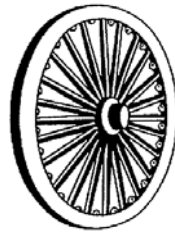


Vipassana



Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Sāhu dassanamariyānaṃ, sannivāso sadā sukho;
Adassanena bālānaṃ, niccameva sukhi siyā.

Good is it to see the Noble Ones (Ariyas); to live with them is pleasing. One will always be happy by not encountering fools.

—Dhammapada 206, Sukhavaggo

I Became an Arya in the True Sense

Early Childhood

Myanmar or Burma or The Golden Land is the country where I was born in the village of *Nyovinda*, near Jiyawadi about 147 miles north of the capital city Yangon in a hamlet redolent with coconut, mango, banyan and shirish trees and a natural tranquil atmosphere. *Nyovinda* means 'the place of the banyan tree'. Nearby to the east was the Yangon - Mandalay highway with railway tracks running parallel to it.

Beyond the flat plains of this area far on the horizon were the *Kareni Yoma* mountains where I used to gaze at the pink glow of the rising sun. In the evening it returned to rest behind the *Peguyoma* Mountains. On southernmost edge of this mountain is the world renowned Shwedagon Pagoda.

Another village of about 40 - 50 Burmese families nestled in the green tranquil land, a short distance from my village. Between these hamlets were our farmland and a pristine, serene Buddha Vihara from where every morning I could hear the chants that went *Namo tassa bhagavato arahato sammāsambuddhassa*.

One time when I was in seventh standard, while I was on study leave during board exam time, I went to the vihara and met the senior monk requesting him for a quiet room to study in. He gave me permission to study in a tiny hut in a remote, quiet corner of the vihara. The esthetically crafted tranquil bamboo hut happened to be his meditation place but no one else used the retreat. With profound compassion for me he allowed me to study in that room.

Youthful Beliefs

From what I had absorbed through my youthful mind, from my parents and about 22,000 Indians living in the area, was the belief that Indians were superior to the Burmese. They were meat eaters while we were vegetarians besides other factors which weighed in our favour. We firmly believed in their cultural inferiority. Yet I wondered how these people, inferior as their culture was, built such magnificent stupas, viharas and statues of the Buddha! What could have motivated them

to create these exalted structures on such a large scale as they did! Why indeed did that Saint of India, the Buddha, have such a profound impact on these people even though he never visited Burma! What was it about him!

Even though the powerful statue of the Buddha in my village had made a deep impact on me, yet my dogmatic mind considered the Buddha's Teachings as inferior to the pujas, and hawans as well as the Upanishads, Ramayana and other scriptures of the Aryan Hindu culture.

However I continued to be struck by the awe inspiring stupas and viharas that dotted the countryside. Once with a group of friends I roamed the *Tanasarin* area and I marvelled, once again at the now familiar sight of magnificent stupas and viharas. Indeed, north Burma is filled with them.

Moulmein College where I studied was nestled in a valley surrounded by mountains. Nearby on the mountain was a quiet vihara. One day I went there with my friends. Upon seeing the serene beauty of the place I thought: what a wasteful sanctuary for lazy people! Instantly the following thought arose: certainly there is more to it than I understand. Why does Prince Gautama of India appeal so much to these people! Why is He so deeply worshipped, inspiring them to such fine creations!

Another time a group of students went to *Bilu Kyun Island* situated in the Salween River. The exquisite island sparkled not just with beauty but, once again with beautifully made viharas and statues. While travelling I was greeted with warm and sincere hospitality wherever I went, a guest was truly a god for the Burmese. From where did these values come! My enquiring mind sought an answer to what these simple Buddha worshipping Mon tribal villagers knew about Him that we didn't.

While at college, whenever I visited the Lha Shwe family in the neighbouring village, they would greet me with bananas, tea, 'betel nut box' etc. A small table would be laid out around which a mat was spread. We would sit and enjoy our simple vegetarian fare.

Not just the Lha Shwe's but wherever one went, the villagers honoured the guest very warmly. In case one

needed to spend the night anywhere, a pillow, mat and bedding were always rolled and hung up in welcoming readiness. This was not an isolated instance but a way of life all over the countryside in Myanmar. Wherever I went, especially in villages, this was the custom. Was this the outcome of the Buddha's Teachings? This question continued to baffle me.

After two years at Moulmein College I joined Yangon University. By now I was disillusioned by Hindu dharma with its rites and rituals and I had become an Arya Samaj (Hindu reformist movement) follower. Every Sunday I would go to the Arya Samaj temple and perform yagna, sing bhajanas, contribute to their magazine, visit renowned spiritual people, and attend literary meets. These activities had made me a spiritual seeker.

Busy as I was with my life as an Arya Samaj follower, I could however not ignore the world famous Shwedagon Pagoda, Sule Pagoda and many other viharas, including the World Peace Pagoda where the Sixth Saṅgāyana gathering had taken place right in the heart of Yangon. Filled with these dhamma vibrations, I would bow down in reverence; yet still my ego whispered, the Aryan Hindu culture is the best, Hindu dharma is the teacher of the world.

It was not that my inner being was satisfied with my current spiritual practice because whenever I looked within I could see the impurities that lurked there.

Since long back a large number of Indians had settled in Myanmar and were by and large prosperous. By 1885, about 25,000 – 30,000 Indians had settled in *Jiyawadi* and *Chautaga*. They were mostly farmers. The Indian Diaspora had one thing in common: to focus on earning a livelihood. To dwell on Burmese culture was a waste of time. My generation studied hard and aspired towards higher education. Nearly everyone wanted to be an engineer or a doctor. Possibly there was not one student at that time (around 1964), who showed an inclination towards Burmese literature or studying Buddha's Teachings. No one opted to study Burmese religion or Pali literature including me. I studied biology and wanted to become a doctor though I did not get an admission in the medical college.

Introduction to Vipassana

Around this time a rumour started that a leading light of the Indian community, one Mr. S.N. Goenka had become a Buddhist. It disturbed me. I had been hearing his talks since I was in sixth standard. One day when I happened to go to his residence in Yangon, I met him and found that the rumours of his becoming a Buddhist were unfounded and I was relieved. I found him to be a true *Sanātani* Hindu. I was always impressed by him and his spiritual understanding, though of course I didn't yet understand true dhamma.

An unexpected turn of events brought about a sudden and unbearable separation from Myanmar. I had to leave my beloved motherland and come to India in November 1970. Call it a stroke of luck that some

incredibly painful events in life compelled me to attend a Vipassana camp in March 1971 a few months after landing in India. Shri Satyanarayan Goenka had already come to India in 1969 and the 28th Vipassana camp was about to begin under his guidance in Bombay. The experience of those 10 days was magical. I felt totally transformed and blessed. I had at last found the answers to my questions. Now I understood the meaning of *Arya* Culture. Indeed the experience made me an *Arya* in true sense. Certainly I was not yet free of defilements, but I had found the way out of them. Filled as I was with anger, desires and frustration I was suffering, but I felt that I was perhaps free of at least a fraction of my misery. I was confident that by walking this path I could be free of all miseries. Truth was revealed and I had the answers.

So far I had only read about equanimity of mind. I had read scriptures on detachment and used to discuss the ultimate truth of the Vedas and Upanishads. I had read the writings of Rishis (Saintly persons) of yore. I now felt that these had given me only theoretical knowledge. These are not to be devalued but the fact that someone actually teaches the way out of defilements, teaches how to become equanimous and reveals the practical aspect of Dhamma in this life here and now; this was beyond my imagination.

Ashoka and the Tradition of Teacher to Pupil

Emperor Ashoka's teacher Moggaliputtatissa Thera had sent two fully liberated monks Sona and Uttara to Myanmar (Burma). These two masters had planted the seed of Vipassana in the Golden Land, and this tradition continued to flourish in an unbroken chain from teacher to pupil for 2,300 years until the time of Ledi Sayadaw.

Ledi Sayadaw then spread these teachings to the householder Saya Thet Gyi and the chain continued from him to Sayagi U Ba Khin and was then passed on to Shri S.N. Goenka, all three of them being highly respected Teachers.

Now Vipassana is healing and helping suffering masses of the world's humanity. Mere lectures did not change the people of Myanmar. They could not! What transformed them was the practical aspect of Dhamma, the experiential wisdom of Dhamma. This was not just in Myanmar, it changed people in many other Asian countries, and now around the world.

The Vipassana camp had transformed my life. Now Goenkaji was my guru. Yet I was filled with gratitude towards my previous teachers, friends and the Burmese people that had contributed to my growth – I was grateful to them all. I had never felt the kind of love for Myanmar previously that I felt after arriving in India, not because I had left there, but because of the wholesome changes that I had witnessed in the Burmese people owing to the world's finest spiritual master, the Buddha. Now in India I had tasted the same nectar. Now I understood the meaning of 'true dhamma'; applicable to all, and for all times. Truly a blessing for all those who practice it.

I understood the meaning of Vipassana, the technique to control and purify the mind that seemed so natural in Burmese people; albeit not in everyone. The Buddha did not give mere theoretical teachings, He taught to control the mind in order to purify it at the deepest experiential level.

Flowing ceaselessly for 2500 years in Myanmar the teachings of the Buddha seem to have permeated people's very being. People make efforts to practice true dhamma and live an equanimous life. unenvious of others' success, they work at being peaceful and contented with their lot. I understood their equanimity and witnessing nature of mind. They seem to know the import of '*sabbe sankhārā vayadhamma*' – all *sankhārās* are passing away. Arising and passing away – such is the eternal nature of existence. This is an experiential truth for them not just a theoretical knowledge, even if it remains alive within relatively few hearts. I understood finally what inspired the simple, rural folks to build viharas, stupas and meditation caves in village after village.

The teachings of the Buddha can be imbibed by anyone as per his or her level of understanding. It had inspired that compassionate bhikkhu who let the small boy study in his meditation hut. He was not a so called high saint with his ritualistic beliefs but a *Dhammiko* bhikkhu who understood the essence of *Sīla, samādhi, paññā*. I could now see the depth of his compassion and hospitality.

At every step he uttered the words – '*Anissa Faya*' – meaning '*Anicca*'. If he stumbled – *Anicca*, he uttered. These utterances were deeply embedded in him. That land has always flourished with the presence of Arahants who lead such detached balanced lives.

The glorious teachings and tradition of the Buddha was spread from India by the efforts of selfless bhikkhus but was kept untarnished by the neighbouring nation for 2,500 years; not just in its theoretical aspect, but in its practical aspect as well – *pariyatti and paṭipatti*. Buddha's teachings were maintained in the Pali language which has also been maintained in Myanmar. Thus all the sacred texts are well preserved in Myanmar in Pali.

India's golden period spiritually and politically is the period ranging from a few hundred years prior to Emperor Asoka's time and some years after him. Without this 500 – 700 year period of India's history, India would neither be considered the spiritual head of the world nor would its 'golden period' be evident. This is the cultural - spiritual legacy of the entire world.

Acharya Goenkaji practiced reverentially with his teacher Sayagi U Ba Khin for 14 years and then has been distributing the teachings in India and around the world for the past 28 years (March 1997) which are proving so very relevant and beneficial to the world today.

Guruji asked me to study and translate a number of classic Dhamma texts, including Burmese classical texts. Just a few translations of these texts reveal to me

how magnificent India's history is, its geography, stories of its lands and above all its glorious spiritual traditions. All have been carefully preserved in Burmese literature. The texts also reveal the depth of the ties between India and Myanmar since ancient times.

I was blessed to have been able to receive an Exalted Dhamma and to have been able to serve the Dhamma mission. My human life has fulfilled its true purpose.

May the entire humanity be benefitted by the spread of Pure Dhamma!

Ram Avadh Verma

March - 1997

(Shri Ram Avadh Verma, who died a few years ago, was a Vipassana teacher. He had also worked sincerely for the Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) and translated about 65 books, small articles, travelogues etc. from Burmese into Hindi which continue to benefit research students and many others.)



Centre News

Dhamma Ajanta, Aurangabad

Construction of a new well planned centre, Dhamma Ajanta, has been completed in Aurangabad on 14.5 acres with 90 individual residential quarters.

Ajanta International Vipassana Samiti Centre, Survey No. 45, Rampuri, Aurangabad (20 km from Bijapur-Nasik Road). **Regd. Off:** 2, Surana Nagar, Rajhans Bhavan, Jalna Road (airport road), Aurangabad – 431003. **Contact:** Mob: 94222 11344, 99218 17430, email: info@dhammaajanta.org; online booking – www.dhammaajanta.org. (Prior booking is necessary)



Pagoda Under construction at Dhamma Vipula – Navi Mumbai

Ten day and Three day courses have been running successfully in Dhamma Vipula Vipassana Centre, Navi Mumbai. A Pagoda with capacity of 130 cells is now under construction. Future plans include a garden, walking areas, boundary walls etc. Those wishing to participate in this meritorious project may contact – Sayagi U Ba Khin Memorial Trust, Dhamma Vipula Savings A/c No. 911010050616521, Axis Bank, Nerul Branch, Navi Mumbai. **Contact:** Shri Pravin Katpatal – 098677 76888.



New Centre at Bilaspur – Dhamma Garh (Gadh)

Vipassana camps at rental sites have been organized in Chhattisgarh since 2011. A new centre has now been constructed about 23 kms. from Bilaspur city and 8 kms. from Kargi railway station in Bharari village. Residential arrangement has been completed for 18 men and 10 women. A meditation camp will be held once every month. For further information and for those willing to contribute with dhamma volition please **contact: Vipassana Sadhana Charitable Trust, A/c. 20152075235, IFSC- MAHB-0460, Bank of Maharashtra, Bilaspur. Complete Address: Dhamma Garh Vipassana centre, Village- Bharari, Via Mohanbhata, Bilaspur, Pin-496330. Office: 34 Vinoba Nagar, Bilaspur. Tel.: 1. Shri S. Meshram. 098269 60230, or 2. Shri. H. C. Dahat. 094241 61087. Email: dhammachhattisgarh@gmail.com**



Pali Training Programme, Vipassana Research Institute (VRI), Global Vipassana Pagoda, Mumbai

— Pali English Advanced Residential Course – 25 May to 9 Aug 2015. — Workshop for Translation work - 10 to 17 Aug. Participants eligible for it:

** Should have completed minimum three 10 day courses & one Sati Pathan course. ** Graduation degree or 15 years of schooling; **Contact:** Tel: 91 – 22 – 33747560.

email: Mumbai@vridhamma.org.

One Day Mega course on the auspicious occasion of the coming Buddha Pūrṇimā Day.

Sunday, On May3, 2015 a one-day mega course will be conducted at the Global Vipassana Pagoda in the presence of respected Mātājī. Course hours: 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Non-meditators can participate in the discourse at 3:00 PM. Please contact the following numbers for registration. Please only come with registration and ‘**samaggānam taposukho**’ – take advantage of the happiness of practicing meditation with such a large group. (Contact: 022-28451170, 022-337475-01/43/44-ext 9. Phone booking hours: 11:00 AM to 5:00 PM every day. Online Registration: www.oneday.globalpagoda.org.)

Children's Meditation Courses in Mumbai

Date: 19-4, 17-5, 21-6 **Place:** Goregaon (age 10 to 16 Only)
Registration before Course Thursday and Friday

Date	Course site	Age (years)	Registration
First Sunday	Dombivili	10-16	2 days before Course
First Sunday	Ulhasnagar	10-16	2 days before Course
First Sunday	Matunga	10-16	2 days before Course
Second Sunday	Sanpada	10-16	2 days before Course
Second Sunday	Andheri	10-16	2 days before Course
Third Sunday	Ghatkopar	10-16	2 days before Course
Fourth Sunday	Airoli	10-16	2 days before Course

2 Day Residential Anapana Course for Children: (age 12 to 16 Only for Girls) 28 to 29-5-2015, (age 12 to 16 Only for Boys) 30 to 31-5-2015, **Bhiwandi:** Naik Foundation Padaga village (Bhiwandi) Mumbai Nasik Highway (N.H.3) After Padaga Toll Naka, Near Pallavi Hotel, For Registration call 022-25162505, 25011096. (Registration After 15th May Only)

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 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. **Dombivili:** K B Vira HighSchool, Near Municipal Office, Dombivili (E) Mob. 9930301594. **Ulhasnagar:** 703-A Block /1405, Gokul Nagar, Behind Netaji School, Near Mahesh Granite, Tel. 9970755130, **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Mob. 98201-50336, 98922-18186. **Sanpada:** Navi Mumbai Mahanagar Palika School, Sector 5, Sanpada. Tel: 7738649821, 9699862322, 9223300575, **Andheri:** Mayfair Meridian Meditation Hall, Ceaser Road, Off S.V. Road, Amboli, Near St. Blaise Church Andheri, Mob. 99674-80865, 99678-13469. **Ghatkopar:** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar (W), Opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086. Tel: 25011096, 25162505. **Airoli:** Saraswati School, Sector 5, Airoli, Mob. 9892565765. 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.

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New Responsibilities

Senior Asst. Teachers

1. Shri Jaipalsingh Tomar, Buldhana
2. Shri Mangal Tamgadge, Nagpur
3. Shri Damodaran V. Kumar, Pune
4. Shri V. Narendra Reddy, Hyderabad
5. Shri M. Vishnuvardhanrao, Vijaywada
6. Shri G. Raghuramakumar, Hyderabad
7. Shri M. R. Muthusami, Erode

- 3-4. Mr. Sophoan Sok & Mrs. Sambo Tey, Cambodia
5. Ms. Xian Jun Tang, China

Childrens' Course Teachers

1. Mrs. Suman Yadav, Firozabad, UP
2. Ms. Pratibha Maurya, Varanasi
3. Shri Vivek Pal, Delhi (Pl. Note: this name was printed as Mrs. Vivek Pal in the Jan. newsletter inadvertently).
4. Mr. Sun Huijun, China
5. Ms. Xu Bing, China
6. Mr. Xie Dongjian, China

New Appointments

Asst. Teachers

- 1-2. Mr. Daisuke & Mrs. Shoko sato, Japan;

DHAMMA DOHAS

Cār satya haiṃ jagata ke, inase mukha mat moḍa.

Yahī mārga hai mukti kā, āsha parāyī choḍa.

The Four Noble Truths are the path of Liberation; follow them properly, depend on yourself not others.

Āṭh aṅga haiṃ dharma ke, dūra kare bhava-vyādhī.

Tin bhāga meṃ baṅta rahe, prajñā shīla samādhī.

There are eight aspects of Dhamma which dispel the miseries of existence; these are divided into three parts – Sīla, Samādhī and Paññā.

Duhkha-mūla utkhanana kī, pāyī jisane rāha.

Vahī huā sukha-shānti kā, saccā shāhaṃshāha.

One who has found the way to uproot all sufferings, has become the true emperor of happiness and peace.

Kore buddhivilāsa se, hoya nahīṃ kalyāṇa.

Ārya-pantha para jaba cale, taba pāye nīrvāṇa.

With mere intellect one cannot achieve true welfare; only by practicing the Noble Path does one attain Nibbāna.

Bāiṭha pālathī mārā kara, kāyā sīdhī rākha.

Mouna mouna mana mouna kara, cākha dharma rasa cākha.

Sit down cross legged, and keep the body straight; be silent, calm, quiet – taste the nectar of Dhamma.

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Vipassana Research Institute

Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403

Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra, India

Fax: [91] (02553) 244176

Tel: (02553) 244076, 244086, 243712, 243238

Email: info@giri.dhamma.org;

Website: www.vridhamma.org