

# Vipassana Newsletter

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

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## Words of Dhamma

*Asevanā ca bālānaṃ, paṇḍitānañca sevanā;*

*Pūjā ca pūjanīyānaṃ, etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

– Suttanipāṭapāḷi Gatā 262, Maṅgalasuttam

Avoidance of fools, the company of the wise, honouring those worthy of honour: this is the highest welfare.

## Such was Gurudev: Sayagyi U Ba Khin

### Soft as a Rose Petal, Hard as a Diamond

A saintly person, who is full of love and compassion, has a heart that is soft, like the petal of a rose. But when it comes to his duty, he becomes hard like a diamond. Both of these qualities manifested in Sayagyi's life from time to time. A few of the many incidents illustrating this are included here.

On 4 January, 1948, Burma became independent. Unfortunately, the newly-formed national government had to face an immediate crisis. Throughout the country, followers of different ideologies were challenging the government. The insurgents had no scarcity of arms and ammunition, because during the Second World War not only the Japanese, but the Allies also had freely distributed arms and ammunition to attract the Burmese youth towards their fold.

The rebels started fighting on so many fronts that it became impossible for the newly-formed national army to handle the crisis. The situation threatened the ability of the new government to peacefully administer the country. Soon the insurgents gained the upper hand, and were masters of the situation. They had different causes and slogans: some were communists, some socialists, some provincial secessionist groups. A chaotic situation prevailed throughout Burma, as the different groups with their different causes each occupied and ruled a different territory.

A time came when the federal government of Burma was in fact only the government of the city of Rangoon. Soon even this nucleus of control was imperiled when one group of rebels started knocking at the door of Rangoon itself. The insurgents occupied a village ten to twelve miles from the city. There was no rule of law anywhere in the country; the continued existence of the federal government was hanging in the balance. If the government of Rangoon fell, then the existence of the Union of Burma would also disintegrate, as the whole country became divided up into competing factions.

The government was distressed, the army was distressed—but what could be done? There seemed to be no hope of a way out.

Sayagyi was deeply devoted to his country, and wished peace, harmony and prosperity for Burma, but what could he do? His strength was only Dhamma strength. So, at times he would go to the residence of the Prime Minister and give *mettā* (meditation of goodwill and compassion for all). At other times in his own home, he would generate deep *mettā* for the security of his country.

In a situation such as this, his heart was very soft, like the petal of a rose. But it became, on occasion, hard as a diamond. It so happened that during the same crisis, the government appealed to a neighbouring country for assistance. This friendly country agreed to come to Burma's aid in this emergency. But whatever items were to be given had to be transported by air. The government of Burma did not have adequate air transport. The airplanes required for the purpose would have to be procured outside the country. To succeed in this plan, the government made a hurried decision which did not fall within the framework of the country's laws.

At that time U Ba Khin was the Accountant General, and he declared the decision to be illegal. The government was now in a dilemma. The Prime Minister knew very well that Sayagyi was a man of principle, that he would not compromise where principles were concerned. (Sayagyi always asserted: "I get my pay for one purpose only: to see that not a single penny of government funds should be used in a way which is contrary to the law. I am paid for this!")

The Prime Minister had great respect for Sayagyi's integrity, his adherence to duty. But the situation was very delicate. He therefore called Sayagyi for a private discussion, and told him: "We have to bring these provisions, and we must make an expenditure for the air transportation. Now, tell us how to do this in a legal way."

Sayagyi found a suitable solution, and the government followed his advice to save itself from using a wrong means for a right action.

The situation of national crisis continued, but one after another the rebels were overpowered by the national army. In most of the country except the remote mountainous areas, the rebels were defeated. The government then started giving

more importance to social programmes for the improvement of the country. Thanks to the diligence of the Bhikkhu Saṅgha in bringing reading and writing to the villages throughout Burma, there was never a problem of illiteracy in the country, except for a few hill tribes. Though there was a high rate of basic literacy, higher education was lacking in Burma.

The Prime Minister undertook to address this situation. In a large public gathering, he announced a scheme to implement adult education throughout the country. He authorized a large sum of money for this purpose to be given immediately to the ministry concerned.

Sayagyi was fully sympathetic to the virtues of the plan, but he determined that the amount specified did not fit into any section of the national budget. He therefore objected. The Prime Minister was placed in a very embarrassing situation, but U Ba Khin’s objection was valid: according to law, the announced amount could not be directed to its proposed purpose.

Sayagyi’s determination was accepted, but the announcement had already been made, and something had to be done. So the Prime Minister sought another solution. He called the officers of the Rangoon Racing Club and requested their cooperation in helping to implement the adult education programme. He suggested that they sponsor a special horse race with high entry fees; whatever money earned would be given as a donation to the noble cause. Who could refuse the Prime Minister’s request? The Racing Club agreed, and all went according to plan. The Racing Club earned a huge amount from the special race.

Once again, a large public meeting was organized, and with great pomp and ceremony, a cheque containing a large amount was presented to the Prime Minister by the officials of the Racing Club. The Prime Minister, in turn, handed the cheque over to the minister concerned.

After this event, however, the case came before Sayagyi, and again he raised objections. The Prime Minister was nonplussed. It was, after all, a question of his prestige. Why was Sayagyi now stopping the payment of the cheque? —this is not the government’s money; what right has he got to stop it? But Sayagyi pointed out that the income of the race course included a tax for the government. If the government tax was taken out, the rest could go towards supporting the adult education programme. The Prime Minister was speechless, but he smiled and accepted U Ba Khin’s decision.

Just as Sayagyi was fearless in disposing his official responsibilities, so he was free from favouritism. The following incident is one amongst many incidents illustrating this trait.

In the Accountant General’s department, one of the junior clerks was also one of Sayagyi’s Vipassana students. This man was very humble, always willing to lend a helping hand. He was always very happy to serve Sayagyi, and Sayagyi had great paternal love for him. Even paternal love, however, could not become an obstacle to Sayagyi in his fulfilling his appointed duty.

It happened that at the end of the year it was time for staff promotions. The name at the top of the list prepared by the staff was the name of this junior assistant. He was next in line for rightful promotion because he had the greatest seniority in the department. If Sayagyi had wanted, he could easily have recommended this promotion, but he did not do so. For him, promotion should not depend only on seniority. It should also

take into consideration one’s ability to work efficiently. The assistant, who had many other good qualities, was unfortunately lacking in this area. Sayagyi called him and lovingly explained that if he was able to pass a certain accountancy examination, he would get the promotion. The disciple accepted the advice of his teacher, and it took him two years to study and pass the examination. It was only then that Sayagyi granted the promotion.

As with fearlessness, lack of favour was one of Sayagyi’s rare qualities. There are very few people who are free from fear or favour, or who have a love which is paternal, yet detached.

Soft as a rose petal, hard as a diamond. I feel fortunate to have learned Dhamma from such a teacher. I pay my respects, remembering these shining qualities of his.

## Teacher of a Non-sectarian Path

One of the things which kept attracting me closer and closer to my teacher was his non-sectarian interpretation of Dhamma. The teaching of Buddha is so universal that people from different sects and communities can follow it and experience its benefits. I never found Sayagyi interested in converting people to the formal, organized Buddhist religion. Of course he himself was Buddhist by birth, and proud to be so. But for him the essence of Buddhism was Dhamma, and a true Buddhist was one who practised Dhamma. He was interested in helping people to establish themselves in Dhamma—that is, in *s<sup>2</sup>la* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration) and *paññā* (wisdom); to show people how to convert themselves from misery to happiness. If someone who had undergone this conversion from impurity to purity then wished to call himself a Buddhist, Sayagyi was pleased; but the important point was the change which had come in the person’s life, not merely the change in the name he called himself.

Sayagyi would even admonish enthusiasts who were eager to convert others to Buddhism, saying to them, “The only way to convert people is to become established oneself in Dhamma—in *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*—and to help others similarly to get established. When you yourselves are not established in *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, what is the sense in your trying to convert others? You may call yourselves Buddhists but unless you practise *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, to me you are not Buddhists. But if someone practises *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*, then even though he may not call himself a Buddhist, nevertheless he is a true follower of the teachings of the Buddha, whatever he may label himself.”

One incident, illustrating this non-sectarian attitude, occurred when a staunch Christian came to take a course under Sayagyi. While the opening formalities were being explained, this man became frightened that he was being asked to convert from Christianity to Buddhism; and out of this groundless fear, he refused to take refuge in Buddha. “I can take refuge in Jesus Christ, but not in Buddha,” he said. “Very well,” replied Sayagyi smilingly, “Take refuge in Jesus Christ—but with the understanding that you are actually taking refuge in the qualities of Christ, in order to develop these very qualities in yourself.” In this way the person began to work; and by the end of the course he realized that his initial objection had been unnecessary, that his fears of conversion had been without cause.



## Dhammic Deaths

Ven Acariya Ming Chia passed away peacefully on 21st January, 2024. She served as Area Teacher for Taiwan from 2000 to 2011 and helped to establish Dhamma Vikasa—Vipassana center dedicated to long courses. She conducted a large number of courses in Taiwan and China and was a beacon of Dhamma for students learning and practicing Vipassana in these regions. May she continue her journey on this Noble Path of Dhamma and may she be happy and peaceful. All our metta to her.

### Additional Responsibility

1. Mr. Shankar Raj Shakya, To assist the CT of Dhamma Janani, Nepal
2. Mr. Kehar Singh Khadka, To assist the CT of Dhamma Janani, Nepal
3. Mr. Shankar Pratapshih Thakkar, Mandavi, Kutch
4. Mrs. Nandadevi Borse, Dhulia
5. Mrs. Meena Borse, Dhulia
6. Ms. Nalini Gupta, Bangalore
7. Mr. Jeevan Puthamane Srinivas, Bangalore

### New Responsibility Teachers

1. Mrs. S. Janaki –AJS, Chennai
2. Mr Ramnath Shenoy, Mumbai
3. Mr. R. Srinivasan, Madurai
8. Mr. Amarnath, B.L. Bangalore
9. Mr. Santosh Dharmraj, Bangalore
10. Mrs Vimala Oak, Bangalore
11. Mr. Prakash Pataskar, Hyderabad
12. Mrs. Nagamani Shanigarapu, Hanamkonda, Telangana

### New Responsibility Senior Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Santosh Jambhulkar, Nagpur
2. Mr. Bhanumurthy Tammali, Hyderabad
3. Mr. Markandeyulu Velamuri, Hyderabad
4. Mr. Laxmaiah Bandari, Secunderabad
5. Mrs. Veena Bandari, Hyderabad
6. Mrs. Siddamma Pothuru, Secunderabad
7. Mr. Vallabhaneni Brahma Vara Prasad, Eluru
8. Mr. Hridaya Narayan Chaudhari, Nepal
9. Mrs. Renu Jajodia, Nepal
10. Mrs. Pushpa Lamsal, Nepal
11. Mrs. Sanu Maiya K.C, Nepal
12. Mr. Prakash Bir Singh Tuladhar, Nepal
13. Mr. Gyan Darshan Udas, Nepal
14. Mr. Bishnu Prasad Bhandari, Nepal
15. Mr. Basant Kumar Thapa, Nepal
13. Mr. Vidyasagar Abburi, Hyderabad, Telangana
14. Mr. Birendra Raj Wagle, Nepal
15. Mr. Kashi Ram Ghimire, Nepal
16. Ms. Shova Thakali, Nepal
17. Mr. Phu Tshering Bhutia, Sikkim
18. Miss. Arawee Tovijit, Thailand
19. Mrs. Duangsamorn Jansomboon, Thailand
20. Mrs. Hui Zhen Xie, China
21. Mrs. Yi Liu, Taiwan, China
22. Ms Cheng-Hoon Low, Malaysia.

### Children Course Teachers

1. Mrs. Sonali Kose, Chandrapur,
2. Mr. Aman Nandeshwar, Nagpur
3. Mr. Chandramani Bansod, Nagpur
4. Mr. Jagadish Gajbhiye, Nagpur
5. Mrs. Kavita Chauhan, Nagpur
6. Mr. Paritosh Dange, Nagpur
7. Ms. Sujata Tamgadge, Vardha
8. Mr. Aditya Dugar, Kolkata
9. Ms. Geeta Kumari, Hugali
10. Miss Shyamsri Lahiri, Kolkata
11. Mr. Vinod Ruke, Palghar
12. Mrs. Neha Hareshwala, Mumbai
13. Miss Reeta Patil, Mumbai
14. Mr. Amarish Kadam, Mumbai
15. Mr. Mario Jayamaha, Sri Lanka,

### New appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Ms Surabhi Jain, Jaipur
2. Mr. Khushal Sinh Pardeshi, Aurangabad

## Teacher Satyanarayan Goenkaji concludes successfully...

Watching the successful conclusion of the Birth Centenary celebration of our Principal Teacher Goenkaji on the 4th Feb 2024, warmed the hearts of all of us the world over. On this auspicious occasion not only did about 7000 people meditate together in the Global Vipassana Pagoda, but many others sat together while watching, and listening to the direct transmission of the function in many other centres and places. This was well appreciated by all who participated in the programme.

Many presentations were taken from Goenkaji's lectures and discourses, and an inspirational compilation will be published in the forthcoming newsletter. Here we conclude with the Indian Prime Minister's message given during the occasion:

Please see the PM's Message linked below:

<https://www.youtube.com/live/XeTF9f9I8zw?si=f168DpzPBIKRCWBD>

These are some photos of 6 to 7 PM group settings on the location of upper Parikrama of Pagoda, prior to the 4th February event:-





## “Dhamma Sambodhi” New Vipassana Center for long courses

A new Vipassana center has been planned for the long courses in Bodh Gaya. A master plan has been prepared to start the construction work of this center on 8 acres of land adjacent to Dhamma Bodhi Vipassana Center. The facility will be available for 100 meditators in this long course centre.

In ‘Dhamma Sambodhi’, 104 residences for meditators, A 120 Pagoda with 120 cells, male and female Acharya residences, dining hall, office, stores, etc. will be constructed. This project is going to cost approximately ₹ 20 crore.

An opportunity is available to participate in this dhamma work. The old students can contact directly on the following email and phone.

With dhamma wishes,

‘Dhamma Bodhi’, Bodhgaya International Vipassana Meditation Centre, Bodhgaya, Bihar, India.

Website: [bodhi.vridhamma.org](http://bodhi.vridhamma.org)

Email: [accounts.bodhi@vridhamma.org](mailto:accounts.bodhi@vridhamma.org)

Tel: +91-9930796064



## DHAMMA DOHAS

*Gahana nisā vana bhaṭakate, huā vikala gumarāha;  
Sahaja dikhāyā dharmapatha, guru ne pakarī bāmha.*

Lost and anxious while wandering in the darkest night, My teacher held my hand and showed the Dhamma way just so easily.

*Dhanya bhāga guruvara mile, karuṇā ke bhaṅḍāra;  
Andhe ko āṅkhem milī, satya dharma kā sāra.*

I was blessed to have met the teacher who is filled with compassion; So the blind could see the essence of true Dhamma.

*Dharama nīra aisā milā, dhulā citta kā cīra;  
Miṭī dekhate-dekhate, tana kī, mana kī pīra.*

Having found such Dhamma water that the mental fabric was cleansed; And the pain of the body and the mind was released so well.

*Mana madamatta gajendra sā, jarā na vaśa mem āya;  
Santa mahāvata sā milā, aṃkuśa diyā lagāya.*

The mind was drunk like an elephant which could not be controlled at all; Until I found a saint-like mahout who reined me in.

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