



WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Assaddho akataññū ca, sandhicchedo ca yo naro;
Hatāvakāso vantāso, sa ve uttamaporiso.*

— Dhammapada 97, Arahantavagga.

With no beliefs, the Unmade known, with fetters finally severed, with kammās cut and craving shed, attained to humanity's heights.

When The Ganges Herself Went to the Thirsty

Professor Anraj Chaudhary

In the Vipassana Newsletter of August 2009 I read about Goenkaji's initial experiences of teaching Vipassana. At the end of this article he says that he felt obliged to those meditators who learned the technique of Vipassana meditation from him. He also wrote that he wanted to express his gratitude to all of them in the 'Gratitude Gathering' to be organized at the Global Vipassana Pagoda on the 17th Jan 2010. I felt a little strange about it, but at the same time my respect for Goenkaji increased a great deal. Doesn't this gesture of his speak of his generosity, contentment and humility? Actually the meditators should feel grateful to Goenkaji, but here instead Goenkaji is feeling grateful to the meditators who gave their precious time to learn Vipassana from him. Isn't it like the Ganges going to the thirsty people to quench their thirst, and then saying to them that she is grateful to them for giving her the opportunity to quench their thirst? Words fail to describe the greatness and compassionate nature of Goenkaji. I felt greatly obliged to him and I remembered my first course conducted by him way back in 1973.

In his first ten years of teaching Vipassana in India 165 Vipassana courses were held in which a total of 16,496 people were taught the technique of Vipassana meditation. I am one of them. Goenkaji conducted a ten-day course from 20.9.73 to 30.9.73 in Nava Nalanda Mahavihara, Nalanda, Bihar where I was a lecturer.

I used to read the words of the Buddha, I also used to teach them, but I did not know even the ABCs of Vipassana which is the quintessence of his teachings. Initially I was not willing to sit in the course. But when Ven. U Dhammaratana, my colleague from Sri Lanka, Ven. U Jāgarābhivamsa, my student from Myanmar, and some other colleagues, who had heard about Vipassana courses taught by Sri Goenkaji, told me of their importance, I at last made up my mind to sit in the course and try it.

The course organized there was unlike the courses organized today where there is an arrangement of board and lodging in the premises of the centre itself. Of course we stayed there in the rooms of the Mahāvihāra, but we had food brought in from our own quarters. As I was asked to observe noble silence right from the first day I did not talk to anybody. I found it strange to sit with my eyes closed and observe the

incoming and outgoing breath for the initial three and a half days. After that I was instructed to observe different kinds of sensations on the body. Observing sensations was a subtler and more difficult work than observing the incoming and outgoing breath. I did not understand at all why Goenkaji was asking us to do all these practices. Initially I found it useless and I thought it would have been better for Goenkaji to give a lecture on the philosophy of the Buddha. As I was a lecturer I liked giving lectures and listening to them, but at the same time I was curious to know what it was all about. Gradually I came to realize that I had never looked within, I had never known how the mind works, how flickering and fickle the mind is, and how quickly it grasps one object after another. Let alone this, I had never known what it was like to observe the breath continuously; the breath now light, now heavy, now long, now short, now hot and now cold and wondered why this was so? And sometimes I would feel annoyed, "Why should one want to observe his breath? Isn't it a waste of time to do so?"

But the strong resolve with which Goenkaji sat on his Dhamma seat and effectively and lucidly explained why we should practice the way we were asked to, made it clear that there were some advantages of doing so, otherwise why should he waste so much of his time.

And I kept on practicing. As I was not doing any work, neither reading, nor teaching nor writing—because we were forbidden to do these—so I thought why not concentrate my mind and see what happens within. But very soon I realized that doing so was very difficult, not easy. And if I was able to concentrate even for a few moments what I experienced was all new to me. I had never had such experiences before. Oh! mind is so unsteady. Now I realized why the Buddha said that the mind is fickle and very difficult to control and guard it.

Phandanam capalam cittaṃ, durakkham dunnivārayam

I knew now from my own direct experience how correctly and realistically the Buddha explained the nature of mind.

While practicing *ānāpāna*, whenever I was able to concentrate my mind even for a moment I could clearly see what was happening within me. Until now I had been in the habit of seeing what happened outside, but now it dawned upon me that what is happening within can also be observed, and there is a technique to observe it. To observe the incoming and outgoing breath means to develop one's awareness, one's mindfulness. This is called 'sati' in Pali.

There is one more word which goes with it called 'sampajañña'. About this I will speak later.

In the course of teaching the *Visuddhimaggo* by Ācariya Buddhaghosa in M.A. classes, I had come across these two terms, but honestly speaking, I had not understood their real import.

I used to explain the meaning of these two terms to my students. 'Sati' means 'smṛti' (memory) and 'sampajañña' means 'knowing in a special way'. But in the heart of my hearts I was not satisfied. I could not understand what they actually stood for.

I began to listen to the evening discourses given by Goenkaji very attentively. I discovered that the questions which arose in my mind while practicing Vipassana during the day, were anticipated and answered by him very clearly in these discourses. Why should he not anticipate and answer our questions? He had himself passed through such stages.

Now I began to understand the difficulties I had in observing the incoming and outgoing breath. Oh, I could not even concentrate my mind even for a second. I could not even count from 1 to 10 without my attention slipping away. When I made efforts to bring it back to the incoming and outgoing breath it again gave me the slip and wandered away. Now I began to understand what 'sati' means. It means to live in the present and not to think of the past and the future which are the pastures of our mind. 'Sati' actually means awareness of the present without breaking continuity. But how difficult it is to live in the present!

And so I realized it is impossible to observe incoming and outgoing breath without living in the present. But the mind actually has the habit of remembering the past and planning for the future. How difficult it is to tame it and keep it focussed on one point!

But Goenkaji would say, "This is what one has to do."

To observe the incoming and outgoing breaths keeping one's eyes closed—this is practicing Dhamma. This is not easy. It requires great effort, great concentration of mind and great vigour. And doing so is not fruitless. One does not waste one's time trying to do so. This is what is called making right effort.

It is in this context that Goenkaji explained the importance of observing moral precepts. Observing moral precepts is the *sine qua non* of attaining concentration of the mind, because one can drive out different defilements that agitate and disturb mind by observing moral precepts, which means keeping physical and vocal actions pure.

He would further say that it is difficult but not impossible. Constant practice gives results. Just as a bullock cart makes a rut in the rugged land by its constant movement, which makes the journey easy and comfortable, in the same way constant practice will enable one to attain concentration of mind without any difficulty.

In the first course I understood the importance of constant practice for making a rut but I could not make it. Just as one cannot see things clearly in the light of an unfocussed torch, similarly he cannot see clearly what happens within himself and what its nature is unless he concentrates his mind, making it steady and steadfast. For this he has to practice ānāpāna and Vipassana constantly.

When I entered the field of Vipassana, another technical term that became clear to me was 'sampajañña'. 'Sampajañña' does not mean only knowing in a special way, as I once used to teach, but it means experiencing the impermanence of all that happens to one.

Sensations pleasant and unpleasant arise on the body. This I understood very quickly as I experienced them. I also began to understand a little that they are impermanent and not eternal. I directly experienced that unpleasant sensations do not last forever and even pleasant sensations also do not last forever, however much one wants them to continue. In this way I began to understand the law of nature a little. Had I not practiced what Goenkaji asked me to practice, had I been satisfied just to listen to what Goenkaji said, I would not have clearly understood the law of nature. But he did not only explain, he wanted me to see these laws within myself.

This made a world of difference. It is in this context that I understood why Goenkaji gives such instructions as 'start again, start again' just five minutes after each break. The idea is twofold; one, not to waste time, and two, to maintain the continuity of practice.

In the last discourse Goenkaji instructed us to practice meditation every morning and evening for an hour, just in order to maintain continuity of practice. He also said that developing concentration of mind results in the increase of the power of memory. It also increases the stamina to do more work.

This ten-day practice of Vipassana opened up a new world for me—the world about which I would not have known by reading books.

I will not recount here the other benefits that I derived by practicing Vipassana for the first time. But one great advantage that I gained was to know the meaning of technical terms such as *sati* etc., used in Pali Literature, from my own experience. I was a teacher of Pali Literature and therefore I desperately needed to know their meaning before I could explain them to my students, and now I could understand their meaning by practicing Vipassana. A new horizon opened up before me, a new world I had not known before.

I had read a lot about the relationship between a word and its meaning while I was preparing my thesis for the D.Lit degree. I had read the theories propounded by the two schools of the *Mīmāṃsakas*. I had also read Bhartṛhari's *Vākyapadīya*—the Philosophy of Grammar. There I had read that knowledge and word interpenetrate each other and that all knowledge can be acquired through words.

*Na so asti pratyayo loke, yah śabdānugamādrte/
Anuviddhamiva jñānam savaṃ śabdena bhāṣate//*

Keeping this in mind I had prepared a paper entitled 'Language and Culture' immediately after becoming a lecturer, trying to prove that if one knows the language he can also know the culture of the people who speak that language, because there is a mutual relationship between language and culture. Language conveys culture. I still remember when I read this paper, an objection was raised by a Professor of English from the South of India. He said that had it been so the composers of Upanishads would not have said 'neti, neti'—not this, not this. He further said that there are many experiences which cannot be completely expressed through words. Words are not powerful enough to express one's deep experiences. With some words there is a one to one relationship between the word and its meaning, like the word elephant and the animal elephant. But this is not true of words which express our deep and subtle experiences, as often they inadequately and faintly indicate the meaning, but are incapable of expressing the entire gamut of our experiences.

When I tried to know the meaning of such technical terms as 'sati' and 'sampajañña' from this point of view I could understand that they are just indicators, like the finger

raised towards the moon. But is the raised finger the moon? 'Sati' and 'sampajñña' are terms like the finger raised towards the moon—only the indicators. Just as one can know a lot about the moon if one lands there and lives there, similarly one can understand the meanings of 'sati' and 'sampajñña' by practicing Vipassana and having knowledge at the experiential level. As I went on practicing Vipassana I was able to understand their significance. Thus I began to understand, or began to understand the process to understand, the meaning of other technical terms used in Pali Literature.

When I met Goenkaji on *mettā* day of my first course I expressed my gratitude to him saying, "Guruji, you have opened my eyes. Until now I vaguely understood the meanings of words like 'sati' and 'sampajñña'. Now they are a little clearer to me." Goenkaji smiled and said, "This is true. Unless you practice meditation (*paṭipatti*), you cannot understand the theoretical aspect (*pariyatti*) of Dhamma."

'Pariyatti' and 'paṭipatti' are deeply interrelated, particularly in Pali literature where the words of the Buddha are preserved explaining what he experienced, not merely what he thought and contemplated on, based on his intelligence and logic. This was like Archimedes' 'eureka' for me, an experience never to be forgotten.

From what Goenkaji explained I could clearly understand where craving arises, why it arises and how it can be stopped from arising. Had I not learned to experience and see things at the experiential level, I would not have been able to understand the meaning of the following important law propounded by the Buddha. I saw that when I felt pleasant sensations in the body I wanted more of them, I wanted them to continue.

Yaṃ loke piyarūpaṃ sātārūpaṃ etthesā taṅha uppajjamaṇā uppajjati, ettha nivasamaṇā nivasati, yaṃ loke piyarūpaṃ sātārūpa etthesā taṅhā pahīyamaṇā pahiyati, ettha nirujjamaṇā nirujjhati

Craving arises because we are attracted towards the things of the world we like. If we are not attracted towards them, if we do not like them, we will not crave for them and as a result craving or desire will not arise in us.

It is by practicing Vipassana that one can go to the depth of the meaning of the sentence, *phussa phussa vyanṭikaroti*. How we are able to annihilate old *saṅkhāras* (mental conditioning), and not allow new ones to arise, can be understood only at the experiential level. If we understand the mechanism of the arising of craving we will understand the mechanism of its ending. Then we can understand how old *saṅkhāras* are eliminated and how new ones are not allowed to arise. The implication of:

Khīṇaṃ purāṇaṃ navaṃ natthi sambhavaṃ.

Old *saṅkhāras* are annihilated and new ones are not created, can be understood only by practicing *ānāpāna* and Vipassana.

The veracity of all the laws propounded by the Buddha can be proved by practicing Vipassana. It cannot be proved in any outside laboratory as the veracity of physical and chemical laws are proved. The veracity of the laws discovered and propounded by the Buddha can be proved only in this fathom long body. That sensations give rise to craving can be proved by practicing Vipassana and experiencing the effects of pleasant and unpleasant sensations on oneself. While practicing Vipassana there were moments when I could see deep into myself and saw very clearly how craving arises because of sensations and how wisdom, experiential

knowledge, can be developed by observing the nature of sensations.

Had I not experienced that anger burns one, had I not experienced it at the experiential level, how could I understand the meaning of this Pali verse:

Pubbe hanati attānaṃ pacchā hanati so pare.

- He hurts himself first before he hurts others.

Respected Guruji enabled me to see clearly, to experience deeply. He gave me eyes to see. In fact he made me clearly grasp the deeper meaning of the words of the Buddha. I confess I was thirsty but did not know that I was so. But he came to me to slake my thirst just like the Ganges herself goes to those who are thirsty to quench their thirst.

Every pore of my self is grateful to Respected Guruji.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Shri Anil Mehta, To Serve as Centre Teacher for Dhamma Guna, Guna-Gwalior Division, Madhya Pradesh.
2. Shri Praveen Bhalla, To Serve as Centre Teacher for Dhamma Dhaja, Punjab.
3. Mr. Shirendev Dorlig, To Serve as Centre Teacher for Dhamma Mahana, Mongolia.
- 4-5. Mr. Amy and Mrs. Rashmi Shanker, To Serve as Centre Teachers for Dhamma Delaware, USA.
6. Mr. Ramesh Pandit, To assist the Centre Teacher of Dhamma Pala, Bhopal
- 7-8. Shri. Gautam and Mrs. Vanmala Chikte, To assist the Centre Teacher of Dhamma Ajay, Chandrapur.
9. Shri Rakesh Singh Bisen, To assist the Centre Teacher of Dhamma Lakkhana, Lucknow.
10. Mr R Kannan, To assist the Centre Teacher in serving Dhamma Madhura.
- 11-12. Mr. Itamar Sofer and Mrs. Jung Im Jung, To assist the Center Teachers in Serving Dhamma Korea.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Ambalal Rajbhata, Bhopal
- 2-3. Shri. Gautam and Mrs. Vanmala Chikte, Chandrapur
4. Smt. Pramila Khante, Nagpur
5. Sri Chandrashekar Datye, Pune
6. Kirsten Schulte, Germany
7. Nanette Kurz, Germany
- 8-9. Mr Michael and Mrs Hilde Hubner, Germany
10. U Khin Maung Soe, Myanmar
11. U Thant Sin, Myanmar
12. U Sai Hsai Leng, Myanmar
13. Daw Nang Khin Htay, Myanmar

NEW APPOINTMENTS Bhikkhu Teacher

1. Ven. Bhikku Saranankar, Nagpur
- #### Assistant Teachers
1. Shri Ananda Hiwarkar, Jalgaon
 2. Shri Janardan Janglu Bhagat, Washim (Mah.)
 3. Shri. Vijay Tempe, Nagpur
 4. Shri Kanubhai Paghdar, Rajkot
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VRI - Abhidhamma Workshop at Global Pagoda, Mumbai

Abhidhamma workshop by an Abhidhamma Scholar. From **April 3rd to 7th** 2016 residential at V.R.I., Global Pagoda Campus, Mumbai **Kindly note:** Last date to submit the form: **20th Feb. 2016** Medium of Instruction: **ENGLISH** Seats are limited.

Please find Eligibility Criteria and Application form on <http://www.vridhamma.org/Theory-And-Practice-Courses>



Dhamma Guna, Guna-Gwalior (MP)

Dhamma Guna (Dhamma House) is located amidst 3 acres of lush green fields in Pagara which is 12 kms. from Guna towards Gwalior. Guna is also known as the gateway to Malwa Pathar (Plato). The local Guna and Pagara railway stations are well connected to Jodhpur and Jaipur via Kota. It is directly linked to Gwalior & Bhopal also. To date the following facilities have been completed: Dhamma Hall, residences for 15 men & 15 women single and double occupancy with attached toilet, residences for ATs & Dhamma workers, office, and kitchen. Arrangement of water and electricity has also been completed. Regular courses started in March 2013. For a fully well developed centre, at least 4-5 acres of land is needed. Those wishing to benefit from dāna pāramī may **Contact:** Shri Virendra Singh Raghuvanshi, Raghuvanshi Kirana Store, Near State bank of India, Ashok Nagar Road, Village – Pagara, Dist: Guna, MP-473001. Mob: 9425618095 Shri Rajkumar Raghuvanshi Mob: 9425131103. Email: info@guna.dhamma.org; Bank A/c. 'Vipassana Lok Nyas,' State Bank of India, Acct. No. 31630432478, IFSC –SBIN 0030196, Pagara, Guna. (Please inform if contacting the bank directly)

For further info, for online regn., the historical importance of the place, for future courses etc.: <http://www.guna.dhamma.org/os>



Dhammic Death

Shri Gaurishankarji Goenka, the younger brother of respected Shri S. N. Goenkaji passed away peacefully on 26th Jan. 2016. He learned Vipassana from Sayagi U Ba Khin in Burma before he came to India and settled here with his family. He kept his sadhana (meditation) alive amidst great initial difficulties. Goenkaji had written many letters to both his younger brothers (Shri Gaurishankar and Shri Radheshyam and their wives Mrs. Sita, and Mrs. Vimala) encouraging them to keep up their Dhamma practice; a number of these letters have been printed here in the VRI newsletter.

After Goenkaji's arrival in India in the year 1969, all of them contributed extensively to his Dhamma work. Gaurishankarji was a trustee in the Sayagi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust and the Vipassana Research Institute for a number of years. He possessed immense pāramīs which would certainly help him in his onward journey. The Dhamma family offers its best wishes for the highest well being of the departed.



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

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** Time: 11 am to 4 pm. Non-meditators may participate in the 3 pm discourse. Please come only with prior registration. **Samaggānaṃ tapo sukho:** 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

*Janama milā jisa deśa men, dharma milā jisa deśa,
Jāge hṛdaya kṛtajñatā, śraddhā jage aśeṣa.*

The land that gave me birth, the land that gave me Dhamma, May my heart be filled with gratitude and boundless reverence for that land.

*Dhanya paḍosī deśa ke, santa aura arahanta.
Rakṣita rakha saddharma ko, maṅgala kiyā ananta.*

Blessed are the saints and arahants of the neighbouring nation of Myanmar, For protecting the pristine purity of Dhamma resulting in boundless welfare.

*Jahān bodhi kā mukti patha, jāge bāraṃbāra,
Pāvana bhārata bhūmi kā, nā bhūlen upakāra.*

The land where the way to liberation arises again and again, Let us not forget our obligation to that sacred land of India.

*Yaha santan kī bhūmi hai, sadguruyon kā deśa,
Isake kaṇa kaṇa men bharā, karuṇā kā sandeśa.*

This is the land of saints, this is the land of gurus Every particle of dust here carries the message of compassion.

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