



VIPASSANA
Newsletter Collection

From January 1994 to December 1997

Part - 2

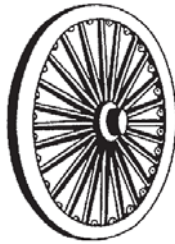
Acharya S. N. Goenka

Vipassana

Newsletter Collection Part-2

[From January 1994 to December 1997]

**Articles of Vipassanacharya Shri Satyanarayan Goenka
and other Articles Published in Newsletter**



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Vipassana Newsletter

Collection Part-2

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From Devotion to Direct Experience

Every religion teaches the importance of living a moral life, of developing mastery of the mind, of keeping the mind free from defilements. Reading about such teachings in the scriptures, a religious devotee may accept them out of great faith or out of intellectual conviction. But merely accepting these teachings will not help at all; the real benefit comes only from practice. One cannot quench a raging thirst by reading a description of the molecular structure of water. One cannot satisfy the pangs of hunger by studying a restaurant menu. One cannot be healed of the torment of sickness by reading a doctor's prescription. Neither will diverting the attention give real relief from thirst, from hunger, or from disease. In the same way, trying to forget the problems of life will not solve them, nor will it help merely to talk about the way to solve them.

Unless one takes concrete steps to their solution—that is, unless one practices Dhamma—one is bound to remain miserable. Practice, however, is not so easy; one must work hard to eliminate negativities from the mind. Far easier is to suppress them or to distract the mind, or to intoxicate it with a pleasurable object. But suppression, diversion, or intoxication are only temporary; when their effects wear off, the problem still remains. So long as defilements exist in the depths of the mind it is not cured of the disease of suffering. Whenever we encounter an unpleasant situation we usually try to run away from it, to escape from the unwelcome reality by busying the mind elsewhere. And life provides so many kinds of entertainment to help us distract ourselves: television, cinema, fairs and circuses, or even worse, intoxicants such as alcohol and drugs. Even if

Freedom behind Bars: Vipassana in Prison

In April 1994, a ten-day Vipassana course for over a thousand people was held inside the confines of Tihar Prison in New Delhi. The course was conducted by Mr. & Mrs.S.N. Goenka, with 13 assistant teachers. This was the largest Vipassana course to be held in modern times, inside or outside a jail.

With about 9,000 inmates, Tihar is one of the largest prisons in Asia. The site covers several hundred acres in a district of suburban New Delhi. Because of the difficulty of administering so large a population, Tihar is divided into four separate jails. Inmates from all four jails participated in the April course.

The course was the culmination of events which began about 20 years ago. The first Vipassana courses in an Indian prison were conducted in 1975 and 1977 by S.N. Goenka at the Central Jail, Jaipur, at the invitation of Mr. Ram Singh, the then Home Secretary to the Government of Rajasthan. Mr. Ram Singh, himself an enthusiastic practitioner of Vipassana, was eager to see if the technique could be effective in solving problems in society and government, as well as the problems faced by individuals.

The results of these two courses, and a course for police officials at the Police Academy in Jaipur, were very encouraging. However, due to the change of government in the state and transfer of key officials, the Vipassana program in the jails could not be pursued further. Mr. Ram Singh subsequently retired from government service and was one of the first assistant teachers appointed by S.N. Goenka.

Why I Sit ?

- by Paul Fleischman

The following was taken from “Why I Sit”, which was published in 1993 by the Buddhist Publication Society, Sri Lanka. Dr. Fleischman is an assistant teacher of S.N. Goenka and a practising psychiatrist.

This morning, the first thing I did was to sit for an hour. I have done that regularly for twenty years, and have spent many evenings, days and weeks doing the same.

I would like to know myself. It is remarkable that while ordinarily we spend most of our lives studying, contemplating, observing and manipulating the world around us, the structured gaze of the thoughtful mind is so rarely turned inwards. This avoidance must measure some anxiety, reluctance or fear.

Most of our lives are spent in externally oriented functions that distract from self-observation. This relentless, obsessive drive persists independently of survival needs such as food and warmth, and even of pleasure. Second to second, we couple ourselves to sights, tastes, words, motions or electronic stimuli, until we fall dead. It is striking how many ordinary activities, from smoking a pipe to watching sunsets, veer towards, but ultimately avoid, sustained attention to the reality of our own life.

This motivated me on a search that led through intense intellectual exploration in college, medical school and psychiatric training, and finally to the art of “sitting”, as taught by S.N. Goenka, a Vipassana meditation teacher with whom my wife and I first took a course near New Delhi, India, in 1974. Those ten days of nothing but focusing on the



Acharaya Shri S. N. Goenka & Smt. Illaichidevi Goenka

Sri Satyanarayanji Goenka was born in Mandalay, Myanmar in 1924. Although he topped the list of all successful candidates in the whole of Myanmar in the tenth class, he could not continue his studies further. At a very early age he set up many commercial and industrial institutions and earned fabulous wealth. He also established many social and cultural centres. Because of tension he became a victim of migraine, which could not be cured by doctors of Myanmar and of other countries in the world. Then some one suggested him to take a course of Vipassana. Vipassana has done well not only to him but it has also been benefiting many others.

He learned Vipassana from Sayagyi U Ba Khin in 1955. Sitting at the feet of his teacher he practiced it for fourteen years. He also studied the words of the Buddha during this period. He came to India in 1969 and conducted the first vipassana course in Mumbai. After that a series of courses were held. In 1976 the first residential course of vipassana was held in Igatpuri and the first centre of vipassana was established here. Up till now 189 centres have been established all over the world. New centres also are coming up. At these centres 1500 trained teachers teach vipassana in 59 languages of the world. Not only ten-day courses are conducted at these centres but also at some centres 20-day, 30-day, 45-day and 60-day courses are conducted. All courses are free of charge. The expenses on food and accommodation etc are met by the self-willed Dana given by those who benefited from the course. Seeing its benevolent nature vipassana courses is held not only for the inmates of jails and school children in the world but also for police personnels, judges, government officers etc.

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