pli-tv-bu-vb-sk69 — Sitting on a low seat

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Text

Theravāda Collection on Monastic Law

The Great Analysis

The chapter on training

The subchapter on shoes

Sitting on a low seat

Origin story

At one time the Buddha was staying at Sāvatthī in the Jeta Grove, Anāthapiṇḍika's Monastery. At that time the monks from the group of six were sitting on low seats while giving teachings to people sitting on high seats.

The monks of few desires complained and criticized them, "How can the monks from the group of six sit on low seats while giving teachings to people sitting on high seats?" … "Is it true, monks, that you do this?"

"It's true, sir."

The Buddha rebuked them … "Foolish men, how can you do this? This will affect people's confidence …" After rebuking them … he gave a teaching and addressed the monks:

Jataka

"Once upon a time in Bārāṇasī, monks, there was a low-caste man whose wife became pregnant. She said to him, 'I'm pregnant. I crave mangoes.'

'But there are no mangoes. It's the wrong season.'

'If I don't get any, I'll die.'

At that time the king had a mango tree that was always bearing fruit. Then that low-caste man went to that mango tree, climbed it, and hid himself. Just then the king and his brahmin counselor went to that same mango tree. There the king sat on a high seat while learning the Vedas. The low-caste man thought, 'How wrong-headed this king is, sitting on a high seat while learning the Vedas. And the brahmin is wrong-headed too, sitting on a low seat while teaching the Vedas to one sitting on a high seat. And I'm wrong-headed too, stealing mangoes from the king because of a woman. This is all so low!' And he fell out of the tree right there.

The low-caste man says:

‘Neither understands what is good,

Neither sees the Truth:

Not he who teaches the Vedas,

Nor he who learns improperly.’

The brahmin replies:

‘I’ve eaten the finest rice,

With a curry of pure meat:

Therefore I’m not practicing the Teaching,

The Teaching praised by the Noble Ones.’

The low-caste man replies in turn:

‘A curse it is the obtaining of wealth,

And so is becoming popular, brahmin;

These things come with a low rebirth,

Or with wrong-headed behavior.

‘Go forth, great brahmin,

Other beings will do the cooking;

Don’t go against the Teaching,

Because you’ll break like a jar.’

Even at that time, monks, I was displeased by someone teaching the Vedas while sitting on a low seat to someone sitting on a high seat. How, then, could it not be displeasing now? This will affect people’s confidence …” … “And, monks, this training rule should be recited like this:

Final ruling

“‘I will not give a teaching while sitting on a low seat to anyone sitting on a high seat who is not sick,” this is how you should train.’”

One should not give a teaching while sitting on a low seat to anyone sitting on a high seat who is not sick. If a monk, out of disrespect, gives a teaching while sitting on a low seat to someone sitting on a high seat who is not sick, he commits an offense of wrong conduct.

Non-offenses

There is no offense: if it is unintentional; if he is not mindful; if he does not know; if he is sick; if there is an emergency; if he is insane; if he is the first offender.

The ninth training rule is finished.