

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Words of Dhamma

*Vācānurakkhī manasā susaṅvuto,
kāyena ca nākusalaṅ kayirā;
Ete tayo kammapathe visodhaye,
ārādhaye maggamisippaveditaṅ.*

– Dhammapadapāli 281, Maggavaggo.

Guarded in speech, well-restrained in mind,
you should do nothing unskillful in body.
Purify these three ways of action, and
attain the path made known by the Great Sage.

Excerpts from Letters Written to Babu Bhaiya

In order to keep his Teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin informed about the ten-day Vipassana courses being held in India, the following letter, written over 50 years ago by Respected Goenkaji to his elder brother Babulal, or Babu Bhaiya as he was called, illustrates how camps were conducted in those days with great equanimity and loving-kindness as he guided meditation students how to walk on the path of Dhamma.

On Respected Goenkaji's 9th death anniversary, may we be inspired by his efforts. Let us also take part in this service of Dhamma-dāna in some way by helping as many as we can taste the nectar of Dhamma while helping to repay our own debt to our Dhamma father, Goenkaji. — Editor

The Way to Become Free of Debt to the Teacher

Pathshala- Bagaha, (Bodhgaya, Bihar)

12th Dec, 1970

Babu Bhaiya, Pranam

Prior to attaining enlightenment (sammā-sambodhi), Siddhattha Gotama, who had renounced all for his ascetic practice (tapas), must have certainly wandered in various areas around the town of Gaya, Bihar. Here in this desolate forest region, a remote school, Samanvaya Vidyapith, Bagaha, is where our 23rd course is being held. It is located about 27 miles (43 kms) from Bodh Gaya, and we can easily imagine samaṇa Siddhattha passing through here while immersed in his tapas. It is possible that after attaining enlightenment, he may have passed this way on alms-round and even stayed for a while. This is perhaps the reason why the atmosphere here is redolent with Dhamma vibrations (*dhamma-dhātu*) even today.

The meditation course here concluded in the evening very successfully, and the heart was filled with joy. While sharing merits with all beings, I remembered Resp. Gurudev (Sayagyi U Ba Khin) with deep gratitude. That warm remembrance lingers in my heart, which pulsates with these feelings as I offer all my merits –

Jaya jaya jaya gurudevajū, jaya jaya krpānidhāna;

Dharama ratana aisā diyā, huā parama kalyāna.

Roma roma kirataga huā, ṛṇa na cukāyā jāya;

Dukhiyana bāṭūn dharama sukha, yaha hī eka upāya.

My teacher may you be victorious; Compassionate one may you be victorious. You gave me such a jewel of Dhamma which has been so beneficial to me.

Every fibre of my body is grateful, I cannot repay the debt. To distribute the benefit of Dhamma to the suffering people is the only way.

How can I ever repay his immeasurable debt? I have been so enriched with the Dhamma treasure that I have received from him, so prosperous that my abundance has no limits. How generously and freely I distribute every ounce of this priceless Dhamma jewel; yet my abundance, rather than diminishing, grows – *Dhammadānaṃ, sabbadānaṃ jinati* (Dhamma donation is the highest donation of all).

The money spent on social causes like schools, hospitals, temples, pilgrim rest-houses, libraries, etc. while in Burma will certainly bring us good merits. But now the dāna of this unlimited Dhamma treasure that I am distributing on behalf of the entire family, as a representative of Resp. Gurudev, its incalculable and joyous outcome cannot be measured by any yardstick. It is but the immense good karma of the entire family. Not only just me, but the whole family is indebted to Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

How can any disciple become free from the debt of the Guru? Mother, father, and teacher – all three debts are incalculable, and it is not easy to become free of them. Lord Buddha has shown the way to become free of at least the debt of the father and mother – that if they have not surrendered to the triple gems, then help them do so. If they are not established in *sīla* (morality), then help them to do so; if they are not established in *samādhi* (mastery over the mind), then again help them do so and if they are not established in *paññā* (wisdom, insight), then to help them do so as well. If they have not tasted the ambrosia of *Nibbāna* (liberation), then lead them to it. This is the only way to become free of these debts. But as for the Guru, the Dhamma Teacher is surrendered to the triple gems, well established in *sīla* and *samādhi* as well as *paññā*

and knows liberation too. Then, what more can one do to become free of debt?

As I see it, there is but one way out. The Dhamma Teacher, one's Guru, replete with insight, wisdom, and a heart melting with compassion, makes a sacred wish for the welfare of the people and opens the door to their well-being by bringing more and more people on the path of Dhamma. And if we participate in fulfilling his exalted goal, then, filled with sympathetic joy, we help multiply the merits, thus becoming free of that immense debt, even if only partially.

If I work even partially in this direction, my heart naturally begins to fill with dhammic joy. I make you and all others in the family a part of this meritorious joy, which only increases my own merits and joy. In this mammoth and meritorious task, I, with Resp. Gurudev and Ma Sayama, include not just you and the family, but I share the merits with all the Dhamma families at the meditation centre. I am suffused with joy at this.

The full moon is shining in the clear, silent sky, and I can see very few stars. The moon is spreading its blessed light everywhere. The atmosphere all around fills me with tremulous joy. It seems like every particle all around is filled with beatitude. If I can personify this, then I can say that the congregation of devas in the sky is redolent with joy as every heart bursts with the victory of Dhamma. In such a state, no one can remain untouched by the bliss of Dhamma.

As I mentioned, this camp is being held outside of Bodh Gaya in a desolate, uninhabited forest region. About 70 acres of this jungle were given by the head of a religious sect to Shri Dwarko Sundarani of Samanvaya Ashram, to bring this land up and serve the poor people of the region. Dwarkoji had the land cleared of wild bush and, having built a few small dwellings, he enrolled two poor children each from 50 surrounding villages, establishing an ashram and a school.

Some years ago, during a severe famine here in Bihar that had persisted for two years, Samanvaya Ashram had given substantial aid and assistance. Many people and organisations from all over the world have generously donated money and materials to the ashram. They saw that this was one organisation whose members served very selflessly. Many foreigners started to come merely to see how they served. In this way, the Bodh Gaya Samanvaya Ashram became a pilgrim spot. Since then, hundreds of foreigners have come here each year with the intention of serving, many of whom stay for days or months. Many foreign organisations also send their young members here for training.

Many foreigners who arrive, upon seeing the pitiable conditions of the poor here and the way they are being served, also make financial donations according to their means. Hence, Shri Dwarkoji had no financial difficulties in establishing the school in this desolate jungle. But money alone, of course, is not sufficient. The work of such organisations is taken forward by those who serve selflessly. Where honest work is being done, with the folded hands of the donors, the means follow.

As I was saying, while the school in the Bagaha forest region became established with financial assistance from foreigners, the contribution of the hard-working, selfless volunteers of the Samanvaya Ashram, on the other hand, was no less important. Indeed, the credit here should go more to the latter. The religious head who had given this desolate land parcel to Dwarkoji as a donation, used to have difficulty even paying the annual tax on this land as it generated no income. He used to say that if money alone

could turn this land into a flourishing settlement, then he would have more money in his treasury than what Dwarkoji had received from foreign lands. But he could not turn this land into a settlement, nor would he have ever been able to do so. This is so true.

Today, this 70-acre land now has swaying fields of grains. Many fruit-bearing trees have been planted, which will mature in a few years. A number of large ponds and wells have been dug for farming. A deep tube-well is soon to be drilled, and a well kept cowshed is also in use. But most of all, this ashram is a jungle home to children, where two children from each surrounding village are being nurtured with the intent that these children, upon growing up, will return to their villages and not only live an ideal life, but be able to guide their village kin. There is a strong possibility that this dream will become a reality.

Nearly all of the children have been taken from the poorest of poor families. Most of them are from homes that don't have food grains for nearly four to six months out of a year. They survive on jungle leaves; this is certainly no exaggeration. This is the poorest region of India and the life that these children are currently leading in the ashram is totally novel for them. During the entire day, two hours are kept aside for studies and the rest of the time they are kept occupied with some work. Working is the chief purpose of studying. It has been to the great misfortune of India that the education systems here have kept students away from work. Laborious tasks have been considered as low, not something to value.

This is why, if electrical cables in a house are damaged, the youngster at home who has studied electrical engineering cannot repair the cable but, of course, can write a research paper on it. The theoretical aspect always takes precedence here, and the practical aspect remains lacking. This has become a habit. Though fundamental knowledge and wisdom were regarded in philosophy as a means 'to see', 'to realise', in reality, all of the emphasis remained on hair-splitting of theoretical and intellectual philosophical aspects, getting stuck in excessive details.

Who knows how many expositions and commentaries must have appeared about equanimity and detachment as found in the Gita? Indeed, this remains a widely discussed book throughout the world due to its high and noble principles. But nobody was concerned with the practice of how to remain detached and equanimous from a pragmatic viewpoint. At best, they remained stuck with their eyes clearly focused on divine intervention. Even now, I encounter mostly these kinds of people who only want to know what I teach and what my philosophy is. And once they know, they feel they have learnt the subject. They feel liberated simply by knowing about it intellectually.

It is peculiar the way in which knowledge has been defined. Whether the said knowledge has become part of our lives or not is, unfortunately, not a matter of concern. But by the mere learning of its existence and its basic principles, the purpose of knowledge is felt to have been achieved. What I mean here is that in nearly every field, the pragmatic aspect has remained wanting while the theoretical aspect has been strong. Hence, even the meaning of children's education remained this – to know something, not to also do something. Contrary to this tendency, here education is being imparted to do something, to act, since this alone is of use, and is truly to be praised.

Progress of meditators at the Samanvaya Vidyapith

Dwarkoji feels that the basic foundation of these children should have a spiritual dimension, and hence he is trying to impart its basics right from the beginning. In order that this knowledge

should be at a practical level rather than a mere theoretical one, he decided to hold the camp.

Due to my experience of some previous camps where a few children had been taken, and the difficulties faced by other meditators because of it made me reluctant, I felt it would be burdensome to teach meditation to 25 ten-year-old children. Yet I agreed to this programme, and so prepared myself for a new experience and research into a new dimension of teaching. And truly, it was indeed a new experience for me. Children are unsteady like monkeys, and what else could have been expected? To sit quiet and unmoving was against their nature, and to practise getting the mind to focus was a distant reality due to their pranks, frolics, and indiscipline. When I gave them a vow of silence for a day or even half a day, it was a shock for them and I saw their entire bodies turn ‘verbal’.

A bhikkhu at a camp in Delhi once commented that I constantly had to deal with so many meditators in the camps, yet I didn’t get irritated. Foreign students also said that we sit in your courses repeatedly in order to get just a shred of the kind of peace you have. But coming here, I knew these children would put me to the test, and this camp truly served as a training ground for me. One child, and then another two children, had to be disciplined for excessive talking by asking them to leave the group and stand facing the wall. But even then, I continued to check myself to see whether I had compassion towards them or not. Perhaps this was the reason that these restless children were able to take Vipassana on the fifth day, and awareness ‘awakened’ in the bodies of every one of them, and thereafter they all began to sit in *adhiṭṭhāna* for an hour each time. A child or two may have shifted slightly on their seats, but that was all. Watching their progress, the eleven adults present were not only surprised but also inspired. They too had very good success. With the exception of one elderly German woman, they all reached subtle levels of meditation.

After the Delhi camp, Bhikkhu Mahendra travelled with the Vietnamese bhikkhu to Bodh Gaya and then went with Dwarkoji to see his forest school. He then asked to be able to remain there until the camp commenced. Dwarkoji had decided that no one outside of the school would be taken for the camp, but he gave permission to this bhikkhu, and he benefited very much. By the 8th or 9th day, he experienced a kind of calm and peace that he had never experienced before. He was overwhelmed, and said he had realised the fruits of his 25 years of being a recluse. It was a moment of joyous contentment for him. Certainly it was not nibbanic peace, yet it was the beatific state of a purified mind. He carries within him deep reverence and saddhā for Resp. Sayagyi, and he made an earnest request that whenever I write him a letter, I must pay his respects, so that he can avail of his special *mettā bhāvana*.

Of the few adult meditators here who had joined the camp, there was one female teacher, the rest being men, the chief one amongst them being Dwarkoji himself. After Mahatma Gandhi’s death, he was appointed head secretary of the Sarvodaya Samaj, an organisation founded by Shri Vinoba Bhave, having been in full accord with the late leader’s ideas. He was also the head of the Samanvaya Ashram in Bodh Gaya. He holds the leading position amongst the followers of the Sarvodaya movement in India. The camp that was held in Bodh Gaya the last time became possible only due to his enthusiastic support. Three workers from his ashram had participated then and were fully satisfied. For the last few months, he himself had been eager to join a camp but could not due to some reason or another. This time he did, as the camp was held in his own school.

From my past experience, I have seen that when someone

joins a course that he has organised at his own place, meditation progress is hindered as attention is constantly drawn to the course arrangements; he is so immersed in his surroundings that thousands of things draw his attention unconsciously. Living like a renunciate, having left home for 10 days seems like a necessary precondition. This man also faced difficulties with the camp being at his place. But I was surprised to see how he was able to dive deep in the Ganges of Dhamma by the end of the course. Other adults too, like him, to a more or less degree, achieved the state of total dissolution (*bhaṅga*). There was a Muslim boy, who I had counted as an adult though he was only about 15 or 16 years old, who experienced the arising and passing away of sensations the same as the children. The keenest among all was a teacher, Shri Sitaramdas, who teaches yoga and is also the naturopath of the ashram.

All were deeply satisfied with the camp. Dwarkoji found a base for the purpose of his organisation’s long-term goals as well as his ultimate destination. Hence, he entreated that I must hold camps in the various ashrams of the Sarvodaya organisation so that the selfless workers of the local areas could satiate their thirst for spiritual aspiration and gain moral strength for their wholesome goals of serving humanity.

I have been entreated by the Sarvodaya organisation to hold camps in Indore, Jaipur, and Wardha centres, and now Dwarkoji is requesting me to hold one camp in the month of May in Uttarkashi for the main organisers of the Sarvodaya movement. Besides, he wants to organise a Dhamma talk on the occasion of Buddha’s birth anniversary during their Annual Convention in Bangalore. I don’t like the idea of speeches, though they certainly inspire new aspirants. But the idea of a camp for these Sarvodaya people certainly strikes a note, time permitting. With pure Dhamma, a new dimension will open up for human welfare.

But rather than dwell on making long-term plans with the far off future in mind, it’s better to focus on the present and gather strength to well execute the camps that I have committed to and which have already been planned and organised. Resp. Gurudev and Ma Sayama’s dhammic blessings work like incomparable medicine for me. Whatever is happening here is certainly beyond my capacity. Resp. Gurudev and those in this tradition, Resp. Maya Thetgyi and Ledi Sayadaw, and all other Dhamma Teachers all the way to the Most Compassionate One, the Buddha, are instrumental in restoring the flow of the Ganges of Dhamma in India. I see the seed of the giant tree of Dhamma sprouting in the camp held in this desolate forest land of Bagaha.

This was my stance while travelling throughout India; I had not come here to increase the number of Bauddhas (Buddhists), nor was it my mission. My one and only wish is that people learn to walk the sacred path of *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*; they can then call themselves Sanatani, Arya Samaji, Sikh, Jain, Muslim, Christian, or whatever they want. It will be most unfortunate if the entire land of India begins to call itself Bauddha but not one of its residents gets established in *sīla, samādhi* or *paññā*. Alternatively, even if no one in this land calls himself a Bauddha, it will be good fortune if all the countrymen become established in *sīla, samādhi* and *paññā*; this will be the ultimate success of my dream.

These thoughts of mine, and consequently the work that is being done, are in line with the thought processes of these Sarvodaya people. Let us see how these high-minded people accept it.

Yours,

Satya Narayan Goenka



Future Course Schedule and Applications

Information on future Courses is available on the internet. All types of bookings are currently available online only as per the Government's new rules due to Covid-19. Applications will not be accepted on paper. Therefore, you are requested to check the following link and apply online directly for your appropriate course or for dhamma service at Dhammagiri:

<https://www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schgiri>

Please apply similarly as per the schedule of other centres. Here is the link for all Indian centres:

<https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/locations/directory#IN>

New VRI website for applying for courses: <https://schedule.vridhamma.org/> and for worldwide courses: www.dhamma.org

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New Appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Shri Anant Naik, Palghar
2. Shri Krishnan and Mrs.
3. Lakshmi Kannan, Chennai
4. Shri Gajendra Sharma, Vadodara
5. Shri Pradeep Waghmare, Pune.

Children Course Teachers

1. Mr. Umeshchandra Bhuyan, Cuttack Odisha
2. Mrs. Jayashree Bhuyan, Cuttack Odisha
3. Mr. Srinibas swain, Bhubaneswar
4. Mrs. Samita Swain, Bhubaneswar

5. Mr. Amit Saxena, Pune
6. Mrs. Priti Dhande, Pune
7. Mr. Manish Mineeyar, Pune
8. Mr. Tejas Nilkanth Patil, Pune
9. Mr. Virbhadrha Shankar Swami, Pune
10. Mrs. Mahananda S. Hinge, Pune
11. Mrs. Lalita Prakash Bansode, Bhusawal
12. Mr. Prakash Suresh Bansode, Bhusawal
13. Miss. Nirmala Uttam Sonawane, Bhusawal
14. Mrs. Sangita A. Adakmol, Bhusawal

One-Day Mega Courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai

- (1) **Sunday**– 9th October, 2022, Sharada-Pūrṇimā plus Puja Goenkaji's Death Anniversary.
- (2) **Sunday**– 15th January, 2023, Mataji's and Sayagi U Ba Khin's *Death Anniversary*.
- (3) **Sunday**– 07th May, 2023 Buddha Purnima,
- (4) **Sunday**– 02nd July, 2023 Ashadha-Pūrṇimā (Dhammacakkappavattana day)
- (5) **Sunday**– 1st October, 2023 Sharada-Pūrṇimā plus Puja Goenkaji's Death Anniversary.

In addition there are **Daily One-Day Courses** being held in the Pagoda for Vipassana Students. Please follow the link to join and take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group. **Contact: 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm). Online registration: <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register> Email: oneday@globalpagoda.org** (Pl. bring a bottle so you can fill it with drinking water at GVP.)

Dhammalaya Stay during Mega Courses:—Meditators can stay at Dhammalaya during mega courses and avail maximum benefit. Please contact 022 50427599 or email- info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org;

For any other information for One day or Mega courses you may contact: info@globalpagoda.org or pr@globalpagoda.org

DHAMMA DOHA

*Bare bhāgya se mukti kā, pāyā pantha mahāna;
Bhava-bhaya vyākula jīva kā, huā parama kalyāṇa.*

To my great fortune, I found the exalted path of liberation; And this fearful and anxious person attained unsurpassed welfare.

*Saba māñī kī putaliyāñ, mileñ rākha yā reta;
Sātha cale basa dharama hī, puñya loka sukha heta.*

All are but figures in the soil, turning into ash or dust; Only Dhamma accompanies one towards the joyous land of meritorious perfection.

*Dharma jage to sukha jage, dukkha ukharatā jāya;
Tṛṣṇā kī tarapana miṭe, tṛpti sudhā rasa pāya.*

If Dharma awakens then happiness awakens and the miseries get uprooted; Dissolving the restless yearning of desires, the elixir of contentment is achieved.

*Prajñā śīla samādhi hī, śuddha dharma kā sāra;
Kāyā vāñī citta ke, sudhareñ saba vyavahāra.*

Wisdom, morality, and mastery of the mind are the essence of pure Dhamma; through these the conduct of the body, speech and mind improve.

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