

Pācittiya #48: Going to See an Active Army

On this occasion the Buddha, the Blessed One, was dwelling at Sāvatti, at Jeta's grove, in Anāthapiṇḍika's park. Furthermore, on this occasion, King Pasenadi of Kosala had mobilized his army. [Some] group-of-six monks went to see the active army. King Pasenadi of Kosala saw the group-of-six monks coming from afar. After seeing them and summoning them, he said, “Bhante, for what purpose have you come?” “We want to see the great king.” “Bhante, what is it with the sight of me delighting in battle? Shouldn't the Blessed One be seen?” People denounced, criticized, and castigated: “How is it that Sakyan-son contemplatives will go to see an active army? It is not a gain for us, it is bad fortune for us, we who came to the army for the sake of a livelihood, in service of our wives and children!” Monks heard of those people, denouncing, criticizing, and castigating. Those monks who were of few wishes... denounced, criticized, and castigated: “How is it that group-of-six monks will go to see an active army?” ... “Is it true that you, monks, went to see an active army?” “It is true, Blessed One.” The Buddha, the Blessed One, reprimanded... “How is it that you, foolish men, will go to see an active army? This is not, foolish men, for the faith of the faithless... And thus, monks, you may recite this training-rule:

“If any monk goes to see an active army: a Pācittiya.”

And thus this training rule was designated for the monks by the Blessed One.

On a [later] occasion, a certain monk's uncle [who was] in the army was sick. He sent a message to that monk, [saying] “I am in the army, sick. May the Auspicious One come. I wish for the arrival of the Auspicious One.” Then that monk thought, “A training-rule has been designated by the Blessed One: ‘One is not to go to see an active army.’ And this uncle of mine is in the army, sick. What is to be done⁵⁸³ by me?” He reported this matter to the Blessed One. Then the Blessed One, on account of this issue, on account of this incident, having given a Dhamma talk, announced to the monks: “Monks, I allow [you] to go to an army when there is a reason like that. And thus, monks you may recite this training-rule:

“If any monk goes to see an active army, except when there is an appropriate⁵⁸⁴ reason: a Pācittiya.”

Any monk: ...

Active: After going out from a village, an army has settled down or set out.

⁵⁸³ *Paṭipajjitabbam*. From *paṭipadā*. One might render this “How am I to practice?”

⁵⁸⁴ *Tathārūpa*. In the origin story this same phrase was rendered more literally as “a reason like that;” however, as the rule itself has no surrounding story for such a statement to reference, a self-contained expression has been used instead.

Army: Elephants, horses, chariots, footmen. Twelve-man: elephant; three-man: horse, four-man: chariot; four men with arrows in hand: footmen⁵⁸⁵. One goes to see: a Dukkaṭa offense. Standing where one sees: a Pācittiya offense. After leaving sight-range, one sees again and again: a Pācittiya offense.

Except when there is an appropriate reason: Having set aside an appropriate reason.

Perceiving it as active when it is active, one goes to see, except when there is an appropriate condition: a Pācittiya offense.

In doubt when it is active, one goes to see...: a Pācittiya offense.

Perceiving it as not active when it is active, one goes to see...: a Pācittiya offense.

One goes to see [it] one by one⁵⁸⁶: a Dukkaṭa offense.

Standing where one sees: a Dukkaṭa offense.

After leaving sight-range, one sees again and again: a Dukkaṭa offense.

Perceiving it as active when it is not active: a Dukkaṭa offense.

In doubt when it is not active: a Dukkaṭa offense.

Perceiving it as not active when it is not active: non-offense.

Non-offense[s]: One sees [it] while standing in a monastery; it approaches the standing-place, sitting-place, or reclining-place of a monk; one sees [it] while going the other way; when there is an appropriate condition; when there are misfortunes; for one who is crazy; and for the first offender.

⁵⁸⁵ These four cryptic passages may be a shorthand description of standard military divisions in the Buddha's time. Without the cultural context of its time and place, it is too abbreviated to make much further sense of.

⁵⁸⁶ Perhaps this means one soldier at a time, or one division at a time.