SN 8.5 — Well-Spoken Words

English translation by Bhikkhu Sujato.
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Text

Linked Discourses 8.5

1. With Vaṅgīsa

Well-Spoken Words

At Sāvatthī.

There the Buddha addressed the mendicants, “Mendicants!”

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

“Mendicants, speech that has four factors is well spoken, not poorly spoken. It’s blameless and is not criticized by sensible people. What four? It’s when a mendicant speaks well, not poorly; their speech is principled, not unprincipled; they speak pleasantly, not unpleasantly; and they speak truthfully, not falsely. Speech with these four factors is well spoken, not poorly spoken. It’s blameless and is not criticized by sensible people.”

That is what the Buddha said. Then the Holy One, the Teacher, went on to say:

“Good people say well-spoken words are foremost;

second, speech ought be principled, not unprincipled;

third, speak pleasantly, not unpleasantly;

and fourth, speak truthfully, not falsely.”

Then Venerable Vaṅgīsa rose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his cupped palms toward the Buddha, and said, “I feel inspired to speak, Blessed One! I feel inspired to speak, Holy One!”

“Then speak as you feel inspired,” said the Buddha.

Then Vaṅgīsa extolled the Buddha in his presence with fitting verses:

“Speak only those words

that do not hurt yourself

nor harm others;

such speech is truly well spoken.

Speak only pleasing words,

words gladly welcomed.
Pleasing words are those
that bring nothing bad to others.
Truth itself is undying speech:
this is an ancient teaching.
Good people say the teaching and meaning
are grounded in truth.
The words spoken by the Buddha
for finding the sanctuary, extinguishment,
for making an end of suffering:
this really is the best kind of speech.”