



Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal

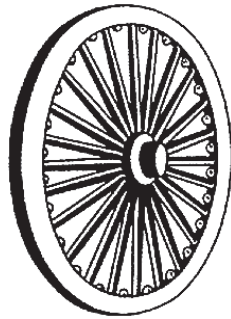
A Collection Commemorating
The Teaching of Sayagyi U Ba Khin



Vipassana Research Institute

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*Jo guruvara milate nahĩn
Dharama Gaᅅga ke tĩra,
to basa Gaᅅgā pūjatā,
pĩ pātā nā nĩra.*

Had I not found my teacher
on the banks of the Ganges of Dhamma,
I would have kept worshipping the river,
but not have drunk its water.

– Hindi doha of S.N. Goenka

Introduction

Two decades have elapsed since the death of the great Burmese meditation teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, whose life spanned the first seventy years of this century.

U Ba Khin was one of the outstanding figures of his time. His accomplishments, in two usually incompatible fields, were singular: he was a master meditation student and teacher as well as a government official of tireless devotion and impeccable conduct. His service to the country of Burma is noteworthy, but his example to the citizens of the world is no less remarkable; for, in a time of increasingly complex global crises, his life demonstrates a simple, powerful truth—that an individual of pure mind exerts a positive, corrective influence on society. U Ba Khin's career was that of an ideal householder, combining unwavering dedication to Dhamma (the truth, the teaching) with unwearied commitment to public service.

Before he died on 19 January 1971, U Ba Khin was able to realize one of his most cherished dreams. He saw the ancient meditation technique of Vipassana, which had been preserved in his country for over two thousand years, returned to India, its land of origin. It was returned to its birthplace by U Ba Khin's devoted student, S.N. Goenka.

When his Teacher passed away in 1971, S.N. Goenka had been conducting ten-day Vipassana courses at scattered sites in India for less than two years, and the seedling of Dhamma was very young and fragile. In the intervening years, its growth has proceeded in leaps and bounds. For the past two millennia, the sublime practice of Vipassana—the heart of the teaching of the Buddha—has been the province of only a small number of meditator monks and householders in a few Asian

countries. Today, thousands of seekers have had the opportunity to receive the teaching and experience its benefits. These people come from scores of different countries, Eastern and Western, representing all religions, creeds, castes and communities.

Because of the pressing demands on his time, Sayagyi confined his teaching to a relatively small number of students who came to his meditation centre in Rangoon. Now, in 1994, there are over twenty-five international centres—nine in India, the remainder in ten other countries—where the technique of Vipassana taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin, and carried on by his student, S.N. Goenka, is being offered.

In his teaching, S.N. Goenka has always placed primary emphasis on the actual practice of Dhamma—what is called, in the language of the Buddha, *paṭipatti*. It is only through practice that one can have the direct experience which will take one to the final goal of freedom from all suffering. In this approach, Goenkaji follows the example of his Teacher, who always insisted that Dhamma must be applied if it is to have real meaning.

Nevertheless, there is another important aspect of Dhamma: *pariyatti*—understanding at the theoretical, intellectual level. This is helpful to inspire one to undertake the actual practice of meditation, and to elucidate questions that may arise while one is practising. Unfortunately, the amount of material in English which provides a suitable theoretical foundation for a student of Vipassana, has not kept pace with the growth in the availability of the practice of Dhamma. This journal of historical and theoretical research has been compiled to respond to this need, and to shed light on various aspects of

Vipassana meditation.

This collection is a tribute to Sayagyi U Ba Khin and, indeed, its contents are an outgrowth of his life's work. The book begins with a section describing the contribution of Sayagyi and the chain of Burmese Vipassana teachers before him, who continued their country's noble tradition of preserving the teaching of the Buddha. This is the first time that biographical material and discourses of these teachers has appeared in one collection in English.

The Journal includes a selection of essays by the present Teacher, S.N. Goenka. Although his primary focus in twenty-two years of teaching Vipassana has always been to offer the actual practice (in over 390 ten-day courses worldwide), Goenkaji, like his teacher, has been highly productive in other areas as well. He has given a large number of public discourses in different countries, to audiences of meditators and non-meditators alike. He has written hundreds of inspirational articles about Dhamma, the majority of them for the monthly Hindi Vipassana Newsletter (which is sent to 15,000 students in India). He has written many articles in English as well.

Goenkaji is also a prolific poet. Over his years as a student and teacher, he has spontaneously composed thousands of rhymed couplets called *dohas*, some of which are included here. This traditional form of inspirational poetry is derived from the ancient *anuṭṭhuba chandas*, the poetic form most frequently used by the Buddha. To the basic couplet form, the *doha* adds a rhyme at the end of each line. Many Indian spiritual teachers have used this form as a medium for their teachings. *Dohas* have penetrated so deeply into the Indian psyche that even illiterate villagers recite them.

The Journal goes on to feature articles by some of the many assistant teachers whom Goenkaji has appointed in recent years to meet the increased demand for Vipassana courses, as well as accounts of personal experiences by Vipassana students.

A brief but important section highlights

the significant textual research work of the Vipassana Research Institute.

The Journal concludes with a description of some of the tangible fruits of the seeds sown by Sayagyi in the tiny country of Burma over two decades ago: facilities in different parts of the world where students can go to learn Vipassana.

This collection is offered primarily to inspire the practice of Dhamma, for those who have taken courses as well as those who have no experience in Vipassana meditation. It should not, however, be used as a teaching manual for the technique. Attending a ten-day course under the careful guidance of a qualified, authorized teacher is essential to properly establish oneself in the practice of Vipassana.

It is an indication of the need for this timeless teaching that Vipassana courses are much in demand, with over two hundred ten-day courses per year now being conducted. Moreover, every course is run solely on the basis of freely-offered donations. The Teacher and his assistants do not receive remuneration; they and the Dhamma workers serve on a volunteer basis. This is consistent with the tradition of pure Dhamma, a tradition adhered to by Sayagyi. Donations are accepted only from students who have completed a Vipassana course and wish to share the benefits they themselves have received by giving *dāna* (donation) for the students who come after them.

All of the work of Sayagyi and Goenkaji, all the present worldwide Dhamma activity, have only one purpose: to help people find the way out of suffering. The technique which provided this path was lost in India, and unknown in most of the rest of the world, for many centuries. It is now available once again. Sayagyi believed in the ancient prophecy that 2,500 years after the time of the Buddha, Dhamma would arise anew and spread around the world. This belief is being verified. As he used to say, "The time clock of Vipassana has struck."