

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Pabūtavitto puriso,
sahirañño sabhojano;
eko bhujjati sādūni,
tam parābhavato mukham.*

To have much wealth,
and ample gold and food;
but to enjoy one's luxuries alone—
this is a cause of one's downfall.

—*Sutta Nipāta 1.102*

Two Earthen Pots

S. N. Goenka

There is an incident in the life of Buddha.

One day a young man came to him, very upset.

'What happened?' asked the Buddha

The young man said:

'Sir, yesterday my father died. I have come to you with a special request. Please do something for my dead father. When ordinary priests perform some rites or rituals, he gains access to heaven. Sir, if a great man like you performs any rites or rituals for my father, he will gain not only entry but a permanent residence in heaven. Please sir, do something for my father!'

He was so unbalanced, so emotional. The Buddha knew that any kind of rational argument would have no effect at this stage but he had his own way of explaining things. He asked the young man to go to the market and buy two earthen pots.

The young man happily went and bought them, thinking that this was to prepare for some ritual. The Buddha asked him to fill one with butter and the other with stones and pebbles. He did all this. The Buddha told him to close and seal them properly, and put them both in a nearby pond. He did so and both the pots sank to the bottom. The Buddha now told him to bring a stout stick, strike at them, and break them open. He did so, thinking that now the Buddha would perform a wonderful ritual for his father.

India is a vast and ancient land, full of diversities and extremes. There are people who have attained full enlightenment like the Buddha, and on the other hand, there are people in deep ignorance, immersed in blind faiths, beliefs, and dogmas. One belief is that when a parent dies, the son must take the corpse, put it on the funeral pyre and burn it; when it is half burned, he must take a strong stick, and break open the skull. The

belief is that, as the skull is broken on earth, so the gateway of heaven is broken above, and the parent enters heaven.

The young man thought that, as his father was already dead and cremated yesterday, the Buddha was asking him to break open these earthen pots as a substitute. As he did so, the butter escaped from the first and floated to the surface; the pebbles escaped from the second pot and settled at the bottom.

'Now,' said the Buddha, 'this much I have done. Now call all your priests. Let them come here and pray: 'Oh pebbles, rise to the surface! Oh butter, sink to the bottom!''

'Are you joking, sir? How is this possible? It is against the law of nature, sir. The pebbles are heavier than water; they are bound to stay down, they can't float. Butter is lighter than water, it is bound to float; it cannot go down.'

'Young man, you know so much about the law of nature, and yet you do not want to understand the law that is applicable to one and all. If your father kept performing actions like pebbles and stones, he was bound to go down. Who can pull him up? If he kept performing actions which are light like butter, he is bound to go up. Who can push him down?'

Our difficulty is that we think that some invisible power will somehow favour us, even though we do nothing to change our own behaviour pattern, our own actions. When we understand this eternal law of nature—that the fruits depend on our actions—we will be careful about our actions.

This discourse was given by the Buddha to Mahānāma the Sakyā. ☸

(*Pathama Māhānāma sutta*)

First Vipassana Course in Lebanon

Lebanon has long been a crossroads of East and West, a vibrant and varied society. For some time, Lebanese students of Vipassana have been trying to organize a course in their country. The need was all the greater with the suffering and turmoil faced by Lebanese people in recent years.

When plans for a course near Beirut were announced in late 2007, old students stepped forward to offer financial contributions and Dhamma service. They included people living in Lebanon as well as others who had moved abroad. The site was in the Al-Shouf mountains one hour east of Beirut—a government facility sponsored by the World Bank to protect and develop Lebanon's beautiful cedar forests. Workers at the facility were careful to respect the need for silence and quiet. Silent retreats are known and valued by residents of the surrounding villages.

The course took place in January 2008, with 15 students completing it. All but two of them were new students. Among the Dhamma workers were people living in Lebanon as well as others with roots in Europe, Iran, the United States, Canada and Armenia. They reflected in miniature the diversity of Lebanese society. The assistant teachers came from Canada; instruction was provided in English and French.

The course was a rich experience. Outside, turmoil continued; here in the mountains, the peaceful atmosphere of Vipassana prevailed. On *mettā* day, the silence gave way to expressions of joy and hopes to hold another course soon. Many people have offered help, not only in Lebanon but in nearby countries.

To make the teaching more widely available, naturally it must be possible to hold courses in Arabic. Some old students have been working on translation of the discourses into Arabic. In addition, a professional translator has been commissioned to translate *The Art of Living* and the book should appear within 2008. When it does, *The Art of Living* will be available in all the official languages of the United Nations.

Meanwhile, weekly group sittings are being held in Beirut and plans are being made for a course this summer. For information on these as well as future courses in Lebanon, please contact: halahb@inco.com.lb

Vipassana in the Czech Republic

Old students in the Czech Republic, who had sat courses in other parts of the world started organizing and meeting for occasional group sittings in 2003-2004. These led to a meeting in the summer of 2004 to discuss details involved in translating the course material and in organizing a course.

A suitable site was found in early 2006, and work on translating the course-material started in earnest. It was a boarding house in Zihle near Pilsen (about halfway between Prague and the German border). The facility is in the middle of a forest but well serviced by public transportation. It is used mainly for school trips for children from cities.

In the summer of 2006, there was a meeting to discuss European non-centre activities in Vienna, Austria. The Czech old students went to the meeting feeling overwhelmed by all the problems that they needed to solve for the course. They were sure they would not have enough time to finish everything in time.

But the meeting gave them renewed hope, enthusiasm and determination. It was a challenge. The translations and recordings of the course material were finished just in time. Setting everything up was hectic with only a handful of people available to help. But in the end everything worked out and the course was ready to begin in late 2006.

The building capacity far exceeded course needs. This meant that the rent was higher. On the other hand, segregation was easier and nearly all old students could be given single rooms.

Christmas is the most important holiday in the Czech Republic but the site was available only at this time. Many Czechs could not imagine spending this time away from their family.

However, this is also the time of peak demand for courses, and the European centres are all booked months ahead. As a result, many students came from other European countries, particularly Germany, for the course. Only about one third of the students were from the Czech Republic. About 80 students participated. The course was conducted in English, German and Czech.

Although not ideal, the facility worked. Warm weather helped keep a poorly insulated meditation hall usable. *Dhamma Dvāra*, the Vipassana centre in Germany, provided support; an old student gave a loan to cover food costs; and an experienced team of Dhamma workers also came from Germany. All these factors helped make the course a success.

As a result of the high rent and some one-time expenses (meditation cushions, etc.), the course ended with a deficit but this was covered by generous old students.

The same facility was used again at the end of 2007. The owners had been impressed and happy with the Vipassana group the year before; they offered somewhat better terms and even insulated the area used for the main meditation hall. This time things went much more smoothly and donations covered costs.

Unless a more suitable location is soon found, the Zihle boarding house will be used again in late 2008. There is also the possibility of a course in July near Prague.

Regular group-sittings have begun in Prague, where most old students live, at a local kindergarten twice a week. *Dhamma Dvāra* is only a few kilometres from the Czech border and is easy to reach from the Czech Republic.

The Art of Living is being translated and the movie *Doing Time, Doing Vipassana* will soon be available for screenings with Czech subtitles.

A Czech version of the [dhamma.org](http://www.cz.dhamma.org) web page is also available (<http://www.cz.dhamma.org>).

Vipassana Activities in Scandinavia

Scandinavia consists of a small group of countries with very similar cultures, languages and history. So far the region has only one centre: the Nordic Vipassana Center, *Dhamma Sobhana*, in Sweden. For about a year now, it has offered bilingual ten-day courses in Swedish and English, as well as shorter courses for old students in English only.

But almost every course has drawn participants from Norway, who appreciate the relative closeness of *Dhamma Sobhana*—about six hours from Oslo. Two courses in English were previously held at rented locations in Norway but a search for a new temporary location has not yielded results. For this reason, the Norway Vipassana Association is focusing on courses at *Dhamma Sobhana*.

A small but dedicated team is currently translating the ten-day discourses and instructions into Norwegian. The aim is to soon be able to meet the demand for courses in the Norwegian language. The Nordic Vipassana Centre will then include bilingual courses in Norwegian and English.

New Development Project at Dhamma Mahi

Dhamma Mahi, the first Vipassana centre in Europe, was established in 1988. Located in a quiet and rural part of France, the centre has a conducive meditation atmosphere.

After hosting more than 400 Vipassana courses, it has truly grown into an ideal place to meditate. The demand to sit courses is constantly increasing and so there are frequently long waiting lists.

To meet the expanding demand, the centre trust has decided to launch a major development project. The centre will be expanded from its present capacity of 90 people to 150 (approximately 120 students and 30 servers).

The first phase of the development is the construction of a new meditation hall. This will be a separate building made principally of wood. The estimated cost, along with a fire access road and outdoor circulation paths, is approximately 500,000 euros. Construction will begin in March 2008 and is scheduled to finish in September 2008.

New Vipassana Center in South-eastern USA

The Southeast Vipassana Meditation Center, *Dhamma Patāpa*, conducted its first course on March 12, 2008. The center is located in Jesup, Georgia, USA. A 40-acre parcel of land was purchased for the site in December 2005 and construction began in April 2006.

The center consists of three buildings. One will be used as servers' and assistant teachers' accommodations, a kitchen and students' dining facilities. Another building holds sleeping quarters for 28 students and a meditation hall with seating capacity for 40 students. The last and smallest building will be used for registration, Day ten display and dining hall for servers. Future expansion plans will eventually bring the center to a capacity of over 100 students.

Children's Courses in Mumbai Schools

Vipassana Research Institute has started a program to teach Anapana to school children in BMC schools. This year, courses will be conducted for about 10000 students of IX Std. Courses for these children will resume from the first week of April 2008 and will continue until end of May 2008. The schedule of courses is available online at <http://www.vri.dhamma.org/anapana/bmc.html>

There is a great need for Dhamma servers to work in these courses. Meditators who have completed at least three ten-day courses and are under the age of 50 are welcome to serve in these courses. They must have the aptitude and a desire to work with children. Training will be provided for the same. They may contact Aditya Sejpal, 98200-22990 or Ramnath Shenoy, 98203-74006 or email childrencourse@vsnl.com

Courses at Dhamma Pattana, Global Pagoda, Mumbai

10-day (executive) courses: 7 to 18-5, 21-5 to 1-6, 4 to 15-6, 20-6 to 1-7, 4 to 15-7, 30-7 to 10-8, 13 to 24-8, 27-8 to 7-9, 10 to 21-9, 8 to 19-10, 22-10 to 2-11. **#ST:** 19 to 27-7, 24-9 to 2-10. **3-day:** 2 to 5-10-08. **Send applications to:** VIA, *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri-422403, Nashik. Tel: (02553) 244076, 244086 (10 am to 5 pm). Fax: 244176. Email: info@giri.dhamma.org (Please write **Dhamma Pattana course** on the form). **One day courses:** every Sunday, 11:00 am to 5:00 pm. For gate pass to visit the Pagoda, call: Tel: (022) 2845-2111, 2845-2261. Website: www.globalpagoda.org; Email: globalpagoda@hotmail.com; Tel/Fax: 2845-2112.

Goenkaji's Discourses on Television

Aastha: Daily, 9:40 to 10 am

Hungama: and **Bindass:** Daily, 4.30 to 6.00 am

Zee: Urja, Daily, 4:30 am

USA: Aastha TV at 6 pm EST (Monday to Friday) on WORLDDIRECT platform of DIRECTV on channel no. 2005. (Please confirm exact telecast timings.)

Vipassana Websites

Vipassana introduction: www.dhamma.org

Contains information about Course Schedules of Vipassana centres worldwide, Application Form for ten-day courses, etc.

Dhamma Giri: www.vri.dhamma.org

Contains information about Indian Vipassana centres and schedule of courses, VRI Newsletters, research papers, publications, etc.

Pali Tipiṭaka Website: www.tipitaka.org

Contains the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka alongwith commentaries, subcommentaries and related Pali texts. in Roman, Devanagari, Cyrillic, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Myanmar, and Sinhala scripts. More scripts will be added in future.

Prison Courses Website: www.prison.dhamma.org

Global Pagoda Website: www.globalpagoda.org

Online Vipassana Newsletters and Archives

For online editions of the VRI Newsletter in English, Hindi, Telugu, Tamil and Gujarati, visit: www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters. Archives of earlier editions are also available at this website.

Publication of AT Address Book

VRI has published the address book of assistant teachers and Vipassana centres in January 2008. Assistant teachers and centre managers who have not received a copy as yet are requested to contact Dr. Pathak, VRI, *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri 422 403, Tel: [91] (02553) 244076, 244086; Fax: [91] (02553) 244176; Email: vri_admin@dhamma.net.in

Children's Courses in Mumbai

To serve children's courses in Mumbai, call 98200-22990.

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
4-5	South Mumbai	14-18 yrs	3 & 4-5
11-5	Ulhasnagar	10-12 yrs	9 & 10-5
18-5	Ghatkopar	13-16 yrs	17 & 18-5
8-6	South Mumbai	9-13 yrs	31-5 & 1-6
29-6	Ghatkopar	10-12 yrs	14 & 15-6
29-6	Matunga	10-12 yrs	14 & 15-6

Course Timings: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration:** 11 am to 1 pm
Course Venues: **Ghatkopar (W):** SNTD School, New Bldg., Cama Lane, Opp. Vidyut Soc. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Rd, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga, Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **South Mumbai:** Tel: 2308-1622. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: (0251) 252-2693. NB Please: *bring cushion, *register on specified phone numbers, *inform in advance if unable to attend after registration, *arrive on time for the course.

Residential Children's Courses at Khadavli, Mumbai

23 to 25 May for boys and 27 to 29 May for girls. **Age:** 13-16 years.
Registration: 11 to 21 May. **Venue:** *Dhamma Sarita*, Jivan Sandhya Mangal Sansthan, near Khadavli station. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505.

Children's Courses at Goregaon, Mumbai (8.15 am – 2.30 pm)

22 June: age group 10-12 yrs; **Registration:** 20 & 21-6 (12 – 2 pm);
29 June: age group 13-16 yrs; **Registration:** 27 & 28-6 (12 – 2 pm);
Contact: 2876-6886 extn. 230; **Mobiles:** 99750-22508; 98202-37750;
Venue: Vipassana Counselling & Research Centre, Siddharth Municipal General Hospital (SMGH), Opp. Motilal Nagar Post Office, Goregaon (W), Mumbai-400104.

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācaryas:

Dr. Hamir & Dr. (Mrs.) Nirmala Ganla

To assist the area teacher in serving *Dhammālaya*, Kolhapur

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr. Hans Kuoni, *Canada*
2. Ms. Sharon Reed, *Canada*
3. & 4. Mr. Robert Strand & Mrs. Edith Todd, *Canada*

Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr. Dnyandeo Bansode, *Alibaug*
2. Mr. Gautam Gaikwad, *Thane*
3. Mr. Mannilal Yadav, *Fatehpur*
4. Ms. Belva Fisher, *USA*
5. & 6. Mr. Israel Hertzog & Mrs. Rony Ben-Zion, *Israel*

Children's Course Teachers:

1. Mrs. Snigdha Mehta, *Jaipur*
2. U Chit Swe, *Myanmar*
3. U Khin Mg Kyi, *Myanmar*
4. Daw Lay Sin, *Myanmar*
5. Daw Khin Moo Myint, *Myanmar*
6. Mr. Jame (Dimitri) Topitzes, *West Indies / USA*
7. Ms. Keo Luong, *France*
8. Ms. Sam Callaghan, *Australia*

DHAMMA DOHAS

Sadācarāṇa hī Dharma hai, durācarāṇa hī pāpa;
Sadācarāṇa se sukha jage, durācarāṇa dukha tāpa.
 Right conduct is Dhamma, wrong conduct is sin;
 From right conduct comes happiness;
 from wrong conduct, suffering and torment.

Paropakāra hī puṇya hai, para-pīḍana hī pāpa;
Puṇya kiye sukha hī jage, pāpa kiye santāpa.
 Kindness to others is virtue; harming others is sin;
 Virtuous actions result in happiness;
 sinful actions result in torment.

With much metta,
A Vipassana meditator

Dharmavanta to hai vahi, śīlavanta jo hoyā;
Kāyā vāñī citta ke, śīla na khaṇḍita hoyā.
 To practise the Dhamma, one must practice morality;
 By body, speech or mind, sila should not be broken.

Kāyika karma sudhāra le, vācika karma sudhāra;
Manake karma sudhāra le, yahi Dharma kā sāra.
 Improve your bodily actions, improve your vocal actions;
 Improve your mental actions—this is the essence of Dhamma.

With best compliments from
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

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