

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Susukhaṃ vata jīvāma,
ussukesu anussukā;
ussukesu manussesu,
vihārāma anussukā.*

Ah, happily do we live,
Without avarice among the avaricious;
Among avaricious people,
We live free from avarice.

—Dhammapada 199

Vipassana: The Practical Path to Unity in Diversity

Acharya S. N. Goenka

(The sacred Buddha relics were enshrined within the main dome of the Global Pagoda on 29 October 2006 in the presence of venerable bhikkhus from many countries, Goenkaji and Mataji, honourable dignitaries, and thousands of Vipassana meditators. The following is an article by Goenkaji on this historic occasion. It has been adapted for the Newsletter.)

The Path to Peace and Happiness

In multi-religious and multi-cultural societies such as in India, Vipassana is a wonderful, practical path to unity in diversity. Vipassana, an ancient, timeless heritage of India, is the quintessence of all religions: how to live a moral life, to be a master of one's own mind, to purify the mind. No religion objects to these ideals. No right-thinking person objects to these ideals. Vipassana is the effective, universal method to achieve these ideals.

In past millennia, and in the present day, we are seeing how Vipassana enables one to live a happy, harmonious life. When more individuals achieve inner peace, peace is achieved in homes, in the neighbourhood, in villages, towns, cities and countries.

Universal Non-sectarian Path

This unifying process of peace and harmony is visible in Vipassana courses worldwide. During a Vipassana course, people from all religions, castes, nationalities, races and social strata sit together to practice this ancient path. Thousands of Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists and Jews have taken Vipassana courses. They follow the same code of discipline and gain benefit from the Vipassana course.

Vipassana courses have been taken not only by the followers of all religions but also by their leaders. Many religious leaders have later told me, "Goenkaji, in the name of Vipassana, you are teaching our religion!" Vipassana courses have been held in temples, mosques, churches, and monasteries.

True Dhamma

In the ancient Pali language, Vipassana means to see things as they are, not as they seem to be. Gotama the Buddha re-discovered this ancient scientific path to real

happiness. This is the true *Saddhamma*, the truth of the laws of nature applicable to all beings in the universe.

The Buddha did not claim any monopoly on this path; neither did he intend to start any sect, cult or ritualistic religion. He told people who came to debate and sometimes to quarrel with him: "Let us keep aside our differences. Let us talk about what we agree upon. I am teaching *sīla* (morality) *samādhi* (mastery of the mind) and *paññā* (purification of the mind)."

The Science of Mind and Matter

The Buddha was a super-scientist who rediscovered certain universal truths using his own body and mind as the laboratory instruments. He discovered that, at the actual level, there is no solidity in the entire universe, that all material phenomena are made up of tiny *kalāpas* (sub-atomic particles) that arise and pass away with such great rapidity that they give the appearance of solidity. These *kalāpas*, the basic building blocks of the material universe are nothing but mere vibrations. The Buddha said:

*Sabbo ādīpito loko,
sabbo loko padhūpito;
sabbo pajjalito loko,
sabbo loko pakampito.*

(Therīgāthā 200)

The entire world is in flames,
The entire world is going up in smoke;
The entire world is burning,
The entire world is vibrating.

The Role of Bodily Sensations

The Buddha discovered that the key to liberation experiencing the different physical sensations in the body and their nature of arising and passing away (*anicca*). He also realized that misery arises because of the blind reaction of craving and aversion to these sensations.

One comes out of the habit pattern of misery when one learns to remain equanimous with every sensation, pleasant or unpleasant, with the experiential realization that they are all impermanent, changing every moment. This ability to remain equanimous eradicates old impurities and helps one to

change the behaviour pattern of the mind.

The Importance of Morality (Sīla)

At the start of the Vipassana course, the student undertakes to observe a moral code of conduct. The student experiences how morality is the essential foundation to inner peace and happiness, not merely an empty, unrealistic ideal. One cannot do any harm to others without first harming oneself:

Pubbe hanati attānaṃ; pacchā hanati so pare.

Anapana

The student in a Vipassana course starts meditation practice with Anapana—observation of the natural incoming and outgoing breath, as it is, without regulating the natural reality of the breath. The student is instructed not to add any shape, colour, form, philosophy or image to the breath. As the natural breath is linked directly to the mind, one observes the mind by observing the breath. For instance, when one is angry, the breath becomes hard and irregular; when one is calm and peaceful, the breath becomes soft and subtle.

The truth of the natural breath can be experienced by anyone; this is not the monopoly of any religion or country. Then the student observes the touch of the breath at the point below the nostrils, above the upper lip where the breath touches.

When the student starts observing the point of contact of the breath with the body, he or she begins to experience the truth of sensations on the body: any physical feeling like heat, cold, vibration, tingling, itching, pain, etc.

Vipassana

During the practice of Vipassana, the student is instructed to observe the truth of sensations throughout the body. It is a choiceless observation. The student is instructed not to give any importance to any particular sensation or to have any bias or preference for any sensation.

The student proceeds from the gross truths to the subtler truths to ultimately reach the subtlest truth. He observes the mind-matter phenomenon, the truth of the so-called 'I', the truth about the causes and effect of suffering and the way out of suffering. He makes this observation within the framework of the body, without any illusion, delusion, imagination or visualization.

The Vipassana student observes the truth of the moment, as it is. So he experiences the truth of the changing reality, from moment to moment, within the framework of the body. Nature is playing its role, one just observes. One realizes how difficult this is! One also realizes how necessary and beneficial this is!

From Reaction to Equanimity

Soon, the Vipassana practitioner experiences how the mind is blindly reacting to these bodily sensations with craving or aversion, with attachment or hatred. He experiences how this habit pattern to the pleasant or unpleasant reality of sensations—which is not in his control—causes a vicious cycle of suffering and misery. Apparently, one seems to be reacting to objects, situations and

people in the outside world. In reality, one is constantly reacting to the sensations caused by the outside objects coming in contact with the sense doors of eyes, ears, nose, body, tongue and mind. This deep-rooted habit pattern of blind reaction is the cause of suffering of oneself and others.

By training the mind to objectively observe the sensations, instead of blindly reacting to them, the Vipassana student progresses on the path leading to real happiness. Every time a negative thought or emotion arises, instead of suppressing or blindly expressing these negativities, the student enjoys the benefits of the middle path of mere observation. One realizes that nothing can arise in the mind without a sensation arising on the body. One experiences how the negative habit pattern starts weakening at the root level by dispassionate observation of the sensations. When no new fuel is added to the fire, the fire gradually dies out. One starts experiencing real happiness in life, the happiness of a pure, peaceful mind.

Mettā Bhāvanā (Loving Kindness)

Towards the end of the Vipassana course, the student learns how to share this peace and harmony with all others. When one truly benefits, then one cannot resist sharing the benefits with others. The practice of *mettā bhāvanā*, an essential part of Vipassana, enables one to share one's peace, happiness and harmony with all beings. One wishes for the well being of others from the depth of a purified mind. By the practice of *mettā*, one becomes peaceful and happy and the entire atmosphere around is suffused with peace and harmony.

The Universal Law of Nature

This practical path to real happiness can be called by any name. For conventional, linguistic purposes, it is called Vipassana. Just as the law of gravity works in the same way irrespective of whatever name we give it, the practice of coming out of suffering by objective observation of sensations is beneficial to all, irrespective of whatever it is called.

People from all religions and backgrounds understand this universal truth: one has to have a balanced, pure mind to be happy amidst the vicissitudes of life. They also understand that the saints of the past must have been practising this technique of developing equanimity to sensations. How else could they generate infinite compassion for the very people who were torturing them to death, as many noble saints of the past from all religions did?

Core of Purity

Every religion has a wholesome essence of love, compassion and goodwill. The outer shells of each religion are different: the various rites, rituals, ceremonies or beliefs. However, all religions give importance to purity of mind. Vipassana helps us to experience this wonderful, happy unity in diversity.

Emperor Asoka: Respect for All Religions

One of the truest followers of the Buddha's teaching was Emperor Asoka. In one of his

rock edicts, he gave us this benevolent message:

"One should not honour only one's own religion and condemn other religions. Instead one should honour other religions for various reasons. By so doing, one helps one's own religion to grow and also renders service to the religions of others. In acting otherwise, one digs the grave of one's own religion, and harms other religions as well. Someone who honours his own religion and condemns other religions, may do so out of devotion to his religion thinking 'I will glorify my religion,' but his actions injure his own religion more gravely."

Let all listen: Concord is good, not quarrelling. Let all be willing to listen to the doctrine professed by others.

When this important quality of respecting other religions arises, there will be no sectarian conflicts. One who respects the noble qualities of other religions, instead of finding fault, becomes a true and inspiring representative of his religion.

By practising tolerance for all religions, Emperor Asoka did not become a weak ruler. There is no record of any communal conflict or foreign invasion during his reign after he renounced violence. On the contrary, his reign was the golden age of Indian history.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin: A Life of Integrity

My Vipassana teacher and Dhamma father, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, is an inspiring example of how Vipassana enables one to live an active, honest, beneficial, and efficient life and to serve others tirelessly and selflessly. He was the first Accountant General of independent Myanmar and a trusted confidant of the Prime Minister of Myanmar. Yet Sayagyi U Ba Khin did not hesitate to point out any impropriety in the government that conflicted with established laws and norms. He took immediate action against any action to bribe him. He often took a strong position against the government. Yet the government kept extending his period of service and postponing his retirement and even changed governmental regulations to allow him to serve longer!

People from all religions came to take Vipassana courses from Sayagyi U Ba Khin, even though he called himself a staunch follower of the Buddha's teaching. I was a leader of the Hindu community in Myanmar when I approached him to take my first Vipassana course. He told me, "I will not convert you to a Buddhist. I will teach you a technique that will make you a better human being."

From Bondage to Liberation

I took the Vipassana course and all my doubts and fears were removed. I found that Vipassana is *Bhagavad Gita* in practice. This is the only conversion that Vipassana does: the conversion from misery to happiness, from ignorance to enlightenment, from bondage to liberation.

As more and more individuals in the world experience this path of converting themselves

from misery to happiness, all violence will be eradicated and there will be peace and prosperity all around. This happened during the reign of Emperor Asoka and I have no doubt that it will again happen in the future.

May all beings be happy, be peaceful, be liberated!

Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ—May all beings be happy!

KERALA VIPASSANA CENTRE

One-day courses at *Dhamma Ketana*, Kerala Vipassana centre have been conducted on 15 August and 24 September. The Kerala Vipassana Samiti plans to conduct the first ten-day course at the centre **from 21 December 2006 to 1 January 2007**. Temporary facilities including residences are being built.

All donations to Kerala Vipassana Samiti are exempt from income tax under Section 80 G. There is also an urgent need for Dhamma servers to help with the ongoing construction. A long-term caretaker is also required.

Contact: dhamma-service@ketana.dhamma.org

Raghunath Kurup: Mobile: 94441-75179;

B. Raveendran: Mobile: 98465-69891

Dhamma Ketana, P. O. Cheriyanaad 689 511, Chengannur, Kerala. Email:

info@ketana.dhamma.org

Tel: (0479) 235 1616; Website:

www.ketana.dhamma.org

GOENKAJI'S DISCOURSES ON TELEVISION

Aastha TV channel: Daily from 9:40 to 10 am (Goenkaji's Sri Lanka tour). **Hungama TV channel:** Hindi discourses telecast daily from 4.30 to 6.00 am (IST). **Zee TV: *Urja***, daily, 4:30 am (IST). **USA: Aastha TV** will be telecasting Goenkaji's discourses at 6 pm EST (Monday to Friday) on the WORLDDIRECT platform of DIRECTV on channel no. 2005.

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CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

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

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
19 Nov	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	16 & 17 Aug
3 Dec	South Mumbai	10-12 years	30-11 & 1-12
10 Dec	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	7 & 8 Dec
10 Dec	Andheri	10-12 years	7 & 8 Dec
17 Dec	Ghatkopar	10-12 years	14 & 15 Dec
24 Dec	JNPT	13-16 years	21 & 22 Dec

Course Timing: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration:** 11 am to 1 pm.

Course Venues: **Andheri (W):** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Ghatkopar (W):** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Opp Vidyut Society. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **JNPT:** Trainee Hostel Bldg, Sector 3, Sheva Taluka, Uran, Navi Mumbai. 98923-87145, 98218-08488, 2747-2554. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: (0251) 252-2693. **South Mumbai:** Times of India Bldg., Opp CST station. Tel: 2308-1622.

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

IN MEMORIAM

Anagarika Ratnamanjari, Vipassana Teacher from Nepal, passed away peacefully on 5 October 2006. She was among the first assistant teachers appointed by Goenkaji in Nepal.

May she be happy, peaceful and liberated.

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr. Jaya Prasad Bhetwal, *Nepal*
2. Mr. Ashok Kumar Karna, *Nepal*
3. Mr. Dev Kishan Mundada, *Nepal*
4. U Tun Hla, *Myanmar*
5. U Aung Than, *Myanmar*

Children's Course Teachers:

1. Mrs. Meenu Agrawal, *Kota*
2. Mr. Asleem Barua, *Sriganganagar*
3. Mr. Prakash Chandra, *Kota*
4. Mrs. Channi Sharma, *Churu*
5. Mr. Sanjay Dhole, *Yavatmal*
6. Mr. Eknath Gadling, *Yavatmal*
7. Mr. Dinesh Deshmukh, *Akola*
8. Mrs. Jyoti Deshmukh, *Akola*
9. Mr. Pitikamal Patil, *Chandrapur*
10. Ms. Prewanda Patil, *Nagpur*

11. Mr. Durwas Chaudhari, *Nagpur*
12. Mr. Sukhlal Choure, *Seoni*
13. Mr. Chandrabhan Upase, *Nagpur*
14. Mrs. Devika Ghatole, *Betul*
15. & 16. Mr. Tom & Mrs. Alex Reveley, *U.K.*
17. & 18. Mr. Yves Paillard & Mrs. Nelly Richard, *France*

VIPASSANA WEBSITES

Vipassana introduction: www.dhamma.org - Contains information about Goenkaji, Vipassana centres worldwide, Code of Discipline, Application Form for ten-day courses, etc.

Dhamma Giri: www.vri.dhamma.org - Contains information about Vipassana Research Institute, Vipassana Newsletter and Patrika, Indian Vipassana centres, schedule of courses, etc.

Pali Tipiṭaka website: www.tipitaka.org - Contains the *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka* in Roman script with commentaries.

Global Pagoda website: www.globalpagoda.org - Contains updated information including facility for online donation.

Prison course website: www.prison.dhamma.org

Executive course website: www.executive.dhamma.org

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Bhālā hoyā isa jagata kā, sukhī hoṇya saba loga;
Dūra hoṇya dāridra dukha, dūra hoṇya saba roga.*

May the world enjoy well-being; may all people be happy;

May poverty and suffering be dispelled;
May all ills be vanquished.

*Barase barakhā samaya para, dūra rahe duṣakāla;
Sāsana hove Dharama kā, loga hoṇya khuṣahāla.*

May the rains fall in due season, may there be no drought;

May the government be righteous,

May the people be happy and prosperous.

With much metta,

A Vipassana meditator

Sāsana meṇ jāge Dharama, ukhaḍe bhraṣṭācāra;

Dhaniyoṇ meṇ jāge Dharama, svaccha hoyā vyāpāra.

May Dhamma arise among the rulers, uprooting

corruption;

May Dhamma arise in the wealthy, cleansing business dealings.

*Jana jana meṇ jāge Dharama, jana jana sukhīyā hoyā;
Jana mana ke dukhaḍe miṭeṇ, jana jana maṅgala hoyā.*

May the Dhamma arise in the masses, may everyone be happy;

May affliction be ended in the minds of all; may all be at peace.

With best compliments from

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

41 U.A. Bungalow Road, Jawahar Nagar, Delhi 110 007

Mumbai, Tel: 23513526; Chennai, Tel: 24982315;

Pune, Tel: 24486190; Bangalore, Tel: 26542591;

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2412331.

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Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403,

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Tel: [91] (02553) 244076, 244086; Fax: 244176

Email: info@vri.dhamma.org

Website: www.vri.dhamma.org