



THE
GRACIOUS
FLOW OF
DHARMA

S. N. Goenka

The Gracious Flow of Dharma

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Preface

Vipassana Research Publications is pleased to offer this book of Mr. S. N. Goenka's public talks.

Mr. Goenka left his homeland of Myanmar (Burma) in 1969, to come to India, the land of his ancestors, to teach Vipassana meditation. Vipassana originated in India but was lost to the country. Fortunately it was preserved in its pure form for over two millenia in the neighbouring country.

In the twenty-four years since he left Myanmar, Mr. Goenka has introduced Vipassana to tens of thousands of people worldwide. His primary focus has always been on the practical aspect of the technique. He has conducted nearly 400 ten-day Vipassana courses in India and a dozen other countries, and many thousands of people have learned Vipassana in courses conducted by his assistant teachers.

In addition to his teaching work, Mr. Goenka has presented Vipassana to the general public through hundreds of public discourses in different countries, and in different cities in India. Mr. Goenka has given the majority of these talks in Hindi; the remainder, as in the present volume, in English. Initially, these talks were given in one session. In recent years, however, Goenkaji has developed an additional format of speaking for a series of three or five consecutive evenings, in order to treat the subject in greater depth.

The three-day series of public talks contained in this book was given in Hyderabad, A.P., India from July 22 to 24, 1993. For publication purposes, it has been titled "The Gracious Flow of Dharma."

The Sanskrit word *Dharma* (which is spelled *Dhamma* in the Pāli language) originally meant “the law of nature” or “the truth.” In today’s India, unfortunately, the word has lost its original meaning, and is mistakenly used to refer to “sect” or “sectarianism.” Using this theme as an introduction, Goenkaji explains that Vipassana meditation teaches how to live a life of pure Dharma—a life full of peace, harmony and goodwill for others. This subject is particularly relevant in India today—and indeed the whole world—where sectarianism and communalism have divided large sections of society and caused acute suffering.

May these talks give inspiration to all to walk on the path of pure Dharma and gain the lasting benefit of real peace and happiness.

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*Dharma na Hindū Bauddha hai,
Sikkha na Muslima Jaina.
Dharma citta ki śhuddhatā,
Dharma śhānti sukha chaina.*

Dharma is not Hindu nor Buddhist,
not Sikh, Muslim, nor Jain;
Dharma is purity of heart,
peace, happiness, serenity.

—*Hindi doha of S. N. Goenka*

Day One:

Dharma and Sectarianism

Friends, seekers of peace and harmony:

Everyone seeks peace. Everyone seeks harmony. Life is full of misery, misery of one kind or another, due to this reason or that reason. There is misery everywhere. How can we come out of misery? How can we live peaceful, harmonious lives, good for ourselves and good for others?

The sages, saints and seers of India—the wise, enlightened ones—asked: “Why is there misery?” and “Is there a way out of misery?” There are innumerable apparent reasons why there is misery. But we cannot come out of misery by eradicating these apparent reasons. The real cause of misery lies deep within ourselves. And unless this deep-rooted cause of misery is eradicated, we can never experience real peace, real harmony or real happiness.

How can we eradicate the deep-rooted cause of misery within ourselves? Everyone who was wise and enlightened realized that the only way to eradicate misery was by following the path of Dharma. If one lives the life of Dharma, one is definitely coming out of misery. Dharma and misery cannot co-exist. But the difficulty came when, after a few centuries, people forgot what Dharma was. When one does not understand the real meaning of Dharma, how can one apply Dharma in life?

Two thousand years ago in India, there were two distinct traditions. One tradition gave importance to the purity of Dharma. The other gave importance to sectarian rites, rituals, religious ceremonies, external appearances, and so on. In those

Day Two: Living the Life of Morality and Developing Mastery over the Mind

Friends: We have assembled here again this evening to further discuss the subject of Dharma. Yesterday we discussed Dharma and sectarianism. Unfortunately in India today, these two words have become synonymous, which is totally wrong. The two are poles apart. Dharma is its own entity. Dharma is universal. It is all-powerful. Dharma is the law of nature, the universal law of nature which governs the entire universe. All animate and inanimate beings are governed by the law of Dharma.

The Dharma of the negativities of the mind is to make one miserable. This law existed in the past, this law exists today and this law will still exist in the future. It is eternal. The Dharma of the purity of the mind has the qualities of love, compassion and goodwill. It gives peace and harmony. This was so in the past, it is so today and it will be so in future. This is the reason why Dharma is *sanātana*—eternal. Unfortunately today, even this Hindi word *sanātana* has become sectarian. *Sanātana Dharma* means a particular Dharma of a particular sect. It is a great misfortune that India has lost the real meaning of Dharma. Because of this, it has become very difficult for people to practise Dharma.

Dharma and sectarianism are totally different. When the country became independent, some very wise, experienced, patriotic people framed the Constitution and declared: “Our government will be a secular government.” This was a good thing: a good government is always a secular government. But

Day Three:

Practising Purification of the Mind

Friends: we have assembled here again this evening on the bank of the Ganges of Dharma—pure Dharma, non-sectarian Dharma—to understand what pure Dharma is. Let us understand how to practise pure Dharma: how to live a life of pure Dharma, and how to get benefited by pure Dharma.

Dharma should be kept aloof from sectarian terminologies. Dharma should never be confused with Hindu-Dharma, Buddhist-Dharma, Jain-Dharma, Muslim-Dharma, Christian-Dharma, Sikh-Dharma, etc. Dharma is the universal law of nature. It is applicable to everyone, everywhere, at all times. It is the law of nature which will keep our minds free from impurities, free from negativities, free from any kind of defilement. Practising Dharma makes the mind pure—full of love, full of compassion, full of sympathetic joy, full of equanimity. A pure mind will help you to live a good life, a healthy life, a wholesome life, which is good for you, and at the same time good for others. Such a Dharmic life can be lived by anyone.

One may keep calling oneself a Hindu, a Muslim, a Buddhist, a Jain, a Sikh or a Parsi: it makes no difference. One may call oneself a Brahmin or a non-Brahmin: it makes no difference. One may call oneself a Punjabi or a Tamilian: it makes no difference. One may call oneself an Indian or a Pakistani: it makes no difference. A human being is a human being. If one understands the basic law of nature, and lives in accordance with the law of nature, without breaking this law of nature, one is bound to live a very peaceful life, harmonious life. Out of ignorance, if one breaks this law of nature, he or she is bound to become unhappy, bound to become miserable. One may call