Ud 5.5 — Uposatha Sutta: Uposatha

English translation by Thanissaro Bhikkhu.

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Text

I have heard that on one occasion the Blessed One was staying near Sāvatthī at the Eastern Monastery, the palace of Migāra's mother. And on that occasion, the Blessed One — it being the observance day — was sitting surrounded by the community of monks. Then Ven. Ānanda — when the night was far advanced, at the end of the first watch — got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "Lord, the night is far advanced. The first watch has ended. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them." When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a second time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the middle watch, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "Lord, the night is far advanced. The second watch has ended. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to them." When this was said, the Blessed One remained silent.

Then a third time, when the night was far advanced, at the end of the last watch, as dawn was approaching and the face of the night was beaming, Ven. Ānanda got up from his seat, arranged his robe over one shoulder, stood facing the Blessed One, paying homage with his hands placed palm-to-palm over his heart, and said to him, "Lord, the night is far advanced. The last watch has ended. Dawn is approaching and the face of the night is beaming. The community of monks has been sitting here long. May the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the community of monks."

"Ānanda, the gathering isn't pure."

Then the thought occurred to Ven. Mahā Moggallāna: "In reference to which individual did the Blessed One just now say, 'Ānanda, the gathering isn't pure'?" So he directed his mind, encompassing with his awareness the awareness of the entire community of monks. He saw that individual — unprincipled, evil, unclean and suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions, not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature — sitting in the midst of the community of monks. On seeing him, he got up, went over to that individual, and on reaching him said, "Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the community of monks." Then the individual remained silent. A second time... A third time, Ven. Mahā Moggallāna said, "Get up, friend. You have been seen by the Blessed One. You have no affiliation with the community of monks." And for a third time the individual remained silent.

Then Ven. Mahā Moggallāna, grabbing that individual by the arm, having expelled him through the outside door of the porch and locking the bolt, approached the Blessed One and on arrival said, "I have expelled that individual, lord. The gathering is now pure. Let the Blessed One recite the Pāṭimokkha to the community of monks."

"Isn't it amazing, Moggallāna. Isn't it astounding, how that worthless man waited until he was grabbed by the arm." Then the Blessed One addressed the monks: "From now on I will no longer perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha. From now on, you alone, monks, will perform the observance and recite the Pāṭimokkha. It is impossible, it cannot happen, that a Tathāgata would perform the observance or recite the Pāṭimokkha with an impure gathering.

"Monks, there are these eight amazing & astounding qualities of the ocean because of which, as they see them again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean. Which eight?

"[1] The ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch.[1] The fact that the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch: This is the first amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[2] And furthermore, the ocean is stable and does not overstep its tideline... This is the second amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again &

again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[3] And furthermore, the ocean does not tolerate a dead body. Any dead body in the ocean gets quickly washed to the shore and thrown up on dry land... This is the third amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[4] And furthermore, whatever great rivers there are — such as the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, the Mahī — on reaching the ocean, give up their former names and are classed simply as 'ocean'... This is the fourth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[5] And furthermore, though the rivers of the world pour into the ocean, and rains fall from the sky, no swelling or diminishing in the ocean for that reason can be discerned... This is the fifth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[6] And furthermore, the ocean has a single taste: that of salt... This is the sixth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[7] And furthermore, the ocean has these many treasures of various kinds: pearls, sapphires, lapis lazuli, shells, quartz, coral, silver, gold, rubies, & cat's eyes... This is the seventh amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"[8] And furthermore, the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas. There are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long. The fact that the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas; and there are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long: This is the eighth amazing & astounding quality of the ocean because of which, as they see it again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"These are the eight amazing & astounding qualities of the ocean because of which, as they see them again & again, the asuras take great joy in the ocean.

"In the same way, monks, there are eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya. Which eight?

"[1] Just as the ocean has a gradual shelf, a gradual slope, a gradual inclination, with a sudden drop-off only after a long stretch; in the same way this Dhamma & Vinaya has a

gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch. The fact that this Dhamma & Vinaya has a gradual training, a gradual performance, a gradual practice, with a penetration to gnosis only after a long stretch: This is the first amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[2] And furthermore, just as the ocean is stable and does not overstep its tideline; in the same way my disciples do not — even for the sake of their lives — overstep the training rules I have formulated for them... This is the second amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[3] And furthermore, just as the ocean does not tolerate a dead body — any dead body in the ocean getting quickly washed to the shore and thrown up on dry land — in the same way, if an individual is unprincipled, evil, unclean & suspect in his undertakings, hidden in his actions — not a contemplative though claiming to be one, not leading the holy life though claiming to do so, inwardly rotten, oozing with desire, filthy by nature — the community has no affiliation with him. Having quickly gathered together, they suspend him from the community. Even though he may be sitting in the midst of the community of monks, he is far from the community, and the community far from him... This is the third amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[4] And furthermore, just as whatever great rivers there are — such as the Ganges, the Yamunā, the Aciravatī, the Sarabhū, the Mahī — on reaching the ocean, give up their former names and are classed simply as 'ocean'; in the same way, when members of the four castes — noble warriors, brahmans, merchants, & workers — go forth from home to the homeless life in this Dhamma & Vinaya declared by the Tathāgata, they give up their former names and clans and are classed simply as 'contemplatives, sons of the Sakyan'... This is the fourth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[5] And furthermore, just as the rivers of the world pour into the ocean, and rains fall from the sky, but no swelling or diminishing in the ocean for that reason can be discerned; in the same way, although many monks are totally unbound into the property of unbinding with no fuel remaining, no swelling or diminishing in the property of unbinding for that reason can be discerned... This is the fifth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[6] And furthermore, just as the ocean has a single taste — that of salt — in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has a single taste: that of release... This is the sixth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[7] And furthermore, just as the ocean has these many treasures of various kinds — pearls, sapphires, lapis lazuli, shells, quartz, coral, silver, gold, rubies, & cat's eyes — in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya has these many treasures of various kinds: the four establishings of mindfulness, the four right exertions, the four bases of power, the five faculties, the five strengths, the seven factors for awakening, the noble eightfold path... This is the seventh amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"[8] And furthermore, just as the ocean is the abode of such mighty beings as these: whales, whale-eaters, & whale-eater-eaters; asuras, nāgas, & gandhabbas, and there are in the ocean beings one hundred leagues long, two hundred... three hundred... four hundred... five hundred leagues long; in the same way, this Dhamma & Vinaya is the abode of such mighty beings as these: stream-winners & those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; arahants & those practicing for arahantship. The fact that this Dhamma & Vinaya is the abode of such mighty beings as these — stream-winners & those practicing to realize the fruit of stream-entry; once-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of once-returning; non-returners & those practicing to realize the fruit of non-returning; arahants & those practicing for arahantship: This is the eighth amazing & astounding quality of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see it again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya.

"These are the eight amazing & astounding qualities of this Dhamma & Vinaya because of which, as they see them again & again, the monks take great joy in this Dhamma & Vinaya."

Then, on realizing the significance of that, the Blessed One on that occasion exclaimed:

Rain soddens what's covered & doesn't sodden what's open. So open up what's covered up, so that it won't get soddened by the rain.[2]

Note

1.

The Pali here reads, na āyataken'eva papāto. The Commentary insists that this phrase means, "with no abrupt drop-off." There are three reasons for not accepting the Commentary's interpretation here. (a) The first is grammatical. The word āyataka means "long, drawn out; lasting a long time." To interpret āyatakena, the instrumental of a word meaning "long, drawn out," to mean "abrupt" makes little sense. (b) The second reason is geographical. The continental shelf off the east coast of India does have a sudden drop-off after a long gradual slope. (c) The third reason is doctrinal. As noted in the interpretation of the simile, the shape of the ocean floor corresponds to the course of the practice. If there were no sudden drop-off, there would be no sudden penetration to awakening. However, there are many cases of sudden penetration in the Canon, Exhibit A being

Bāhiya's attainment of arahantship in Ud 1.10.

2.

This verse also appears among the verses attributed to Ven. Sirimaṇḍa at Thag 6.13 (verse 447 in the PTS edition).

See also: AN 3.129