

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Words of Dhamma

*Na vedanaṃ vedayati sapañño,
sukhampi dukkhapi bahussutopi;
Ayañca dhārassa puthujjanena,
mahā vireso kusalassa hoti.*

— *Samyutta Nikāyo, Saḷāyatanavaggo 2.Vedanāsamyuttaṃ, Salla Sutta 254.*

A person with wisdom is not affected by sensation, either pleasant or unpleasant, being well-trained. Between the sage and the worldling, this is the great difference in skill.

The Vessel of the Dhamma

- by Principal Teacher S. N. Goenka

The following article has been adapted from an address given by Goenkaji to the annual Meeting on the Spread of the Dhamma held in March 1989 at the Vipassana International Academy, Iगतपुरी, India.

Messengers and servants of the Dhamma,

You have all assembled here from around the world to deepen your understanding of how to spread the Dhamma so that more and more people may come into contact with it and benefit from it. Whatever you discuss or plan here in the coming days, keep firmly in your minds the basic message imparted by the greatest messenger of Dhamma twenty-five centuries ago. That message explains not only what Dhamma is but also how it should be distributed. Every word of it is valuable to remember. It is a message of eternal relevance to all Dhamma messengers in all ages.

What ultimately is the volition with which to spread the Dhamma? What is the underlying purpose? Is it the wish to convert people to Buddhism, Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, or any other organized religion? On the contrary, that great messenger made clear the volition required. The Dhamma is to be spread *bahujana-hitāya, bahujana-sukhāya*—for the good and benefit of many! As many people as one is capable of serving.

And how is this service to be given? Again, the same message gives us the answer: *lokānukampāya*—with compassion for people, with selfless love and goodwill in one's heart.

All servants and messengers of Dhamma must keep examining themselves to check that their service accords with this message, for egotism may make its onslaught in any person at any time. When it does, the recognition

one receives and the prominence one is granted seem more important than the service rendered. This attitude is nothing but madness, all the more dangerous because it can be so subtle. For this reason one must constantly be on guard against its approach.

Of course, personal material gain is out of the question, but certain forms of Dhamma service may sometimes lead to name and fame. Be careful not to let this become the attraction. Remember that you must work without expecting anything in return, with compassion for those whom you serve. They are the most important, not those who give the service. The weaker your egotism and the greater your goodwill, the better you are fit to serve.

And what precisely is the service that you must seek to give? Again the master teacher has explained: *desetha Dhammam*—give the people Dhamma, nothing but Dhamma. Not the Dhamma of any organized religion, be it Buddhist, Hindu, Christian, or Jain, but the universal law applicable to one and all.

One characteristic of the genuine Dhamma is that it confers benefits at every stage to those who practice it. As the teacher said, it is *ādikalyāṇaṃ, majjhekalyāṇaṃ, pariyosānakalyāṇaṃ*—beneficial in the beginning, in the middle, and in the end. The first steps on the path yield positive results at once, and these increase as one goes further. When the final goal is reached, the benefits are limitless. Thus, every step of the practice produces good. This is one important feature by which to recognize the true Dhamma.

Another characteristic is that the Dhamma is complete. Nothing need be added to it or removed from it to render it effective; it is *kevalparipuṇṇaṃ parisuddhaṃ*. The Dhamma is like a vessel that is already full; nothing more is needed to fill it, and any addition would mean sacrificing what is already there.

Often the urge to add may be well-intentioned, in the

hope of making the Dhamma more attractive to people of various backgrounds. “What harm is there in adding something that is itself good?” someone may ask. Understand: the harm is that the Dhamma will eventually be relegated to the background and forgotten. Additions may offer mundane benefits, but the goal of Dhamma is supramundane: liberation from suffering. Something may be harmless in itself, but it becomes most dangerous if it causes us to lose sight of this goal.

Equally insidious are moves to abridge the Dhamma in any way. Again, the intention may be good: to avoid offense to people who might find aspects of the teaching hard to accept. Against such urgings we must recall that the Dhamma was not devised to suit any particular set of views; it is the law of nature, rediscovered by the Master Teacher 2500 years ago. Every part of it is needed to lead on to the final goal. Omitting an aspect that some find controversial—whether *sīla*, *samādhi*, or *paññā*—may be a good way to curry favour, but what is that worth if the efficacy of the teaching is lost? We seek not popularity but liberation for ourselves and others.

Given a bowl of nectar, someone cries, “It is too sour!” Another says, “It would be sweeter with a little sugar.” Very well, mix a little sugar with it; there is no harm in doing so. But if the next time the bowl is offered, more sugar is added, and more every time, eventually the taste of nectar will be lost. Then people will mix together sugar and water and drink that mixture, calling it nectar, and wonder why their thirst is not slaked. So with the nectar of the Dhamma, imbibe it in its pure form, without any alteration, in order truly to benefit from it.

Words are only words; to attract others to the Dhamma, far more useful is the example you set by your way of life. Therefore the great teacher said, “*Brahmacariyam pakāsetha*,” be a shining example of the Dhamma by applying it yourself. This is the best way to encourage others to practice it.

Suppose you point with your finger in a particular direction and say, “This is the right path that all must follow to reach liberation. This is the direct way to real happiness.” Before examining the path, people will first look at your finger. If it is stained with dirt or blood, what confidence can they have in the way to which you point? Develop purity in yourself if you wish to encourage others to follow the path of purification.

The teaching is extraordinary in its simplicity; a certain cause will produce a certain effect. To remove the effect, eliminate the cause. Reacting with craving to pleasant sensations or with aversion to unpleasant ones will immediately give rise to suffering. If, instead of reacting, one smilingly observes and understands the impermanence of the experience, then no suffering will arise. This is Dhamma, the universal law, applicable to all regardless of religion, gender, social group, or nationality. It is this essence of Dhamma that we seek to offer to others in its pristine purity.

Keep to these fundamental principles of the Dhamma, and all the details of how to distribute it will naturally become clear.

As love and compassion are the proper bases for spreading the Dhamma, they must form the base for all your discussions during this meeting. When making a suggestion, be careful to present it humbly, without any attachment to your view. See that you speak with all the wisdom that you have. You may put forward a proposal up to three times, but if others still do not accept it, smile and drop it. Recognize that the Dhamma will take the course that is best for it, not necessarily the one that you, with your limited understanding, think is best.

Remember that an empty vessel has nothing to offer others. Therefore, fill yourself with the Dhamma. Discover real peace and harmony within yourself, and naturally these will overflow to benefit others. May you keep walking on the path of Dhamma for your own good, happiness, and liberation and for the good, happiness, and liberation of so many.

*Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ,
Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ,
Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ.*

Questions & Answers

Annual meeting: Dhamma Giri,

India March 4, 1990

Q: *Can a Hindu, a Jain, or a Muslim take part in religious celebrations at places for the practice of their faith and yet still make progress in Vipassana?*

Goenkaji: Yes. If you have understood Vipassana properly, even when you attend religious celebrations, you will understand that these are meaningless, essenceless. If your family celebrates such festivals, go to the so-called places of worship with them in order to have good relations; you shouldn’t cause antagonism to arise. If you have to bow down, yes, bow down.

But how should you bow down? We were taught by my teacher never to bow down mechanically. As one bows down the first time, one is aware of sensations at the top of the head and understands *anicca*; the second time one bows down, understanding *dukkha*; and the third time one bows down, understanding *anattā*.

Wherever one bows down understanding *anicca*, *dukkha*, *anattā* at the experiential level, one is bowing down to Dhamma, and nothing can go wrong. But if you believe bowing down to a statue in a temple, mosque, or cathedral will liberate you from misery, you are not a good Vipassana meditator.

We can’t say a certain place of worship is either good or bad: The vibration depends on what sort of people go there. When one is established in experiencing sensations within, one starts feeling sensations outside also. A stage comes when, if there are two people sitting in front of you who

may outwardly look the same but one is burning with some unhappiness deep inside and the other is peaceful and quiet, you will find you feel heat coming from one person and cool vibrations coming from the other.

These are higher stages, but everyone has to reach higher stages and start to feel the sensations of the vibrations around.

My teacher had his own ways of examining whether a student was developing in Dhamma. An American show called “Holiday On Ice” was playing in Rangoon, and while I was meditating on a course, he suggested to my sons that they should buy tickets for our family to go and see the show on the day my course ended. On that day he said to me, “Goenka, your boys have bought a ticket for you to see the show, so you should go with them.”

I thought to myself, “I have just taken a ten-day course, and now Sayagyi is suggesting I go to see a show where semi-naked girls will be dancing and generating passion? There must be some reason for this.” And so I agreed. Our seats were in the front row, and as soon as we sat down, the vibration was so bad that I felt nauseous and wanted to vomit. We couldn’t stay for more than two minutes. The next day we visited the centre and Sayagyi asked me, “Goenka, did you enjoy ‘Holiday On Ice’? What was your experience?” So I told him.

“*Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu,*” he replied. “I sent you there to see whether you have started to experience sensations not merely within, but also outside.”

At the end of another course, he told me to go to Shwedagon Pagoda before returning home. He had never asked me to visit Shwedagon before, so I wondered what the purpose was. I was to enter by a particular stairway, go to a place where there is a particular statue, and bow before that statue before returning home.

Knowing my teacher would not have asked me to go there without a reason, I agreed. Shwedagon Pagoda is a wonderful place where relics of the Buddha are enshrined. I had been there a number of times to meditate on a quiet, raised platform, and I knew the place to have wonderful vibrations.

But what happened on that visit? As I bowed down, I found I couldn’t raise my head. It was as if melted lead had been poured down my spinal cord. I had such a heavy and painful feeling, and that sensation lasted twenty-four hours.

The next evening I went to my teacher, and he questioned me, “Did you go to Shwedagon Pagoda yesterday?”

“Yes, sir.”

“And what happened?”

I didn’t reply because Sayagyi was a Buddhist by birth, and I thought if I described my experience, he would feel hurt. But he pressed me, and I had to tell the truth. I told him, “Sir, I can’t even bow down now: my back is so heavy.”

“*Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu.* I sent you there to see what you would feel. People go to that particular place only to crave: They wish for this or that and then pick up a stone that is

kept there. If the stone feels light, the supplicant will be successful, and if the stone feels heavy, the wish will be unfulfilled. What vibrations are there in that area? Only craving.”

A good Vipassana meditator should be able to differentiate between the vibrations of this or that place, this or that person. But don’t discuss your impressions; otherwise, your ego will increase. When you find a bad vibration somewhere, don’t tell anybody: just smile, give *mettā* and leave. Whether you go to a temple, a mosque, or a church, it makes no difference. Feel the vibrations. If the vibrations are good, that is fine; but if the vibrations are not good, without condemnation, smilingly give *mettā* and leave.

A Vipassana meditator should always bear in mind that it is equanimity towards the internal vibrations which will take us to the final goal.

Auspicious death

1. At the age of 88, Shri Mannilal Yadav, a senior assistant teacher in Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, passed away peacefully on February 25, 2025. After being appointed as an AT in 2008, he was made senior assistant teacher in 2011. He had been actively involved in Dhamma service ever since he was appointed. We all wish that he continues to progress on his Dhamma journey till he reaches the ultimate goal.

2. On March 16, 2025, Shri Jaipal Sanghdeep, a senior assistant teacher from Gandhinagar, Gujarat, passed away. In 1995, he was appointed A.T., and in 2013, he was asked to serve as senior assistant teacher. Since then, he and his wife have realized his life’s mission by providing sincere Dhamma service. His Dhamma family hopes that he will keep growing in Dhamma

Additional Responsibility

1. Shri. Chandrashekhar Datye, CT of Sangli to hold additional responsibility of CT of Dhammalaya Kolhapur center and to assist CAT of Solapur, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur area.
- 2-3. Shri Rajendra Kumar and Smt. Sheela Sharma To assist the Centre Teacher of Dhamma Kalyana, Kanpur
4. Shri Naresh Patel, To serve as Centre Teacher at Dhammācal Mt. Abu, Rajasthan

New Responsibility Teacher

1. Mr. Ashok R Babhale, New Panvel, Raigadh

SATs

- 1-2. Mr. Mahesh & Mrs. Vandana Walvekar, Sangli
- 3-4. Mr. Tatyasaheb & Mrs. Rekha Patil, Kolhapur
5. Ms. Milan Korgaonkar, Kolhapur
6. Mr. Arun Anjarkar, Kolhapur
7. Mrs Vijaya Pawar, Dhule
8. Shri Mauji Lal Sankhwar, Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh

9. Miss Tripti Singh, Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh

10. Miss Sandeep Kaur Virk, Karnal, Haryana
11. Shri Rajender Kumar Mehta, Gurugram, Haryana

New Appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Anand Karia, Mumbai
2. Mr. Ulhas Fulazele, Nashik
3. Mr. Daulat Gangurde, Nashik
4. Mrs. Chandraprabha Ghuge, Aurangabad
5. Mrs. Payal Shende, Nagpur
6. Ms. Sridevi Rao, Hyderabad
7. Mr. Madhu Nag HM, Bangalore
8. Mr. J. M. Cheluvharaju, Bangalore
- 9-10. Mr. Hanumantha Rao & Mrs. Kalyani Kurra, Chirala, A.P.
11. Mr. Harihara Nagarajan Murugan, Theni, T.N.
12. Mr. Dilip Kumar yonzon, Darjeeling, W.B.
13. Mr. Om Sithol, Cambodia

Children Course Teachers

1. Ms Alexandra Nafari, Sweden
2. Ms Zhanna Tsvir, Ukraine

A new Centre: Dhamma Arunachala-2

On the day of Buddha Purnima (11th May) a new centre, 'Dhamma Arunachala-2' will be inaugurated next to 'Dhamma Arunachala-1' in Tiruvanmalai, Tamil Nadu. For more information, please contact the organisers of Dhamma Arunachala or visit the website:

E-Mail: info.arunachala@vridhamma.org

Web: www.arunachala.dhamma.org

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I, **Rampratap Ramdev Yadav**, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

sd/-

Rampratap Ramdeo Yadav
Signature of Publisher

Date: 1st April 2025,

One-Day Mega Courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai

- 1) **1. Sunday**, 11th May, 2025 Buddha Pūrnimā,
2. Sunday, 13th July, 2025 Ashadha-Pūrnimā, (Dhammacakkappavattana day).
3. Sunday, 5th October, 2025 Pujya Goenkaji's Death Anniversary (29-9-2013).
4. Sunday, 11-1-2026 Mataji's Demise-day (5-1-2016) and Sayagi U Ba Khin's demise day (19-1-1971).
- 2) In addition there are Daily One-Day Courses being held in the Pagoda for Vipassana Students. Please follow the link to join and take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group
Contact for all one-day: 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm). **Online registration:** <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>;
Email: oneday@globalpagoda.org
- 3) **Dhammalaya Accommodation during Mega Courses:**
Meditators can stay at Dhammalaya during mega courses and avail maximum benefit. Please **contact:** 022 50427599 or **Email-** info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Dhanya! dhanya! gurudeva jī, dhanya! buddha bhagavāna;
Śuddha dharma aisā diyā, hoyā jagata kalyāṇa.*

Homage to my teacher, Homage to Lord Buddha; Who gave pure Dhamma to the world, for welfare of all.

*Hindū ho yā bauddha ho, muslima ho yā jaina;
Śuddha dharma kā pathika ho, rahe sukhī dina raina.*

Whether a Hindu, or a Bauddha, whether a Muslim or a Jain; One who walks on the path of pure Dhamma, lives happily day and night.

*Śuddha dharma kā hoyā jaba, sarvāgīṇa vikāsa;
To sadguṇa sadbhāva kā, ujvala jage ujāsa.*

When pure Dhamma develops in all its aspects; Then good qualities and virtues will shine brighter.

*Śuddha dharma se tūṭatī, saṃpradāya dīvāra;
Jo dhāre usake lie, khuleṃ mukti ke dvāra.*

Pure Dhamma breaks the wall of sectarianism; For he who imbibes it, the gateway to liberation opens up.

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Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403

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Tel: (02553) 244998, 243553, 244076,

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