SD 16.7.

<sup>22</sup> On these subhuman states, see SD 54.3f (2.2.4).

<sup>23</sup> See (**Nānā,karaṇa**) **Puggala S 1** (A 4.123), SD 23.8a.

<sup>24</sup> SD 48.1 (6.3.1.5).

<sup>25</sup> See eg an embedded quote (KhpA §172/151).

<sup>26</sup> Be A 1.59. See SD 2.13 (1).

In the **(Ekaka) Pamāda Sutta** (A 1.6.9), the opposite case is stated: **non-diligence** or heedlessness (*pa-māda*) is the one thing (*eka, dhamma*) “on account of which un arisen unwholesome states arise and arisen wholesome states decline,” and so on.<sup>27</sup>

Diligence in wholesome states, says the **Das’uttara Sutta** (D 34), is the one thing of great help (*bahu,-kāra*).<sup>28</sup> Heedful diligence is defined in a number of suttas.<sup>29</sup>

**3.2.1.2** Is there any contradiction in the seeming declaration that both diligence [3.2.1] and patience [3.2.2] are the supreme spiritual qualities? Technically, diligence, or “**heedful diligence**,” to be exact, is the underpinning quality for all spiritual actions and good efforts. In other words, diligence has both a supramundane (*lok’uttara*) dimension (pertaining to the teachings of the Buddha and the arhats), and a mundane (*lokiya*) aspect. [3.2.2.0(4)]

As unawakened beings, our understanding of a supramundane teaching like heedful diligence is, as a rule, understood only on a mundane level—unless, we at once attain the path as we listen to it. This brings us to another problem. Sakra is probably already a streamwinner [2.3.2.3] when he speaks the verses on **patience** [877\*-882\*; 886\*-891\*]. Hence, his words are not “worldly” since he is a “learner” (*sekha*), one who has attained the path of awakening but not yet won arhatood.

In other words, Sakra’s verses reflect a supramundane truth, even though he is not yet an arhat. However, since he is not an arhat (he is still unawakened), we may, for convenience, say that his teachings on patience are “mundanely spiritual,” the supramundane teachings of a learner saint. [3.3.1.2].

**3.2.1.3** What are the qualities or characteristics of **patience** that make it spiritually supreme, indeed, the foremost virtue amongst humans and gods?

**(1)** In the two related Suttas—the **(Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4) and the **Subhāsita,jaya Sutta** (S 11.5)—Sakra is addressing (in the very same verses), the topic of patience [S 886\*-891\*]. In the latter Sutta, they are auspiciously called “the victory by the well-spoken” (*subhāsita,jaya*) [877\*-882\*]. While the asura Vepa,citti advocates the rod and sword to win the crowd and tame his enemies [883\* 885\*], Sakra champions the use of non-violence to win others. In our own times, we would see Sakra as advocating that “the pen is mightier than the sword.”

**(2)** Sakra’s patience flows in the same vein as that of his natural sense of *leadership and love*—his **humanity** and **humaneness** in the most Apollo-like divinity in Buddhist mythology. His marriage to the most beautiful asura woman, **Sujā**, is no mere divine mischief,<sup>30</sup> but, when we recall the nature of kingly alliances in the growing empires of the central Gangetic plain,<sup>31</sup> this has advantages in preventing future conflicts between the asuras and the devas—since Sujā is the daughter of Vepa,citti, seniormost of the asuras and Sakra’s bitter enemy.<sup>32</sup> Apparently, Sakra is empowered by reasons of the heart, too, to uphold patience as the supreme virtue of the gods: he is the lord of the *devas* and son-in-law of the lord of the *asuras*.

<sup>27</sup> A 1.6.9 = A 1.59 (SD 2.13(4)): see SD 2.13 (1) for list of suttas.

<sup>28</sup> D 34,1.2(1) (SD 42.22, opening quote).

<sup>29</sup> **(Chakka) Appamāda S** (A 6.53) @ SD 42.22 (2); **Pamāda Vihāri S** (S 35.97), SD 47.6; **(Dasaka) Appamāda S** (A 10.15), SD 42.23; **Sāra,gandha S** (S 45.143), SD 42.24; **Paṭisallāna S** (It 45), SD 41.4; **Dh 21**, SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 46.15 (2.7.2); SD 47.1 (1.1.2.5); SD 47.17 (2.3.4.1).

<sup>30</sup> On how Sakra steals Sujā from the asuras and her acquiescence, see DhA 1:275-278.

<sup>31</sup> On royal alliances by marriage in the Buddha’s time, see SD 52.1 (2.2.1.15); J 1:205 f.

<sup>32</sup> On Sakra and Sujā’s connections, see DhA 2.7/1:275-280. On the past associations between Sakra and Sujā, see DhA 1:275-278. On his marriage to her, DhA 1:278-280 :: DhA:B 1:320-324; J 1:206.

(3) Since Sakra is a streamwinner, we can at once understand how he is able to naturally uphold the practice of patience, especially as a divine figure of power and pleasure. He was guided by love (*mettā*),<sup>33</sup> the 5 precepts,<sup>34</sup> and advocates others to keep them, too.<sup>35</sup> As a streamwinner, Sakra is selfless; hence, he is able to naturally champion patience as the supreme virtue. He does not fall for superstition—he well knows that his heavenly birth is the result of his earthly diligence as **Magha** and his 33 friends.<sup>36</sup> He has no doubts whatsoever in the 3 jewels.<sup>37</sup>

(4) From all this and the teachings of the 2 Suttas (S 11.4 + S 11.5) here, we can reflect on patience as a term for the practice of **the 4 divine abodes**. Sakra, even as Magha (as we have noted above) is famed for his **love** (*mettā*). His **ruth** (*karuṇā*) is illustrated by **the Kulāvaka Sutta** (S 11.6) where he would rather lose the battle with the asuras than let his chariot destroy a bird’s nest on the tree-top.<sup>38</sup> His **joy** (*muditā*) at the good of others is seen in his rejoicing in giving alms to good monks.<sup>39</sup>

However, as an unawakened deva with divine powers, he often resorts to psychic powers to get his way. Moreover, he does not tolerate holy men practising asceticism (such as performing rituals and observing vows). He would send apsaras to distract, even seduce, them with divine pleasures so that they fall from their religiosity—which shows that they are not really diligent in their practice.<sup>40</sup> Anyway, he’s only a streamwinner, not yet an arhat. [3.3.1.2]

Sakra’s patience is likely to be rooted in his confidence in his divine powers. His equanimity is unlikely to be as developed as his first two divine abodes. We must imagine that he does have a mundane kind of equanimity that is expressed in his remarkable quality of patience. The point remains that he is *the most virtuous* of all the gods and non-humans in his realms for him to have been able to attain such a level of lordship.

### 3.2.2 “Nothing surpasses patience” (*khantiyā bhiyyo na vijjati*)

**3.2.2.0 (1) Patience** (*khanti*) is highly praised in the suttas, although not as often as heedful diligence (*appamāda*). Patience is defined as “endurance” (*adhivāsana*),<sup>41</sup> as in the famous **Dhammapada** line: “Forbearing patience is the highest austerity” (*khantī paramaṃ tapo titikkhā*) (Dh 184a).<sup>42</sup> This Dhammapada verse has an almost identical sense as “Nothing surpasses patience” (*khantiyā bhiyyo na vijjati*) [877d\* = 886d\*].

<sup>33</sup> DhA 1:266-268 :: DhA:B 1:315-317. See also his 7 vows (which are the basis for his attaining rebirth as Sakra): **Vata,pada S** (S 11.11/1:228), SD 54.12.

<sup>34</sup> **Kulāvaka S** (S 11.6/1:224 f), SD 86.22.

<sup>35</sup> DhA 2.7/1:275-278 :: DhA:B 1:320-323.

<sup>36</sup> DhA 2.7b/1:266-272 :: DhA:B 1:315-319; J 1:199-206. A long account is also found in Comy to **Satipaṭṭhāna Ss** (D 22; M10): DA 3:710,22-718,21.

<sup>37</sup> See **Buddha Vandanā S** (S 11.17/1:233 f), SD 86.1; **Vata,pada S** (S 11.11/1:228), SD 54.12; **Saṅgha Vandanā S** (S 11.20/1:236), SD 86.4; **Dhajagga S** (11.3/1:218-220), SD 15.5.

<sup>38</sup> **Kulāvaka S** (S 11.6/1:224 f), SD 86.22.

<sup>39</sup> Such as giving alms to Mahā Kassapa: U 3.7/29 f; DhA 4.10.1:424-430. See **Beggars can be choosers**, SD 71.2.

<sup>40</sup> See SD 54.3a (2.3.2.5).

<sup>41</sup> *Khanti nāma adhvāsana-k, khanti*, KhpA 149,1 = SnA 1:300. Also Dhs 230,17-19; DA 2:478,12; MA 1:80,12 f; SA 1:26,26, 166,10; AA 3:120,19 = 324,3 = SA 3:227,9 = ThaA 3:61,20; DhA 3:237,19-21; SnA 1:318,4; PmA 1:46,28-31; J 5:379,2 f; CA 180,31, 186,1.

<sup>42</sup> *Khanti* is the verbal n from *khamati*, “to tolerate; accept (to bear), hence, prefer.” It has 2 distinct meanings: (1) “patience,” ie, as “endurance” (*adhivāsana*) (Dh 184; DhA 3:237,19-21+24 f); (2) “preference” = “liking” (*ruci*) (eg M 95,14/2:170,28, *diṭṭhi, nijjhāna, khanti*). PED gives only (1), but sv *khamati*: *nijjhānam khamati*. For refs, see DP sv *khanti*, where (2) is “receptivity, predilection, preference, preferred view.”

(2) Both S 877d\* = 886d\* are preceded by a very significant line: *sad-attha, paramā atthā*, here translated as “Of benefits, self-benefit is supreme” [877c\* = 886c\*]. The word *sad-attha* is found in Dh 166, where the context clearly gives it the sense of “self-benefit”:<sup>43</sup>

<i>atta-d-attam par'atthena</i> <i>bahunā'pi na hāpaye</i> <i>atta-d-attham abhiññāya</i> <i>sad-attha, pasuto siyā</i>	Even for the good of others, however great, one should never neglect directly knowing what is good for oneself: let one be intent on one's own spiritual good [goal].
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(Dh 166)<sup>44</sup>

(3) However, *sad-attha* used in this way is rare, apparently, occurring only in poetic verses. It more often occurs in the sense of “the highest good; summum bonum,” that is, derived from: *sat* (= *sant*, “good, holy”) + *attha*, “goal, good.”<sup>45</sup> The highest good in early Buddhism is, of course, arhathood.<sup>46</sup> However, sometimes, we find both sense being applied, that is, with the meanings of “self-good” and “arhathood.”<sup>47</sup>

(4) We can take *sad-attha* in 877c\* = 886c\* (in Sakka's verse) as a wordplay (*śleṣa*),<sup>48</sup> since “self-benefit” can have both the worldly as well as the spiritual senses: we benefit from good both in this life and those to come, and also attain the path [3.2.1.2]. In fact, the two may overlap: we can well attain the path, even awakening, in this life itself, too. Such polysemy is not only common but characteristic of Pali teachings.<sup>49</sup>

**3.2.2.1 The Maṅgala Sutta** (Khp 5) lists patience (*khanti*) as a “supreme blessing” (*maṅgala uttama*), since it is a cause for various spiritual qualities mentioned below (KhpA 150,1 f). It is listed as blessing number 27, in the “spiritual training” section (9<sup>th</sup> verse, Sn 266), near the end of the Sutta—attesting to its significance in spiritual training.

The **Khuddaka, pāṭha Commentary** on the Maṅgala Sutta (Khp 5), commenting on patience gives a list of cases where it is well exemplified, as follows:<sup>50</sup>

**3.2.2.2 The Khanti, vādī Jātaka** (J 313). Here, patience is forbearing (*khamanam*); it is a name for endurance (*adhivāsana*). A monk possessing *patience*, when abused with any of the 10 instances of abuse,<sup>51</sup> or threatened with torture, etc, responds as if he neither hears nor sees them, remaining impassive as does the ascetic **Khanti, vādī**,<sup>52</sup> of whom it is said:

<sup>43</sup> Explained as “one's own good” (*sake attho*, DhA 3:160,1); CA 139; J 4:26.

<sup>44</sup> Also at 24.6b (5.4).

<sup>45</sup> D 16,5.10/2:141 (SD 9); M 1,51f/1:4 etc (SD 11.8); S 12.21/2:29, considering the good of both self and others, we should strive on diligently (cf S 6.15/1:157,34-158,2 + D 16,6.7/2:156-157,19), SD 9; A 10.99,9.2/5:207 f, SD 30.9.

<sup>46</sup> DA 3:863; MA 1:43; AA 2:235, 3:380; ThaA 1:141, 236; ItA 165 f; NcA 49.

<sup>47</sup> **Dasā, bala S 2** (S 12.22/2:29 :: SA 2:49), SD 63.15; **Culla, bodhi J** (J 443/4:26,27-29).

<sup>48</sup> On *śleṣa*, see **Bāla Paṇḍita S** (M 129,35.5), SD 2.22; SD 10.6 (8.7); SD 54.2a (3.2.2); SD 24.10b (2.1.6.4) App 2.1.7.

<sup>49</sup> See SD 1.1 (4.4.5); SD 10.16 (1.3.1-1.3.2; 2.2); SD 54.3b (2.1.1.4).

<sup>50</sup> KhpA 148-151 :: KhpA:Ñ 161-165. The nn here are a paraphrased tr of KhpA = SnA refs.

<sup>51</sup> The 10 instances of abuse (*dasā akkosa, vatthu*): “You are a robber (*cora*), a fool (*bāla*), an idiot (*mūlha*), a camel (*oṭṭha*), an ox (*gonā*), an ass (*gadabha*), you belong to a state of loss (*āpāyika*), you are from hell (*nerayika*), you are an animal (*tiracchāna, gata*), there is no happy destiny for you (*n'atti tuyham sugati*), only a suffering one for you! (*duggati yeva tuyham*).” (VbhA 340,29-341,2). Or, they abuse him based on birth, name, race, age, work, craft, sickness, sex, defilement and Vinaya offence (Sumaṅga-p, pasādinī (a ṭīkā) on Khudda, sikkhā 129).

<sup>52</sup> On *Khanti, vādī*, see KhpA 148-151 [here]; DhA 1:149,5; J 1:46,17, 3:178,4, 6:257,26; BA 60,21. The J shows how a person's anger can grow towards an unoffending victim (J 4:11) and how one who is angry loses all his prosperity (J 5:113, 119).

*ahū atītaṃ addhānaṃ*<sup>53</sup> A long time ago,  
*samaṇo khanti,dīpano* there was a recluse, a beacon of patience.  
*taṃ khantiyā yeva ṭhitam*<sup>54</sup> He remained patient even when  
*kāsi,rājā achedayīti* (J 313/3:43,1) the king of Kāsi murdered him.  
(KhpA 148,24-149,6 = SnA 1:300)

**3.2.2.3 The Puṇṇ'ovāda Sutta** (M 145 = S 35.88). Or, patience is regarded in an auspicious (*bhadra-**ka*) manner well beyond its afflictive state,<sup>55</sup> as in the case of **the elder Puṇṇa**. He says:

“Bhante, if the people of Suṇāparanta were to abuse me, or were to insult me, then, I shall think thus: ‘These people of Suṇāparanta are good (*bhaddaka*), truly good, in that they do not punch me with their fists!’ What if they were to *punch* you ... *hit you with clods of earth ... beat you with rods ... attack you with sharp knives ... take your life*. Finally, he says:

“Bhante, if the people of Sunāparanta were to take my life with sharp knives, then I shall think thus: ‘There have been disciples of the Blessed One, who being repelled and disgusted by the body and by life, have resorted to a knife-bringer.’<sup>56</sup> But I have not sought the knife: it is the knife that seeks me!”<sup>57</sup>

**3.2.2.4 The Sarabhaṅga Jātaka** (J 522). The seers praise such an accomplishment of patience, as the seer Sarabhaṅga declares:

*kodhaṃ vadhitvā na kadāci socati* Who has slain anger sorrows no more.  
*makkha-p,pahanaṃ isayo vaṇṇa,jati* The seers praise the abandoning of contempt.  
*sabbesaṃ vuttaṃ pharusam khametha* Be patient with all that is harshly spoken.  
*etaṃ khantiṃ uttamaṃ āhu santo'ti* This patience is supreme, says the one at peace.  
(J 522/5:141,18-21)

**3.2.2.5 The (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4). The devas praise the patient, too: Sakra, the lord of the devas, speaks thus:

*yo have balavā santo* When, indeed, one who is strong  
*dubbalassa titikkhati* endures the weak,  
*taṃ āhu paramaṃ khantiṃ* that patience is supreme, they say.  
*niccaṃ khamati dubbalo*<sup>58</sup> The weak (must) always show patience.  
(S 11.4/1:222 @ S 878\* = 887\*), SD 54.6

This verse recurs in **the Subhāsita,Jaya Sutta** (S 11.5,15.3/1:223 @ S 887\*), SD 54.6.

**3.2.2.6 The Vāseṭṭha Sutta** (M 98 = Sn 623; Dh 399). The buddhas, too, praise patience; hence, the Blessed One says:

<sup>53</sup> J *addhāne*.

<sup>54</sup> J *hitam*.

<sup>55</sup> *Bhadra,kato vā manasikaroti tato uttariṃ aparādhā,bhāvena* (KhpA 149,7).

<sup>56</sup> On this “graduated scale of ill-treatment,” see (3.2).

<sup>57</sup> M 145/3:268 = **Puṇṇa S**, S 35.88/4:60-63 (SD 20.15).

<sup>58</sup> Note that *dubbalo* in nom, and subject of *khamati*. This verse recurs at Khp A 149,21-23, where Ñānamoli helpfully notes that the tr “seeks to bring out that patience is a necessity rather than a virtue in the weak, but appears as a virtue in the forbearance of the strong” (KhpA 162) n94.

*akkosaṃ vadha, bandhañ ca  
aduṭṭho yo titikkhati  
khantī, balaṃ bal’ānīkaṃ<sup>59</sup>  
tam ahaṃ brūmi brāhmaṇaṃ*

Who, when abused, struck or bound,  
endures without ill will, with  
endurance as his strength, his strength his army—  
him do I call a brahmin.

(M 98, 11.3/2:196 = Sn 3.9/623\*/120 = Dh 399), SD 37.1

### 3.3 PATIENCE AND RELATED VIRTUES

Here we shall examine selected verses related to patience, that is, S 897\* [3.3.1], S 853\*-854\* [3.3.2] and the parable of the saw [3.3.3].

#### 3.3.1 Verocana Asur’inda Sutta (S 11.8), SD 87.13

**3.3.1.1 The Verocana Asur’inda Sutta** (A 11.8) is a brief record of a debate between Verocana (Skt *vairocana*),<sup>60</sup> an asura lord, and Sakra, the lord of the devas. **Verocana** holds the view that one should attain one’s goal or ambition no matter what, and that goal is to bond and network with others. This sentiment, in fact, succinctly describes the psychological mindset of a typical *asura*—titans (erstwhile devas) who enjoy the pleasures of celestial society, partying and fighting.<sup>61</sup>

While Sakra, himself a pleasure-loving deva but well-tempered by a good sense of the spiritual, has a clear sobre idea of the supremacy of patience, especially as the supreme lord of two earth-based heavens, that is, the realm of the 4 great kings and of Tāvātimsa itself.<sup>62</sup> Hence, he replies:

[Sakka:]

*sabbe sattā attha, jātā  
tattha tattha yathārahaṃ  
saṃyoga, paramā tv-eva  
sambhogā sabba, pāṇinaṃ<sup>63</sup>  
nipphanna, sobhino atthā  
khantiyā bhiyyo na vijjati*

(S 897\*)

All beings have some purpose of their own,  
now here, now there, as they see fit.  
Bonding is supreme indeed:  
all beings enjoy one another.  
Of goals that shine when attained,  
nothing surpasses patience.

(S 11.8/1:226 @ S 897\*), SD 87.13

**3.3.1.2** Being only a streamwinner, Sakra can only speak of **patience** in a mundane manner. However, he does this in a profoundly spiritual way, when we consider that he is admonishing his sworn enemy, Vepa, citti, the eldest and lord of the asuras, who holds violently opposite ideas [874\* = 883\*, 876\* = 885\*]. But then, again, who is the real audience, here: we are! The Buddha is instructing us through Vepa, citti and Sakra, on the disadvantages of violence and animosity, and the benefits of non-violence and patience.

We may not be talking about arhathood here but the Suttas are addressing something more real and more urgent to us right now. These teachings and stories are reminding us of the conduct and environment that are conducive to reaching the path, to the attaining of at least streamwinning. [3.2.1.3]

<sup>59</sup> *Bal’ānīkaṃ* = *bala*, “strength, power, force,” + *anīka*, “array, army, troops” (Sn 623; Dh 399; cf DhA 4:164).

<sup>60</sup> See **Mahā, samaya S** (D 20, 12/38a\*/2:259, 11), SD 53.4, mentions “Bali’s 100 sons, all named Veroca” (*satañ ca bali, puttānaṃ sabbe veroca, nāmakā*), of which Comy says that they all bore the name of their uncle Rāhu (DA 2:689, 26 f). This suggests that Verocana and Rāhu are prob identical.

<sup>61</sup> On the general nature of an asura, see SD 39.2 (1.3); SD 40a.1 (11.2.2).

<sup>62</sup> See SD 54.3b (3.5.1).

<sup>63</sup> On S 897cd\*, see **Dh 204c**, which says “the trustworthy are the best of relatives” (*vissāsa, paramā ñātī*): SD 38.4 (4.2); SD 34.1 (2.2.3); SD 37.8 (4.4.3). On the meaning of *saṃyoga* as “socializing,” see **Saññoga S** (A 7.48/4:57 f), SD 8.7; **Dasa, ratha J** (J 461/J 4:127, 14 f).

**3.3.2 (Yakkha) Ālavaka Sutta** (S 10.12 = Sn 1.10), SD 114.12

**3.3.2.1 Ālavaka** is a yaksha, a tutelary nature spirit; and a cannibal, too.<sup>64</sup> He lives in a cave in the Himalayas, and if anyone has the misfortune of crossing his path, he will seize him. He would then give him riddles to solve—as in the Greek myth of the sphinx<sup>65</sup>—failing which he will devour him, drive him mad or hurl him over the Ganges river.<sup>66</sup>

**3.3.2.2 The (Yakkha) Ālavaka Sutta** (S 10.12) is about the Buddha, noticing Ālavaka’s readiness for spiritual transformation, approaches him, and lets him threaten and question him with his riddles. His riddles are:

“What here is a man’s greatest treasure? | What habitually done brings happiness? | What truly is the sweetest of tastes? | How, as they say, does one live the best life?”<sup>67</sup> The Buddha answers that they are *faith, righteousness* [the Dharma], *truth* and *living by wisdom*. (S 847\*)

After two more sets of questions and their answers, the Buddha instructs Ālavaka, from which these two verses are taken:

*Yass’ete caturo dhammā  
saddhassa gharam esino  
saccaṃ dhammo<sup>69</sup> dhiti cāgo (S 853\*)  
sa ve pecca na socati*

These four things are found<sup>68</sup>  
in the faithful house-seeker:  
truth, righteousness, steadfastness, charity.  
Indeed, (with these) he sorrows not hereafter.<sup>70</sup> (Sn 188)

*iṅgha aññe pi pucchassu  
puthu, samaṇa, brāhmaṇe  
yadi saccā damā cāgā  
khantya<sup>72</sup> bhiyyo ’dha vijjati (S 854\*)*

Come now! Ask others, too,  
of the many recluses and brahmins,  
whether truth, discipline [self-control], charity,<sup>71</sup>  
are found to surpass **patience** here. (Sn 189)

(S 10.12 @ S 853\*+854\* = Sn 188 f)<sup>73</sup>

<sup>64</sup> See **Mahā,samaya S** (D 20,7 n), SD 54.4.

<sup>65</sup> In Greek mythology, a **sphinx** is a creature with the head of a human and the body of a lion. Sometimes, he is depicted with a human head, the haunches of a lion and the wings of a bird. This deadly version of a sphinx is found in the Oedipus story. See Martin Kallich, “Oedipus and the Sphinx,” in (eds) Kallich, MacLeish & Schoenbohm, *Oedipus: Myth and Drama*, NY: Odyssey Press, 1968.

<sup>66</sup> See DPPN: Ālavaka (2).

<sup>67</sup> *Kimśud’ha vittam purisassa seṭṭham | kimśu suciṇṇam sukham āvahāti | kimśu have sādutaram rasānam | katham jīvim jīvitam āhu seṭṭham ||*

<sup>68</sup> A more idiomatic tr would be: “A faithful house-seeker who has these four things...” SnA glosses *gharam esino* (“house-seeker”) as one who seeks the fivefold sense-pleasures (*pañca kāma,guṇa*) (SnA 237). However, from the sutta context—and also ItA 2:163—it clearly refers to a lay person who, while living the household life, keeps to the lay precepts. Cf A 3:377; PvA 124. Norman: “It is possible to interpret *-m-* as a sandhi consonant (see n on [Sn] 132), or to take *gharam-esin* as an *aluk-samāsa*, ie a *tatpuruṣa* compound with the case ending of the first element retained” (Sn:N 185 n188).

<sup>69</sup> All MSS (incl Sn) read *dhammo*, except PTS: *damo*.

<sup>70</sup> S:Ee lists 2 MSS that here has these additional lines: *asmā lokā param lokam | evam pecca na socati*, “passing from this world to the next, | in this way, he sorrows not.”

<sup>71</sup> A possible alt tr: “Whether one can find here anything better than truth, discipline, charity, patience.”

<sup>72</sup> Norman: “It is possible that the ending of *khantya* is due to the omission of a svarabhakti vowel by a scribe who knew Sanskrit. The same reading occurs at S 1:215,7\*.” (Sn:N 186 n189)

<sup>73</sup> S 10.12/1:215 @ S 853\*+854\* = Sn 188 f (SD 114.12); for excerpts, SD 15.12 (1.2).

**3.3.2.2** Usually, S 854cd\* is translated somewhat like this: “Whether there is found here anything better | Than truth, self-control, generosity, and patience” (S:B). However, when we consider the primacy given to patience, it is here listed as merely one of a set of 4 qualities. Secondly, if we look closely at S 854d, we can see that primacy is, after all, given to *patience*. From our translation above [854d], we see *the primacy of patience* that is highlighted in both **the (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta** (S 11.4) and **the Subhāsita Sutta** (S 11.5).

**Patience**, as a primary quality, like *diligence* [3.2.1], underlies truth, discipline and charity. Whether it is to seek the truth or to teach it, we need patience. To tame oneself (to overcome defilements) and lead a disciplined spiritual life, we need patience. To practise charity, giving, helping and healing, we need a great amount of patience to muster the givers, the gifts, the occasions, and to do so in a manner that will benefit both givers and recipients, we need much patience.

### 3.3.3 The Kakacūpama Sutta (M 21), SD 38.1

**3.3.3.1** The locus classicus on the teaching on **patience**, significantly paired with non-violence (*ahimsa*), is **the Kakacūpama Sutta** (M 21), the discourse on the parable of the saw. Interestingly, the occasion for the Buddha’s teaching this Sutta is not about *the dangers or challenges of a missionary monk*, which is the theme of a related Sutta: **the Puṇṇ’ovāda Sutta** (M 145) [3.2.2.3]. For M 21, the Buddha’s instruction is on account of the lack of restraint and patience in the monk Moliya Phagguna, who was infatuated with nuns, so that he reacts angrily like a layman, should anyone speak ill of them.

The Buddha begins his teaching by reminding **Phagguna** that he is a monk. As such, whenever anyone speaks ill of the nuns or were even to strike them in anyway, he should not react angrily *as if he were a layman*. Similarly, if anyone were to do all this to *him*, he should not react angrily *as if he were a layman*, but to cultivate lovingkindness towards them, too.

**3.3.3.2 The parable of the saw** is one of the most famous and fearsome Buddhist parables, and its significance is highlighted by the fact that it closes the discourse after which it is named, the Kakacūpama Sutta (M 21), where the Buddha declares:

Bhikshus, even if low-down thieves were to cut you up from limb to limb with a double-handled saw, if you were ever to defile your mind with anger, you are thereby not a doer of my teaching.  
(M 21,20/1:129), SD 38.1

The reasons for this are not difficult to fathom. Assuming such a terrible predicament were to occur, the victim would surely die. Then, he should fill his mind with lovingkindness so that his dying moments are wholesome. Hence, he would attain a good rebirth; and if he were to have regularly reflected on impermanence, he would even attain streamwinning.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> See **Entering the stream**, SD 3.3.

# 6a

## (Sakka) Vepa,citti Sutta

The (Sakka) Discourse on Vepacitti • S 11.4/1:220-222  
or **Khanti Sutta** The Discourse on Patience

Traditional: S 1.11.1.4 = Saṃyutta Nikāya 1, Sagāthā Vagga 11, Sakka Saṃyutta 1, Paṭhama Vagga 4

Theme: To answer anger with anger is to fail twice

1 At one time, the Blessed One was residing in Anātha,piṇḍika's park monastery in Jeta's grove outside Sāvattihī.<sup>75</sup>

2 There, the Blessed One addressed the monks:

“Bhikshus!”

“Bhante!” the monks replied.<sup>76</sup> [221]

### The battle between the devas and the asuras

3 “Once<sup>77</sup> upon a time,<sup>78</sup> bhikshus, **the devas and the asuras** were in the thick of battle.<sup>79</sup>

4 Then, bhikshus, **Vepa,citti**,<sup>80</sup> the lord of the asuras, addressed the asuras, thus:<sup>81</sup>

‘Sirs, in the thick of battle, should the asuras be victorious over the devas, the devas defeated,<sup>82</sup> then, having bound Sakra, lord of the devas, fivefold, bound hand, foot and neck, let him be brought before me in Asura city.’<sup>83</sup>

5 Bhikshus, **Sakra**, lord of the devas, too, address the devas, thus:

‘Should, sirs, in the thick of battle, the devas be victorious over the asuras, the asuras defeated, then, having bound Vepa,citti, lord of the devas, fivefold, bound hand, foot and neck, let him be brought before me in the Sudhammā Hall.’<sup>84</sup>

### The asuras were defeated

6 Now, bhikshus, in that battle, the devas won, the asuras were defeated.<sup>85</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Se so; Be only has *sāvattihī, nidānaṃ*; Ee *sāvattihyaṃ jetavano pe*; see S 1:218,26.

<sup>76</sup> Only in Ce Ee; Be omits. See S 1:218,27-29.

<sup>77</sup> The opne-quote here marks the start of a 1<sup>st</sup>-person narration by the Buddha that ends at §21.

<sup>78</sup> “Once upon a time,” *bhūta, pubbaṃ*, lit “it happened in the past.”

<sup>79</sup> *Bhūta, pubbaṃ bhikkhave devā'sura, saṅgāmo samupabbūlho\* ahoṣi*. \*Be Se *samupabyūlho*; Ee *samupabbūlho*.  
On the ancient roots of the deva-asura war: SD 39.2 (1).

<sup>80</sup> Vepa,citti is the eldest of the asuras. On the origin of his name, see SD 39.2 (2).

<sup>81</sup> See **Yavakalāpi S** (S 35.248/4:201 f), SD 40a.3, for a similar incident. On the deva-asura war: SD 39.2 (1).

<sup>82</sup> *Sace mārisā devānaṃ asura, saṅgāme samupabbūlhe asurā jineyyurū, devā parājeyyurū*. \* \*Be Se *parājineyyurū*;  
Ce Ee *parājeyyurū*.

<sup>83</sup> *Yena naṃ sakkam devānam indaṃ kaṅṅha, pañcamehi bandhanehi bandhitvā mama santike āneyyātha asura, - puran'ti*.

<sup>84</sup> **The Sudhammā hall** (*sudhamma, sabhā*) arose in Tāvatisa posthumously, on account of the merit of Sudhammā, one of Sakra's 4 wives. It is the moot-hall of the devas, 900 leagues in extent (DhA 1:269 f, 274 f; 1:201 f). The devas gather there monthly on the 8<sup>th</sup> day, or when the Dhamma is taught, and for all their important festivals and gatherings (D 2:268; M 2:79; S 1:221; Tha 1198; J 6:97, 126). All buddhas teach the Abhidhamma in the Sudhammā hall. The name *sudhamma, sabhā* is often used to denote a celestially fine hall. Every deva-realm has its own Sudhamma hall: eg **Māra Tajjanīya S** (M 50,29b\*/1:338), SD 36.4 (MA 2:422,34-37 = ThaA 3:174,23-26).

<sup>85</sup> *Tasmim kho pana bhikkhave saṅgāme deva jinimṣu, asurā parājiniṃsu\**. \*Be *parājiniṃsu*; Ce Ee *parājimṣu*.

7 Then, bhikshus, having bound Vepa,citti, lord of the devas, fivefold, bound hand, foot and neck,<sup>86</sup> he was brought before Sakra, lord of the devas, in the Sudhammā Hall.

8 Now, bhikshus, Vepa,citti, the lord of the asuras, bound fivefold, reviled Sakra, lord of the devas, with vile, harsh words, when he was entering and leaving the Sudhammā Hall.<sup>87</sup>

### Mātali-Sakra<sup>88</sup> verses

9 Then, bhikshus, **Mātali**, charioteer to Sakra, the lord of the devas, uttered in verse, thus:

9.2<sup>89</sup> *Bhayā nu maghavā<sup>90</sup> sakka  
dubbalyā no titikkhasi  
suṇanto pharusam vācam  
sammukhā vepa,cittino'ti* 1 (872) Is it from fear, Maghava Sakra,  
or from weakness that you endure  
listening to the harsh words  
of Vepa,citti, face to face?

[Sakra:]

10 *Nāham bhayā na dubbalyā  
khamāmi vepa,cittino  
katham hi mādiso viññū  
bālena paṭisaṃyuje'ti* 2 (873) Neither from fear nor weakness  
that I endure Vepa,citti.  
How can a wise one like me  
engage himself with a fool?

[Mātali:]

11 *Bhiyyo bālā pabhijjeyyum<sup>91</sup>  
no c'assa paṭisedhako  
tasmā bhusena daṇḍena  
dhīro bālam nisedhayeti* 3 (874) But fools only get bolder  
if they are not put to a stop.  
Therefore, with harsh punishment  
let the wise restrain the fool.

[Sakra:]

12 *Etad eva aham maññe  
bālassa paṭisedhanam  
param saṅkupitam nātva  
yo sato upasammatīti* 4<sup>92</sup> (875) This is just the way, I think,  
for stopping the fool:  
knowing the anger in another  
one mindfully stays calm.

[Mātali]

13 *Etad eva titikkhāya  
vajjam passāmi vāsava  
yadā nam maññati bālo  
bhayā myāyam titikkhati* To endure thus, indeed,  
I see as faulty, Vāsava<sup>93</sup>—  
when the fool thinks of you:  
'This one endures me out of fear!'

<sup>86</sup> On the fivefold bonds and Vepa,citti's reaction, see **Yavakalāpi S** (S 35.248) + SD 40a.3 (1.2.2)

<sup>87</sup> *Tatra sudam bhikkhave vepa,citti asur'indo kaṇṭha,pañcamehi bandhanehi baddho sakkam devānam  
indam sudhamma,sabham pavisantañ ca nikkhamantañ ca asabbhāhi pharusāhi vācāhi akkosati paribhāsati.*  
On Sudhammā hall, see §5 n.

<sup>88</sup> Instead of Mātali, Nett attr his verses to Vepa,citti throughout (Nett 172 f).

<sup>89</sup> From hereon, internal number sequence does not follow PTS.

<sup>90</sup> Be Se *maghavā*; Ce Ee *mathavā* (wr).

<sup>91</sup> Be Ce Ee2 Se *pabhijjeyyum*, "to be bold"; Ee Nett 172,20 *pakujjheyym*, "become angry," which Comy recognizes as a variant reading (*pakujjheyym'ti pi pāṭho*, SA 1:342,28). The former, however, fits the context better.

<sup>92</sup> These *italcized* running numbers denotes 875\*-882\* recurring in **Subhāsita,jaya S** (S 11.5) [884\*-891\*].

<sup>93</sup> Vāsava, of Sakra's many names [2.1.2.2; 2.3.3.2]. See **Sakka,nāma S** (S 11.12,4.4) + SD 54.19 (1.2.4.2).

*ajjhāruhati*<sup>94</sup> *dummedho*  
*go'va bhiiyo palāyinan'ti*      5    (876)      The dimwit will bully<sup>95</sup> one  
 like a cow (chasing) at one fleeing.

SAKRA'S VERSES ON PATIENCE<sup>96</sup>

\*Sakka khanti gāthā

[Sakra:] [222]

- 14** *Kāmaṃ maññatu vā mā vā*<sup>97</sup>  
*bhayā myāyaṃ titikkhati*  
*sad-attha,paramā atthā*<sup>99</sup>  
*khantiyā bhiiyo na vijjati*<sup>100</sup>      6    (877)      Let him think what he wants:<sup>98</sup>  
 'This one endures me out of fear!  
 Of benefits, self-benefit is supreme.  
 Nothing surpasses patience.<sup>101</sup>
- 15** *yo have balavā santo*  
*dubbalassa titikkhati*  
*tam āhu paramaṃ khantiṃ*  
*niccaṃ khamati dubbalo*<sup>102</sup>      7    (878)      When, indeed, one who is strong  
 endures the weak,  
 that patience is supreme, they say.  
 The weak (must) always shows patience.
- 16** *abalan taṃ balaṃ āhu*<sup>103</sup>  
*yassa bāla,balaṃ balaṃ*  
*balassa dhamma,guttassa*  
*paṭivattā na vijjati*      8    (879)      What one sees as strength is not strength,  
 but a fool's foolish strength.  
 For the strong restrained by good,<sup>104</sup>  
 there is no striking back.<sup>105</sup>
- 17** *tass'eva tena pāpiyo*  
*yo kuddhaṃ paṭikujjhati*      One only worsens things for oneself  
 who replies the angry with anger.

<sup>94</sup> Be *ajjhāruhati*; Ce Ee Se *ajjhārūhati*; Se *ajjhorūhati*. See foll n.

<sup>95</sup> "Bully one," *ajjhārūhati* (*adhi-ā* + √RUH, to ascend), lit, "to grow in and up over (as a parasite plant splitting and choking a tree, J 3:208,18 f, 398,4 f) past part *ajjhārūlha* (CPD); to tyrannize, bully (S 1:221,34\* = 233,19\* vl *ajjhoruhati*); Comy glosses as *ajjhottharati* (sometimes spelt *ottarati*: *adhi-ava* + √STR, to strew; see CPD), SA 1:343,2; qu at Nett 173.3\*. See prec n.

<sup>96</sup> These 5 verses of "Sakra's verses on patience" (S 877\*-882\*) recur in **Subhāsita Jaya S** (S 11.5/1:223 f) as the "victory by the well-spoken word" [886\*-891\*].

<sup>97</sup> On this verse, cf S 854d\* + 897d\*: [3].

<sup>98</sup> Cf **Ass'ājāniya S** (A 8.13): *kāmaṃ maññe* [Be *kām'aññe*] *assā vahantu vā mā vā*, "Let the horses pull or not ... " (A 8.13/4:189,5) ... *kāmaṃ maññe bhikkhu sikkhantu vā mā vā*, "Let the monks train or not, (I will train)" (4:90,4).

<sup>99</sup> Comy: "Amongst the highest benefits (goals) for oneself, there is no benefit (goal) better than patience" (*tesu sak'attha,paramesu atthesu khantito uttaritaro añño attho na vijjati*, SA 1:343,8 f). Although *sadattha,parama atthā* (877c\*) is pl, the verb *vijjati* (877d) is sg: it is either poetic licence or refers to "nothing" (from *na*) which is sg. On the significance of Sakra's statement, see (3.2.1.3).

<sup>100</sup> On *line d*, cf S 854d\* + 897d\* [3.3.1].

<sup>101</sup> Lit, "there is naught more than patience": see Nett 173,10 f :: Nett:Ñ 227. Bodhi disagrees with Nāṇamoli: S:B 492 n616, but Bodhi is unconvincing.

<sup>102</sup> Note that *dubbalo* in nom, and subject of *khamati*. This verse recurs at Khp A 149,21-23, where Nāṇamoli helpfully notes that the tr "seeks to bring out that patience is a necessity rather than a virtue in the weak, but appears as a virtue in the forbearance of the strong" (KhpA 162) n94.

<sup>103</sup> Be *abalaṃ taṃ balaṃ āhu*; Ce *abalan taṃ balaṃ āhu*; Ee *abalan taṃ balaṃ āhu*.

<sup>104</sup> Comy takes *gutta* as related to "to protect" (*rakkhati*), thus explaining it as either "to one protected by the Dharma, or to one who is protecting the Dharma" (*dhammena rakkhitassa, dhammaṃ vā rakkhantassa*, SA 1:343,-10-13). I have taken *gutta* figuratively (with *dhamma* in loc) in the common sutta usage of "restrained, guarded, watchful" which fits very well here: S 4:70; A 3:6; Sn 250, 971; Dh 63.

<sup>105</sup> Lit, "there is no countering," ie, he is not predictably reactive.

	<i>kuddhaṃ appaṭikujjhanto saṅgāmaṃ jeti dujjayaṃ</i>	9 (880)	Not replying the angry with anger, one wins a battle hard to win.
18	<i>ubhinnaṃ atthaṃ carati attano ca parassa ca paraṃ saṅkupitaṃ ñatvā yo sato upasammati.</i>	10 (881)	Who lives for the good of both, that of oneself and of others, knowing that another is angry, he mindfully keeps his peace.
19	<i>ubhinnaṃ tikicchantaṇaṃ attano ca parassa ca janā maññanti bālo'ti ye dhammassa akovidā'ti</i>	11 (882)	The one healing both, oneself and others, too— the people who think him a fool, are not skilled in the Dharma. <sup>106</sup>

## Conclusion

20 Now, bhikshus, Sakra, lord of the devas, fed by the fruit of its own merit, reign in supreme lordship over the 33, will be one who praises patience and gentleness.<sup>107</sup>

21 So here, bhikshus, beautify this well-taught Dharma-Vinaya, into which you have gone forth, becoming *patient and gentle*.<sup>108</sup>

— evaṃ —

# 6b

## Subhāsitaḥaya Sutta

The Discourse on the Victory by the Well-spoken • S 11.5/1:222-224

Traditional: S 1.11.1.5 = Saṃyutta Nikāya 1, Sagāthā Vagga 11, Sakka Saṃyutta 1, Paṭhama Vagga 5

Theme: The word is mightier than the sword

1 Originating in Sāvattḥi.<sup>109</sup>

## The Vepa,citti-Sakra debate

2 “Once upon a time,<sup>110</sup> bhikshus, **the devas and the asuras** were in the thick of battle.<sup>111</sup>

3 Then, bhikshus, **Vepa,citti**,<sup>112</sup> the lord of the asuras, addressed **Sakra**, the lord of the devas, thus:<sup>113</sup>

<sup>106</sup> Nett adds that when Sakra has spoken this verse, the devas applaud but the asuras are silent (Nett 173,23 f).

<sup>107</sup> *So hi nāma bhikkhave sakko devānaṃ indo sakaṃ puñña, phalaṃ upajīvamāno devānaṃ tāvatimsānaṃ issariy'ādhipaccaraṃ rajjaṃ kārento khanti, soraccassa vaṇṇa, vādī bhavissati.*

<sup>108</sup> *Idha kho taṃ bhikkhave sobhetha, yaṃ tumhe evaṃ svākkhāte dhamma, vinaye pabbajitā samānā khamā ca bhaveyyātha soratā cāti.* The close quote here marks the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> person narration by the Buddha that begins at §3.

<sup>109</sup> This Sutta (S 11.5) is fully qu in Nett 172 f :: Nett:Ñ §895/226-228

<sup>110</sup> *Bhūta, pubbaṃ*, lit “It happened in the past.”

<sup>111</sup> *Bhūta, pubbaṃ bhikkhave devā'sura, saṅgāmo samupabbūḥo\* ahoṣi.* \*Be *samupabyūḥo*; Ee *samupabbūḥo*.

<sup>112</sup> Vepa,citti is the eldest of the asuras. See [SD 54.6a] ad loc.

‘Lord of devas, let there be a victory by the well-spoken!’<sup>114</sup>

‘Vepa,citti, let there be a victory by the well-spoken!’

**4** Then, bhikshus, the devas and the asuras appointed **a council of judges**, saying:

‘They will decide [understand]<sup>115</sup> what is well spoken and what is ill spoken by us.’<sup>116</sup>

**5** Then, Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras, said to Sakra, lord of the devas:

‘Speak a verse, lord of devas!’

**6** When this was said, Sakra, lord of the devas, said to Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras:

‘You, Vepa,citti, are the senior deva.<sup>117</sup> Speak, Vepa,citti, a verse.’<sup>118</sup> **[223]**

**7** When this was said, **Vepa,citti**, lord of the asuras, uttered this verse:<sup>119</sup>

[Vepa,citti:]<sup>120</sup>

<p>7.2 <i>Bhiyyo bālā pabhijjeyyurū</i><sup>121</sup>  <i>no c’assa paṭisedhako</i>  <i>tasmā bhusena daṇḍena</i>  <i>dhīro bālaṃ nisedhayeti</i></p>	<p>3 (883)</p>	<p>Fools become only more bold  if they are not put to a stop.  Therefore, with harsh punishment  let the wise restrain the fool.</p>
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**8** But, bhikshus, when the verse was spoken by Vepa,citti, the lord of the asuras, only the asuras applauded. The devas remained silent.

**9** Then, bhikshus, Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras, said to Sakra, lord of the devas:

‘Speak a verse, lord of devas!’

**10** When this was said, **Sakra**, lord of the devas, uttered this verse:

[Sakra:]

<p>10.2 <i>Etad eva ahaṃ maññe</i>  <i>bālassa paṭisedhanaṃ</i>  <i>paraṃ saṅkupitaṃ ṅatvā</i>  <i>yo sato upasammatīti</i></p>	<p>4<sup>122</sup> (884)</p>	<p>This is just the way, I think,  for stopping the fool:  knowing the anger in another  one mindfully stays calm.</p>
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<sup>113</sup> See **Yavakalāpi S** (S 35.248/4:201 f), SD 40a.3, which tells us of the painful effects on Vepa,citti whenever he has hateful thoughts.

<sup>114</sup> *Hotu devānam inda subhāsitena jato’ti.*

<sup>115</sup> *Ājānissanti* (pl), usu “they will understand”; as *ājānissati* (sg), M 1:169,33, J 1:81,15; *āññassati* (sg), Sn 909b.

<sup>116</sup> *Ime no subhāsitaṃ dubbhāsitaṃ ājānissantīti.*

<sup>117</sup> “Senior deva,” *pubba,deva*, which can also tr as “the first devas,” as in *mātā,pitara pubb’ācariyā’ti vuccare*, “Parents are called ‘the first teachers.’” But here in S 11.4, the asuras are “former devas” (in times before Sakra).

<sup>118</sup> *Tumhe khv-attha vepa,citti pubba,devā. Bhana vepa,citti gāthan’ti.* Comy alludes the asuras’ past: “You are the ancient masters, having long lived in the deva world, tell us what has come down by tradition to you” (**Pubba,-devā’ti deva,loke cira,nivāsino pubba,sāmikā. Tumhākaṃ tāva paveni,āgataṃ bhaṇathāti**, SA 1:344,1-2). Subcomy explains that they are “senior devas” (also “former devas”) (*pubba,devā*), but Sakra addresses Vepa,citti in the royal pl as an external show of respect (SAṬ:Be 1:334,1-5). Note a tinge of Sakra’s sarcasm suggested by Comy. Also note that Sakra addresses Vepa,citti by name, thus subtly asserting his superiority over Vepa,citti and the asuras. Cf Kvu 360; J 5:19.

<sup>119</sup> Verses 872\*-873\*, ie, the 1<sup>st</sup> + 2<sup>nd</sup> verses, do not recur here.

<sup>120</sup> In (**Sakka**) **Vepa,citti S** (S 11.4), Mātali speaks this verse [SD 54.6b].

<sup>121</sup> Be Ce Ee2 *pabhijjeyyurū*, “to be bold”; Ee Nett 172,20 *pakujjheyeyyurū*, “become angry,” which Comy recognizes as a variant reading (*pakujjheyeyyurū’ti pi pāṭho*, SA 1:342,28). The former, however, fits the context better.

<sup>122</sup> These *italicized* running numbers for 884\*-891\* denote the recurrent verses in (**Sakka**) **Vepa,citti S** (S 11.41) [875\*-882\*].

11 But, bhikshus, when the verse was spoken by Sakra, the lord of the devas, only the devas applauded. The asuras remained silent.

12 Then, bhikshus, Sakra, lord of the devas, said to Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras:  
'Speak a verse, Vepa,citti!'

12.2 When this was said, Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras, uttered this verse:<sup>123</sup>

[Vepa,citti:]<sup>124</sup>

12.3	<i>Etad eva titikkhāya vajjam passāmi vāsava yadā naṃ maññati bālo bhayā myāyaṃ titikkhati ajjhāruhati dummedho go'va bhiyyo palāyinan'ti</i>	5 (885)	To endure thus, indeed, I see as faulty, Vāsava <sup>125</sup> — when the fool thinks of you: 'This one endures me out of fear!' The dimwit will bully one like a cow (chasing) at one fleeing.
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13 But, bhikshus, when the verse was spoken by Vepa,citti, the lord of the asuras, only the asuras applauded. The devas remained silent.

14 Then, bhikshus, Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras, said to Sakra, lord of the devas:  
'Speak a verse, lord of devas!'

15 When this was said, **Sakra**, lord of the devas, uttered these verses:

#### VERSES ON VICTORY BY THE WELL-SPOKEN<sup>126</sup>

##### *Subhasita,jaya Gāthā*

15.2	<i>Kāmaṃ maññatu vā mā vā<sup>127</sup> bhayā myāyaṃ titikkhati sad-attha,paramā atthā<sup>129</sup> khantiyā bhiyyo na vijjati</i>	6 (886)	Let him think what he wants: <sup>128</sup> 'This one endures me out of fear!' Of benefits, self-benefit is supreme. Nothing surpasses patience. <sup>130</sup>
15.3	<i>yo have balavā santo dubbalassa titikkhati tam āhu paramaṃ khantiṃ niccaṃ khamati dubbalo<sup>131</sup></i>	7 (887)	When, indeed, one who is strong endures the weak, that patience is supreme, they say. The weak (must) always shows patience.

<sup>123</sup> Ee omits this line.

<sup>124</sup> In **(Sakka) Vepa,citti S** (S 11.4), Mātali speaks this verse [SD 54.6b].

<sup>125</sup> Vāsava: see (2.1.2.2; 3.2.2.3). See **Sakka,nāma S** (S 11.12,4.4) + SD 54.19 (1.2.4.2).

<sup>126</sup> These 6 verses on "the victory by the well-spoken" (S 886-882\*) recur in **(Sakka) Vepa,citti S** (S 11.4/1:223 f) [886\*-891\*].

<sup>127</sup> On this verse, cf S 854d\* + 897d\*: [3.3.1].

<sup>128</sup> Cf **Ass'ājāniya S** (A 8.13): *kāmaṃ maññe* [Be *kām'aññe*] *assā vahantu vā mā vā*, "Let the horses pull or not ..."  
(A 8.13/4:189,5) ... *kāmaṃ maññe bhikkhu sikkhantu vā mā vā*, "Let the monks train or not, (I will train)" (4:90,4).

<sup>129</sup> Comy: "Amongst the highest benefits (goals) for oneself, there is no benefit (goal) better than patience" (*tesu sak'attha,paramesu atthesu khantito uttaritaro añño attho na vijjati*, SA 1:343,8 f). Although *sadattha,parama atthā* (877c\*) is pl, the verb *vijjati* (877d) is sg: it is either poetic licence or refers to "nothing" (from *na*) which is sg. On line d, cf S 854d\* + 897d\* [3.3.1].

<sup>130</sup> Lit, "there is naught more than patience": see Nett 173,10 f :: Nett:Ñ 227. Bodhi disagrees with Ñāṇamoli: S:B 492 n616, but Bodhi is unconvincing.

- 15.4 *abalaṃ taṃ balaṃ āhu*<sup>132</sup>  
*yassa bāla,balaṃ balaṃ*  
*balassa dhamma,guttassa*  
*paṭivattā na vijjati* 8 (888) What one sees as strength is not strength,  
but a fool's foolish strength.  
For the strong restrained by good,<sup>133</sup>  
there is no striking back.<sup>134</sup>
- 15.5 *tass'eva tena pāpiyo*  
*yo kuddhaṃ paṭikujjhati*  
*kuddhaṃ appaṭikujjhanto*  
*saṅgāmaṃ jeti dujjayaṃ* 9 (889) One only worsens things for oneself  
who replies the angry with anger.  
Not replying the angry with anger,  
one wins a battle hard to win.
- 15.6 *ubhinnam atthaṃ carati*  
*attano ca parassa ca*  
*paraṃ saṅkupitaṃ ñatvā*  
*yo sato upasammati.* 10 (890) Who lives for the good of both,  
that of oneself and of others,  
knowing that another is angry,  
he mindfully keeps his peace.
- [224]
- 15.7 *ubhinnam tikicchantānaṃ*  
*attano ca parassa ca*  
*janā maññanti bālo'ti*  
*ye dhammassa akovidā'ti* 11 (891) The one healing both,  
oneself and others, too—  
the people who think him a fool,  
are not skilled in the Dharma.<sup>135</sup>

16 But, bhikshus, when the verse was spoken by Sakra, the lord of the devas, only the devas applauded. The asuras remained silent.

### The victory of the well-spoken

17 Then, bhikshus, the council of devas and asuras said this:

18 'The verses spoken by Vepa,citti, lord of the asuras, are in the sphere of punishment and violence, of conflict, dispute, quarrel.

19 The verses spoken by Sakra, lord of the devas, are in the sphere of non-punishment and non-violence, of non-conflict, non-dispute, non-quarrel.<sup>136</sup>

To Sakra, the lord of the devas, is **the victory of the well-spoken** (*subhāsita,jaya*)!

20 Thus, bhikshus, to Sakra, lord of the devas, was the victory of the well-spoken."

— evaṃ —

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<sup>131</sup> Note that *dubbalo* in nom, and subject of *khamati*. This verse recurs at Khp A 149,21-23, where Ñāṇamoli helpfully notes that the tr "seeks to bring out that patience is a necessity rather than a virtue in the weak, but appears as a virtue in the forbearance of the strong" (KhpA 162) n94.

<sup>132</sup> Be *abalaṃ taṃ balaṃ āhu*; Ee *abalan taṃ balam āhu*.

<sup>133</sup> Comy takes *gutta* as related to "to protect" (*rakkhati*), thus explaining it as either "to one protected by the Dharma, or to one who is protecting the Dharma" (*dhammena rakkhitassa, dhammaṃ vā rakkhantassa, SA 1:343,-10-13*). I have taken *gutta* figuratively (with *dhamma* in loc) in the common sutta usage of "restrained, guarded, watchful" which fits very well here: S 4:70; A 3:6; Sn 250, 971; Dh 63.

<sup>134</sup> Lit, "there is no countering," ie, he is not predictably reactive.

<sup>135</sup> Nett adds that when Sakra has spoken this verse, the devas applaud but the asuras are silent (Nett 173,23 f).

<sup>136</sup> *Bhāsita kho sakkena devānaṃ indena gāthāyo. Tā ca kho adaṇḍāvacarā iti asatthāvacarā iti abhaṇḍanam iti aviggaho iti akalaho iti.*