

(Tad Ah') Uposatha Sutta (This Day of) The Observance Discourse¹

[Types of sabbaths]

(Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.70/1:205-215)

Translated by Piya Tan ©2003

Introduction

1 Origins of the *uposatha*

The ancient India year adopted by early Buddhism has three seasons—the cold (*hem'anta*), the hot (*gimhāna*) and the rains (*vassa*) (Nc 631)—each lasting about four months. Each of these seasons is further divided into eight fortnights (*pakkha*) of 15 days each, except for the third and the seventh each of which has only 14 days. Within each fortnight, the night of the full moon and the new moon (either the fourteenth or the fifteenth) and the night of the half-moon (the eighth) are regarded as auspicious, especially the first two. For Buddhists, these are the *uposatha* or observance days.

The observance (*uposatha*) was originally the Vedic *upavasatha*, that is, the eve of the Soma sacrifice.² “Soma” is the name of the brahminical moon-god to whom libation is made at the Vedic sacrifice.³ The word *upavasatha* comes from *upavasati*, “he observes; he prepares,” derived from *upa-* (at, near) + √VAS, “to live, dwell”; as such, *upavasati* literally means “he dwells near,” that is, spends the time close to a spiritual teacher for religious instructions and observances. Apparently, in Vedic times, it was believed that on the full moon (*paurṇamāsa*) and new moon (*darśa*) days, the gods came down to dwell with (*upavasati*) the sacrificer. By the Buddha’s time, the term *upavasatha* (BHS *poṣadha*) had come to mean the four stages of the lunar month’s waxing and waning. The early Buddhists adopted this weekly system of holy days.

Uposatha is the Pali name for the observance (such as the act of keeping the eight precepts by the laity), or the observance day, a day of spiritual vigil, sometimes also known as “fast day.” During the Buddha’s time the word meant the day before the four phases of the moon, namely, the 1st, 8th, 14th/15th and 23rd nights of the lunar month.⁴ The *pāṭihāriya, pakkha* (“the extraordinary half”) is an ancient extra holiday (not observed today).⁵ **S Dutt** says that it is likely that on these days the brahminical *sannyasins* (ascetics) would discourse on the Āraṇyakas and Upanishads, while the reform sects—ascetics (*samaṇa*) and wanderers (*parivrājaka*)—would recite their orally-transmitted canonical texts (replacing the *vrata* or observances of the householders) (1960:83; cf V 1:101).

The Buddha adopted this practice when those who came to listen to the Dharma were displeased at the monks sitting silently and remarked that they were “sitting like dumb pigs” (V 1:102). The Buddhist *uposatha* is held by a chapter of monks once a fortnight, ie on the new-moon and the full-moon days, a practice that has become unique to the Buddhists.⁶ **The Mahāpadāna Sutta** (D 14) says that in the time of the Buddha Vipassī, the *uposatha* was conducted only once in six years and only the *Ovāda Pāṭimokkha* was recited (D 14.3.27-28).⁷

¹ Lit “this observance day today.”

² See Macdonell & Keith 1912: Soma; Ling 1968:30 ff.

³ Cf Sata, patha Brahmaṇa 1.1.1.7.11. Cf also Iranian *haoma*, Hebrew *shabbath*, Malay *puasa* (fasting) [fr *upavasa*].

⁴ Respectively, *cātu-d, dasī, pañca-d, dasī, pakkhassa aṭṭhamī, pāṭihāriya, pakkha* (S 1:208; A 1:144; Sn 402; Vv 12, 17, 19, 20, 26, 35, 51; J 4:320, 6:110; DhA 4:21); *pañcamī, aṭṭhamī, cātu-d, dasi, paṇṇarasīnam uposatha, divasā* (Ujl 192,28), ie a weekly holy day.

⁵ AA 2:234; SnA 378, Ujl 2:55; Thī:K 67.31.

⁶ Pande 1974:275.

⁷ D 2:49 = Dh 184-186 except for the last 2 lines. Cf V 3:7 ff. See also Dutt 1960:70.

2 Precepts

The keeping of the *uposatha* is known by various terms: *uposatha,kamma* (“act of observance” for Order members & for the laity),⁸ *uposatha,karāṇa* (“deed of observance”),⁹ *uposatha,pālana* (“protecting the observance”),¹⁰ *uposatha,rakkhaṇa* (“guarding the observance”),¹¹ *uposatha,vāsa* (“keeping the observance”).¹² The first is the oldest term.¹³

The early monks also used this holy day for the recitation of the Monastic Code or *Pāṭimokkha*, while the laity observed the 8 precepts (*aṭṭh’āṅga,sīla*, *aṭṭha,sīla*) or observance precepts (*uposatha,sīla*), which traditional Theravādin Buddhists still do. These precepts are known in the Canon and Commentaries as “the eight-limbed observance” (*aṭṭha,uposath’āṅga* or *uposath’āṅga*),¹⁴ that is, the precepts against killing, stealing, incelibacy, lying, intoxicants, eating at untimely hours; dancing, singing, music, shows, garlands, scents and cosmetics; and high and luxurious beds.¹⁵

An observance day (*uposatha,divasa*, *uposatha,dīna*) when the 8 precepts are kept is known as “the observance attended by 8 factors” (*aṭṭh’āṅga,samann’āgata uposatha*), or simply “the eightfold observance” (*aṭṭhaṅgika uposatha*). These 8 precepts kept by the laity are the training-rules (*sikkhā,pada*) nos 1-9 of the 10 precepts (of the novice), which in the Canon do not occur under the name of *sīla* or *sikkhā,-pada*, but are also known as *aṭṭh’āṅga,samann’āgata uposatha* or *aṭṭha’ṅgika uposatha*. The observance precepts or 8 precepts comprises the 5 precepts and three others regarding sense-restraint.

The observance precepts are so called because they are special precepts observed on *uposatha* days. At other times, they are known simply as the 8 precepts. The 8 precepts, like the 10 precepts, may be undertaken in one of two ways. If they are observed for a day or a specified period of time only, it is known as “time-limited moral conduct” (*kāla,pariyanta sīla*); or they may be undertaken as “lifelong moral conduct” (*āpāṇa,koṭṭika sīla*, lit “end of breath” moral conduct) (Vism 1.30).

The observance day is sometimes called “fast day” because the preceptees (those keeping the precepts) refrain from taking “untimely meals” (*vikāla,bhojana*), ie from noon to dawn the following day.¹⁶ It should be noted that “noon” and “12 o’clock” are not necessarily the same time. “Noon” technically is when the sun is directly over one’s head (over the meridian), while 12 o’clock is conventional (local) time depending on the time-zone.

3 The observance today

The “8-precept” observance day is today almost exclusively a Theravāda lay practice. These precept days are known as *poya* (Sri Lanka), *u.bok.nei* (Myanmar), and *wan.phra/* (Thailand). On new-moon and full-moon days lay Mahayana Buddhists generally keep to a vegetarian diet and/or offer puja.

One begins the observance day by the “taking” (mindfully reciting) of the observance precepts, usually in a congregation before a monk. This is then followed by listening to a Dharma talk or some meditation.¹⁷ But strictly speaking, the observance is a day of solitary retreat or temporary renunciation spent in a monastery, temple, centre, retreat or even one’s own personal space. For such a retreat one should have tied up all loose ends with the world (at least temporarily) and have prepared all that one needs for the observance. One also dresses in simple and comfortable clothing.

The observance may also be kept as a communal event with common meals, Dharma study or discussion, and meditation. There can also be an “invitation” (*pavāraṇā*) to others to point out one’s faults which one then resolves. This is best done in a Dharma circle, that is, small groups (numbering less than

⁸ For monks, V 1:102, 105, 111, 5:142; Kkhv 8; VA 1166; for laity, J 3:52, 3:342; Vv 945; Vbh 422; Miln 293.

⁹ Kkhv 9, 11; J 4:332; AA 2:180.

¹⁰ Ujl 191.

¹¹ Ujl 191.

¹² J 4:332, DhA 1:27.

¹³ Cf Ujl:Se 96.

¹⁴ V 5:137; J 3:445; DhA 1:205; ThaA 3:128; SnA 2:377 ad Sn 401.

¹⁵ Eg S 1:208 f; A 1:144, 213, 4:248 f; Sn 400 f.

¹⁶ V 1:83, 4:274; D 1:5; M 1:39; A 1:212, 2:209; Sn 400d.

¹⁷ Cf Ujl 189.

15-20 each) to keep in touch spiritually. In such cases, one should of course speak mindfully. It is such practices that truly makes one an *upāsaka* (male follower) or an *upāsikā* (female follower), since one “keeps” (*upavasati*) the precepts and stays close to the Dharma.

The nature of the eightfold observance day is discussed in detail here in **the Tad-ah'uposatha Sutta** (A 3.70),¹⁸ which incorporates **the Vitthata Uposatha Sutta** (A 8.42),¹⁹ The section [8] on Recollection of the Devas is also found in **the Mahānāma Sutta** (A 6.10).²⁰ Both the Tad-ah'Uposatha Sutta and the Vitthata Uposatha Sutta end with verses on the 8 factors, two of which are found in the **Dhammika Sutta** of the Sutta Nipāta.²¹ **The Pañc'uposatha Jātaka** (J 4:325 ff) was related to 500 lay followers to encourage them to keep the observance.

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¹⁸ A 3.70/1:205-215.

¹⁹ A 8.42/4:251-255. There is also a shorter version of this, **Saṅkhitta Uposatha S** (A 8.41/4:248-251).

²⁰ A 6.10.7/3:287 f.

²¹ A 4:254 f = Sn 400 f.

(This Day of) The Observance Discourse

(A 3.70/1:205-215)

[A 1:205]

1a Thus have I heard.

At one time the Blessed One was staying in the mansion of Migāra's mother²² in the Eastern Monastery near Sāvattthī. Now at that time—it being the observance day—Visākhā Migāra,mātā [Migāra's mother], went up to the Blessed One, and having saluted him, sat down at one side. Sitting thus at one side, the Blessed One said this to Visākhā Migāra,mātā:

“Now, Visākhā, why are you here so early at dawn?”

“Today, bhante, I am keeping the observance.”

Three kinds of observance**1b** “Visākhā, there are these **three kinds of observance**. What are the three?”

- (1) The cowherd's observance,
- (2) the observance of the Nirgrantha [the naked Jain ascetics],
- (3) the noble observance [of the saints].²³

2 (1) And what, Visākhā, is **the cowherd's observance**?

Suppose, Visākhā, a cowherd, having returned the cows to the owner in the evening, thinks over thus: ‘Today the cows grazed at such and such a place, and drank at such and such a place. Tomorrow they will graze at such and such a place, and drink at such and such a place,’

In the same way, Visākhā. A certain observant [observance keeper]²⁴ here reflects thus:

‘Today I ate such and such hard food, took [206] such and such soft food. Tomorrow I shall eat such and such hard food, I shall take such and such soft food. And he lets the day pass with his mind occupied by covetousness through greed.

This, Visākhā, is the cowherd's observance. This cowherd's observance is not of great fruit, not of great benefit, not very luminous, not very pervasive.

3 (2) And what, Visākhā, is **the Nirgrantha's observance**?

There is, Visākhā, a class of Nirgrantha [naked Jain] ascetics who exhort their disciple thus:

‘Come, my good man, lay aside the stick [show no violence] to all living beings that exist in the east for a hundred fathoms; lay aside the stick to all living beings that exist in the west for a hundred fathoms; lay aside the stick to all living beings that exist in the north for a hundred fathoms; lay aside the stick to all living beings that exist in the south for a hundred fathoms!’

Thus, Visākhā, they show²⁵ compassion and kindness towards certain living beings. They do not show compassion and kindness to certain living beings.

Then again, Visākhā, on the day of observance, they exhort their disciple thus:

‘Now, my good man, take off all your clothes²⁶ and say thus:²⁷

- (a) I'm not in anything (*nāham kvācini*);
- (b) There is nothing of me in anything whatever (*na kassaci kiñcana tasmim*);
- (c) There is nothing whatever that is mine (*na ca mama kvācini*); and
- (d) There is nothing in anything (*kismiñci kiñcana n'atthi*).²⁸

²² “The mansion of Migāra's mother,” *Migāra,mātu pasāde*. For details, see (Satta) Jaṭila S (S 3.11.1/3:11n) = SD 14.11.

²³ “Noble observance,” *ariy'uposatha*, alt tr “the observance of the noble ones (ie the Saints).”

²⁴ “Observant,” *uposathika*, ie one keeping the *uposatha*.

²⁵ “Show,” *samādapenti*, lit “they undertake” = *samādiyanti*. Alt tr: “take up; take upon (themselves); rouse”.

²⁶ “Take off...thus,” *tvaṃ...sabba,celāni nikkhipitvā evaṃ vadehi*, lit “Having taken off all your clothes, say this...”

²⁷ These four statements are, in Buddhism, called the 4 kinds of emptiness (*catu,koṭika suññatā*) (M 2:263 f; A 1:206, 2:177; cf A 3:170). For details, see “Is there a soul?” (SD 2.16.15).

But still the parents know their son, “This is our son,” and he knows them, “These are my mother and father.” But still the wife and children know²⁹ their bread-winner, “This is our bread-winner,”³⁰ and he knows them, “These are my wife and children.” But still his slaves, labourers and workers know him, “This is our master,” and he knows them, “These are my slaves, labourers and workers.”

Thus at a time when they should be exhorted to undertake the truth³¹, they are exhorted to undertake false speech! This is speaking false speech on their part, I say!

Then when the night has passed, he resumes the use of his belongings that actually³² have not been returned to him!³³ This is taking the not given on their part, I say!

This, Visākhā, is the Nirgrantha’s observance. This Nirgrantha’s observance is not of great fruit, not of great benefit, not very luminous, not very pervasive.

THE LIMBS OF STREAM-WINNING³⁴

Recollection of the Buddha

4a (3) And what, Visākhā, is **the noble observance?** [207]

It is, Visākhā, by the cleansing of a soiled mind in a proper way.³⁵

How, Visākhā, is a soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Tathagata, thus:

‘The Blessed One is such:

*an arhat [worthy],
fully self-awakened,
accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
well-farer,
knower of worlds,
peerless guide of persons to be tamed,
teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.’³⁶*

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

Parable of the head and cleansing paste

4b This soiled mind, Visākhā, is cleansed in a proper way, Visākhā, in the same way that a soiled head is cleansed. And how, Visākhā, is a soiled head cleansed in a proper way?

By means of cleansing paste³⁷ and clay and water and proper personal effort.³⁸ This, Visākhā, is how a soiled head is cleansed in a proper way. In the same way, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way.

²⁸ This well known stock phrase is found in connection with the teaching of not-self (*anattā*) at M 2:263 f; A 1:206, 2:177; cf A 3:170.

²⁹ “The wife and children,” *putta,dāro* (lit “son and wife”) is a singular collective noun attracting singular verb constructions; but the English idiom has to be rendered in the plural.

³⁰ “Bread-winner,” *bhattā*, usu tr as “husband”, but the context here dictates it to be “supporter, bread-winner” as at J 5:260.

³¹ “The truth,” *sacce*, PTS ed wr *sabbe*, “all”.

³² “Actually,” *eva*.

³³ “He resumes...to him,” *so...te bhoge adinnam y’eva paribhuñjati*, lit “he indeed partakes of his not-given wealth”.

³⁴ *Sotāpannessa aṅgāni* (D 33.1.11(14)/3:227). These are the qualities of a streamwinner, here to be cultivated by the laity of a simpler level. Cf *sotāpatti-y-aṅga*, the “limbs for streamwinning”: see **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3(1). For a shorter statement on the limbs of a streamwinner, see **Ogadha S** (S 55.2/ 5:343 f).

³⁵ “In a proper way,” *upakkamena*, which Comy glosses as *paccatta,purisa,kārena*, “by individual effort” (AA 2:322). See n on “Proper personal effort” below.

³⁶ On this reflection, see **Buddhānussati** = SD 15.7.

4c How, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Tathagata, thus:

‘Such is he, the Blessed One,
*an arhat [worthy],
 fully self-awakened,
 accomplished in wisdom and conduct,
 well-farer,
 knower of worlds,
 peerless guide of persons to be tamed,
 teacher of gods and humans, awakened, blessed.*’

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

This noble disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep **the divine observance** [of Brahmā] (*brahmūposatha*): he dwells with Brahmā. It is in reference to Brahmā [the Buddha] that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, by which his soiled mind is given up in a proper way.

This, Visākhā, is the way of cleansing his soiled mind in a proper way.

Recollection of the Dharma

5a There is, Visākhā, the cleansing of a soiled mind in a proper way. How, Visākhā, is a soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Dharma, thus:

‘*Well-taught is the Blessed One’s Teaching,
 visible here and now,
 immediate,
 inviting one to come and see,
 accessible,
 to be personally known by the wise.*’³⁹

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

Parable of the body and the shell

5b This soiled mind, Visākhā, is cleansed in a proper way, Visākhā, in the same way that a soiled body is cleansed.

And how, Visākhā, is a soiled body cleansed in a proper way?

By means of shell⁴⁰ and chunam [lime soap]⁴¹ and proper personal effort. This, Visākhā, is how a soiled body is cleansed in a proper way. In the same way, Visākhā, is his soiled mind [208] cleansed in a proper way.

5c How, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Dharma, thus:

‘*Well-taught is the Blessed One’s Teaching,
 visible here and now,
 immediate,
 inviting one to come and see,
 accessible,*

³⁷ “Cleansing paste,” *kakka*, “a sediment, a paste (produced by grinding oily substances); face-powder.” J 6:232 mentioned 3 kinds of paste: mustard (*sāsapa*) paste, fragrant earth (*mattika*) paste and sesamum (*tila*) paste. DA 1:88 adds turmeric (*haliddī*), used before face-powder is applied.

³⁸ “Proper personal effort,” *purisassa ca tajaṃ vāyāmaṃ paṭicca*. See n on “In a proper way” above.

³⁹ On this reflection, see *Dhammānussati* = SD 15.9.

⁴⁰ “Shell,” *sotti*; PED conjectures this meaning.

⁴¹ “Chunam,” *cuṇṇa* (Skt *cūrṇa*, Tamil *cuṇṇam*), ie lime used esp with betel leaf to make pan. The proper way of washing and using chunam are given at V 1:47.

to be personally known by the wise.'

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

This noble disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep **the Dharma observance**: he dwells with the Dharma. It is in reference to the Dharma that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, by which his soiled mind is given up in a proper way.

This, Visākhā, is the way of cleansing his soiled mind in a proper way.

Recollection of the Sangha

6a There is, Visākhā, the cleansing of a soiled mind in a proper way. How, Visākhā, is a soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Sangha, thus:

'The Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the good way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the straight way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the true way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the proper way.

These four pairs of Persons, the eight Individuals are this Blessed One's Community of disciples:

worthy of offerings,

worthy of hospitality,

worthy of gifts,

worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,

*an incomparable field of merit for the world.'*⁴²

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

Parable of the cloth and cleaning salt

6b This soiled mind, Visākhā, is cleansed in a proper way, Visākhā, in the same way that a soiled piece of cloth is cleansed.

And how, Visākhā, is a soiled cloth cleansed in a proper way?⁴³ [209]

By means of **cleaning salt**⁴⁴ and lye⁴⁵ and cow-dung and proper personal effort. This, Visākhā, is how a soiled piece of cloth is cleansed in a proper way. In the same way, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way.

6c How, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the Tathagata, thus:

'Of good conduct is the Blessed One's Community of Holy Disciples

'The Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the good way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the straight way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the true way;

the Blessed One's Community of disciples keeps to the proper way.

These four pairs of persons, the eight individuals are this Blessed One's community of disciples:

worthy of offerings,

worthy of hospitality,

worthy of gifts,

worthy of salutation with the lotus-palms,

an incomparable field of merit for the world.'

⁴² On this reflection, see *Atṭha,puṅgala Sutta 1* (A 8.59) = SD 15.10.

⁴³ This analogy recurs in Khemaka S (S 22.89/3:131).

⁴⁴ "Cleaning salt," *ūsa*; I follow Bodhi (S:B 945). PED conjectures as "salt earth". Comy says "heat (or steam)" (*usuma*) is involved.

⁴⁵ "Lye," *khāra*, ie an alkali or caustic substance (like soda or potash).

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

This noble disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep **the Sangha observance**: he dwells with the Sangha. It is in reference to the Sangha that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, by which his soiled mind is given up in a proper way.

This, Visākhā, is the way of cleansing his soiled mind in a proper way.

Recollection of moral virtue

7a There is, Visākhā, the cleansing of a soiled mind in a proper way. How, Visākhā, is a soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects his own moral virtue, unbroken, untorn, unmixed, spotless, liberating, praised by the wise, untarnished, giving rise to concentration.⁴⁶

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

Parable of the mirror

7b This soiled mind, Visākhā, is cleansed in a proper way, Visākhā, in the same way that a soiled mirror is cleansed. And how, Visākhā, is his soiled mirror cleansed in a proper way?⁴⁷

By means of **oil** and by means of ashes⁴⁸ and by means of a brush of (animal) hair and by means of proper personal effort. This, Visākhā, is how a soiled mirror is cleansed in a proper way. In the same way, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way.

7c How, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way? **[210]**

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects his moral virtues.

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

This noble disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep **the observance of moral virtue** (*sīlūposatha*): he dwells with moral virtue. It is in reference to moral virtue that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, by which his soiled mind is given up in a proper way.

This, Visākhā, is the way of cleansing his soiled mind in a proper way.⁴⁹

Recollection of the devas⁵⁰

8a There is, Visākhā, the cleansing of a soiled mind in a proper way. How, Visākhā, is a soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects the devas—

there are the devas of the heaven of the Four Great Kings (*cātum, mahā, rājikā*);

there are the devas of the heaven of Tāvātimsa [the Heaven of the 33 Devas];

there are the devas of the heaven of Yāma;

there are the devas of the heaven of Tusita [the Contented];

there are the devas of the heaven of Nimmāṇa, ratī [who delight in creating];

there are the devas of the heaven of Para, nimmitta, vasavattī [who lord over the creation of others];⁵¹

⁴⁶ “Unbroken, ... giving rise to concentration,” *akhaṇḍehi acchiddehi asabalehi akammāsehi bhujisseyhi viññūpasatthehi aparāmaṭṭhehi samādhi, saṁvattanañihehi*. See UA 268. On this practice, see **Sīlānussati** = SD 15.11.

⁴⁷ This analogy recurs in Khemaka S (S 22.89/3:131).

⁴⁸ “Ash,” *chārika*.

⁴⁹ In (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10), here follows the recollection of charity (*cāgānussati*), but not found here. This is curious because Visākhā is well known for her charity, which could well serve as a good subject of recollection. On this practice, see **Devatā'nussati** = SD 15.13.

⁵⁰ This recollection is also found in **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10.7/3:287 f). The first 6 deva planes are the six sense-sphere (*kāma, loka*) heavens. The devas of Brahma's Hosts (*brahma, kāyikā*) dwell in the various spheres of the 1st absorption in the form world (see A:ÑB 293 n52). The “devas beyond these” are those of the form world and the formless world. See chart in Appendix. For comy, see Vism 7.115-118.

⁵¹ Māra the evil one is said to reside in this heaven, lordling over a part of it (MA 1:33 f). The ruler of this realm here is called Vasa, vattī (D 1:219; A 4:243). Māra is also called Vasa, vattī (but distinct from his namesake) because

there are the devas of the heaven of Brahma's Hosts;⁵²
(and) there are the devas beyond these.⁵³

The fivefold noble growth⁵⁴

8b (1) The faith that those devas are endowed with because of which, when they pass away from this world, they are reborn there, that kind of faith is found in me, too.

(2) The moral virtue that those devas are endowed with because of which, when they pass away from this world, they are reborn there, that kind of moral virtue is found in me, too.

(3) The learning⁵⁵ that those devas are endowed with because of which, when they pass away from this world, they are reborn there, that kind of learning is found in me, too.

(4) The charity that those devas are endowed with because of which, when they pass away from this world, they are reborn there, that kind of charity is found in me, too.

(5) The wisdom that those devas are endowed with because of which, when they pass away from this world, they are reborn there, that kind of wisdom is found in me, too.⁷

8c When he recollects his own faith and moral virtue and learning and generosity and wisdom, *as well as those of the devas*,⁵⁶ his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

Parable of cleansing gold

This soiled mind, Visākhā, is cleansed in a proper way, Visākhā, in the same way that gold⁵⁷ is cleansed.

8d And how, Visākhā, is gold cleansed in a proper way?⁵⁸

By means of a furnace⁵⁹ and by means of salt and by means of red chalk⁶⁰ and by means of a blow-pipe⁶¹ and by means of a pair of tongs and by means of proper personal effort. This, Visākhā, is how soiled gold is cleansed in a proper way. In the same way, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way. [211]

8e How, Visākhā, is his soiled mind cleansed in a proper way?

Here, Visākhā, the noble disciple recollects his moral virtues.

When he reflects thus his mind is calmed, joy arises—he gives up his soiled mind.

he is “lord with great power over the 6 Sense Realms” (*māro mahānubhāvo cha, kāmāvar'issaro vasavattī*, MA 2:201). Māra is also called Pajā, patī, “the lord of creation,” because he lords over this “generation” (*pajā*) of living beings (M 1.9/1:2; MA ad loc).

⁵² “Brahma's hosts,” *brahma, kāyikā*. See n on this section's header.

⁵³ “Beyond this,” *tat'uttarim*, lit “higher than these”. See n on this section's header.

⁵⁴ “Fivefold growth,” ie the fivefold noble growth (*ariya, vuḍḍhi*, A 3:80); cf the 5 virtues conducive to growth (*vuḍḍhi, dhamma*, A 5.246/2:245): see **Entering the Stream** = SD 3.3(1) etc; (**Agata, phala**) **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10.-7/3:287) = SD 15.3; **Sambadh'okāsa S** (A 6.26.8/3:316) = SD 15.7a.

⁵⁵ “Spiritual learning,” *suta*, lit “listening,” ie “one who has heard much Dharma,” cognate with today's “well-read, learned”, but in spiritual matters.

⁵⁶ From hereon, replacing the remaining section of the para, **Mahānāma S** (A 6.10) has “At that time his mind is not obsessed by lust, hate or delusion—his mind is straight, with the devas as its object. This is called a noble disciple who dwells (spiritually) consistent amidst an inconsistent generation, who dwells unafflicted amidst an afflicted generation, who has entered upon the stream of the Dharma and develops the recollection of the devas” (A 6.10/ 3:288). On “the stream of the Dharma,” see “**Listening Beyond the Ear**” = SD 3.2 Intro (3).

⁵⁷ “Gold,” *jāta, rūpa*, which the Vinaya's own Old Commentary defines *jāta, rūpa* as “gold” (that is “the colour of the teacher”, V 3:238). Here it refers to the worked metal.

⁵⁸ This analogy recurs in **Khemaka S** (S 22.89/3:131).

⁵⁹ “Furnace,” *ukkā*, also “crucible”.

⁶⁰ “Red chalk,” *geruka*.

⁶¹ “Blow-pipe,” *nāḷika*.

This noble disciple, Visākhā, is said to keep **the observance of the gods**: he dwells with the gods. It is in reference to the gods that his mind is calmed, that joy arises, by which his soiled mind is given up in a proper way.

This, Visākhā, is the way of cleansing his soiled mind in a proper way.

THE SAINTS' OBSERVANCE⁶²

The eight-limbed observance

9 Then the noble disciple, Visākhā, reflects⁶³ thus:

(1) 'As long as they live, the arhats, giving up harming any living being, refraining from harming any living being, having laid aside rod and sword, conscientious, kind, dwell compassionate towards all living beings.

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up harming any living being, refraining from harming any living being, having laid aside rod and sword, conscientious, kind, dwell compassionate towards all living beings.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.'

10 (2) 'As long as they live, the arhats—giving up taking the not-given, refrain from taking the not-given, accepting only what is given, expecting only what is given, dwell not by theft but with a mind of purity.⁶⁴

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up taking the not-given, refrain from taking the not-given; accepting only what is given, expecting only what is given, dwell not by theft but with a mind of purity.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.'

11 (3) 'As long as they live, the arhats, giving up incelibacy, live a celibate life; dwelling alone,⁶⁵ refraining from coupling, the way of the world.⁶⁶

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up incelibacy, live a celibate life; dwelling alone, refraining from coupling, the way of the world.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.' [212]

12 (4) 'As long as they live, the arhats, giving up false speech, refrain from false speech; speaking the truth, keeping to their word, trustworthy,⁶⁷ not breaking their word to the world.

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up false speech, refrain from false speech; speaking the truth, keeping to my word, trustworthy, not breaking my word to the world.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.'

13 (5) 'As long as they live, the arhats, giving up strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, refrain from *them*.

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up strong drinks, distilled drinks, fermented drinks and that which causes heedlessness, refrain from *them*.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.'

14 (6) 'As long as they live, the arhats, eating only one meal a day, refrain from eating at night and from untimely meals.

Today I, too, for this night and this day, eating only one meal a day, refrain from eating at night and from untimely meals.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.'

⁶² This whole concluding section (incl closing verses) is also found word-for-word at (Vitthata) Uposatha S (A 8.43/4:255-258).

⁶³ "Reflects," *paṭisañcikkhati*.

⁶⁴ "A mind of purity," *sūci, bhūtena attanā*. Here *attanā* refers to "mind".

⁶⁵ "Dwelling alone," *anācarī, vll ārā, cārī, anācārī*.

⁶⁶ "The way of the world," *gāma, dhamma*, lit "the way of village".

⁶⁷ "Trustworthy," *sacca, sandha*.

15 (7) ‘As long as they live, the arhats, refraining from dancing, singing, music,⁶⁸ watching unseemly shows, and from wearing and adorning themselves with garlands, scents and cosmetics.⁶⁹

Today I, too, for this night and this day, refraining from dancing, singing, music, watching unseemly shows, and from wearing and adorning myself with garlands, scents and cosmetics.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.’

16 (8) ‘As long as they live, the arhats, giving up high and luxurious beds, refrain from *them*, using a low bed, that is, a small bed or a straw mat.

Today I, too, for this night and this day, giving up high and luxurious beds, refrain from *them*, using a low bed, that is, a small bed or a straw mat.

I will emulate the arhats in this manner and the observance will be kept by me.’

Such, Visākhā, is the noble observance. Thus kept, the noble observance is of great fruit, of great benefit, very luminous, very pervasive.

17 How is it of great fruit, of great benefit, very luminous, very pervasive?

Suppose, Visākhā, one were to wield lordship and sovereignty [213] over **these sixteen countries**⁷⁰ abounding with their seven great treasures,⁷¹ that is to say—Aṅga, Magadha, Kāsī, Kosala, Vajjī, Mallā, Ceḍī, Vamsā, Kuru, Pañcala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avantī, Gandhārā and Kambojā⁷²—yet this is not worth even a sixteenth⁷³ part of a single observance complete in its eight limbs.

What is the reason for this? Because poor is human sovereignty when compared to heavenly bliss.

Heavenly bliss

18 For the devas of the heaven of **the Four Great Kings**, a single night and day (there) is that of fifty human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. Five hundred such celestial years⁷⁴ are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of the Four Great Kings.

It is possible, Visākhā, for a certain woman or man here, having kept the observance complete in its eight limbs, after death, when the body has broken up, to be reborn in the company of the devas of the Four Great Kings. It is in reference to this that I said human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

19 For the devas of the **Tāvātimsa heaven**, a single night and day (there) is that of hundred human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. A thousand such celestial years are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of the Four Great Kings.

It is possible, Visākhā, *to be reborn in this heaven*. It is in reference to this that I said human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

20 For the devas of the **Yāma heaven**, a single night and day (there) is that of two hundred human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. Two thousand such celestial years are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of Yāma.

⁶⁸ “Music,” *vādita*.

⁶⁹ “Cosmetics,” *vilepana*.

⁷⁰ Some of these 16 great states (*solasa mahājanapadā*), such as Kāsī (Kāśī), Kosala (Kośala), Kuru-Pañcala, Maccha (Matsya), Gandhārā and Kambojā, had existed long before and were mentioned on Vedic literature. The rest, such as Aṅga, Magadha, Vajjī (Vṛjī), Malla, Ceḍī, Vatsā, Surasena (Śūrasena), Assaka (Aśmaka) and Avantī, were new states that arose from declining old ones or more areas coming into prominence. The autocratic monarchies (Skt *rājya*, P *rajja*) were Kosala, Magadha, Vamsā (Vatsā) and Avantī. Kosala had annexed Kāsī; Magadha had annexed Aṅga; Vamsā had annexed Ceḍī; and Avāntī had annexed Assaka. (Sanskrit names follow within parentheses.)

⁷¹ The seven treasures—the wheel treasure, the elephant treasure, the horse treasure, the jewel treasure, the woman treasure, the householder treasure, the advisor treasure—are described in detail in **Bāla,paṇḍita S** (M 129.-34-41/3:172-176) = SD 2.22.

⁷² See Appendix.

⁷³ “A sixteenth,” *solasiṃ*, here a figure meaning “an iota; a tiniest fraction,” meaning there is almost no comparison at all.

⁷⁴ “Celestial years.” See Appendix or A:ÑB 17 f.

It is possible, Visākhā, *to be reborn in this heaven*. It is in reference [214] to this that I said human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

21 For the devas of the **Tusita heaven**, a single night and day (there) is that of four hundred human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. Four thousand such celestial years are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of Tusita.

It is possible, Visākhā, *to be reborn in this heaven*. It is in reference to this that I say human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

22 For the devas of the **Nimmaṇa,ratī heaven** [who delight in creating], a single night and day (there) is that of eight hundred human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. Eight thousand such celestial years are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of Tusita.

It is possible, Visākhā, *to be reborn in this heaven*. It is in reference to this that I say human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

23 For the devas of the **Para,nimmita,vasavattī heaven** [who lord over the creation of others], a single night and day (there) is that of sixteen hundred human years: 30 such days make a month, 12 such months make a year. Sixteen thousand such celestial years are the lifespan of the devas of the heaven of Tusita.

It is possible, Visākhā, for a certain woman or man here, having kept the observance complete in its eight limbs, after death, when the body has broken up, to be reborn in the company of the devas of the Para,nimmita,vasavattī heaven. It is in reference to this that I say human sovereignty is poor compared to heavenly bliss.

- 24** One should not harm a living being; nor take the not-given;
 One should not speak false speech; nor drink intoxicating drinks;
 One should refrain from incelibacy [when one is under the rule]; [215]
 One should not eat during the night nor at the wrong time;
 One should not wear garlands nor use scents;
 One should dwell on a small bed or a couch on the ground.
 This is “the great observance of eight limbs”
 Declared by the Buddha for the end of suffering.

The sun and the moon, both beautiful to look at,
 Shed their radiance where they course their orbits,
 Scattering the gloom as they go in the open skies;
 The heavens light up, radiant in all the quarters.
 Within this space there is wealth to be found—
 Pearl, gem, beryl and lucky stone,
 Gold nugget and glowing gold,
 Beautiful metal called “Hāṭaka gold”.
 Yet of the keeping of the eight-limbed observance
 They are but a fraction not worth a sixteenth.
 Nor all the moonlight and galaxy of stars.

Therefore a woman or a man of moral virtue
 Who keeps the eight-limbed observance
 Makes merits that bring them happiness
 Without a fault, they find a place in heaven.

— evaṃ —

Appendix

The 16 Great States

Some of these sixteen great states (*soḷasa mahā.janapadā*), such as **Kāśī, Kośala, Kuru-Pañcāla, Matsya, Gandhārā and Kambojā**, had existed long before and were mentioned on the Vedic literature. The rest, such as Āṅga, Magadha, Vṛjī, Malla, Ceḍī, Vatsā, Śūrasena, Āsmaka and Avantī, were new states that arose from declining old ones or more areas coming into prominence.

Country/State	Capital & towns	Modern districts
1. Āṅga	Campā (Bhagalpur) Bhadrikā (P: Bhaddiyā) Aśvapura (P: Assapura)	Bengal
2. Magadha	Rājagṛha or Girivraja (Rajgir)	Southern Bihar
3. Kāśī/Kāśī	Vārāṇasī (Banaras)	Banaras/Vārāṇasī
4. Kośala/Kosala	Śrāvastī (Saheth Maheth) Sāketa (Ayodhyā)	Oudh
5. Vṛjī/Vajjī	Vaiśālī (Besarh) of the Licchavis Mithilā (Janakpur) of the Videhas	Northern Bihar
6. Malla (<i>Malloi</i>)	Pāvā (Padaraona) Kuśinagara (Kasia; P: Kusinārā)	Gorakhpur
7. Caitya/Ceḍī	Śuktimati Sahajaṭī Tripurī	Bundelkhand
8. Vatsā/Vaṃsā	Kausāmbī (Kosam; P: Kosambī)	Allahābād
9. Kuru	Indraprastha (Delhi) Hastinapura	District of Thānesar, Delhi & Meerut
10. Pañcāla	N. Ahicchatra (Rāmnagar) S. Kāmpilya (Kampil)	Rohilkhand Central Doāb
11. Matsya/Maccha	Virāṭa (Bairāt)	Jaipur
12. Śūrasena	Mathurā	Mathurā (Muttra)
13. Āsmaka or Aśvaka/ Assaka (<i>Assakenus</i>)	Potali or Potana (Bodhan)	Nizam
14. Avantī*	Ujjayinī (Ujjain), (P: Ujjenī) Māhiṣmati	Mālwa & Nimār
15. Gandhārā or Yonā*	Takṣaśilā (P: Takka, sīlā)	D of Peshāwār & Rawalpiṇḍī
16. Kambojā		SW Kaśmīr & Kāfirstān

(A 1:213 = 4:252 f. = Nc 247) [See Lamotte, *History of Indian Buddhism*, 1988:8]

The names in *italics*, e.g. *Malloi*, are those found in ancient Greek writings.

A name with an asterisk (*), e.g. “Avantī*” denotes that it was outside the Middle Country.

The Middle Country of the Buddhists was **about the size of peninsular Malaysia** or of England and Wales.

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