

The Taking of Precepts

The following precepts are traditionally taken at the start of a meditation retreat or as part of a refuge ceremony. The language is Pali, which is the language used for the Theravada Buddhist suttas. It is similar to Sanskrit and is close to the actual language spoken by the Buddha. The custom is for the teacher to chant each precept one time and then for the students to join in for the second and third chant of each precept.

(1) *Panatipata veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking life."

(2) *Adinnadana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from taking what is not given."

(3) *Abrahmacariya veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from celibacy."

(4) *Musavada veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from false speech."

(5) *Suramerayamajjapamadatthana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from fermented and distilled intoxicants which are the basis for heedlessness."

(6) *Vikalabhajana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from eating beyond the time limit."

(7) *Nacca gita vadita visukhadassana-mala gandha vilepana dharanamandana vibhusanatthana veramani sikkhapadam samamadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from dancing, singing, instrumental music, unsuitable shows, and from wearing garlands, using scents, and beautifying the body with cosmetics."

(8) *Uccasayana mahasayana veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from high and luxurious beds and seats."

For daily life, the precepts change slightly. The householder takes only the first five precepts and changes the 3rd one to:

(3) *Kamesu micchacara veramani sikkhapadam samadiyami*, "I undertake the training rule to abstain from misconduct in regard to sense pleasures."

The translation used here is from Bhikkhu Bodhi in 'Going for Refuge--Taking the Precepts', the Buddhist Publication Society, The Wheel Publication No. 282/284 (www.accesstoinsight.org). For the code of conduct used within Friends of the Heart, we amplified the precepts to include encouragement to cultivating the wholesome in our lives, in addition to the abstentions from unwholesomeness.

Code of Conduct for Members of Friends of the Heart

1. I undertake to train myself to refrain from killing. I will endeavour to promote life, to encourage good and wholesome activities of body, speech and mind in myself and others. I will strive to practise non-harming, to be compassionate in intention and aware in action, so that I may come to exhibit wisdom in this very life.

2. I undertake to train myself to refrain from stealing. I will endeavour to give positive energy and honest encouragement to myself and others. I aspire to give freely to all those who ask for my help.

3. I undertake to train myself to refrain from misuse of sexual energy. I will strive to promote wholesome exploration with the senses. I will respect the vows that I and others have taken.

4. I undertake to train myself not to tell lies. I will strive to promote the path of truth in my speech, my actions and my reflections.

5. I undertake to train myself to refrain from using substances which cloud the mind. I understand that these are ultimately impediments to clear awareness and can cause obstruction on the path of Awakened Compassion, the path to which I aspire.

6. I agree that I will abide by these precepts and by the by-laws of Friends of the Heart and that if my conduct, my fellow students' conduct or the conduct of any teachers for Friends of the Heart becomes a cause for concern that I or others may ask for a hearing before the Board in order to address these matters.

Additional Code for Teachers at Friends of the Heart

7. I understand that I, as a teacher, must act responsibly with a clear and open mode of conduct, bearing in mind the responsibility I hold to the group as a whole. If I find myself facing an ambiguous situation, without clear moral guidelines, I will seek consultation with my peers or spiritual friends.

8. I am aware of a power imbalance that exists in any teaching situation and vow that I will not use my position to override the best interests of the student nor to curtail his or her freedom of choice.

9. I am aware that, from time to time, in the normal course of life, sexual attraction can arise between a student and his/her teacher and that this can lead to a wholesome relationship. I understand that any such relationship should take place outside and subsequent to the period in which there was a student/teacher relationship.

10. I undertake to abjure the use of violence as a teaching tool. I am aware that there is a long history of teaching through violence but understand that psychological studies have shown it to be damaging to students of the present day. There may be a time when sword teaching is considered necessary for the advancement of a particular student and this should be mutually agreed upon. I agree that it will not move into the realm of physical brutality.

11. I agree that my conduct can be examined by the Board of Directors of Friends of the Heart and that a student may ask for a review of my conduct at any time.