

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Vipassana Research Institute
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Manopubbāṅgamā dhammā,
manoseṭṭhā, manomayā.
manasā ce pasannena, bhāsati vā karoti vā.
tato naṃ sukhamanveti, chāyā'va anapāyini.*

Mind precedes all phenomena. Mind is their chief.
All phenomena are mind-made. If, with a pure mind,
One should either speak or act,
Happiness follows one, as one's shadow that never leaves.

—Dhammapada 2

MY FRIEND, MUNINDRAJI

S. N. Goenka

“Mr Goenka, please go to Thathana Yeikta (meditation centre) and meet your guest from India. If you wish, you may take vegetarian food for him”

This phone-call was from my friend, U Chan Htoon, who was the Attorney-General of Myanmar as well as the General Secretary of the Buddha Sāsana Council. After hosting the *Chatṭha Saṅgāyana*, the government of Myanmar decided to invite people from different countries who wanted to learn Vipassana and treat them as state guests. It had invited several people to Myanmar. Many householders got the opportunity to earn merits by giving donation (*dāna*) for this government project. Prime Minister U Nu sent a message to me that I could earn merits by taking part in this project. By then, I had benefited immensely by the practice of Vipassana. Therefore, I wanted more and more people to benefit by practising this benevolent technique and make their lives truly meaningful. Such feelings arose in my mind repeatedly. Hence, I considered it my good fortune to take part in this noble project and gladly agreed to sponsor the travel and other expenses of two pilgrims. U Chan Htoon decided to entrust my family with the responsibility of hosting a Japanese and an Indian pilgrim.

The Indian pilgrim had arrived in Rangoon (present-day Yangon) the previous day. The government had arranged accommodation for him at Thathana Yeikta. U Chan Htoon had phoned me to inform me about his arrival. I went to Thathana Yeikta to meet my guest and took food for him. I saw that he was a slender and short person of my age. His face was very serene and his eyes were filled with humility. I learned that he was a member of the Barua community from the eastern part of Bangladesh and was a follower of the Buddha by birth. He had taken a vow of celibacy. He was called *anāgārika* because he had not married and did not have a family.

Even though he had not taken robes, he wore white clothes and lived the life of a monk (*bhikkhu*). He had settled in India with many other members of his community and was presently the superintendent of the Bodhgaya temple. Because the beneficent technique of Vipassana taught by the Buddha had been completely lost in India, he had come to Myanmar to learn it. This was my first meeting with Anagarika Munindra Barua, who became a very close friend. We respectfully called him Munindraji.

After a few days, he told me that he had developed a liking for the food cooked at Thathana Yeikta. Therefore, I need not take the trouble to send food for him daily. We stopped sending food daily but he would come home once every five-ten days to have Indian food. Illaichi Devi [Mataji] used to be happy to serve Indian food to him because he liked it very much.

Within three months, he completed his study of Vipassana. Then he expressed the desire to stay in Yangon for a few more months to study the Abhidhamma. The Abhidhamma scholars of Myanmar are highly praised and renowned in all the Buddhist countries. They had a deep knowledge of this profound subject, therefore, Munindraji wanted to undertake a special study of the Abhidhamma under their guidance. While staying at Thathana Yeikta, he had become friendly with many householders who were only too happy to arrange for his stay in their homes and to provide meals and other requirements to one who they considered to be a good-natured and simple living lay-devotee (*upāsaka*). Munindraji wanted my permission for this because he was my guest. What objection could I have! I was very happy with his wholesome resolution.

Even then, he came to my residence once every five-ten days to have Indian food. My family had also arranged to fulfil his daily needs. His needs were very

simple, which could have been easily fulfilled by any ordinary householder.

Munindraji stayed in Myanmar for nine years and studied the Abhidhamma as well as the other Pitakas in detail. Whenever he came to my residence for an Indian meal and if it was a holiday, I used to get the benefit of discussing Dhamma and Pali with him. During this time, he also went to other meditation centres and learned numerous other meditation techniques.

Sometimes, we had discussions about meditation. After learning about my meditation experiences, he was extremely attracted to the meditation technique of Ledi Sayadaw that was taught by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. He was eager to learn this ancient technique of Myanmar as well. But my revered teacher refused to accept him on a course. I pleaded with Sayagyi to accept him. Another student of Sayagyi, U Lun Baw, Chairman of the Public Service Commission of Myanmar, who was very devoted to Munindraji, also requested Sayagyi to accept Munindraji. But Sayagyi still refused. There was a reason for this decision.

Some time ago, a monk (*bhikkhu*) from India had come to a meditation centre to learn Vipassana but before completing the three-month course, he became mentally unbalanced. I used to bring Indian food for him. When I went to meet him, I found that his mental condition had become very unstable. Therefore, I met the main teacher of the centre and asked his permission to take the *bhikkhu* to my residence. Within a few days, his mental state returned to normal and he became completely healthy. He was happy to learn that I was a Vipassana meditator. He was even more pleased to learn that my teacher was Sayagyi U Ba Khin who he knew intimately in the past. Before the Japanese War, he was a chief engineer when Sayagyi was the Accounts Officer of Burma (Myanmar) Railways. He became eager to meet Sayagyi. I took him to Sayagyi. Because he was such an old friend, Sayagyi arranged a special course for him alone. He worked with great devotion and enthusiasm and was highly benefited by the course. After the course, before returning to India, he went to Mandalay to meet some of his pre-war friends. There, he gave a few public talks, in which he showered lavish praise on the ancient technique of Vipassana taught by Sayagyi. Unfortunately, he also denounced the meditation centre where he had first stayed to learn Vipassana after coming from India. When Sayagyi learned about this after his return to Yangon, he became very unhappy. He said, "It is an unwholesome *kamma* to criticize any *bhikkhu* or his teaching. You should not do this." But, out of overenthusiasm, even in Yangon, while staying at my residence, he kept repeating that Vipassana being taught in the tradition of Ledi Sayadaw was the best and all the others had flaws. He returned to India but Sayagyi was very displeased by this incident. He made a strong decision that if anyone had already taken a Vipassana course with a monk teacher, he would not allow him to take a course with him. He was totally against any kind of quarrel or argument caused by comparing different

techniques. He had a natural feeling of devotion towards monks. Therefore, he could not accept anything said against them. It was because of this reason that Munindraji could not get a chance to learn meditation from him. Munindraji was very disappointed about this but I was helpless.

After serious study of Buddhist literature for nine years in Myanmar, Munindraji returned to India and settled at Bodhgaya.

When I came to India in June 1969, I was discouraged by the situation here. It was totally impossible to conduct a ten-day residential course without active help from others. However, within a few days, the Aduka family took up the challenge of organizing a Vipassana course in Mumbai and successfully accomplished it. After that, courses were organized in different sites in Mumbai and South India. But it was very difficult to organize a course in North India. My close friend, Shri Yashpal Jain arranged a small course in Delhi at the guest-house of Birla Mandir, after which, more courses were organized in North India. I was very keen that a course should be organized at Bodhgaya. The manager of Samanvay Ashram, Shri Dwarko Sundrani, came forward to organize it. Munindraji gave ample help for that course. He himself wanted to participate in the course. But how could I take a person in my course who had been refused by Sayagyi. On Munindraji's strong urging, I phoned Sayagyi in Yangon. He immediately gave his permission because, in India, there was no danger of any controversy caused by comparison with Vipassana taught by any *bhikkhu*.

Munindraji was extremely happy that he could join the course. He experienced the arising and passing away of *kalāpas* [small indivisible units of matter] in the entire body, the state of *bhanga*. After the course, Munindraji wrote a letter full of gratitude and Dhamma sentiments to Sayagyi. He gained so much benefit from the course that he started to send many foreign students who came to him to my courses. They were also benefited, which made Munindraji very happy.

He stayed at Bodhgaya for some time and then went to America on the insistence of some of his students. However, he did not enjoy his stay there and returned to India. He met me and expressed the wish to spend his old age meditating at *Dhamma Giri*. I was delighted to know his wish. A separate room and a meditation cell were arranged for him at *Dhamma Giri*. My students were happy to get the chance to serve Munindraji. He endeared himself to everyone there not just because he was my close friend but by his simple lifestyle and affectionate nature. All his daily requirements were fulfilled at *Dhamma Giri*. He was content to spend his remaining years there and sat long courses and my self-course every year. He meditated the rest of the time as well. He used to go to Kolkata every year to meet his family and friends. During his last visit, he passed away in Kolkata. Certainly, he went to a higher plane.

I feel that there must have been deep friendship between us for many lives in the past, which was further

strengthened in this life. The friendship of this saintly meditator was extremely delightful. The company of a meditator friend is very beneficial. Whenever I remember him, *mettā* arises spontaneously in my mind. May he be happy in the celestial world! ☺

MUNINDRAJI'S LETTER TO SAYAGYI

(The following is Anagarika Munindraji's letter to Sayagyi U Ba Khin after his first Vipassana course with Goenkaji. It was published in the April 1972 issue of *The Maha Bodhi* journal.)

Dear respected Sayagyi,

Kindly accept my profound regards and affectionate loving thoughts for you.

You will be glad to know that we had the opportunity to organize a ten-day Vipassana meditation course at the most sacred place of Buddhagaya and it was started on the 19th of April. It was conducted by my *Dhamma-mitta* and *Kalyana-mitta* Shri Satya Narayanji Goenka, who is one of your competent and devout disciples. The arrangement was made without previous preparation and at short notice. In this meditation-training seminar, 25 yogis took part, out of which 6 were monks of different nations. I myself took advantage of participating in this seminar and have been greatly benefited by this Vipassana course. In such a short time, the technique helped to open up the new dimension of understanding that it was surprising. The sincere and earnest meditators having accumulated previous *paramis* could quickly see, feel and understand the characteristics and functions of the *rupakalapas* in their body through the concentrated mind and penetrating insight. It is very strange to see the true nature of the body—the *anicca*-state—the state of continuous flux of four elements, which is perceptible to the inner eye of insight. I experienced sleepless nights with mind inward, observing *anicca*—the continuous change of my corporeal body. Body became so sensitive and alive that some times with the very contact of objects of sense doors I felt and observed the whole body like bubbles in the water appearing and disappearing when I was deeply aware and mindful.

During this ten-day course, my *Dhamma-mitta* Shri Goenkaji used to give a talk on Dhamma every evening to all the yogis. All talks were on different aspects of Buddha Dhamma – related to the practice and true to the point and meaning in accordance with the teaching. The talks were so inspiring, encouraging and ennobling that since my return from Burma I had no opportunity to hear such good *Dhamma-desana* anywhere in India. I had no idea that my friend was so well conversant with and such a good exponent of Dhamma in its true spirit both in theory and practice. I feel so happy and fortunate myself that I took part in it.

During my long sojourn of about nine years in Burma from 1957 to 1966 for study and practice of Buddha-Dhamma, I had the privilege to study the whole Tipitaka together with all their commentaries under competent and expert teachers; I practiced meditation there under

the guidance of noted teachers with most sincerity, earnestness and profound devotion. I have derived rich benefit of it. It has changed my whole outlook and character. In later years, during my stay in Burma, I took advantage of studying and practising different aspects of Satipatthana meditation in almost all the main *Kammattthana* centres in Rangoon, such as Mingun, Sonlum, Ledi Yeitha, Hanthawady, Nanasagi etc. and I have been greatly profited by all these practices and studies that gave me more knowledge on different aspects and approaches. Though India is my birthplace (*janma-bhumi*), Burma is my *Dharma Bhumi*—where Dharma was born in me. Everyone everywhere was so kind to me, so hospitable and so generous—this I cannot forget. I always bear these happy and sweet memories in me with deep gratitude and respect and give all my good wishes and *metta* for the welfare, happiness and progress of the people of Burma daily.

During my stay in Burma, I had several occasions to visit your meditation centre and I liked the place very much—the environment was so calm and serene. I was very much inspired to stay there for some time and practise meditation under your kind guidance. You had been always very kind and sweet to me. Due to certain reasons during those days I could not get the opportunity to stay and practice there, and fulfil my intense desire. I understood your difficulty and appreciated deeply your friendliness and affectionate loving kindness towards me.

My keen desire to be in your centre under your noble guidance has been fulfilled now at the hand of your true disciple. The ten-day seminar was successfully completed on 19th April with great satisfaction. The result was beyond expectation. We learned many things. All meditators were extremely happy to have spent these ten days in retreat. Since my arrival in India I have dedicated my life for the cause of *sasana* and have been doing the *sasana*-work through practice and talks on Dhamma. This ten-day meditation course has added more knowledge that I value and treasure very much for my Dhamma-work. This has been also a refresher course for me. All credit goes to you for everything and I am deeply grateful to you and Shri Goenkaji for all this. Whatever merits I have acquired by observing *Sila*, practicing concentration and cultivating insight, all I share with you. By virtue of these merits, may you live long with sound health and mind so that you may be in a position to continue *sasana* work for long and many more people may be benefited by you. May Dhamma the true law reign forever for the happiness of all beings.

Yours in the service of Dhamma,
Anagarika Munindra

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

Current and past issues of the Hindi Vipassana Patrika and English Newsletter can be downloaded from the VRI website:
<http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html>
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CHANGE OF RESPONSIBILITIES

Acaryas: Ms. Floh Lehmann, *Germany*
Spread of Dhamma in Europe

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Acaryas: Mr. Heinz Bartsch & Mrs. Brunhilde Becker, *Germany*
To serve Dhamma Dvāra, Germany
Senior Assistant Teachers: Mrs. Grace Reed, *Australia*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

1. Mrs. Manorama Tiwari, *Orai, U.P.* 2. Mr. A. Subramaniam, *Kalpakkam* 3. Mr. Shiren Dev, *Mongolia* 4. Mr. Ping-san Wang, *Taiwan* 5. Mr. Ole Bosch, *South Africa*
6. Mr. Jan Haringsma, *South Africa*

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1. Mr. Sreedharan Moothathu. S., *Kottayam* 2. Mrs. P. N. Nandini, *Kottayam* 3. Mrs. Rajalaxmi S. Kariyal, *Delhi*
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ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Every **third** Sunday at **Ghatkopar**. Contact: Tel 2510-1096, 2516-2505

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
12.9.2004	Andheri	10-12 years	9 & 10.9.2004
12.9.2004	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	9 & 10.9.2004
10.10.2004	Andheri	13-16 years	7 & 8.10.2004
10.10.2004	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	7 & 8.10.2004
07.11.2004	Matunga	10-12 years	4 & 5.11.2004

Course Timing: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Registration Timings:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Course Venues:** **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W), Tel: 2633-6671. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: 252-2693. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 5601-9977. [NB *Please bring cushion. *Please register on the specified phone numbers. If you are unable to attend after registration, please inform in advance. *Please arrive on time for the course.]

GOENKAJI'S INTERVIEW ON ZEE TV

Zee TV is telecasting a program called *Urja* featuring Goenkaji **every Friday at 12:00 noon**. In this program, Goenkaji answers questions about the different aspects of Dhamma (Dharma). Meditators may inform their family and friends about the opportunity to hear Goenkaji expound on the universal Dhamma.

DHAMMA DOHAS

Jāgo logo jagata ke, bitī kālī rāta.

Huā ujālā dharama kā, maṅgala huā prabhāta.

People of the world awake, the dark night is over
The light of Dhamma has shone, the dawn of happiness

Āo prāṇī visbva ke, suno dharama kā gyāna.

Isame sukha hai shānti hai, mukti moksha niravāṇa.

Come beings of the universe, listen to the wisdom of Dhamma.
In this lies happiness and peace, freedom, liberation, *nibbāna*.

With warm regards and metta,

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Yaha to vāṇī buddha kī, shuddha dharama kī jyota.

Akshara akshara mem bharā, maṅgala ota parota.

The words of the Buddha, the light of pure Dhamma
Each syllable is filled and permeated with happiness.

Buddha vāṇī mīṭhī ghaṇī, misarī ke se bola.

Kalyāṇī maṅgalamayī, bharā amṛta rasa ghola.

Sweet are the Buddha's words, like crystallized sugar
Yielding welfare and happiness, suffused with
the taste of the deathless.

With warm regards and metta,

A VIPASSANA MEDITATOR

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