

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Mettāvihāro yo bhikkhu
pasanno buddhasāne
adhigacche padaṃ santaṃ
saṃkharapasamaṃ sukhaṃ.*

—Dhammapada - 368

The meditator who abides in loving-kindness,
who is devoted to the Buddha's Teaching,
attains the peace of *Nibbāna*,
the bliss of cessation of all conditioned things.

THE BUDDHA'S TWO MAIN MEDITATION TECHNIQUES

by S. N. Goenka

(The following has been translated and adapted from "Kyō Buddha Dukkhaṃ? The?" first published in Nepal in May 2000, in which Goenkaji has sought to dispel prevailing misconceptions about the teaching of the Buddha.)

To live a happy and harmonious life and to eradicate all misery, the Buddha taught many meditation techniques. Of these, the two principal methods are Vipassana and *mettā bhāvanā*.

1. Vipassana meditation

Vipassana enables meditators to gain mastery over the mind on the basis of morality, and to develop experiential wisdom to eradicate all the defilements of craving and aversion. It is a practical technique that gives beneficial results here and now, just as it did in the past. At the time of the Buddha, millions of suffering people tormented by the unbearable assaults of life were relieved from this burden of suffering through Vipassana.

One example:

Kisā Gotamā²

For years after her marriage, Kisā Gotamā² suffered the painful burden of childlessness. When she finally gave birth to a son, her happiness knew no bounds. It was as if a divine treasure had been bestowed upon her. However, after only a few years, her only child died of snakebite. Her heart sank to the greatest depth of misery. Others around her could not tolerate her extreme lamentation. When this anguished woman met the Buddha and learned Vipassana, she was relieved not only of the grief of her son's death but also of all the suffering of repeated births and deaths. She spent the rest of her life helping other suffering women to become free from misery.

Another example:

Paṃcārā¹

Paṃcārā¹ was the daughter of a very rich family of Sāvathī. She was born and brought up in great luxury. Unfortunately, she slipped and fell into the quicksand of passion and ran away with one of her family's young servants. Years passed before she began her journey to return to her parents. Several circumstances had resulted in the catastrophic loss not only of her husband, but of both of their sons. In acute grief and lamentation over the loss of husband and sons, she reached Sāvathī, only to find three funeral pyres burning outside the town. Imagine her deep shock when she discovered that these pyres were burning the bodies of her own mother, father and only brother. (The night before, their house had collapsed in an earthquake.) Now this unfortunate woman had no relative left in the world. Due to this intolerable trauma, she became totally insane. Then she came in contact with the Buddha and learned Vipassana. Practising it, she found that this benevolent technique liberated her not only from the sorrow of losing her near and dear ones, but also from all the sufferings that come from the cycle of birth and death. She started serving others and helped many to lead happy lives.

Even today, this practice gives the same results, with each step that is taken on the Noble Path of Vipassana. Those who practise it live happy and peaceful lives even in the face of complex worldly problems. The experience of hundreds of thousands of meditators is the concrete proof of this. People all over the world from all walks of life come to Vipassana courses. Their minds are burdened with grief from the losses of their near and dear ones: their mothers, fathers, sons, daughters, husbands, wives. Or they are afflicted with depression or insomnia due to the stresses of modern life. They have suffered the losses of money, position, prestige, or disappointment in personal relations. They are disheartened and frustrated by multifarious problems. Yet, we always find that at the end

of their ten-day Vipassana course, their faces light up with peace and happiness.

There are so many instances where serious Vipassana meditators have faced the pain of terminal illnesses such as cancer with great fortitude, rejecting strong painkillers or drugs that would have made them unconscious. They choose to face their deaths with full awareness and pass away with peaceful and alert minds. What could be a greater medicine to cure the affliction of misery!

Thousands of prison inmates burning in the fire of revenge go through Vipassana retreats every year. Over and over again, we witness them at the end of their ten-day exploration of the reality deep inside themselves. They proclaim their acceptance of their faults with tears in their eyes; instead of smouldering in thoughts of vengeance, they start generating loving-kindness for everyone. These examples, being lived every day, demonstrate the exquisite practicality of the Buddha's teaching. Such examples are direct confirmation of the results it gives here and now.

2. *Mettā bhāvanā*: Loving kindness

The teaching of the Buddha does not build castles in the air. It does not give false hope. It teaches us to proceed with every step firmly grounded in the truth of one's own experience of reality within. A meditator looks within—to the anchor of his or her own direct experience—to discover for oneself, that every time he generates hatred or animosity against anyone, at that very moment, he becomes agitated. He loses his peace of mind.

Āntasya kuto sukhaḥ?

He who has lost his peace of mind has no happiness.

He observes for himself the workings of Dhamma: how far away from happiness he is when he loses his peace of mind. He understands clearly that whenever he generates anger or hatred or animosity, he becomes the first victim of that defilement. At that very moment, he becomes agitated. He also experiences that when he removes these defilements he becomes happy and peaceful. Therefore, again and again he reflects:

Ahaḥ avero homi, abyapajjo homi, an'gho homi, sukhaḥ attānaḥ pariharāmi.

May I be free from animosity, free from hatred, free from anger. May I experience peace within myself.

This sentiment is not just wishful thinking. One practises *mettā bhāvanā* (loving kindness meditation) only after one actually starts eradicating defilements through the practice of Vipassana. There naturally arises a wish in one's mind that all others—whether friends, relatives or unknown people, (visible or invisible)—be free from defilements and become happy and peaceful.

Mātaṅgāya cāriyā nāṭisam'bhā, averā hontu, abyapajjā hontu, an'ghā hontu, sukhaḥ attānaḥ pariharantu.

May my mother and father, teachers, neighbours be free from animosity, free from hatred, free from anger. May they all experience peace within themselves.

Maṅgalaṅgāya, bhāgavāya, rakkhāya, kassapaṅgāya, averā hontu, abyapajjā hontu, an'ghā hontu, sukhaḥ attānaḥ pariharantu.

May the guardian deities, tree deities, deities in the sky be free from animosity, free from hatred, free

from anger. May they all experience peace within themselves.

Purāthimāya disāya, pacchimāya disāya,

Uttarāya disāya, dakkhiṇāya disāya,

Hejjhimāya disāya, uparimāya disāya,

Purāthimāya anudisāya, pacchimāya anudisāya,

Uttarāya anudisāya, dakkhiṇāya anudisāya,

East, west, north, south, above, below, south-east, north-east, north-west and south-west: all beings of these ten directions,

Sabbe sattā, sabbe pāpā, sabbe bhāṅgā, sabbe puggalā,

Sabbe attabhāvaparipannā, sabbā itthiyo sabbe purisā,

Sabbe ariyā, sabbe anariyā, sabbe devā, sabbe manussā,

Sabbe amanussā, sabbe vinipatikā.

All sentient beings, all animals, all living things, all who have been born, all women, all men, all *ariyas* (noble ones), all *anariyas* (non-noble ones), all humans, all non-humans and all beings of the netherworlds,

Averā hontu, abyapajjā hontu, an'ghā hontu, sukhaḥ attānaḥ pariharantu.

Be free from animosity, free from hatred, free from anger. May they all experience peace within themselves.

Thus cleansing oneself of all defilements and enjoying true peace and happiness, a Vipassana meditator bestows the wish that all other beings be happy and peaceful.

When one undertakes the intensive practice of Vipassana in a ten-day course or longer, and cleanses his mind of craving and aversion, then with a gladdened heart and great delight one practises *mettā bhāvanā*, loving kindness, on the last day of the course.

Many have read this from the Gita:

Advellā sarvabhāṅgānāḥ maitrah karuṇā eva ca.

Without hatred towards all beings, with love and compassion.

Now they learn the actual practice and become truly blessed by removing hatred towards all beings and generating love and compassion towards them.

When they get an opportunity to actually become *nirvairah sarvabhāṅgātesu* without enmity towards any being and put into practice *sarvabhāṅgārahitā*—engrossed in the welfare of all beings—they are overjoyed. A grateful and joyful heart gives rise to the wish that all should receive this peace and happiness. *Mere sukha meḥ ānti meḥ, bhāgā sabhāḥ hoyā.*

May all beings—*sukhino vā khemino hontu*—be happy, be secure!

Ye keci pāpābhāṅgāṭṭhi, tāṣṭ vā thāvarā anavasesā;

D'ghā vā yeva mahantā vā, majjhimā rassakā a'ukathā.

Dipphā vā yeva adipphā, ye ca d're vasanti avid're;

Bhāṅgā vā sambhaves' vā, sabbe sattā bhavantu sukhitattā.

Whether these beings are static or in motion; big, medium or small in size; gross or subtle in body; visible or invisible; far away or near; already born or in the womb—may they all be happy!

'May all beings be happy! May all beings be peaceful! May all beings be liberated!'

The entire atmosphere of the meditation centre becomes charged with these wholesome vibrations of compassionate goodwill:

May all beings be happy... be happy... be happy!

May everyone be happy!

May all visible and invisible beings attain welfare!

May all beings of water, earth and sky be happy!

May all beings of all the ten directions be happy!

May all be without fear, without enmity, without affliction!

When one practises loving kindness, one receives many benefits:

1. one sleeps contentedly
2. one gets up happily
3. one does not have bad dreams
4. one's face acquires a glow (the countenance becomes pleasing)
5. one is liked by many
6. one dies with an alert mind full of peace and happiness
7. one gets liberated from the cycle of becoming.

Dippha^½ *va anupagamma*—Because he does not get entangled in a false belief;

S²lav± dassanena sampanno—being endowed with upright character and wisdom, that is, Vipassana;

K±mesu vineyyagedha^½—having eradicated craving for sensual pleasure and being fit to practise *brahmacharya* (a life of celibacy), he is born in the *brahma* realm after death; and practising Vipassana, he is liberated from there. He then experiences the ultimate happiness beyond all realms.

Therefore,

Na hi j±tu gabbhaseyya^½ *punareti*—Because he is free from the cycle of becoming, he is free from the misery of *punarapi janana² japhare wayanam*—falling repeatedly in a womb.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question: I have trouble working with *sampajañña* when not sitting in meditation. Could you please offer some suggestions for working with it outside of meditation?

Goenkaji: According to the teaching of Buddha, there must be a continuity of awareness of *anicca* within the framework of the body. This should be maintained while walking, sitting, eating, drinking; in every position, in every posture. You have to remain aware of it all the time. This takes you to the depth of your mind and helps you to eradicate deep-lying impurities there. Even at home, meditating in the morning and evening, *sampajañña* is important. But when you are engaged in your day-to-day responsibilities, *sampajañña* is not necessary. You are not meditating at that time, and if you try to keep half your attention on sensations and the other half on your work, you won't be successful at either activity.

(21 January 1995, Annual Meeting: *Dhamma Giri*)

CALMING THE MIND WITH ANAPANA

Goenkaji was invited to participate in the Annual Conference of World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland in January 2000. He spoke in four different sessions. On 28 January, in the session on "What Should You Do When You Are Angry?" the points of discussion were: In our time-compressed and competitive world there seem to be more and more opportunities than ever to get upset when things don't go our way. Anger can ruin relationships, professional careers and health. What should be done to eradicate anger?

Goenkaji explained, "The law of nature is such that one who generates anger is its first victim. One is bound to become miserable as one generates anger. It is obvious to any intelligent person that anger arises when something undesirable has happened, when someone has created an obstacle in the fulfilment of one's desires. Even the most powerful person in the world has to face undesirable things and one is helpless to prevent it. Though one knows that anger is harmful and wants to get rid of it, anger continues to overpower one from time to time. To solve this problem, one has to seek a deeper reason for the anger within oneself. Simply diverting one's mind to some other activity is only a temporary solution. One must go to the root of the problem. One must learn to observe anger."

He then explained how Anapana, which is observation of the natural breath as it is, and Vipassana, which involves equanimous observation of sensations with the understanding of their impermanent nature, helps one to come out of anger.

One of the participants did not agree that anger is injurious. He insisted that anger is very useful in life and that he could not accept that one could live without anger. He said that one should not try to get rid of anger. "Anger is necessary in life," he insisted. He kept arguing about this till the end of the session and did not agree with whatever Goenkaji was saying.

On Monday, 31 January, Goenkaji was the sole speaker in the session titled "Is This As Good As It Gets? The Meaning of Happiness". At the end of Goenkaji's talk, during the question and answer session, the same participant stood up and narrated his experience:

"I attended Mr. Goenka's session on anger and kept arguing with him throughout the session. I did not agree with anything that he said. However, when I went back to my hotel and had a bath, I remembered Mr. Goenka's explanation of the technique he teaches and how it works. I relaxed observing my breath as I lay in the bath as I often do after my tennis. I realized that I was able to achieve the same peacefulness that Mr. Goenka was recommending through awareness of breathing.

"I was surprised and told my wife all about it. She decided to come to this session on "True Happiness". She is here with me, Mr. Goenka."

After a Vipassana course, meditators gain the ability to calm the agitated mind by practising Anapana for a few minutes. It is exceptional that this participant was able to calm his mind with Anapana without any previous experience of meditation.

S±²sa dekhate dekhate, citta avicala ho j±ya.

Avicala citta nirmala bane, sahaja mukta ho j±ya.

Observing breath after breath, the mind becomes still.

The unwavering mind becomes pure and naturally finds liberation.

Doha by Goenkaji

THE JOY OF DHAMMA SERVICE

(by a Dhamma Server)

Upon completing my last course, I decided that I wanted to make Vipassana a larger part of my life. I chose to serve a course and it was a far more expansive experience than I had ever expected.

I knew that serving would be an excellent way to give dāna, and to help others to experience the wonders of Vipassana, yet I had no idea how much it would expand my practice. Serving changed my conception of Vipassana from an intense personal experience, to a community experience more easily integrated into my life.

After sitting a course, it is difficult for me to incorporate the practice into daily life. Familiar surroundings and interactions at home quickly distract me, and the old habit patterns of my mind come streaming forth. While serving, the novel setting and emphasis on awareness allowed me to utilise the practice throughout the day. Each day I became more conscious of my sensations outside the Dhamma hall.

Serving was different than sitting a course in that my interactions with others brought forth very obvious issues that I frequently face in life. Confronting those limiting patterns, while still sitting three hours a day and living within a supportive atmosphere, gave me a better understanding of how not to react to, but to grow from, those difficulties.

Spending ten days alongside similarly motivated individuals was surprisingly inspiring. Having shared these experiences, I now feel part of a supportive community. I know from direct interaction that I am not the only one out there who finds this practice extremely difficult and wonderfully beautiful. It makes each step down this path a little easier, each stride a little longer.

I cannot explain the joy I experienced seeing ninety-one meditators complete the course. I guess that is the power of dāna. It was wonderful to see so many smiling faces, to hear of their paths and newfound liberation. It is amazing how powerful it is to share the most precious part of my life.

Looking back at the end of the course, I was surprised by the depth and breadth of experience those ten days provided. No one told me I would grow and expand my practice in such directions. I hope that your life will offer you the opportunity to have this experience and to deepen your practice. May you be happy.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. Mr Virak Chan, *France*
2. Ms Marianne Eriksdotter, *Sweden*

Children Course Teachers

1. Mrs Anuradha Kamat, *Bangalore*
2. Mrs Mridula Madhusudan, *Bangalore*
3. Mr S. M. Jyothi Prakash, *Bangalore*
4. Mrs Archana Sekhar, *Bangalore*
5. Mr A. Venkatesh, *Bangalore*
6. Mrs Bernadette Vincent, *Bangalore*
7. Mrs Somaly Kuoch, *France*
8. Mrs Michelle Vincent, *France*
9. Mr Björn Kiehne, *Germany*

NEW VRI PUBLICATIONS

VRI has published four new books in Hindi for the benefit of Vipassana meditators:

Sutta-sāra I (D^gghanikāya and Majjhimanikāya)

Sutta-sāra II (Sa^½yuttanikāya)

Sutta-sāra III (A^guttaranikāya and Khuddakanikāya)

(set of 3 books for Rs 135/-)

Dhammapada (Pali g[±]thas in Devanāgarī script

Rs 25/-

with Hindi translation)

Payment must be made only by crossed bank draft payable at Igatpuri in favour of Vipassana Research Institute. Please add postage and handling charges as follows:

For India and Nepal (Registered Printed Matter Postage): All four books: Rs 30.00. **Outside India (Registered Printed Matter Airmail Postage):** All four books: Rs 300.00

DHAMMA NEWS

Goenkaji's Discourses on Television: Goenkaji's discourses in Hindi are being broadcast on Zee TV every Monday from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m. and on Aastha TV channel daily at 5:00 p.m.

Dhamma Pu^oa, Pune: Eighty-two visually challenged students successfully completed a ten-day Vipassana course at Pune Vipassana Centre from 18 to 29 June 2001. All of them expressed deep satisfaction on mettā day of the course. The next course for visually challenged students at *Dhamma Pu^oa* will be organised from 19 to 30 September 2001.

Phaltan: The first ten-day Vipassana course at Phaltan (near Pune) was held from 21 May to 1 June 2001 for 103 students.

Jabalpur Central Prison: Thirty-five female inmates participated in the second course held at Jabalpur Central Prison from 18 to 29 February 2001. The first course was organised last year from 5 to 16 March for 60 male inmates. The Prison Superintendent has been impressed by the results and wants all the inmates to benefit from Vipassana.

SUBSCRIPTION TO ENGLISH/HINDI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: ANNUAL: RS 20/- (U.S. \$10/- OUTSIDE INDIA); LIFE SUBSCRIPTION: RS 250/- (U.S. \$100/- OUTSIDE INDIA) BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF VRI.

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