

Vipassana Newsletter

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

Vol. 35, No. 1, 13 January, 2025.

A monthly publication of the Vipassana Research Institute

Website: www.vridhamma.org; International website: www.dhamma.org

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Words of Dhamma

*Na ve kadariyā devalokaṃ vajanti,
bālā have nappasaṃsanti dānaṃ;
Dhīro ca dānaṃ anumodamāno,
teneva so hoti sukhī parattha.*

— Dhammapadapāḷi—177, Lokavaggo

Misers do not go to the celestial realms, fools do not praise giving. But the wise approve of giving, and so gain happiness hereafter.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin and the Vipassana Pagoda by Acharya Satyanarayan Goenka

Rarely in human history has such a noble person been born who has made such a substantial contribution to the public welfare. What a saint Sayagyi U Ba Khin was. He was a shining star of the Guru-disciple tradition through which Burma maintained the Vipassana technique in its pure form for centuries. While his heart overflowed with boundless compassion for the whole world, his love for India was unique and unparalleled.

He used to say that he had no idea how many times he had been born in India or how many times he had meditated in Himalayan caves. In the sixth decade of this century, when Bihar experienced a two-year famine, an ocean of compassion poured from his heart for the famine-stricken people there. He had a skilled sculptor create a copy of the Himalayas beside the Dhamma Hall of the Yangon Vipassana Center, and after meditation every morning at four o'clock, he would stand by it and give metta (loving-kindness) for a long time. May the people of India be free from suffering. May the people of India benefit from Dhamma.

The country where Siddhartha Gotama attained perfect enlightenment—which became a cause of supreme welfare not just for him but for the entire world—today the people of that very country are so afflicted, so poor, so miserable! What is happening there in the name of Dhamma! There is so much violent conflict and hostility between different castes and different classes, those that belong to the so-called high and low status, and between different beliefs and sects! There is so much terror from hatred, ill will, and inhuman killings. This sacred land where pure Dhamma in the form of Vipassana originated and the land that shared it with the world's suffering masses for many centuries—alas! Today that same country is completely deprived of the benefits of this knowledge. Forget about taking the benefit of this great knowledge; it is such a great misfortune of the people there that they have forgotten the word 'Vipassana' itself. If this great country gets this ancient spiritual knowledge again, then all the conflicts and rebellions will end automatically.

He would often say that centuries ago, Burma (Myanmar) received this priceless jewel from India, and now the time has come when he must repay this debt—this invaluable heritage that the teachers in Burma preserved so carefully must be returned to India. With a compassionate heart, he would often express this benevolent wish to come to India himself to repay this debt. But due to political reasons, he could not come. Nevertheless, time and again he would make a Dhamma proclamation that now the clock of Vipassana has struck, and Vipassana will soon return to India. He had a firm belief that the prophecy of a saint from the past would definitely be fulfilled, where it was said that this knowledge would survive in Myanmar for twenty-five centuries after the Tathāgata and then would return to India to be accepted eagerly by many meritorious, wise people there. Then this knowledge would then spread from India throughout the world and greatly benefit people. To his regret, he could not come himself. Yet he had to fulfill his auspicious resolution. He trained his Dhamma son of Indian origin as much as he could and sent him to India as his representative. After a long interval of about two thousand years, this knowledge of the Vipassana technique returned to this great country.

What has been accomplished in the last 29 or 30 years is not enough, but satisfaction lies in the fact that a beginning has been made. And it has been a good beginning. We owe a debt of gratitude to that wonderful saint, whose devotion and hard work returned India's lost priceless heritage. How can we forget that saint's debt, and how can we repay it? The only way is first to get established in this knowledge ourselves and then help others come in contact with this knowledge and achieve their own welfare. This was the teacher's benevolent intent, a very meritorious aim of his life, so dear to him.

Next year is the birth centenary year of that saintly person, Sayagyi U Ba Khin. A resolution has been taken to construct a huge stupa in the Mumbai metropolis. For this purpose, a very valuable piece of land has been donated with great faith by the family of a meritorious Vipassana practitioner, where this Dhamma stupa will become a unique medium for the spread of Vipassana. Nearly ten thousand Vipassana meditators

will be able to benefit from the Dhamma vibrations in this stupa's spacious Dhamma hall, where some of Lord Buddha's physical relics will be housed in accordance with his final instructions to place his remains in stupas. Here, one-day courses will also be offered.

At times some curious people ask why this huge building is being made in the form of a pagoda. Why not give it the shape of an Indian temple? Understand why this is being done. If the structure of the stupa is circular on the inside, then the meditative vibrations become stronger and more long-lasting, and this Dhamma stupa, of course, is being built for Vipassana meditation. Its form cannot replicate a temple. No idol will be installed in here, nor will there be a sixteen-fold worship, no devotional singing, no worship offerings, and no incense lamps will be lit, and no floral offerings will be made. No bells will be rung nor artis performed (fire ritual), nor will any other kind of sectarian rituals be performed. Inside the Dhamma stupa, only Vipassana meditators will meditate, and they will not meditate on any idol or on any form. They will not do any kind of chanting, including mantra chanting; otherwise, it will turn sectarian. The stupa will be used only for Vipassana meditation, where the meditators will practice staying very alert to know the causes of defilements within and the way to remove them.

This practice of Vipassana is not sectarian. Its universality is self-evident. For this, there is no need to be initiated into any sect. Just as asana (yogic exercises) and pranayama (breathing exercises) are physical exercises, similarly, Vipassana is a mental exercise. Whosoever, belonging to any sect, practices it; he or she will get the same results. One finds the art of living a wholesome life filled with happiness and joy. This is what we observe. Many people from different sects attend and benefit from the courses. The Vipassana stupa is not being built to establish any sect at all. On the contrary, it is being built to free people from various sectarian bonds and lead them to live a life of universally accepted morality and good conduct and to learn the technique of concentrating and purifying the mind. This Dhamma stupa serves as a place for Vipassana meditators to come and deepen their practice, as well as to inspire those who are not to try Vipassana meditation.

My teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, was not eager to send any sect from Myanmar to India but was eager to send Vipassana, which is beneficial for all people. There are a lot of sects here, and we also have to deal with the results they produce. The word 'sect' means to provide equality. But these sects, no matter which sect they are, instead of providing equality, are providing inequality in the society. In such a situation, what good would one more sect arriving in India do? My teacher understood this very well. Universal Dhamma alone will benefit India and the world. This is what he expected. Now in his sacred memory and to fulfill his benevolent intent, this Vipassana Dhamma stupa is going to be built.

Then another question arises—of course one can understand the creation of a circular Dhamma hall to sit 10,000 meditators under its dome-shaped roof, without pillars, but why make the outer structure in the shape of the Shwedagon Pagoda of Yangon? What is the reason for

that? Let us understand.

When we start understanding the purity of Dhamma, we will also start to understand that gratitude is an important part of Dhamma. It is absolutely necessary to feel gratitude towards Myanmar, the country that kept this priceless treasure of our country in its pure form for almost two thousand years and has now returned it for our benefit. This is in accordance with Dhamma.

In the past, when this knowledge reached neighbouring countries, the stupas built by the people there were made as replicas of the stupas built in India in those days. One of the main reasons for this was that on seeing these stupas, the people of those countries would feel grateful towards India for centuries. It remains so today. Similarly, now that we have received this knowledge from Myanmar, the people here, upon seeing the stupa being built as a replica of their famous stupa, feel grateful towards Myanmar, and this gratitude should remain alive for centuries. With this very purpose in mind, this shape was adopted. This huge, sky-high stupa adorned with magnificent architecture will draw many from India and the world, raising the head of India's ancient spiritual knowledge high.

From amongst those who will come to this sacred ground, many will be drawn to Vipassana to their benefit. This is another sacred objective in the construction of this Dhamma stupa. May more and more people benefit from Vipassana! Not just of India, but may all violent conflicts and disputes of the entire world end! May the sacred Dhamma Ganges of Vipassana flow once again, leading to the auspicious welfare of the entire world. With this Dhamma inspiration, this is one reverent attempt to express our deep gratitude towards that great householder saint, Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

Gratitude truly leads to our welfare. While making our contribution to this great historical and sacred Dhamma work, let us understand the pure dāna, or charitable spirit, of ancient India. In ancient India, in the field of pure Dhamma, the tradition of donation was extremely sacred and pure. In order to boost the nation's pride and dignity and improve public welfare, we must likewise establish the same level of purity.

According to ancient tradition, when a bhikkhu went out in town for alms, he would stand silently, eyes lowered with alms bowl in hand, stopping in front of each house for about a minute. He would neither call out, “Please give alms,” nor keep repeating, “Mother, I am hungry; Baba, give me bread; Mother, give me bread.” In ancient India, no bhikkhu was a beggar. There is a big difference between a bhikkhu and a beggar. The person who pierces the sorrows of the worldly life through Vipassana meditation is called a bhikkhu: Bhindati dukkham'ti bhikkhu. He would not go around begging for the sake of alms, but, according to the pure tradition of Dhamma, he would stand in front of each house to give an opportunity to the householder to perform a meritorious deed. If no one emerged from the house in a minute, he would move on with a calm and happy mind and with goodwill for them. If someone came out and put food in his bowl, he would move on with the same goodwill for them.

And it often used to happen that at the time of the bhikkhus' alms rounds, householders, in front of their

houses, would wait eagerly for them. This is still happening in neighbouring countries today. Dhammic householders feel grateful to the bhikkhus for giving them the opportunity to offer food. Due to this sacred practice, neither does a beggar’s mentality arise in a bhikkhu’s mind nor does any ego arise in a householder’s mind. Giving and receiving dāna, both remain unstained, filled with Dhamma. This purity should be applied to all donations pertaining to the true Dhamma.

One should be conscious that the stupa project for which they are contributing will bring many people to Vipassana, not just now but for generations to come. The bases of every donation will be strong and productive for many generations in this way. One should understand, “What great fortune that I am getting this unique opportunity to earn merit that will bear fruit for a long time.” This kind of feeling needs to be awakened in the mind of every donor. And the Vipassana meditators who wish to give donations should awaken one more auspicious thought in their mind: “Had our grandfather-teacher not given this beneficial knowledge to India, how would my sacred welfare have come about! Therefore, whatever contribution I am able to give, little or more, according to my capacity in this gigantic undertaking, it is an offering of my gratitude towards that great saint, Sayagyi U Ba Khin.”

May the meritorious work of public welfare through beneficent Vipassana continue for a long time in India and the world, and may everyone’s Dhamma volition for universal welfare be fulfilled. Any cooperation given with this Dhamma understanding, whether small or large, will be truly very meritorious. May India awake again to its ancient dignity and glory! Donning this invaluable crown jewel of Vipassana knowledge on its head, may this experiential training of non-violence spread throughout the world, imparting peace to all! May its influence bring auspicious welfare to the whole world! May Vipassana knowledge spread in the entire world! May the sufferings of all be removed! May all achieve peace and happiness! May all be liberated!

Our gratitude towards all Dhamma teachers, from Sakyamuni Gotama the Buddha to Sayagyi U Ba Khin, is infinite. Had they not preserved Dhamma for centuries, keeping it in pristine purity, then how indeed would we have received this invaluable jewel now?

We bow our heads in profound faith and infinite gratitude to them.

– S.N. Goenka

(Excerpts from Vipassana Pagoda Journal, 1999)

Interview with Mataji

Mrs. Ilaichi Devi Goenka, who is known to her family and students as Mataji (respected mother; a respectful form of address for elderly Indian women) was born in Mandalay, Burma in January, 1930. Her ancestors migrated from Rajasthan, India to Burma about one hundred years ago. They were merchants, trading in grains and other commodities. She was one of three children, two girls and one boy.

Mataji spent the first twelve years of her childhood in Mandalay, the old capital of Burma, in the house next door to the one where Goenkaji’s family lived. As was the custom in those days, the marriage was arranged and she

was engaged to Goenkaji at a young age.

Near the end of 1941, the Japanese invaded Burma, and went on to occupy the country for the duration of the Second World War. Many of Burma’s Indian residents, including Mataji’s and Goenkaji’s families, returned to their ancestral homes.

Goenkaji and Mataji were married in Mandalay in early 1942, during an aerial bombardment of the city. Almost immediately thereafter their families fled to India, where they remained for the duration of the war. Mataji’s family stayed in northern India, where her father established a livelihood in Gujarat and the Punjab. Goenkaji’s family stayed in Churu in Rajasthan and then southern India, where Mataji joined her husband.

After the war, Goenkaji and Mataji returned to Burma and settled in Rangoon, where they were fully occupied with the householders’ responsibilities of raising six sons and other family members, conducting the family businesses, and being a leading family of the Hindu community.

Goenkaji took his first Vipassana course with Sayagyi U Ba Khin in 1955. Mataji and other family members and friends also took courses and began practising under Sayagyi’s guidance. In 1969, Goenkaji went to India and began conducting the first Vipassana courses there. Mataji stayed in Burma until after Sayagyi’s death in 1971.

Because of the change in the Burmese government, and the work of spreading the Dhamma (first in India; later, around the world) the family settled in Bombay shortly after Sayagyi’s death.

Goenkaji and Mataji have six sons, six daughters-in-law and eleven grandchildren, most of whom live together in a traditional joint family house in Bombay.

The following interview, through an interpreter, was held at the family residence in Bombay in October 1991.

(We’ve started an interview with Mataji to honor her on the ninth anniversary of her passing, and it will continue in the next issue..)



New Responsibility-SATs

1. Mr. Vijay Mukhedkar, Pune
2. Mrs. Neelam Oswal, Pune

Additional Responsibility

1. Mrs. Sujata Khanna, To assist Centre Teacher in serving Dhamma Vipula
2. Mr. Pravin Katpatal, To assist Centre Teacher in serving Dhamma Vipula
3. Dr. Sangram Jondhale (C.T. of Dhamma Desh Hingoli) To assist the CAT of Marathwada

New Appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Nitin Masrani, Mumbai
2. Mr. Amol Mithari, Kolhapur
- 3-4. Mr. Prashant & Mrs Shilpa Deore, Dhule

5. Mrs. Madhvi Sanghvi, Rajkot
- 6-7. Mr. Manoj & Mrs. Chhaya Gandhi, Surat

8. Mrs. G Jansi Rani, Bengaluru
9. Mrs. Swathi Gaadhe, Hyderabad

10. Mr. Megha Raj Pokharel, Nepal
11. Mr. Kamal Prasad Uprety, Nepal

12. Mrs. HariPriya Aryal, Nepal
13. Miss. Rameshwori Maharjan, Nepal

14. Mr. Seng Vutea, Cambodia
15. Mrs. Supreeya, Pongsakul, Thailand

16. Miss. Vilaiporn Chaiphannittrakul, Thailand
17. Mrs. Kitima Silabutr, Thailand

18. Mr. Suchin hongnoppakun, Thailand

Dhammic Death

1. The Centre teacher of Dhamma Manjusa in Akola dist. Maharashtra Shri Nanduji V. Tayade passed away on 10th Dec 2024 very peacefully. Till the last, he continued to practise Metta and Vipassana with full awareness. He was appointed AT in 2001, conducting innumerable courses. He was instrumental in organising camps and played a significant role in establishing centres. May his meritorious deeds take him along the path to Nibbāna. May he be at peace.

2. Shri Ashok Singapore, Senior assistant teacher of Ulhasnagar, Maharashtra, passed away peacefully on 15th Dec 2024. He gave his Dhamma services consistently and sincerely since 2017 at many centres in Bihar and Maharashtra, benefitting many people. May he continue to progress on the path of Dhamma, attaining Nibbāna soon. May he attain peace.

3. Mr. Francois Kuoch, the Center teacher for Dhamma Laṭṭika in Battambang, Cambodia, passed away peacefully on December 19th after a brief illness. For many years, he served selflessly in Dhamma, conducting courses, training ATs, as well as translating and recording course teaching materials etc. into the Khmer language. The Dhamma family wishes him continued progress on the path to Nibbāna. May he be peaceful and liberated.



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

1) One-day Mega course on Sunday:

1. **Sunday**, 19th January, Sayagi U Ba Khin's (19-1-1971) and Mataji's (5-1-2016) Demise-day
2. **Sunday**, 11th May, 2025 Buddha Purnima,
3. **Sunday**, 13th July, 2025 Ashadha-Pūrṇimā (Dhammacakkappavattana day)
4. **Sunday**, 5th October, 2025 Sharada-Pūrṇimā plus Pujya Goenkaji's Death Anniversary.

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

*Jana-jana ke kalyāṇa hita, stūpa sthāpanā hoyā;
Jāge viśva vipaśyanā, jana-mana maṅgala hoyā.*

May the Stupa (pagoda) be established for the benefit of everyone; May Vipassana arise in the world, leading to the auspicious welfare of all.

*Patthara-patthara joṛa kara, liyā caitya cinavāya;
Jisake nīce baiṭha kara, dhyāna kare sukha pāya.*

Joining stone with stone, the Caitya (pagoda) was erected; Under which, one sits down, meditates and finds happiness.

*Isa maṅgalamaya stūpa se, dharma prakāśita hoyā;
Jana-jana kā hita-sukha sadhe, bhalā viśva kā hoyā.*

May the light of Dhamma spread from this auspicious Stupa; For the welfare of the people, the welfare of the world.

*Dhanya! dhyānakīrigiriguhā, dhanya! dhyānakāstupa;
Yahā śānti saba ko mile, bhikkhu hoyā yā bhūpa.*

Blessed be the cave of meditation, blessed be the Stupa of meditation; Here everyone finds peace, be they a mendicant or a king.

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Edited and published by R.P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri-422 403 and printed at Apollo Printing Press, 259, SICOF Ltd., 69 MIDC, Satpur, Nashik-422 007.
No. 1, 13 Jan, 2025. Posted at Igatpuri, Dist. Nashik, Posting Day: Purnima of every month; Vip. NL Regd. No. 49916/90; P. Regn No. NSK/RNP-232/2021-2023

DATE OF PRINTING: 30 DECEMBER, 2024, DATE OF PUBLICATION: 13 JANUARY, 2025

If undelivered, please return to:

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