pli-tv-bi-vb-ss3 — Being alone

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Nuns' Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing suspension

Being alone

Origin story

First substory

At one time when the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery, a nun who was a pupil of Bhaddā Kāpilānī had an argument with the nuns and then went to her relatives' village. Not seeing her pupil anywhere, Bhaddā Kāpilānī asked the nuns, "Where's so-and-so? She's disappeared."

"She disappeared, venerable, after arguing with the nuns."

"My dears, her relatives live in such-and-such a village. Go there and look for her."

The nuns went there, and when they saw her, they said to her, "Why did you go alone, venerable? We hope you weren't assaulted?"

"I wasn't."

The nuns of few desires complained and criticized her, "How could a nun walk to the next village by herself?" … "Is it true, monks, that a nun did this?"

"It's true, sir."

The Buddha rebuked her … "How could a nun do this? This will affect people's confidence …" … "And, monks, the nuns should recite this training rule like this:

First preliminary ruling

'If a nun walks to the next inhabited area by herself, then that nun too has committed an immediate offense entailing sending away and suspension.'"

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

Second substory

On one occasion two nuns were traveling from Sāketa to Sāvatthī. On the way they had to cross a river. They went to a boatman and said, “Please take us across.”

“I’m not able, venerables, to take both of you across at the same time.” And so they crossed individually, alone with the boatman. When he had crossed with the first nun, he raped her. And after returning to the first bank, he raped the other nun as well. Later, when they were reunited, they asked each other, “Venerable, I hope you weren’t assaulted?”

“I was. And you, venerable, were you assaulted?”

“I was, too.”

They then continued on to Sāvatthī and told the nuns there what had happened. The nuns of few desires complained and criticized them, “How could a nun cross a river by herself?” They told the monks, who in turn told the Buddha. Soon afterwards he had the Sangha gathered and questioned the monks: “Is it true, monks, that a nun did this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked them … “How could a nun do this? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And so, monks, the nuns should recite this training rule like this:

Second preliminary ruling

‘If a nun walks to the next inhabited area by herself or crosses a river by herself, then that nun too has committed an immediate offense entailing sending away and suspension.’”

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

Third substory

On one occasion a number of nuns were walking through the Kosalan country on their way to Sāvatthī, when one evening they arrived at a certain village. One of the nuns was beautiful and graceful, and a certain man fell in love with her as soon as he saw her. Then, as he was preparing sleeping places for those nuns, he prepared hers to one side. And that nun thought, “This man is obsessed with me. If I go there for the night, I’ll get into trouble.” Then, without informing the nuns, she went to a certain family and slept there.

When night arrived, that man went searching for that nun, and as he did so he bumped into the other nuns. Not seeing that nun anywhere, the nuns said, “No doubt she has left with a man.”

The following morning that nun returned to the nuns, and they said to her, “Venerable, why did you leave with a man?”

“I didn’t leave with a man, venerables.”

She then told the nuns what had happened. The nuns of few desires complained and criticized her, “How could a nun spend the night apart by herself?” … “Is it true, monks, that a nun did this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked her … “How could a nun do this? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And so, monks, the nuns should recite this training rule like this:

Third preliminary ruling

‘If a nun walks to the next inhabited area by herself or crosses a river by herself or spends the night apart by herself, then that nun too has committed an immediate offense entailing sending away and suspension.’”

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

Fourth substory

On one occasion a number of nuns were traveling through the Kosalan country on their way to Sāvatthī. One of the nuns, needing to defecate, stayed behind by herself, and then followed behind the others. People saw her and raped her. She then went to the other nuns, and they said to her, “Why did you stay behind by yourself, venerable? We hope you weren’t assaulted?”

“I was.”

The nuns of few desires complained and criticized her, “How could a nun lag behind her companions by herself?” … “Is it true, monks, that a nun did this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked her … “How could a nun do this? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And so, monks, the nuns should recite this training rule like this:

Final ruling

‘If a nun walks to the next inhabited area by herself or crosses a river by herself or spends the night apart by herself or lags behind her companions by herself, then 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. Walks to the next inhabited area by herself: if she crosses the boundary of an enclosed inhabited area with her first foot, she commits a serious offense. If she then crosses it with her second foot, she commits an offense entailing suspension. If she enters the vicinity of an unenclosed inhabited area with her first foot, she commits a serious offense. If she then enters it with her second foot, she commits an offense entailing suspension. Or crosses a river by herself: A river: wherever, after covering the three circles, the sarong gets wet when the nun is crossing. When she has crossed with the first foot, she commits a serious offense. When she has crossed with the second foot, she commits an offense entailing suspension. Or spends the night apart by herself: if, at dawn, she is in the process of going beyond arm’s reach of her companion nun, she commits a serious offense. When she has gone beyond, she commits an offense entailing suspension. Or lags behind her companions by

herself: if, in an uninhabited area, in the wilderness, she is in the process of going beyond the range of sight or the range of hearing of her companion nun, she commits a serious offense. When she has gone beyond, she commits an offense entailing suspension. That too: this is said with reference to the preceding offenses. 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.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if her companion nun has left or disrobed or died or joined another religion or sect; if there is an emergency; if she is insane; if she is the first offender.

The third offense entailing suspension is finished.