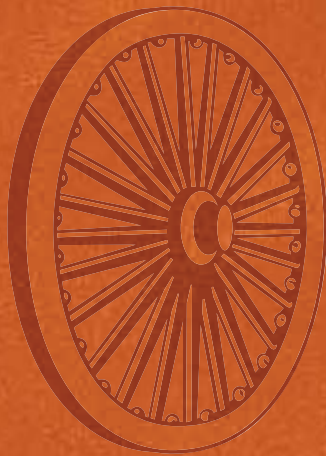


MEDITATION NOW

Inner Peace Through Inner Wisdom



S. N. Goenka

Meditation Now

Inner Peace Through Inner Wisdom

By Acharya S. N. Goenka

A collection Commemorating
Mr. Goenka's Tour of North America
April to August, 2002



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S. N. Goenka

A Teacher for the World

Mr. Satya Narayan Goenka, the foremost lay teacher of Vipassana meditation, was a student of the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin of Burma (Myanmar). The technique which Mr. Goenka teaches represents a tradition that is traced back to the Buddha. The Buddha never taught a sectarian religion; he taught Dhamma—the way to liberation—which is universal. In the same way, Mr. Goenka's approach is totally nonsectarian. For this reason his teaching has a profound appeal to people of all backgrounds, of every religion and no religion, from every part of the world.

From Businessman to Spiritual Teacher

Mr. Goenka was born in Mandalay, Myanmar, in 1924. He joined his family business in 1940 and rapidly became a pioneering industrialist, establishing several manufacturing corporations. He soon became a leading figure in Myanmar's large influential Indian community, and for many years headed such organizations as the Burma Marwari Chamber of Commerce and the Rangoon Chamber of Commerce & Industry. He often accompanied Union of Burma trade delegations on international tours as an advisor.

In 1956 Mr. Goenka took his first ten-day Vipassana course at the International Meditation Center in Rangoon, under the guidance of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. In 1964-1966 Mr. Goenka's businesses and industries were taken over when the newly installed military government of Myanmar nationalized all industry in the country. This gave him an opportunity to

spend more time with his teacher for meditation and in-depth training, all the while remaining a devoted family man and father of six sons. After fourteen years practicing with his teacher, he was appointed a teacher of Vipassana himself and devoted his life to spreading the technique for the benefit of all humanity. Shortly thereafter he came to India and conducted his first ten-day meditation course in 1969. In India, a country still sharply divided by caste and religion, Vipassana has been widely and easily accepted because of its nonsectarian nature.

The Vipassana International Academy (*Dhamma Giri*) was established in 1974 in Igatpuri, near Bombay, India. Courses of ten days duration and longer are held there continuously. In 1979 Mr. Goenka began traveling abroad to introduce Vipassana in other countries of the world. He has personally taught tens of thousands of people in more than 400 ten-day courses in Asia, North America, Europe and Australasia.

In response to an ever-growing demand, he started training assistant teachers to conduct these ten-day residential courses on his behalf. To date, he has trained more than 700 assistant teachers who have, with the help of thousands of volunteers, held Vipassana courses in more than 90 countries, including the People's Republic of China, Iran, Muscat, the United Arab Emirates, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Mongolia, Russia, Serbia, Taiwan, Cambodia, Mexico and all the countries of South America. More than 80 centers devoted to the teaching of Vipassana have been established in 21 countries. Today more than 1,000 courses are held annually around the world. One of the unique aspects of these Vipassana courses is that they are offered free of any charge for board, lodging or tuition; the expenses are completely met by voluntary donations. Neither Mr. Goenka nor his assistants receive any financial gain from these courses.

A prolific writer and poet, Mr. Goenka composes in English, Hindi and Rajasthani, and his works have been translated into many languages. He has been invited to lecture by institutes as diverse as the Dharma Drum Mountain Monastery (of Ven. Sheng Yen) in Taiwan; the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, and the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations where he stressed for the assembled spiritual leaders the overreaching importance of inner peace to effect real world peace.

***Teaching for All Sections of Society:
From Prisoners to Government Officials***

Vipassana meditation has been taught to prison inmates and staff in many parts of India as well as the United States, Britain, New Zealand, Taiwan and Nepal. There are permanent Vipassana centers in two Indian prisons. More than 10,000 inmates have attended ten-day Vipassana courses in jails and prisons. One thousand prisoners participated in a ground-breaking ten-day course conducted by Mr. Goenka in Tihar Jail, Delhi, in April, 1994. What started in a dramatic way in Tihar has now spread all over India. Convinced of its positive effects the Government of India has recommended that every prison in the country should organize ten-day Vipassana courses for inmates. As a result hundreds of prisoners continue to participate in Vipassana retreats every month. In addition, thousands of police officers have also attended Vipassana courses at the meditation center at the Police Academy, Delhi, and at other centers in India.

Men and women from all walks of life successfully practice Vipassana. They include the highly educated and the illiterate, the wealthy and the impoverished, aristocrats and slum-dwellers, devout followers of every religion and followers of none, the powerful and the powerless, the elderly

and the young. Courses have been organized for people with disabilities, including the blind and leprosy patients. Other programs have focused on school children, drug addicts, homeless children, college students and business executives.

High level institutions in India, such as the governments of the states of Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh; large corporations such as the Oil and Natural Gas Commission; leading research institutes such as the Bhabha Atomic Research Institute; and national training institutes such as the Indian Institute of Taxation—all encourage their employees to attend Vipassana courses as part of their ongoing job training.

Commitment to Peace

Mr. Goenka believes and teaches that for peace outside (among nations, among different communities) there must be peace inside. Individuals must learn the “art of living” in order to live peaceful lives. This is the heart of his teaching to people from different backgrounds. One important consequence of his work in India has been a subtle but telling influence on interreligious harmony. Thousands of Catholic priests, Buddhist monks, Jain ascetics, Hindu *sanyasis* and other religious leaders have come, and continue to come, to Vipassana courses. The universality of Vipassana—the core of the Buddha’s teaching—is providing a way whereby ideological differences can be bridged and people of diverse backgrounds can experience deep benefits without fearing conversion.

Mr. Goenka recently made history in India when he and a leading Hindu leader, HH Shankaracharya of Kanchi, met and together exhorted Hindus and Buddhists alike to forget past differences and live in harmony. After this initial meeting Mr. Goenka also met HH Shankaracharya of Sringeri and many

other top Hindu leaders in an effort to establish harmonious relations between Hindu and Buddhist communities.

Despite this positive development, mere exhortations alone cannot bring about the much desired reconciliation and cooperative spirit. Only when individuals undertake to remove from within themselves the blocks to peace and harmony can peace begin to flower outside and affect society. For this reason Mr. Goenka has always emphasized that the practical application of meditation is what will enable human beings to achieve inner as well as outer peace.

Vipassana Meditation and the Laws of Nature

***An Interview with S.N. Goenka
by Alan AtKisson***

Introduction: I can't tell you anything about what Vipassana meditation feels like, because I've never done it. But while definitions are tricky, what we call "spirituality"—the reaching of human awareness and conduct toward "that truth which passeth all understanding"—seems basic to meeting the enormous challenges of our times.

Which is why I accepted an invitation to interview S. N. Goenka during his 1992 visit to the Seattle area, where I was living at the time. Goenka—a leading teacher of the ancient Vipassana meditation technique—is not spiritual "leader" in the sense one usually means by the term, for he has no "followers." He would likely prefer to be described as a scientist who researches the relationship of mind, body, and matter via insight meditation, and teaches others how to do the same—directly, for themselves.

A former wealthy industrialist, born in Burma to parents of Indian descent, Goenka turned to Vipassana (which means "insight," as in "seeing into reality as it is") when nothing else could alleviate his severe migraine headaches. He was introduced to the practice—reputed to be the method of meditation originally taught by the Buddha, though Vipassana itself is not a sectarian movement—by senior Burmese government official and meditation master, Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

Goenka became a devoted practitioner of Vipassana, and in 1969, having given up his businesses in Burma, he moved to India to begin teaching the technique in the land where it originated.

Two decades later, there are Vipassana meditation centers throughout the world, and they attract people from all faiths.

The Universal Message of Peace

***Address by S. N. Goenka
to the Millennium World Peace Summit,
UN General Assembly Hall, United Nations, New York 29
August 2000***

In late August of 2000, Goenkaji participated in the Millennium World Peace Summit, a gathering of 1000 of the world's religious and spiritual leaders. This address was delivered to the participants at a session in the General Assembly chambers at the United Nations, under the auspices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The purpose of the meeting was to promote tolerance, foster peace, and encourage interreligious dialogue. With the many different viewpoints represented, the potential for disagreement was strong. In his presentation to the delegates, Goenkaji tried to highlight what they, and all spiritual paths, have in common: the universal Dhamma. His remarks were received with repeated ovations.

Friends, leaders of the spiritual and religious world:

This is a wonderful occasion, when we can all unite and serve humanity. Religion is religion only when it unites; when it divides us, it is nothing.

Much has been said here about conversion, both for and against. Far from being opposed to conversion, I am in favor of it—but not conversion from one organized religion to another. No, the conversion must be from misery to happiness. It must be from bondage to liberation. It must be from cruelty to compassion. That is the conversion needed today, and that is what this meeting should seek to bring about.

The ancient land of India gave a message of peace and harmony to the world, to all humanity, but it did more: it gave a method, a technique, for achieving peace and harmony. To me

The Meaning of Happiness

The following is adapted from Goenkaji's address "Is This All There Is? The Meaning of Happiness" at the World Economic Forum, Davos, Switzerland, January, 2000.

Every person who is attending this forum is among a unique group of people on our planet. They are generally among the wealthiest, most powerful most accomplished individuals in the world. Even being invited to attend the World Economic Forum is recognition of the eminent status that each participant has reached among his or her peers. When someone has all the wealth, power and status that anyone could ever want, are they necessarily happy? Are all these accomplishments and the self-satisfaction they bring 'all there is'? Or is there some greater degree of happiness which it is possible to achieve?

Happiness is an ephemeral condition. It is rapidly fleeting; here one moment and gone the next. One day when all is going well with your business, your bank account and your family, there is happiness. But what happens when something unwanted happens? When something entirely out of your control happens to disturb your happiness and harmony?

Every person in the world, regardless of their power and position, will experience periods during which circumstances arise that are out of their control and not to their liking. It may be the discovery that you have a fatal disease; it may be the illness or death of a near and dear one; it may be a divorce or the discovery that a spouse is cheating on you. For people addicted to success in life, it may simply be a failure at something: a bad business decision, your company being acquired and the

The Art of Living

Everyone seeks peace and harmony, because these are what we lack in our lives. From time to time we all experience agitation, irritation, disharmony, suffering; and when we suffer from agitation, we do not keep this misery limited to ourselves. We keep distributing it to others as well. The agitation permeates the atmosphere around the miserable person. Everyone else who comes into contact with him becomes irritated, agitated. Certainly this is not the proper way to live.

One ought to live at peace within oneself, and at peace with others. After all, a human being is a social being. One has to live in society—to live and deal with others. How to live peacefully? How to remain harmonious within ourselves, and to maintain peace and harmony around us, so that others also can live peacefully and harmoniously?

When one is agitated, then, to come out of it one has to know the basic reason for the agitation, the cause of the suffering. If one investigates the problem, it soon becomes clear that whenever one starts generating any negativity or defilement in the mind, one is bound to become agitated. A negativity in the mind—a mental defilement or impurity—cannot coexist with peace and harmony.

How does one start generating negativity? Again investigating, it becomes clear. I become very unhappy when I find someone behaving in a way which I don't like, when I find something happening which I don't like. Unwanted things happen, and I create tension within myself. Wanted things do not happen, some obstacles come in the way, and again I create

Awareness of Natural Respiration

The following has been translated and adapted from the sixth in a series of 44 Hindi discourses broadcast on Zee TV. It was originally published in the January 1999 issue of the Vipāśyanā Patrikā.

The goal of Vipassana meditation is to purify the mind completely by eradicating all mental impurities such as anger, hatred, passion, fear etc. For this, one must gain complete knowledge of the body, of the mind and of the mental impurities at the experiential level, which is done with the help of respiration.

If one wants to understand one's own physical and mental nature, one must use a pure object of concentration—natural, normal respiration. One should not try to regulate the breath or do any breathing exercise. Nor should one repeat any word or mantra or visualize any shape, form or imaginary object along with awareness of respiration. One should observe bare respiration, as it is.

When one observes respiration, one begins to understand the nature of the mind. One reality about the mind becomes very clear: the mind is very fleeting, very fickle. It wanders repeatedly from one object to another. Where does it wander? It wanders to so many objects. Even if one kept a diary, one would not be able to make a list of all the objects. But, if the meditator is attentive, he will see that the mind wanders in two areas only: either in the past or in the future. It recalls some past incident and starts to roll in thoughts of the past, “This had happened; this had not happened.” Suddenly it may jump to the

Walk the Path Yourself

The following has been translated and adapted from the seventh in a series of 44 Hindi discourses broadcast on Zee TV. It was originally published in the February 1999 issue of the Vipāśyanā Patrikā.

One who goes to a meditation center to learn Vipassana should clearly understand that the first step is to objectively observe the truth about one's own natural respiration.

No word should be added to the natural breath even as an oversight. One can concentrate the mind and make it calm by repeating any word. But the accumulation of defilements is blazing within, just as it did earlier. At any time, these sleeping volcanoes can erupt and overpower the mind and make one miserable.

Therefore, those who want to eradicate their defilements at the depth of the mind should not use any word. In other types of meditation, the use of a word has its own benefit. But it cannot eradicate the defilements at the depth of the mind.

One may repeat a word to concentrate the mind, just as a mother sings a lullaby to put her child to sleep. She keeps repeating the lullaby and the child falls asleep. In the same way, when a word is repeated, the mind will become concentrated on that. But this word becomes an obstacle in the objective observation of the truth in the present moment.

I can understand this obstacle because I myself used to meditate with the help of words. This has been confirmed by the experiences of others who have faced the same obstacles. A great saint from India, Kabir, said the same thing. As one continues meditating with the help of a word, an echo arises

The Importance of Daily Meditation

The following has been translated and adapted from a discourse by Goenkaji to about 5000 Vipassana practitioners at University Ground, Nagpur in October, 2000.

My dear Dhamma sons and Dhamma daughters,
I am very happy that we have sat together and practiced pure Dhamma. Meditating together is of great importance. As the Buddha said:

Happy is the arising of the Buddhas in the world.

Happy is the teaching of pure Dhamma.

Happy is the coming together of meditators.

Happiness is meditating together.

Two thousand six hundred years ago, Gotama Buddha arose in this country and taught pure Dhamma resulting in great happiness for the world. People started living in accordance with this teaching. They started meditating together just as we have done today: there is no greater happiness than this. If one meditates alone, one becomes liberated from mental defilements and becomes truly happy. But when Dhamma brothers and sisters sit together and meditate in such large numbers, if someone's meditation is a little weak, it is strengthened because the meditation of others is strong and the entire atmosphere is charged with Dhamma vibrations. Whenever possible, meditators should have joint sitting at least once a week. If in the past week anyone's meditation has become weak, it is strengthened by the group meditation and he is able to face the vicissitudes of life for the whole week with renewed strength.

Awaken in Wisdom

These two articles about wisdom were originally published in the Hindi Vipashyanā Patrikā. They have been translated and slightly adapted.

Let us liberate ourselves from the bondage of ignorance. To become liberated from ignorance means to be liberated from the bondage of *dukkha* (suffering) in this life and *dukkha* resulting from the cycle of future births and deaths. It is ignorance that keeps us bound to *dukkha* in this life and in future lives.

What is ignorance? It is the state of dullness, heedlessness, unskillfulness. Because of ignorance, we keep generating new *saṅkhārās* (mental reactions) and keep defiling our minds with fresh negativities. We are barely aware of what we are doing: how we imprison ourselves with the bonds of craving, with the bonds of aversion; and how, in our ignorance, we tighten the knots of these bonds.

We can eradicate ignorance by remaining aware, alert, and attentive every moment. Then we will not allow new *saṅkhārās* to make deep impressions on our minds like lines chiseled on granite; we will not allow ourselves to be bound by the fetters of craving and aversion. This quality of attentiveness of mind, endowed with understanding, is called *paññā* (wisdom) and it eradicates ignorance at the roots.

To awaken this wisdom, and to get established in it, we practice Vipassana.

Yathaṃ care: when we walk, we walk with awareness.

Yathaṃ tiṭṭhe: when we stand, we stand with awareness.

Yathaṃ acche: when we sit, we sit with awareness.

Work Out Your Own Salvation

The following article has been condensed from a discourse given by S. N. Goenka during a three-day Vipassana course for returning students.

At the surface, the mind plays so many games—thinking, imagining, dreaming, giving suggestions. But deep inside, the mind remains a prisoner of its own habit pattern, and the habit pattern of the deepest level of the mind is to feel sensations and react. If the sensations are pleasant, the mind reacts with craving; if they are unpleasant, it reacts with aversion.

The enlightenment of the Buddha was to go to the root of the problem. Unless we work at the root level, we will be dealing only with the intellect and only this part of the mind will be purified. As long as the roots of a tree are healthy they will provide healthy sap for the entire tree. So start working with the roots. This was the enlightenment of the Buddha.

When he gave Dhamma, the Noble Eightfold Path—the path of *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (mastery over the mind) and *paññā* (experiential wisdom)—it was not to establish a cult, a dogma or a belief. Dhamma is a practical path. Those who walk on it can go to the deepest level and eradicate all their miseries.

Those who have really liberated themselves will understand that going to the depth of the mind—making a surgical operation of the mind—has to be done by oneself, by each individual. Someone can guide you with love and compassion; someone can help you in your journey on the path, but nobody can carry you on their shoulders and say: “I will take you to the final goal, just surrender to me; I will do everything.”

Freedom from Addiction

The following is the closing address by S. N. Goenka at the Seminar on Vipassana for Relief from Addictions & Better Health, Dhamma Giri, 1989.

Friends, you have all participated in this ten-day Dhamma seminar. This is the practical side of Dhamma. Without this experience of the practical side of Dhamma, the theoretical aspect will not be clear. Of course, it is not expected that in ten days you will have grasped the deeper aspects of Dhamma, but you should have gained at least a rough outline of what the path is, a rough outline of what the law of nature is.

I keep repeating that Dhamma does not mean Buddhist Dhamma, or Hindu Dhamma, or Jain Dhamma, or Muslim or Christian or Parsi Dhamma. Dhamma is Dhamma. And also Buddha is Buddha. Not just one person has become a Buddha. Anyone who gets fully enlightened is a Buddha.

And what is full enlightenment? It is the realization of truth at the ultimate level by direct experience. When someone becomes fully enlightened, that person does not establish a particular sect or a particular religion. He just explains the truth that he has realized himself, the truth that can be realized by one and all, the truth which liberates one from all the misery.

The Buddha proclaimed so clearly that one who understands the law of cause and effect, understands Dhamma, and one who understands Dhamma, understands the law of cause and effect. The law of cause and effect is never sectarian. The law of nature is such that the moment you generate negativity in the mind, the mind influences matter, and this