

# Ājīvatthamaka Sīla

## (The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth)

The *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* builds upon the framework of *Pañca Sīla* (Five Precepts) in two ways: the fourth Precept on wrong speech is expanded to include all four types of wrong speech; and an eighth Precept, Right Livelihood, is added.

1) *Pānātipātā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from killing and injuring living things

2) *Adinnādānā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from taking that which is not given

3) *Kāmesu micchācārā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from sexual misconduct and excessive sensuality

4) *Musāvādā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from false and harmful speech

5) *Pisunāvācā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from backbiting

6) *Pharusāvācā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from using harsh or abusive speech

7) *Samphappalāpā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from useless or meaningless conversation

8) *Micchājivā veramanī sikkhāpadam samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from wrong means of livelihood

In this article I discuss writings on the subject of *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* by notable Theravāda Buddhist scholar-monks, either Myanmar [Burmese] or who have a connection with Myanmar [Burma]; and by Sayagyi U Chit Tin (a lay Buddhist born in Myanmar [Burma]).

The article also touches on the other Precepts mentioned by Venerable Ledi Sayadaw in his booklet, *The Requisites of Enlightenment*: "...sīla means: *Pañca Sīla* [The Five Precepts], *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* [morality ending with the practice of Right Livelihood], *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* [The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts] and *Dasanga Sīla* [The Ten Precepts for Laypeople], in respect of ordinary laymen and women, and the *Bhikkhu Sīla* [*Catupārisuddhi Sīla*] in respect of the *Bhikkhus*...The Five Precepts...are basic and constitute the minimum which every man or woman must observe. They are abstention from killing, stealing, improper sexual intercourse, telling lies, and taking intoxicants...The eight *Uposatha* precepts [*Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla*] are: abstention from (1) killing, (2) stealing, (3) unchastity, (4) lying, (5) intoxicants, (6) eating after midday, (7) dancing, singing, music and shows, garlands, scents, cosmetics and adornment etc, and (8) luxurious and high beds. The Ten Precepts...is the polished form of *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla*. No. seven of the eight precepts is split into two parts, and no.10 is 'abstinence from accepting gold and silver'... *Bhikkhu Sīla*: the four kinds of the monk's moral purity [*Catupārisuddhi Sīla*] are: (1) restraint with regard to the 227 *Pātimokkha* training rules, (2) restraint of the senses, (3) restraint with regard to one's livelihood, and (4) morality with regard to the four requisites." (2007 edition pages 11-12)

### **Venerable Rewata Dhamma Mahā Thera (1929-2004)**

Venerable Rewata Dhamma born in Myanmar [Burma], was head of the Birmingham Buddhist Vihāra until his death in 2004. His book *Mahā Paritta: The Discourses of the Great Protection (With the Threefold Refuges, Precepts, Salutations to the Triple Gem, Dependent Origination and Mettā Bhāvanā)*, gives the formula in *Pāli* and English for requesting *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* (The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth). (pages 9-12)

## **Venerable Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya Mahanāyaka Thera Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru Agga Mahā Pandita (1896-1998)**

Venerable Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya, born in Sri Lanka, attended the Sixth Buddhist Council held in Myanmar [Burma] (1954-56). In 1956, during the third session of the Council, he served as Chairman of the Convocation for a few weeks. The Council was convened by the Myanmar [Burmese] government to prepare an authorized re-edit and reprint of the entire *Tipitaka* (the *Pāli* Canon) and its commentaries. Venerable Ānanda Maitreya was appointed the Sri Lankan representative on the final editing committee. The Myanmar government conferred on him the honorary title of *Agga Mahā Pandita* ('Chief Great Scholar') in appreciation. The Myanmar government invited him shortly after his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday to Myanmar to receive the country's highest title *Abhidhaja Maharatthaguru* ('His Eminence the Great Spiritual Teacher of the Nation'). In March 1997 he travelled to Myanmar to receive the honour.

Venerable Balangoda Ānanda Maitreya is widely regarded as the person who did the most to introduce the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* to the west. He explained the importance of these precepts in these terms: "The perfect moral conduct or character ... can be categorised under the eight precepts called *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. These are, refraining from eight unwholesome ways... All the good conduct and keeping precepts or *Pātimokkha* rules of Buddhist monks are included in these eight precepts." (1995 page 16)

## **Venerable Ñyānatiloka Mahā Thera (1878-1957)**

Venerable Ñyānatiloka *Mahā Thera* and Venerable Ñyānaponika *Mahā Thera* (1901-1994) (both born in Germany) attended the Sixth Buddhist Council in Yangon [Rangoon] in Myanmar in the 1950s. They are regarded as the first and only European *Bhikkhus* to attend a Council of Theravāda Buddhism, assuming that no Greek *Bhikkhus* had been present at the Third Council in India.

Venerable Ñyānatiloka, in his *Buddhist Dictionary: Manual of Buddhist Terms and Doctrines*, defines *sīla* as "Morality of the Eightfold Path, namely right speech, right action, and right livelihood, is called Genuine or Natural Morality' (*pakati sīla*), as distinguished from the external rules for monks or laymen, the so-called 'Prescribed Morality' (*pannatti sīla*)... What now is karmically wholesome morality (*kusala-sīla*)? It is the wholesome bodily action (*kāya-kamma*), wholesome verbal action (*vacī-kamma*) and also the purity with regard to livelihood which I call morality. (Translation of *Samanamandika Sutta*, *Majjhima Nikaya*, *Sutta 78*)"

In the same book he has defined other versions of *sīla* as follows:

*Cāritta Sīla* and *Vāritta Sīla*: " 'Morality consisting in Performance and morality consisting in Avoidance', means 'the performance of those moral rules which the Blessed One has ordained to be followed, and the avoidance of those things that the Blessed One has rejected as not to be followed'".

*Abhisamācārika Sīla*: " 'Morality consisting in good behaviour' is a name for those moral rules other than the eight ending with right livelihood (i.e. fourfold right speech, threefold right action and right livelihood, as in the Eightfold Path)."

*Ādi Brahma Cariya Sīla*: " 'Morality of Genuine Pure Conduct', [which] consists in right speech, right bodily action and right livelihood, forming the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> links of the Eightfold Path."

## **Venerable Ledi Sayadaw Mahā Thera Agga Mahā Pandita (1846-1923)**

Venerable Ledi *Sayadaw* is a Buddhist scholar of importance and influence in Myanmar [Burma] and throughout the Buddhist world. (*Sayadaw* is derived from *saya*, meaning teacher, and *daw*, meaning great or respectable.) He helped develop interest in Buddhist meditation. He established many monasteries (education centres, meditation centres and secluded forest retreats), and helped develop associations for lay Buddhists throughout

Myanmar. He was the first person to receive the honorary title of *Agga Mahā Pandita* (Chief Great Scholar) from the British government in Burma in 1912.

Venerable Ledi *Sayadaw* wrote about the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* in *Decision on Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*, which is only available in Myanmar [Burmese] and unfortunately has not been translated into English. His works *Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani or the Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment* and *Magganga-Dīpani: The Manual of The Constituents of the Noble Path* which I discuss below, also cover *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* in depth.

## ***Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani or the Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment***

*Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani or the Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment* was published by the BPS Buddhist Publication Society as *Wheel 171-174 The Requisites of Enlightenment: Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani*. It was later republished by the BPS as *The Requisites of Enlightenment: Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani: A Manual by the Venerable Ledi Sayadaw* (2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2007). It is also published in *The Manuals of Dhamma* by *Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw*, published in 1999 by the VRI Vipassana Research Institute in India.

*Bodhipakkiyā Dīpani or the Manual of the Factors Leading to Enlightenment* is an explanation of the thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhammas* [requisites of enlightenment] which constitute the essence of the teachings of the Buddha. In this work Venerable Ledi *Sayadaw* stresses the importance of the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* in the attainment of *Nibbāna* (enlightenment). Relevant extracts are as follows:

“...*sīla* means: *Pañca Sīla* [The Five Precepts], *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*, *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* [The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts] and *Dasanga Sīla* [The Ten Precepts for Laypeople], in respect of ordinary laymen and women, and the *Bhikkhu Sīla* [*Catupārisuddhi Sīla*] in respect of the *Bhikkhus*.” (2007 edition page 11)

“The three constituents of the morality-group of the Eightfold Path when considered in detail become *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* (morality ending with the practice of Right Livelihood) in the following way:

1. I will abstain from taking life.
2. I will abstain from stealing.
3. I will abstain from indulging in improper sexual intercourse and taking intoxicant drugs.
4. I will abstain from telling lies.
5. I will abstain from setting one person against another.
6. I will abstain from using rude and rough words.
7. I will abstain from frivolous talk.
8. I will abstain from improper livelihood.” (2007 edition page 11)

“The fifteen *carana-dhammas* [Right Conducts] are:

1. *Sīla* (morality)
2. *Indriya-samvara* (guarding the sense doors)
3. *Bhojane mattaññutā* (moderation in eating)
4. *Jāgariyānuyoga* (wakefulness)
- 5-11. *Saddhamma* (the seven attributes of good and virtuous people)
- 12-15. Four *jhānas* (meditative absorptions)” (2007 edition page 16)

“Those persons who wish to fulfil the paths and the fruits thereof in this very life must fulfil the first eleven *carana-dhammas* [right conducts]...Herein, *sīla* means *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* (permanent practice of morality ending with right livelihood)...” (2007 edition pages 16-17)

“If the *Tipitaka* which contains the discourses of the Buddha...be condensed, and the essentials extracted, the thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhammas* (requisites of enlightenment) are obtained. These thirty-seven *bodhipakkhiya-dhammas* [requisites of enlightenment] constitute the essence of the *Tipitaka*. If these be further condensed the seven *visuddhis* [purifications] are obtained. If again the seven *visuddhis* [purifications] be condensed, they become *sīla* [morality], *samādhi* [concentration], and *paññā* (wisdom).

These are called *adhisīla-sāsana* (the teaching of higher morality), *adhicitta-sāsana* (the teaching of higher mentality), and *adhipaññā-sāsana* (the teaching of higher wisdom). They are also called the three *sikkhās* (trainings).” (2007 edition page 22)

“When *sīla* is mentioned, the essential for laymen [and women] is *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality]. Those people who fulfil *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality] become endowed with *carana* [conduct], which with *vijjā*, enables them to attain the paths and the fruits. If these people can add the refinement of *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* [The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts] over *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality], it is much better. For laymen [and women] *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality] means the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* (morality ending with Right Livelihood as the eighth precept). That *sīla* must be properly and faithfully kept. If because they are *putthujjanas* (worldlings) they break the *sīla*, it can be re-established immediately by renewing the undertaking to keep the *sīla* for the rest of their lives. If, on a future occasion, the *sīla* is again broken, it can be similarly cleansed, and every time this cleansing occurs, the person concerned again becomes endowed with *sīla*. The effort is not difficult. Whenever *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality] is broken, it should be immediately re-established.” (2007 edition pages 22-23)

“As far as laypeople are concerned, *sīla* means *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* which is *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality] for them. The *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* [The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts] and *Dasanga Sīla* [The Ten Precepts for Laypeople] add refinement to *Nicca Sīla* [permanent morality]. It is a good thing to be able to observe them but it does not matter much if they cannot be observed. For those people who assume the yellow garb of *Isis* (hermits, recluses, *rishis*) the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* and *Dasanga Sīla* [The Ten Precepts] constitute *sīla*. The *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* [The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts] is included in the *Dasanga Sīla* [The Ten Precepts]. For *Bhikkhus*, the *Catupārisuddhi Sīla* [*Bhikkhu Sīla*] constitutes morality (*sīla*).” (2007 edition page 48)

“...*sotāpannas* [stream-enterers] do not transgress the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* (the eightfold morality ending with right livelihood) even in their dreams throughout the series of lives and world-cycles that follow until the final attainment of *Parinibbāna*.” (2007 edition page 52)

“Foundation of supramundane concentration (the fourth constituent of stream-entry) means the ‘permanent morality ending with right livelihood as the eighth precept’ (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*) which can enable one to attain supramundane concentration in this very life. When that *sīla* is unbroken and pure, it is free from the defilements of *tanhā* [craving], *māna* (conceit), and *ditthi* (wrong view), and as such, one must understand that *saddhā* is prominent in that *sīla*. Inability to observe the requirements of that *sīla* is called ‘breaking’ it. Although the *sīla* may be technically unbroken, if it is observed amidst ordinary worldly conditions, it is said to be ‘impure’.” (2007 edition page 71)

“The *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* that is taken and observed with the purpose of destroying the great kingdom of *ditthi-anusaya* (proclivity to wrong views) belongs to the path factors of the mundane morality category [*lokiya Sīlakkhanddha-magganga*]. It is also purification of virtue. That eightfold virtue ending with right livelihood (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*) is twofold: for layfolk, and for monks. Abstention from the threefold evil conduct in deeds [*kāya-duccarita*] and the fourfold in words [*vacī-duccarita*] comprise that virtue for layfolk. The *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* (The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts) and the *Dasanga Sīla* (The Ten Precepts for Laypeople) are refinements of that virtue. For monks, that virtue is constituted by the observance of the 227 *Vinaya* rules, which cover bodily and vocal *kamma*. The remaining rules laid down in the *Vinaya Pitaka* are refinements of it.” (2007 edition page 92)

### ***Magganga-Dipani: The Manual of The Constituents of the Noble Path***

The *Magganga-Dipani: The Manual of The Constituents of the Noble Path* was published in English by S.S. Davidson in 1986 as *Magganga-Dipani: The Manual of The Constituents of the Noble Path*. It is also published in *The Manuals of Dhamma* by Mahāthera Ledi Sayadaw, published in 1999 by the VRI Vipassana Research Institute in India.

The *Magganga-Dipani: The Manual of The Constituents of the Noble Path* is a description of the Noble Eightfold Path. It includes explanations of how the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* is an important part of this path. Relevant extracts follow.

In the section *Exposition of Right Effort*, the fourth kind of Right Effort is explained as “Putting forth effort in such a way as to keep unbroken the Purification of Virtue such as the Five Precepts and the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* which one is observing in this very life, till one attains *Nibbāna* and to make it permanent, is the fourth kind of Right Effort.” (1986 edition page 33)

### **“FORMING THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH INTO THREE GROUPS**

1. *Sīlakkandha* (Morality-group) comprises Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood.
2. *Sammādhikkhandha* (Concentration-group) comprises Right Effort, Right Mindfulness and Right Concentration.
3. *Paññākkhandha* (Wisdom-group) comprises Right Understanding and Right Thinking.” (1986 edition pages 42-43)

“The three constituents of the Morality-group, when considered in detail, become *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* in the following manner:

1. I will abstain from taking life.
2. I will abstain from stealing.
3. I will abstain from indulging in sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants.  
These three comprise Right Action.
4. I will abstain from telling lies.
5. I will abstain from setting one person against another.
6. I will abstain from using rude and rough words.
7. I will abstain from talking frivolously.  
These four comprise Right Speech.
8. *Sammā-ājīva* (Right Livelihood) means livelihood without resorting to taking lives, etc.

Thus the three constituents of the Morality-group, become *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.” (1986 edition page 43)

*Nicca Sīlas* (Permanent Morality), such as...[the] Five Precepts, the Ten Precepts observed by *Isis* (*Rishis*, hermits) and *parabbājakas* (wandering mendicants), the Ten Precepts observed by *sāmaneras* and the 227 Rules of *Vinaya* observed by *Bhikkhus* are within the domain of *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. And the laymen’s Eight Precepts [*Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* (The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts)] are nothing but improvements on and polishing of the Five Precepts and *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.” (1986 edition page 43)

### **HOW TO ESTABLISH THE MORALITY-GROUP OF THE EIGHTFOLD PATH**

#### **“The exposition of the Eightfold Path in relation to the stages of *ditthi* [view]**

In order to get rid of the three evil bodily actions and the four evil verbal actions, the three constituents of the Morality-group of the Eightfold Path must be established, meaning thereby that *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* must be accepted and observed.” (1986 edition page 44)

#### **“How to take and practise *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla***

In order to get rid of the third stage of Personality-belief, people should establish themselves in Purification of Virtue by taking, observing and practising *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. They can either of their own accord recite it and then observe it, or make up their mind to abstain from contravening the Eight Precepts...from that day throughout life, and successfully abstain from them accordingly. If one observes it of one’s own accord, there would be no necessity to accept it from a *Bhikkhu*. It is enough if one makes up one’s mind as follows:

1. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from taking life.
2. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from stealing.
3. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from indulging in sexual misconduct and also from the five kinds of intoxicants.
4. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from speaking untruth.
5. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from setting one person against another.
6. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from abusive and rude words...
7. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from speaking things which are not conducive to the well-being of the beings either in the present life, in *samsāra*, or in the Supramundane Sphere.
8. From today throughout my life, I will abstain from improper livelihood.

### **The kinds of *Nicca Sīla* (Permanent Morality)**

Once it has been taken, it remains good till it is violated. Only the precept that is broken should be taken again, but if the one that is not violated is taken again, there would be nothing wrong though there is no necessity to do so. If one precept which has not been violated is taken again, it becomes strengthened thereby.

It is better to take the whole of *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* every day. *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* like *Pañca Sīla* is a *Nicca Sīla* (permanent morality). It is not the kind of morality (*sīla*) that is taken and observed on *Uposatha* (Fasting) days. *Sāmaneras*, *Isis* (Rishis, hermits) and *parabbājakas* (wandering mendicants) who have to observe always the Ten Precepts, and *Bhikkhus* who have to observe always the 227 *Vinaya* Rules need not specially take *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.

This is the end of the explanation as to how *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* is to be taken.” (1986 edition pages 44-45)

**“Ingredients of the Seven Kinds of Wrong Doing (Three-fold bodily action: killing, stealing, sexual misconduct. Four-fold verbal action: lying, slandering, rude speech, foolish babble.)**

Five conditions of *Pānātipātā*

1. The being must be alive.
2. There must be the knowledge that it is a live being.
3. There must be an intention to cause death.
4. An act must be done to cause death.
5. There must be death, as the result of the said act.

If all the said conditions are fulfilled, the first precept is violated and should be taken again.

Five conditions of *Adinnādānā*

1. The property must be in the possession of another person.
2. There must be the knowledge that the property is in the possession of another person.
3. There must be an intention to steal.
4. There must be an act done to steal.
5. By that act, the property must have been taken.

If all the said conditions are fulfilled, the second precept is violated and should be taken again.

Four conditions of *Kāmesu micchācārā*

1. It must be a man or a woman with whom it is improper to have sexual intercourse.
2. There must be an intention to have such sexual misconduct with such man or woman.
3. There must be an act done to have such intercourse.
4. There must be enjoyment of the contact of the organs.

If all the said conditions are fulfilled, the third precept is violated and should be taken again.

Four conditions of *Musāvādā*

1. The thing said must be untrue.
2. There must be an intention to deceive.
3. There must be an effort made as a result of the said intention.
4. The other must know the meaning of what is said.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the fourth precept is violated and should be taken again.

Four conditions of *Pisunāvācā*

1. There must be persons to be disunited.
2. There must be an intention to disunite two persons.
3. There must be an effort made as a result of the said intention.
4. The other must know the meaning of the thing said.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the fifth precept is violated and should be taken again.

Three conditions of *Pharusāvācā*

1. There must be someone to be abused.
2. There must be anger.
3. Abusive language must actually be used.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the sixth precept is violated and should be taken again.

Two conditions of *Samphappalāpā*

1. There must be an intention to say things which bring forth no good benefits.
2. Such things must be said.

If these conditions are fulfilled, the seventh precept is violated and should be taken again....

The foregoing conditions about *musāvādā*, *pisunāvācā*, and *samphappalāpā* relate to violation of the respective precepts. They become conditions for *Kamma*patha, ie *kamma* which leads to rebirths in lower planes, if the following conditions are added:

*Kamma*patha takes place thus:

1. In the case of *musāvādā*, another person must suffer loss or damage.
2. In the case of *pisunāvācā*, disunion must be brought about.
3. In the case of *samphappalāpā*, others must think that the plays and novels are true stories.

And in the case of the remaining four precepts, namely *pānātipātā*, *adinnādānā*, *kāmesu micchācārā*, *pharusāvācā*, the said conditions relate not only to their violation, but also to the respective *kamma* amounting to *kamma*patha [*kamma* which leads to rebirth in the lower planes].

These are the conditions relating to the seven kinds of wrong doing which should be known by those who observe *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* every day.

This is the end of a brief explanation of the way to establish the three constituents of *Sīlakkandha* (Morality-group) of the Eightfold Path." (1986 edition pages 45-48)

## **A SHORT EXPLANATION OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NOBLE EIGHTFOLD PATH**

"Proper and full observance of *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* constitutes the practice of the Morality-group of the Eightfold Path which comprises Right Speech, Right Action and Right Livelihood." (1986 edition page 57)

**Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayagyi U Chit Tin (1919-2002)**

“*Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayagyi* U Chit Tin and his wife *Mahā Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Daw Mya Thwin* are the eminent disciples of Saygyi U Ba Khin (1899-1971) who both learned *Vipassanā* [insight] meditation under their teacher beginning in 1950-51. They both served their teacher from 1953 until his death in January 1971, helping and assisting in teaching...the *Dhamma* at the International Meditation centre (IMC), Yangon [Rangoon], Myanmar [Burma] until 1978. They left Myanmar in 1978, after being invited to teach in the West. They settled in the United Kingdom, founding IMC-UK in 1979...they have established five International Meditation Centres...

...the Sixth Buddhist Synod [Council] ... [opened] in May 1954. Saygyi U Ba Khin and U Chit Tin...were fully occupied with serving as host to all the Buddhist countries of Thailand, Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Laos. U Chit Tin was also given the duties of printing and publishing all the edited *Tipitaka Pāli* Texts, Commentaries, and Sub-Commentaries, both in *Pāli* and in Myanmar [Burmese] translations. He worked at this task from 1958 to 1978...retiring in..1978.

...Saygyi U Chit Tin...was awarded the religious title of *Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja* in...1996 for his services in promoting and propagating the *Buddha-Dhamma*, which was also the primary objective and lifetime effort of his *Dhamma* Teacher, Saygyi U Ba Khin.” (*The Perfection of Virtue* inside front cover)

*Saddhamma Jotika Dhaja Sayagyi* U Chit Tin wrote books and article on the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. Relevant extracts follow.

### ***Buddhist Meditation and the Factors Leading to Awakening (based on Venerable Ledi Sayadaw’s Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī)***

*Buddhist Meditation and the Factors Leading to Awakening (based on Venerable Ledi Sayadaw’s Bodhipakkhiya Dīpanī)*, is published by The Saygyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust UK.

This book explains “Venerable Ledi Sayadaw gives fifteen aspects of right conduct (*Carana-dhammas*). The first is morality (*sīla*). For laymen who hope to encounter the next Buddha, this means practising The Five Precepts [*Pañca Sīla*] at all times and keeping The Eight [*Uposatha*] Precepts [*Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla*] four times a month. Those who wish to work for the Paths and Fruition States in this lifetime should practise morality ending with the practice of right livelihood (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*). This is an elaboration of The Five Precepts with greater emphasis laid on abstaining from wrong speech: (1) Abstaining from taking life. (2) Abstaining from stealing. (3) Abstaining from indulging in improper sexual relations and taking intoxicants. (4) Abstaining from telling lies. (5) Abstaining from setting one person against another. (6) Abstaining from rude and rough words. (7) Abstaining from frivolous talk. (8) Abstaining from improper livelihood.” (pages 9-10)

“Laymen [and women] should keep the moral precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*). This includes abstaining from killing, stealing, from sexual misconduct and the taking of intoxicants, from telling lies, from setting one person against another, from rude and harsh words, from frivolous talk, and from wrong livelihood.” (page 31) This explains clearly that in the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla* the third Precept includes abstaining from intoxicants.

“For...meditators on a [meditation] course...keeping at least The Five Precepts and observing...silence will result in keeping the moral precepts with right livelihood as the eighth....When Saygyi U Ba Khin taught Buddhist meditation...he recommended that his students observe the eight precepts ending in right livelihood (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*) at all times. These precepts put added emphasis on right speech. And he recommended that the students keep the *Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla* (The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts) on observance days [Full, New and Half Moon days] if they could.” (page 31)

“The virtue which serves as the foundation for supramundane concentration (the fourth component of Stream-entry) means the permanent virtue with right livelihood as the eighth precept’ (*Ājīvatthamaka Nicca Sīla*) which can enable one to attain supramundane concentration in this very life. When such virtue is unbroken and pure, it is free from the defilements of craving [*tanhā*], conceit or pride [*māna*], and wrong view [*ditthi*], Faith [*saddhā*] is prominent in such virtue [*sīla*]. If such virtue [*sīla*] is observed while living in ordinary worldly conditions, it is said to be ‘impure’, even though it may be technically unbroken.” (page 48)

“The eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*)...are the virtue that must be observed as preparation to destroying the ...tendency towards wrong view (*Ditthi-anusaya*). This is the virtue included in right speech, right action, and right livelihood, for this set of precepts puts great emphasis on the various aspects of right speech. These eight precepts also amount to purification of virtue. For laymen, these eight precepts have two aspects: (1) abstaining from the three types of bad conduct in bodily actions (*kāya-duccarita*), that is, abstaining from taking life, from stealing, and from indulging in improper sexual relations or in taking intoxicants; and (2) abstaining from the four types of bad conduct through (wrong) speech (*vacī-duccarita*), that is, abstaining from telling lies, from setting one person against another, from using rude and rough words, and from frivolous talk. The Eight *Uposatha* Precepts [*Atthangīka Uposatha Sīla*] (including not eating after noontime) and The Ten Precepts for Laymen [and women] [*Dasanga Sīla*] are simply refinements of the virtue of the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth.” (page 63)

“The virtue of the discourses (*Suttanta-sīla*) for laymen and laywomen means keeping the eight precepts with right livelihood as the eighth...” (page 69)

“Lay people who are permanently confirmed in the precepts with right livelihood as the eighth and in the Triple Gem of the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha are endowed in part with the qualities of those who have entered on the good way, the proper way.” (page 70)

“If laymen [and women] can establish themselves in the precepts with right livelihood as the eighth, they can immediately become heirs of the [Buddha] *Sāsana*. [The Dispensation of the Buddha; Buddhist teaching, doctrine].” (page 73)

## ***Buddhism as a Way of Life and Other Essays***

*Buddhism as a Way of Life and Other Essays* by Sayagyi U Chit Tin is published by The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust UK. It contains a collection of essays some of which offer further helpful information about the importance of *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*.

### The article *Buddhism as a Way of Life*

The article *Buddhism as a Way of Life* states “The five moral precepts...must be kept at all times for there to be a moral base, but many more precepts can be added to these. As we make progress in working for the goal we will develop a desire to do so.” (page 5)

“I would like to explain in detail a set of eight precepts which is called virtuous conduct with right livelihood as the eighth kind (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*). This set of eight precepts is the initial stage of the life of purity consisting in the Path, according to the Venerable Ashin Buddhaghosa [author of *Visuddhimagga* translated by the BPS as *The Path of Purification* and by the PTS as *The Path of Purity*]. These eight precepts include three precepts for moral physical actions: (1) to abstain from killing, (2) to abstain from stealing, (3) to abstain from indulging in sexual misconduct and from taking intoxicants; four moral verbal actions: (4) to abstain from lying, (5) to abstain from malicious speech, (6) to abstain from harsh speech, and (7) to abstain from gossiping; and finally, (8) right livelihood.” (page 6)

“In these precepts the importance of right speech is made very clear. They are explained by the Buddha in a discourse given to the people of the town of Sālā” (page 6)

The *Sāleyyaka Sutta Majjhima Nikāya Sutta* 41 has been translated by *Bhikkhu* Bodhi [in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikāya*]

as *The Brahmins of Sālā* and by the Pali Text Society as *Discourse to the People of Sālā* [in *The Middle Length Sayings: (Majjhima-Nikāya)*].

Sayagi U Chit Tin quotes the following passage from the Pali Text Society translation:

In this case householders, a certain one, abandoning lying speech is restrained from lying speech... Thus his speech does not come to be intentional lying either for its own sake or for that of another or for the sake of some material gain or other. Abandoning slanderous speech, he is restrained from slanderous speech... Abandoning harsh speech, he is restrained from harsh speech... Abandoning frivolous chatter, he is restrained from frivolous chatter. He is one who speaks at the right time, who speaks in accordance with fact, who speaks about the goal, who speaks about the doctrine, who speaks about discipline. He utters speech that is worth treasuring, with similes at a right time, purposeful, connected with the goal." (pages 6-7)

### The article *Practising the Buddha-Dhamma as Laymen*

The article *Practising the Buddha-Dhamma as Laymen* [a talk given by U Chit Tin in 1985] also discusses The *Sāleyyaka-Sutta Majjhima Nikāya* 41.

"The Buddha mentions three kinds of actions of the body. Unrighteous and unbalanced living means killing, stealing, and indulging in sensual pleasures... There are for kinds of speech. Unrighteous and unbalanced speech includes lies, slander, harsh speech, and frivolous chatter." (page 212) "The right kinds of body and speech that the Buddha taught to the laymen [and women] of Sālā and Verañjā are included in the precepts for virtuous living followed by all true Buddhists. The minimum number of precepts, which must be respected at all times, are the five precepts. These include the four righteous actions of the body: not killing, not stealing, and abstaining from indulging in sensual pleasures, including adultery and taking intoxicants. The fifth precept is to abstain from lying. So we can see that here, the Buddha gives a more detailed explanation of the control over verbal actions. A group of eight precepts (*Ājivatthamaka Sīla*) for laypeople includes these four types of right speech. In addition, there are the three types of right kindly actions the Buddha gave the people of Sālā and Verañjā and the eighth precept is right livelihood." (pages 213-4)

### The article *Right Motivation and Right Action*

The article *Right Motivation and Right Action* explains "In the *Nettipakarana* [translated by the Pali Text Society as *The Guide* page 67], the four wrong ways are said to be the unskillful roots (*akusala-mūla*) of the ten unskillful ways of acting (*akusala-kamma-pathā*). These ten are either intentional actions - physical and verbal acts - or mental actions. There are three bad physical actions (*kāya-duccarita*): Killing (*pānātipātā*), stealing (*adinnādānā*), and sexual misconduct (*kāmesu micchācārā*). There are four bad verbal actions (*vacī-duccarita*): Lying (*musāvādā*), malicious talks (*pisunāvācā*), harsh speech (*pharusāvācā*), and frivolous chatter (*samphappalāpā*). There are three bad mental actions (*mano-duccarita*): coveting other people's property (*abhijjha*), malevolent thoughts (*vyāpāda*), and holding wrong beliefs (*miccha-ditthi*)." (page 65)

"Hatred (*dosa*) leads to killing, stealing, and harsh speech. Greed (*lobha*) leads to stealing, sexual misconduct, and lying. Ignorance (*moha*) leads to frivolous chatter." (page 65)

"Wrong beliefs are the wrong path (*miccha-magga*, the opposite of the Noble Eightfold Path). More details of these ten unskillful ways of acting and of the opposite ten skillful ways of acting are found in several discourses in the *Pāli* Canon. Especially of interest is the explanation of skillful and unskillful speech and mental actions." (page 66) (In a footnote on page 66, Sayagi U Chit Tin refers to the *Cunda the Silversmith Sutta* 176 of *Anguttara-Nikāya*, translated by the Pāli Text Society as *Discourse Cunda the silversmith*, in *The Gradual Sayings: (Anguttara-Nikāya)* Volume V *The Book of The Tens*. This *sutta* explains the Ten Unwholesome Courses of Action (*Dasa akusala-kamma-pathā*) and the Ten Wholesome Courses of Action (*Dasa kusala-kamma-pathā*.)

“Lying refers to being a bad witness. This will be the case if a person says he heard or saw something that he did not hear or see, or if a person says he did not hear or see something he did hear or see. Intentional lying is done either for one’s own benefit, for someone else’s benefit, or for some material gain. Refraining from lying is opposed to all of this.” (page 66)

Malicious talk means that a person repeats what he has heard in order to divide other people. He sows discord among people who were in harmony and aggravates discord when it already exists. He takes pleasure in discord, delights in it, it is his joy and motivates his speech. The person who abandons malicious speech does not repeat what he has heard to sow discord. He reconciles those who are divided and unites his friends. He takes pleasure in harmony, delights in it, it is his joy and motivates his speech. (page 66)

“Harsh speech is rough, hard, severe, on others, abusive of others, bordering on wrath, and is not conducive to concentration. The opposite is speech that is gentle, pleasing to the ear, affectionate, going to the heart, urbane, and pleasant to the multitude.” (page 66)

“Frivolous chatter results when a person speaks at the wrong time, saying things that do not conform to the facts - his speech is not about the goal [of *Nibbāna* enlightenment], it is about what is not the Doctrine [*Dhamma*] or discipline. It is not worth treasuring. It is spoken at the wrong time and so it is incongruous, has no purpose, and is not connected with the goal. By abandoning frivolous chatter, a person speaks at the right time, in accordance with fact, about the goal, about the Doctrine [*Dhamma*] and discipline. His speech is worth treasuring, with timely similes that are purposeful and connected with the goal.” (page 66)

### The article *Being Assured of Attaining Nibbāna*

This article explains the importance of *sīla* (morality) in the attainment of Paths and Fruits of Stream-Entry (*Sotāpatti*), Once-Returner (*Sakadāgāmi*), Never-Returner (*Anāgāmi*) and Enlightened Person (*Arahat*). “In the *Sotāpatti Sutta* of the *Mahāvagga* of the *Samyutta-nikāya*, many discourses are grouped together concerning the stage of a Stream-Winner.” (page 161)

The *Sotāpatti Suttas* of the *Samyutta Nikāya* have been translated by *Bhikkhu* Bodhi [in *The Connected Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Samyutta Nikāya* Volume II] as 55 *Sotāpattisamyutta Connected Discourses on Stream-Entry*, and by the Pali Text Society as *Kindred Sayings on Stream-Winning* [in *The Kindred Sayings: (Samyutta-Nikāya* Volume V Book XI)].

“Most of the discourses were given to laypeople...Attaining the stage of a Stream-Winner or higher is the only way a person can be completely sure that he or she is assured of escaping from the suffering of continued existence. The most complete description...is given by the Buddha to the Kosalan laymen of Veludvāra...the Buddha...taught them...how to eventually attain release from all suffering.” (page 161)

The Buddha begins by teaching the villagers concerning virtuous conduct *sīla* (morality). They should consider what causes them suffering, then abstain from such actions and encourage others to abstain from them. They should abstain from killing, stealing, adultery, lying, slander, harsh speech, and frivolous talk (Here the Buddha gives only seven points. Right livelihood is implied in the seven given here, for if they are followed, right livelihood will result. In addition to virtuous conduct, the layman [and woman] should be established in the four desirable conditions (*akankhiya thāna*): complete confidence (*aveccapasāda*) in the Buddha, the *Dhamma* and the *Sangha*, and the virtues which the Noble Ones consider to be lovely (*ariyakanta sīla*) - virtuous conduct which is unbroken, unflawed, unspotted, unblemished, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, and leading to concentration.” (pages 161-162)

“This second mention of virtue shows the importance of keeping the precepts at the highest level. In the *Visudhimagga*, [translated by the BPS as *The Path of Purification* and by the PTS as *The Path of Purity*] [Venerable] *Ashin* Buddhaghosa says that virtue, being

pure of the defilement of misconduct, is the reason for Stream-Entry and Once-Returning. As the Buddha points, out, virtuous conduct leads to concentration (*samādhī*). [Venerable] Ashin Buddhaghosa says concentration means one is purified from craving and is the reason for becoming a Non-Returner. It is understanding (*paññā*) that finally leads to *Arahatship*. Thus, a person who wishes to escape from suffering must first develop ordinary virtuous conduct, then go on to the higher virtue of the Noble Ones.” (page 162)

### ***The Perfection of Virtue (Based on the Mahābuddhavamsa by Tipitakadhara Dhammabhandhāgārika Ashin Vicittasārābhivamsa, Aggamahāpandita Abhidhaja-Mahāratthaguru)***

“The three immoral physical actions are killing other living beings, stealing other’s property, and committing adultery. The four immoral verbal actions are lying, backbiting, using abusive words, and vain talk. The two kinds of immoral action or abstaining from them may be associated with earning a livelihood or dissociated from earning a livelihood.” (page 2)

“Abstaining from the three immoral physical actions when not associated with earning a livelihood is known as the abstention of right conduct (*sammā-kammanta-virati*). Abstaining from the four immoral verbal actions when not associated with earning a living is known as abstention through right speech (*sammā-vācā-virati*). Abstaining from these two types of immoral actions when associated with earning a livelihood, especially if the wrong types of livelihood (*micchā-ājīva*) mentioned for *Bhikkhus* are avoided, is known as abstention through right livelihood (*samma-ājīva -virati*).” (pages 2-3)

“The mental volition that accompanies acts of virtue as abstinence as well as the mental volition the accompanying acts done to fulfil one’s duty is known as virtue as volition.” (page 3)

U Chit Tin explains on pages 10-11 that one way virtue can be classified is as:

#### 1) *Cāritta Sīla*

actions to be performed (for laypeople *cāritta* includes virtue as keeping the Precepts.

#### 2) *Vāritta Sīla*

actions to be avoided or abstained from (for laypeople *vāritta* is abstaining from unskillful actions (for example, killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying, taking intoxicants) which will result in rebirth in the lower planes of existence.

“Good behaviour (*Abhisamācārika Sīla*) and virtue that is the beginning of the life of purity (*Ādi-Brahma Cariya Sīla*). ...for laymen [and women], good behaviour includes actions that indicate a positive attitude, such as showing respect for one’s elders and teachers, etc. Venerable Buddhaghosa [author of *Visuddhimagga* translated by the BPS as *The Path of Purification* and by the PTS as *The Path of Purity*] says that virtue with right livelihood as the eighth kind is the initial stage of the life of purity consisting in the path. Virtue with right livelihood as the eighth kind (*Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*) includes: three moral physical actions: (1) abstaining from killing, (2) from stealing, (3) from indulging in sexual misconduct and taking intoxicants; the four moral verbal actions: (4) abstaining from lying, (5) from malicious speech, (6) from harsh speech, and (7) from gossip; and finally, (8) right livelihood.” (page 13)

In terms of *The Book of Discipline (Vinaya Pitaka)* the rules included under virtue as the beginning of the life of purity are the 227 rules included in the *Sutta-vibhanga*; the rules included under good behaviour are found in the *Khandhaka* (subdivided into *Mahāvagga* and *Cullavagga*). (The last section, the *Parivāra*, is a summary and classification of the rules in the other parts.) (page 14)

Virtue as abstinence (*virati*)...means abstaining from wrong speech, from wrong action, and from wrong livelihood. (page 14)

## **CONCLUSION**

In this article I have looked at writings by people involved in Myanmar [Burmese] Buddhism about the important role of the *Ājīvatthamaka Sīla*. I would be very grateful to receive any further relevant information.

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