



# Vipassana Newsletter

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

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## Words of Dhamma

Yo cha pubbe pamajjitvā, pacchā so nappamajjati;  
Somaṃ lokam pabhāseti, abbhā muttova candimā.

—*Dhammapada, Lokavaggo- 172*

One who having been heedless is heedless no more, illuminates this world like the moon freed from clouds.

## A big weight is lifted off my Head!

'Why do we need a mirror when we have a bangle on our wrist?' Why do we need proof for something that is self-evident? By this principle, there is no reason to doubt the practical, experiential side of Vipassana. The beneficial outcome of Vipassana was its direct proof. Liberation from impurities was not a blind belief; it was an experienced reality. As I delved deeper into the practice, its universal and scientific aspects became clearer. However, due to the thick layers of sectarian philosophy on the mind, doubts regarding its theoretical aspects kept arising.

The path is wonderful, it is true. It has pleasant outcomes. It brings swift results. It is scientific and universal. But, I thought, it is still atheistic. I, a devout theist, feared becoming an atheist. This deep-seated apprehension kept troubling my mind.

This was at a time when I hadn't studied even a bit of the Buddha's teachings that had vanished from India. Thus, I wasn't aware that in ancient India, the term "atheist" was highly derogatory. Even Lord Buddha used this term in that context, but its interpretation was different back then. An "atheist" was someone who didn't believe in the natural law of karma and its results. Those who believed in it were termed "theists". Atheists believed that neither good deeds yield a good result nor bad deeds yield a bad result. Even if one fills a river with corpses, it does not result in negative karma. Such people with a tendency against Dhamma were called atheists. Therefore, this term was used in a highly derogatory sense.

Over time, some people, for their selfish motives, changed the meaning of this term to denounce Lord Buddha. They were deeply influenced by their vested interests. They couldn't criticize the teachings of the Buddha, as there was no fault in them. The Buddha had rejected the four-fold caste system based on birth, and that was unacceptable to some. To justify the caste system, they would cite their religious scriptures, which Lord Buddha completely rejected. Such people attacked Lord Buddha with the term "atheist". They changed its meaning to convey a person who doesn't consider the Vedas authoritative, and the theist was the one who believed in the authority of the Vedas. Some may have accepted this interpretation, but others did not, because the Vedas additionally prescribed violent sacrifices,

which had already been stopped from happening in the country.

As time passed, another new meaning of the term "atheist" was propagated in order to attack and criticize Lord Buddha. It meant someone who did not believe in the existence of the soul or the Supreme Soul. Slowly, this definition became pervasive and universally accepted.

I, too, influenced by this faulty interpretation, remained skeptical. It seemed irreligious to me to be an atheist and not believe in the existence of the soul or the Supreme Soul. My wrong perception of the phrases "theist" and "atheist" burdened me even if Vipassana had many qualities that had changed my life by releasing me from mental impurities.

I found myself with doubt regarding the soul and the Supreme Soul, nevertheless. This soul—what is it? I had no clear answer. I knew of a tradition in India that believed the soul to be as big as the body it resides in. So, the soul of an elephant would be as big as an elephant, and the soul of an ant would be as big as an ant, while the soul of a human being would be as big as the person. If all souls are not the same size and dimensions, how can an elephant's massive soul enter the tiny body of an ant upon death? This was a question that had me perplexed.

Another belief was that the soul is the size of a thumb. But whose thumb? If it is the size of the thumb of a human being, then it can still not enter the body of an ant. So the conclusive belief was that the soul of a being remained the size of its own thumb. But then, if this is the case, then all the souls are not of the same size, and once again, they would not be equal. When an elephant's soul, even the size of its thumb, entered the body of an ant in the next birth, how would it fit in it?

Then arose the belief that the soul was the size of a sesame seed. The problem was that certain organisms are smaller than a sesame seed, and a sesame-sized soul could not enter their body either. Then there was the notion that the soul is as tiny as the tip of a hair. However, many microscopic organisms are so small that millions of them could fit on the tip of a hair.

Among the various beliefs regarding the soul that caused numerous doubts, one point stood out: if there is no soul, then who reincarnates? Because the body and mind are both destructible, there must be some non-destructible element there that wanders from one birth to the next, undergoing

8.4 million reincarnations, even if this means that the size of its souls alters with each incarnation. However, it must pass through multiple incarnations before being liberated.

If reincarnation is accepted, then the existence of the soul must also be accepted. To believe in reincarnation while denying the existence of the soul seemed like an anomaly to me. This logic seemed very convincing to me at the time. Thus, while fully embracing the practical aspect of Vipassana, its theoretical aspect didn't sit well with me. The concept of believing in the soul persisted with me.

It was much the same with the belief in God. Even with faith in God's existence, many questions arose in my mind. Some believe he is formless and without attributes, while others believe he has form and attributes. If he has form, what does he look like? Is he fair or dark-skinned? Does he have two arms, four, or perhaps a hundred? Is he a handsome, beardless, half-naked young man adorned with many jewels, as Indian gods often appear, or an aged figure with white hair, a long beard, and robes, as Western depictions suggest? Or, do different sects have different gods, or is there only one God?

If there's only one, then when Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Christians, Sikhs, and others fight, commit atrocities, set fires to and destroy places of worship, they do it in the name of their respective gods. Why then does God remain helpless, unable to intervene? Is he truly weak and powerless, or, as some believe, omnipotent? Does he rejoice or sorrow at his followers' actions? If he's saddened, why doesn't he stop them or punish them? Is he truly just and merciful? If so, why did he create this terrible four-fold caste system? A system in which one caste suffers oppression by other castes for generation after generation while another caste enjoys privileges. If God has a hand in this injustice, how can he be just and merciful?

My mind was filled with questions regarding God. I wrote forceful critiques of this corrupt societal structure in my poetry back then. I remember certain passages from a poem I wrote in which I expressed my disapproval of the caste system:

"Born in Brahmin or Baniya homes, does that elevate us above all?  
We are high-born, we are the best, and our status in society is high.  
Claiming higher status, considering ourselves the best,  
Enjoying privileges while others toil.

Since our ancestors' time, we have put the burden of service on their shoulders.

Those gentle, meek ones—what did we not make them do?

They, the so-called 'untouchables', are the true backbone, labouring in filth, yet without them, we wouldn't be where we stand.

How can there be justice when they're marginalized and we're privileged? ..."

I had strong reasons to remain a faithful theist, but I also experienced turbulent, rebellious feelings of dissatisfaction. If there is no Creator, how did this wondrous universe come into being? There must be some force governing its laws with which the creation is bound. There must be a generator for these laws. The cosmic rules that apply to the vastest galaxies and the tiniest particles, the animate and inanimate—isn't there a lawgiver?

Such questions about the soul and the Supreme Soul captivated me for almost two years. I had a bright spark of insight during an adhiṭṭhāna sitting in my third course in my

third year. The ultimate purpose of life, it became clear, is to cleanse the mind of impurities, not to entangle it in these right or wrong beliefs. What relation do these beliefs have to mental impurities? What good are all these philosophical concepts?

I have held philosophical convictions about the soul and the Supreme Soul since a young age. However, simply believing did not cleanse my mental impurities. Many people, including myself, proudly regard themselves as theists but suffer from impurity. On the other hand, there are so many Vipassana meditators I see who, while not believing in the existence of the soul or Supreme Soul, have tasted the ambrosia beyond mind and matter and whose mental impurities have been weakened. There are those who are sotāpanna (stream enterer) or even sakadāgāmi (once returner). Indeed, I have seen some anāgāmis (non-returners) whose sensual desires have been totally uprooted and who live a celibate life naturally. There is also at least one person I have seen who is an arahant, with all the qualities of one.

Another thought arose: What am I truly doing? I am making a concerted effort to uphold virtue and ethical conduct. I am practising to focus my mind on the truth of the breath. I am engaged in the task of rooting out impurities based on bodily sensations. If there truly is a God, he would undoubtedly be pleased. How could he possibly be displeased to see me established in moral conduct (sila), mastery of the mind (samādhi), and wisdom (paññā)? And if that God is merely a figment of the fearful human psyche or just an imaginary power centre of priestly power brokers, then why should I bear the false burden of this belief? Similarly, if there is a distinct soul within the body, this practice of liberation from impurities will only benefit it. And if it is merely a figment of the imagination of those attached to the idea of self-hood, then why should I carry the false burden of this imaginary belief?

As soon as I realized this, all the speculations regarding the soul and the divine ceased. It felt as though a massive weight had been lifted off my head. My mind felt so light that the onward journey on the spiritual path became easy and accessible. As my spiritual progress advanced, the entire web of beliefs about the soul and the divine became clearer and clearer. All confusion between theism and atheism dissolved. No obstacle remained in accepting the truth as God and the ultimate truth as the Supreme God.

The true Dhamma is that universal, eternal, ultimate that is omnipresent, dwelling in every entity, the inner guide that knows all, formless, beyond attributes, which neither comes nor goes, unfathomable, beyond comprehension, pure, untainted, whose rule applies over all living and non-living beings, that which bears every atom, the entire universe, and is borne by the entire universe, on whose wondrous laws the sun, moon, stars, and entire galaxies operate; on whose natural laws the entire world's cycle of creation, sustenance, dissolution, and regeneration functions. Now, there wasn't the slightest hesitation in accepting this power of impersonal existence. It was truly a great blessing, indeed a profound blessing, to come to this realisation!

– Kalyanamitta,

S. N. Goenka

*(This is a chapter translated from the Hindi Patrika "Vipassana" Volume-23 No. 5 on 29th October, 1993)*



**New Responsibility  
SAT**

- 1. Mrs. Jyoti Moliya, Gujrat
- 2. Mrs. Uma Patel, Gujrat
- 3. Mrs. Smita Mukesh Vora, Gujrat
- 4. Mr. Devidas Wadhvani, Gujrat

**New appointments  
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- 1. Mr. Ravindra Kulkarni, Pune
- 2. Mrs. Manisha Pradip Patil, Jalgaon,
- 3. Mrs. Nilima Bansod, Raipur
- 4. Mr. Vinod Joshi, Jaipur
- 5. Mr. Dong YU, China
- 6. Mr. Wang Dan DU, China

**Importance of Lighting a Pagoda**

Respected Goenkaji always said that it is of special importance that a Pagoda where relics are kept be well lit throughout the night. This helps maintain the Dhamma atmosphere. Anyone wishing to donate for the lighting of the Global Pagoda may do so. The cost per night is Rs. 5000/-. For further information Contact at (‘GVF’) address.

**Vipassana Research Institute (VRI)  
Project Pāla**

On the occasion of Guru Purnima, Vipassana Research Institute is very happy to announce Project Pāla – Treasures of Dhamma.

As you are all aware, this precious Dhamma, which was taught to us by S.N. Goenkaji, in its pristine purity, which is being maintained through the pure tradition of Teachers, must be preserved, protected, and passed on for the benefit of many. This includes a vast collection of materials comprising manuscripts, rare books, pictures, palm leaves from Myanmar, artefacts, audio and video tapes, and Goenkaji's personal documents.

**Treasures of Dhamma summary:**

- Photos, over 2000 images & 8000 negatives.
- Letters, Documents & Transcripts – over 210,000.
- Newsletters, Newspapers, & Magazines – over 10000.
- Diaries & Notebooks – around 500.
- Printed books – over 12000.
- Palm leaves & Manuscripts – Approx 28.
- Audio & Video collection – over 3000 tapes.
- Paintings - over 130 large paintings on the Life of the Buddha.

The word pāla means to preserve or secure Dhamma teachings. In order to protect these materials from the risk of damage due to environmental conditions, a 5000 sq ft state-of-the-art conservation and preservation facility is planned. The storage facility will have a temperature-controlled environment that is fire and water proof.

The project is estimated to cost around Rs 300 lakhs; hence, any contributions towards this noble cause for future generations would be of great merit to the donor.

Please click the YouTube link below to see a short video on Pāla - The Treasures of Dhamma: <https://youtu.be/eK-dJPWnOhs> Anyone can donate online through our website,

mobile app, scan UPI QR Code, net banking or by sending a cheque to our address.

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**Donations to VRI** are eligible for 100% tax deduction benefits to Indian citizens. The bank details for the donation are as follows:

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Account number: 911010004132846; IFSC Code: UTIB0000062;

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4. Online Donation- <https://www.vridhamma.org/donate-online>

**Future Course Schedule and Applications**

Information on future Courses is available on the internet. All types of bookings are currently available online only as per the Government’s new rules due to Covid-19. Applications will not be accepted on paper. Therefore, you are requested to check the following link and apply online directly for your appropriate course or for dhamma service at Dhammagiri: <https://www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schgiri>

Please apply similarly as per the schedule of other centres. Here is the link for all Indian centres: <https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/locations/directory#IN>

New VRI website for applying for courses: <https://schedule.vridhamma.org/> and for worldwide courses: [www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)

**Very Important Notices**

**1. Central IVR** (Interactive Voice Response) number-022-50505051. Applicants can call this number from their registered mobile number (the number mentioned in the form), to check their status, cancel, transfer or re-confirm their application. They can also contact the centre through this system. This is a central number for all Vipassana centers in India.

**2.** If you are sending non-centre Dhamma programs to be published in Newsletters, please send through the CAT (Coordinator Area Teacher) and if it’s for a centre, it should come through the Centre Teacher.

**Vipassana Activities in Greater Mumbai Area**

There are several Vipassana Centres & Meditation Facilities in Greater Mumbai area:- *Please View the link:*

<https://mumbai.vridhamma.org/>

**1-day Courses and Group Sitting Information in India: Please view the link below:**

<https://www.vridhamma.org/1-day-Courses-Information-in-India>

**Important Notice**

Those who send donations to the ‘GVF’, please note that the item for which they are sending money must be mentioned so that the donation can be deposited for this same item and the receipt can be written accordingly. (Thanking you in advance.)

## PAGODA CORPUS FUND

### for the Operations of Global Vipassana Pagoda

Pujya Guruji Shri S.N. Goenka ji had the vision to develop this historical monument as a symbol of gratitude to his teacher, and the chain of teachers back to the Buddha, and to help preserve and promote the technique of Vipassana, the ancient cultural heritage of India, as well as to provide a place for people from all over the world to come and meditate together, in the huge meditation hall, under the Buddha relics that are being preserved here.

It has been decided to set up a Centuries Corpus Fund to fulfil the above vision and meet the daily expenses for the period of the second Sasana of the Buddha. It has been calculated that if 1,39,000 persons were to donate Rs 9000/- (Rs. Nine Thousand) per person then the total would amount to Rs. 125 crores. The interest earned from this amount could then meet the daily expenses of operations and maintenance of the Global Pagoda.

Donations are eligible for tax benefits under Section 80G of the Indian Income Tax Act, 1961.

You may Contact/ Refer-Bank Details:

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Account No.: 911010032397802;

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2. Sh. Bipinbhai Mehta - 022-50427510/ 9920052156
3. Email - [audits@globalpagoda.org](mailto:audits@globalpagoda.org)
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## One-Day Mega Courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai

1. 10th Dec 2023, Sunday Centenary year Mega course
2. 14th Jan 2024, Sunday Sangha dana and Mega Course
3. 4th Feb 2024, Sunday MEGA EVENT: Documentary Film on Pujya Guruji & other events

In addition there are **Daily One-Day Courses** being held in the Pagoda for Vipassana Students. Please follow the link to join and take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group. **Contact:** 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm ).

**Online registration:** <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>  
Email: [oneday@globalpagoda.org](mailto:oneday@globalpagoda.org) (Pl. bring a bottle so you can fill it with drinking water at GVP.)

### Facility for students at Pagoda site

Meditators can stay at Dhammalaya during mega courses and avail maximum benefit. Please **contact:** 022 50427599 or email- [info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org](mailto:info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org)

For any other information for One day or Mega courses you may **contact:** [info@globalpagoda.org](mailto:info@globalpagoda.org) or [pr@globalpagoda.org](mailto:pr@globalpagoda.org), Tel :- 022-50427500 / +91 8291894644

• Email: [guruji.centenary@globalpagoda.org](mailto:guruji.centenary@globalpagoda.org)

## DHAMMA DOHAS

*Apane apane karma ke, hama hī jimmedāra;*

*Apane sukha ke dukkha ke, anya kauna karatāra?*

We are responsible for our own actions; Who else but ourselves are creators of our happiness and sorrows?

*Āśa parāyī choṛa kara, apane karma sudhāra;*

*Vipaśyanā ke nīra se, dho le citta vikāra.*

Leave hope aside, correct your own actions; Wash away mental defilements with the waters of Vipassana

*Mānava jīvana ratana sā, kara na vythā barabāda;*

*Taja pramāda, puruṣārtha kara, cākha mukti kā svāda.*

Human life is like a gem, do not misuse it; Leave aside indecision, work with discipline and taste the nectar of liberation.

*Parāvalamba se dukha jage, svāvalamba sukha hoya.*

*Apane pairon para cale, prāpta lakṣya ko hoya.*

Suffering arises from dependence, happiness arises from self-reliance; Walk step by step and reach the goal.

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