

Pācittiya #78: Eavesdropping

On this occasion the Buddha, the Blessed One, was dwelling at Sāvatti, at Jeta's grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park. Furthermore, on this occasion, [some] group-of-six monks were arguing with well-behaved monks. The well-behaved monks said, “Venerable, these group-of-six monks are shameless. It is not possible to argue with them.” The group-of-six monks said, “Venerables, why do you disgrace us with the term 'shameless'?” “Where did you hear this, Venerable?” “We were eavesdropping on the Venerables.” Those monks who were of few wishes... denounced, criticized, and castigated: “How is it that group-of-six monks will eavesdrop on monks who are argumentative, disputatious, and quarrelsome?” ... “Is it true that you, monks, eavesdropped on monks who are argumentative, disputatious, and quarrelsome?” “It is true, Blessed One.” The Buddha, the Blessed One, reprimanded... “How is it that you, foolish men, will eavesdrop on monks who are argumentative, disputatious, and quarrelsome? This is not, foolish men, for the faith of the faithless... And thus, monks, you may recite this training rule:

“If any monk eavesdrops on monks who are argumentative, disputatious, and quarrelsome, [thinking] 'I will listen to what they say,' after doing it for just this reason and no other: a Pācittiya.”

Any monk: ...

On monks: On other monks.

Argumentative, disputatious, and quarrelsome: Involved in an issue⁶⁶².

Eavesdrops: [Thinking] “After listening to them, I will reprove, remind, counter-reprove, counter-remind him; I will make him ashamed,” one goes: a Dukkaṭa offense. Staying where one hears: a Pācittiya offense. When going after [them], one moves quickly, [thinking] “I will listen”: a Dukkaṭa offense. Staying where one hears: a Pācittiya offense. When going before [them], one stays behind, [thinking] “I will listen”: a Dukkaṭa offense. Staying where one hears: a Pācittiya offense. After going to a place where conversing monks stand, sit, or recline, one is to cough⁶⁶³, one is to make [them] aware; if one does not cough or make them aware: a Pācittiya offense.

After doing it for just this reason and no other: There is no other reason whatsoever to eavesdrop.

Perceiving a fully ordained person as fully ordained, one eavesdrops: a Pācittiya offense.
In doubt about a fully ordained person...: a Pācittiya offense.
Perceiving a fully ordained person as unordained...: a Pācittiya offense.

⁶⁶² *Adhikaraṇa*. This refers to legal issues pertaining to monastic life, such as accusations or offenses.

⁶⁶³ *Ukkāsaṭi*. This is sometimes translated “clear one's throat.” Throughout the Canon this is commonly used as a polite way to wordlessly announce one's presence, such as when approaching a monk's dwelling or an occupied restroom.

One eavesdrops on an unordained person: a Dukkaṭa offense.
Perceiving an unordained person as fully ordained: a Dukkaṭa offense.
In doubt about an unordained person: a Dukkaṭa offense.
Perceiving an unordained person as unordained: a Dukkaṭa offense.

Non-offenses[s]: One goes, [thinking] “After listening to them, I will desist, refrain, become tranquil, and liberate myself”; for one who is crazy; for the first offender.