

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Words of Dhamma

*Na attahetu na parassa hetu,
na puttamicche na dhanam na rattham;
Na iccheyya adhammena samiddhimattano,
sa sīlavā paññavā dhammiko siyā.*

— Dhammapadapāḷi 84, Paṇḍitavaggo

For one's own sake or for the sake of others, one does no evil; nor does one wish for sons and daughters or for wealth or for a kingdom by doing evil; nor does one wish for success by unfair means; such a one is indeed virtuous, wise, and a follower of Dhamma.

Disarmament of the Army by Emperor Ashoka?

Ed. Note: Given the problematic times we live in, where war is always on the horizon, we present Goenkaji's thoughts on the subject, based on ancient literature.

The Kalinga War, fought in ancient India in the third century BC, pitted the Mauryan Empire under Ashoka the Great against Kalinga, an independent feudal kingdom located along the east coast in what is now the state of Odisha and north-east Andhra Pradesh. The Kalinga War was one of the largest and deadliest wars in Indian history, claiming nearly 250,000 lives.

After the Kalinga War, Emperor Ashoka gave up violence and became an ardent practitioner of the Buddha's teachings. How, however, could he have disbanded the army and relinquished weapons? How could he have turned the troops to monastic life, as many people assert?

On the contrary, following the teachings of the Lord, he kept a powerful army, but used it not to attack another country but to protect his nation from external forces and from divisive forces within the country. His empire spread from Afghanistan in the west to Bengal in the east. Such a large empire was not built by any Indian emperor before or after him. To keep this vast subcontinent safe, he kept a strong armed army deployed on the borders of the country. After the Kalinga war, he did not attack any country himself, but maintained the integrity and independence of his country completely.

After the Kalinga War, he ruled for 29 years till his death. For such a long time, no foreign enemy could take even an inch of the country's land. No one even dared to attack. Ashoka did not let the country's independence be affected even a little. Would this have been possible by

making the army monks? Would this have been possible by disarming the army?

Does our common sense not say that if Kalinga was subjected to so many atrocities, the fire of revenge would have flared up in the hearts of the people of Kalinga if the army was made monks immediately after that? Wouldn't they rebel? Wouldn't anarchy spread elsewhere in such a large empire?

Lord Buddha was a lover of freedom. How could his most devoted follower Ashoka not keep the country's freedom intact? How could he not keep his subjects safe? Lord Buddha was a strong supporter of the protection of the state. He considered subjugation to be bad. Lord Buddha gave great importance to the protection of the country. He has said in his teachings in very clear words that a subjugated person can never be happy. Only a free person is happy.

Nāññassa puriso siyā – Never live under someone's subjugation.

Nāññam nissāya jīveyya – Never live depending on someone.

Udāna 52, Sattajaṭṭilasuttam

That is why, during his life, Lord Buddha never asked any king to downsize his army nor asked that a war be stopped; rather, in case a situation demanded he approved of it.

The Buddha-Following Kings' State Security Prince Abhaya of Magadha

The empire of King Bimbisāra spread from Kashi (current Varanasi) in the west to Anga in the east. His relationship with King Pasenadi of Kosala to the west was amicable, as his sister was wed to Prasenjit, and Prasenjit's sister was wedded to him. Due to this, the borders of his kingdom on the west were secure. But on

the eastern border, skirmishes with the neighboring nation were a regular occurrence. Hence, King Bimbisāra had to maintain an army in readiness in the east. Moreover, when needed, reinforcements were periodically sent from Rājagaha, the capital of the kingdom. It is a historical fact that once, when additional forces were sent from the capital to fight the enemy, they were led by Prince Abhaya Kumar, the king’s son.

When Abhaya Kumar returned victorious from this war, Bimbisāra celebrated by making him king for seven days. This happened in the presence and with the knowledge of Lord Buddha. He did not oppose it in the least. It is clear that he was a strong supporter of the security of the state—whether it was the republican Licchavī kingdom or the monarchic Magadha or Kosala kingdoms.

Dhammapada Aṭṭhakathā 2.170-171, Abhayarājakumarvatthu

Kosala King Pasenadi (Prasenjit)

In addition, the Kosala king was extremely concerned about the safety of his realm. While its eastern border was essentially secure, his kingdom’s western frontier was constantly being attacked by its neighbors. There, his powerful military was constantly on guard. For the sake of the kingdom’s security, Pasenadi himself occasionally led his army from his capital, Sāvattihī, to the border to wage battles. Lord Buddha was familiar with the conflicts fought for the kingdom’s protection. At times, when leaving for battle, King Pasenadi would urge his army to wait while he walked inside Jetavana monastery to pay respects to the Buddha and communicate news of the approaching conflict. During one such meeting, the Lord smiled and asked him, “Who will you fight today? Is it with Bimbisāra, the Licchavī, or some other enemy?”

Majjhima Nikāya 2.350, Aṅgulimālasuttam

On his way back, after winning a battle, Pasenadi would again stop by the Jetavana monastery, and bowing down to the Buddha, he would express his joy and apprise him of the victory over the enemy, while his army waited outside. He was a great devotee of the Buddha. Had he even the minutest inkling that the Buddha was against his maintaining armed forces and employing them in war for the nation’s protection, he would certainly have dismantled his armed forces.

Even if he had not dismantled his forces, then while sending them on war expeditions, with or without his leadership, he would not have visited the Buddha during such expeditions. It is clear that the Buddha approved of the use of armed force for the safety of the nation. That is the reason Pasenadi would stop by for his blessings.

Aṅguttara Nikāya 3.10.30, Dutiyakosalasuttam

Emperor Ashoka Protects his Subjects from external Attacks and Terrorism

Ashoka followed the important instructions given by Lord Buddha for a monarch to protect his subjects from external attacks. Ashoka was aware of the description of a Cakkavatti (Chakravarti) Emperor given by Lord Buddha. However, he did not call himself a Chakravarti Emperor, not even an Emperor or Maharaja, but used only the word “Rājā.” This was a sign of his infinite humility. In fact, his kingdom, like the kingdom of a Chakravarti Emperor, was spread over the entire land from one coast of the ocean to the other. The coast of the Bay of Bengal in the east and the coast of the Arabian Sea in the west. Like a Chakravarti king, he conquered the unconquered countries by his Dhamma without any stick or weapon. That is why the neighboring countries started calling him “Dīpacakkavatti,” the Chakravarti King of Jambudīpa. (Jambu—ancient name for India; dīpa means island.)

The Lord had told that a Chakravarti King has a powerful army of fourfold forces and has powerful princes. When he is not going to conquer anyone by fighting with weapons, then why all this pomp and show? It is clear that this is necessary for the protection of the people. He protects his country and his people.

Aṅguttara Nikāya, 2.5.133, Dhammarājāsuttam

In this sutta the Buddha clearly indicates that—a Cakkavatti protects his kingdom’s villages, towns, and cities and all segments of the population residing there. Another matter worth mentioning in this context is that the Chakravatti king also protects his army. If he did not maintain the army, then where is the issue of protecting it? The intent is clear—if the king reduces his forces or does not bring in the most modern weaponry, then some ill-intentioned neighbor with a more powerful army will destroy this weakened army. Hence, to keep his army protected, the emperor maintains large forces, and bringing in the modern weaponry, he truly shields the army, which then can protect the nation from ill-intentioned forces.

The neighboring countries, too, followed the Buddha’s teachings disseminated by Ashoka. Neither did they ever dismantle their army, nor did they disarm them. How immensely false is the narrative, then, that Ashoka himself did not obey the guidance of the Buddha? The truth being that the forts built by Ashoka in the frontier provinces and the vast armed forces kept there in readiness would fill the neighbors with apprehension. They knew that Ashoka’s forces were so powerful that he could decimate them easily.

The Resolution of Emperor Ashoka

His determination to not attack the neighboring countries was the beginning of building good relations with the neighboring countries, and then he started

helping them in many ways. Just like in his own country, he had fruit-laden trees planted on the roadside for shelter, and medicinal plants were planted for humans and animals. He had clinics opened for not only citizens but also for animals. Wells were dug, and he had drinking water pots supplied at various places for the convenience of the travelers.

This was an important gift from a very rich and generous India to its neighboring countries. It was an active offer of goodwill.

Now he won over his neighbors, but not by war, but by Dhamma. That is, he suggests the same governing methods that he established in his empire to his neighbors. He recommends the same type of administrative system and ideal judiciary that he himself follows. Many people gladly followed his governance policy.

He sent Dhamma emissaries to many countries who imparted Dhamma education, the complete teachings of Lord Buddha, along with the beneficent technique of Vipassana meditation. This was gladly accepted by those countries. India had no selfish motive in this. We have before us the example of Shri Rama (revered icon of ancient Indian times) winning over Sri Lanka. After vanquishing the enemy in Sri Lanka, Rama did not send a representative, a viceroy from Ayodhya (his kingdom), to rule over Lanka. The people there were not exploited politically or economically. A capable person from their own kingdom was given the kingdom so that the people did not suffer exploitation at the hands of an external ruler.

The Buddha established an ideal of high caliber for an emperor's behavior (Chakravarti Samrat). Ashoka followed it most conscientiously. He won over the neighboring countries with Dhamma. This did not establish his or Bharat's sovereignty there but won them over, making him the emperor of their hearts. This was not limited to his own lifetime only, but even after thousands of years, the people of these neighboring countries consider Ashoka an ideal king and feel immensely grateful to him for the teachings of Dhamma that he sent to them.

In their morning chants, I have seen the householders in Burma recite for the welfare of the world:

Devo vassatu kālena, sassasaṃpatti hetu cha;

May timely rains ensure a good harvest;

Phitobhāvatu loko cha, rājā bhāvatu dhammiko.

May the nation prosper and the king be dhammic.

When they say that may the king of the country be dhammic, then they are addressing the ideal of the dhammic reign of the King Ashoka. They wish for their king too to follow the ideal of a dhammic king. Hence their daily chant goes:

Yathā rakkhimsu porāṇā, surājāno tathevimaṃ;

Just as the kings of olden times protected their subjects,

Rājā rakkhatu dhammena, attanova pajampajam.

May our king too protect us just as he protects his children.

- *Aṭṭhakathā, Saṃgāyanassa pucchā-vissajjanā 1.3.11 (Myanmar)*

This was then Ashoka's Dhamma victory which proved to be the victory of the land of Bharat (India).

India did not exploit other nations, nor did it enslave them. In fact, they put such a warm cordial imprint on their hearts that for generations it left an impact of India's greatness. Every year, from those countries millions of people visit India and Nepal and pay obeisance. They come today and will continue to come in future.

This was a victory achieved by Dhamma, not a victory of arms. Such a victory is long lasting, while victory won by arms is short-lived. Dhamma victory pleases both, the victor and the vanquished. Ashoka has thus expressed this in carving on one of his stone tablets:

- I am satisfied by achieving victory through Dhamma.
- The world is full of Dhamma and it is eternal.
- The joy and bliss that flows from this victory filled with the welfare of people is in fact total, unspeakable bliss.

This was the victory of Dhamma of the great Ashoka, the great follower of Lord Buddha! This was the victory of Dhamma of the great India! Such a victory in which the winner won and the defeated too. No one lost. Everyone won. When the country became independent after centuries of slavery, independent India revived the memory of this glorious victory of Emperor Ashoka by inscribing the 'Ashoka Chakra' (the wheel) on the national flag and hoisting it in the sky. The four-headed lions of Emperor Ashoka were accepted as the royal insignia and were given due respect and the neighbouring countries were delighted. May India regain its ancient glory! May India once again become the king of the hearts of the people of the whole world!!

Kalyāṇa-mitta

Satya Narayana Goenka

(Excerpted from VRI publication—“Rājadharma” by S.N. Goenka)

Additional Responsibility

1. Mr. Dattatraya Raut, To assist the Centre Teacher in serving for Dhamma Vasudha, Wardha.

New Responsibility Teacher

1. Smt. Kamaltai R. Gavai, Amravati
2. Shri Prakash Chandekar, Nagpur
2. Shri Rahul Telang, Nagpur

SATs

- 3-4. Shri Rajabhau & Smt. Pramila Raut, Washim
5. Mrs. Usha Tayde, Akola
6. Mrs. Mala Mandal, Kolkata

New Appointments Assistant Teachers

- 1-2. Mr. Ajay Chopra & Mrs. Chhavi Trivedi, Igatpuri
3. Mr. Chandrakant Waghmare, Pune
4. Mrs. Xinhua HE, China
5. Mrs. Zhi Juan Chen, China
6. Ms. Severine Mons, Australia

Dhamma Sudhakar Vipassana Centre is currently under construction

The construction of the new Vipassana meditation center, Dhamma Sudhakar, started on Buddha Purnima, Monday, 12 May 2025, in the village of Mathurapur in Tehsil Sikandrara, District Hathras, Uttar Pradesh.

The meditation center for about 100 students will be constructed in four phases. In the first phase, there is a plan to have retreat facilities for about 30 to 40 meditators.

Full address of the **center**: Dhamma Sudhakar Vipassana Center, Village- Mathurapur, Post- Hasayan, Sikandra Rao, District Hathras, Uttar Pradesh-204 212. Email: dhammasudhakara@gmail.com; Contact Number: Meerut Vipassana Institute, Meerut +917505414181, +919555515548, +919837035642 Bank Details: Meerut Vipassana Institute, Indian Bank, Meerut Branch, Account No. 6575615053, IFSC Code: IDIB000M685, PAN: AAATM9958M You can also avail this golden opportunity of donation.

Vipassana Sansthan, Meerut is eligible for 80G Income Tax benefit. Please send your donation details to the above number or email to get a donation receipt.

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

- 1) 1. **Sunday**, 13th July, 2025 Ashadha-Pūrṇimā, (Dhammacakkappavattana day).
2. **Sunday**, 5th October, 2025 Pujya Goenkaji's Death Anniversary (29-9-2013).
3. **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 or info@globalpagoda.org *****

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Yuddha bhūmi yoddhā tape, tape sūrya ākāśa;
Tāpasa antasa men tape, kare dukhon kā nāśa.*

A warrior ever struggles on the battlefield, the sun ever burns in the sky; A meditator ever battles deep within, overcoming all suffering.

*Raṇa sahasra yoddhā laḍe, jīte yuddha hajāra;
Para jo jīte svayaṃ ko, vahī sūra saradāra.*

A warrior fights hundreds of battles, winning many of them; But one who conquers oneself is the finest warrior.

*Cita samarāṅgaṇa jo kare, satata ghora sangrāma;
Aise jāgrata santa ko, hai ārāma harāma.*

One who is ever fighting the battle on the ground of one's mind; For such an awakened saint, time is very precious.

*Samaya baḍā anamola hai, samaya baḍā balavāna;
Bina pramāda tapatā rahe, pāye pada nirvāṇa.*

Time is precious, time is powerful; One who constantly battles attains Nibbāna.

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