pli-tv-bu-vb-pc56 — Lighting a fire

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing confession

The subchapter on drinking alcohol

Lighting a fire

Origin story

First substory

At one time the Buddha was staying in the Bhagga country at Susumāragira in the Bhesakaḷā Grove, the deer park. At that time, during winter, the monks were warming themselves after setting fire to a hollow log. Heated by the fire, a black snake came out of the log and attacked the monks. The monks ran here and there.

The monks of few desires complained and criticized them, "How could those monks light a fire to warm themselves?" … "Is it true, monks, that monks did this?"

"It's true, sir."

The Buddha rebuked them … "How could those foolish men do this? This will affect people's confidence …" … "And, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

First preliminary ruling

'If a monk lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, he commits an offense entailing confession.'"

In this way the Buddha laid down this training rule for the monks.

Second substory

At one time a number of monks were sick. The monks who were looking after them asked, "I hope you're bearing up? I hope you're getting better?"

"Previously we lit a fire to warm ourselves, and then we were comfortable. But now that the Buddha has prohibited this, we don't warm ourselves because we're afraid of wrongdoing. Because of that we're not comfortable."

They told the Buddha. Soon afterwards he gave a teaching and addressed the monks:

“Monks, I allow a sick monk to light a fire to warm himself, or to have one lit.

And so, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Second preliminary ruling

‘If a monk who is not sick lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, he commits an offense entailing confession.’”

In this way the Buddha laid down this training rule for the monks.

Third substory

Soon afterwards the monks did not light lamps, small fires, or saunas because they were afraid of wrongdoing. They told the Buddha …

“Monks, I allow you to light a fire, or to have one lit, if there’s a suitable reason.

And so, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Final ruling

‘If a monk who is not sick lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, except if there is a suitable reason, he commits an offense entailing confession.’”

Definitions

A: whoever … Monk: …The monk who has been given the full ordination by a unanimous Sangha through a legal procedure consisting of one motion and three announcements that is irreversible and fit to stand—this sort of monk is meant in this case. Who is not sick: who is comfortable without a fire. Who is sick: who is not comfortable without a fire. To warm himself: wanting to heat himself. A fire: flames are what is meant. Lights: if he lights it himself, he commits an offense entailing confession. Has one lit: if he asks another, he commits an offense entailing confession. If he only asks once, then even if the other lights many fires, he commits one offense entailing confession. Except if there is a suitable reason: unless there is a suitable reason.

Permutations

If he is not sick, and he does not perceive himself as sick, and he lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, except if there is a suitable reason, he commits an offense entailing confession. If he is not sick, but he is unsure of it, and he lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, except if there is a suitable reason, he commits an offense entailing confession. If he is not sick, but he perceives himself as sick, and he lights a fire to warm himself, or has one lit, except if there is a suitable reason, he commits an offense entailing confession.

If he puts back a burning piece of wood that has fallen off, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If he is sick, but he does not perceive himself as sick, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If he is sick, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If he is sick, and he perceives himself as sick, there is no offense.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if he is sick; if he warms himself over a fire lit by another; if he warms himself over flameless coals; if he lights a lamp, a small fire, or a sauna, when there is a suitable reason; if there is an emergency; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The training rule on lighting a fire, the sixth, is finished.