



WORDS OF DHAMMA

Vassikā viya pupphāni, maddavāni pamuñcati.
evaṃ rāgañca dosañca, vippamuñcetha bhikkhavo.

—Dhammapada 377, Bhikkhuvaggo

As the jasmine creeper sheds its withered flowers,
even so, O Bhikkhus, should you totally shed lust and
hatred.

What is True Dhamma?

This is the first part of first day a series of 3-day public talks given by Principal Teacher S. N. Goenka at Ramabai Ambedkar Girls High School, Nasik Maharashtra in 1998.

My dear citizens of the Dhamma land of Nasik,

For thousands of years this region of Nasik has been an exalted spiritual centre of India. Not only here in the state of Maharashtra, but it has been a place of spiritual pride for all of India. People from near and far have been coming here to get established in sublime spirituality since ancient times.

From here, on the banks of Godavari river and up to the region of Paithan a few hundred miles away, about 1800 years ago there existed a number of sanctified areas where Sages and Saints practiced *tapas* (meditation), undertaking deep and varied *sadhanas* – some meditated, some performed *yajya* or fire homage, while others followed vows and practices of various traditions. Thereafter, a major wave of *bhakti* (devotion) tradition arose engulfing a large number of people here and all over India. This tradition is still going strong.

Now once again, the era of deep meditation of Vipassana has arisen and what's more, people here are readily accepting it, proving their strong spiritual affinity.

A few days ago nearby in Mumbai, the foundation stone was laid for a huge Global Vipassana Pagoda. A respected guest once asked me, 'Sir, why did you choose this area, what pulled you here and not somewhere else in India?' The truth is that I did not choose the place, this blessed land chose me!

The people here have an inclination towards spirituality; they understand the significance of Dharma (Dhamma). When explained properly they grasp its essence and are ready to start walking on the path. For this is not a subject of mere conversation and intellectualization. One has to walk on the path. Unless Dharma is put into practice it cannot give the desired results. If it becomes a mere topic of empty intellectualization and speculation then it loses its vitality.

Let us now understand what Dharma is, how to live according to its tenets and why indeed we should live in accordance with Dharma. In these three days we will explore this subject in some depth.

What is Dharma? In the last 1500 to 2000 years, to its great misfortune India lost the true meaning of the word 'dharma.' How indeed could one live according to its tenets when its very meaning was lost! To make matters worse many types of support, one could say crutches, were added to it. Various communities created their own respective dharma; hence there came about Buddhist dharma, Jain dharma, Hindu dharma, Christian dharma and so on.

These sectarian terms were the crutches attached to Dharma, though it does not need any support. It gives support. But when these crutches arise, they take precedence and become prominent, while Dharma recedes into the background, unseen. To our great misfortune this is what happened.

In ancient India Dharma meant that which is imbibed, lived by – *dhāretīti dhammam*. That which arises on the surface of mind at a given moment was considered the dharma of the mind. What does the mind imbibe but its own nature, its own characteristics that is its 'dharma'. Dharma meant the characteristics, the nature of a particular element. Dharma in the language of those days was also called *rit*, meaning the law of nature. For instance, the nature or characteristic of fire is to burn and burn whoever comes in contact with it. The nature or characteristic of ice is to be cool and cool whoever comes in contact with it.

Dharma as Nature's Law

We also say that it is nature's law that all beings face death, illness and old age. The law of nature, in other words, was Dharma. Let us examine what the nature of the mind is. Whatever has arisen at this moment in my mind: anger, animosity, jealousy or arrogance for example. These are negativities that may arise from time to time, and as such have been called the nature of the mind, that is, the law, the Dharma of the mind. The great researchers of yore – the Rishis, Sages, Saints, Gurus, Arahants, Buddhas searched long and hard to find what was Dharma, or the nature of the mind.

Any defilement, any negativity of anger, jealousy, or arrogance, when it arises, it results in tremendous heat and agitation within. This is its nature. It is inevitable. If anger has arisen within, then another part of nature, agitation, will follow as an inevitable result every single time. These defilements always arise coupled with agitation. This was

called *sahajāt* – meaning together; this misery arises along with its own consequence, its own effect every time.

Let us understand this better – when burning coals are put in a container, these will burn the container before heating up the external environment. Anyone who comes near it will feel the heat. Similarly, if one keeps ice in a vessel, it will first cool the vessel before cooling the external environment. This is the unchangeable law of nature.

Just like fire, when a person is angry, he first becomes the victim of his own anger before spreading vibrations of agitation and heat in the environment. All those who come in contact with this person feel the agitation. This is the expression or nature of a mind dwelling in ignorance manifesting itself. As soon as one distances oneself from the burning coals, the heat will subside.

The Sages of yore, as mentioned earlier, realized the profound truth that when any defilement like jealousy, anger, arrogance etc. arise then it will inevitably burn them. If they put burning coals in their mental vessels, then the result can't be anything but heat and agitation. At such times they behaved this way in ignorance not realizing the immutable law of the nature; since no one in their rightful mind would want to generate burning agitation for themselves.

A child in his ignorance does not know that fire burns and puts his hand on burning coals. Startled, he pulls his hand back. Curious, he again puts his hand on fire then pulls it back when it burns. This may be repeated a few times, until he finally realizes that this is fire, it burns and should never be touched.

A child understands. But what do we do? We keep filling ourselves with more and more burning coals, burning ourselves and others. Sheer ignorance! When anger, jealousy, aversion, arrogance or some such defilement arises, it keeps multiplying within filling us with thoughts of the event or the person who was instrumental in its occurrence. We justify it to ourselves by saying, 'Such and such happened which angered me, so it was not my fault. It is only natural that I became angry'.

Natural indeed! You are angry with someone or some event which obstructed you from reaching your desired goal. Maybe, but the fact also is that you are burning yourself. You have not seen the heat within. The mind is only looking outwards.

On the other hand, if instead of burning coals, cool ice is put in the vessel then it will result in soothing, calming coolness since ice will also follow its own nature to cool. The attributes of mind that carry cooling properties are loving-kindness, compassion, and joy in another's happiness. All good habits have the integral nature of imparting cooling calmness to one's self as well as to others around one.

The science or technique of looking within was called Vipassana in ancient India. Though one needs to be aware of external reality, to observe within was rightly considered vital for one's mental development; to watch the reactions that arise within due to certain events is one of the most important aspects of consciousness. The day we can truly see this truth, is when we start to understand pure Dharma without any crutches.

'Whenever I generate defilements in my mind, it inevitably results in agitation'; one begins to understand this absolute truth. After repeatedly watching this phenomena a few times, one also learns to watch this reality objectively. Which means initially one observes the event or events that

take place outside and sees those events as the cause of his anger, jealousy, animosity etc. As he matures on the path, he disengages himself from events and focuses attention on what happens within when he gets angry. He begins to see that in such situations he burns with agitation and unhappiness. As he continues to watch within and understand this fundamental reality of Dharma, his nature and behaviour starts changing. He grows deeper into Dharma.

He also learns that getting muddled with defilements is not Dharma. He also sees that awakening wholesome qualities like compassion, loving-kindness and joy in others' joy is Dharma as he experiences serenity and peace upon generating such qualities.

dhāretīti dhammaṃ – Dharma is that which is lived and imbibed. When one knows it at an experiential level the person becomes truly Dharmic. One knows well that if one lives with fire one will certainly burn and conversely, if one lives with ice, one will remain cool. Nothing can alter this phenomenon. This is *rit*, the universal law that governs all without exception; it does not differentiate between people belonging to different sects and communities, be they Hindu, Muslim or from any other community.

The day we recognise this universal aspect of Dharma, that day humankind will make a quantum leap in human evolution.

If one forgets this universal truth and persists in putting undue attention on external rites and rituals, then the work of self-evolution slows down, or indeed one moves further away from Dharma.

Various sects and communities have their own rites and rituals, their way of dressing, their life philosophy and respective social customs which govern their lives. There is nothing wrong with that, but these social rituals and conventions are not Dharma! Investing all his time in rites and rituals one may fool himself thinking that he is very Dharmic; but when he probes deeper within then he may see the reality of how far he has moved away from Dharma, from wisdom and knowledge – generating defilements, growing agitated, harming himself and disturbing others' peace.

Dharma is, as said earlier, universal, and has but one yardstick to check whether one is growing on the path; that is to see whether defilements are decreasing. This is the simple and only yardstick to measure Dharma by. Then whichever caste, sect or class one may belong to becomes immaterial once one understands the true and universal nature of Dharma.

Be Selfish in the True Sense

True Dharma teaches us to be selfish in its true sense. A person learns to watch himself in all situations, at all times; to see what has arisen on the mind at the given moment and how has it affected him. A truly selfish man understands where his best welfare lies and works accordingly. Such 'selfishness' has nothing to do with selfishness as it is commonly understood, where a person may cheat and lie to protect his interests. He may appear to be benefitting himself by being selfish in those moments, but he is actually working against his interests as he is harming himself by cheating and lying. A truly selfish man works towards his best welfare by growing in Dharma.

If virtues of loving-kindness, compassion and goodwill for all are growing in him, then he is indeed taking care of his 'selfish' interest. But if negative values become predominant

in him, then he is harming his self-interests and going against Dharma.

Understanding this at an intellectual level is never enough. Hence the spiritually evolved Saints of this country exhorted others to safeguard their interests and see the truth, the reality within. Until one learns to look inside, whatever experiences one may have in the external world, will not prove to be meaningful. When one learns to explore within and see, then one discovers a true gem, one learns to live life as it is meant to be lived, meaningfully enriching oneself. Living in peace and joy, he can then be said to have learnt the art of living.

Who doesn't want this? Who indeed wants to burn in hellish fires of defilements? Of course no one does, but out of sheer force of habit, one persists in indulging in acts that make him and others around him unhappy. But when he turns his mind inwards and starts seeing within, he realises the futility of living with anxiety and agitation, making himself and others unhappy.

However, constantly reacting with aversion towards the unwanted, and craving towards the wanted, the change does not come about with mere discourses, as habits are deeply rooted as we have become slaves of our desires. Change must come from within. What does one do for that?

The Rishis of yore were seekers who explored the meaning of *rit*, or the law of nature, the law governing this entire universe. They did not search intellectually, externally; they searched within looking for answers.

One of the ways that they found was that whenever aversion or a feeling of anger arises, one should shift one's attention to something else; start drinking a glass of water or start counting 1-2-3-4. Shifting the attention of course proved to be helpful in making one feel better. Even starting to chant the name of one's favourite Gods, Goddesses or one's Guru eased up anger or negativity that may have arisen.

The best way however to purify oneself of defilements was to understand the fundamental law that if you defile your mind, the nature will certainly punish you, and punish without delay. Conversely, if you purify the mind with virtuous thoughts and deeds, the reward too will follow without delay. There is absolutely no delay in the nature's response; it is but an echo of one's own thoughts and deeds.

As a citizen of a nation, whichever nation one lives in, one follows its laws. If any law is broken, the punishment that is likely to follow may take time due to legal delays. One may even get away scot free and not have to suffer the consequences due to some legal error. But the law of nature or Dharma has no exceptions and no delays ever. Defilement in thought and action is automatically and immediately followed by agitation and anxiety, just as a good deed or good thought is immediately followed by the reward of peace and joy that inevitably follows. As soon as one begins to understand this at the experiential level, one's nature and behaviour starts changing for the better.

(To be continued)



Peaceful Passing

➤ Vipassana teacher Shri Shersingh Jain passed away in Jaipur at the ripe old age of 83 years with peace and equanimity. He came to Vipassana in 1986 while suffering from the terrible pain of having lost his son and never left. He became an assistant teacher in 1993 and then becoming a teacher he served the Dhammathali centre. He also travelled to various parts of India and abroad serving many courses.

Editing a newsletter by the name of 'Dhammathali Sandesh' he sincerely worked at spreading the message of Dhamma. May we all be inspired by the wholesome life of Shri Shersinghji who fulfilled the goal of living a Dhamma life which we all aspire to.

➤ Ms. Surekha Kodimba Shinde of Mumbai became an assistant teacher in 2013. She was participating in the 60 day course when she had to leave after taking metta on 30th day due to health issues. In Mumbai she was admitted to a hospital where she passed away on 21-11-15 with peace and equanimity. She was a sincere meditator who served many courses. She fulfilled her goal of living a wholesome life in Dhamma. The Dhamma family offers its best wishes.

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FLOODING AT DHAMMA SETU

CHENNAI VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE

Dear meditators from across India and the world,

Due to very heavy rains, and as a result of them water having to be released from Sembarabakkam Lake, the entire Centre was completely flooded with water to a depth of 5 metres. The kitchen area, all dining rooms, 3 meditation halls, 2 female residential quarters, 3 male residential quarters, ground floor of Pagoda and the office block were all completely submerged in water and have incurred extensive damage with much rebuilding needed. All the cushions, beds, furniture's, iPads, computers, electricals, generator were all under water.

As a large sum is required for reconstruction, meditators may render their service and or contribute to **VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE Chennai**. The address for sending any cheque contribution is:

Vipassana Meditation Centre, C/o. Meridian Apparels Private Limited, 121/3, TTK Road, Alwarpet, Chennai – 600 018.

Those who wish to send RTGS / NEFT, please send in to the below address:

STATE BANK OF INDIA, (12931) – SME, SIDCO Industrial Estate, Thirumudivakkam, Chennai – 600 044.

Beneficiary: VIPASSANA MEDITATION CENTRE

IFSCODE : SBIN0012931, Account No. 34241713833

An official receipt will be posted back to you. (Please send address.)

IMPORTANT:- Any one contributing must inform by email to the following email IDs

Email : Vinod@meridianapparels.com; uma.s@meridianapparels.com

Many times payments are coming without our knowledge and it is becoming difficult to locate and get the credit. But if you send email, we will trace the payment and confirm to you and also document it.

LET US ALL WORK TO BRING DHAMMA SETU BACK TO ACTION.

With Metta, Trustees

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Workshop for Children course teachers at Dhammapuṇṇa, Pune

20 Jan 5 pm to 23rd Jan 5 pm, contact: Dhammapuṇṇa office,
Registration by Email: info@punna.dhamma.org

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Two Day Residential Course for Children

Age: 12 – 16 yrs. Dt: 26 – 27 Dec – For Boys // 28 – 29 Dec. – for Girls
Venue: Naik Foundation, Padgha, Bhivandi, near Pallavi Hotel & Padgha Toll Naka, 15 mins. from Khadavli Railway Station on Mumbai N.H. No. 3. **Contact:** From 15th Dec onwards – 25162505 // 25011096.

Please Note

Those who do not receive the newsletter for any reason may request it in English, Hindi or Marathi by E-mail. vri_admin@dhamma.net.in

VRI - Training Programs at Global Pagoda premises, Mumbai in 2016

- Workshop for writing Pali in Roman, Devnagari & Sinhalese.: **20 – 27 Apr.**
- Six week intensive residential course for Pali - Hindi training.: **4th May – 15th June.**
- 12 week intensive residential course for Pali - English training. **6th July – 5th Oct.**
- Workshop for Pali – English Translation. **7th Oct – 12th Oct.**
- For forms & info. reg. eligibility please visit –
- <http://www.vridhamma.org/Theory-And-Practice-Courses/>
- Or **Contact:** VRI Off – 022 33747560. Ms. Baljit Lamba – 09833518979. Ms. Rajshri – 09004698648. Ms. Alka Vengulerkar: 9820583440

Teacher's Self Course Concludes Successfully

On 29th November Respected Mataji's Self Course concluded successfully at Global Pagoda in Mumbai with TSC courses concluding parallely at other centres. Mataji gave a warm reception to a group of Vietnamese meditators at the end of the course.

(Pic) Mataji is giving metta to all meditators outside the Teacher's Residence. ➔

**ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Shri R. R. Pandit, To assist center teacher of Dhammapala, Bhopal.
2. Shri A. L. Rajbhatt, To assist center teacher of Dhammapala, Bhopal.
3. Mr. L. H. Chandrasena, To serve as centre teacher for Dhamma Kuta, Sri Lanka
4. Mr. Nanda Wijewardana, To assist centre teacher in serving Dhamma Kuta, Sri Lanka

New Responsibilities Childrens' Course Teachers

1. Mrs. Chaitali Bagchi, Shantiniketan
2. Mr. Manjul Bhakri, Gurgaon
3. Mr. Jagdish Chandra Gupta, Jaipur
4. Mr. Fred Jacquemin, France
5. Miss Praew Kosee, Thailand
6. Miss Wanwisa, Chunkhampha, Thailand
7. Mr. Ben Sidebottom, Australia
8. Ms. Lin Kuoy, Australia.

One-day Mega course schedule at Global Vipassana Pagoda for 2016

Sunday – 17th Jan. in Gratitude of Sayagyi U Ba Khin (19th), **Sunday 22nd May**, Buddha Purnima (21st May); **Sunday 17th July**, Guru-Purnima (19th); **Sunday 2nd Oct.** in Gratitude of Respected S.N. Goenka (29th Sept.) & Sharad Purnima.

One-day mega courses will be held at **GVP** in presence of Respected Mataji. Time: 11 am to 4 pm. Non meditators may participate in the 3 pm discourse. Please come only with prior registration. **Samaggana Taposukho:** Avail of the immense benefit of meditating in large group. For registration **Contact:** 022 28451170 // 022 337475-01 / 43 / 44 – Extn.: 9. (Tel booking: 11 am to 5 pm daily). **Online registration:** www.oneday.globalpagoda.org.

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Kudarata kā kānūna hai, saba para lāgū hoy,
Maile mana vyākula rahe, nirmala sukhiyā hoy.*
Nature's law is that which is applicable to all. The impure mind is distressed and the pure mind happy.

*Kudarata leve pakṣa nā, kare na kabhī lihāja,
Usako vaisā phala mile, jisakā jaisā kāja.*
Nature takes no side, never gives favor.
One gets the fruit which is due as per one's deed.
Jaba jaba mana mailā kare, kudarata deve daṇḍa,

Ākula vyākula ho uthe, rahe na sānti akhaṇḍa.

Whenever one pollutes one's mind, then nature gives punishment. One becomes distressed and there is no peace at all.

*Puraskāra tatṣaṇa mile, jaba mana nirmala hoy,
Yahī niyama hai dharma kā, pakṣapāta nā hoy.*

Reward comes immediately when the mind becomes pure. This is the law of Dharma, where there is no partiality.

SUBSCRIPTION TO ENGLISH/HINDI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: ANNUAL: RS 30/- (US \$10 OUTSIDE INDIA);

LIFE SUBSCRIPTION: RS 500/- (US \$100 OUTSIDE INDIA) BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF Vipassana Research Institute

Edited and published by R. P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri-422 403 and printed at Apollo Printing Press, G-259, SICOF Ltd., 69 MIDC, Satpur, Nashik-422 007

25 December, 2015 Posted at Igatpuri, Dist. Nashik, Posting Day: Purnima of every month Vipassana Newsletter Regd. No. 49916/90

WPP POSTAL LICENCE NUMBER – AR/TECHNO/WPP-04/2015-2017 REGISTERED NO. NSK/232/2015-2017

DATE OF PRINTING: 15 December 2015, DATE OF PUBLICATION: 25 December 2015

PRINTED MATTER**If undelivered, please return to:****Vipassana Research Institute**

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