

PILGRIMAGE



TO THE SACRED LAND OF DHAMMA

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Vipassana Research Institute

Preface

PILGRIMAGE TO MYANMAR

India is the land where the Buddha attained enlightenment. It is the land from where he distributed the invaluable gem of Dhamma (the way, the truth, the path) for forty-five years. This is why those who have benefited from his teachings have for millennia undertaken pilgrimages to India. They come to pay respects to the land where the Buddha attained enlightenment, from where the Dhamma arose and spread around the world.

In recent years people from different parts of the world have begun to take pilgrimages to Myanmar (Burma), where the practical aspect of the teaching of the Enlightened. One was preserved even after it had died out in the land of its origin. It was a small group of monks in Myanmar who passed on the meditation technique of Vipassana, the practical application of the Buddha's teachings, from one generation to the next. Vipassana meditators who have benefited from this technique are grateful to Myanmar. They will always remain grateful to the Myanmar *Bhikkhusaṅgha* (order of monks), and to the teacher-student tradition, which preserved both the *pariyatti* (the theoretical aspects) and the *paṭipatti* (the practical aspects) of Dhamma in their pristine purity.

Pilgrims to Myanmar come from different communities, different countries, different traditions, but all have deep respect for the teachings of the Buddha. They have received great benefit from the Dhamma he taught. Pilgrims visit the sites of significance in the lineage of this Vipassana tradition. They visit Yangon, Mandalay, Mogok, Monywa, Bagan, Pwawwegyi, Kyaukse, and the Sagaing Hills. They pay their respects by

meditating at the monasteries, meditation centres and temples where the teachers of this lineage practiced Vipassana. They also visit the modern meditation centres that have arisen in Myanmar, such as *Dhamma Joti* in Yangon, *Dhamma Maṅḍala* and *Dhamma Maṅḍapa* in Mandalay, and *Dhamma Ratana and Dhamma Makuta* in Mogok.

Another way that pilgrims pay respects is by honouring the *Bhikkhusaṅgha* (the order of monks) with *Saṅghadāna* (donation to the monks). The *Saṅgha* is the repository of Dhamma. It has kept the Dhamma as a living tradition through the last two millennia. The *Bhikkhusaṅgha* maintained the purity of the teaching and this has ensured that the teaching of the Buddha retained its universal application and widespread appeal even today. Those who benefit from Vipassana are grateful to the *Saṅgha* for this priceless inheritance. They also feel respect for the deep renunciation of the *Saṅgha* who have renounced the householder's life to dedicate their lives to practicing the Path taught by the Buddha. Usually at a *Saṅghadāna* the monks are first served food and then given other requisites. Hundreds of lay people take the opportunity to earn merits by serving the monks.

While many undertake this pilgrimage on their own or in small groups, over the years several large pilgrimages led by Mr. Goenka have also been organized. The first of these pilgrimages was in the year 2000 to commemorate the centenary year of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Mr. Goenka also accompanied Vipassana students on pilgrimages in 2003 and 2004.

During the pilgrimage of December 2004, Mr. Goenka exhorted the pilgrims thus:

Myanmar is not only my motherland but also the country that gave me the invaluable jewel of Dhamma. It is the land of my revered teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin and the chain of teachers that kept Dhamma in pristine purity. We all pay respect to this Dhamma land.

We pay homage to the Buddha who fulfilled enormous pāramīs (virtues) through countless lives and attained perfect self-enlightenment to show us the path of liberation. We pay respect to the Saṅgha that kept the Dhamma in its pure form through the centuries. We are so grateful to all those saintly monks.

The only way to pay respect to the Buddha and the Saṅgha is to actually walk on the path of Dhamma.

You will find a wonderful Dhamma atmosphere at the holy places you are going to visit. May you meditate there and get inspiration to walk further on the path of Dhamma.

This book is a collection of photographs that were taken during the many pilgrimages to Myanmar led by Mr. Goenka. It is hoped that these images and text provide a source of inspiration and knowledge for the reader.

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YANGON
SAYAGYI U BA KHIN

PYAW BWE GYI
SAYA THETGYI

MANDALAY

THE SAGAING HILLS

MONYWA
VENERABLE LEDI SAYADAW

MOGOK

BAGAN

WORLD BUDDHIST SUMMIT 2004

Talks by **Ācaraya S. N. Goenka** for the Fourth World Buddhist Summit,
December, 2004, Yangon, Myanmar



Yatra 2003 - Group Meditation at Shwedagon Pagoda



Yatra 2004 - S. N. Goenka addresses the World Buddhist Summit