

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Sukhaṃ vā yadi vā dukkhaṃ, adukkhamasukhaṃ saha.

Ajjhattañca bahiddhā ca, yaṃ kiñci atthi veditaṃ.

Etaṃ dukkhanti ñatvāna, mosadhammaṃ palokinaṃ.

Phussa phussa vayaṃ passaṃ, evaṃ tattha vijānati.

Vedanānaṃ khayā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbuto'ti.

— Suttanipāṭapāli- 743, 744, Dvayatānupassanāsuttaṃ.

Whatever sensations one experiences in the body, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, inside or outside, all are misery, all are illusory, all are ephemeral. A meditator observes that whenever there is a contact in the body, sensations pass away (as soon as they arise). Realising this truth with the ending of sensations, the meditator is freed from craving, fully liberated.

TALK FOR OLD STUDENTS

Principal Teacher S.N. Goenka

Buddha Purnima May 16, 1992

Dharma Shringa, Kathmandu, Nepal

Dear Meditators,

Today is a very auspicious day, a very fortunate day and you have all jointly taken a very good decision, a very auspicious decision, that today for the whole day meditation will be practised. There is no greater respect for the Buddha than this. There is no better homage to the Buddha than this, no better offering than this. Whatever the Blessed One taught for our good, one must practise in real life. By walking on the path shown by the Buddha, one should make one's life successful. Only in this way will one pay his respects to the Buddha.

Remembering the Buddha and praying to him with folded hands is good, as is developing faith towards the Buddha in one's mind. However, if we only develop faith and do not benefit by following his teachings, it is our loss.

It is an extraordinarily rare occasion for a Buddha to take birth as it is not easy. For countless aeons one has to develop one's *pāramīs* (perfections) to become a Buddha. The *pāramīs* remain the same for everyone but an extremely large measure is needed to become a Buddha. One has to develop every single *pāramī* like filling an ocean. It takes such a long time, and a lot of effort. It is not an easy job.

The Blessed One, Gotama the Buddha, who out of great compassion gave us this wonderful path, worked hard for four aeons and one hundred thousand *kappas*: an uncountable, astronomical figure. From when he met

Dīpaṅkara Buddha and expressed his desire to become a Buddha like him, until he attained Buddhahood, took a very long time. Just to have such a desire in the mind is not sufficient, a person must be suitable. Only then will the Sammā Sambuddha of that period give his assurance that the aspirant will become a fully enlightened Buddha after a certain period of time, and he will predict his future, just like happened in the case of Sammā Sambuddha Gotama.

At the time of Dīpaṅkara Buddha, this young man Sumedha was born into a brahmin family. He had left his household life and all his wealth and had come to meditate in the Himalaya Mountains. This region is very holy, a very pure place. Why is this so?

Who knows how many bodhisattas (Buddhas to be) meditated in caves at the foot of the Himalayas. Whosoever is to become a bodhisatta, will come and meditate in this area for many lives. This young man had not yet become a bodhisatta, though as a recluse named Sumedha he had come here to meditate. He had learnt the eight *jhānas* (deep absorption concentrations). It is not easy for someone to be a master of the eight *jhānas*. He was fortunate that he happened to pass through a village where the Blessed One, Dīpaṅkara Sammā Sambuddha was due to arrive. When he came in contact with the Blessed One Dīpaṅkara, just as in the case of others before him, this thought arose in his mind, "Someday I should also become a Sammā Sambuddha."

He already had many attainments including the five *abhiñña* (super-knowledges). If only he learned Vipassana from the Blessed One, then within a very short time he could have become an *arahant*, passing through the fruition stages of *sotāpanna*, *sakadāgāmi*, *anāgāmi* and *arahant*. He had the suitability; he had the capacity.

However, he sacrificed this. He was not an ordinary human being as he came so close to liberation and instead chose to sacrifice it. "No, I don't want liberation. So many people in the world are suffering, so many beings are miserable. How can I alone be liberated? What a selfish act it would be. No, I shall attain my liberation when I can help innumerable others to get liberated. And that will be possible when I also, like the Blessed One Dīpaṅkara become a Sammā Sambuddha."

Being accomplished in the eight *jhānas* showed he had accumulated a large stock of *pāramīs* over many lives and could have become an *arahant* immediately. But he sacrificed this attainment knowing that he would have to endure a lot of misery. "With the amount of *pāramīs* that I have accumulated, I could become an *arahant*. All that is needed to attain this is for someone to show the path, and the Buddha is here to show me the way. He could teach me Vipassana and immediately I would become liberated. But if I want to become a Sammā Sambuddha, it will take a very long time, many aeons." Never the less, he was not apprehensive about the length of time he would have to work because over every lifetime, while developing one *pāramī* or the other, he would be serving for the welfare of others. The *pāramīs* are meant for this purpose.

What is meant by *pāramī*? The tool that helps one to cross the ocean of existences is called *pāramī*. And the tool that helps one to cross the ocean of existences is good for oneself and simultaneously good for others also. A person may think, "Only I should be happy, let others keep suffering. They suffer because of their past deeds; what can I do?" Such a person cannot become a Buddha. Whereas Sumedha thought, "Oh no, what is the use of liberation for me alone? I should be helpful in aiding the liberation of many. Therefore, for countless aeons I shall fulfil my *pāramitās* and along with this I shall continue to serve for the welfare of others."

The Sammā Sambuddha of that time gave his assurance after taking into consideration all these points. A Sammā Sambuddha has omniscience in three ways. He can read the thoughts in other's minds. There will be many who will stand up and say that they also wish to become a Sammā Sambuddha. He will just keep smiling. But if someone approaches him who is suitable, is capable, how will he know this? He will read the past of this person. For how many past lives has this person been accumulating his *pāramīs*? He will scrutinize his present. Today what is his suitability, what is his capacity? If he is taught Vipassana today, will he attain liberation or not? If he will be able to attain liberation, only then he is suitable, otherwise not. And the future is full of difficulties. The lives of a bodhisatta are full of difficulties, not easy at all. Therefore, does this person really have the capacity to bear all these difficulties or is he just expressing his desire to become a Sammā Sambuddha out of blind devotion? Thus, after examining these three aspects – this person has a sufficient stock of *pāramīs* from his past lives, he has at present, the capacity to attain liberation, and if he becomes a bodhisatta he has the capacity to endure difficulties in the future lives – he declares: "*Dhuvam Buddhō Bhavissasi*" – "You shall also become a Sammā Sambuddha like me." And then he predicts that after a span of four aeons and one hundred thousand kappas, Sumedha will be born in the Sākya clan with

the name Siddhāttha Gotama and will become a Sammā Sambuddha.

From the moment he received this blessing until the time he became a Sammā Sambuddha, all his time was spent on attaining just one goal. "I have to develop my *pāramīs* which will be beneficial for myself and beneficial for others." Full of compassion for the benefit of others, for the welfare of humanity, he obtained the path that would liberate beings from their misery. With this aim in mind he kept taking birth after birth, birth after birth as a human being, or in some higher celestial plane (*deva-loka*) or *brahma-loka*. Sometimes he even took birth in a lower plane of existence to help the beings there. In every birth he had only one aim: "How can others be benefited? Not I alone, but how can others be benefited?"

His mind became very pure, supremely pure. It became filled with infinite loving-kindness, infinite compassion, infinite sympathetic joy and infinite equanimity. Even before he became a bodhisatta, he served for the benefit of the people. What to say about his service towards humanity after he became a bodhisatta? Just serving humanity, serving for the welfare of people who were miserable.

Therefore, it is said *buddhuppādo dullabho lokasmiṃ*. It is very rare, very rare that in this era such a person was born who became a Sammā Sambuddha. We are very fortunate that, despite 2,500 years having passed, the technique is still alive in not only the theory, not only the words but also the practical part, the method of the teaching, the experiencing aspect, the technique. We are born in such an era; we are so fortunate.

Despite being born as a human being in such an era, if one does not walk on the path and benefit from it, isn't he very unfortunate? Who can be more unfortunate than him? A thirsty man, who has been thirsty for many lives has now come to the banks of the river Ganges. The cool water of the Ganges is flowing nearby, the holy Ganga is flowing. He can quench his thirst but he does not. So how can the Ganges be blamed? The pure water of the Ganges keeps flowing and keeps inviting the thirsty people of the world: "O, thirsty people of the world. Do come and drink my cool water and quench your thirst. Get liberated from your misery." If someone does not listen to its call, its invitation, or even if he listens but does not drink the water, then how is the flowing water of the Ganga to be blamed?

What is the fault of the Dhamma (law of nature)? It keeps distributing. Walking on the path is our job; we must quench our thirst. Therefore, it is fortunate we have started the job of quenching our thirst. We have at least started walking with unsteady footsteps on the path shown by the Blessed One. The path is very long, but however long the path may be, even the longest path starts with the first step. Whosoever takes one step on the path, it can be expected he will take the second step, he will take the third step. Thus, walking step by step he will reach the final goal. So, at least one has started walking.

If someone develops faith but does not walk on the path, how can the poor path be blamed? It is very unfortunate. The path says, "Come, walk on this path, you will reach the stage of liberation, you will reach your goal." Though

one is thirsty, and yet does not drink even a handful of water from the Ganges which is flowing beside one, this is their misfortune. The path of liberation is before you, and if you do not take a single step on it, this is extremely unfortunate. Therefore don't remain unfortunate. You have come with the intention to walk on the path of liberation. You have only to keep walking, keep walking.

One point that must be very clearly understood is that when someone becomes a Sammā Sambuddha, he does not establish any sect. What would he gain by doing this? He only sees how so many people have started coming out of their misery. How so many people have started walking on this beneficial path. With this compassionate mind, he teaches. What will he gain by establishing a sect? Sects are established after his time by those who do so out of ignorance. A Buddha has no such consideration. He establishes the Dhamma. Benefits accrue out of the Dhamma, not out of any sect. Any individual who becomes a Sammā Sambuddha establishes the Dhamma, the pure Dhamma.

What is pure Dhamma? He explains this with an example. A mollusc, a sea snail has died and has washed up on the shore and has started rotting. Anyone who wants to use the shell (*sankha*) must clean out the muscle from within it. By scraping the shell over and over again with a knife it eventually becomes clean. So this clean, polished shell that is free from accumulated dirt and to which fresh dirt does not stick, is what pure Dhamma is like. The old stock of defilements are eradicated by washing and scraping while new defilements do not accumulate.

A long period passes between one Sammā Sambuddha and another and in this gap between them the Dhamma becomes polluted. A Sammā Sambuddha teaches pure Dhamma. But slowly over time people forget the teaching. The words remain as they are but their meaning changes; they get polluted just like in the example of the river Ganges. Someone who has gone to Gangotri (the source of the Ganges) must have observed that when the Ganga arises from the Himalayas its water is very pure, very clear. One can see every stone that lies at its bottom. So clear, so clean. From the heights of the mountains, the river keeps flowing down and when it flows across the plains it meets with a canal or some drains here and there. Some dirt from here gets mixed in with it, and some dirt from there gets mixed with it and by the time it reaches the Bay of Bengal, it is full of dirt. The same Ganges water, how polluted it has become. This is exactly what happens with the Dhamma teaching.

A Sammā Sambuddha teaches the pure Dhamma to the people. However, as the time passes by defilements creep in, impurities creep in. And when another Sammā Sambuddha arises, when he becomes a Sammā Sambuddha, he washes away all these defilements, all these impurities and again presents the Dhamma in its pure form.

What is the pure form of Dhamma that he presents? What are the defilements that pollute the Dhamma? He calls it the *saddhamma* which means truth, pure Dhamma. If a person becomes a Sammā Sambuddha, he will teach only the *saddhamma*, which means it does not have even a trace of imagination. “Our belief says so, your belief

says so. We believe in certain rites and rituals; you believe in other rites and rituals.” People only believe it is so, only imagine it is so. This is not *saddhamma*, true Dhamma.

Firstly, one does not know whether this truth has been experienced by anyone in the past. Even if one believes that it must have been experienced by someone and that it is the truth, even then it has been experienced only by that person. It remains hearsay and one is just imagining it and imagination is always false; it is far away from the truth.

If it has really been experienced by oneself, then it is the truth, it is *saddhamma*. If it has not been experienced by oneself, it is not *saddhamma*, it is only a belief. Therefore, if one accepts the teaching of Gotama the Buddha blindly, how can it be the *saddhamma*? It becomes a mere imaginary belief – “The Buddha said so, and I believe it.” Then one has not at all understood this great seer.

Jānato, passato bhagavā dhammaṃ desetī – By knowing for oneself, seeing for oneself through the practice of Vipassana one becomes a Buddha, and then teaches the Dhamma to the people and tells them that they should also experience it. Experience it by practising Vipassana – *passa, jāna, passa, jāna*. The teachings of a Sammā Sambuddha are filled with these two words: *passa, jāna, passa, jāna*. Know for yourself and when you understand by experience that it is beneficial, then only believe it. Then believe it in such a manner that you practise it in your daily life.

The one who does so has understood the Buddha. The one who just bows down to the Buddha and says, “Oh, the Eightfold Noble Path is so wonderful, so beneficial,” but does not walk on it has not understood. One may decide, “I will not walk on the path, I will just praise it. I will debate with others, I will enter into intellectual discussions with others arguing that you people do not believe in the Eightfold Noble Path, we believe in the Eightfold Noble Path; you don't believe in the concepts of *anicca, dukkha and anattā*, we believe in the concepts of *anicca, dukkha and anattā*; we believe...” Even if one searches, one can't find a more unfortunate person than this in the whole world. One lavishly praises the *Ganges*, one praises the clean water of the *Ganges* but does not drink even a drop of it. One praises the sweetness of *rasgulla* (a delicious sweet) but does not place a single *rasgulla* in one's mouth, does not even taste it. Oh, isn't this person unfortunate? A Buddha helps people to come out of this unfortunate situation. However, each one has to work for himself.

No goddess will save you, no god will save you, no Brahma will save you. Oh, not even a Buddha can save you. You have to walk on the path step by step. If you have not understood even this much, then how can you call yourself a follower of the Buddha? You have wasted your life in pretence, haven't you? So *saddhamma* is *saddhamma* when one experiences the truth for oneself. The truth that is experienced by the Buddha, benefits the Buddha. He then showed us the way to experience it for ourselves. But if we do not make the effort to experience it for ourselves, then how is the Buddha responsible for it? How can his teaching be blamed? How can the Dhamma be blamed? We can only blame ourselves if we do not make the effort to learn at the experiential level but just

remain satisfied praising the teaching.

Before his *parinibbāna*, the Buddha spoke these last few words of nectar: *vayadhamma saṅkhara appamādena sampādettha*—conditioned things are subject to decay, strive on with heedfulness. This is the truth. Whatever arises in this whole universe, mental or material, mind or matter, whatsoever arises, arises to pass away. Its characteristic is to pass away, to keep changing, to be impermanent, to grow old, to die away, to get destroyed. This is not a philosophical belief. This is the truth that this great seer experienced by himself and this is the truth which every individual must understand for himself through his own experience. Only then does one get its benefits. Otherwise, one may keep calling himself a follower of the Buddha, one may keep asserting that he admires the Buddha, one may keep saying that he has extreme faith in the Buddha; still, one has not benefited. Oh, from what depth this great seer discovered the truth.

The water of the Ganges was so clear when it started flowing, but by the time it reached the sea it had become so dirty. That water is still in it, the water that had arisen from the Himalayas is still flowing till it reaches the sea. But so much dirt has become mixed in with it that it is so difficult even to recognise. Also, it is not useful to us anymore. However, if the dirt is removed, then the water becomes very useful.

In this long period between two Buddhas, people keep forgetting that the Buddha gave importance to one's deeds. You are the child of your deeds. You are the offspring of your actions good or bad. This is the inherent law of nature. A Buddha knows this by experience and explains this to the people. With time, these words percolate on and people continue to hear, “Actions have great significance, actions have great importance. If one performs wholesome actions, he will get wholesome fruits. If one performs unwholesome actions, he will get unwholesome fruits.” Even at the time when there is no Buddha, these words remain. However, after some time, they get polluted. How are they polluted? Someone comes and whispers in the ear of an ignorant man, “You have committed so many sins in so many of your past lives and also in this very life. You are a weak person. Do you think you can wash away all your sins by yourself? How will you be able to clean them? But that goddess is there, isn't she; that god is there, isn't he; that deity, that supernatural power will wash away all your sins. You will be liberated from all your bad actions without having to bear the results of those bad actions. You need this external help, this sympathy.” One becomes so perplexed.

In spite of having belief in the principle of kamma, one gets confused, one has covered this understanding up with the dust of ignorance. And as a result, the depth of the principle of kamma is forgotten. One who has become a Buddha knows that every action, the mind (consciousness and mental factors) is Dhamma. The mental action is Dhamma. The vocal and bodily actions are the yardstick to measure the mental contents. The action is nothing but the product of the mind. Slowly, people forget the importance of the mind in the principle of kamma.

Now-a-days people have started giving greater importance to bodily actions, more importance to

vocal actions; special importance to the physical action. “Whatever wrong actions have been done, they have been done by my body and therefore this body must be punished. If this body is punished then the fruits of all the bad actions have been endured; the matter is settled”. Oh, look how kamma has been polluted, the way it has been distorted.

When someone becomes a Buddha, he once again presents the Dhamma in its pure form to the people, “Oh people, purify your minds. Whatever defilements you are generating in your mind every moment, stop generating these defilements. Unwholesome *saṅkhāras* will not get formed. Whatever has already been accumulated, this will come to the surface and if you keep observing it with equanimity, then *uppajjivā-nirujjhanti, tesam vūpasamo sukho* it will arise and it will get eradicated resulting in happiness.” This is the gift of the Buddha.

In the time between two Buddhas, the words remain in memory that what we call our sense faculties – *indriyas*, namely: eyes, ears, nose, tongue, body, these five and their five objects, namely: material form, sound, smell, taste and touch are very dangerous. Therefore, seeing a form, don't ever get sunk into it; hearing a sound, don't get enchanted by it. And likewise with smell, taste, touch. The words of wisdom remain, but their essence gets lost. Only the five *indriyas* are talked about, the sixth *indriya* is forgotten. The mind itself is an *indriya* and is the most important *indriya*. This mind has to be purified. Whatever arises in it, whatever Dhamma arises in it, the mental object that arises in it, don't ever get carried away by it, don't get lost in it. When a Buddha arises in the world, he gives a very precious gift to the world. Not just the five *indriyas* are important, he talks of the six *indriyas*, and he talks of the *saḷāyatana* – the six sense fields.

Manopubbhaṅgamā dhammā, manoseṭṭhā manomayā – the mind is the chief; the mind is supreme. He presents to the people the excellence, the supremacy, the importance of the mind because he has seen within. One more precious gift he gives the people which has been forgotten by them over a long lapse of time is that of the six sense organs and their six objects; whenever they come in contact they produce a sensation on the body. And whatever craving or aversion one generates, it is towards these sensations. Before the arising of the Buddha, this fact was forgotten by the whole human race. Even before the time of the Buddha, many philosophical teachers existed in our country whose writings are available. Even during the time of the Buddha, many philosophical teachers existed and they have continued to exist even after the time of the Buddha. But this fact got lost. All will keep saying that because of these five sense organs, or even if they accept six sense organs, it is because of these sense organs and their objects that craving arises, aversion arises. When the object of the sense organ is pleasant, craving arises; when the object of the sense organ is unpleasant, aversion arises. This will be accepted by all. But if one is a Buddha, he will say: as soon as *saḷāyatana-paccayā-phassa* – the six sense organs come in contact with an object, then *phassa-paccayā-vedanā* – due to this contact sensation arises on the body. Sensations arise on the body and they are experienced by the mind. Both go hand in hand. And

then *vedanā-paccayā-taṇhā* – due to sensation craving arises. When sensation arises if one feels it as pleasant one generates craving; when one feels it as unpleasant one generates aversion. When it is pleasant, one feels like clinging to it, when it is unpleasant, one wishes to get rid of it. If this has been forgotten, one has forgotten everything. One may keep discoursing in the name of the Buddha, one may keep writing scriptures in the name of the Buddha, one may keep calling oneself a follower of the Buddha, a devotee of the Buddha but one gains nothing, not even an ounce. This wonderful discovery made by this great seer was how the sense organs come in contact with their objects and how because of this contact, sensations arise on the body and craving arises at this point. This is the special gift of the Buddha. And by practising Vipassana, this very gift will benefit us.

At a superficial level, one feels that having seen a material form one felt a liking towards this object and therefore craving arose, or that having seen a form one felt a disliking towards the object, and therefore aversion arose. This is the truth at a superficial level, the apparent truth level. But the actual truth is that a sensation arose. If this sensation was felt as pleasant, then craving arose. If the sensation was felt as unpleasant, then aversion arose. If this truth is not understood, and one does not experience sensations, then how can one understand the teaching of the Buddha? So on this important day, one has to understand the important role of bodily sensations and if one really wishes to walk on the path as taught by the Buddha, one cannot keep oneself away from bodily sensations. The Buddha throughout his life kept on saying: *niccam kāyagatā sati* – be aware of whatever is happening within the framework of the body, every moment be alert, be aware of it day and night till you enter into a deep slumber. Being a meditator, being a householder, how can one remain aware day and night? One has to fulfil one’s responsibilities. But when one comes for a course like this, when one comes to a Dhamma land, then one comes with this aim that even while performing one’s daily chores like walking, drinking, eating, bathing, washing; one will perform all these outward duties but the mind will remain within. One is feeling sensations on some part of the body or the other and one keeps understanding its nature of impermanence, *anicca*, and one does not generate craving towards the sensations, thus one remains alert. One does not generate aversion towards the sensations, thus one remains alert. So one has now understood the right path.

Gradually, in daily life also, one will be able to immediately look within when one faces some unwanted situation and understand the law of impermanence – *anicca, anicca, anicca*. So one has developed awareness and therefore one has understood how to live. You are householders. I do not say you should renounce your householder’s life. But for those who have left their households, what else have they got to do other than this? If you had the intention to do other things, then why did you set aside your household responsibilities? You could very well have led a householder’s life. Why did you renounce it?

You have renounced it so that you can work seriously day and night, with no other work. You have such a profound technique, what else do you need? You have

taken birth as a human being and have received this wonderful technique, now you only have to practise it. You have released yourself from all other responsibilities. The food that you require is being provided by charitable donors. You have the clothing you need to cover yourself. What more do you require? Now you only need to work hard. But for a householder, he has the responsibilities of the household, of his family, of the society. Performing all these duties, the bodhisatta lived not for one life but many lives and thus he provided an example to others that while being a householder, one can lead a good life. In every life as a householder, he worked hard to fulfil one *pāramī* or the other for his own good and for the good of others; for his own benefit and for the benefit of others.

So if one is walking on the path taught by the Buddha, then one has to be very alert that whenever one places his feet on this Dhamma land, then one does not gossip here, does not engage in any meaningless, useless talk. This is not the place for such things. This is not a picnic spot, this is a Dhamma land. As long as one stays here remaining aware of the sensations within one’s body with the understanding of *anicca*, for that period one is making a contribution of Dhamma vibrations to this land. However many people meditate seriously on this land now and in the future, this will help the land to grow stronger and stronger in Dhamma vibrations and it will be so beneficial. The people of this generation who come on this land and meditate, will not only be benefited themselves, but for generation after generation, for centuries together, this land will provide benefit to all who come here. This is not an ordinary thing. It is not a common occurrence for a Buddha to arise. He starts teaching the Dhamma, which is also not something very ordinary. Similarly, the creation of a Dhamma land is not something ordinary. It is very extraordinary, so give your contribution to this land. I am not talking of charity by way of money. Give this land your contribution of pure vibrations. Make a determination not to engage in useless things. Having come to this land, you will only engage in Dhamma talk, Dhamma service, and practice only Dhamma so that these vibrations will become stronger and stronger and the coming generations will benefit a lot because of it.

May you all be happy, may you all be benefited, may you all be liberated.

Sādhu, Sādhu, Sādhu.



Autobiography continues

The previous vignettes from the life of the world renowned Vipassana teacher Mr. Satyanarayan Goenka, were from the days prior to, and just after his coming into contact with pure Dhamma. Now we move ahead to the period of his teaching courses in India. We offer this series from his autobiography so that it may inspire others. **NL Part – 16.**

Swami – The Master

It was to our good fortune that many monks, renunciates, sadhus, saints, litterateurs, artists, social workers and political leaders graced the Goenka household in

Rangoon, giving us an opportunity to host them.

A couple of years after my initiation into Vipassana, a swami by the name of Krishnanandji arrived at the house. Tall and well-built with a bright, happy demeanour and a regal personality, he had been a member of the royal family of Jodhpur in Rajasthan, and had served as a judge for sometime before becoming a renunciate and leaving for the Himalayas. He returned after 17 years, built an ashram in Baroda, Gujarat, and began serving people. But his primary place of work was in Africa and Mauritius where he became very popular. Many visitors and family members swayed in rhythm when he began the chant of 'Jai Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram' in his booming voice in the large hall of our house.

One day I broached the topic of Vipassana with him, and like myself initially, he could not believe that consciousness and sensation were able to be 'awakened' so quickly throughout the body. Being very humble, he readily accepted that despite meditating for so many years in the Himalayas, he could only feel sensations in some parts of the body and not in the entire body. I was impressed by his honesty and took him to meet Sayagi U Ba Khin at his centre. He was surprised to know that this vibrant awareness of sensation could be felt throughout the body not just by me, but sooner or later by almost everyone.

Some time later on a visit to India I chanced upon him in Delhi. We were both very pleased with this encounter. But this was our last meeting. I remember him with warmth and a feeling of respect for his grace and simplicity.

Mahatma — The Saint

I needed to fulfil a certain responsibility when I came to India with the gift of Vipassana meditation. We had faced considerable difficulty in teaching the Hindi language in Burma, since the Burmese regime had blocked the import of the necessary books from India. The main problem was the lack of availability of books for primary classes. I began writing these books myself and having them published by the Ramakrishna Mission. But these needed formal recognition by the National Language Promotion Board if they were to be used officially for teaching; hence, a few copies were sent to Wardha, India. As no response was forthcoming from them, it became necessary to meet them in person.

A Vipassana course had been organised in that region and I went to Wardha to meet the secretary of the Board, Shri Rameshwar Dayal Dubey, who was truly a gracious man. He had seen the books and so gave his permission immediately. While conversing he asked if I would like to go to Sevagram, the famed ashram of Mahatma Gandhi which was nearby and I readily agreed. There we met the daughter-in-law of Gandhiji, Shrimati Nirmala Gandhi, who showed us around the ashram, especially Gandhiji's cottage.

After some cursory talk, the conversation turned towards Vipassana. She was surprised to know that a technique actually existed which could remove the mental defilements and purify the mind, and said that if I could hold a camp there, she would make all the necessary arrangements. I welcomed the idea of holding

a camp in Mahatma Gandhi's ashram. In March 1972, about 10 to 12 elderly people who had been Gandhi's co-workers and a number of others sat for a course there. The camp was successful, and by the tenth day many of the students experienced the subtle flow of tiny wavelets or *bhaṅga*, while some others experienced the pleasing, subtle flow in some areas of the body. Everyone was very happy, and most of all, me.

There was one among them, Shri Annasaheb Sahasrabuddhe, who said: "Now I know what Bapuji used to do." I was curious to know what he meant. Annasaheb said that Bapuji used to organise prayer meetings in the evenings where at times thousands participated. Bapuji would sit on a platform with closed eyes and legs folded while the entire congregation clapped their hands and chanted the Rama Nama in unison:

Raghupati rāghav rājārām, patit pāvan sītārām...

O Lord Rama, descendant of Raghu, uplifter of the fallen, you and your beloved consort Sita are to be worshiped...

Ishwar allah tero naam, sab ko sanmati de bhagavān.

All names of God refer to the same Supreme Being, including *Ishvara* and *Allah*.

While everyone sang, he would sit still. One day we asked him why he did not sing or clap hands while we sang. He replied saying, "While you all sing, I get immersed in a much loftier task". We got curious and asked further what loftier task he got immersed in. He replied, "I get a glimpse of god in those few moments". Now we were really curious and asked what kind of god it was. He responded saying, "There may be differences of opinion regarding the shape and form of god, but there can never be any dispute that the 'truth' is god, and I see this truth as god". With our senses on full alert, we asked further how he saw it and what was its form? And Gandhiji said, "When I close my eyes and go within, a consciousness courses through my body from head to toe. I feel very tranquil, suffused with happiness and get immersed in it. This, for me, is the vision of god. In this state, when thoughts concerning worldly decisions of vital importance rise up to the surface of the mind, they prove to be always correct". Annasaheb concluded, "I now understand and believe that he practised Vipassana in those moments. We have also seen that on the eighth or the ninth day, a similar flow of consciousness pervades our being. Evidently, the Mahatma (the saintly one) must have experienced the flow of *bhaṅga*: the state of total dissolution, which he understood to be God, the Formless One, the Truth".

It seems that the blissful flow of consciousness that awakens in the entire body is called the eternal, absolute, formless, attribute-less God in the India of our times. Normally, it is not easy to achieve this state, it may take years. Vipassana is a technique that leads one to this state quickly and easily. My respected teacher Sayagi U Ba Khin used to say that one who has practised Vipassana in previous lives and has passed away with awareness of impermanence (*anicca*) of bodily sensations, will be reborn in the human or deva loka and will be able to experience a flow of sensations through his body without any practice or guide. Perhaps something of this kind occurred with Mahatma Gandhi. Of course, it cannot be

said with certainty, but it seems that he did not have any meditative training or practice. Books speak about his close association with Shrimad Rajchandraji (a saint of India), but there is no mention of Gandhiji having learnt meditation from him.

There have been instances of meditators in Vipassana camps who, upon receiving Vipassana on the fourth day, felt sensations throughout the body. Some reported that they had experienced this flow of consciousness since childhood but did not understand it then. One or two people also said that when they spoke about this experience to their elders, they were taken on rounds of fruitless visits to psychiatrists who plied them with medicines to somehow put a stop to it. This, of course, brought its own set of problems. Now, having practised Vipassana, they understood that this flow was not an ailment but an indication of an elevating experience. And that there was no need for concern, as long as equanimity was maintained on the basis of realising its ephemeral nature, with neither craving nor aversion arising towards it; just knowing. With this awareness one continues to progress on the path to liberation.

Since Vipassana had been lost in India for centuries, it was not easy to reach the state of *bhāṅga* or total dissolution. If one did get there, then this state of *anicca*, impermanence was understood to be permanent, eternal, the final goal of a long and arduous journey. For these people to realise the ephemeral nature of this flow of total dissolution, and to understand that there were

further milestones to come, was impossible. As a result, the work of shaking the deep-rooted *saṅkhāras* which have been lying dormant for lifetimes in the deepest crevices of the unconscious, and to eradicate them, could not even begin. How, then, could one get beyond the six senses and realise the unconditioned, the eternal beyond the ever-becoming, ever-in-flux existence? The obstructions get multiplied when these mid-way junctions, filled with extreme bliss and joy, are mistaken for the final destination.

(from the Autobiography of Mr. S.N. Goenka) –

To be continued...



Centuries Corpus Fund for the Operation of Global Vipassana Pagoda (GVP)

As desired by Gurujī, a Centuries Corpus Fund has been set up to meet the daily expenses of GVP. To fulfill this desire of Gurujī's, the Global Vipassana Foundation (GVF) calculated that if each of 8960 persons donates Rs 1,42,694/- then the amount will be Rs 125 crores. The interest earned from this amount will meet the daily expenses. If one cannot deposit this amount at one time one can do it in installments in a year.

This is a great occasion for all meditators and non-meditators to increase their *pārami* by contributing to this fund **as any amount of donation is always welcome.**

• For more information and making contribution please contact GVF office: 1. Mr. Derik Pegado, 9921227057. or 2. Mr. Bipin Mehta, Mo. 9920052156, A/c. Office: 022-50427512 / 50427510; Email-- audits@globalpagoda.org;

Connect to Vipassana Meditation at:

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Residential Accommodation at the Global Pagoda for Dhamma Servers and Meditators at Dhammalaya-2

One Day Mega Courses are held at the Global Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai every year. People at times come from far off places to participate but are inconvenienced as there are no residential quarters for an overnight stay. Hence a 3-4 storey residential accommodation building is being planned where servers and 1-day course meditators can stay. Anyone wanting to participate in this noble project may **Contact:** 1. Mr. Derik Pegado: 9921227057. or 2: Shri Bipin Mehta: 9920052156, Email: audits@globalpagoda.org **Bank Details:** 'Global Vipassana Foundation', (GVF) Axis Bank Ltd., Sonimur Apartments, Timber Estate, Malad (W), Mumbai - 400064, Branch - Malad (W). Bank A/c No.- 911010032397802; IFSC No.- UTIB0000062; Swift code: AXISINBB062.

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI)

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI), a non-profit-making body, has the principal aim of conducting scientific research into the sources and applications of the Vipassana Meditation Technique. Donation to VRI is eligible for 100% tax deduction benefits under Section 35 (1) (iii) of the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961. Bank Details: Vipassana Research Institute, Axis Bank Ltd, Malad (W). Account No. 911010004132846 IFSC Code: UTIB0000062; **Contact:** Mr. Derick Pegado, Mob: 9921227057; or Mr. Bipin Mehta, Mob: 9920052156 <https://www.vridhamma.org/donateonline>.

PALI-HINDI (45 DAYS) / PALI-ENGLISH (60 DAYS)

Both Pali-Hindi and Pali-English Residential courses conducted by VRI for the year 2020 have been cancelled in the wake of the covid-19 pandemic. VRI plans to start an **Online Pali-English** course soon. The dates and details of the course will be displayed on the VRI Website by the end of this month.

VRI started an Online Pali-Hindi course on 6th April 2020. The recorded sessions of the course from the beginning are available on the VRI Website, www.vridhamma.org. For further details contact on: mumbai@vridhamma.org. Tel.: +91 96192 34126 / +91 (22) 50427560 / +91 (22) 28451204 560 (9:30 AM to 5:30 PM only).

One-day Mega courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda for 2020 / 2021

Sundays— on the occasions of **27th September, Sharad Purnima and Goenkaji's Death Anniversary; 10th January, 2021 Mataji's Death Anniversary and Sayagyi' U Ba Khin's Death Anniversary; 23rd May, Buddha Purnima; 25th July, Ashadhi Purnima; 26th September, Sharad Purnima and Goenkaji's Death Anniversary;** All are **One-day Mega courses** at GVP start at 11am till 4 pm. Non-meditators may participate in the 3 pm discourse. (**Daily one-day courses still held at Pagoda for those who are staying in the campus.**) *Please come only with prior registration. Samaggānaṃ tapo sukho:* Take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group. For registration Contact: 022-62427544, 022-28451170- Extn: 9, Mob. 8291894644 (Tel. booking: 11 am to 5 pm daily). Online registration: <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>

DHAMMA DOHA

Durlabha jīvana manuja kā, durlabha saṅta milāpa;

Dhanyabhāga donoṅ mile, dūra kareṅ bhava tāpa.

Rare is the life of a human being, rarer is meeting with a saintly being; Blessed am I to have had both, now I must work to come out of worldly miseries.

Kara leṅ dūra kaṣāya saba, yahī janama kā dhyeya;

Durlabha jīvana manuja kā, sādheṅ anupama śreya.

May we remove all the impurities, this alone is the goal of life; Rare is the life of a human being, may we focus on the highest goal.

Śtlavīhārī hai vahī, sadācāra-yuta hoyā;

Kāyā vāṅī citta ke, karma na dūṣita hoṅya.

The one who lives a taintless life is one who dwells in virtue; The one whose actions of the body, speech and mind remain unsullied.

Kuśala karma karate raheṅ, kareṅ na pāpa lavaleśa;

Mana nirmala karate raheṅ, yahī buddha saṅdeśa.

Immersed in wholesome acts, may we remain far away from unwholesome acts; May we continue to purify our minds, this is the message of the Buddha.

SUBSCRIPTION TO ENGLISH/HINDI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: ANNUAL: RS 30/- (US \$10 OUTSIDE INDIA); (No Retail Sale)
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