

Ajivatthamaka Sila (Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth) in Buddhism

14 December 2025

In Theravada Buddhism there are two versions of the Eight Precepts: *Atthangika Uposatha Sila* (Eight *Upasatha* Precepts) and *Ajivatthamaka Sila* (Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth).

The *Ajivatthamaka Sila* builds upon the framework of *Panca Sila* (The Five Precepts). It expands the Fourth Precept of the *Panca Sila* (The Five Precepts) to specify the four types of wrong speech from which a lay disciple should abstain. The *Ajivatthamaka Sila* also requires abstention from wrong livelihood, including trading in arms; in living beings (slavery, prostitution); meat; alcohol; and poison.

Venerable Balangoda Ananda Maitreya Mahanayaka Thera Aggamaha Pandita Abhidhaja Maharathaguru DLitt DLitt (1896-1998) explains in *Nine Special Qualities of the Buddha & Other Essays* on page 16

“The perfect moral conduct or character can be categorised under the Eight Precepts called *Ajivatthamaka Sila*. These are refraining from eight unwholesome ways, namely, killing, taking what is not given; a life devoted to sensuality; falsehood, slandering, backbiting, harsh speech, gossip; and wrong livelihood. All the good conduct and keeping Precepts or *Patimokkha* rules of Buddhist monks are included in these eight Precepts.”

Venerable Ledi Sayadaw (1846-1923) explains in *Wheel 171-174 A Manual of The Requisites of Enlightenment* in Notes note 21 page 156; and in *A Manual of The Requisites of Enlightenment*, Introduction page 11

The three constituents of the morality-group of the eightfold path when considered in detail, become *ājīvaṭṭhamaka-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 intoxicating 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.

The *Ajivatthamaka Sila* occurs in the *Pali Canon* in the *Abhidhamma Pitaka*, the *Sutta Pitaka* and the Commentaries.

Ajivatthamaka Sila (The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth)

1) *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

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

2) *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

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

3) *Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

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

4) *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from false and harmful speech

5) *Pisuna vaca veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from backbiting

6) *Pharusa vaca veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

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

7) *Samphappalapa veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from useless or meaningless conversation

8) *Micchajiva veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from wrong means of livelihood

Ajīvattṃamaka Sīla (The Eight Precepts with Right Livelihood as the Eighth) with Diacriticals

1) *Pāṇātipātā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

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

2) *Adinnādānā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

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

3) *Kāmesu micchācārā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

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

4) *Musāvādā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from false and harmful speech

5) *Pisuṇāvācā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from backbiting

6) *Pharusāyavācā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

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

7) *Samphappalāpā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from useless or meaningless conversation

8) *Micchājīvā veramaṇī·sikkhāpadaṃ samādiyāmi*

I undertake the Precept to refrain from wrong means of livelihood

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