

The Importance of Vedanā and Sampajañña

A Seminar February 1990,
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri



Vipassana Research Institute

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Preface To Second Edition

The Seminar on *Vedanā* and *Sampajañña*, held in 1990 at *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri, was an important milestone in the acknowledgement of Vipassana Meditation as the quintessence of the Buddha's teaching. The papers presented at this Seminar gave detailed insight into these two very important terms from the Pali canon and are inspiring to meditators and scholars interested in the Buddha's teaching.

In the second edition, Goenkaji has contributed a new article that once again stresses the importance of *vedanā* (body sensations) in the practice of Vipassana Meditation. Articles published in the first edition that do not deal directly with *vedanā* and *sampajañña* have been excluded.

Introduction to the Papers Presented by VRI

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) is an organisation that was established for conducting research into the *pariyatti* (theory) and *patipatti* (practice) of the Buddha's teaching. It also conducts research on the application of Vipassana in such fields as health, education and social development. The Institute is adjacent to Vipassana International Academy, Igatpuri where regular courses in Vipassana meditation are offered. VRI also offers a Pali language study programme and publishes works of interest to Vipassana students. It integrates theoretical principles of the non-sectarian teaching of Gotama the Buddha with the practice of Vipassana meditation.

Vipassana Research Institute has undertaken the task of interpreting certain words that are of great importance to the practice of the Buddha's teaching. This seminar has been organized to help elucidate such terms, the understanding of which, play a crucial role in Vipassana meditation as taught by Gotama the Buddha—*vedanā* and *sampajañña*. It is important that meditators understand these two terms so that they may practice seriously, with confidence, free from confusion.

There is tremendous gratitude for all of the pioneering efforts in translating the sayings of the Buddha into English and other languages. As a result of these efforts many people have come into contact with and have been inspired by his precious teachings.

However, the translation of one language into another is difficult and often imperfect, even more so when it comes to the words of the Fully Enlightened One. When the Buddha uses technical terms that are the crux of meditation techniques, these terms have very specific and specialised meanings. Corresponding terms in other languages may not, and often do not, exist.

For this reason translations must continue to be refined and updated because a clear understanding of these words serves as an essential guide to the practice. As one develops in the practice, one's understanding deepens, which in turn allows for more accurate translations of the Buddha's teachings.

In presenting these papers, it is hoped that the understanding of the Buddha's words will become more precise and that students of meditation will be able to work free from doubt and confusion to experience real peace and happiness. Certainly, the coverage of these two terms, presented in these papers, is incomplete. Additional work is needed in order to shed light on many other *suttas* in the *Tipiṭaka* and its commentaries where these terms are contained; research must continue—both theoretical and practical.