pli-tv-bu-vb-pc11 — Destroying plants

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing confession

The subchapter on plants

Destroying plants

Origin story

At one time the Buddha was staying at Āḷavī at the Aggāḷava Shrine. At that time the monks of Āḷavī were doing building work, and they cut down trees and had them cut down. Then, when a certain monk was cutting down a tree, the deity that lived in it said to him, “Venerable, don’t cut down our dwelling because you want to build a dwelling for yourself.” Not taking any heed, he just cut it down, and he hurt the arm of that deity’s child. The deity thought, “Why don’t I just kill this monk?” But then it reconsidered, “It wouldn’t be right to just kill this monk. Let me instead tell the Buddha about this matter.” And it approached the Buddha and told him what had happened.

“Well done, deity! It’s good that you didn’t kill that monk. If you had killed that monk, you would have made much demerit. The tree over there is empty. Take that as your dwelling.”

People complained and criticized the monks, “How can the Sakyan monastics cut down trees and have them cut down? They are hurting life with one sense.”

The monks heard the complaints of those people, and the monks of few desires complained and criticized those monks, “How can those monks at Āḷavī cut down trees and have them cut down?”… “Is it true, monks, that you do this?”

“It’s true, sir.”

The Buddha rebuked them … “Foolish men, how can you do this? People regard trees as conscious. This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Final ruling

‘If a monk destroys a plant, he commits an offense entailing confession.’”

Definitions

Plant: there are five kinds of propagation: propagation from roots, propagation from stems, propagation from joints, propagation from cuttings, propagation from seeds. Propagation from roots: turmeric, ginger, sweet flag, white sweet flag, atis root, black hellebore, vetiver root, nutgrass, or any other plant produced from roots, that grows from roots—this is called “propagation from roots”. Propagation from stems: the Bodhi tree, the banyan tree, the Indian rock fig, the cluster fig, the Indian cedar, the portia tree, or any other plant produced from stems, that grows from stems—this is called “propagation from stems”. Propagation from joints: sugarcane, bamboo, reed, or any other plant produced from joints, that grows from joints—this is called “propagation from joints”. Propagation from cuttings: shrubby basil, rajmahal hemp, Vicks plant, or any other plant produced from cuttings, that grows from cuttings—this is called “propagation from cuttings”. Propagation from seeds: grains, vegetables, or any other plant produced from seeds, that grows from seeds—this is called “propagation from seeds”.

Permutations

If it is capable of propagation, and he perceives that it is, and he cuts it down or has it cut down, or he breaks it or has it broken, or he cooks it or has it cooked, he commits an offense entailing confession. If it is capable of propagation, but he is unsure of it, and he cuts it down or has it cut down, or he breaks it or has it broken, or he cooks it or has it cooked, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is capable of propagation, but he perceives that it is not, and he cuts it down or has it cut down, or he breaks it or has it broken, or he cooks it or has it cooked, there is no offense.

If it is not capable of propagation, but he perceives that it is, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is not capable of propagation, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is not capable of propagation, and he perceives that it is not, there is no offense.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if he says, “Consider this”, “Give this”, “Bring this”, “There’s need for this”, “Make this allowable;” if it is unintentional; if he is not mindful; if he does not know; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The training rule on destroying plants, the first, is finished.