



S. N. GOENKA

THE DISCOURSE
SUMMARIES



S. N. GOENKA

The Discourse Summaries

talks from a ten-day course
in Vipassana Meditation
condensed by William Hart



Vinassana Research Institute

CONTENTS

	Page
Foreword	v
Note on the Text	vii
Day One Discourse	1
Initial difficulties—the purpose of this meditation—why respiration is chosen as the starting point—the nature of the mind—the reason for the difficulties, and how to deal with them—dangers to be avoided	
Day Two Discourse	6
Universal definition of sin and piety—the Noble Eightfold Path: <i>sīla</i> and <i>samādhi</i>	
Day Three Discourse	11
The Noble Eightfold Path: <i>paññā</i> —received wisdom, intellectual wisdom, experiential wisdom—the <i>kalāpā</i> —the four elements—the three characteristics: impermanence, the illusory nature of the ego, suffering—penetration through apparent reality	
Day Four Discourse	16
Questions on how to practise Vipassana—the law of <i>kamma</i> —importance of mental action—four aggregates of the mind: consciousness, perception, sensation, reaction—remaining aware and equanimous is the way to emerge from suffering	
Day Five Discourse	23
The Four Noble Truths: suffering, the cause of suffering, the eradication of suffering, the way to eradicate suffering—the chain of conditioned arising	
Day Six Discourse	28
Importance of developing awareness and equanimity towards sensations—the four elements and their relation to the sensations—the four causes of the arising of matter—the five hindrances: craving, aversion, mental and physical sluggishness, agitation, doubt	
Day Seven Discourse	34
Importance of equanimity towards subtle as well as gross sensations—continuity of awareness—five ‘friends’: faith, effort, awareness, concentration, wisdom	

Day Eight Discourse	40
The law of multiplication and its reverse, the law of eradication—equanimity is the greatest welfare—equanimity enables one to live a life of real action—by remaining equanimous, one ensures a happy future for oneself	
Day Nine Discourse	46
Application of the technique in daily life—the ten pāramī	
Day Ten Discourse	52
Review of the technique	
Day Eleven Discourse	59
How to continue practising after the end of the course	
Pāli Passages	
Quoted in the Discourses with English Translation	
Glossary of Pāli Terms	82
Publications of VRI	90
List of Vipassana Meditation Centres	92

FOREWORD

“Liberation can be gained only by practice, never by mere discussion,” S. N. Goenka has said. A course in Vipassana meditation is an opportunity to take concrete steps towards liberation. In such a course the participant learns how to free the mind of the tensions and prejudices that disturb the flow of daily life. By doing so one begins to discover how to live each moment peacefully, productively, happily. At the same time one starts progressing towards the highest goal to which mankind can aspire: purity of mind, freedom from all suffering, full enlightenment.

None of this can be attained just by thinking about it or wishing for it. One must take steps to reach the goal. For this reason, in a Vipassana course the emphasis is always on actual practice. No philosophical debates are permitted, no theoretical arguments, no questions that are unrelated to one’s own experience. As far as possible, meditators are encouraged to find the answers to their questions within themselves. The teacher provides whatever guidance is needed in the practice, but it is up to each person to implement these guidelines: one has to fight one’s own battle, work out one’s own salvation.

Given this emphasis, still some explanation is necessary to provide a context for the practice. Therefore every evening of a course Goenkaji gives a “Dhamma talk”, in order to put into perspective the experiences of that day, and to clarify various aspects of the technique. These discourses, he warns, are not intended as intellectual or emotional entertainment. Their purpose is simply to help meditators understand what to do and why, so that they will work in the proper way and will achieve the proper results.

It is these talks that are presented here in condensed form.

The eleven discourses provide a broad overview of the teaching of the Buddha. The approach to this subject, however, is not scholarly or analytical. Instead the teaching is presented in the way that it unfolds to a meditator: as a dynamic, coherent whole. All its different facets are seen to reveal an underlying unity: the experience of meditation. This experience is the inner fire that gives true life and brilliance to the jewel of the Dhamma.

Without this experience one cannot grasp the full significance of what is said in the discourses, or indeed of the teaching of the Buddha. But this does not mean that there is no place for an intellectual

appreciation of the teaching. Intellectual understanding is valuable as a support to meditative practice, even though meditation itself is a process that goes beyond the limits of the intellect.

For this reason these summaries have been prepared, giving in brief the essential points of each discourse. They are intended mainly to offer inspiration and guidance to those who practice Vipassana meditation as taught by S. N. Goenka. To others who happen to read them, it is hoped that they will provide encouragement to participate in a Vipassana course and to experience what is here described.

The summaries should not be treated as a do-it-yourself manual for learning Vipassana, a substitute for a ten-day course. Meditation is a serious matter, especially the Vipassana technique, which deals with the depths of the mind. It should never be approached lightly or casually. The proper way to learn Vipassana is only by joining a formal course, where there is a suitable environment to support the meditator, and a trained guide. If someone chooses to disregard this warning and tries to teach himself the technique only from reading about it, he proceeds entirely at his own risk.

Fortunately courses in Vipassana meditation as taught by S. N. Goenka are now held regularly in many parts of the world. Schedules may be obtained by writing to any of the centres listed in the back of this book.

The summaries are based primarily on discourses given by Goenkaji at the Vipassana Meditation Centre, Massachusetts, U.S.A. during August 1983. An exception is the Day Ten Summary, which is based on a discourse given at the Centre in August 1984.

While Goenkaji has looked through this material and approved it for publication, he has not had time to check the text closely. As a result, the reader may find some errors and discrepancies. These are the responsibility not of the teacher, nor of the teaching, but of myself. Criticism will be very welcome that might help to correct such flaws in the text.

May this work help many in their practice of Dhamma.

May all beings be happy.

William Hart

DAY ONE DISCOURSE

Initial difficulties—the purpose of this meditation—why respiration is chosen as the starting point—the nature of the mind—the reason for the difficulties, and how to deal with them—dangers to be avoided

The first day is full of great difficulties and discomforts, partly because one is not accustomed to sit all day long and to try to meditate, but mostly because of the type of meditation that you have started practising: awareness of respiration, nothing but respiration.

It would have been easier and faster to concentrate the mind without all these discomforts if, along with awareness of respiration, one had started repeating a word, a mantra, a god's name, or if one had started imagining the shape or form of a deity. But you are required to observe bare respiration, as it naturally is, without regulating it; no word or imagined form may be added.

They are not permitted because the final aim of this meditation is not concentration of mind. Concentration is only a help, a step leading to a higher goal: purification of mind, eradicating all the mental defilements, the negativities within, and thus attaining liberation from all misery, attaining full enlightenment.

Every time an impurity arises in the mind, such as anger, hatred, passion, fear etc., one becomes miserable. Whenever something unwanted happens, one becomes tense and starts tying knots inside. Whenever something wanted does not happen, again one generates tension within. Throughout life one repeats this process until the entire mental and physical structure is a bundle of Gordian knots. And one does not keep this tension limited to oneself, but instead distributes it to all with whom one comes into contact. Certainly this is not the right way to live.

You have come to this meditation course to learn the art of living: how to live peacefully and harmoniously within oneself, and to generate peace and harmony for all others; how to live happily from day to day while progressing towards the highest happiness of a totally pure mind, a mind filled with disinterested love, with compassion, with joy at the success of others, with equanimity.

To learn the art of living harmoniously, first one must find the cause of disharmony. The cause always lies within, and for this reason you have to explore the reality of yourself. This technique helps you to do so, to examine your own mental and physical structure, towards