In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, as taught

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Sabbe dhammā anattā'ti, yadā paññāya passati, atha nibbindati dukkhe, esa maggo visuddhiyā.

All phenomena are insubstantial when one observes this with insight, then one becomes detached from suffering; this is the path of purification.

— -Dhammapada – 271, Mahavaggo

Being Free from the Clutches of Mara

By S.N. Goenka, Rangoon, 13.6.1968.

(Goenkaji wrote this letter to his younger brothers and their wives living in India; they were also Vipassana students of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. This letter, to mark the Mahasamayasutta discourse of the Buddha, deals with the need to guard against defilements overwhelming one's mind).

Dear Shanker, Seeta, Radhe, Vimla, Be established in Dhamma!

Today is the day that Lord Buddha gave the Mahasamaya discourse. Its origin was in the constant dispute between the Sakka princes and the Buddha's maternal cousins, the Koliya princes. On one bank of the river Rohini lived the Sakkas, and on the other the Koliyas. They quarrelled over the river water that irrigated the farmlands of both populations. When the water levels dropped during summer and fields became parched, their mutual ill-will intensified. On a summer afternoon, this quarrel soon deteriorated into an imminent war between the two countries.

The Buddha perceived with his special faculties of the mind that his kinfolk were prepared to kill or be killed over a water dispute. At once he reached the battlefield and calmed them. He explained how it would be a great waste to spill blood, and that human life was more precious than river water. He gave a Dhamma discourse.

Inspired, 500 royal Sakka and Koliya warriors renounced their householders' life to join the Sangha as bhikkhus (monks). They learned Vipassana meditation from the Buddha, and with ardent effort became arahants (fully liberated beings). Accompanied by these 500 young arahant monks, Buddha went to the Mahavana forest in the Himalayas, near the city of Kapilvatthu in modern day Nepal.

There the Buddha said — "One who is young, established in brahmacariya (celibacy) becomes a monk and attains the highest fruit of liberation, an arahant. Such a one, free from all defilements of the mind, shines like a full moon on a cloudless night".

The news of the Enlightened One's sojourn with these 500 monks spread to the realms of devas (celestial beings). Celestial beings from 10 deva lokas gathered in the Mahavana forest, to pay their respects to the Buddha and the young monks radiant with inner purity. Several earth and sky-dwelling devas and brahmas (highest order of celestial beings) of several world systems joyously uttered:

Tatra bhikkhavo sammādahaṃsu cittaṃ attano ujukam akaṃsu, Sārathīva nettāni gahetvā indriyāni rakkhanti paṇḍitā.

(D.N 2.7.332, Mahasamayasutta)

These bhikkhus have tamed their senses, are concentrated having straightened their minds, and are absorbed in meditation, just as a skilled and competent charioteer has disciplined and is in control of his horses.

These joyous devas were of varying splendour, brilliance, adorned in celestial, bejewelled garments. The Buddha informed

the monks of their presence, and said these devas had arrived from many parts of the earth, and from various celestial worlds.

... Tato āmantavī satthā, sāvake sāsane rate.

'Devakāyā abhikkantā, te vijānātha bhikkhavo';

Te ca ātappamakarum, sutvā buddhassa sāsanam;

Tesam pāturahu ñāṇam, amanussānadassanam...

(D.N. 2.7.334, Mahasamayasutta)

The Buddha asked the bhikkhus to see the devas. The bhikkhus strove hard and developed the knowledge (divine eye) to see them.

Some monks saw a hundred, some a few thousand, some saw a hundred thousand devas. Some even saw innumerable devas within all the (ten) directions (As per their Parmīs).

In this way, the monks saw beings from many celestial worlds. The Buddha then mentioned the names of some of the assembled devas. He remarked on the splendorous appearance of the devas, and said this regarding most of them:

Iddhimanto jutimanto vaṇṇavanto yasassino; Modamānā abhikkāmum, bhikkhūnam samitim vanam.

(D.N. 2.7.340, Mahasamayasutta)

They have psychic power, are luminous, magnificent and resplendent, and are present here in this forest today to pay respects to the monks.

He added that along with this great assembly that included Indra (Sakka – Lord of the Devas) and brahmas, the evil Mara along with his army of defilements also had arrived. Upon arrival, Mara shouted:

Etha gaṇhatha bandhatha rāgena bandhamatthu vo; Samantā parivāretha mā vo muñcittha koci nam.

"Come! Capture them! Apprehend them! Trap them in craving and desire. Let none escape!" In this way he roared, thundered and descended upon the assembly with his army. Lord Buddha addressed the monks thus:

"Mārasenā abhikkantā, te vijānātha bhikkhavo".

(D.N. 2.7.342-343, Mahasamayasutta)

"Beware, O monks, understand that Mara's army has arrived."

Upon hearing this warning, the Vipassana-meditating bhikkhus attentively became keenly aware. In this way they defeated and chased away Mara's army of impurities.

A few words on the existence of celestial beings: we saw that for the 500 arahants to see these less visible beings, they learnt and attained Dibba Chakkhu. It is evident that the faculty of divine-eye can also be attained with a mind purified with meditation, provided it is taught under guidance of the right teacher, and to an arduous and suitable student. Another noteworthy detail is that not all monks saw the same number of devas and yakkhas (beings in lower celestial planes).

In Sayagyi U ba Khin's Vipassana meditation center too I noticed that this ability to see celestial beings varies for each student who has developed the faculty of divine-eye. One student

might see 100 devas in assembly, another student a thousand, and yet another may see even more. However, how the appearance of the devas is perceived, by each student, is similar, only the ability to see their numbers varies. Some meditators with a sharper divine-eye see more of these celestial beings, as their vision reaches further. To ensure that students are not just imagining, the experiences of two students with this ability are compared separately. If their descriptions match each others, only then are they considered valid.

Also of note is that there is no exaggeration when nearly all devas present were praised thus:

...mahabbalā; Iddhimanto jutimanto, vaņņavanto yasassino.

(D.N. 2.7.336, Mahasamaya sutta)

They are mighty, powerful, luminous, magnificient, and resplendent.

It is quite a normal for such celestial devas and yakkhas to possess power and splendour. No doubt, compared to humans they are much stronger, more resplendent. But because of their unstructured flowing forms they can do things that are humanly impossible. Based on the kamma (actions) of their previous lives, the luminosity and radiance of these beings also varies. Some are Vipassana meditators and are most radiant and magnificent with very pure minds.

These less visible beings only protect us if we properly walk the path of Dhamma - by observing Sila, Samadhi and by practising Vipassana. Such samma devas are happy to accompany and support us in our Vipassana practice. In this way, the presence of several less visible meditators calms, purifies our surroundings, enabling us to strengthen concentration. Because of this, impurities of the mind get eradicated faster, and attainment of the highest goal of liberation gets accelerated. The samma devas also help us in living the Dhamma in our every day life. But all this protection is possible only if we are established firmly on the path. Such samma devas that walk the path deserve our respect, gratitude and metta, there is no harm in that - just as a virtuous, saintly person deserves it. No more than that.

Towards the end of the Mahasamaya Sutta, we notice the unpleasant arrival of Mara and his evil companions among the great assembly of devas and brahmas. Mara's sole intention is to keep beings trapped in the field of mind and matter, his domain of craving, aversion and delusion. He does not like anyone meditating to liberate himself. So he uses all types of tricks – arousing impurities in one's own mind- to disturb, or stop meditation. The other name for Mara is Yama, lord of death. Mara wants beings to continue in his realm of birth and death.

Vipassana meditators should remain ever vigilant of Mara – that is, the arising of defilements in one's mind. To conquer Mara just be aware of sensations, from moment to moment. As soon as one becomes vigilant, Mara and his army of impurities disappear. As soon as the owner of the house wakes up, a thief takes off. If your mind is overcome with intense passion, realize this truth for one moment, "Oh! Passion has arisen in the mind". That is it. As soon as you observe and understand this, passion disappears like a thief who has been seen, "O Mara, I have seen you." The same goes for anger, ego, jealousy etc. As soon as these thoughts of impurities arise, immediately observe the bodily sensations that arise with these thoughts. The defilements lose strength and pass away.

But do we do that? Instead, as soon as impurities arise in the mind, we start multiplying them by rolling in those defiled thoughts. There is no trace of awareness. By rolling in impure thoughts, one gets overwhelmed with the impurity and repeats some unwholesome action. After a while one becomes aware and repents this foolishness of falling in the net of Mara. But how does that help? Only our awareness is instrumental in overcoming Mara if we catch him approaching with his battle cry. To repent afterwards is futile. Better to be alert and vigilant every moment.

So come, let us liberate ourselves from the clutches of Mara, by removing impurities with Vipassana meditation. Let us reap our welfare through the practice of observing sensations with equanimity from moment to moment. In this lies the well-being of everyone.

With blessings, Satya Narayan Goenka

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Dhamma son of Myanmar, Modern-day Asoka by Venerable Bhante Ashin Nyanissara

The most venerable monk Sitagu Sayadaw (Bhante Nyanissara) of Sagaing, Myanmar, has great regard and metta for the late Principal Vipassana Teacher S.N. Goenkaji. With the Sayadaw's metta, thousands of people gathered for the last-rites ceremonies for Goenkaji in Rangoon, Mandalay and Myitkyina (the origin of River Irrawady). The ceremonial procession started from the Dhamma Mandala Vipassana center in Mandalay, to the banks of the Irrawady River at the Panmadee Jetty. It included a great many monks and nuns who melodiously chanted Dhamma verses. On the Irrawady five large barges loaded with people cruised into in a circular formation, and set afloat a thousand lamps dedicated to Goenkaji. Before this procession started, at a sangha-dana (a ceremoney during which alms, including robes are offered to monks) the venerable Bhante Nyanissara addressed the assembled congregation of monks and nuns with the following words:

"Aniccāvata Sankhārā, uppādavayadhammino; Uppajjitvā nirujjhanti, tesam vūpasamo sukho."

Indeed all sankharas are impermanent. Everything that arises—circumstances, material objects, people—has the nature of impermanence. To arise and pass away is their true characteristic, their inherent nature. With the practice of Vipassana, one observes the phenomena of this arising and passing until it is extinguished—there is no more arising. This is ultimate peace, this is nibbana (liberation, enlightenment).

During the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, Sakka descended from his Tāvatiṃsa abode along with other devas and recited the above verse. Mahabrahma along with his assembly of Brahmas showered flowers to pay homage. A large number of bhikkhus had congregated to pay their last respects to the Buddha. Almost in the same way as we have gathered here to pay our last respects to Goenkaji. At the time of the Buddha's *parinibbāna*, the Ven. Mahakassapa, who was filled with the volition to preserve the Buddha's beneficial teachings, was unable to attend. The responsibility of lighting the pyre of his physical remains was therefore on the Ven. Anuruddha

Following that, Mahabrahma Sahampati, Sakka – the king of devas, and the Ven. Ananda each gave a Dhamma verse, whereas the Ven. Anuruddha recited two Dhamma messages. In this way, all those present paid respects to the earthly remains of the Buddha.

Respected Goenkaji passed away in Mumbai, India, which is where he was cremated. He was born in Mandalay and deeply loved his motherland Myanmar. Although born in a staunch Hindu family, he later embraced Vipassana and became its prominent advocate. His immense faith in Vipassana arose from the fact that Vipassana helped him come out of his suffering. Two factors firmly established his faith. One was that Sayagyi U Ba Khin freed him from the woes and trappings of his worldly life. Additionally Sayagyi's teacher, the Ven. Saya Thet Gyi, and in turn his teacher, the Ven. Ledi Sayadaw opened the doors to appointing teachers for the laity (householders).

The other factor was that Goenkaji was deeply grateful to the Sangha (order of monks) of Myanmar, for their diligence in preserving the Dhamma for 2,500 years in its pristine form. The Burmese Sangha has somehow failed to fathom this gratitude the way Goenkaji, an Indian national, grasped it. It was this gratitude

that inspired Goenkaji to establish a Vipassana center in India and spread the noble teaching of Vipassana to the rest of the world.

I told Goenkaji in person that after Emperor Asoka, it was only he who spread the Dhamma, not only all across India, but to every corner of the world. I also mentioned this to several other people on different occasions.

In fact, I have mentioned this to Goenkaji at least three times, that he was the modern day Asoka. Upon this he replied, "It would be remiss to compare me with Asoka. Yes, of course I want to live my life in the footsteps on the great tradition." Twice, he gave me the same response.

On the third occasion, we were strolling at a beach in Mumbai. Once again, I compared him with Asoka. He smiled, just as he does in this picture here. I told him, "There are twenty sanctuaries for the Burmese Sangha in India today, but not one was able to establish a center like you. Yes, there were the Venerables Mahassi Sayadaw and Tang Pulu Sayadaw who established centers. But there is no comparison with Goenkaji after that. Hence, I am telling you that you are the modern day Asoka." He smiled.

He said that India was the motherland of Dhamma, and yet it very nearly vanished in its true form. It is our responsibility that we restore it, bring it back to life. So I deliberately asked him, "What do you mean when you say 'Dhamma'?" He replied that, "Dhamma is a discipline, a way of thinking, a path, a technique. Until we realized the Truth, we shall remain trapped in this incessant cycle of life and death."

Honorable people, the passing of Goenkaji is the passing of Asoka! In his passing, we have lost a modern day Asoka. In his passing the world has lost both its eyes. The world is suffering, affected – whether British, American, Arab – everyone! Goenkaji had the ability to pacify a staunch Muslim person to participate in a retreat even if he believed that the word of Allah is the only one truth. He made room for Muslims and also the Jews of Israel. That is why I say that in his passing we have lost Asoka, who was but a messenger of Dhamma. He who gave the world the eyes (to see the truth) is gone. I now request your permission to start the procession with the urn of his remains. Before we start, let us understand the verses uttered by Sakka (during the Parinibbana of the Buddha): Anicca vata sankhara...

Sankhara – is nothing but a product of kamma (actions), citta (mind), environment, and nutrition. The structure formed with these impermanent elements is therefore impermanent. We can call this (hall) a Dhamma Village, because Dhamma discourses are given here. If we sell food here, we will call (the establishment) a restaurant. If a King and a Queen decide to live here, then it will be called a royal palace. If we sell goods here, then it will be called a supermarket. But what is it in reality? Nothing but a structure made of bricks, iron, lumber and concrete. This is a home, and a palace; an aviary and a lavatory. This is the truth for everyone, whether they are of a Chinese, British, Indian or Burmese origin. Whether they are a Brahma, a deva, a cat, a hen or a dog it makes no difference. Each one has a rupa (matter), nama (mind) and a hetu (causation). The combination of these three produces a sankhara. As mention above, the nature and characteristic of these three is to arise and pass away, to get compounded and to disperse. This phenomenon continues endlessly for aeons.

What is Vipassana? It is a technique. We focus the mind inwards and observe the truth of arising and passing. This truth is such that it can be observed within the framework of our body. Whatever arises, passes away; and what has passed away, arises once again. Yada niccam tam dukkham – Whatever is annica (impermanent) is dukkha (suffering). Meaning suffering exists wherever there is impermanence. And suffering and impermanent are anatta (insubstantial). There is no 'I', there is no 'mine'. So it can be said that anicca, dukkha and anatta are not different but

identical. Where is anicca? In the arising and passing. And what do we observe in Vipassana? The truth that manifests. What is the apparent truth? The nama, rupa and hetu. The effort to focus on these three is so that we can unravel the arising and passing within, and understand the dukkha that ensues from that. When that becomes clear, anatta becomes clear along with the reality that we are so helpless. We do not have any control on these three. In this way, our attachment to our physical form of nama-rupa gradually declines. This is the universal truth within all of us.

The Buddha bestowed the wisdom of this very truth upon us and Sakka venerated him with the above verse. Similarly everyone else offered their flowers of devotion. In our offering of flowers of devotion, let me say this that the span between samsara (the state of suffering, cyclical rebirths) and nibbana (the state of final emancipation) in not significant. Nibbana is not that far beyond reach. Let us understand this with an example.

For example the waters of the Irrawady river separate one bank from the other. When the water level is high, the distance between the two banks will be large. But as the water level reduces, this distance decreases. Finally, when there is no water in the river-bed, both the banks merge to become one. Meaning that there is no separation between the two banks, there is no obstruction. The journey from one bank to the other becomes easy, becomes uninterrupted.

It is very important to understand this. We should avoid filling ourselves up with the waters of impurities. Because our water body is deluged with impurities, we are unable to perceive the shore of nibbana. In fact, nibbana walks in tandem with the physical form (samsara). And because of our impurities we decipher two separate shores of the river. Vipassana is like a water-pitcher of panna (wisdom) that draws out these impurities. Of course it depends on whether you have gone to a Vipassana center, and how much water you have drawn in your 10-day retreat. If we do not let the water levels rise (again), the shore will slowly but surely get closer. When all the water has been emptied, the two shores will unite. Samsara and nibbana will become one.

Only this much can be said in the (limited) time we have. Today as we disseminate the final remains of Goenkaji in the Irrawady river, let us also chant the same verses to offer our last salutations. No other verse, no other paean. We shall only chant this verse while observing the sensations within. **Annica vata sankhara...**

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V.R.I. Academic Schedule, Global Pagoda, Mumbai, for the year 2015

- One month Residential Pali- Hindi Intensive course (10th Jan-12th Feb)
- (ii) Advance Pali grammar Workshop (13th to 17th Feb)
- (iii) Learn to read and write Pali in three scripts (Burmese-Roman -Devanagari) (10th May to 19th May)
- (iv) Residential Pali- English Intensive Course (25th May to 9th Aug)
- (v) Translation Workshop (10th Aug to 17th Aug)
- (vi) Workshop on Ashokan Inscription & Brahmi Script (1st-05th Oct)
- (vii) Advance Pali Grammar Workshop (03rd Nov to 10th Nov)
- (viii) Research Methodology Workshop (15 th Nov to 19 th Nov) Eligibility Criteria
- (i)All courses are open only to those who have done three ten days & one Sattipatthana course.
- (ii) Graduation/ 15 yrs of schooling
- (iii)Translation and advance Grammar workshops are only for those who have completed V.R.I. Residential Pali Course /Masters in Pali.

V.R.I. plans to take research projects on the following topics:

- (1) Vipassana as found in the words of saints (santa vani me Vipassana), (2) Elements of Ayurveda as found in Tipitaka.
- (3) Transformation through Vipassana, then and now.
- If anyone has done work on these topics or wishes to contribute towards these projects, he/she is welcome.

Contact: E-mail: mumbai@vridhamma.org; Tel.: +91-22-33747560

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Children's Meditation Courses in Mumbai

Date	Course site	Age (years)	Registration
First Sunday	Dombivili	10-16	2 days befor Course
First Sunday	Ulhasnagar	10-16	2 days befor Course
First Sunday	Matunga	10-16	2 days befor Course
Seond Sunday	Sanpada	10-16	2 days befor Course
Seond Sunday	Andheri	10-16	2 days befor Course
Third Sunday	Ghatkopar	10-16	2 days befor Course
Fourth Sunday	Airoli	10-16	2 days befor Course
21-12	Goregaon	10-16	18 & 19-12-2014

Course Timing: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. Registration Timings: 11 am to 1 pm on the specified numbers and dates for each location. Course Venues:-- Goregaon: Vipassana Counselling & Research Centre, Siddharth Municipal General Hospital, Goregaon (W), Tel: 2624-2025. Dombivili: K B Vira HighSchool, Near Muncipal Office, Dombivali (E) Mob. 9930301594. Ulhasnagar: 703-A Block /1405, Gokul Nagar, Behind Netaji School, Near Mahesh Granite, Tel. 9970755130, Matunga: Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNDT College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Mob. 98201-50336, Sanpada: Navi Mumbai Mahanagar Palika School, Sector 5, Sanpaada. Tel: 7738649821, 9699862322, 9223300575, Andheri: Mayfair Meridian Meditation Hall, Ceaser Road, Off S.V. Road, Amboli, Near St. Blaise Church Andheri, Mob. 9820459449. 9664782244, 9699668642. Ghatkopar: SNDT School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar (W), Opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086. Tel: 25011096, 25162505. Airoli: Saraswati School, Sector 5, Airoli, Mob. 9892565765.

Please call two days in advance for registration.

NB *Please bring cushion. *Please register on the specified phone numbers. If unable to attend after registration, please inform in advance. *Please arrive on time for the course.



Vipassana Center in Nalanda, Bihar

Bihar, eastern India, is the land of Emperor Asoka whose capital Pataliputra is adjacent to modern day Patna. Bihar's ancient world-renowned Nalanda University has been revived as Nava-Nalanda Mahavihar. In the historical city of Nalanda, the Government has made arrangements for a **10-day Vipassana course**, held from Aug 27 to Sep 7, for about 35 students. Many research students, professors and officials participated. Eight venerable monks also benefited from this course.

One day Mega course on the death anniversary of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

One day Mega course will be held in the presence of Mātājī 0n 18 January 2015 at Global Vipassana Pagoda.

Time: From 11a.m to 4 p.m. Those who are not meditators can also listen to the discourse at 3p.m. For booking kindly contact the phone numbers given below or e-mail. Please do not come without booking your seat. Book your seat first and derive the benefit of meditating in a group. **Contact:** 022 28451170, 337475-01/43/44 Ext 9 (phone booking daily from 11 a.m to 5 p.m.

Online Regn www.oneday.globalpagoda.org



NEW APPOINTMENTS Assistant Teachers

- 1. Ms. Paramita Sinha, Kolkata
- 2. Mr. Dattatray Tayade, Mumbai
- 3. Mr. Mudar Mannah, Germany
- 4. U Tun Tun Oo, Myanmar
- 5. U Soe Min Aye, Myanmar6. Daw Khin Khin Win,
- Myanmar
- 7. Daw Tin Tin Oo, Myanmar

Children's Course Teachers

1.Mrs Induben Kapdi Kutch

- 2. & 3. Mr Shital and Mrs Sujata Mule Sangli
- 4. Mr Prashant Magdum Sangli 5. Mrs Varsha Tambe Ratnagiri
- 6. Dr Meghana Shende Chhindwara MP
- 7. Mr Ketan Mehta Bhopal
- 8.& 9. Mr Govind and Mrs Priti Wani Dhammagiri
- 10. Mr Patrick Houston Australia
- 11. Mrs Tali Krieger Australia
- 12. Ms. Cornelia Pietschmann Germany
- 13. Mrs. Nayeli Weippert Germany
- 14.Mr Stijn Baecke Netherlands

DHAMMA DOHAS

Char satya hai jagat ke, isase mukha mat moda; Yehi marg hai mukti ka, aas parayi chhoda.

Give all importance in life to the Four Noble Truths; This is the truth, the path of liberation Do not cling to false imaginations.

Aath anga ka arya path, diya Buddha bhagwan; Paga-paga-paga calte hue, pragate pad Nirvana.

The most compassionate Buddha taught the Eight-fold Noble Path; Walking on it, step by step, we reach the goal of Nibbana.

Baitha palthi māra kara, kāyā seedhi rākha; Mauna, mauna, man maun kara, chākha dharam ras chakha. With folded legs, your back upright, Quell, quieten, silence the mind Taste the peace, the truth so bright, For in Dhamma, nectar you shall find.

Dukkha mula utkhanana ki, payi jisne raah; Vahi hua sukh shanti ka, saccha shah-en-shah.

The meditator who bravely fights and eradicates impurities, becomes monarch of the kingdom of peace and happiness within.

Pragya sheel samadhi ki, bahi triveni dhaar; Dubaki mare so tire, ho bhavasagar paar.

With sila, sammadi and panna, flow the three rivers of Dhamma; swimming ardently in Dhamma, one crosses the ocean of suffering.

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