

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, as taught by S. N. Goenka

Vol. 34, No. 03, 25 MARCH, 2024.

A monthly publication of the Vipassana Research Institute

Website: www.vridhamma.org; International website: www.dhamma.org

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Words of Dhamma

*Adhigatamidam bahūhi, amataṃ ajjāpi ca labhanīyamidaṃ;
Yo yoniso payuñjati, na ca sakkā aghaṭamānena.*

– Therīgāthā- 515

The deathless has been attained by many; this is true even today; By those who wisely apply themselves; but not without effort.

Birth Centenary of Guruji as Gratitude to Sayagyi U Ba Khin

Celebrated on Sunday, 4 February, 2024 (instead of 30th January)

Respected Bhikkhu Sangha, Teachers, Trustees and Meditators !

We have gathered today on the occasion of the Birth Centenary of Guruji Shri Satya Narayan Goenkaji. An occasion of great importance is in front of us. For those meditators who worked very closely with Guruji, receiving Dhamma under his direct instructions, then started giving dhamma service, eventually getting the opportunity to share this gift of Dhamma by getting appointed assistant teachers and teachers, this is a special occasion. These meditators witnessed the entire progression from the gypsy camp courses in the beginning to the construction of the first permanent Vipassana centre and then the establishment of many meditation centres all over the world. They also experienced the resulting change in conduct of so many participants in courses, from children to convicts in prisons. During this time, the work of transliterating Pali Tipitaka from Burmese and Devanagari script to Roman script and many others through the Vipassana Research Institute was accomplished, as was the establishment of the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Village in Iगतपुरी. The construction of the Global Vipassana Pagoda, as well as the depositing of the Relics of Lord Buddha there, was also a reality for all those meditators. It brings back sweet memories and brings to life many past moments. Even if a meditator may not have seen Guruji physically, every one of them meditates as per the instructions of Guruji even today, and they understand the theoretical aspects of the teachings through Guruji's discourses; therefore, everyone feels great respect and gratitude towards him.

Almost 60 years of Guruji's life were dedicated to Dhamma, and since his arrival in India in 1969, all the great Dhamma work that was accomplished was essentially the journey of Dhamma. Guruji's enormous pāramīs made him an ideal vessel for this. The birth centenary of such

a compassionate teacher is an occasion for inspiration and guidance for existing as well as future generations to strengthen and mature in Dhamma through their personal practice and dhamma service.

(This article is taken from S. N. Goenka's closing remarks at the 1999 Annual Conference at Dhamma Giri; the recording was played during the conference in February of this year.)

My dear Dhamma meditators:

Once again we have gathered for this annual meeting. I have listened to the report of what was done during the last year, and it is quite satisfactory, quite encouraging. I also noted what you are going to do in the coming year. This is a very important year because it is the birth centenary of the great lay saint, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, who was so compassionate. In his memory we have to work hard.

While monuments and memorials honouring Sayagyi are fitting, the greatest tribute to him is a person—each of you is a memorial to him. Develop yourself in Dhamma to such an extent that others think, “Here is a Vipassana meditator who learned Dhamma in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Look how it changes people!” Make this effort to show your gratitude towards him, to encourage people to come on the path and liberate themselves, and also because it is in your own interest.

These are two important things that each meditator in this tradition has to do. First, do your best to get yourself established in pure Dhamma. Understanding fully well what pure Dhamma is: abstaining from unwholesome activities, performing wholesome activities, and purifying the mind—the totality of the mind, not just the surface of the mind. That is all. The entire Dhamma is contained in these three. There is nothing more to add, paripuṇṇa, and nothing to take out from it, parisuddha. By working to get yourself established in Dhamma, you thereby become a good example for others.

And the second thing, how to fulfill the vision the noble mission of this saintly person. What a strong Dhamma volition he had! He said, “I have to pay back the debt of gratitude to the country from which we received this invaluable jewel.” When he discussed newspaper reports on the situation in India, we saw how much compassion he had. He said, “What is happening in that country where Buddhas arise, where pure Dhamma arises? People are quarrelling and fighting in the name of religion! There is sectarian conflict, racial conflict, and caste conflict. If they get this wonderful Dhamma, the whole country will come out of misery. There is no other way. As long as these conflicts exist, there will be nothing but misery, and they can be eradicated only if the country gets pure Dhamma.”

With much enthusiasm, he exclaimed, “I have to go and perform this noble duty.” He was unable to come. And when I came, he was so happy. “Look, now my Dhamma son will represent me. He will work, and he will be successful.” He kept on telling me, “You will succeed; don’t worry. You will be successful.” I was apprehensive and said, “Who will accept Vipassana in India? Nobody knows me there.” Sayagi replied, “Don’t worry. Time has ripened. There are people there with very good pāramīs. They will come automatically. As soon as they hear “Vipassana,” they can’t resist; they will come. You need not worry. And once this country has started accepting Dhamma, then, like a wildfire, it will spread around the world from India, which is the origin of Dhamma. Previously, from this country, it spread. Now again, time has ripened. From this country, it will spread. Now the time has ripened. The clock of Vipassana has struck.”

I still doubted that I would be successful, but somehow, within just one month of my arrival in this country, the first course was given, and then course after course, the Ganges of Dhamma started flowing. So his mission, his vision, was that Dhamma should get re-established in this country of its origin, and then Dhamma must spread around the world.

There is misery everywhere. Everywhere, people are miserable. For example, a very short-tempered person, full of negativity, understands at the intellectual level, “Oh, this is not good for me. I am making myself miserable. I am making others miserable. I want to come out of it.” But they do not have a way to come out of it. An addict understands very well, “This is not good for me. I want to come out of it.” Anybody involved in any kind of vice is very unhappy and wants to change their life from vice to virtue, but how?

People should know there is a way that does not depend on blind faith or blind belief. Vipassana is scientific, rational, and pragmatic, and it brings results here and now. If you work on it, you will get results, and then naturally, you will have confidence in it. Step by step, you will reach the final goal. Give it a trial. We don’t say you should accept it just because we are saying that this is the path of liberation. Don’t accept it blindly. Give it a trial. As Buddha said, “Give me seven days of your life.” We say, “Give me ten days of your life.” And just give it a trial. See, if you get good results.

We are not interested in just increasing the number of people who call themselves disciples of Goenka or disciples of U Ba Khin. Meaningless! This counting of heads is meaningless. We are not interested in snatching people from this tradition or that tradition. Meaningless! What will we get? This is a universal desire of everyone: to come out of misery. We are helping them to fulfil this desire. “Here is a way. If you find it to be good, accept it. If you don’t find it to be good, don’t accept it. Give a trial.” That’s all.

We are not here to establish an organised religion. Dhamma is far away from organised religions. The moment Dhamma becomes an organised religion, Dhamma is lost, and organised religion becomes predominant. So we are not interested in that. Every student of Vipassana must understand that one has to be very careful that pure Dhamma does not become an organised religion. Everyone has to work. You work, and you get the benefit. It should never happen that the teacher says, “Well, you are so weak. How can you liberate yourself? Come to me. Surrender to me. Take refuge in me. I will liberate you. Liberation is in my pocket. I will give it to you.” That sort of thing should never happen in Dhamma. Not now and not in the future; otherwise, Dhamma will be lost. Everyone has to work. Work properly, and you will get the result. If you don’t work properly, no result will come.

So the most important thing is that people should know that there is a way to help them come out of their misery. Once they are agreeable to give a trial, and they give a trial, then the next important thing is for whoever has the capacity and whoever has the ability to see that this person is helped to progress on the path. For that, what facilities are needed? How can we help? How can we encourage this person? One starts doing the best that one can so that more and more people come out of their misery. Bahujana-hitāya, bahujana-sukhāya: this is the aim, no other. More and more people should get the benefit of Dhamma, should get peace and harmony, and should come out of misery. That is all.

We should not become a group of sectarians. There is a danger that in the future a son or a grandson of a Vipassana meditator might say, “I am a vipaśyī because I was born in a family of vipaśyīs,” and the vipaśyī caste will start. Without practising Vipassana or knowing what it is, people will be called “vipaśyī.” This is a big danger, and you have to be careful from now onwards. Understand, without actually practising Vipassana, there is no benefit. Encourage others to work by working ardently yourself. This is the way we can pay back the debt of gratitude to this saintly person.

Another very important thing is that this wonderful technique was lost, not only in India but around the world, everywhere, even in the so-called Buddhist countries. Now we go there and give courses, and we find there are only words about Vipassana. The actual practice, the pure practice, is lost. That is why they are very excited to get it, they are very happy to get it.

The time has come now. Vipassana is coming up again. We have to see that it remains for a long time, serving people.

It will continue to serve people only when they maintain the purity of the technique. Any mixture, and the efficacy is gone. If the efficacy of the technique is gone, people won't care for it, and they will lose it, as they did thousands of years ago. We have to be very careful about that. Whatever we have received from this saintly person and what he received from the tradition we have to maintain in its pristine purity. No addition; we won't add anything to it. Kevalam paripuṇṇam it is complete. Total Dhamma is there in it. What else is to be added? Kevalam parisuddham total purity. There is no subtraction; nothing has to be taken out of it.

If we maintain it from generation to generation, a large number of people in this miserable world will start coming out of misery. This was the mission of this saintly person; this is what he wanted. Now the time has come. The bell of Vipassana has rung. It will start, but somebody has to do something for that. It won't start miraculously. Somebody has to work for it. Somebody has to maintain its purity.

At this Annual Conference we are having here, these few points should be very important: that to pay real respect and show our gratitude to this saintly person, we have to establish ourselves in Dhamma. Otherwise, you cannot encourage others or help others. A blind person cannot help another blind person. A lame person cannot help another lame person. We have to first strengthen ourselves, and then, by various means, we have to see that the large number of people suffering in the world get the message and become aware that, “Look, there is a path. There is a path that is giving results.” Such positive results have already been achieved over the last thirty years. People should know this truth: that there is a path that is giving results, which is non-sectarian and does not involve any kind of conversion from one religion to another. It is just a mental exercise. When you do physical exercise, you don't have to convert yourself to a particular religion. Similarly, this is a mental exercise, where you need not convert yourself from one organised religion to another organised religion; you need not change your name from this to that. You are a sick person. You need medicine to come out of sickness. Here is the medicine. Take that medicine and you come out of it. That information has to go out.

Each one of you in this conference must think, “How best can I apply my ability, my intelligence, and my strength to see that the message goes to more and more people, so that more and more people know about Vipassana?” And second, “How can we help those who want to apply this technique? According to my ability, according to my capacity, what can I do so that more and more people take advantage of this technique? What can I do so that more and more people get established in this technique?” And the third thing is, “I myself will never spoil the purity of the technique, and as far as possible, I will not allow anybody, will not encourage anybody, will not support anybody who is spoiling the purity of this technique.”

Our conference will have been successful if you carry

these determinations with you. And it will be successful; there is no doubt about that. Dhamma is there to help you. Dhamma has been helping until now, and it will continue to help you. But it requires a strong determination from you to pay back the debt of gratitude to this saintly person, because of whom you received the Dhamma.

As we have got a feeling of gratitude towards Buddha, “Oh, if he had not worked hard in countless lives developing his pāramīs, he would not have discovered this wonderful path. And if he had not discovered this wonderful path, how could I have gotten it?” So there is a feeling of deep gratitude towards Buddha, deep gratitude towards the tradition that maintained the purity, and deep gratitude to Sayagi U Ba Khin, who had this strong Dhamma volition. Now the time has ripened. It will spread. It has to spread. To fulfil his noble volition, we will do everything that is possible within us, not only for our own good but also for the good of everyone else.

A large number of people around the world are suffering. May pure Dhamma spread around the world. May more and more miserable people come in contact with Dhamma, apply Dhamma in life, and get liberated from all the miseries.

Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ, Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ,
Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ



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DHAMMA DOHAS

*Suddha dharama phira jagata meñ, pūjya pratiṣṭhita hoyā;
Jana-jana kā hove bhalā, jana-jana maṅgala hoyā.*

May pure Dhamma get established in the world
once again. May it benefit everyone one, may all
be blessed.

*Isa sevā ke puṇya se, bhalā sabhī kā hoyā!
Sabake mana jāge dharama, sabakā maṅgala hoyā!*

With the merits gained from this service, may all
benefit. May Dhamma arise in every heart, filling all
with well being.

*Jyota jage phira dhama kī, dūra hoyā andhiyāra;
Bahujana kā hita-sukha sadhe, ho bahujana upakāra.*

May the flame of Dhamma be lit again, dispelling
the darkness; May the well being of many be ful-
filled, may all be happy and blessed.

*Dharmabhūmi para dhama kī, gaṅga pravāhita hoyā;
Isa murajhāe deśa meñ, phira hariyālī hoyā.*

May the Ganges of Dhamma flow on the land of
Dhamma, May this wilted nation become lush once
again.

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Edited and published by R.P. Yadav for VRI, Iगतपुरी-422 403 and printed at Apollo Printing Press, 259, SICOF Ltd., 69 MIDC, Satpur, Nashik-422 007.
No. 03, 25 Mar., 2024. Posted at Iगतपुरी, Dist. Nashik, Posting Day: Purnima of every month; Vip. NL Regd. No. 49916/90; P. Regn No. NSK/RNP-232/2021-2023

DATE OF PRINTING: 06 MARCH, 2024, DATE OF PUBLICATION: 25 MARCH, 2024

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