pli-tv-bu-vb-pc33 — Eating meals in succession

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing confession

The subchapter on eating

Eating meals in succession

Origin story

First substory

At one time when the Buddha was staying in the house with the peaked roof in the Great Wood near Vesālī, a succession of fine meals had been arranged in Vesālī. A certain poor worker thought, “Why don’t I prepare a meal? It must be really worthwhile, seeing as these people prepare a meal with such respect.”

He then went to his boss Kira and said, “Sir, I wish to prepare a meal for the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha. Please give me my salary.” Because Kira also had faith and confidence, he gave the worker his salary and much extra. Soon afterwards that worker went to the Buddha, bowed, sat down, and said, “Sir, please accept a meal from me tomorrow together with the Sangha of monks.”

“The Sangha is large.”

“No problem! I’ve prepared much jujube, supplemented with jujube drinks.” The Buddha consented by remaining silent, and the worker understood.

He got up from his seat, circumambulated the Buddha with his right side toward him, and left.

The monks heard that a poor worker had invited the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha on the following day for a meal supplemented with jujube drinks. And so they ate in the morning after walking for alms.

When people heard that a poor worker had invited the Sangha of monks headed by the Buddha for a meal, they brought much food of various kinds to him. The following morning that worker prepared his food, and then had the Buddha informed that the meal was ready.

The Buddha robed up, took his bowl and robe and, together with the Sangha of monks, went to the house of that poor worker where he sat down on the prepared seat in the dining hall. The worker served the monks, but they kept saying, “Give just a little.”

“Venerables, don’t accept so little because you think I’m just a poor worker. I’ve prepared much food of various kinds. Please accept as much as you like.”

“We’re not accepting so little because of that, but because we ate in the morning after walking for alms.”

That poor worker complained and criticized them, “How could the venerables eat elsewhere when invited by me? Am I not able to give as much as they need?”

The monks heard the complaints of that worker, and the monks of few desires complained and criticized those monks, “How could those monks eat elsewhere when invited for a meal?” … “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 eats a meal before another, he commits an offense entailing confession.’”

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

Second substory

Soon afterwards a certain monk became sick. Another monk took some almsfood, went to that monk, and told him to eat it.

“I can’t. I’m expecting another meal.”

But since that almsfood only arrived at midday, that monk did not get to eat as much as he had intended. They told the Buddha. Soon afterwards the Buddha gave a teaching and addressed the monks:

“Monks, I allow a sick monk to eat a meal before another.

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

Second preliminary ruling

‘If a monk eats a meal before another, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession. This is the appropriate occasion: he is sick.’”

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

Third substory

Soon afterwards, during the robe-giving season, people prepared a meal together with robe-cloth and then invited the monks, saying, “We wish to offer a meal and give

robe-cloth.” But knowing that the Buddha had prohibited eating a meal before another and being afraid of wrongdoing, they did not accept. As a result, they only got a small amount of robe-cloth. They told the Buddha. …

“Monks, I allow you to eat a meal before another during the robe-giving season.

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

Third preliminary ruling

‘If a monk eats a meal before another, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession. These are the appropriate occasions: he is sick; it is the robe-giving season.’”

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

Fourth substory

Soon afterwards people invited the robe-making monks for a meal. But knowing that the Buddha had prohibited eating a meal before another and being afraid of wrongdoing, they did not accept. They told the Buddha. …

“Monks, I allow you to eat a meal before another at a time when you are making robes.

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

Final ruling

‘If a monk eats a meal before another, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession. These are the appropriate occasions: he is sick; it is the robe-giving season; it is a time of making robes.’”

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

Fifth substory

Soon afterwards, after robing up in the morning, the Buddha took his bowl and robe and went to a certain family with Venerable Ānanda as his attendant. He sat down on the prepared seat, and the people there gave cooked food. Being afraid of wrongdoing, Ānanda did not accept it. The Buddha said, “Accept it, Ānanda.”

“I can’t, sir, I’m expecting another meal.”

“Well then, Ānanda, assign that meal to someone else and then receive this.”

Soon afterwards the Buddha gave a teaching and addressed the monks:

“Monks, I allow you to eat a meal before another if you assign the other meal to someone else.

And, monks, this is how it should be assigned: ‘I give my expected meal to so-and-so.’”

Definitions

Eats a meal before another: if he has been invited to eat any of the five cooked foods, and he then eats any of the five cooked foods elsewhere—this is called “eats a meal before another”. Except on an appropriate occasion: unless it is an appropriate occasion. He is sick: if he is not able to eat as much as he needs in one sitting, he may eat a meal before another. It is the robe-giving season: if he has not participated in the robe-making ceremony, he may eat a meal before another during the last month of the rainy season. If he has participated in the robe-making ceremony, he may eat a meal before another during the five month period. It is a time of making robes: when he is making robes, he may eat a meal before another.

If he receives food with the intention of eating it, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. For every mouthful swallowed, he commits an offense entailing confession.

Permutations

If it is a meal before another, and he perceives it as such, and he eats it, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession. If it is a meal before another, but he is unsure of it, and he eats it, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession. If it is a meal before another, but he does not perceive it as such, and he eats it, except on an appropriate occasion, he commits an offense entailing confession.

If it is not a meal before another, but he perceives it as such, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is not a meal before another, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is not a meal before another, and he does not perceive it as such, there is no offense.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if it is an appropriate occasion; if he assigns his other meal to someone else and then eats; if he eats the food from two or three invitational meals together; if he eats the meals in the same order that the invitations were received; if he is invited by a whole village and he eats anywhere in that village; if he is invited by a whole association and he eats anywhere that belongs to that association; if, when being invited, he says, “I’ll get almsfood;” if it is a regular meal invitation; if it is a meal for which lots are drawn; if it is a half-monthly meal; if it is on the observance day; if it is on the day after the observance day; if it is anything apart from the five cooked foods; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The training rule on eating meals in succession, the third, is finished.