pli-tv-bu-vb-pc64 — Concealing a grave offense

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on offenses entailing confession

The subchapter on containing living beings

Concealing a grave offense

Origin story

At one time when the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery, Venerable Upananda the Sakyan had committed an offense of intentional emission of semen. He told his brother's student about this, adding, "Don't tell anyone."

Soon afterwards another monk also committed an offense of intentional emission of semen. He asked the Sangha for probation, which he got. While he was on probation, he saw Upananda's brother's student and said to him, "I've committed an offense of intentional emission of semen. I asked the Sangha for probation, which I got. I'm now undergoing probation. Please remember me as such."

"Do others who have committed this offense need to do the same?"

"Yes."

"Venerable Upananda committed this offense and told me not to tell anyone."

"So did you conceal it?"

"Yes."

That monk then told other monks. The monks of few desires complained and criticized him, "How could a monk knowingly conceal a monk's grave offense?" … "Is it true, monk, that you did this?"

"It's true, sir."

The Buddha rebuked him … "Foolish man, how could you do this? This will affect people's confidence …" … "And, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Final ruling

‘If a monk knowingly conceals a monk’s grave offense, he commits an offense entailing confession.’”

Definitions

A: whoever … Monk: … The monk who has been given the full ordination by a unanimous Sangha through a legal procedure consisting of one motion and three announcements that is irreversible and fit to stand—this sort of monk is meant in this case. A monk’s: another monk’s. Knowingly: he knows by himself or others have told him or the offender has told him. Grave offense: the four offenses entailing expulsion and the thirteen entailing suspension. Conceals: thinking, “If they find out about this, they’ll accuse him, remind him, scold him, censure him, humiliate him; I won’t tell,” then by the mere fact of abandoning his duty, he commits an offense entailing confession.

Permutations

If it is a grave offense, and he perceives it as such, and he conceals it, he commits an offense entailing confession. If it is a grave offense, but he is unsure of it, and he conceals it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is a grave offense, but he perceives it as minor, and he conceals it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct.

If he conceals a minor offense, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If he conceals the grave or minor misconduct of one who is not fully ordained, he commits an offense of wrong conduct.

If it is a minor offense, but he perceives it as grave, he commits an offense of wrong conduct.

If it is a minor offense, but he is unsure of it, he commits an offense of wrong conduct. If it is a minor offense, and he perceives it as such, he commits an offense of wrong conduct.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if he does not tell because he thinks there will be quarrels or disputes in the Sangha; if he does not tell because he thinks there will be a fracture or schism in the Sangha; if he does not tell because he thinks the person he is telling about is cruel and harsh and that he might become a threat to life or to the monastic life; if he does not tell because he does not see any suitable monks; if he does not tell, but not because he wants to conceal; if he does not tell because he thinks the other person will be known through his own actions; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The training rule on concealing a grave offense, the fourth, is finished.