

Words of Dhamma

*Vayadhammā saṅkhārā,
appamādena sampādethā.*

the last words of the Buddha, recorded in the *Mahāparinibbāna Sutta, Dīgha Nikāya*

Transitory are all compounded things.
Keep striving diligently!

The messenger of inner peace: Satya Narayan Goenka

It was late afternoon of a long day toward the end of August 2000. In the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York, delegates to the Millennium World Peace Summit were weary and a little jaded. This was the first global gathering of religious and spiritual leaders at the UN, and it had descended into acrimony. Far from finding common ground, the delegates had sharply differed over the question of conversion. Some delegates were highly critical of the practice; others representing some of the leading religions rejected those views. Over the years, the hall had often been the setting for this sort of wrangle involving politicians; it was disappointing to see spiritual leaders doing no better.

To close the session, a lesser-known figure made his way to the podium, helped by an assistant. His silver hair gleamed; he wore a smartly tailored Indian suit. Carefully he paid respects and smilingly surveyed the crowd. Then he started speaking, and within seconds he had caught the attention of the assembled dignitaries.

“Religion is religion only when it unites,” he said. “Religion is no religion when it divides. Religion is not for dividing people. It is for uniting people.”

The words were greeted with a sudden burst of applause. This was not more of the same argument that had been dragging on all day. The delegates started to pay attention.

The speaker picked up his thread: “So much has been said for and against conversion. I am for conversion, not against it. But conversion not from one organized religion to another organized religion—no. Conversion from misery to happiness. Conversion from bondage to liberation. Conversion from cruelty to compassion. That is the conversion needed today.”

Applause greeted almost every statement. The speaker warmed to his theme:



*Shri Satya Narayan Goenka,
January 30, 1924 - September 29, 2013*

“If I have an agitated mind full of anger, hatred, ill will and animosity, how can I give peace to the world?”

“Therefore all the sages and saints and seers of the world have said, 'Know thyself.' Not merely at the intellectual, emotional or devotional level, but at the actual level. When you know the truth about yourself at the experiential level, many of the problems get solved. You start understanding the universal law of nature or God, which is applicable to one and all.

“When I observe myself and find that I am generating anger, ill will or animosity, I realize that I am the first victim of the hatred or animosity I am generating within myself. Only afterwards do I start harming others. And if I am free from these negativities, nature or God Almighty starts rewarding me: I feel so peaceful.



Goenkaji at the Millennium World Peace Summit, United Nations General Assembly, New York, August 2000 (courtesy Lyn Hughes, photographer, New York)

“Whether I call myself a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Jain, it makes no difference: a human being is a human being. Human mind is human mind. Conversion should be from impurity of the mind to purity of the mind. This is the real conversion that is necessary—nothing else.”

The gong had rung, indicating that the speaker's time was up. But he begged indulgence to deliver a message from a past ruler of his country. Quoting and then paraphrasing, the speaker said:

“Every religion has the wholesome core of love, compassion and good will. The outer shell differs, but give importance to the inner essence and there will be no quarrel. Don't condemn anything, give importance to the essence of every religion and there will be real peace and harmony.”

The ruler referred to was the great Emperor Ashoka of India, who had issued the message—the world's first call for religious tolerance—more than two millennia before. And the messenger was a man who always regarded Ashoka as a hero and had devoted his life to teaching a way to inner peace: Satya Narayan Goenka.

Early life

Goenkaji's journey to deliver the message started in 1924 in Mandalay, the former royal capital of

Myanmar. Less than 50 years before, a king still ruled there but the British had overrun the south. In their wake, a wave of immigrants entered the country from India, and one of them was Goenkaji's grandfather. Like most of the newcomers, he was seeking his fortune. But he was an upright, honest man who was spiritually inclined; and though a Hindu, he quickly developed a deep respect for the Myanmar people and their traditions.

He conveyed that respect to his grandson. When he was a child, Goenkaji recalled, his grandfather took him to the famous Maha Myat Muni pagoda on the outskirts of Mandalay. There the old man sat with eyes closed, engaged in silent contemplation. Meanwhile the boy waited and watched patiently, absorbing the atmosphere of peace. In the child, respect turned to a profound love for the land of his birth. That love never wavered throughout his long life.

The boy grew up and graduated from high school at the top of his class. Although the idea of continuing his studies was attractive, he dutifully entered the family textile business. Then the cataclysm of the Second World War intervened. As the Japanese army invaded Myanmar in 1942, Goenkaji helped to lead a large group of family members overland through mountain and jungle to safety in India. They were more fortunate than the thousands of people who died on the arduous journey.

The family spent the war years in southern India, where a friend helped them to make a new start. After the Japanese defeat and withdrawal, they returned to Myanmar. By then Goenkaji was in his 20s. He quickly showed his extraordinary flair for business and became a leader of the Indian community. But as he has often recounted, wealth and prominence gave him no peace. Instead, mental tension triggered debilitating migraines that could be treated only with doses of highly addictive morphine. Goenkaji traveled to consult doctors in Japan, Europe and America; none of them could help.

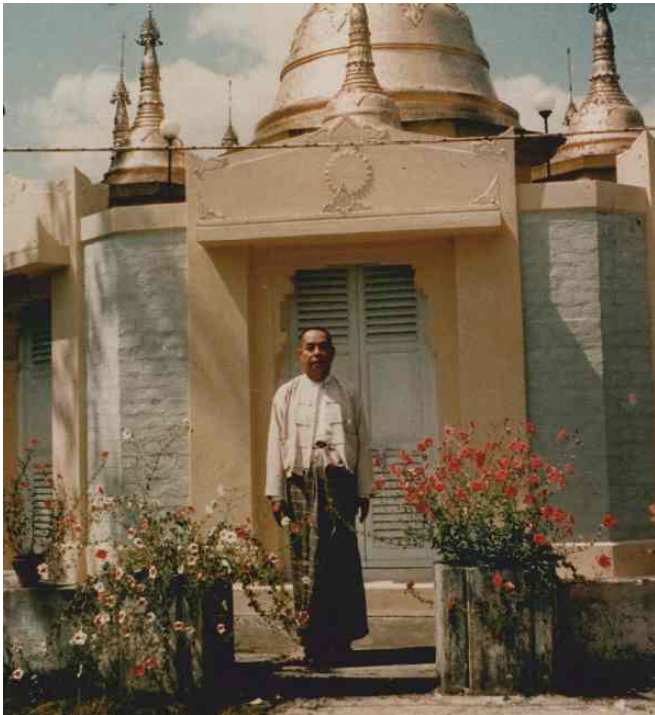
Encounter with Vipassana

It was then that a friend suggested going to the International Meditation Centre in northern Yangon, established a few years earlier by Sayagyi

U Ba Khin. Born into a poor family, U Ba Khin had risen to become a top-level civil servant in the government of Myanmar, renowned for his integrity and effectiveness. At the same time he was a lay teacher of



Vipassana, a technique of self-introspection that had been handed down from ancient times by the community of Buddhist monks in Myanmar.



Sayagi U Ba Khin at the International Meditation Centre in Yangon, 1960s

Goenkaji took his friend's suggestion and arranged a visit to see the meditation center and learn about what was taught there. As the young man approached, U Ba Khin recognized that here was someone who would be instrumental in the fulfillment of his mission as a Vipassana teacher.

Despite that, Sayagi initially refused the visitor's request to join a 10-day course. Goenkaji had frankly said that he was seeking relief from his migraines. "You are devaluing the technique if you come to cure a physical disease," said U Ba Khin.

"Come to relieve your mind of tension and suffering; the physical benefits will automatically follow."

Goenkaji agreed. After hesitating a few months, in 1955 he attended his first course. Though he wanted to run away on the second day, he persevered and found benefits he had never dreamed of. For the rest of his life, in his morning chanting he would express his deep gratitude to Sayagi U Ba Khin.

In the following years, Goenkaji returned regularly to the International Meditation Centre and brought many family members and friends. Along with meditation, he pursued his business interests. But in



Goenkaji pays respects to Sayagi U Ba Khin in the central cell at the International Meditation Centre 1960s.

1963 came a turning point when the newly installed military government launched a program of nationalization. Overnight, Goenkaji lost the industries he had established and much of his fortune as well. His name also appeared on a list of capitalists targeted for execution. He accepted this situation smilingly and urged his former employees to keep working hard for the good of their country. He also composed the following verse:

If nature so wills ... may every atom of my body be mingled with the dust of this sacred land. And if it is the will of nature for me to live longer, may every breath of my life flow with gratitude toward my motherland, (paraphrase of the original Rajasthani)

The golden years

In the end, the threat to his life was dropped and Goenkaji entered what he later called his golden years. Freed from business responsibilities, he spent more and more time with his teacher, immersing himself in the Dhamma, the teaching of liberation. For himself, he wanted nothing more than this. But U Ba Khin had other plans. He recalled the ancient prophecy that 2,500 years after the Buddha, the teaching would return from Myanmar to the land of its origin, India, and would spread from there around the world.

U Ba Khin's dearest wish was to fulfill the prophecy by re-establishing the technique of Vipassana—the essence of the Buddha's teaching—in India. Unfortunately, in the 1960s the Government of Myanmar did not normally allow its nationals to go abroad. But since Goenkaji was of Indian descent, he might be given permission.

..... to be continued in next issue, by courtesy of Vipassana Newsletter (International Edition, Vol. 40, No.3, Oct. 2013)



Children's Meditation Courses in Mumbai

| Date | Course site | Age (years) | Registration |
|---------|-------------|-------------|-----------------|
| 1-12-13 | Ulhasnagar | 10-16 | 29 & 30-11-2013 |
| 1-12 | Matunga | 10-16 | 29 & 30-11-2013 |
| 8-12 | Sanpada | 10-16 | 6 & 7-12-2013 |
| 8-12 | Andeheri | 10-16 | 6 & 7-12-2013 |
| 15-12 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 12 & 13-12-2013 |
| 12-1-14 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 9 & 10-1-2014 |
| 16-2 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 13 & 14-2-2014 |
| 23-3 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 20 & 21-3-2014 |
| 20-4 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 17 & 18-4-2014 |
| 18-5 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 15 & 16-5-2014 |
| 15-6 | Goregaon | 10-16 | 12 & 13-6-2014 |

Course Timing: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration Timings:** 11 am to 1 pm on the specified numbers and dates for each location.

Course Venues: **Goregaon:** Vipassana Counselling & Research Centre, Siddharth Municipal General Hospital, Goregaon (W), Tel: 2624-2025 & 98690-23884. **Sanpada:** Navi Mumbai Mahanagar Palika School, Sector 5, Sanpada. Tel: 9869405600. **Dombivili:** K B Vira High School, Near Municipal Office, Dombivili (E) Mob. 9930301594. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Mob. 98201-50336. **Ulhasnagar:** 703-A Block /1405, Gokul Nagar, Behind Netaji School, Near Mahesh Granite, Tel. 9970755130, **Andeheri:** Mayfair Meridian Meditation Hall, Ceaser Road, Off S.V. Road, Amboli, Near St. Blaise Church Andeheri, Mob. 9820459449. 9664782244, 9699668642.

| | | |
|------------|----------------|-------------|
| Ulhasnagar | Second Sundays | 94225-50489 |
| Dombivili | First Sunday | 9930301594 |

Please call two days in advance for registration.

NB *Please bring cushion. *Please register on the specified phone numbers. If unable to attend after registration, please inform in advance. *Please arrive on time for the course.



One-Day Mega course in the presence of Rev. Mataji on the occasion of the death anniversary of Sayagi U Ba Khin

The course will be conducted in the main Dome of the Global Vipassana Pagoda from 11 am to 4 pm on January 19, 2014, Sunday. Recorded Discourse of the late Goenkaji will be played at 3 pm; non-meditators are also welcome to attend the discourse. Registration is compulsory for sitting as well as for giving Dhamma Seva. Register online at www.oneday.globalpagoda.org Registration on Phone [between 11am and 5pm]: (022)33747501– ext: 9; (022)28451170 –ext: 9; (022)33747543; (022)33747544. Email registration: oneday@globalpagoda.org.



Pali Study Programme

Intensive residential Pali Courses at V.R.I. The Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai -- (1) **The One Month Pali-Hindi intensive residential course** will be held from 20th Jan 2014 to 20th Feb. 2014. **Last date for submission of forms:** 10th January 2014.

(2) **The Three month intensive residential Pali-English course** (only for Male) will be held from 1st June 2014 to 30th August 2014. **Last date for submission of forms:** 30th April 2014.

(3) **The Two Month Pali-English residential course** will be held from 10th Oct. 2014 to 10th Dec. 2014.

Last date for submission of forms: 1st Sept. 2014

The Eligibility criteria as:

(1) Applicant must have completed three 10-day Vipassana courses and one Satipatthana course. (2) One year regular practice of two hours at home daily. (3) Observation of five precepts for the last one year. (4) Minimum 12th std. pass certificate is required.

Recommendation by Area Teacher / Senior Assistant Teacher is a must. **Contact:** Vipassana Research Institute, Global Vipassana Pagoda, Near Essel World, Gorai Borivali (W), Mumbai.

For queries : Email: 1. Dr. Sharda Sanghavi – Phone: 022-23095413, 9223462805, Email: mumbai@vridhamma.org;

director@vridhamma.org. 2. Mrs. Baljit Lamba: Phone: 9833518979.



Imp. Notice for workshop: 'Trustees and Dhammaservers' workshop will be held at Dhammagiri from 14th to 15th Dec.2013. Registration is essential. Centre teachers! please send the names of those attending and your suggestions, to serversworkshop@gmail.com

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Guruvara tere puṇya kā, kaisā prabala pratāpa;
Jāgā bodha anitya kā, dūra huye bhava tāpa.*

O revered teacher, how great is the majesty of your moral merit! The knowledge of impermanence dawned upon me and the burnings of life have cooled down.

*Dharma diyā gurudeva ne, kaisā ratana amola;
Mṛtyuloka ke jīva ko, amṛta kā rasa ghola.*

The revered teacher taught me Dharma which is a priceless jewel, For the people of this world, it is just like nectar.

*Sadguru kī saṅgata milī, milā dharma kā sāra;
Jīvana saphala banā liyā, sira kā bhāra utāra.*

I was fortunate to get the company of a good teacher, I was fortunate to get the essence of Dharma. I have set down the load of my head and have made my life a success.

*Durlabha sadguru kā milana, durlabha dharma milāpa;
Dharma milā sadguru mile, mīte sabhī santāpa.*

Rare it is to get a good teacher, rare it is to receive Dharma, As I got both, a good teacher and Dharma, all my sufferings and burnings are gone.

*Dhanya! Dhanya! Gurudevajī, dhanya! Buddha bhagavāna;
Śuddha dharma aisā diyā, hoyā jagata kalyāṇa.*

Blessed is my revered teacher, blessed is the Lord Buddha, He taught the pure dharma, as a result, the whole world is benefitted.

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