

# UPOSATHA SĪLA

*The Eight-Precept Observance*



Compiled and written by  
Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāriya

Translated from the Thai by  
Bhikkhu Kantasīlo





**Uposatha Sīla:**  
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Compiled and written by  
Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāriya  
(Nānāvāra Thera)

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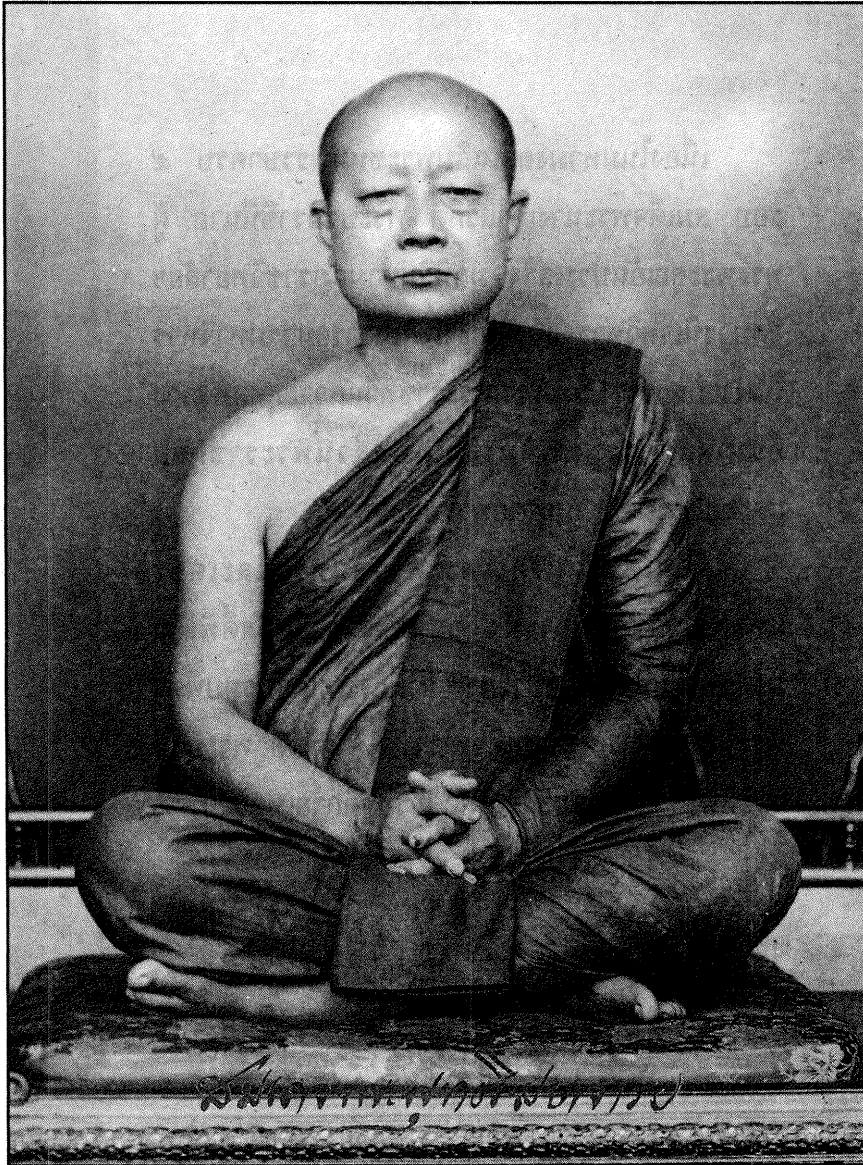
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Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāriya

*nica sīla*—Permanent undertaking; regular precepts; uninterrupted observance of virtue; the good conduct to be observed uninterruptedly i.e. the Five Precepts.

*pañca sīla*—The Five Precepts.

*sugata inches*—Measurements used in the Buddha's time .

*Upāsaka*—lit. one who comes or sits near; a lay devotee; a devout or faithful layman; lay Buddhist.

*Upāsikā*—A female devotee; a lay woman disciple.

*Uposatha*—1. Observance; the observance of the Eight Precepts.

2. bi-weekly recitation of the Vinaya rules by a chapter of Buddhist monks; the days for special meeting of the order, and for recitation of Patimokkha.

3. the Uposatha hall; consecrated assembly hall.

*Uposatha sīla* —The Eight Precepts observed by lay devotees on Uposatha days.

*vera*—Anmity; hostile action; hatred; revenge.

*vipassanā*—Meditation leading to insight; intuitive vision; introspection; contemplation; intuition; insight development.

## Glossary

*Arahat*—One who has attained Nibbana.

*Ariya*—Any of the four types of persons who have attained insight into Nibbana.

*Atthakathā Ācāriya*—The writers of the commentaries.

*Bhikkhu*—A fully ordained Buddhist monk.

Brahmafaring—The chaste life also known as Brahmachariya.

*Dhammadesana*—A talk on the Dhamma given by the Buddha or Buddhist monks.

*Dhammassavana*—Hearing the Doctrine; hearing the preaching of the Doctrine; hearing a sermon; listening to the good teaching.

*kammaṭṭhāna*—Subjects of meditation; meditation exercises.

*Kusala*—Wholesome; meritorious; moral; skilful; Karmically wholesome.

*samatha*—Meditation leading to calm; tranquillity; quietude of heart.

*sīla*—Morality; moral practice; moral conduct; code of morality; Buddhist ethics; a precept; rule of morality

*aṭṭha sīla*—The Eight Precepts.

# UPOSATHA SĪLA

## *The Eight-Precept Observance*

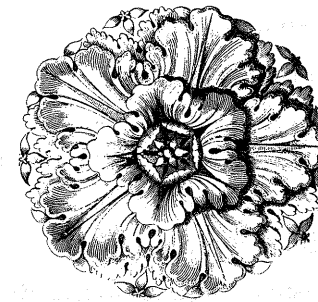
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6. The words for requesting *Uposatha*.

7. The benefits of observing *Uposatha*.

This makes seven divisions in all. Is that correct?

A. Yes.



*samādiyāmi*

The *Uposatha* which was laid down by the Buddha and consists of the eight *sīla* has been determined by me, I will keep them well for one full day and night.

(The bhikkhu then says: *imāni aṭṭha sikkhāpadāni ajjekam rattindivam uposathasilavasena tumhehi upāsakupāsikābhutehi sādhuam akhaṇḍam katvā appamādena rakkhitabbāni*)

The crowd answers: *āma bhante*

(The bhikkhu continues: *sīlena sugatim yanti sīlena bhogasampadā sīlena nibbutim yanti tasmā sīlam visodhaye*)

This is the end of requesting the precepts. The laity should respect the bhikkhu by making obeisance.

Q. What is the benefit of keeping the *Uposatha*?

A. In brief, the benefits are the exact opposite of the evil we forgo. That is to say however much iniquitous or unskillful action we are able to cast off that will be all the more benefit for us. Plus it will serve as a base for deeper grades of concentration and wisdom.

Q. To summarize all the information from the very beginning, there have been seven topics.

1. A detailing of the factors which should and should not be practiced.
2. The method of requesting *Uposatha*.
3. An explanation of the factors enabling one to decide if the *Uposatha* has been broken or not.
4. The practice in terms of strictness and looseness.
5. The method of observing or keeping the *Uposatha*.

## Introduction

I compiled the *Uposatha Sīla* when I still held the rank of Maha. At that time, the manuscript had some errors but now have been corrected. This text will be used in the curriculum of "Nak Dhamm Tri" \* for the men and women who will be testing. Though for laity the subject of lay discipline replaces that of clergy discipline in the exams. The testing shall be held every year starting in B.E. 2472 (1929).

(Acting on the orders of H.H. Somdet Phra Sangharajchao)

Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāraya  
(Ñāṇavara Thera)

Wat Thepsirintaravas  
September 2, 2472 (1929)

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\* Every year in Thailand there are religious exams given through monasteries known as "Nak Dhamm" for the clergy and "Dhamma Sueksa" for the laity. From the lowest to the highest the exams are Tri, To and Ek.

## Translator's Introduction

I am hopeful that this translation of the Uposatha Sila along with its commentary will be beneficial to English speaking Buddhists who are intent on practice.

The original Thai text was compiled by His Eminence Somdet Phra Buddhaghosācāraya of Wat Thepsirintaravas in B.E. 2472/1929. Through his farsightedness it still proves to be useful today.

This text contains many technical Pali terms, some of which have been difficult to accurately translate. For example, some Pali terms dealing with Vinaya are still used today but the true meanings have long been lost or misused.

It is auspicious that this translation will be finished in time to commemorate Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's fifth cycle or sixtieth birthday anniversary which will be celebrated on August 12, 2535/1992.

May her Majesty Queen Sirikit reap the merits and benefits of this printing of the Uposatha Sila. By the power of the Triple Gem may she develop in the four Dhammas of long life, beauty, happiness and strength for ages to come.

Bhikkhu Kantasīlo

Wat Bovoranives Vihara

July 17, 2535/1992

I request the training rule to refrain from unchaste behavior which is an obstacle to the Brahma faring.

4. *musāvādā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I request the training rule to refrain from false speech.

5. *surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I request the training rule to refrain from distilled and fermented intoxicants which cause carelessness.

6. *vikāla-bhojanā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I request the training rule to refrain from eating in the wrong time, the wrong time being from noon to the dawn of the next day.

7. *nacca-gīta-vādita-visūka-dassana mālā-gandha-vilepana-dhāraṇa-maṇḍana-vibhūsanatṭhānā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I request the training rule to refrain from dancing, singing, music and going to see entertainments which are stumbling blocks to wholesomeness; And to refrain from wearing garlands, using perfumes and beautifying the body with cosmetics.

8. *uccāsayana-mahāsayanā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.*

I request the training rule to refrain from sitting and lying down on seats and beds with legs over the limit, on large seats and beds and from using intricate or detailed bed coverings.

*imaṃ aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgataṃ buddhapaññattaṃ uposathaṃ imaṃca rattiṃ imaṃca divasaṃ sammadeva abhirakkhituṃ*

**buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**—To the Buddha I go for  
Refuge

**dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**—To the Dhamma I go for  
refuge

**sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi** —To the Sangha I go for ref-  
uge

**dutiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**

**dutiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**

**dutiyampi sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi** (for the second  
time...)

**tatiyampi buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**

**tatiyampi dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi**

**tatiyampi sanghaṃ saraṇaṃ gacchāmi** (for the third time...)

(The bhikkhu will then say: **tisaraṇagamaṇaṃ nitthitaṃ** or **tisaraṇagamaṇaṃ** or **saraṇagamaṇaṃ** meaning, finished are the three refuges).

Now, along with the intent to refrain, one takes the precepts one by one.

1. **pāṇātipātā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi**

I request the training rule to refrain from the taking of life as well as from ordering others to kill.

2. **adinnādānā varamaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.**

I request the training rule to refrain from stealing as well as from ordering others to steal.

3. **abrahmacariyā veramaṇī sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi.**

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Some texts state (the time for keeping the *pāṭihārika-pakkha uposatha*) the five months are from the seventh month up to the eleventh month.

Some *Ācāriyas* say the three months are the seventh, eleventh and third month.

Yet other sources explain the four days, i.e. the seventh, ninth, thirteenth and fourteenth both waxing and waning are the only days for the observance of the *pāṭihārika-pakkha uposatha*.

For those who wish merit, the *Uposatha* should be kept on the days shown here. Other days outside of these mentioned are for the observance of the five precepts and not the *Uposatha*.

Q. Usually, what is the *Uposatha* called that is observed on the eight, fourteenth and fifteenth?

A. It is called the *Pakkhauposatha*.

Q. What is the passage which is widely used today for the requesting of the *Uposatha sila* ?

A. In unison this passage is chanted thrice:

***mayam bhante tisaraṇena saha aṭṭaṅgasamannāgataṃ uposathaṃ yācāma.***

Q. What is recited when requesting the *Uposatha sila* ?

A. One starts the process by venerating the Buddha with these words.

***namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa (tikkhattum)***

Homage to the Exalted One, the Arahant, the Buddha perfected by himself. (thrice)

a group of three, differing only on the day of observance. The method of requesting the *Uposatha* is the same as before.

Q. What are the different categories of observance.

1. *Pakati-uposatha*.
2. *Paṭi-jāgara-uposatha*.
3. *Pāṭi-hārika-pakkha-uposatha*.

The time for keeping the *pakatiuposatha* is the 5th, 8th, 14th and 15th of the waxing moon and the 5th, 8th, 14th and 15th of the waning moon.

The time for keeping the *patijagarauposatha* is the five days of the waxing moon, i.e. the 4th, 6th, 7th and 9th. Six days in the waning moon: The 1st, 4th, 6th, 7th, 9th, 12th or 13th. That makes eleven days in a month for the observance of this type of *Uposatha*.

The four months of the rainy season or *Vasso*, starting on the first night of the waning moon of the seventh month and ending in the middle of the tenth month, is the period for observing the *pāṭihārikapakkhauposatha*.

The commentary to the *Rāja Sutta* explains that the *pāṭihārikapakkhauposatha* is the *Uposatha* that is observed continually throughout the three months of the rains. If one cannot keep the observance for the full three months of the rains, then it should be kept for one month from the first day of the waning moon of the tenth month to the eleventh month. If one is not able to keep the observance for one full month, then it should be kept for a half month from the first day of the waning moon of the tenth month to the end of that month. Any term of this observance is called *pāṭihārikapakkhauposatha*.

## UPOSATHA SĪLA

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### *The Eight-Precept Observance*

on one's preference. But it is generally agreed that not just these six should be practiced. Because if that were the case, then those skilled in *vipassanā* could not do insight meditation as these six are classified as *samatha* meditation only.

Therefore, in the *ariyauposatha samatha* and *vipassanā* should be practiced, thus not making it difficult for those who are *samathayānika* (practitioners of calm meditation) and *vipassanāyānika* (practitioners of insight meditation). In brief, this means that one is benefiting oneself at the time of observing (*Uposatha*) by practicing *kammaṭṭhāna*. This is called *ariyauposatha*.

Q. *Niggaṇṭha-uposatha* is reckoned as the lowest, *copāla-uposatha* as being intermediate and *ariya-uposatha* as the highest. Is this correct?

A. Yes, that is correct. But *niggaṇṭha-uposatha* is not deemed as *Uposatha* in the Teaching of the Blessed One. Most practitioners are not willing or able to observe the *ariya-uposatha* which is the highest. Most keep only the *copāla-uposatha*. If practitioners can make their observance an *ariya-uposatha*, even just for one day, then most likely they will see it as a special source of merit for themselves, not to mention the rapture and happiness they experience from such actions. They will truly have not wasted such an occasion as rebirth in the human realm and coming into contact with the Buddha's Teaching.

Q. Why is it that the *Uposatha* can only be observed on the 8th, 14th and 15th of the waxing moon? Is observing *Uposatha* on other days not considered *Uposatha* ? Are there other days that the *Uposatha* can be kept?

A. *Uposatha* can be observed on other days as well, not just the three dates mentioned above. I will answer in brief according to the manner of practice. The *Uposatha* can be arranged into

tion practice, and if there is faith inspiring Dhamma talk taking place then one should join in such talk. This is useful in that it leads to knowledge and can correct any misunderstandings we may have. One should not participate in such talk with a sense of competition, winning, losing etc. If such Dhamma talk does not lead to the benefits mentioned above, and if there is a *Dhammadesana*, then one should go and listen so as to fortify one's *saddhā* (faith), *hiri* (fear of doing evil deeds), *ottappa* (the fear of the results of evil deeds), *suta* (that which is learned through hearing), *virīya* (energy), *sati* (mindfulness), and *paññā* (wisdom); causing them to develop. We also listen to the Dhamma to cause *sañvega*—a sense of urgency or faith to arise. If for whatever reason problems arise so that listening to Dhamma does not lead to benefits as mentioned above, then one should practice a *kammaṭṭhāna* which is suitable. The *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* have pointed out six objects for *kammaṭṭhāna* practice which are suitable to the *ariyauposatha*. They are:

1. *Buddhānussati*—Reflection on the qualities of the Buddha.
2. *Dhammānussati*—Reflection on the qualities of the Dhamma.
3. *Sanghānussati*—Reflection on the qualities of the Sangha.
4. *sīlānussati*—Reflection on one's own morality.
5. *cāgānussati*—Reflection on one's own giving.
6. *devatānussati*—Reflecting on such qualities as giving, morality and meditation which cause humans to become celestials.

Any one of these subjects can be practiced depending

## UPOSATHA SUTTA

*Evamme sutam ekam samayam bhagavā sāvatthiyam viharati jetavane anāthapiṇḍikassa ārāme tatra kho bhagavā bhikkhū āmantesi bhikkhavoti bhadanteti te bhikkhū bhagavato paccassosum bhagavā etadavoca aṭṭhaṅgasamannāgato bhikkhve uposatho upavuttho mahapphalo hoti mahānisaṃso mahājutiko mahāvippahāroti.*

Thus have I heard:

At one time, the Blessed One was residing in Jetavana, the monastery of *Anāthapiṇḍika*, near *Sāvattihī*.

At that time, the Blessed One, having called all the bhikkhus together, addressed them thus: "Bhikkhus!"

The bhikkhus answered in assent: "Lord!" (The bhikkhus then prepared themselves for the following teaching.) The Blessed One then gave the following teaching on *Uposatha*.

"Bhikkhus! *Uposatha* is comprised of eight factors which the Ariyan disciple observes. The observation of which brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit."

"Bhikkhus! What is the *Uposatha* which, observed by the Ariyan disciples, brings glorious and radiant fruit and benefit?"

1. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up the intentional taking of life (*pāṇātipātā*). The club and sword have been laid down. They have shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings.'

All of you have given up the intentional taking of life, have put

down all weapons, are possessed of shame (of doing evil) and are compassionate towards all beings. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the first factor of the *Uposatha*.

2. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up taking what has not been given (*adinnādānā*). They take only what is given; are intent on taking only what is given. They are not thieves. Their behavior is spotless.'

All of you have given up the taking of what has not been given. Are ones who do not take what is not given, are intent only on taking of what is given; are not thieves. Your behavior is spotless. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the second factor of the *Uposatha*.

3. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring (*abrahma-cariyā*). Their practice is like that of a Brahma. They are far from sexual intercourse which is a practice of lay people.'

All of you have given up that which is an obstacle to the Brahma-faring; behave like a brahma. Your behavior is far from sexual intercourse. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the third factor of the *Uposatha*.

4. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up the telling

may refrain from killing their own mothers, fathers, relatives, friends or certain animals which are dear to them, but they do not refrain when it come to other beings. The other precepts are practiced along these lines. In short, this group keeps the precepts as they like. This observance is called *niggaṇṭha-uposatha*.

The method of requesting and observing the *copāla-uposatha* is correct according to the *Dhamma-Vinaya* as we see in the example of today's *upāsakas* and *upāsikās*. But after they request the *Uposatha*, they speak low speech. There is talk of villages, towns, mountains, trees, fields, gardens, buying and selling, grandchildren, here and there, this and that person etc. Such talk is not conducive to kusala and does not cause one to reap the effects of happiness and faith in the *Uposatha* that one has observed. The *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* have thus compared such people to hired cow hands (not the owners of the cow). In the morning the hired hands herd the cattle in search of food. In the evening they herd the cattle back to the owner. After they are paid a fair amount of money, they think: 'Tomorrow we will feed the cattle here, and the next day we will feed them over there. Grass and water are abundant here but not so over there.' Again and again this is what takes place. The hired hands never partake of the products of the cow, such as fresh milk and butter. Such observance is called *copālauposatha*.

From the time the *ariyauposatha* is undertaken, if it is the right time and place, then *samatha* and *vipassanā* should be practiced in accordance with one's preference and skill. If one's practice of *kammaṭṭhāna* leads to a stilling of the unwholesome stumbling blocks through such practices as *tadangapahāna* (the abandoning by substitution of opposites), then one should continue with this effort. If the mind becomes unsettled or it is not the time or place for medita-

breaks the third precept *kāmesu micchācārā*.<sup>2</sup>

Q. What about the woman's role here and how is it considered in the third precept?

A. If a man and a woman have feelings for each other but the man is not suited to her, then he becomes her *agamaniya vatthu*.

Q. How many types of *Uposatha* are there arranged by the manner in which they are practiced? What are they?

A. There are three types of *Uposatha* arranged in order of low, medium and high practice. The three are:

1. *niggaṇṭha-uposatha*

2. *copāla-uposatha*

3. *ariya-uposatha*

*Uposatha* observed by heretics is called *niggaṇṭhauposatha*.

*Uposatha*, practiced by lay men and women who appear as though they were hired cow hands is known as *copāla-uposatha*.

*Uposatha* as kept by *upāsakas* and *upāsikās* being special due to the terms of practice is called *ariyauposatha*.

Q. This explanation was very short and difficult to understand. What is a more comprehensive explanation?

A. The *niggaṇṭha-uposatha* is the partial or incomplete observance of the *Uposatha*. Unlike in the first precept, those who observe this *Uposatha* may refrain from taking life in the direction of the West but not in the other directions. They

<sup>2</sup> In English the third precept is usually translated as not committing adultery, which is correct but, this precept involves much more than that. The third precept considers other peoples rights (relatives etc.), diseases, social stability etc.—translator.

of lies (*musāvādā*). They utter the truth only and are intent on the truth. Their speech is firm and is composed of reason. Their speech does not waver from that which is a main stay for the world.'

All of you have given up the telling of lies. You speak only the truth and are intent only on that which is true. Your words are firm and with reason. Your speech does not waver from that which is a mainstay for the world. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the fourth factor of the *Uposatha*.

5. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:"

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants (*surā-meraya-majja-pamādaṭṭhānā*), or that which intoxicates, causing carelessness). They are far from intoxicants.'

All of you have given up the taking of liquors and intoxicants. You abstain from drink which causes carelessness. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the fifth factor of the *Uposatha*.

6. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. They abstain from food in the "wrong time" (*vikāla bhojanā*).'

All of you eat at one time only and do not partake of food in the evening. You abstain from food in the 'wrong time'. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the sixth factor of the *Uposatha*.

7. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainment, which is a stumbling block to that which is wholesome. They do not bedeck themselves with ornaments, flowers or perfume.'

"All of you have given up singing and dancing, the playing of musical instruments and the watching of entertainment, which is a stumbling block to that which is wholesome. You do not bedeck yourselves with ornaments, flowers or perfumes. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the seventh factor of the *Uposatha*.

8. "Bhikkhus! Ariyan disciples in this Religion reflect thus:

'All Arahatas, for as long as life lasts, have given up the lying on large and high beds. They are content with low beds or bedding made of grass.'

All of you have given up the lying on large or high beds. You are content with low beds or beds made of grass. For all of this day and night, in this manner, you will be known as having followed the Arahata, and the *Uposatha* will have been observed by you. This is the eighth factor of the *Uposatha*.

"Bhikkhus! The *Uposatha* is comprised of these eight factors which the Ariyan disciple observes; is of great and glorious fruit and benefit."

Thus the Blessed One spoke on the *Uposatha*. The bhikkhus were delighted and rejoiced at his words.

11. A woman whose indentureship was bought by a man intending to make her his wife is called *dhanakkītā*.

12. A woman who lives with a man of her own free will is called *chandavāsini*.

13. A woman who becomes the wife of a man because of his wealth is called *bhogavāsini*.

14. A destitute woman who becomes the wife of a man out of hope for things such as clothes, is called *paṭavāsini*.

15. A woman whom a man has asked for in marriage in which elders of the family take hold of the bride and groom's hands, plunge them into a tray of water and give the blessing: " May both of you love each other and live happily together. Do not break apart just as the water in this tray does not break apart," is called *odapattakini*.

16. A woman who, being released from a heavy burden by a man, then becomes his wife is called *obhata-cumbaṭā*.

17. A slave woman whom a man takes to wife is called *dāsibhariyā*.

18. A workwoman whom a man takes to wife is called *kammakārinibhariyā*.

19. A woman whom a man wins in battle and then makes his wife is called *dhajahaṭā*.

20. A woman who, living with a man for a certain period of time understanding that she is his wife, is called *muhuttikā*.

Any man who encroaches on any one of these twenty groups of women along with the factors mentioned above

- |                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 11. <i>dhanakkītā</i>         | 12. <i>chandavāsini</i>              |
| 13. <i>bhogavāsini</i>        | 14. <i>paṭavāsini</i>                |
| 15. <i>odapattakini</i>       | 16. <i>obhatacumbaṭā</i>             |
| 17. <i>dāsī ca bhariyā ca</i> | 18. <i>kammakārini ca bhariyā ca</i> |
| 19. <i>dhajahaṭā</i>          | 20. <i>muhuttikā</i>                 |

1. A woman who is kept by her mother is called *māturakkhitā*.
2. A woman who is kept by her father is called *piturakkhitā*.
3. A woman who is kept by both mother and father is called *mātāpiturakkhitā*.
4. A woman who is kept by her older or younger brother is called *bhāturakkhitā*.
5. A woman who is kept by her older or younger sister is called *bhaginīrakkhitā*.
6. A woman who is kept by her relatives is called *nātirakkhitā*.
7. A woman who is kept by her clansmen is called *gottarakkhitā*.
8. A woman who is kept by people who practice Dhamma under the same teacher is called *dhammarakkhitā*.
9. A woman who is kept by her husband is called *sārakkhā*.
10. A woman of such and such name, house or street for misbehaving with whom a king levies a fine against a man is called *saparidaṇḍā*.

## Explanation of the Uposatha Sutta Questions and Answers

Q. What does the word *Uposatha* mean?

A. It means the day of observance (by fasting).

Q. What are the eight precepts of *Uposatha* in brief?

1. Not to kill.
2. Not to steal.
3. Not to engage in sexual intercourse.
4. Not to speak lies.
5. Not to take intoxicants.
6. Not to eat from noon to the dawn of the next day.
7. Not to sing, dance, watch entertainments and use ornaments, cosmetics and perfumes.
8. Not to sit or lie on a large or high seat or bed.

Q. Is it this Sutta which is similar in meaning to the *paccavekkhana* which the laity chant every *dhammassavana* day in the afternoon?

A. Yes.

Q. When one who knows the meaning of what is being chanted and at the time of chanting concentrates on the meaning it will make ones mind calm, wholesome and be of great benefit. Perhaps this practice will lead the practitioner to a momental release from the hindrances (*tadangapahāna*). Can this be considered as practicing *sīlānusati*?

A. Yes.

Q. Briefly, how many ways are there in breaking the eight *Uposatha* precepts?

A. There are two ways. By body and by speech.

In all of the eight, if one breaks a precept, then it is done bodily. If one orders another to do so, then the precept is broken through speech. This (speech) must be accompanied by intention before the precept is broken. But this is true for the first and second precepts only. For the third to the eighth precepts, even if one asks another to do so, one does not break the precept.

Breaking the precept through ones own effort is known as *sāhatthikapayoga*. The ordering of another to behave in a way that breaks the precept is called *ānattikapayoga*.

Thus one who is careful and does not stray from the precepts is known as a virtuous person. The wise say that *sīla* or precepts is an instrument in which body and speech can be purified. It is a way to vanquish the coarse defilements which appear through body and speech.

Q. Of all of the *Uposatha* precepts, (in going against them) how many faults are there? What are they?

A. The first is called *Lokavajja*<sup>1</sup> or worldly fault which the laity should avoid. The second is called *Paññattivajja*.

Whether people observe the precepts or not, when they do something which goes against the first five precepts, it is

<sup>1</sup> Again there is apatti known as lokavajja (worldly faults), that is to say, the common people who are not bhikkhus can also commit such wrongs and the penalties will be borne by them also as when there is a case of stealing, killing human beings and even the lighter wring-doings of striking, scolding, abusing and so forth.—The Entrance To The Vinaya

Correct?

A. Correct.

Q. If while keeping the precepts, one or more are broken what should one do?

A. If one is willing to continue practice, then one should request the precepts anew. This is better than abandoning the precepts in a broken state.

Q. This sutta does indeed deal with the *Uposatha* sila (the eight precepts), but what about the third precept in the *pañca sīla* (the five precepts)? How many and what are the factors of this precept?

A. There are four factors in the third precept (*kāmesu micchācārā*).

*agamanīya vatthu*—That which should not be visited. (the 20 groups of women.)

*tasmim sevanacittam*—The intention to have intercourse with the above mentioned groups.

*sevanappayogo*—the effort at sexual intercourse.

*maggena maggappaṭipatti*—sexual contact through that effort.

Q. What are the twenty types of women?

A. By group name they are:

1. *māturakkhitā*                      2. *piturakkhitā*

3. *mātāpiturakkhitā*              4. *bhāturakkhitā*

5. *bhaginirakkhitā*                      6. *ñātirakkhitā*

7. *gottarakkhītā*                      8. *dhammarakkhitā*

9. *sārakkhā*                              10. *saparidaṇḍā*

1. *uccāsayana mahāsayanaṃ*—a high or large bed.
2. *uccāsayana mahāsayanasaññitā*—one is aware that it is a high or large bed.
3. *abhinisīdanaṃ vā abhinipajjanaṃ vā*—to sit or lie down there upon.

Q. The factors of the third precept are broken down into two and four. So which factors should we go by—the first two or the last four?

A. One may go by either set because if you look closely, you will find that the spirit is the same; only the letter is different.

Q. What about the seventh precept? Why aren't all the factors brought together into six instead of separating them into two parts?

A. The factors can not be combined as the practice differs in content. This precept does not concern just one matter as do other precepts. The first part concerns dancing, singing, watching and listening. The second part involves beautifying the body.

Therefore the two parts cannot be turned into a single faceted precept. These have been separated into two precepts where the ten precepts are concerned. If these two parts were not brought together into six factors then if the practitioner were to dance, sing, and watch entertainments but were to forgo cosmetics, such a one would not be in conformity with the six factors, and the *Uposatha* would be broken.

Q. One who has infringed on the precepts should decide if the precept is broken by the factors mentioned above. If any one of the factors is still intact, the *Uposatha* is not broken. All of the factors must be violated before the precept is broken.

known as *Lokavajja*. It will be a personal loss and will be something the world condemns (*lokavajja*). As for the last three precepts, if they are broken it is called *Paññativajja*. This occurs when one intends to break the rule. If this is not the case, then no fault is accrued.

Q. How many types of perils (in breaking the precepts) are there, and what are they?

A. There are two types:

1. causing peril (*vera*), and
2. not causing peril.

The breaking of the first five precepts causes peril for the breaker. That is to say, the fruit of such actions will follow one, such as short life expectancy. In the breaking of the last three precepts, there is no peril.

Q. In the first precept it is stated that one has laid down clubs and weapons. What does this mean?

A. It simply means that one has given up the taking of life and that one is not a killer. For example, if one kills with instruments (weapons), if he lays down or throws away those instruments, then the killing does not take place. According to this sutta, weapons are of two types: dull and sharp. If the instrument is blunt, then it would come under the category of 'club'. If the instrument is sharp, it comes under the 'sword' category. There is such a wide range of instruments used for killing, but in brief there are two types: sharp and not sharp.

Q. The fifth precept deals with intoxicants (*surā* and *meraya*). How many types of intoxicants are there? What are they?

A. There are ten types of intoxicants. Five of *surā* and five of *meraya*.

Alcohol (*surā*) ...

1. made from flour,
2. made from sweets,
3. made from rice,
4. made from yeast,
5. made from a combination of ingredients.

Fermented (*meraya*) ...

1. made from flowers,
2. made from fruit,
3. made from honey,
4. made from sugar cane,
5. made from a combination of ingredients.

Q. In the fifth precept, no mention is made of drugs such as opium and marijuana. If one is observing the *Uposatha* or *nica sīla* and indulges in these substances, does one break the precept?

A. The precept is broken with the use of opium and marijuana. Brandy, champagne and other spirits (even though not specifically mentioned) are included in *surā* and *meraya*. If used for medicinal purposes in small amounts, not causing one to become inebriated, then the precept is not broken.

Q. In the sixth precept it speaks of eating at one time only. Is it wrong to eat more than once?

A. Before this question can be answered, one must know the "time" first. The time for meals are two in number:

1. *Purebhata-kāla*—the time before the meal.

The sixth precept has four factors.

1. *vikālo*—the time from noon until dawn of the next day.
2. *yāvakālikam*—foodstuffs or that which is considered food.
3. *ajjhoharaṇappayogo*—the effort to eat.
4. *tena ajjhoharaṇam*—the swallowing of food through that effort.

The seventh precept must be examined in two parts.

Part one: to refrain from dancing, singing, playing musical instruments and watching entertainments which are an impediment to wholesome mental states. There are three factors.

1. *naccādīni*—entertainments such as singing, dancing etc.
2. *dassanattāya gamanam*—going to see or listen.
3. *dassanam*—watching or listening.

Part two: to refrain from ornaments. This part has three factors.

1. *mālādīnam aññataratā*—ornaments to bedeck the body consisting of flowers, perfumes etc.
2. *anuññātakāraṇā bhāvo*—except in the time of illness the Buddha does not allow their use.
3. *alaṅkata bhāvo*—using ornaments with the intention of beautifying the body.

The eighth precept has three factors.

*vitaraṇī* cite two factors in the third precept.

1. *sevanacittam*—the intent for sexual intercourse.
2. *maggena maggappaṭipādanam*—sexual contact through any one of the 'paths' (i.e. genitals, anus or mouth).

The commentary to the *Khuddakapāṭha* states four factors.

1. *ajjhācaraṇīyavatthu*—the bases or paths for wrong conduct.
2. *tattha sevanacittam*—the intent for sexual intercourse through any of the above *ajjhācaraṇīyavatthu*
3. *sevanappayogo*—sexual intercourse.
4. *sādiyanam*—being pleased

The fourth precept has four factors.

1. *atatham vatthu*—a falsehood.
2. *visaṃvādanacittam*—the intent to speak a falsehood.
3. *tajjo vāyāmo*—the effort is made.
4. *parassa tadatthavijānanam*—others understand what was said.

The fifth precept has four factors.

1. *madaniyam*—intoxicants.
2. *pātukamyatācittam*—the desire to drink.
3. *tajjo vāyāmo*—the effort is made.
4. *pītapavesanam*—the intoxicants being drunk passing the throat.

2. *Pacchābhatta-kāla*—the time after the meal.

The time from dawn to midday (noon), is called *purebhatta-kāla*. From midday to dusk is called *pacchābhatta-kāla*. One may eat as many times as necessary in the first period. From dusk to the next dawn is called *ratti* (night), and meals may not be taken at this time. This is the reason for the passage with the words to the effect that one refrains from eating at night.

Q. In the Pali of the sixth precept, it states that one will refrain from food in the *vikāla*. What time is *kāla* and what time is *vikāla*

A. From dawn to midday (noon) is called *kāla* (proper time) or the time that ariyas and Buddhas take their meal. From midday to the dawn of the new day is *vikāla* or the improper time for meals.

Q. The seventh precept speaks of refraining from dancing, singing and the playing of musical instruments. Is it not proper for one to ask another to perform so that one may watch?

A. It is not proper.

Q. If that is the case, then the precepts—three to eight—are only broken through one's own volition and not if one orders another to do so. Does this go uncontested?

A. If A enlists B to dance and/or sing, then you should not watch or listen. In this instance the *sīla* will not be broken. But the *sīla* would be broken for those who watch or listen not on the grounds of ones ordering another to dance or sing. Even if one orders another to watch the said activities, the one who gave the orders would not have breached the precept.

- Q. In this sutta only watching is mentioned. In that case, is listening to music not suitable for those who observe the *Uposatha sīla* ?
- A. Listening to music is not suitable since listening is included in watching by the *Atthakathā Ācāriyas*.
- Q. How do the *Ācāriyas*, include listening in watching?
- A. According to the *Ācāriyas*, the breaking of the precept lies in the effort exerted in going to watch shows etc. If one is standing, sitting or lying down in one's own place, That is, if one does not put forth the effort to go and watch. And if such shows and entertainments pass or come to us, it is not a breach of the precept for us, though, the *sīla* would be tarnished. But in any case not to listen or watch is the best. The listening to and singing of songs is a breach of the precept except when such ballads contain Dhamma by which means faith arises as well as the boredom of suffering. For example, one thera heard a slave woman singing about life's troubles. When the thera heard this, he saw the tediousness of suffering and made attainments on the path. This type of song can be listened to and is not detrimental.
- Q. Is the (seventh) precept broken if one uses cosmetic powder, not for the sake of self beautification, but to ward off illness?
- A. The precept would not be broken. The point of the precept is to avoid cosmetics which beautify the body and not to avoid that which is medicinal.
- Q. The eighth precept does not permit the use of high or large beds. It is still not clear what is meant here. Perhaps even the one who is observing the precepts doesn't understand entirely. What is meant by a large bed, and what are the measurements making a large bed unallowable?
- A. Beds and stools, made of boards, rattan or cloth, may have

undertaking the precepts. For those who do not know Pali, they may undertake the precepts in their own language.

- Q. The pious can keep the precepts correctly in accordance with the above two methods. But when occasion presents itself, one may intend to break a precept. How is it then decided if the precept is actually broken?
- A. The *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* have outlined the key factors of each precept wherein it is possible to know if the precept is broken or not.
- Q. If the practitioner knew these factors, he would then be able to decide for himself if the precept had indeed been broken. What are the key factors, and how many are there?
- A. The first precept has five factors. They are.
1. *pāṇo* —presence of a living being.
  2. *pāṇasaññitā* — one knows that it is a living being.
  3. *vadhacittaṃ*—the intention to kill.
  4. *upakkamo*—the effort to kill.
  5. *tena maraṇaṃ*—the resulting death of that being.

The second precept has five factors. They are :

1. *parapariggahitaṃ*—items with a concerned owner.
2. *parapariggahitasaññitā*—one knows there is a concerned owner.
3. *theyyacittaṃ*—the intention to steal.
4. *upakkamo*—the effort to steal.
5. *tena haraṇaṃ*—the articles are stolen through that effort.

The commentaries to the *Brahmajāla-sutta* and the *Kaṅkhā-*

- Q. If one is able to go to the temple, then one should ask the precepts from a bhikkhu. If one is not able to go, then who should the precepts be asked from?
- A. One could invite a bhikkhu. But according to the commentaries we are told that if it is the morning of the Uposatha day, one should ask for the precepts from a bhikkhu or *bhikkhuni*. If this is not possible, then at least from a layman or a laywoman who knows the ten precepts well. If there is absolutely no one available then one could determine the precepts by oneself. In this case the layperson should utter the precepts at the same time as establishing the mental intention to refrain in accordance with that particular precept. This is done through either one of two methods.

Q. What are the two methods of asking for the precepts?

A. They are: *Pacceka-samādāna* and *Ekajjha-samādāna*.

The undertaking of precepts one after another is called *Paccekasamādāna*. For example the undertaking of each individual precept starting with *pāṇātipātā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* and ending with *uccāsayana mahāsayanā veramaṇi sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi* is called *paccekasamādāna*.

The undertaking of all eight precepts at one time (without saying each individually) is called *ekajjhasamādāna*. This is done by determining all the precepts at one time and uttering the following: *Buddhapaññattaṃ uposathaṃ adhiṭṭhāmi* —I determine the Uposatha laid down by the Buddha. This method is called *ekajjhasamādāna*.

Those who use either of the two methods mentioned above should begin by venerating the Triple Gem reciting *namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa* (thrice). Then taking the three refuges; *buddhaṃ saraṇaṃ gachāmi, dhammaṃ saraṇaṃ gachāmi, saṅghaṃ saraṇaṃ gachāmi* etc. before

many curved or straight legs. The bed should not exceed 8 *sugata* inches (approximately 20 modern inches) measured from the base board down. Exceeding this measurement would make the bed unallowable. In the case of a square stool, even if the legs exceed eight *sugata* inches, it is still allowable. If a bed has a back and side boards, even if it is a little over the prescribed dimensions, it is allowable. A bed or stool which has legs being over the required measurements but which is stationary is allowable. A bed which does not have a head board, may be elevated a little by putting wood under the legs up to and not exceeding eight inches. High beds and seats tend to lead to boastfulness and excitement. Thus the purpose behind not sitting or lying on high seats and beds is to do away with the possibility of such things leading to lust.

Q. What are the characteristics of a bed and stool?

A. The bed is long and is for reclining. The stool is for sitting and is either round or four-sided.

Q. How many arms widths or forearm lengths before a bed is too big for use?

A. The bed is not measured in this fashion. The term **big** here refers to decorations and covering which should not be used. The *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* have arranged a list of nineteen.

1. A seat adorned with images of fierce animals such as tigers, crocodiles, etc.
2. Pelts with long fur. (The hairs exceed four inches in length.)
3. Spreads made of wool which are intricately embroidered.
4. Spreads made of wool with intricate designs.

5. Spreads made of wool with pictures of flowers.
6. Spreads made of wool intricate with pictures of various animals.
7. Spreads made of wool with hair on both sides.
8. Spreads made of wool with hair on one side.
9. Spreads made out of tiger hides.
10. Red canopy type furnishings.
11. Elephant rugs.
12. Horse rugs.
13. Chariot rugs.
14. Spreads woven of gold and silk and trimmed in gold.
15. Spreads woven of silk and trimmed in gold.
16. A woolen spread big enough for 16 dancers to dance on.
17. Spreads made from civet pelts.
18. Beds with red cushions at both ends
19. A mattress stuffed with nothing but kapok.

Another explanation of the word **big** or **large** bed here is a bed big enough for two or more persons. Those who keep the *Uposatha* precepts stay away from beds such as these which are meant for couples.

Q. What mattresses (stuffings) are allowable?

- A.
1. A Mattress stuffed with wool, feathers, fur from bipeds or quadrupeds excluding human hair.
  2. A Mattress stuffed with cloth.

3. A Mattress stuffed with bark.
4. A Mattress stuffed with grass.
5. A Mattress stuffed with leaves except for the leaves of the Borneo camphor.

The leaves of the Borneo camphor, if mixed with the leaves of other trees is allowable. The above list of mattresses has been allowed by the Buddha.

Q. According to the Sutta, it is not allowable to lie on a large or high bed. Would it be considered a breach of the precept to sit on a large or high bed?

A. Even though the Sutta mentions only lying down, the *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* include sitting here as well. This is similar to the seventh precept where the *Atthakathā Ācāriyas* include listening with watching, dancing, singing etc. Standing and walking are not prohibited on a seat or bed.

Q. If one does not understand the intricacies (of keeping *sīla*) as explained here, is it still possible for one to refrain and be well restrained in regards to *sīla*?

A. This is like the case of the money changer who does not know the difference between genuine and counterfeit bills. It is possible for such a one to throw away the good bills while keeping the counterfeit ones. Or keeping the good bills while throwing away the bad ones by accident. In any case others would not dare confirm the validity of this person's money. Or like the goldsmith's tools. If he does not know how many hammers, files, etc, he has of this and that size, when they go missing, are stolen or are replaced with inferior instruments, how will he know? By the time he finds out most of his instruments will be gone. If the goldsmith's tools are inferior, his work will be inferior. The same holds true for the *Uposatha*.