

S. N. Goenka at the United Nations



Vipassana Research Institute

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**Talks By Acharya S. N. Goenka
At the United Nations**



**Vipassana Research Institute
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri**

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Inner Peace For World Peace

In late August 2000, Goenkaji participated in the Millennium World Peace Summit—a gathering of 1000 of the world's religious and spiritual leaders, held at the United Nations under the auspices of Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The purpose of the meeting was to promote tolerance, foster peace, and encourage inter-religious dialogue. With the many different viewpoints represented, the potential for disagreement was strong. In his presentation to the delegates, Goenkaji tried to highlight what they, and all spiritual paths have in common: the universal Dhamma. His remarks were received with repeated ovations.

Friends, leaders of the spiritual and religious world:

This is a wonderful occasion, when we can all unite and serve humanity. Religion is religion only when it unites; when it divides us, it is nothing.

Much has been said here about conversion, both for and against. Far from being opposed to conversion, I am in favor of it—but not conversion from one organized religion to another. No, the conversion must be from misery to happiness. It must be from bondage to liberation. It must be from cruelty to compassion. That is the conversion needed today, and that is what this meeting should seek to bring about.

The ancient land of India gave a message of peace and harmony to the world, to all humanity, but it did more: it gave a method, a technique, for achieving peace and harmony. To me it seems that if we want peace in human society, we cannot ignore individuals. If there is no peace

Buddha: The Super-Scientist of Peace

Goenkaji was invited to give the keynote speech at the Celebration of the International Recognition of the Vesakha at the United Nations, on the occasion of Vesakha, the full moon day of May, which honors the birth, enlightenment and final passing away of the Buddha. The event was hosted by the Permanent Mission of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations on 29 May 2002. Ambassadors of the Permanent Missions of Sri Lanka, Cambodia and Myanmar spoke briefly before Goenkaji's keynote speech.

The address was given at the Dag Hammerskold Library Auditorium to an audience of ambassadors, other United Nations dignitaries and associates, venerable monks and a few Vipassana meditators. The talk, which put the teaching of the historical Buddha in a modern perspective, was extremely well received by the entire audience.

Venerable monks and peace-loving friends:

I thank the United Nations and the organizers of this magnificent *Vesakha* celebration, especially the Myanmar and Sri Lankan delegations, for the opportunity offered to me to address this distinguished gathering.

One feels so sorry when one looks at what is happening in the world. Man has become the enemy of man. There is no personal enmity; people are being killed only because they belong to a particular sect or community, a particular ethnic group or country. Such is the level of cruelty that a person kills other human beings even if they are innocent, even if they are helpless women and children. Modern technology makes this tragic violence terrifyingly