

Vipassana Newsletter

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

Vol. 15, No. 9: 18 September 2005
Published every month

Vipassana Research Institute
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Phutthassa lokadhammehi
cittam yassa na kampati;
asokam virajam khemam,
etam mangalamuttamam.*

When faced with the vicissitudes of life,
one's mind is unshaken,
sorrowless, stainless, secure—
this is the highest blessing.

—*Khuddaka pāṭha 5.12, Maṅgala Sutta*

THE BUDDHA'S TEACHING IS FOR ALL

S. N. Goenka

(The following is a translation of 'Lokaguru Buddha' by S. N. Goenka published by VRI in December 2003. It has been condensed for the Vipassana Newsletter.)

“What knowledge did Gotama the Buddha have of the difficulties and complexities of household life? As a prince, he renounced the household life immediately after the birth of his son, Rāhula, and lived the life of a homeless recluse. He did not live as a householder himself, so how could he teach others about the duties of household life? Since the Buddha lived the life of a recluse for forty-five years, he understood the problems of recluses very well and so his teaching was very useful for them. His only teaching to householders was that they should abandon the bondage of household life and become monks or nuns. Consequently, a large number of householders became recluses. So, by following his teaching, householders may become good recluses but they can never become exemplary householders.”

Many people in India harbour this misconception about the Buddha. I too was a victim of this delusion for many years. At the age of 31, I came in contact with the beneficial technique of Vipassana that had been taught by the Buddha. I was immensely benefited by it. Nobody asked me to become a *bhikkhu* (monk).

My revered teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, was an ideal householder. Sayagyi U Ba Khin's teacher was also a householder and millions of people in Myanmar who are followers of the Buddha are householders. *Bhikkhus* make up less than one percent of the population of Myanmar.

After benefiting from Vipassana and finding it completely faultless, I began studying the original

words of the Buddha. I discovered that although the Buddha had given many discourses to *bhikkhus* on living ideal lives as recluses, he had given several discourses to householders on living ideal lives as householders. And all his discourses on meditation were applicable and beneficial to both.

So it is totally false to say that the Buddha was a teacher of *bhikkhus* alone. His teaching was for all: householders and recluses, men and women, kings and paupers, the wealthy and the poor, scholars and the illiterate, children and the elderly—speaking any language and of any country. Truly, the Buddha was a World Teacher.

Prince Siddhattha married at the age of 16 and left the household life at the age of 29. During those 13 years, he must have experienced many of the complexities of household life. After he became the Buddha, he came in contact with a large number of people, which exposed him to many more issues about household life.

After attaining enlightenment, the perfection with which this great person understood the difficulties of household life and offered practical solutions to people, is unparalleled in human history. The discourses that the Buddha gave to householders are not just for the followers of a particular religion but for everyone.

One who makes even a cursory study of the Buddha's discourses will appreciate how beneficial they are for householders.

A householder understands that the experience of the highest happiness is possible only by transcending all the suffering of the worldly life and attaining *nibbāna*. But on the journey to the final goal, it is

possible to face the vicissitudes of daily life with an equanimous mind. Vipassana meditators learn to progress in Dhamma while carrying out their worldly responsibilities. By practising Vipassana regularly, a good householder realizes from experience that living a wholesome life results in happiness and harmony, not only for oneself, but also for others.

A Vipassana meditator begins to understand the eternal law of nature, of cause and effect, not merely at the devotional or intellectual level but also at the experiential level. As the seed is, so the fruit will be. As the action is, so the result will be. Good deeds will yield sweet fruits; bad deeds will yield bitter fruits. Whether one believes in this eternal law of nature or not, one's existence is bound by these laws. If a person falls from a height, he may break his limbs or lose his life, even if he does not believe in the law of gravity.

Whoever practises this scientific technique taught by the Buddha—whether a recluse or a householder—begins to clearly understand the law of *kamma*, the law of cause and effect. One understands, “My present circumstances are the cumulative result of my past and present *kammas*. I am responsible for my present stock of *kammas*. No one else can help me to escape its consequences.”

We are responsible for our happiness or unhappiness now and in the future. Whether we accept or reject this law of cause and effect, the results will still follow according to this law.

The Buddha gave the beneficial technique of Vipassana to enable the ordinary householder to become an exemplary individual by developing morality, concentration of mind, and wisdom. Society changes for the better only when individuals change for the better. The greatness of society depends on the greatness of individuals. The Buddha gave a practical teaching to enable the individual and the community to live an ideal life, and showed the way for the development of an ideal human society.

Three Unwholesome Practices:

At the time of the Buddha, three kinds of unwholesome practices were widespread, which caused immense harm to society.

1. Animal sacrifice: Initially, *sāvika yajñas* were wholesome ceremonial offerings. During these *yajñas*, the ruler as well as the rich distributed wealth to the needy. However, tempted by false assurances of gaining heaven after death, the practice of animal sacrifice was added to these *yajñas*. People strayed from the noble quality of natural compassion towards all creatures.

With great compassion, the Buddha opposed this wrong practice that had become prevalent in society. During his lifetime, the rulers, merchants and priests gradually stopped this cruel practice of animal

sacrifice. Within a few centuries after the Buddha, this unwholesome practice that had been customary in the name of *yajña* ended completely. However, even in present times, animals are sacrificed to please a god or goddess in some parts of India.

2. Human slavery: During the time of the Buddha, rearing animals and selling them to the butcher was widespread. The Buddha exhorted householders not to practise this wrong livelihood. Even worse was the inhuman practice of enslaving people and selling them. Sometimes people bought young women as slaves for immoral purposes. In the literature of those days, we find many accounts of male and female slaves, along with servants and attendants, in the houses of rulers and wealthy householders. We also find accounts of ornamented cows and female slaves being given as alms or gifts. How could anyone take care of so many slaves? Therefore, they were sold, and thus, the slave trade flourished. The Buddha prohibited this livelihood for householders, and as a result, this practice of slavery was greatly reduced, and later ended completely. However, the new incarnation of slavery in the form of bonded labour remains, and is yet to be eradicated.

3. Caste System: The third harmful practice was discrimination based on birth. A person living a totally immoral life was considered to be pious and of high status because he was born in a particular caste. Similarly, a person living a moral life was considered to be inferior, of low status or even an untouchable because of birth in a particular caste. When caste was given so much importance, living a moral life became secondary.

The Buddha worked tirelessly to get rid of the harm caused to Dhamma by this social evil and was successful to a great extent. He explained that one who is born of a human mother will be a human, not an animal or bird or reptile. If he is immoral, corrupt, wicked, he is an outcast; if he is moral, virtuous, righteous, he is worthy of respect. A person who does immoral deeds should be considered as inferior and an outcast; if the same person develops wisdom and becomes moral and righteous, he should be respected.

Similarly it is wrong to consider an immoral person to be of high status merely because he is wealthy. The only yardstick for high status and respect in society should be whether one is living a life of Dhamma. For a householder, it is essential to earn a living honestly by working hard and with intelligence. It is equally important to live an ethical life and to make proper use of wealth that one has earned. This alone can make human life successful and meaningful.

Unfortunately, within a few centuries after the Buddha, the dangerous snake of casteism again raised its head and has entangled the entire society in its

destructive coils. Centuries later, India is still suffering from the adverse effects of this poison. If the Buddha's teaching, which gave all importance to moral conduct had been followed, the state of the country would have been completely different.

The Buddha opposed animal sacrifice in the name of Dhamma, discrimination based on birth, and trade of slaves as well as of animals. The eradication of these three evils was essential for the re-establishment of Dhamma then and is equally necessary today. For an ideal household life and an ideal human society, it is essential to have compassion towards all creatures and to have equality among all people. The teaching of the Buddha to householders, for the establishment of an exemplary human society, is an invaluable gift for the entire world.

Human beings may make claims of supremacy over earth, water and sky but as long as they do not establish mastery over their own minds, they remain defeated. The Buddha has taught an effective technique that can be used to gain mastery over oneself. Practising Vipassana, each individual can gain insight into their own nature, establish mastery over their own mind, and reform their undisciplined nature, thus benefitting themselves and others. This is the greatness of the Buddha's universal teaching to householders.

Emperor Asoka and national security

Two hundred years after the Buddha, an exemplary emperor of India, Emperor Asoka, strongly supported the universal teaching of the Buddha. This enabled the formation of an ideal society. The influence of the Buddha's teaching spread not only to the neighbouring kingdoms, but also to distant lands. Besides, Emperor Asoka presented an illustrious example of an ideal ruler, one who did not attack weaker neighbouring kingdoms merely to fulfil his imperial ambitions.

However, Emperor Asoka was constantly alert about the security of his empire and maintained a powerful defensive army. He protected and nurtured his subjects like his own children. This glorious example of the ideal way to fulfil the duties of a ruler was exemplified by him because he applied the practical teaching of the Buddha. He also set an admirable example of establishing strong friendly relations with the neighbouring kingdoms, the enduring influence of which can be seen even now, centuries after his rule.

Vipassana has been accepted by hundreds of thousands of people from all religions and social strata all over the world in the past three decades. However even now, some people, on hearing about Vipassana, frown and say that it is Buddhist. I feel great compassion towards such people. The false propaganda of centuries has spread so much darkness!

Is living a moral life, gaining mastery over the mind, and purifying the mind by developing insight the monopoly of only the Buddhists? Is living such a life unacceptable to others?

Let us brush away the cobweb of misconceptions about the teaching of the Buddha. He investigated the universal eternal practical truth before teaching it to householders. Let us gain mastery over the mind and fill our family life with happiness, harmony, and contentment, and at the same time, share this happiness with others. This will result in an ideal human society. 🌸

FIRST COURSE FOR BLIND CHILDREN IN MYANMAR

This Anapana course was held on 24 July 2005 at the Blind school in Yangon for 73 visually impaired children—48 boys and 25 girls. 14 CCTs and the RCCC served the course.

ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
02 Oct	South Mumbai	10-12 years	29 & 30 Sept
02 Oct	JNPT	10-12 years	29 & 30 Sept
09 Oct	Andheri	10-12 years	6 & 7 Oct
09 Oct	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	6 & 7 Oct
16 Oct	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	13 & 14 Oct
06 Nov	South Mumbai	13-16 years	3 & 4 Nov
13 Nov	Andheri	13-16 years	10 & 11 Nov
13 Nov	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	10 & 11 Nov
20 Nov	Ghatkopar	10-12 years	17 & 18 Nov
27 Nov	Matunga	10-12 years	24 & 25 Nov
04 Dec	South Mumbai	10-12 years	1 & 2 Dec
11 Dec	Andheri	10-12 years	8 & 9 Dec
11 Dec	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	8 & 9 Dec
18 Dec	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	15 & 16 Dec
25 Dec	Matunga	10-12 years	22 & 23 Dec

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

Course Venues: **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W), Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505 **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNDT College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: (0251) 252-2693. **JNPT Vipassana Center:** JNPT Township, Trainee Hostel Bldg, Sector 3, Sheva Taluka, Uran, Navi Mumbai, 98923-87145, 98218-08488, 2747-2554. **Dhamma Sarita:** Jivan Sandhya Mangal Sansthan, near Khadavli station -Tel: 25101096, 25162505 **South Mumbai:** Times of India Bldg., Opp CST Station. For registration and information call Tel 23081622 **Ghatkopar:** SNDT School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar West, opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086, Tel: 25101096, 25162505 NB *Please bring cushion. *Please register on the specified phone numbers. If you are unable to attend after registration, please inform in advance. *Please arrive on time for the course. (To serve children's courses in Mumbai, call 98200-22990.)

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. (Mrs.) Pushpalata Badole, an assistant teacher from Bhilai, Chattisgarh, India, passed away on 24 April 2005. She was suffering from cancer. She continued to walk on the path of Dhamma with strong determination even during the terminal stages of the illness. She is survived by her husband, Dr. Sharad Badole, who is also an assistant teacher.

Mr. G. V. V. Satyanarayana, an assistant teacher from Hyderabad, passed away on 31 August 2005 due to myocardial infarction (heart attack). He played an important role in the spread of Dhamma in Andhra Pradesh.

May they both be happy, peaceful and liberated!

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācharyas:

1. Dr. Rajendra Chokhani, *Mumbai*
To serve Dhamma Giri (in addition to Mr. Arun & Mrs. Kamala Toshniwal and Mr. Premji & Mrs. Madhu Savla)
2. & 3. Mr. Klaus & Mrs. Nadia Helwig, *Japan*
To serve Philippines, Vietnam and distribution of teaching sets of East Asian languages

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācharyas:

- Mrs. Manju Vaish, *New Delhi*
To serve Dhamma Sota

Senior Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr. Prakash Mahajan
To serve Jalgaon district including Jalgaon city
2. & 3. Mr. Ittiporn & Mrs. Monta Thong-Innate, *Thailand*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

1. Ms. A. Gayatri Balakrishnan, *Igatpuri*
2. Mr. Sharnjit Singh Kanwar, *Punjab*
3. Mrs. Indu Bharat Shah, *Mumbai*
4. Mrs. Rebecca Shrestha, *Nepal*
5. U Tin Shwe, *Myanmar*
6. & 7. Mr. Thomas & Mrs. Heike Willburger, *Germany*

Children Course Teachers:

- Myanmar: 1. [Daw Hla Hla Myint](#) 2. [Daw Mya Mya Oo](#)
3. [Daw Than Than Myint](#) 4. [Daw Khin Hnin Yi](#)
5. [U Htay Myint](#) 6. [U Maung Tu](#) 7. [U Aung Naing Win](#)
Thailand: 8. [Ms. Kanmanee Phoopakdee](#)

FIRST PRISON COURSE IN MONGOLIA

28 female inmates serving long sentences in the only female correctional facility in Mongolia successfully completed their first Vipassana course from 1 to 12 August 2005. The course was conducted as a result of a direct order by the Minister of Justice, who is also the speaker of the Mongolian Parliament. On the last day, the positive results of the course were broadcast nationwide. The Justice Department officials wish to organize more prison courses. For more details about Vipassana in Mongolia, contact: Vipassana centre trust of Mongolia, P. O. Box 32, Ulaanbaatar 48, Mongolia, Index 210648, Email: shirendev@hotmail.com

MANAGER REQUIRED AT VIPASSANA CENTRES

Centre managers are required at *Dhamma Bodhi*, Bodhgaya, (Bihar) and *Dhamma Suvatti*, Sravasti (U.P.). Vipassana meditators who have completed a Satipatthana course, have good knowledge of Hindi and English and are less than 60 years may send their applications to Course Manager, VIA, *Dhamma Giri*, *Igatpuri* 422 403. They will be provided with meals and accommodation as well as suitable honorarium, if necessary.

GOENKAJI'S DISCOURSES ON TELEVISION

India: A new series of Hindi discourses by Goenkaji is being telecast daily at about 9:45 am on Aastha TV channel.

USA: Aastha will be telecasting Goenkaji's discourses at 6 pm EST (Monday to Friday) on the WORLDDIRECT platform of DIRECTV on channel no. 2005.

Zee TV: Daily at 4:30 am (Indian Standard Time)

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Mana ke karama sudhāra le,
mana hī pramukha pradhāna;
Kāyika vācika karama to, mana kī hī santāna.*
Correct your mental actions,
mind is first and foremost;
Deeds of body and speech are offspring of the mind.

*Jo cāhe bandhana kbuleñ, mukti dukhoñ se hoyā;
Vaśa meñ kara le citta ko ,citta ke vaśa mata hoyā.*

If you seek release from bondage, and
freedom from suffering;
Be master of your mind; do not be mastered by it.

*With much metta,
A Vipassana meditator*

*Cita se cita kā damana kara, cita se citta sudhāra;
Citta svaccha kara citta se, khola mukti ke dvāra.*

By mind control your mind, by mind transform your mind;
By mind cleanse your mind and open the door to liberation.

*Cita kī jaisī cetanā, phala vaisā hī hoyā;
Durmana kā phala dukhada hī, sukhaa sumana kā hoyā.*

As is the volition of your mind, so will be the fruit;
An impure mind yields misery, a pure mind gives happiness.

*With best compliments from
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS*

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LIFE SUBSCRIPTION: RS 500 (U.S. \$100 OUTSIDE INDIA) BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF VRI.

Edited and published by R. P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri 422 403 and printed at Akshar Chitra Press, 69B-Road, Satpur, Nashik 422 007.

18 September 2005

Posted at Igatpuri, Dist. Nashik

Posting Day: *Purnima* of every month

POSTAL CLAUSE NO. 232 REG. NO. 49916/90
LICENSED TO POST WITHOUT PREPAYMENT OF POSTAGE - LICENCE NUMBER - AR/NSK/WP-13
POSTAL REG. NO. AR/NSK 39/2003-2005

PRINTED MATTER

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Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

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

Email: info@giri.dhamma.org

Website: www.vri.dhamma.org