pli-tv-bi-vb-ss2 — Ordaining a criminal

English translation by Bhikkhu Brahmali.
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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Nuns' Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing suspension

Ordaining a criminal

Origin story

At one time the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery. At that time in Vesālī the wife of a certain Licchavī man was unfaithful. He said to her, "Please stop. If you don't, I'll punish you." But she did not listen.

Just then in Vesālī the Licchavī clan had gathered on some business. That Licchavī man said to them, "Sirs, please give me permission in regard to one of my wives."

"What is it with her?"

"She's unfaithful. I wish to kill her."

"You may go ahead."

When his wife heard that her husband wanted to kill her, she took their most valuable possessions and went to Sāvatthī. There she went to the monastics of other religions and asked for the going forth, but they refused. She then went to the Buddhist nuns and again asked for the going forth, but they too refused. She then went to the nun Thullanandā, showed her the goods, and once again asked for the going forth. Thullanandā took the goods and gave her the going forth.

That Licchavī man then went to Sāvatthī in search of his wife. When he saw that she had been given the going forth as a nun, he went to King Pasenadi of Kosala and said, "Sir, my wife took my most valuable possessions and came to Sāvatthī. Please permit me to deal with her."

"Well then, find her and then inform me."

"I've seen her. She's gone forth as a nun."

"If she's gone forth as a nun, there's nothing that can be done. The Teaching of the Buddha is well-proclaimed. Let her practice the spiritual life for the full ending of suffering."

Then that Licchavī man complained and criticized the nuns, “How could the nuns give the going forth to a criminal?”

The nuns heard the complaints of that Licchavī man, and the nuns of few desires complained and criticized her, “How could Venerable Thullanandā give the going forth to a criminal?” The nuns told the monks. … “Is it true, monks, that the nun Thullanandā did this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked her … “How could the nun Thullanandā give the going forth to a criminal? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And, monks, the nuns should recite this training rule like this:

Final ruling

‘If a nun, without getting permission from the king or the Sangha or a community or an association or a society, knowingly gives the full admission to a female criminal who is known as sentenced to death, then, except when it is allowable, that nun too has committed an immediate offense entailing sending away and suspension.’”

Definitions

A: whoever … Nun: … The nun who has been given the full ordination in unanimity by both Sanghas through a legal procedure consisting of one motion and three announcements that is irreversible and fit to stand—this sort of nun is meant in this case. She knows: she knows by herself or others have told her or she has told her. A female criminal: any female who has stolen anything worth five māsaka coins or more is called “a female criminal”. Sentenced to death: she has been sentenced to death because of her action. Is known: it is known to other people that she has been sentenced to death. Without getting permission from: without having asked permission. The king: where a king reigns, permission should be obtained from the king. The Sangha: what is meant is the Sangha of nuns, and permission should be obtained from that Sangha. A community: where a community governs, permission should be obtained from that community. An association: where an association governs, permission should be obtained from that association. A society: where a society governs, permission should be obtained from that society. Except when it is allowable: unless it is allowable. Allowable: there are two allowable situations: she has gone forth with monastics of another religion or she has gone forth with other Buddhist nuns. If, intending to give the full admission, she searches for a group, a teacher, a bowl, or a robe, or she establishes a monastery zone, then, except when it is allowable, she commits an offense of wrong conduct. After the motion, she commits an offense of wrong conduct. After each of the first two announcements, she commits a serious offense. When the last announcement is finished, the preceptor commits an offense entailing suspension, and the group and the teacher commit an offense of wrong conduct. That too: this is said with reference to the preceding offense. An immediate offense: there is an offense as soon as the misconduct is committed, and no pressing is required. Entailing sending away: she is sent away from the Sangha. Suspension: … Therefore, too, it is called an offense entailing suspension.

Permutations

If she is a criminal, and the nun perceives her as such, and she gives her the full admission, except when it is allowable, she commits an offense entailing suspension. If she is a criminal, but the nun is unsure of it, and she gives her the full admission, except when it is allowable, she commits an offense of wrong conduct. If she is a criminal, but the nun does not perceive her as such, and she gives her the full admission, except when it is allowable, there is no offense.

If she is not a criminal, but the nun perceives her as such, she commits an offense of wrong conduct. If she is not a criminal, but the nun is unsure of it, she commits an offense of wrong conduct. If she is not a criminal, and the nun does not perceive her as such, there is no offense.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if she gives her the full admission without knowing that she is a criminal; if she gives her the full admission after getting permission; if she gives her the full admission when it is allowable; if she is insane; if she is the first offender.

The second offense entailing suspension is finished.