pli-tv-bu-vb-np23 — Storing the five tonics too long

English translation by Bhikkhu Brahmali.
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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on relinquishment

The subchapter on almsbowls

Storing the five tonics too long

Origin story

At one time when the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery, Venerable Pilindavaccha was clearing a slope near Rājagaha, intending to build a shelter. Just then King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha went to Pilindavaccha, bowed, sat down, and said, "Venerable, what are you having made?"

"I'm clearing a slope, great king. I want to build a shelter."

"Do you need a monastery worker?"

"The Buddha hasn't allowed monastery workers."

"Well then, sir, please ask the Buddha and tell me the outcome."

"Yes, great king."

Pilindavaccha then instructed, inspired, and gladdened King Bimbisāra with a teaching, after which the king got up from his seat, bowed down, circumambulated Pilindavaccha with his right side toward him, and left.

Soon afterwards Pilindavaccha sent a message to the Buddha: "Sir, King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha wishes to provide a monastery worker. What should I tell him?" The Buddha then gave a teaching and addressed the monks:

"Monks, I allow monastery workers."

Once again King Bimbisāra went to Pilindavaccha, bowed, sat down, and said, "Sir, has the Buddha allowed monastery workers?"

"Yes, great king."

"Well then, I'll provide you with a monastery worker."

But after making this promise, he forgot, and only remembered after a long time. He then addressed the official in charge of all practical affairs: “Listen, has the monastery worker I promised been provided?”

“No, sir, he hasn’t.”

“How long has it been since we made that promise?”

The official counted the days and said, “It’s been five hundred days.”

“Well then, provide him with five hundred monastery workers.”

“Yes.”

The official provided Pilindavaccha with those monastery workers and a separate village was established. They called it “The Monastery Workers’ Village” and “Pilinda Village”.

And Pilindavaccha began associating with the families in that village.

After robing up one morning, he took his bowl and robe and went to Pilinda Village for alms. At that time they were holding a celebration in that village and the children were dressed up with ornaments and garlands. As Pilindavaccha was walking on continuous almsround, he came to the house of a certain monastery worker where he sat down on the prepared seat. Just then the daughter of that house had seen the other children dressed up in ornaments and garlands. She cried, saying, “Give me a garland! Give me ornaments!” Pilindavaccha asked her mother why the girl was crying. She told him, adding, “Poor people like us can’t afford garlands and ornaments.” Pilindavaccha took a pad of grass and said to the mother, “Here, place this on the girl’s head.” She did, and it turned into a beautiful golden garland. Even the royal compound had nothing like it.

People told King Bimbisāra, “In the house of such-and-such a monastery worker there’s a beautiful golden garland. Even in your court, sir, there’s nothing like it. So how did those poor people get it? They must have stolen it.” King Bimbisāra had that family imprisoned.

Once again Pilindavaccha robed up in the morning, took his bowl and robe, and went to Pilinda Village for alms. As he was walking on continuous almsround, he came to the house of that monastery worker. He then asked the neighbors what had happened to that family.

“The king has jailed them, venerable, because of that golden garland.”

Pilindavaccha then went to King Bimbisāra’s house and sat down on the prepared seat. King Bimbisāra approached Pilindavaccha, bowed, and sat down. Pilindavaccha said, “Great king, why have you jailed the family of that monastery worker?”

“Sir, in the house of that monastery worker there was a beautiful golden garland. Even the royal compound has nothing like it. So how did those poor people get it? They must have stolen it.”

Pilindavaccha then focused his mind on turning King Bimbisāra’s stilt house into gold. As a result, the whole house became gold. He said, “Great king, how did you get so much gold?”

“Understood, sir! It’s your supernormal power.” He then released that family.

People said, “They say Venerable Pilindavaccha has performed a superhuman feat, a wonder of supernormal power, for the king and his court!” Being delighted and gaining confidence in Pilindavaccha, they brought him the five tonics: ghee, butter, oil, honey, and syrup. Ordinarily, too, Pilindavaccha was getting the five tonics. Since he was getting so much, he gave it away to his followers, who ended up with an abundance of tonics. After filling up basins and waterpots and setting these aside, they filled their water filters and bags and hung these in the windows. But the tonics were dripping, and the dwellings became infested with rats. When people walking about the dwellings saw this, they complained and criticized them, “These Sakyan monastics are hoarding things indoors, just like King Seniya Bimbisāra of Magadha.”

The monks heard the complaints of those people and the monks of few desires complained and criticized those monks, “How can these monks choose to live with such abundance?”

After rebuking those monks in many ways, they told the Buddha. Soon afterwards he had the Sangha gathered and questioned the monks: “Is it true, monks, that there are monks who live like this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked them … “How can those foolish men live like this? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Final ruling

‘After being received, the tonics allowable for sick monks—that is, ghee, butter, oil, honey, and syrup—should be used from storage for at most seven days. If one uses them longer than that, one commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession.’”

Definitions

The tonics allowable for sick monks: Ghee: ghee from cows, ghee from goats, ghee from buffaloes, or ghee from whatever animal whose meat is allowable. Butter: butter from the same animals. Oil: sesame oil, mustard oil, honey-tree oil, castor oil, oil from fat. Honey: honey from bees. Syrup: from sugarcane. After being received, they should be used from storage for at most seven days: they are to be used for seven days at a maximum. If one uses them longer than that, one commits an offense entailing relinquishment: it becomes subject to relinquishment at dawn on the eighth day.

The tonics should be relinquished to a sangha, a group, or an individual. “And, monks, it should be relinquished like this. …” (To be expanded as in Bu NP 1:3.2.5–3.2.29, with appropriate substitutions.)

“Venerables, these tonics, which I have kept over seven days, are to be relinquished. I relinquish it to the Sangha.” … “the Sangha should give …” “you should give …” “I give these tonics back to you.”

Permutations

If it is more than seven days and he perceives it as more, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If it is more than seven days, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If it is more than seven days, but he perceives it as less, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession.

If they have not been determined, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If they have not been given away, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If they have not been lost, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If they have not been destroyed, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If they have not been burned, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession. If they have not been stolen, but he perceives that they have, he commits an offense entailing relinquishment and confession.

After the relinquished tonics have been returned, they are not to be used on the body, nor are they to be eaten. They may be used in lamps or as a black coloring agent. Other monks may use them on the body, but they may not eat them.

If it is less than seven days, but he perceives it as more, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is less than seven days, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is less than seven days and he perceives it as less, there is no offense.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if within seven days they have been determined, given away, lost, destroyed, burned, stolen, or taken on trust; if, without any desire for them, he gives them up to a person who is not fully ordained, and he then obtains them again and then uses them; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The training rule on storing the five tonics too long, the third, is finished.