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Theravada Collection on Monastic Law The Small Division The chapter on the first council 1. The origin story of the communal recitation

Then Venerable Mahakassapa addressed the monks: “On one occasion, as I was traveling from Pava to Kusinara with a large sangha of five hundred monks, I left the road and sat down at the foot of a tree. Just then a follower of the Ajivakas was traveling toward Pava on the same road, holding a coral-tree flower that he had picked up in Kusinara. When I saw him coming, I asked him, ‘Do you know anything about our Teacher?’ ‘I do. Today it’s seven days since the ascetic Gotama attained final extinguishment. That’s why I carry this coral-tree flower.’ Some of the monks there who were not yet free from desire threw up their arms and cried, collapsed on the ground, and rolled back and forth, lamenting, ‘The Buddha, the Happy One, has attained final extinguishment too soon—too soon has the eye of the world been put out!’ But the monks there who were free from desire bore it with mindfulness and full awareness, saying, ‘All phenomena are impermanent. How could it be any different?’ I said, ‘Please stop grieving, stop lamenting. Didn’t the Buddha warn us that we must be separated from everyone and everything dear and agreeable to us? How could that which is born, become, made up, and of a nature to fall apart, not fall apart? That’s impossible.’ On that occasion a monk called Subhadda, who had gone forth when old, was part of that group. He said to the monks, ‘Please stop grieving, stop lamenting. It’s good that we are free from that great ascetic. We were oppressed, always being told what’s allowable and what’s not. Now we can do what we like and not do what we don’t like.’ So then, let’s recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law—before what’s contrary to the Teaching shines forth and the Teaching is obstructed; before what’s contrary to the Monastic Law shines forth and the Monastic Law is obstructed; before those who speak contrary to the Teaching become strong and those who speak in accordance with it become weak; before those who speak contrary to the Monastic Law become strong and those who speak in accordance with it become weak.” “Well then, venerable, please select the monks.” Mahakassapa then selected four hundred and ninety-nine perfected ones. The monks said to him, “There’s Venerable Ananda who, although still a trainee, is incapable of acting out of desire, ill will, confusion, or fear. He has learned many teachings and much Monastic Law from the Buddha. Please invite him as well.” And he did. The senior monks thought, “Where should we recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law?” It occurred to them, “Rajagaha has much almsfood and many dwellings. Let’s spend the rainy season there in order to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law. No other monks should enter the rainy-season residence at Rajagaha.” And Venerable Mahakassapa informed the Sangha: “Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. If the Sangha is ready, it should appoint these five hundred monks to spend the rainy season at Rajagaha in order to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law. No other monks

should spend the rainy-season residence at Rajagaha. This is the motion. Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. The Sangha appoints these five hundred monks to spend the rainy season at Rajagaha in order to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law. No other monks should spend the rainy-season residence at Rajagaha. Any monk who approves of appointing these five hundred monks to spend the rainy season at Rajagaha in order to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law, with no other monks spending the rainy-season residence at Rajagaha, should remain silent. Any monk who doesn't approve should speak up. The Sangha has appointed these five hundred monks to spend the rainy season at Rajagaha in order to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law. No other monks should spend the rainy-season residence at Rajagaha. The Sangha approves and is therefore silent. I will remember it thus." The communal recitation at Rajagaha

The senior monks then went to Rajagaha to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law. They thought, "The Buddha has praised repairing what's defective and broken. Well then, let's spend the first month doing repairs, and then gather for the middle month to recite the Teaching and the Monastic Law." They then spent the first month doing repairs. Venerable Ananda thought, "It wouldn't be proper for me to go to the assembly tomorrow if I'm still a trainee." After spending most of the night with mindfulness directed to the body, early in the morning he bent over to lie down. In the interval between his feet coming off the ground and his head hitting the pillow, his mind was freed from the corruptions through letting go. And Venerable Ananda went to the assembly as a perfected one. Venerable Mahakassapa then informed the Sangha: "Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. If the Sangha is ready, I will ask Upali about the Monastic Law." Venerable Upali informed the Sangha: "Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. If the Sangha is ready, I will reply when asked by Venerable Mahakassapa about the Monastic Law." Mahakassapa then asked Upali, "Where was the first offense entailing expulsion laid down?" "At Vesali." "Who is it about?" "Sudinna the Kalandian." "What is it about?" "Sexual intercourse." Mahakassapa also asked Upali about the topic of the first offense entailing expulsion, about the origin story, about the person, about the rule, about the additions to the rule, about the offense, and about the non-offenses. "And where was the second offense entailing expulsion laid down?" "At Rajagaha." "Who is it about?" "Dhaniya the potter." "What is it about?" "Stealing." Mahakassapa also asked Upali about the topic of the second offense entailing expulsion, about the origin story, about the person, about the rule, about the additions to the rule, about the offense, and about the non-offenses. "And where was the third offense entailing expulsion laid down?" "At Vesali." "Who is it about?" "A number of monks." "What is it about?" "Human beings." Mahakassapa also asked Upali about the topic of the third offense entailing expulsion, about the origin story, about the person, about the rule, about the additions to the rule, about the offense, and about the non-offenses. "And where was the fourth offense entailing expulsion laid down?" "At Vesali." "Who is it about?" "The monks from the banks of the Vaggumuda." "What is it about?" "Superhuman qualities." Mahakassapa

also asked Upali about the topic of the fourth offense entailing expulsion, about the origin story, about the person, about the rule, about the additions to the rule, about the offense, and about the non-offenses. In this way he asked about the analyses of both Monastic Codes. Upali was able to reply to each and every question. Venerable Mahakassapa then informed the Sangha: “Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. If the Sangha is ready, I will ask Ananda about the Teaching.” Venerable Ananda informed the Sangha: “Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. If the Sangha is ready, I will reply when asked by Venerable Mahakassapa about the Teaching.” Mahakassapa then asked Ananda, “Where was ‘The Supreme Net’ spoken?” “At the royal rest-house at Ambalattika, between Rajagaha and Nalanda.” “Who is it about?” “The wanderer Suppiya and the young brahmin Brahmadata.” Mahakassapa also asked Ananda about the origin story of ‘The Supreme Net’ and about the person. “Where was ‘The Fruits of the Monastic Life’ spoken?” “In Jivaka’s Mango Grove at Rajagaha.” “Who is it with?” “Ajatasattu Vedehiputta.” Mahakassapa also asked Ananda about the origin story of ‘The Fruits of the Monastic Life’ and about the person. In this way he asked about the five collections. Ananda was able to reply to each and every question.

2. Discussion of the minor training rules Ananda said to the senior monks, “At the time of his final extinguishment, the Buddha said to me, ‘After my passing away, Ananda, if the Sangha wishes, it may abolish the minor training rules.’” “But, Ananda, did you ask the Buddha what the minor training rules are?” “No, sirs, I didn’t.” Some senior monks said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion, the rest are the minor training rules.” Others said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion and the thirteen rules entailing suspension, the rest are the minor training rules.” Still others said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion, the thirteen rules entailing suspension, and the two undetermined rules, the rest are the minor training rules.” Still others said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion, the thirteen rules entailing suspension, the two undetermined rules, the thirty rules entailing relinquishment and confession, the rest are the minor training rules.” Still others said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion, the thirteen rules entailing suspension, the two undetermined rules, the thirty rules entailing relinquishment and confession, and the ninety-two rules entailing confession, the rest are the minor training rules.” Still others said, “Apart from the four rules entailing expulsion, the thirteen rules entailing suspension, the two undetermined rules, the thirty rules entailing relinquishment and confession, the ninety-two rules entailing confession, and the four rules entailing acknowledgment, the rest are the minor training rules.” Then Venerable Mahakassapa informed the Sangha: “Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. We have training rules that relate to householders. The householders know what is allowable for us and what is not allowable. If we abolish the minor training rules, some people will say, ‘The ascetic Gotama laid down training rules for his disciples until the time of his death. But they practice the training rules only as long as their teacher is alive. Since their teacher has now attained final extinguishment, they no

longer practice them.’ If the Sangha is ready, it shouldn’t lay down new rules, nor get rid of existing rules, and it should undertake to practice the training rules as they are. This is the motion. Please, venerables, I ask the Sangha to listen. We have training rules that relate to householders. The householders know what is allowable for us and what is not allowable. If we abolish the minor training rules, some people will say, ‘The ascetic Gotama laid down training rules for his disciples until the time of his death. But they practice the training rules only as long as their teacher is alive. Since their teacher has now attained final extinguishment, they no longer practice them.’ The Sangha doesn’t lay down new rules, nor get rid of existing rules, and it undertakes to practice the training rules as they are. Any monk who approves of not laying down new rules, nor of getting rid of existing rules, and of undertaking to practice the training rules as they are should remain silent. Any monk who doesn’t approve should speak up. The Sangha doesn’t lay down new rules, nor get rid of the existing rules, and it undertakes to practice the training rules as they are. The Sangha approves and is therefore silent. I will remember it thus.” The senior monks then said, “You have committed an act of wrong conduct, Ananda, in that you didn’t ask the Buddha what the minor training rules are. Please confess that wrong conduct.” “It was because of lack of mindfulness that I didn’t ask. I can’t see that I have committed any wrong conduct, but I’ll confess it out of faith in the venerables.” “You have also committed an act of wrong conduct in that you stepped on the Buddha’s rainy-season robe while you were sewing it. Please confess that wrong conduct.” “I didn’t step on it because of disrespect. I can’t see that I’ve committed any wrong conduct, but I’ll confess it out of faith in the venerables.” “You have also committed an act of wrong conduct in that you first had women pay respect to the Buddha’s dead body. They soiled the Buddha’s body with tears. Please confess that wrong conduct.” “I did this so that it wouldn’t get too late for them. I can’t see that I’ve committed any wrong conduct, but I’ll confess it out of faith in the venerables.” “You have also committed an act of wrong conduct in that you didn’t ask the Buddha, even when he gave you a broad hint, to live on for an eon—for the benefit and happiness of humanity, out of compassion for the world, for the good, benefit, and happiness of gods and humans. Please confess that wrong conduct.” “I didn’t ask because my mind was possessed by the Lord of Death. I can’t see that I’ve committed any wrong conduct, but I’ll confess it out of faith in the venerables.” “You have also committed an act of wrong conduct in that you made an effort for women to be given the going forth on the spiritual path proclaimed by the Buddha. Please confess that wrong conduct.” “I made this effort because Mahapajapati Gotami was the Buddha’s aunt who nurtured him, brought him up, and breastfed him when his own mother died. I can’t see that I’ve committed any wrong conduct, but I’ll confess it out of faith in the venerables.” At that time Venerable Purana was wandering in the Southern Hills with a large sangha of five hundred monks. Soon the senior monks had concluded the communal recitation of the Teaching and the Monastic Law. Then, when Purana had stayed in the Southern Hills for as long as he liked, he

went to the Bamboo Grove at Rajagaha. There he went up to the senior monks, exchanged pleasantries with them, and sat down. And they said to him, “Purana, the senior monks have recited the Teaching and the Monastic Law. Please accept that communal recitation.” “The Teaching and the Monastic Law have been well-recited by the senior monks. Nevertheless, I’ll remember what I myself have received from the Buddha.”

3. Discussion of the supreme penalty

Venerable Ananda said to the senior monks, “At the time of his final extinguishment, the Buddha said to me, ‘After my passing away, Ananda, the Sangha should impose the supreme penalty on the monk Channa.’” “Did you ask the Buddha what the supreme penalty is?” “I did, and he replied, ‘Whatever Channa says, the monks shouldn’t correct him, instruct him, or teach him.’” “Well then, Ananda, impose the supreme penalty on Channa.” “But how should I do it? Channa is temperamental and harsh.” “Go together with many monks.” Saying, “Yes, venerables,” he traveled by boat upstream to Kosambi with a large sangha of five hundred monks. After disembarking, he sat down at the foot of a tree not far from King Udena’s park. Just then King Udena was enjoying himself in the park together with his harem. The harem women heard that their teacher, Venerable Ananda, was seated at the foot of a tree not far from the park. They told the king, adding, “Sir, we would like to see Venerable Ananda.” “Well then, go ahead.”

The harem women then went to Ananda, bowed, and sat down. And Ananda instructed, inspired, and gladdened them with a teaching, at the end of which they gave him five hundred upper robes. After rejoicing and expressing their appreciation for his teaching, they got up from their seats, bowed down, circumambulated him with their right sides toward him, and went to King Udena. When King Udena saw them coming, he said to them, “Did you see the ascetic Ananda?” “We did.” “Did you give him anything?” “We gave him five hundred upper robes.” King Udena complained and criticized him, “How can the ascetic Ananda receive so many robes? Is he starting up as cloth merchant or setting up shop?” King Udena then went to Ananda, exchanged pleasantries with him, sat down, and said, “Sir Ananda, did our harem women come here?” “They did.” “Did they give you anything?” “They gave me five hundred upper robes.” “But what will you do with five hundred robes?” “I’ll share them with those monks whose robes are worn out.” “And what will you do with the worn out robes?” “We’ll make them into bedspreads.” “And what will you do with the old bedspreads?” “We’ll make them into mattress covers.” “And what will you do with the old mattress covers?” “We’ll make them into floor covers.” “And what will you do with the old floor covers?” “We’ll make them into doormats.” “And what will you do with the old doormats?” “We’ll make them into dustcloths.” “And what will you do with the old dustcloths?” “We’ll cut them up, mix them with mud, and smear the floors.” King Udena thought, “These Sakyan monastics are clever at putting things to use; nothing is wasted,” and he gave another five hundred pieces of cloth to Ananda. Together with the first offering of robes, Ananda was given a total of one thousand robes. Ananda then went to Ghosita’s Monastery where he sat down on the prepared seat. Venerable Channa went up to Ananda, bowed, and sat down. And Ananda said, “Channa, the

Sangha has imposed the supreme penalty on you.” “What’s the supreme penalty?” “Whatever you say to the monks, the monks shouldn’t correct you, instruct you, or teach you.” Exclaiming, “I’m ruined!” he fainted right there. Being troubled, ashamed, and disgusted by the supreme penalty, Channa stayed by himself, secluded, heedful, energetic, and diligent. And in this very life, he soon realized with his own insight the supreme goal of the spiritual life for which gentlemen rightly go forth into homelessness. He understood that birth had come to an end, that the spiritual life had been fulfilled, that the job had been done, that there was no further state of existence. Venerable Channa became one of the perfected ones. He then went to Ananda and said, “Venerable Ananda, please lift the supreme penalty.” “The supreme penalty was lifted the moment you realized perfection.” At this communal recitation of the Monastic Law there were five hundred monks, neither more nor less. This is why this communal recitation is called “The group of five hundred”. The eleventh chapter on the first council is finished. In this chapter there are twenty-three topics. This is the summary: “When the Buddha had attained extinguishment, The senior monk called Kassapa; Addressed the community of monks, Guarding the true Teaching. On the way from Pava, Subhadda declared; We will recite the true Teaching, Before what is contrary to the Teaching shines forth. Four hundred and ninety-nine, And he also invited Ananda; Communal recitation of the Teaching and the Monastic Law, Staying in the best of caves. He asked Upali about the Monastic Law, And the wise Ananda about the discourses; Communal recitation of the three Collections, Was done by the disciples of the Victor. The various minor rules, Were continued as laid down; He did not ask, having stepped on, Had pay respect, and did not ask. The going forth of women, Wrong conduct for me out of faith; Purana, and the supreme penalty, Harem with Udena. So many, and worn out, Bedspreads, mattress; Floor covers, doormats, Dustcloth, mixed with mud. He got one thousand robes, With the first, the one called Ananda; Condemned by the supreme punishment, Acquired the four truths; Mastered by the five hundred, Therefore it was ‘the group of five hundred’.” The chapter on the first council is finished.