Ud 5.5 — Uposatha Sutta: The Observance Day

English translation by John D. Ireland.

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Changes: Presentation only: original HTML markup reflowed into plain text; wording, numbering and source repetitions retained. No repetitions expanded.

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Text

Thus have I heard. At one time the Lord was staying near Savatthi in the Eastern Park at Migara's mother's mansion. On that occasion the Lord was sitting surrounded by the Order of bhikkhus, as it was the day of the Uposatha observance. Then, when the night was far advanced and the first watch had ended, the Venerable Ananda arose from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, raised his folded hands, and said to the Lord: "The night is far advanced, revered sir, the first watch has ended and the bhikkhus have been sitting for a long time. Revered sir, let the Lord recite the Patimokkha to the bhikkhus." When this was said the Lord remained silent.

When the night was (still further) advanced and the middle watch had ended, a second time the Venerable Ananda arose from his seat... and said to the Lord: "The night is far advanced, revered sir, the middle watch has ended and the bhikkhus have been sitting for a long time. Revered sir, let the Lord recite the Patimokkha to the bhikkhus." A second time the Lord remained silent.

When the night was (yet further) advanced and the last watch had ended, as dawn was approaching and the night was drawing to a close, a third time the Venerable Ananda arose from his seat... and said to the Lord: "The night is far advanced, revered sir, the last watch has ended; dawn is approaching and the night is drawing to a close and the bhikkhus have been sitting for a long time. Revered sir, let the Lord recite the Patimokka to the bhikkhus."

"The gathering is not pure, Ananda."

Then the Venerable Mahamoggallana thought: "Concerning which person has the Lord said, 'The gathering is not pure, Ananda'?" And the Venerable Mahamoggallana, comprehending the minds of the whole Order of bhikkhus with his own mind, saw that person sitting in the midst of the Order of bhikkhus — immoral, wicked, of impure and suspect behavior, secretive in his acts, no recluse though pretending to be one, not practicing the holy life though pretending to do so, rotten within, lustful and corrupt. On seeing him he arose from his seat, approached that person, and said: "Get up, friend. You are seen by the Lord. You cannot live in communion with the bhikkhus." But that person remained silent.

A second time and a third time the Venerable Mahamoggallana told that person to get up, and a second time and a third time that person remained silent. Then the Venerable Mahamoggllana took that person by the arm, pulled him outside the gate, and bolted it. Then he approached the Lord and said: "Revered sir, I have ejected that person. The assembly is quite pure. Revered sir, let the Lord recite the Patimokkha to the bhikkhus."

"It is strange, Moggallana, it is remarkable, Moggallana, how that stupid person should have waited until he was taken by the arm."

Then the Lord addressed the bhikkhus: "From now on, bhikkhus, I shall not participate in the Uposatha observance or recite the Patimokkha. From now on you yourselves should participate in the Uposatha observance and recite the Patimokkha. It is impossible, bhikkhus, it cannot happen, that the Tathagata should participate in the Uposatha observance and recite the Patimokkha with a gathering that is not pure.

"Bhikkhus, there are these eight wonderful and marvellous qualities of the great ocean, seeing which the asuras delight in the great ocean. What are the eight?

(1) "The great ocean, bhikkhus, gradually shelves, slopes, and inclines, and there is no sudden precipice. Since the great ocean gradually shelves... this is the first wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean, seeing which the asuras delight in the great ocean.

(2) "Furthermore, the great ocean is stable and does not exceed the limits of the tide-line. This is the second wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(3) "Furthermore, the great ocean does not tolerate a dead body; for when there is a dead body in the great ocean, it soon conveys it to the shore and casts it up on dry land. This is

the third wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(4) "Furthermore, whatever great rivers there are — the Ganges, the Yamuna, the Aciravati, the Sarabhu, and the Mahi — on reaching the great ocean lose their former names and identities and are just called 'the great ocean.' This is the fourth wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(5) "Furthermore, although the rivers of the world flow into the great ocean and showers of rain fall from the sky, no lessening or filling up of the great ocean is evident. This is the fifth wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(6) "Furthermore, the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt. This is the sixth wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(7) "Furthermore, the great ocean contains many precious substances, various precious substances, such as these: pearl, crystal, beryl, conch, quartz, coral, silver, gold, ruby, and cat's eye. This is the seventh wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

(8) "Furthermore, the great ocean is the abode of mighty creatures, of such creatures as these: the timi, timingala, timirapingala, asuras, nagas, and gandhabbas. There exist in the great ocean beings a hundred yojanas in size, beings two hundred, three hundred, four hundred, and five hundred yojanas in size. This is the eighth wonderful and marvellous quality of the great ocean...

"These, bhikkhus, are the eight wonderful and marvellous qualities of the great ocean, seeing which the asuras delight in the great ocean.

"Similarly, bhikkhus, there are eight wonderful and marvellous qualities in this Dhamma and Discipline, seeing which bhikkhus delight in this Dhamma and Discipline. What are the eight?

(1) "Just as the great ocean gradually shelves, slopes, and inclines, and there is no sudden precipice, so also in this Dhamma and Discipline there is a gradual training, a gradual course, a gradual progression, and there is no sudden penetration to final knowledge. Since, in this Dhamma and Discipline there is a gradual training,... this is the first wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline, seeing which bhikkhus delight in this Dhamma and Discipline.

(2) "Just as the great ocean is stable and does not exceed the limits of the tide-line, so also my disciples do not transgress a training rule laid down by me for disciples even for the sake of their lives. This is the second wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(3) "Just as the great ocean does not tolerate a dead body... and casts it up on dry land, so also whatsoever person is immoral, wicked, of impure and suspect behavior, secretive in his acts, no recluse though pretending to be one, not practicing the holy life though

pretending to do so, rotten within, lustful and corrupt, the Order does not associate with him, but when it has met together soon throws him out. Even though he may be sitting in the midst of the Order of bhikkhus, yet he is far from the Order and the Order is far from him. This is the third wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(4) "Just as whatever great rivers there are... on reaching the great ocean lose their former names and identities and are just called 'the great ocean,' so also (those of) the four castes — nobles, brahmans, merchants, and workers — having gone forth from home to the homeless state in the Dhamma and Discipline made known by the Tathagata, abandon their former names and identities and are just called 'recluses, the followers of the Sakyan son.' This is the fourth wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(5) "Just as, although the rivers of the world flow into the great ocean and showers of rain fall from the sky, no lessening or filling up of the great ocean is evident, so also, although many bhikkhus attain final Nibbana in the Nibbana-element with no residue left, no lessening or filling up of the Nibbana-element is evident. This is the fifth wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(6) "Just as the great ocean has one taste, the taste of salt, so also this Dhamma and Discipline has one taste, the taste of liberation. This is the sixth wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(7) "Just as the great ocean contains many precious substances, various precious substances... so also this Dhamma and Discipline contains many precious things, various precious things, such as these: the four foundations of mindfulness, the four right endeavors, the four bases for successful accomplishment, the five faculties, the five powers, the seven enlightenment factors, and the Noble Eightfold Path. This is the seventh wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline...

(8) "Just as the great ocean is the abode of mighty creatures... so also this Dhamma and Discipline is the abode of mighty creatures, such as these: the stream-enterer and the one who is on the way to realizing the fruit of stream-entry, the once-returner and the one who is on the way to realizing the fruit of once-returning, the non-returner and the one who is on the way to realizing the fruit of non-returning, the arahant and the one who is on the way to arahatship. This is the eighth wonderful and marvellous quality in this Dhamma and Discipline.

"These, bhikkhus, are the eight wonderful and marvellous qualities in this Dhamma and Discipline, seeing which bhikkhus delight in this Dhamma and Discipline."

Then, on realizing its significance, the Lord uttered on that occasion this inspired utterance:

Rain soddens what is covered up, It does not sodden what is open. Therefore uncover what is covered That the rain will not sodden it.