

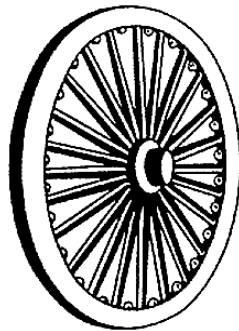
Vipassana

Newsletter Collection

Part 5

[From January 2002 to December 2003]

A collection of articles by Vipassanācārya
Shri Satyanarayan Goenka and other meditators
published in Vipassana Newsletter



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Why vedanā and what is vedanā

(Dhamma eradicates suffering and gives happiness. Who gives this happiness? It is not the Buddha but the Dhamma, the knowledge of anicca (impermanence) within the body, which gives this happiness. That is why you must meditate and be aware of anicca continually.)

—Sayagyi U Ba Khin

I remember the first time I met Sayagyi U Ba Khin. I had gone with great attachment to my beliefs and misgivings about the teaching of the Buddha. Sayagyi knew that I was a leader of the local Indian Hindu community. He asked me, “Do you Hindus have any objection to *sīla*—a life of morality, to *samādhi*—mastery over the mind and to *paññā*—wisdom to purify the mind?” How could I object! How could anybody object! He continued, “Well, this is what the Buddha taught. This is all I am interested in and this is all that I am going to teach you.” Sayagyi’s interpretation of Dhamma was universal and non-sectarian. He had no problem in my being a Hindu.

My first Vipassana course introduced me to the teachings of the Buddha and transformed my life forever. I was pulled like a magnet to his logical, practical, pragmatic, universal and non-sectarian teaching. There was nothing objectionable in it. I had been hearing about and talking about the eradication of defilements and the purification of mind. When I started observing sensations, initially there were moments of doubt, “How is this going to help me?” But soon I realized that by observing sensations I am going to the root of the defilements. I was actually walking towards the goal of full liberation. Whatever Sayagyi taught me was not merely to develop faith or to satisfy the intellect, though both are important. He taught me the way to know the truth at the experiential level. If anybody had tried to convince me about the teachings of the Buddha

The Buddha : dispenser of happiness

(The following is an extract from “Was The Buddha A Pessimist?” in which Goenkaji has sought to dispel prevailing misconceptions about the Buddha and his teaching.)

From the assertion that his philosophy and teachings were nothing but suffering and misery, the implication is that the Buddha himself was miserable and unhappy. Nothing could be further from the truth. As a perfectly Enlightened One, the Buddha had come out of all the miseries of the world, and lived a life full of contentment and infinite happiness in every situation. To others also he gave nothing but happiness.

The Buddha was always happy

Once he was sleeping on a bed of dry leaves fallen from a tree on a cattle path in *Aḷavī*. At that time an *Ālavaka* prince named Hatthaka had set out for a stroll. When he saw the Buddha, he asked, “Venerable sir, did you sleep happily?”

The Buddha replied, “Yes, young man, I slept well. I am one of those people in the world who sleep happily.”

To this Hatthaka said, “This is a cold autumn night, the season of snowfall. The hooves of cows have made the land coarse and uneven. The bed of leaves is thin. There are very few leaves on the tree. A cold wind is blowing from all directions and you have but tattered clothes on you. How could you sleep happily?”

The Buddha replied, “A householder or a son of a householder sleeps in a proper house on a soft bed with pillows and blankets. However, the fire of craving for sensual pleasure may be burning inside him. In that case, smouldering in the heat of desire, he sleeps in misery. A Buddha has extinguished all his craving—destroyed it, uprooted it, put an end to it forever,

The Cause of Misery and Its Eradication

(The following is an extract from “Was The Buddha A Pessimist?” in which Goenkaji has sought to dispel misconceptions about the Buddha and his teaching.)

The Buddha wanted to create an inclination in the minds of the people to free themselves from misery. This was why he taught the truth about suffering, its cause and how to come out of it. In this light, how can the following statement stand? “The Buddha’s view of life seems to be lacking in courage and confidence. Its emphasis on sorrow, if not false, is not true....” If anything, such a statement only proves the writer’s ignorance of the Buddha’s teaching. Who can deny the reality of suffering associated with birth, decay, disease and death, association with the unpleasant and disassociation from the pleasant; the suffering of wanted things not happening, and of unwanted things happening? Are not these realities true?

We get attached to the five aggregates thinking, “This is my mind,” “This is my body,” and we cling to them as “me” and “mine”. This deep attachment to these five aggregates leads to the repeated cycle of birth and death. Who can deny the truth of this reality of suffering? All the spiritual traditions of India accept the cycle of becoming as misery and aim at getting liberated from this cycle, to attain the deathless.

The Buddha said in this context:

Dukkhā jāti punappunaṃ.

(Before becoming liberated) I took repeated births in this misery.

Before attaining Buddhahood, a Bodhisatta thinks thus:

Kicchaṃ vatāyaṃ loko āpanno.