Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Words of Dhamma

Appamādarato bhikkhu, pamāde bhayadassi vā;
Saṃyojanaṃ aṇuṃ thūlaṃ, ḍahaṃ aggīva gacchati.
Dhammapadapāḷi- 31, Appamādavaggo.

The meditator, devoted to heedfulness and seeing the danger in negligence; Advances like a fire, burning all fetters, great and small.

The First Vipassana Centre: Igatpuri

Address by Goenkaji – 27 October, 2002

Respected Bhikkhus and Dhamma brothers and sisters!

Twenty-five years have passed since the establishment of this dhamma land, named Dhammagiri—The Hill of Dhamma. India was the source of Dhamma for the world and for 500 years all over India, and in Maharashtra for 700 years, it served people. However, it then became totally lost in India for various reasons and was similarly lost in other countries where it spread. Only in one neighbouring country, was it carefully preserved for centuries, though among only a few, and hence we were able to receive it.

Upon my return to India from Burma (Myanmar), someone asked me, "Why did you start your dhamma journey from here? Why did you choose this place?" I think I did not choose this place. But this place chose Dhamma. This land of India is very sacred.

We were looking for an appropriate place here in Maharashtra to establish a permanent Vipassana centre. A course had ended in Nasik, and while returning to Mumbai, a meditator, Bhojraj Sancheti, stopped the car in front of his house in Igatpuri and said, "You have been wandering in search of an appropriate spot for a centre; come, let me show you one place." He brought me to this land. As soon as I reached here, there was a feeling of dhamma. And I said, This land is very sacred; the ashram shall be developed here.

Then I was informed there was a cemetery and a crematorium nearby; moreover, there was also a Well of the Parsi community (burial ground of Parsis). In addition, I was asked, "How can you consider this location suitable? As very few people visit this place, and those who do often indulge in drugs and alcohol." I insisted that it was not my decision; rather, the land itself revealed its suitability. The moment I entered, I felt a tranquil, sacred pulsation throughout my body. This is precisely why this location was chosen for the establishment of a Vipassana meditation centre.

At that time it could not even be imagined that Vipassana meditation would spread all over the world, though that was the dream. It soon became evident that this land is indeed blessed and holds great sacred significance. Just like at Gangotri in the Himalayas, the water is so pure, and it flows from there so clear and pristine, like nectar, and this water flowing down from the hills into the northern plains renders them fertile. This place also proved to be the Gangotri of Dhamma. Some time later I was told that centuries ago a saint practised Vipassana here. ...

(To be continued in the next newsletter)

Brief History of Dhammagiri

Upon coming to India, Goenkaji, at the behest of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, had been teaching Vipassana meditation courses throughout India, starting in 1969. In one of these camps sat Shri Shriram Taparia with his wife, Suman. Afterwards, when the Taparia couple went on a world tour, eventually reaching Burma (Myanmar) in 1970, they met Sayagyi. They were the first Indian couple to have met him after having attended a course with Goenkaji. Paying respects to Sayagyi, they asked him what seva (service) they should offer, to which Sayagyi replied, "If you can help build a Vipassana ashram in India, it will be your biggest service." They took it seriously and, upon returning to India, began searching for land, but nothing appropriate had been found.

However a time came when Goenkaji, after conducting a camp in December 1973, was returning to Mumbai from Nasik; he was requested to stop at Igatpuri and was taken to a piece of land there. With unhindered winds on all four sides, the property was perched atop a hill some fifty feet above the village. He liked the land and giving approval he said, "I did not choose this land; Dhamma chose it. An immediate decision was made to purchase 17 acres, and in January 1974, construction work began in earnest. The centre was to accommodate about 80 students.

Igatpuri is known for its salubrious climate and is considered a mini hill station. About 135 km from Mumbai, at a height of 2000 ft, its temperature ranges between 20 and 35 degrees C. It used to receive a lot of rainfall, but with time, the amount has decreased.

Meditators' Dana of Tapas (Meditation)

Many students enthused by the purchase of land came to contribute their services. One of them went to Mumbai and asked Goenkaji, 'Guruji, what can we do? Please tell us? And he said, "Meditate as much as you can, giving your dana of tapas to this land'.

The land had a run of snakes and scorpions; cows and goats wandered in, making themselves comfortable in rooms. There was no electricity nor water; the area was dotted with old trees and low, squat buildings that were in ruins. A determined student from Australia, Graham Gambie got to work. Climbing down and bringing water from a nearby well that was 50 to 60 feet deep, he began cleaning the rooms. There was no mattress, so Mr. Bhojrajji gave a wooden plank to sleep on. Mr. Narayan Dasarvar began to assist him. Both would stay in two rooms and meditate in a large central room/hall. Some sadhakas from the village, along with a few foreigners, joined them. Once construction work started and workers came in, the place became alive.

Naming and Greening of Dhammagiri

In February 1975, Goenkaji named it 'Dhammagiri (Hill of Dhamma), Vipassana International Academy (VIA).' Old buildings were repaired, and from 12 to 16 April 1975, a mini course was held where 76 old students participated.

Following this, the acquisition of a four-acre plot of land that was adjacent to the property was made, and Goenkaji gave it the name

"Peace Plateau" (Shanti Pathar). Donations began to come in after it was revealed that a pagoda with 248 cells would be constructed there.

In June 1975 the work started by planting trees. Graham Gambie, who was touring northern India at that time, brought a sapling of the Bodhi Tree from Bodh Gaya; from Sarnath he brought a sapling of the 'Sri Lanka Bodhi Tree,' and from Savatthi he brought a sapling of the 'Anand Bodhi Tree,' all to be planted at Dhammagiri. Mr. Robert Hover, a senior meditator who meditated with Sayagyi U Ba Khin in Myanmar (then Burma), also brought a sapling of a 'Burmese Bodhi Tree' from Sayagyi's meditation center. These were planted in the four corners of the Peace Plateau. Many plants, some of a hardy variety, were planted in the entire area during the monsoon, and about 5000 drought resistant saplings were given by the Forest Department. Soon the bare hilltop began to turn lush with greenery.

An announcement to hold the first ten-day camp in 1976 from February 12 to 22 was made, but with a delay in construction work, it was decided to postpone it to March 25, which was also the birth anniversary of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. It was due to his profound compassion and gratitude towards India that this timeless knowledge had returned to India; hence, Goenkaji chose this day to start the course. The participating students were asked to come to the centre by March 24 so that they could participate in the opening ceremony of the centre the next morning.

Goenkaji wanted to hold a self-course prior to the commencement of the courses to 'prepare' the land for meditation courses. But his health, which was already delicate, worsened during the course, and by 21st March 1976, he was taken to the Bombay Hospital in Mumbai with the help of Dr. George Poland, an old Canadian student. He was immediately operated upon by the well-known heart specialist Dr. B. K. Goyal. As soon as his affected gall bladder was removed and put in a dish, it burst. Had it burst inside the body, the situation would have been more serious.

Goenkaji was advised to rest for 2 to 3 months, and all upcoming programmes were cancelled. Goenkaji advised old students to hold self-courses assisted by recordings of his chanting and instructions with an emphasis on eight-fold sila so that the meditators could gain maximum benefit and the atmosphere could get energised with dhamma. Self-courses for 10-15 people continued to be held during the moonsoon up till Diwali in October.

The centre began to develop. Shri Mahavir Sharma (the head cook) took charge of the kitchen, and the trustees from Mumbai organised 100 beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows, etc. for the rooms. Besides rooms built of stone, some thached mud huts were built. A few other experimental-type huts were tried as well.

Hyderabad Vipassana Centre

Goenkaji visited the centre regularly, coming from Mumbai by train or car. Once he walked from the station all the way up the hill with his 8-10 kg heavy suitcase. There were no telephones in those days, so he could not call someone to come and pick him up from the station. The construction work was progressing in earnest when Shri Ratilal Mehta from Hyderabad came to meet Goenkaji. He was a regular meditator and had expressed a desire to build a Vipassana meditation centre in Hyderabad. Earlier in 1973-74, he had organised 2 camps in his factory in Hyderabad and his family had all attended. Donating two acres of land in Hyderabad, he now offered to build a centre there himself. Goenkaji agreed. And in 1976, by the time the monsoon arrived, the centre was ready for about 50 people. But Goenkaji could not go there until September, as healthwise, he was still not fully recovered.

Goenkaji named it - Dhamma Khetta Vipassana International Meditation Centre. On 4th September it was inaugurated, and Goenkaji conducted two courses there from the 4th to 15th and from 16th to 27th September 1976.

Formal Inauguration of Dhammagiri

The major festival of India, Diwali, had just concluded on 27 October, 1976, when the Dhammagiri centre was formally inaugurated. The atmosphere was festive, and the people from the village of Igatpuri were invited. Goenkaji gave a talk welcoming them to come and taste Dhamma – ehipassiko. The first course started that evening, and the first long course of 30 days concluded on 1st January 1977, in which 23 people participated.

Teacher's Residence

The residence that was built for Goenkaji could not be put to use since the money spent on its construction remained unpaid. Goenkaji decided that until the money was paid back he would not use it, and he and Mataji would stay in the 'D' dormitory, which was near the present-day male dining area. The dorm was curtained off in 3 sections with reed mats. The area behind was for private use, the middle section served as his office, while a small section near the entrance was cordoned off where students could meet him, while on the other side a small section was used as the residence and work area for his secretary Mr. R.P. Yadav.

Goenkaji, with clothes in hand, would go to the students' bath area to have a bath. This continued from October 1976 until January 1977, when he was able to shift to the residence built for him when he came to Igatpuri for the 133rd camp in February, as by then the debt had been paid off. He wrote an article relating to this—**The Academy is Free of Debt**, which was published in the newsletter. It was a lesson for the trustees—expenditure should be commensurate with donations. We should not become a burden on others.

Vipassana in Jaipur Jail

After concluding the scheduled programmes at Dhammagiri, a camp was held in the central jail of Jaipur from 4-15 January 1977 for 108 prisoners. He then proceeded to Bodh Gaya, where he held a large camp for 129 people in the Burmese Vihara, followed by a self-course with old students.

When he returned to Igatpuri, he held 6 consecutive camps from February to June 1977. In one of the camps from 3-14 March, 130 people participated in a facility built for 80. The excess 50 people were permitted to put up tents on open ground. For others, makeshift arrangements were made. But the number of participants kept growing, going beyond 150. Seekers were happy in any given conditions so long as they could participate in a course. Goenkaji would say that those who come to the gates of Dhamma should not be turned away as far as possible.

In January 1978, Goenkaji sat for his self-course at Dhammagiri, and by March 1979, when the 158th course was held, the number of students had risen to 209. With the flow of dana, construction of few cement residences started, though tents as well as thached mud huts remained. The number of people kept growing, benefitting from Dhamma.

Inauguration of the Small Pagoda

On 12th March 1979, the Pagoda was inaugurated at Dhammagiri, and again the locals were invited to an open house. Goenkaji gave a talk and people were served refreshments.

In July-August 1979, an overseas tour was planned, and Goenkaji conducted 5 courses in France, Canada, and England over 2 months. Upon his return in September, he spent his time primarily at Dhammagiri conducting courses.

On 29th February 1980, a second Dhamma hall near the Pagoda was inaugurated which today serves as the women's dhamma hall.

In 1981, an application was submitted to have the police firing range shifted to another location, and it was eventually shifted in 2005. The booming sound of the shots would hit the rocky hills and echo, sounding as if some skirmish was under way. It would disturb the meditators, and they would complain. The government authorities agreed after a long discussion to close the firing range once an alternate land was bought and offered to them.

At the start of 1982, Goenkaji appointed 8 assistant teachers for the first time so that the courses could run in his absence. Until then, he would conduct every session personally—from early morning until evening metta, the six am chanting, the 3 group sittings,

individual checking, and discourses, and at times simultaneously checking on the students on concurrently running long courses. He would be working as well on the Pali texts. His work schedule was exhausting. One could see light burning in his room late in the night, and then early in the morning he would be up for the morning sessions.

Mr. L.N. Rathi conducted the first assistant teacher course at Dhammagiri in May 1982, while Mr. Bill Hart conducted one in Bodh Gaya as an assistant teacher for foreigners. The number of assistant teachers gradually increased, leading to the simultaneous holding of many more courses worldwide. The number of assistant teachers continues to grow as demand grows. Residences for the assistant teachers were also built at this time.

Goenkaji recorded a body of discourses and detailed instructions as he taught courses. The extensive recordings were done mostly by Mr. Thomas Crisman—for 10-day courses, 20 days, 30 days, 45 days, children's courses, and then 60 days. Today, the world over, the Vipassana courses of Goenkaji, in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, are held using these recordings of Goenkaji. His words are recorded for posterity.

The original dhamma hall had now become insufficient to accommodate the rising number of students. Hence, in the same year, an octagonal hall, no. 2, was built, which developed in many phases. It can now seat 350 persons. This is currently used as the male dhamma hall.

Another hall, no. 3, in the shape of a lotus, was constructed, which can seat 100 people. Since a mini dhamma hall already existed where discourses were being held in multiple languages, it was later converted into accommodation.

In April 1985, a 3-day children's Anapana course was held, which later would be organized for one or two days. Recordings were made to enable regular courses, and children's course assistant teachers were appointed.

Vipassana Research Institute (VRI)

Goenkaji established another trust – Vipassana Research Institute (VRI) for Pariyatti, which would undertake research and publication work on the words of Pali, the Tipitaka. Towards this, Pali scholars were appointed, and VRI undertook to publish related literature and other Pali works. Though the study in the Pali language had been ongoing since the inception of the Academy, VRI was established to better structure and expand the scope of study, research and training of students in Pali by scholars. New buildings were constructed for the project.

On 20 December 1986, a 10-day course was held to introduce Pali scholars in Patipatti, or the practical, experiential aspect of Vipassana, at the end of which, from 31st Dec '86 to 1st Jan '87, a two-day Experiential Seminar was successfully held where the participants spoke of their experiences and voiced their ideas. It was later published in a newsletter on 15th Mar 1987. Everyone was pleased as they benefitted from this Patipatti and Pariyatti seminar.

40 Day Long Course at Dhammagiri

Goenkaji held a 15-day self-courses at Dhammagiri from 4 to 19 January 1987 and also in 1988. From 22 January, two long courses of 30- and 40-day duration commenced simultaneously. Many other 30-day courses had been organised earlier.

Expansion was made in the female residential area in 1988.

Other Seminars at Dhammagiri.

1989 December—A seminar was held on Vipassana: Addiction and Health. A book was published.

1990 February—The Importance of Vedanā and Sampajañña: held at Dhammagiri. A book was published.

May 1995—Dharma: Its True Nature: An International Seminar.

2005, 15-16 October—A conference on Vipassana and Ayurveda was organized. On the occasion, a book on the life of Jivaka, the physician of the Buddha, was published, and other articles in Hindi and English were compiled.

Inauguration of the Large Pagoda

In 1990, construction work on enlarging the original pagoda began by constructing a larger pagoda over and around it. The project was huge, and completing it took time. It was finally inaugurated in 1994.

In 1991, Goenkaji gave a series of Sutta discourses. Dhammacakkapavattana Sutta was one of them. It was recited and also recorded at the same time.

On 20 April, 1994, a gold-covered umbrella manufactured in Jaipur was raised to the top of the Pagoda during a celebratory function.

In July 2000, the inauguration of Long Course Centre Tapovana 1 took place along with the raising of an umbrella on top of the pagoda there, and a 45-day course started.

At this time, a village near Dhammagiri was established in memory of Sayagyi—Sayagyi U Ba Khin Village (SUBK). It is next to the center but organized and run separately.

In 2001 a 60-day course was conducted in Tapovana 1, in which 97 senior teachers participated.

2004—The Myanmar Gate was built, which has become world-famous. People started coming from afar to see it. Busloads of school children come to visit here.

The first teenagers' course was organized between 9 and 17 April 2004 in the main hall in Dhammagiri. But after a long gap, now teenagers' courses have been held regularly. Space is limited, and the wait-list remains long. Courses are held simultaneously for young girls and then boys. Short discourses are given twice a day so that their enthusiasm remains unflagged.

A special course was organized for senior government officers in 2004 from 10 to 21 March.

Every year, on the outer periphery of the centre, where today solar panels are installed, the Annual National Wrestling competition was being organised. Permission was granted by the courts to discontinue it here, and so this disturbance could be stopped.

In 2006 courses in Advance Diploma Pali-Hindi were organised, which have been shifted to the VRI department in the Global Pagoda premises in Mumbai.

In 2007 it was planned to build Tapovana 2, and a dhamma hall came up before the pagoda was inaugurated in 2009. The residential quarters were built and expanded gradually.

Goenkaji had come to Dhammagiri for 3 days– 3 to 5 June in 2011 for the tree planting and gardening purposes.

In 2012, he came to Dhammagiri, for the last time, Dec 6 to 10 for the AT Meetings.

In 2024, a function on the occasion of Goenkaji's 100th Birth Anniversary, and the 50th Anniversary (Jan 1974) of the purchase of the Dhammagiri land was organized in Dhammagiri.

Invitation for Golden Jubilee Function

All Vipassana students are cordially invited to participate in this year's Golden Jubilee Function of Dhamma's Return to India. As part of the programme a 3-day course has been organised from 26-29 Nov 2026. The booking link has opened from 26 Sept. On 5th Dec 2026 a Mega Course for old students – from 11 am to 4.30 pm – will be held. The booking link opens on 5th Nov.

New Publications

1. A pictorial coffee table book, "Dhamma Giri–The Hill of Dhamma", depicts the journey of the meditaion centre – from barren hilly land to becoming the world-famous place of Dhamma-sadhana it today is. Rare photos, aerial views, letters, timelines, and Goenkaji's inspiring words highlight the future vision and purpose of Vipassana meditation, which was made accessible for everyone's benefit.

2. The book "Essentials of Dhamma" brings together a selection of in-depth discourses by S. N. Goenka and Sayagyi U Ba Khin on subjects like the Four Noble Truths; Anicca, Dukkha, and Anattā; Vedanā Saṃyutta; Conditioned Relations; and Pariyatti in relation to Patipatti and Yoga in the light of Vipassana.

New Responsibility

SAT

1. Dr. Krishna Swarup Dwivedi, Ahmedabad, Gujarat
2. Mrs. Manu Bajpai, Bodhagaya, Bihar

New Appointments

Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Sudhir Pai, Dhammagiri, Igatpuri, MS
2. Mr. Sanjay Dhole, Yavatmal, MS
3. Mr. Nilesh Sinhal, Dhule, MS
4. Mrs. Kajal Kaswala Surat, Guj
5. Mrs. Kusum Patel, Bhuj-Kutch, Guj
6. Mr. Hardeo Singh, Lucknow, UP
7-8. Mr. Rakesh Kumar & Mrs. Rekha Rani, Noida, UP
9. Miss. Kusum Popat, Raipur, C.G.
10. Mr. Prashanth B Reddy, Hyderabad, Telangana
11. Mr.Vasanthakumar Narasimhan, Chennai, T. N.
12. Mr. Suthee Aeknalinratkul, Thailand
13. Mrs. Nantaporn Chaiwongnoi, Thailand
14. Mr. Sonam Thakchoe, Australia

Children Course Teachers

1. Miss Ranjana Moolya, Ulhasnagar
2. Mrs. Geeta Mulay, Thane
3. Mr. Rakesh Gajjar, Ahmedabad
4. Mr. Theerthappa B R, Shivamogga, Karnataka
5. Mr. B. Satyanarayan Reddy, Bangalore
6. Mrs. Makara Aom, Cambodia
7. Ms. Piseth Aom, Cambodia
8. Mrs. Theary Lim, Cambodia
9. Mrs. Channita Seng, Cambodia
10. Mr. Samreth Kao, Cambodia
11. Mr. Samphors Seng, Cambodia
12. Mr. Sai Soe Thiha Ohn Myint, Myanmar
13. Mrs. Nang Khin Nu, Myanmar
14. Mrs. Yi Yi Mon, Myanmar
15. Mrs. Nang Yin Min Aye, Myanmar
16. Ms. Nang Hseng Noon, Myanmar
17. Ms. Myint Myint Aye, Myanmar
18. Mrs. Nang Hseng Khay, Myanmar
19. Mrs. Thida Oo, Myanmar
20. Ms. Nang Noon Kham, Myanmar
21. Ms. Khin let Yar, Myanmar
22. Mr. Tin Lin, Myanmar
23. Mrs. Nwe Nwe Lwin, Myanmar
24. Ms. Myat Myat Moe, Myanmar
25. Mr. Tun Naing Win, Myanmar
26. Mr. Thu Ya Hein, Myanmar
27. Mr. Myo Myint Oo, Myanmar
28. Mrs. Kyu Kyu, Myanmar
29. Ms. Khin Chaw Su Mon, Myanmar
30. Mrs. Su Su Htay, Myanmar
31. Ms. Aye Aye Thein, Myanmar
32. Ms. Sandar Soe, Myanmar

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

(1) One-day Mega course on Sunday:

1. **Sunday, 17th January, 2027** Sayagyi U Ba Khin's and Mataji's Demise-day
2. **Sunday, 23 May 27**, Buddha Pūrṇimā
3. **Sunday, 18th July 2027** Ashadha-Pūrṇimā (Dhammacakkappavattana day)
4. **Sunday, 3rd October 2027** 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; **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

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DHAMMA DOHAS

Dhammagiri se dharma kī, gaṅga pravāhita hoya;
Roga śoka sabake miṭen, mukti dukhon se hoya.

May the Ganges of Dhamma flow from Dhamma Giri; Dissolving the ailments and pain of all and freeing everyone from their misery.

Tapobhūmi se dharama kī, gaṅga pravāhita hoya;
Jana-jana kā hove bhalā, jana-jana maṅgala hoya.

May the Ganges of Dhamma flow from the land of meditation. May there be welfare for all, may there be prosperity for all.

Sukha chāye saṃsāra men, dukhiyā rahe na koya;
Jana-jana jage vipaśyanā, saba kā maṅgala hoya.

May happiness spread in the world, may no one remain unhappy; May Vipassana arise in all, may everyone be blessed.

Sukha chāe isa jagata men, dukhiyā rahe na koya;
Jana-jana mana maitrī jage, jana-jana maṅgala hoya.

May happiness prevail in this world, may no one remain unhappy. May loving-kindness awaken in the hearts of all, may everyone be blessed.

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