

Navanga Uposatha -The Nine Uposatha Precepts

Jacquetta Games

Buddhist Group of Kendal (Theravada)

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In Theravada Buddhist countries (and increasingly in the West) many lay people observe the *Atthangika Uposatha Sila* (the Eight *Uposatha* Precepts) on the *Uposatha* days (Full Moon, New Moon and the two Half Moon days). Many lay people dress in white clothes and spend the *Uposatha* days in monasteries or temples, practising meditation, performing Buddhist rituals, and listening to Dhamma talks delivered by monks or nuns.

A Burmese lady who used to live in Kendal and attended our Group observes the *Navanga Uposatha Sila* (The Nine *Uposatha* Precepts) where a Ninth Precept of *Metta* (practice of Universal Loving Kindness taught by the Buddha in the *Karaniya Metta Sutta*, the discourse on Loving-kindness to all beings), is the Ninth Precept.

The Nine *Uposatha* Precepts are described in the Pali Canon in The *Book of the Gradual Sayings (Anguttara-Nikaya)*, or *More Numbered Suttas*, Volume IV The Book of the Nines, viii (18) Amity pages 259-260. The Pali Commentary to this *Sutta* states "*Loving-kindness meditation is included in accordance with the temperament of the people to be guided*"; from which we can deduce that these Nine Precepts are taken by lay people whose commitment to the Dhamma impels them to do so. If no monk is present a layperson may take the Nine *Uposatha* Precepts alone or with other lay people.

The following formula is used to formally request the *Navanga Uposatha Sila* (Nine *Uposatha* Precepts) from a monk.

The translations are given after the Pali:

Layperson: *Okasa, okasa, okasa; aham bhante tisanenena saha Navanga samannagatam uposatha silam dhammam yacami.*

*Annuggham katva, silam detha me bhante.
Dutiyam pi aham bhante...
Tatiyam pi aham bhante...*

After the request has been formally made, the monk recites a formula paying Homage to the Buddha and takes refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha; and accedes to the request by giving the Precepts one at a time, repeated by the layperson:

Vandana and Tisarana

- 1. Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 2. Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 3. Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 4. Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 5. Sura-meraya-majja-pamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 6. Vikala bhojana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 7. Nacca-gita-vadita-visuka-dassana-mala-gandha vilepana-dharana-mandana-vibhusanatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 8. Ucchasyana-mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*
- 9. Metta Saha gatena cetasa, sabba pana bhutesu mnasam pharitva viharanam samadiyami*

Monk: *Tisaranena saha Navanga samannagatam uposatha silam dhammam sadhukam katva appamadena sampadetha.*

Layperson: *Ama Bhante*

Translation of the above:

Layperson: With your permission, Venerable Sir, I ask for the Nine *Uposatha* Precepts together with the Three Refuges. Out of compassion, please give me the Precepts.

Monk: Homage to the Lord Buddha and the Three Refuges.

1. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from killing living beings.
2. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking what is not given.

3. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from non-celibate conduct.
4. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from false speech.
5. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking drugs and drinks which tend to cloud the mind.
6. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from taking food at an unreasonable time.
7. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from dancing, singing, music and unseemly shows; from the use of garlands, perfumes, and unguents; and from things that tend to beautify and adorn (the person).
8. I undertake the rule of training to refrain from using high and luxurious seats and beds.
9. I undertake the rule of training to stay with a tranquil mind infused with volition of love unto all living creatures.

Monk: Observing carefully these Nine *Uposatha* Precepts, together with the Three Refuges, strive with diligence

(*appamadena sampadetha*).

Layperson: Yes, Venerable Sir.

As a matter of interest, *appamadena sampadetha* (strive on with diligence) appearing as the final admonition given by the Monk in the above ritual, were also the last words spoken by the dying Buddha before he finally passed away.

It has been suggested that since the eight *Uposatha* Precepts can be seen as negative in formulation, *Metta* was added to help develop an *appamana* mind (immeasurable, boundless, infinite mind) often referred to by the Buddha, and make the *Uposatha* Day vast and brilliant. Others have suggested that *Metta* helps with *Sila* (morality) and *Bhavana* (meditation and mental development).

Further information on taking Precepts is given in:

Hammalawa Saddhatissa, Venerable, and Pesala, Venerable, *A Buddhist's Manual* (2nd edition. London, British Mahabodhi Society, 1990).

Rewata Dhamma Maha Thera, *Maha Paritta: The Discourses of the Great Protection (With the Threefold Refuges, Precepts, Salutations to the Triple Gem, Dependent Origination and Metta Bhavana)* (Birmingham, Dhamma-Talaka Publications, 1996)

Win, Sao Htun Hma, *Basic Principles of Burmese Buddhism* (Rangoon, Myanmar, Department of Religious Affairs, 1985)