

# Visakhuposatha Sutta

The Discourse to Visakha  
on the Uposatha  
(The Path to Heavenly Bliss)



Translated from the Pali by Bhikkhu Khantipalo.  
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Compiled for the Serene Joy and Emotion of the Pious

**A Gift of Dhamma**

# Preface

**This sutta paves the path to Heavenly Bliss**, (the blissful world of Devas), especially for those who are not living their last existence in this very life. The third 1,000 years of Buddha sasana is *Anagami era*, lay householders are difficult to reach for arahatship. To most lay householders, Nibbana is just a dream. Buddha saw that the foremost female disciple Visakha, could only reach for the Heavenly Bliss and he thus delivered this **Visakhuposatha Sutta to Visakha**.

In Buddhist country like *Myanmar*, it is routine to see many Buddhists undertake the *Uposatha Undertaken* on the *Full-moon* and the *New Moon* days, like one depicted in the back cover sheet. Many of the observers are dressed down in dark colored dress with shawl around their shoulder. It is a tradition for lady to wear shawl to tone down their beauty during these fasting days (Uposatha days).

In the Buddha-time, various groups of ascetics and wanderers used the traditional *Full moon* and *New moon* days for expounding their theories and practices, while the Buddha allowed bhikkhus to assemble on these days to listen to the recitation of the Patimokkha (the fundamental rules of a bhikkhu) and to teach Dhamma to the lay people who came to their monastery.

From that time down to the present, the Uposatha days have been observed by Buddhists, both ordained and laity, in all Buddhist countries. *The Uposatha with the eight parts training practice and one meal a day, no meal after noon time is being practiced in Buddhist country like Myanmar and the person who undertakes Uposatha Undertaken is called Upokethe*. The eight-parts of Training practice of abstentions:

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*killing living creatures.*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*taking what is not given.*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*unchaste conduct.*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*false speech.*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*distilled and fermented intoxicants* which are the occasion for carelessness.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*eating outside the time.*

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments,*  
wearing garlands, smartening with perfumes and beautifying  
with cosmetics.

I undertake the rule of training to refrain from  
*a high or large sleeping-place.*

As said in the discourse to Visakha, the merits that could be accrued are tremendous; it is a path to the blissful world of Deva (Heavenly world). Depending on one's parami, one could take rebirth in the heavenly bliss. Buddha said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

Thus, he said: *Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship of the Devas:*

**1. The Deva of the Four Kings** – where their one day is equal to human years (Life span is 500 heavenly years)

**2. The abode of the Devas of the Thirty-three – (Tavatinsa)** where their one day equal to 100 human years (Life span is 1,000 years).

**3. The abode of Yama** – where their one day is equal to 200 human years (Life span is 2,000 heavenly years)

**4. The Abode of Tusita** – where their one day is equal to 400 human years (Life span is 4,000 heavenly years)

**5. The abode of Nimanarati** – where their one day is equivalent to 800 human years (Life span is 8,000 heavenly years).

**6. The abode of Paranimmitavasavatti** – where their one day is equivalent to 1,600 years (Life span is 16,000 heavenly years)

*By the Uposatha Undertaken and by the merits accrued, human being could take rebirth in the heavenly abodes. In fact Visakha was reborn in the heavenly abode after her expiration of her human life. If we can afford to undertake the Uposatha Undertaken, we all could be in the heavenly world after this life.*

*Compiled for the serene joys and the emotions of the Pious*

# Visakhuposatha Sutta

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"Visakha, when the Uposatha undertaken with its eight component practices, (2) is entered on, it is of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range. And how, Visakha, is the Uposatha undertaken with its eight component practices, entered on, is of great fruit, great advantage, great splendor and great range?"

"Here, (3) Visakha, a noble disciple considers thus:

#### **1.1.1. The first Practice (Abandon killing)**

"For all their lives the arahants dwell having **abandoned killing living beings**, refrain from killing living beings, they have laid down their staffs, laid down their weapons, they are conscientious,(4) sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings; so today I dwell, for this night and day **having abandoned killing living beings**, refraining from killing living beings, I am one who has laid down my staff, laid down my weapon, I am conscientious, sympathetic, compassionate for the good of all living beings. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this first practice.

#### **1.1.2. The Second Practice (Abandoned what is not given)**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants dwell having **abandoned taking what is not given**, refrain from taking what is not given, they are takers of what is given, those who expect only what is given, themselves become clean without thieving; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned taking what is not given, refraining from taking what is not given. I am a taker of what is given, one who expects only what is given, by myself become clean without thieving. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this second practice.

#### **1.1.3. The Third Practice (abandon unchaste conduct)**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants dwell having **abandoned unchaste conduct**, they are of chaste conduct, living aloof, refrain from sex which is the way of

common society; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned unchaste conduct, I am of chaste conduct, living aloof, refraining from sex which is the common way of society. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this third practice.

#### **1.1.4. The fourth Practice (abandoned false speech)**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants dwell having **abandoned false speech**, refrain from false speech, they are speakers of truth, joiners of truth,(5) firm-in-truth,(6) grounded-on-truth,(7) not speakers of lies to the world; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned false speech, refraining from false speech, a speaker of truth, a joiner of truth, firm-in-truth, grounded-on-truth, not a speaker of lies to the world. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this fourth practice.

#### **1.1.5. The fifth Practice (Abandon intoxicants)**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants dwell having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness and refrain from them; so today I dwell, for this night and day, having abandoned distilled and fermented intoxicants which are the occasion for carelessness, refraining from them. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this fifth practice.

#### **1.1.6. The sixth Practice (refrain from eating outside the time)**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants are one-mealers, **refrain from eating outside the time**, desisting at night, (8) so today I am a one-mealer, refraining from eating outside the time, desisting at night. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this sixth practice.

#### **1.1.7. The seventh Practice (refrain from dancing )**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing garments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics; so today I refrain from dancing, singing, music, going to see entertainments, wearing ornaments, smartening with perfumes and beautifying with cosmetics. By this practice, following after the arahants, the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this seventh practice.

#### **1.1.8. The Eight Practice (abandoned high beds )**

"(He considers:) 'For all their lives the arahants having abandoned high beds (9) and large beds,(10) refraining from high beds and large beds, they make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass; so today I have abandoned high beds and large beds, refraining from high beds and large beds, I make use of a low sleeping place, a (hard) bed or a strewing of grass. By this practice, following after the arahants the Uposatha will be entered on by me.'

"It is undertaken by this eighth practice.

"Thus indeed, Visakha, is the Uposatha entered on and undertaken with its eight component practices, *of great fruit, of great advantage, of great splendor, of great range*. "How great a fruit? How great an advantage? How great a splendor? How great a range?

#### **1.1.9. Great Benefits**

"Just as though, Visakha, one might have power, dominion and kingship(11) over sixteen great countries abounding in the seven treasures (12) -- that is to say, Anga, Magadha, Kasi, Kosala, Vajji, Malla, Ceti, Vansa, Kure, Pañcala, Maccha, Surasena, Assaka, Avanti, Gandhara and Kamboja, yet it is not worth a sixteenth part of the Uposatha

undertaken with its eight practices. For what reason? *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.2. The Deva of the Four Kings**

*"That which among men is fifty years, Visakha is one night and day in the abode of the Four Great Kings;* their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of "the devas of the Four Great Kings" is five hundred of those heavenly years. *Visakha,* Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Four Great Kings -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.3. The Devas of the Thirty-three**

*"That which among men is a hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day in the abode of the Thirty-three,* their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the devas of the Thirty-three is one thousand of those heavenly years.<sup>(13)</sup> Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the devas of the Thirty-three -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.4. The Yama Devas.**

*"That which among men is two hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day of the abode of Yama devas,* their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Yama devas is two thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break-up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Yama devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: *Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.5.. Tusita Deva**

*"That which among men is four hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day in the abode of the Tusita devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Tusita devas is four thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Tusita devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.6. The Nimmanarati Deva**

*"That which among men is eight hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day in the abode of the Nimmanarati devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Nimmanarati devas is eight thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death may arise to fellowship with the Nimmanarati devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.7. The Paranimmitavasavatti devas**

*"That which among men is sixteen hundred years, Visakha, is one night and day in the abode of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas, their month has thirty of those days, their year twelve of those months; the lifespan of the Paranimmitavasavatti devas is sixteen thousand of those heavenly years. Now here a certain woman or man, having entered on the Uposatha undertaken with the eight practices, at the break up of the body, after death, may arise to fellowship with the Paranimmitavasavatti devas -- such a thing indeed is known, Visakha. It was in connection with this that I have said: Miserable is kingship over men compared with heavenly bliss.*

### **1.8. Uposasatha Eight Practices**

"Kill no life, nor take what is not given, speak no lie, nor be an alcoholic, refrain from sex and unchaste conduct, at night do not eat out-of-time food, neither bear garlands nor indulge with perfume, and make your bed a mat upon the ground: this indeed is called the eight-part uposatha taught by the Buddha gone to dukkha's end.

The radiance of the sun and moon, both beautiful to see, follow on from each other, dispelling the darkness as they go through the heavens, illumining the sky and brightening the quarters and the treasure found between them: pearls and crystals and auspicious turquoises, gold nuggets and the gold called "ore," monetary gold with gold dust carried down -- compared with the eight-part uposatha, though they are enjoyed, are not a sixteenth part -- as the shining of the moon in all the groups of stars. Hence indeed the woman and the man who are virtuous enter on uposatha having eight parts and having made merits (14) bringing forth happiness blameless they obtain heavenly abodes."

-- Anguttara Nikaya, iv. 255-258)

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(The Uposatha Visakha (upasaka Vasettha), when she heard this discourse, after the Buddha had finished speaking the above verses, exclaimed:)

"Lord, if my dear kin and relatives were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. Lord, if all the warrior-nobles, brahmans, merchants and laborers were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day."

"So it is, Visakha. If all the warrior-nobles, brahmans, merchants and laborers were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. If this world with its devas, maras and brahmas, this generation with its samanas and brahmans, together with its rulers and mankind were to enter on the uposatha undertaken with its eight practices, it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day. Visakha, if these great sala trees were to enter on the uposatha

undertaken with its eight practices it would be for their benefit and happiness for many a day, that is, if they were conscious, what to speak of mankind."

-- Anguttara Nikaya, iv. 259

## Notes

1. Visakha: a very generous woman lay-disciple who, by listening frequently to Dhamma, became a Stream-winner and who was, perhaps, already a noble disciple (*ariya*) when this discourse was spoken.
2. *anga*: lit. part, component, practice; here meaning practices composing the Uposatha.
3. "Here": meaning "in the Buddha sasana," the Buddha's instructions or religion.
4. *lajji*: one who has shame (*hiri*) of doing evil, and fear of doing evil (*ottappa*), the two qualities which are called "the world guardians."
5. *saccasandha*: "they join the truth" (Comm.).
6. *theta*: lit. "firm, established," that is, in the experience of ultimate truth.
7. *paccayika*: truth that has been seen by perceiving its conditional arising.
8. **Bhikkhus do not eat after midday until the following dawn.**
9. High beds means luxurious beds which are soft and well-sprung.
10. Large beds means those in which two people can sleep.
11. *rajjam*: lit., "kingship," but meaning generally great authority.
12. The seven treasures: gold, silver, pearls, crystal, turquoise, diamond, coral.
13. If calculated in human years, the devas of the *Four Great Kings (Lokapala Nat Min Gyi's)* live 9,000,000 years; of the Thirty-three 36,000,000 years; of the *Yama* 144,000,000 years; of the *Tusita* 576,000,000 years; of the *Nimmanarati* 2,304,000,000 years; of the *Paranimmitavasavatti* devas the life is 9,216,000,000 years. Man can live at most one day in the life of the Thirty-three. It is worth reading the story in the Dhammapada Commentary (trans. "Buddhist Legends," Harvard Oriental Series Vol. 29, reissued by the Pali Text Society, London, 1969), called *Husband-honorer*, which brings to life this comparative time scale.
14. **Merit (*puñña*)**: good kamma which purifies and cleanses the mind of the doer, such as the practice of the three ways of merit-making: giving, moral conduct (or precepts), and meditation.

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### Bibliography:

1. <http://www.accesstoinsight.org/lib/bps/wheels/wheel206/visakha.html>



**Typical Scene in Buddhist Country like Myanmar  
On Uposatha Day  
Uposatha Undertaken – Fasting, Eight-precepts  
& Listen to the Dhamma**