

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Words of Dhamma

*Yo ca buddhañca dhammañca, sañghañca saraṇaṃ gato;
Cattāri ariyasaccāni, sammappaññāya passati.
Dukkhaṃ dukkhasamuppādaṃ, dukkhassa ca atikkamaṃ;
Ariyaṃ caṭṭhaṅgikaṃ maggaṃ, dukkhūpasamaḡamināṃ.
Etaṃ kho saraṇaṃ khemaṃ, etaṃ saraṇamuttamaṃ;
Etaṃ saraṇamāgama, sabbadukkhā pamuccati.*

– Dhammapadapāli, Buddhavaḡgo-190, 191,192

Whoever has gone for refuge to the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Saṅgha, and who sees with right wisdom the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the Eightfold Noble Path leading to the cessation of suffering. This is a secure refuge, this is the ultimate refuge. This is the refuge which brings freedom from all suffering.

Venerable Bhikkhu Ledi Sayadaw

Whenever I recall my Dhamma great-grandfather and venerable teacher, Ledi Sayadaw, my heart overflows with boundless gratitude. He was fully proficient in Pariyatti (theoretical study of the words of the Buddha) and Paṭipatti (practice of Vipassana). He inherited this ancient technique through the lineage of teachers and generously shared it throughout his life.

Ledi Sayadaw was a visionary. A belief had prevailed for centuries that 2500 years after Lord Buddha, the Vipassana technique of pure Dhamma would arise again, return to India, and from there spread throughout the world. He realized that this important event would take place within the next hundred years.

Understanding that this prediction could not be fulfilled only by Bhikkhus, he opened the doors of Vipassana, which had been restricted only to Bhikkhus for centuries, for householders as well.

At the time of the Buddha, members of all four groups—Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis, as well as male and female householders—used to be enlightened Dhamma teachers. But as time passed, the technique remained confined only to Bhikkhus. It is due to the benevolence of Ledi Sayadaw that he removed the restriction and taught the technique to householders. He established a lay farmer named Saya Thetgyi as a teacher so that he could impart the technique to many people. Had he not done so, how could I have received this technique? How could so many other householders have received it?

The Venerable Ledi Sayadaw was born in 1846 in Saingpyin village, Dipeyin township in the Shwebo district (currently Monywa district) of northern Burma (Myanmar). His childhood name was Maung Tet Khaung. (Maung is the Burmese title for boys and young men equivalent to “master.” Tet means “climbing upward,” and Khaung a “roof” or “summit.”) It proved to be an appropriate name

since young Maung Tet Khaung indeed climbed to the summit in all his endeavors.

In his village, he attended the traditional monastery school where the bhikkhus (monks) taught the children to read and write in Burmese as well as how to recite many Pāli texts: the Maṅgala Sutta, Mettā Sutta, Jātaka stories, and so on. Because of these ubiquitous monastery schools, Myanmar has traditionally had a very high literacy rate.

At the age of eight, he began to study with his first teacher, U Nandadhaja Sayadaw, and he was ordained as a sāmaṇera (novice) under the same Sayadaw at the age of fifteen. He took the name Nāṇadhaja (the banner of knowledge). His monastic education included Pāli grammar and various texts from the Pāli canon with a specialty in Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha, a commentary that serves as a guide to the Abhidhamma section of the canon.

Later in his life he wrote a somewhat controversial commentary on Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha, called Paramattha Dīpanī (Manual of Ultimate Truth), in which he corrected certain mistakes he had found in the earlier commentary on that work. His corrections were eventually accepted by the bhikkhus and his work became the standard reference.

During his days as a sāmaṇera, in the middle part of the nineteenth century (before modern lighting), he would routinely study the written texts during the day and join the bhikkhus and other sāmaṇeras in recitation from memory after dark. Working in this way, he mastered the Abhidhamma texts.

When he was eighteen, Sāmaṇera Nāṇadhaja briefly left the robes and returned to his life as a layman. He had become dissatisfied with his education, feeling it was too narrowly restricted to the Tipiṭaka. After about six months, his first teacher and another influential teacher, Myinhtin Sayadaw, sent for him and tried to persuade him to return to monastic life, but he refused. Myinhtin Sayadaw suggested

that he should at least continue with his education. The young Maung Tet Khaung was very bright and eager to learn, so he readily agreed to this suggestion.

“Would you be interested in learning the Vedas (ancient sacred writings of Hinduism)?” asked Myinhtin Sayadaw. “Yes, Venerable sir,” answered Maung Tet Khaung. “Well, then, you must become a sāmaṇera; otherwise, Sayadaw U Gandhama, of Yeu village, will not take you as his student,” the Sayadaw replied.

“I will become a sāmaṇera,” he agreed.

In this way, he returned to the life of a sāmaṇera, never to leave the robes of a monk again. Later on, he confided to one of his disciples, “At first I was hoping to earn a living with the knowledge of the Vedas by telling people's fortunes. But I was more fortunate in that I became a sāmaṇera again. My teachers were very wise; with their boundless love and compassion, they saved me.”

The brilliant Sāmaṇera Ñāṇadhaja, under the care of Gandhama Sayadaw, mastered the Vedas in eight months and continued his study of the Tipiṭaka. At the age of twenty, on 20 April 1866, he took the higher ordination to become a bhikkhu under his old teacher, U Nandadhaja Sayadaw, who became his preceptor (one who gives the precepts).

In 1867, just prior to the monsoon retreat, Bhikkhu Ñāṇadhaja left his preceptor and the Monywa district, where he had grown up, in order to continue his studies in Mandalay. Mandalay was the royal capital of Myanmar at that time, during the rule of King Min Don Min (who ruled 1853-1878), and was the most important center of learning in the country. He studied there under several of the leading Sayadaws and learned from lay scholars as well. He resided primarily in the Mahā Jotikārāma monastery and studied with Ven. San Kyaung Sayadaw, a teacher who is famous in Myanmar for translating the Visuddhimagga (Path of Purification) into Burmese.

Role in the Fifth Council

During Bhikkhu Ñāṇadhaja's time in Mandalay, King Min Don Min sponsored the Fifth Council, calling bhikkhus from far and wide to recite and purify the Tipiṭaka. It was held in Mandalay in 1871, and the authenticated texts were carved into 729 marble slabs that stand today (each slab housed under a small pagoda) surrounding the larger golden Kuthodaw pagoda at the foot of Mandalay hill. At this council, Bhikkhu Ñāṇadhaja helped in editing and translating the Abhidhamma texts.

Also, during the time of his studies in Mandalay, Ven. San Kyaung Sayadaw gave an examination of twenty questions for two thousand students. Bhikkhu Ñāṇadhaja was the only one who was able to answer all the questions satisfactorily. These answers were later published in 1880 under the title Pāramī Dīpanī (Manual of Perfections). This was the first of many books to be published in Pāli and Burmese by Ven. Ledi Sayadaw.

After eight years as a bhikkhu, having passed all his examinations, Ven. Ñāṇadhaja was qualified as a beginning

Pāli teacher at the San Kyaung monastery (also known as the Mahā Jotikārāma monastery) where he had been studying.

For eight more years he remained there, teaching and continuing his own scholastic endeavors, until 1882 when he moved to Monywa. He was now thirty-six years old. At that time Monywa was a small district center on the east bank of the Chindwin River, which was renowned as a place where the teaching method included the entire Tipiṭaka, rather than just selected portions.

While he was teaching Pāli to the bhikkhus and sāmaṇeras at Monywa, his habit was to come to town during the day for his teaching duties. In the evening he would cross to the west bank of the Chindwin River and spend the nights in meditation in a small vihāra (monastery) on the side of Lak Pan Taung mountain. Although we do not have any definitive information, it seems likely that this was the period when he began practicing Vipassana in the traditional Burmese fashion: with awareness of respiration (ānāpāna) and sensation (vedanā).

The British conquered upper Myanmar in 1885 and sent the last king, Thibaw (who ruled from 1878-1885), into exile. The next year, 1886, Ven. Ñāṇadhaja went into retreat in the Ledi forest, just to the north of Monywa. After a while, many bhikkhus started coming to him there, requesting that he teach them. A monastery to house them was built and named Ledi Tawya monastery. From this monastery he took the name by which he is best known: Ledi Sayadaw. It is said that one of the main reasons that Monywa grew to be a larger town, as it is today, was because so many people were attracted there to Ledi Sayadaw's monastery. While he taught many aspiring students here, he retained his practice of retiring to his small cottage vihāra across the river for his own meditation.

Outstanding Scholastic Work

When he had been at the Ledi Tawya monastery for over ten years, his main scholastic works began to be published. The first was the Paramattha Dīpanī (Manual of Ultimate Truth), mentioned above, published in 1897. His second book of this period was Nirutta Dīpani, a book on Pāli grammar. Because of these books, he gained the reputation as one of the most learned bhikkhus in Myanmar.

Though Ledi Sayadaw was based at the Ledi Tawya monastery, he traveled throughout Myanmar at times, teaching both meditation and scriptural courses. He is indeed a rare example of a Bhikkhu who was able to excel in both the theory of Dhamma as well as the practice of Dhamma in his life (pariyatti and paṭipatti). It was during these trips up and down Myanmar that many of his published works were written. For example, he wrote the Paṭicca-samuppāda Dīpanī in two days while traveling by boat from Mandalay to Prome. He had no reference books with him, but he had a thorough knowledge of the Tipiṭaka, so he needed none. In the Manuals of Buddhism, there are seventy-six manuals (dīpanīs), commentaries, essays, and so on, listed under his authorship, but this is not a complete list of his works.

Later, he also wrote many books on Dhamma in Burmese. He said he wanted to write in such a way that even a simple farmer could understand. Before his time, it was not usual to write on Dhamma subjects so that lay people could have access to them. Even while teaching orally, the bhikkhus would commonly recite long passages in Pāli and then translate the passage literally, which was very hard for the ordinary person to understand. It must have been that the strength of Ledi Sayadaw’s practical understanding and the resultant loving kindness (mettā) overflowed in his desire to spread Dhamma to all levels of society. His Paramattha-sankhepa, a book of 2,000 Burmese verses that translates the Abhidhammattha-saṅgaha, was written for young people and is still very popular today. His followers started many associations that promoted the learning of Abhidhamma by using this book.

In his travels around Myanmar, Ledi Sayadaw also discouraged the use of cow meat. He wrote one book called Go-maṃsa-mātikā, which urged people not to kill cows for food and promoted a vegetarian diet in general.

It was during this period, just after the turn of the century, that the Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was first visited by U Po Thet, who learned Vipassana from him and subsequently became one of the most well-known lay meditation teachers in Myanmar and the teacher of Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

By 1911, his reputation as a scholar and meditation master had grown to such an extent that the British government of India, which also ruled Myanmar, conferred on him the title of Aggamaha-pandita (foremost great scholar). He was also awarded a Doctor of Literature from the University of Rangoon. During the years 1913-1917, he had a correspondence with Mrs. Rhys-Davids of the Pāli Text Society in London, and translations of several of his discussions on points of Abhidhamma were published in the “Journal of the Pāli Text Society.”

In the last years of his life, Ven. Ledi Sayadaw’s eyesight failed him because of the years he had spent reading, studying, and writing, often with poor illumination. At the age of seventy-three, he went blind and devoted the remaining years of his life exclusively to meditation and teaching meditation. He died in 1923 at the age of seventy-seven at Pyinmana, between Mandalay and Rangoon (now Yangon), in one of the many monasteries that had been founded in his name as a result of his travels and teaching all over Myanmar.

The Venerable Ledi Sayadaw was perhaps the most outstanding Bhikkhu of his age. All who have come into contact with the path of Dhamma in recent years owe a great debt of gratitude to this scholarly, saintly monk who was instrumental in re-enlivening the traditional practice of Vipassana, making it more available for renunciates and lay people alike. In addition to this most important aspect of his teaching, his concise, clear, and extensive scholarly work served to clarify the experiential aspect of Dhamma.

Kalyāṇamitta S. N. Goenka
Vipassana Research Institute



The Real Significance of the Festival of Lights

During Deepawali, we sweep our houses and yards to clean and beautify them. We then decorate them. We also thoroughly wash our bodies. After cleaning our bodies, we adorn them with clothing and ornaments. This external cleaning and beautifying is both useful and beneficial. Cleaning and decorating our inner selves, which are littered with trash, weeds, dust, and cobwebs, is far more beneficial. Mere external cleaning and adornment will not provide us with true happiness and peace until the inner dirt is removed.

What mental impurities exist? They are craving, aversion, and attachment. Numerous more negativities are drawn to these impurities. Many defilements will gather like dust on the cobwebs of craving and aversion as long as they are present in the mind. These internal cobwebs cannot be eliminated by external cleaning. It is futile to hope for genuine happiness, peace, and prosperity when the mind hasn’t been cleansed.

Only through the practice of Vipassana meditation, or the constant awareness of truth, can we cleanse the mind. The ornaments of love and compassion can adorn the purified mind. When we fill our minds with boundless love and compassion by relying on truth, we achieve true inner cleanliness, which is the essence of true well-being. We should not be satisfied with only external beautification. The focus should be on this inner purification and adornment of the mind.

This cleansing and beautification of the mind should not be limited to special occasions such as this but should be a daily practice. Just as we keep our bodies and homes clean every day, it is even more important to purify the mind regularly. Diwali’s essence should be practiced daily. Our enthusiasm for inner and outer cleanliness should never fade. The practice of Vipassana acts as a broom that sweeps away the mind’s cobwebs. The cultivation of loving-kindness beautifies and embellishes the mind continuously. Like this, we should celebrate Diwali every day. This is our true well-being, real happiness, and true benefit.

— Kalyāṇamitta,
S. N. Goenka



New Vipassana Center at Akola, Maharashtra: "Dhamma Mañjūsā"

A Vipassana Center named “Dhamma Mañjūsā” is being built on 10 acres of land near Mumbai-Kolkata Highway No. 06 in Bargaon Manju village, Akola (Maharashtra), surrounded by natural beauty. There is a plan to provide essential amenities for 100 meditators. There are currently 25 residences, which include a dormitory, rooms for assistant teachers, course manager, dhamma servers, dining rooms, Dhamma hall and an office. Since last year, 10-day courses with approximately 25 meditators have been held here on a regular basis. By 2025, there will be 16 ten-day and three satipatthana courses.

A small meditation hall for 25 students is now available for:



Two-hour group sittings every Saturday and Sunday. * One-Day Vipassana Course on 3rd Sunday of every month. Children's Anapana Course on the 1st and 2nd Sundays of the month.

Centre's address: Dhamma Mañjūsā Vipassana Centre, near Machhi talav, Borgaon Manju, Dist. Akola, Maharashtra. Email ID: dhammamanjusha5@gmail.com Contact: 9404752533

Bank Details for Donation as follows: Trust: Vipassana Sadhana Prashikshan wa Prasar Samiti, Akola. State Bank of India, Borgaon Manju, Akola. A/c No. 40260501535

MIRC Code: 444002069, IFSC Code: SBIN0013534 ,PAN NO: AADTV4106F

(This is an opportunity for Vipassana Students to increase their Dāna Parami by donating to the centre: Registered donors can get 80-G Income tax benefit.)

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New Appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Daya Ram Arun, Lucknow, U.P.
2. Mrs. Shubhangi Dongre, Nagpur, M.S.
3. Mr. Vasant Sonawane, Dhule, M.S.
4. Mrs. Sadhana Jamwal, Jammu, J&K

5. Mr. Sengleap Ruos, Cambodia

Children Course Teachers

1. Nem Singh, Moradabad, U.P.
2. Mrs. Julia Kathri, Switzerland
3. Mr. Bikram Kathri, Switzerland

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

1). One-day Mega course on Sunday:

1. 19-1-2025 Sayagi U Ba Khin's demise-day(19-1-1971) and Mataji's Demise-day (5-1-2016)

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: 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm).

Online registration: <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>

Dhammalaya Stay 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

For any other information for One day or Mega courses you may contact: info@globalpagoda.org or pr@globalpagoda.org. Tel :- 022-50427500 / +91 82918 94644.

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Namana karūṇ main saṅgha ko, kaise śrāvaka santa.
Dharma dhāra ujale huye, nirmala huve bhadanta.*

I bow down to the Saṅgha, such a noble assembly of disciples. Practicing Dhamma, these saintly ones have become radiant and pure.

*Karūṇ vandanā saṅgha kī, sādara karūṇ praṇāma.
Jage preraṇā muktī kī, mile sukhada pariṇāma.*

I worship the Saṅgha, and bow down respectfully with folded hands. Whereby one is inspired towards liberation, giving joyous results.

*Karūṇ vandanā saṅgha kī, jo jaga dharama jagāya.
Jāti varṇa ke bheda bina, saṃton kā samudāya.*

I worship the Saṅgha, which awakens dhamma in the world; It is a congregation of the saintly ones. without any discrimination of caste or class.

*Śānta citta hī santa hai, kisī jāti kā hoya.
Cale dharama ke pantha para, sadā pūjya hai soya.*

One whose mind is peaceful is a saint, whichever caste one may belong to. Walking the path of Dhamma, one is always respected.

*Hindū muslima bauddha sikha, jaina tsāt hoya.
Jisakā mana nirmala huā, santa pūjya hai soya.*

One may be a Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh, Jain or Christian. Anyone whose heart is purified, that saintly one is respectable.

*Nirmala nirmala dharama kā, jo bhī pālaka hoya.
Namana karen usa santa ko, kisī jāti kā hoya.*

One who follows the pure Dhamma, I bow down to such a saint. Whichever caste they may belong to.

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