

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagi U Ba Khin, as taught by S. N. Goenka

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Asso yathā bhadro kasāniviṭṭho,
ātāpino saṃvegino bhavātha;
Saddhāya sīlena ca vīriyena ca,
samādhinā dhammavinicchayena ca;
Sampannavijjācaraṇā patissatā,
jahissatha dukkhamidaṃ anappakam.*
– Dhammapada 144, Dandavaggo

Like a well-trained horse, touched by the whip, be ardent and swift. Through faith, morality, effort, concentration, and investigation of the Dhamma, be aware, endowed with knowledge and good conduct, and leave this great misery behind.

Let us Awaken to Dhamma

by S.N. Goenka

The following article was first published in the June 1974 issue of the Hindi-language "Vipashyanā" Patrikā.

My dear meditators!

Come, let us understand and experience Dhamma. For this is where our true welfare lies.

Discussing Dhamma may be beneficial, but at times it may not be beneficial and may even be harmful.

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Contemplating on Dhamma may be beneficial, but at times it may not be beneficial and may even be harmful.

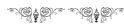
But directly experiencing Dhamma is certainly always beneficial.

Listening to and discussing Dhamma, we gain knowledge of Dhamma which may inspire us, indeed lead us on to directly experience Dhamma. In that case, it becomes beneficial for us. But, upon learning Dhamma, if we merely indulge in mental gymnastics, and if this intellectual knowledge of Dhamma becomes a cause for false pride and arrogance, then it is harmful to us.

Similarly, if contemplation of Dhamma remains limited to empty intellectual understanding giving rise to pride, then it becomes a cause for our harm. But if this same contemplative knowledge inspires us to practise Dhamma by clarifying the way, and if we do indeed experience it, then it becomes a cause for our welfare.

Therefore, meditators, come, let us live and practise Dhamma, awaken to Dhamma; let us be filled with *sīla*, let us be immersed in *samādhi*, let us develop in *paññā*. Let us be sutavas— those who have heard the Dhamma in the true sense of the word.

This is where our true welfare lies.



Joy and suffering are a part of life due to which a person often loses his mental balance. In difficult times, especially when one encounters deep pain coming from all sides, one rolls in an ocean of misery. How can one remain equanimous at such times?

Bringing up this significant aspect of human life, Goenkaji expounded on the *Pātāla Sutta*, a discourse from the *Vedanā Saṃyutta*, at the Dhammathali Vipassana Meditation Centre in Jaipur, 1993 where he spoke at length on sensations (*vedanā*).

This discourse may act as a reminder and help meditators to maintain their equanimity in these difficult times. (VNL Editor):

Pātāla Sutta – The Abyss

“*Assutavā, bhikkhave, puthujjano yaṃ vācaṃ bhāsati: ‘atthi mahāsamudde pātālo’ti. Taṃ kho panetaṃ, bhikkhave, assutavā puthujjano asantaṃ avijjamānaṃ evaṃ vācaṃ bhāsati: ‘atthi mahāsamudde pātālo’ti.’*”

“Meditators, when an uninstructed, ordinary person makes the statement, ‘In the great ocean there is a

bottomless abyss,’ he makes such a statement about something that is nonexistent and unreal.”

Pātālo means a place that is bottomless, endless, its bottom cannot be reached. Someone says ‘I am drowning in a bottomless ocean where there is no ground to rest my feet upon.’ Who says this? A person who is an *assutavā*, one who has never heard the Dhamma.

When a person hears the Dhamma, he takes the first step on the path of liberation. But if one has never heard this Dhamma, and remains trapped in sectarian rites, rituals and philosophies believing these to be the Dhamma; how indeed can he come out of misery? He has not even heard of Dhamma.

He who has never heard Dhamma is an ignorant one, *assutavā, bhikkhave, puthujjano*. He is not walking on the path of Dhamma. He who is untouched by, unaware of Dhamma was called a *puthujjano*. How will a *puthujjano* respond to the vicissitudes of the world? “Oh, this ocean is bottomless!” he will exclaim in his ignorance, *evaṃ vācaṃ bhāsati: ‘atthi mahāsamudde pātālo’*. He is overwhelmed and unable to perceive reality for what it is and so he speaks untruthfully, *asantaṃ avijjamānaṃ*, that this ocean is bottomless, that one cannot touch the bottom.

The Buddha continues:

“*Sārīrikānaṃ kho etaṃ, bhikkhave, dukkhānaṃ vedanānaṃ adhivacanaṃ yadidaṃ ‘pātālo’ti.*”

“This, meditators, is rather a designation for painful bodily sensations, that is, ‘bottomless abyss.’”

The term ‘*pātālo*’ is used to describe gross, unpleasant bodily sensations which make one think it is difficult to go beyond these unpleasant sensations, that this reality is endless.

When unfortunate events strike a person from all sides agitating him, he feels as if he is drowning in a bottomless ocean of misery and there are no stepping stones to use to rise above this endless unhappiness.

When unwholesome actions (*kammas*) bring unpleasant consequences, an uninstructed, ordinary person, *assutavā* gets agitated as he experiences unpleasant bodily sensations and he wallows in this misery. He has not learned to observe the sensations so in this boundless ocean of misery he finds nowhere to seek relief, no way out. He feels there is no escaping this suffering, it is endless, *pātālo*.

“*Assutavā, bhikkhave, puthujjano sārīrikāya dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno socati kilamati paridevati urattāḷiṃ kandati sammohaṃ āpajjati.*”

When he comes in contact with unpleasant bodily

sensation, he gets immersed in sorrow, *socati*, gets distressed, *kilamati*, laments, *paridevati*, beats his chest, *urattāḷim*, and weeps, *kandati*, thus, lost in blind ignorance and not realising what he is doing he continues to multiply his misery, *sammohaṃ āpajjati*.

“*Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ‘assutavā puthujjano pātāle na paccuṭṭhāsi, gādhañca nājjhagā.*”

Hence being ignorant, *assutavā*, such a person gains no footing to come out of misery.

The Enlightened One continues:

“*Sutavā ca kho, bhikkhave, ariyasāvako sārīrikāya dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno neva socati, na kilamati, na paridevati, na urattāḷim kandati, na sammohaṃ āpajjati.*”

He who has heard and understood Dhamma, *sutavā ca kho, bhikkhave*, is a true son of the Buddha, *sutavā*. A noble one walking on the path, *ariyasāvako*. When unpleasant bodily sensations arise on such a person, then understanding Dhamma well, *sārīrikāya dukkhāya vedanāya phuṭṭho samāno*, he does not get immersed in sorrow, *neva socati*, nor get distressed, *na kilamati*, nor lament, *na paridevati*, nor beat his chest, *na urattāḷim*, nor weep, *na kandati*. Such a person does not drown in the sea of blind ignorance, *na sammohaṃ āpajjati*.

“*Ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave, ‘sutavā ariyasāvako pātāle paccuṭṭhāsi, gādhañca ajjhagā’ti.*”

And so I say, meditators, *ayaṃ vuccati, bhikkhave*, when someone who has heard and understood Dhamma well does fall in an immeasurable ocean of misery, *‘sutavā ariyasāvako pātāle paccuṭṭhāsi’* even so he finds a place to rest his feet, *gādhañca ajjhagā*. He does not feel the suffering to be bottomless. His feet are resting on the reality of sensations. He has gained a footing.

When a meditator who is drowning in an ocean of misfortune begins to observe sensations, he begins to come out of that ocean of misery. This is vital for a meditator. He has learnt Vipassana; he is a *sutava*, he is walking on the path, he needs to keep observing sensations.

**“Yo etā nādhivāseti, uppannā vedanā dukhā;
Sārīrikā paṇaharā, yāhi phuṭṭho pavedhati.”**

“One who cannot endure the arisen painful sensations,

Bodily sensations that sap one’s life, who trembles when they touch him.”

When piercing misfortunes strike one from all sides and unpleasant bodily sensations arise *sārīrikā paṇaharā*, and pain hits one as if one is in the throes of

death, if one begins rolling in this and crying, he will be unable to free himself, *nādhivāseti*. Instead, if he watches the sensations objectively, he will learn to live with acceptance of them. If he does not learn to live with his unpleasant reality, does not accept it *uppannā vedanā dukhā*, then:

**“Akkandati parodati, dubbalo appathāmakō;
Na so pātāle paccuṭṭhāsi, atho gādhampi nājjhagā.”**

“A weakling of little strength, who weeps out loud and wails,

He has not risen up in the bottomless abyss, nor has he even gained a foothold.”

He cries, weeps, grows weaker, *appathāmakō* loses his balance and finds no place to stand in this ocean of misery. This ocean is bottomless, he finds no place to stand, *atho gādhampi nājjhagā*. The Buddha continues:

**“Yo cetā adhvāseti, uppannā vedanā dukhā;
Sārīrikā paṇaharā, yāhi phuṭṭho na vedhati;
Sa ve pātāle paccuṭṭhāsi, atho gādhampi ajjhagā’ti.**

“But one who is able to endure them, the arisen painful sensations,

Bodily sensations that sap one’s life, who trembles not when they touch him:

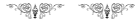
He has risen up in the bottomless abyss, and has also gained a foothold.”

A person who is a *sutavā* and is walking on the path of Dhamma which is well understood, has learnt to accept unhappy situations and unpleasant sensations as they arise, *yo cetā adhvāseti, uppannā vedanā dukhā*. This person’s misery seems as if it is killing him, *yāhi phuṭṭho na vedhati* and the sensations are piercing him, yet he is unshaken. *Sa ve pātāle paccuṭṭhāsi*, this is an ocean of pain that he feels, yet in this depth of misery, *pātāle*, he knows what he needs to do, to be aware, to observe the sensations as they arise and pass away; this way he finds support. He has gained a foothold, *atho gādhampi ajjhagā*.

The Enlightened One has laid emphasis on the importance of bodily sensations time and again. When misery comes one forgets all about the practice of Vipassana, the practice of Dhamma, and therefore one cannot come out of it. Vipassana is taught with the base of body sensations, and if these sensations are observed, then you get a very good foundation to come out of your misery. If you forget, if you miss the observation of body sensations, you can never come out of your misery. Therefore, in the teaching of the Buddha, observing the sensations on the body plays a very important role. It is with the base of these body sensations that one can come out of misery and

get liberated. Keep working and come out of misery. Whatever misery you have, large or small, awareness of sensations will help you to come out of it.

Bhavatu sabba Maṅgalaṃ! (3)



Sacca-kiriyā by Respected Goenkaji

This **sacca-kiriyā** (solemn declaration of truth) was uttered by Guruji, in Kushinagar during a pilgrimage, while chanting *mettā bhāvanā* during a one-hour group meditation:

*I take refuge in the Buddha, I take refuge in the Buddha,
I take refuge in the Buddha alone and no one else.
By the power of this truth, by the power of this truth;
By the power of this truth, may Dhamma arise.*

*I take refuge in Dhamma, I take refuge in Dhamma
I take refuge in Dhamma alone and nothing else.
By the power of this truth, by the power of this truth;
By the power of this truth, may Dhamma spread.*

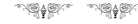
*I take refuge in Saṅgha, I take refuge in Saṅgha,
I take refuge in Saṅgha alone and no one else.
By the power of this truth, by the power of this truth;*

*By the power of this truth, may Dhamma be established.
May all be happy, may all be happy.*

*Blessed is the land of Dhamma,
blessed is the sacred country;
Where pure Dhamma arises again,
for dissolving sufferings of the world.*

*Blessed be the land of Dhamma,
blessed be the sacred country;
Where pure Dhamma arises again,
for dissolving sufferings of the world.*

May all be happy! May all be happy!!
May all be happy!!!



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DHAMMA DOHA

*Bhalā hoya saba jagata kā, sukhī hoṇya saba loga;
Dūra hoṇya dāridra dukha, dūra hoṇya saba roga.*

May all be at peace and fulfilled, May all be happy;
May poverty be eradicated, may all ailments be wiped off.

*Dukhiyāre dukhamukta hoṇ, bhaya tyāgeṃ bhayabhīta;
Baīra choṛa kara loga saba, kareṃ paraspara pṛīta.*

May all who are miserable be free of misery, may the fearful
be fear free; May all be free of malice and love one another.

*Sukha byāpe saṃsāra meṇ, dukhiyā rahe na koya;
Nā koī bhayabhīta ho, nā bhavarogī hoyā.*

May joy and happiness sweep across the world, and none
remain unhappy; May no one remain worried and fearful, may
no one remain in suffering.

*Nā koī vyākula hoyā, nā dukha-kātara hoyā;
Saba kā maṅgala hoyā, sabakā maṅgala hoyā.*

May no one be agitated and anxious, may none be miserable
in pain; May all be happy, May all be always happy.

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