

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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

WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Idha nandati pecca nandati,
katapuñño ubhayattha nandati;
puññaṃ me katanti nandati,
bhiiyyo nandati suggatiṃ gato.*

Here one is happy, hereafter one is happy,
The doer of meritorious deeds is happy in both existences;
“Good have I done.” (thinking thus), he is happy,
He is happier still when he goes to a blissful state.

—Dhammapada 18

THE ESSENCE OF DHAMMA

S. N. Goenka

(The following is a talk by Goenkaji for Vipassana meditators in California on 26 August 1986. It was first published in the VRI publication *For the Benefit of Many*, which is a compilation of Goenkaji's talks and answers to questions from Vipassana students. It has been adapted for the Newsletter.)

Dear members of our Dhamma family:

You are all old students who wish to become established in Vipassana, progress on the path and enjoy the best fruits of Dhamma. To progress on the path of Dhamma it is absolutely essential that you practise Dhamma, and to practise Dhamma it is essential that you understand Dhamma.

If you do not practise Dhamma and merely develop attachment to it—taking it as a dogma, a cult or an organized religion—then Dhamma is no longer Dhamma for you. When you understand Dhamma in its true nature, the deep essence of Dhamma, then the outer shell has no importance.

To understand what Dhamma is you have to understand what *sīla* is and why it should be practised; you have to understand what *sammā-samādhi* is and why this type of *samādhi* should be practised; you have to understand what real *paññā* is and why it should be practised.

The Buddha made people understand at the experiential level why they should observe *sīla*, and then gave them the ability to really observe *sīla*. At the intellectual level one may understand, “I should not do this, it is unwholesome. I should do that, it is wholesome.” And yet in daily life we keep performing unwholesome actions. One of the ancient scriptures points this out, saying:

*Jānāmi dharmaṃ, na ca me pravṛittih;
Jānāmi adharmaṃ, na ca me nivṛittih.*

I know very well what is dharma and yet I cannot follow it.

I know very well what is contrary to dharma, and yet I cannot abstain from it.

Someone who becomes a Buddha discovers a way for people to abstain from unwholesome actions. He makes people realise what actually happens when you kill, steal, commit adultery, lie, or consume alcohol or drugs.

Going deep inside, you start to understand, “I cannot kill anybody unless I generate negativity in my mind—anger, hatred, ill will, animosity, some negativity or the other.” And you also realise, “As soon as I generate negativity in my mind, nature starts punishing me. I become miserable then and there.” Realising this universal truth the Buddha said,

Idha tappati, pecca tappati.

You start suffering now and you continue to suffer in the future.

The seed of the unwholesome action that you have planted makes you suffer here and now, and it will grow and give very bitter fruit.

The Buddha gave a simile: If you take a rope and twist it repeatedly the rope will become tighter and tighter. Every time you break *sīla* you twist that rope further, and you become tense deep inside. The tendency to react in the same way becomes a habit, and you twist it again and again; thus your misery continues to grow. He said that, quite possibly, at the surface level of the mind you don't know that you are creating tension inside. How does it happen that you are unaware of this?

If you look at a burning ember covered by a thick layer of ash it appears as if the charcoal is not burning, as if there is no fire. In the same way, ninety-nine percent of your mind is burning and the one percent at the surface might be distracted by enjoying this or that sensual pleasure. Because you have not seen inside you do not know that you are burning.

Every time you break *sīla* you justify it, and at the surface level you feel perfectly all right. You say to yourself, “I killed that fellow because he was bad.” Or you may say, “Why should he have that? What was wrong with my taking it? I’m quite happy now.” Or else you say, “I had sexual relations but I didn’t harm anybody; it was not a rape, we both consented. What is wrong with that?” Or again you say, “I took only a little glass of wine and I didn’t get intoxicated. What was wrong with that? After all, when I’m in society somebody offers me a glass of wine and by accepting it I am not disturbing the peace and harmony of society, I am helping it. Everybody’s happy.”

A Buddha will smile and say, “Mad fellows. They are happy with the layer of ash covering the truth. They don’t know that they are burning deep inside and that they keep giving fuel to this burning.” Every time you break any *sīla* you are giving more and more fuel to this fire and you become more and more miserable. This cannot be understood by arguments or discussions. Only when you go deeper can you realize that every vocal or physical action that breaks the law of nature simultaneously causes harm to yourself.

When you go deeper you also see that as you start performing wholesome actions, either physical or vocal, the fire burning inside dies down and you start feeling peaceful. The Buddha said, *Idha nandati, pecca nandati, katapuñño ubhayattha nandati*. Because you are cultivating a mental habit pattern of generating peace, harmony, and real happiness, this mental state continues. All actions, either physical or vocal, made with the base of a pure mind cause happiness—not the happiness of that small layer of ash covering a burning ember, but happiness at the depth of the mind.

Samādhi is concentration. How should you concentrate? And why should you concentrate in this particular way? This was the enlightenment of the Buddha: *Sammā-samādhi* must be a *samādhi* that leads us to *paññā*, and its object must be the reality pertaining to your own body and mind.

What is known in the West as the conscious mind is actually a tiny part of the mind. The part of the mind called the unconscious or the half-conscious keeps feeling the sensations on the body and reacting to them. The surface part of the mind is like the layer of ash covering the burning ember: You can play with this and put some ice there so that you feel as if the burning has ceased and that you are perfectly happy. If you meditate using verbalization, it is only the

conscious mind that is verbalizing; the deep unconscious has nothing to do with it. Likewise it is the tiny part of the mind, the “conscious mind” that visualizes, or imagines, or gives some suggestion, or plays some intellectual or emotional games. The mind deep inside has nothing to do with all this, and yet you feel as if you are peaceful.

When you go to a cinema, bar or theatre, you divert your agitated conscious mind and enjoy sensual pleasures. When you intoxicate your conscious mind with alcohol or drugs, again you forget your misery for some time. In the same way, when you intoxicate your mind with different kinds of meditation, you forget your misery. You forget the red-hot charcoal that is burning deep inside.

The enlightenment of the Buddha was to go to the depth and understand the law of cause and effect. He understood that whenever one reacts with craving or aversion, misery follows; this is the law of nature. He investigated why one reacts in this way.

At the apparent level it feels as if you react to things outside. Whatever you see, hear, smell, taste, touch or think that is pleasant, it seems that you react to that sensory contact with craving. Similarly whatever unpleasant contact you have at any of the sense doors, it seems that you react to it with aversion. That is true, but only at the surface level. There is a missing link that you cannot understand without practising Vipassana. You do not react to the external objects coming in contact with the respective sense doors; you react to the sensations within your body caused by the contact. When the sensation is pleasant, you react with craving; when the sensation is unpleasant, you react with aversion. If this link is missing you are not working at the depth of your mind, you are simply working at the surface.

People who work only with the conscious mind fool themselves, and it doesn’t actually help them. You have to go to the depth, limit your attention to your own mind-and-matter phenomenon, and observe the interaction taking place there. The “unconscious mind” deep inside is constantly in contact with the bodily sensations. Mind and matter are so interrelated that every moment anything that happens in the mind influences the body, and anything that happens at the physical level influences the mind.

The Buddha was the first person in this era (there were many Buddhas before who had discovered the same thing) to find out this truth, and with compassion and goodwill to place it before people, “Look, this is the law. Understand this law with your own experience, and come out of your misery.”

Someone might forget this truth and say, “Whether I go to this or that teacher the meditation is the same.” I would reply, “If the guru teaches you to feel bodily sensations and develop equanimity towards them, then

it is the same. It doesn't matter whether it is called Vipassana or not, whether it is the teaching of the Buddha or anyone else." But if the guru does not teach you to work like this, and still you say, "His teaching is the same," you are harming yourself because you are forgetting your bodily sensations, to which you keep reacting with craving and aversion.

This ash that covers the truth inside must be removed. Any object of meditation that helps this ash to grow is not a useful object of meditation; any object of meditation that removes the ash and makes us feel the misery inside is helpful.

This is the first noble truth, "Look how much burning is going on, how much tension there is." This can only be experienced when you start feeling sensations within the body. Every bodily sensation is a misery because out of ignorance you react and generate suffering. How can this be stopped? How can the mind that is so enslaved by this habit pattern be freed from slavery?

It can only be done by practice; intellectual discussions, debates, or accepting the truth at the devotional level will not help. These can give us guidance and show us how we should work, but then we actually have to work. Those who want to progress on the path of Dhamma have to understand what Vipassana meditators are doing and the real reason why we work in this way.

Of course you should not despise others. Those who teach meditation techniques that work only at the intellectual level are also helping people; at least the conscious mind is purified to some extent and this is helpful. But for your own work understand that liberation will only come when you go to the root cause of misery. Unless you eradicate the root of the misery, you can't eradicate your misery.

Dhamma is so simple and yet people have made it so complicated. There cannot be anything simpler than Dhamma. It has been made complicated by adding this or that philosophy, this or that belief. Just practise; don't make it complicated. Those who have made it complicated have harmed themselves and harmed others. You have the true path but it's a long path. To change the habit pattern of the mind takes time; but a beginning has been made. Even if you have taken one course, a good beginning has been made. Make use of this and start to decondition the mind at the deepest level.

As you go deeper in your meditation while practising all the five *silas*, you will start understanding that any breakage of *silā* increases the ash on the surface of the mind, and simultaneously increases the burning inside. So realize the truth of burning, the misery within. Don't be deluded by this surface ash, by this small part of the so-called conscious mind.

Also understand that only by practising Dhamma can you benefit from Dhamma. If you take one course but do not practise every day you will be helped, but only to a small extent. Or if you take one course every year but you don't practise daily, the habit pattern of your mind cannot be changed; and that blind habit pattern has to be changed. Every time you meditate you change this habit pattern little by little, you decondition your mind little by little until you reach the stage where the mind is totally unconditioned; all the past habit patterns evaporate.

For this, you have to work seriously. You have this wonderful facility here, and you have made good use of it. I find the vibrations here have become quite good within these few years, and now you can share this vibration with others.

Once Dhamma starts growing, it keeps growing and nobody can stop it. Grow externally and a large number of people will benefit. Grow internally and deep inside you will benefit. If you yourself do not benefit and you only think of benefiting others, it won't work.

Develop in Dhamma for your own benefit and for the benefit of others; for your own welfare and for the welfare of others; for your own liberation and the liberation of others.

Bhavatu sabba maṅgalam!

May all beings be happy! ☸

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 (IST). (Please confirm exact timings.)

ONE DAY COURSE AT GLOBAL PAGODA

A one-day course is being organized at the Global Pagoda on 11 December 2005 from 11 am to 5 pm. Goenkaji will be present during the course. Vipassana meditators who have completed at least one ten-day course may contact: Mr. Derek Pegado, Tel: (022) 2845-2261 or 2845-2111.

One day course at Global Pagoda: every Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Those wishing to visit the Pagoda site may call for gate pass: Tel: (022) 2845-2111, 2845-2261 Tel/Fax: 2845-2112. Email: globalpagoda@hotmail.com Website: www.globalpagoda.org

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

Current and past issues of the Hindi Vipassana Patrika and English Newsletter can be downloaded from the VRI website: <http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html> <http://www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters/index.html>

IN MEMORIAM

Dr. (Mrs.) Kamala Gandhi, Vipassana teacher, passed away peacefully on 17 October, 2005 at her home in Scottsdale, Arizona, U.S.A. She played an important role in the spread of Dhamma in Europe and America.

May she be happy, peaceful and liberated!

CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
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
08 Jan	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	5 & 6 Jan
15 Jan	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	12 & 13 Jan
22 Jan	JNPT	13-16 years	19 & 20 Jan
29 Jan	Matunga	10-12 years	26 & 27 Jan

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 SNTD 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:** SNTD 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.)

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Acāryas:

Mr. Dirk Taveirne & Mrs. Mieke De Wilde, *Belgium*

To serve Dhamma Pajjota

Senior Assistant Teachers:

Mr. Arthur Rosenfeld & Mrs. Ana Teixido, *the Netherlands*

Mr. Robert & Mrs. Sarah Doyle, *U.K.*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

1. Mrs. Prema Suresh Sarda, *Aurangabad*

2. & 3. Dr. Myo Aung & Daw Khin Than Hmi, *Myanmar*

4. & 5. Dr. U Thein Kyi & Dr. Daw Than Than Htay, *Myanmar*

6. Ms. Anna Schlink, *Australia* 7. Ms. Deborah Coy, *USA*

Children Course Teachers:

Mr. Ramanadhan A. & Mrs. Shanti Ramanadhan, *U.A.E.*

Important Note: 1. All Vipassana course management committees are requested to send the schedule of courses of their centre or non-centre courses on the official letterhead of the trust and signed by the area teacher. If the schedule of courses has already been sent, they are requested to send letter of approval by the area teacher to *Dhamma Giri*.
2. All area teachers, centre managers and non-centre course organizers are requested to send course forms, course reports and centre reports of all courses held in their area/centre in 2005 to VRI, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403 as soon as possible so that Annual Vipassana Report for 2005 can be completed as soon as possible.

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Kṣaṇa kṣaṇa jāge Dharama hī, kṣaṇa kṣaṇa jāge hoṣā;
Kṣaṇa bhara bhī agyāna meṇ, rabeṇ nabiṇ madaboṣā.*

May Dhamma arise every moment,
may awareness arise every moment;
May there be no moment of ignorance,
may no heedlessness remain.

*Kṣaṇa kṣaṇa kṣaṇa kṣaṇa bitate, jīvana bitā jāya;
Kṣaṇa kṣaṇa kā upayoga kara, bitā kṣaṇa nabiṇ āya.*

Moment after moment after moment,
life keeps slipping by;
Make use of every moment;
the past moment never comes again.

*With much metta,
A Vipassana meditator*

*Mānava kā jīvana milā, Dharma milā anamola;
Aba śraddhā se yatana se, apane bandhana khola.*

Attained—this human life; attained—the priceless Dhamma.
Now with faith and effort, untie your bonds!

*Mānava jīvana ratana sā, kiya vyartha barabāda;
Caracā kara lī Dharama kī, cākha na pāyā svāda.*

Human life is like a jewel that you have idly squandered;
Merely talking of Dhamma, you did not taste its savour.

*With best compliments from
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS*

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