

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*So kāya-pariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayamāno,
kāya-pariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmi'ti pajānāti;
jīvita-pariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayamāno,
jīvita-pariyantikaṃ vedanaṃ vedayāmi'ti pajānāti.*

—Paṭhama Gelaṅṅa Sutta,
Saṃyutta Nikāya, XXXVI (II).i.7

Experiencing sensation everywhere within the limits of the body, he understands, "I am experiencing sensation everywhere within the limits of the body."
Experiencing sensation wherever there is life within the body, he understands, "I am experiencing sensation wherever there is life within the body."

THE IMPORTANCE OF DAILY MEDITATION

by S. N. Goenka

(The following has been translated and adapted from a discourse by Goenkaji to about 5000 old students at University Ground, Nagpur on 8 October 2000.)

My dear Dhamma sons and Dhamma daughters,

I am very happy that we have sat together and practised pure Dhamma. Meditating together is of great importance.

Sukho buddhānaṃ uppado.

Happy is the arising of the Buddhas in the world.

Sukhā saddhammadesanā.

Happy is the teaching of pure Dhamma.

Sukhā saṅghassa sāmaggī

Happy is the coming together of meditators.

Samaggānaṃ tapo sukho

Happiness is meditating together.

Two thousand six hundred years ago, Gotama Buddha arose in this country and taught pure Dhamma resulting in great happiness for the world. People started living in accordance with this teaching. They started meditating together just as we have done today: there is no greater happiness than this. If one meditates alone, one becomes liberated from mental defilements and becomes truly happy. But when Dhamma brothers and sisters sit together and meditate in such large numbers, if someone's meditation is a little weak, it is strengthened because the meditation of others is strong and the entire atmosphere is charged with Dhamma vibrations. Whenever possible, meditators should have joint sitting at least once a week. If in the past week anyone's meditation has become weak, it is strengthened by the group meditation and he is able to face the vicissitudes of life for the whole week with renewed strength.

Every meditator has to develop the strength to face the ups and downs of life. For this, it is necessary to meditate

one hour in the morning and evening daily, to meditate together once a week, and to take a ten-day course at least once a year. Then we will keep progressing on the path of Dhamma. Householders face many difficulties, many obstacles. What to speak of householders, even those who have renounced the household life tell me that they are not able to meditate regularly. But we must not give up in spite of all difficulties; we must meditate daily, morning and evening.

We do physical exercise—yoga, jogging or walking—to keep the body healthy and strong. Otherwise, the body becomes weak and diseased. In the same way, it is even more necessary to keep the mind healthy and strong. The mind is more important; one should not allow it to become weak or diseased. Vipassana is exercise of the mind. Meditating morning and evening makes the mind strong and healthy; it is not a waste of time. We live in a complex and stressful world. If the mind is not strong, we lose the balance of the mind and become miserable.

Those who do not know pure Dhamma, who have not learned this meditation, are unfortunate. But those who have received this benevolent teaching and are not using it are even more unfortunate. They have found such a priceless gem but have discarded it as if it is a useless pebble. What can be a greater misfortune?

It is a matter of great fortune to be born as a human being. Only a human being can become introverted and eradicate mental defilements from the depth of the mind. This work cannot be done by animals or birds or reptiles or insects or other lower beings. Even a human being cannot do this work if he does not know this technique. One gets a human birth, finds such a wonderful technique, learns to use it, benefits from it, and still discontinues the practice. What a misfortune! A bankrupt person finds a treasure. And he discards it and becomes bankrupt again. A hungry person gets delicious food. And he discards it and becomes

hungry again. A sick person finds medicine. And he discards it and becomes sick again. Very unfortunate, indeed! One should not make this mistake.

Sometimes meditators come to me and say: “I have stopped meditating. What to do, I am so busy.” It is a poor excuse. Do we not give food to the body three-four times a day? We do not say, “I am such a busy person, I don’t have time for food today.” This meditation that we do every morning and evening makes the mind strong. And a strong mind is more important than a strong body. If we forget this, we harm ourselves. We should never make this mistake. Even if there is too much work, we must do this exercise.

Sometimes it is not possible to meditate at the same place at a fixed time. Though desirable, it is not a must. What is important is to meditate twice in twenty-four hours. In rare circumstances when one is not able to sit with closed eyes, one may meditate with open eyes; sitting with others with the mind directed inwards. We should not make an outward show of meditation; the others need not know that you are meditating. We may not be able to meditate as well as we could have done while sitting alone with closed eyes, but at least we have calmed and strengthened the mind a little. Without regular practice, the mind becomes weak. A weak mind makes us miserable because it reverts to its old behaviour pattern of generating craving and aversion.

We have got human birth. We have come in contact with this wonderful Dhamma. We have developed faith in this technique because we have benefited from it, and yet, we have stopped meditating. Let us not be heedless. We are not doing anyone a favour by meditating twice a day. “Our teacher has told us, so we are doing it.” You are not doing your teacher a favour; you are doing yourself a favour.

This is such a great teaching. When one starts feeling sensations on the body, understand—the door of liberation has opened. A person who cannot feel sensation on the body is unfortunate; the door of liberation has not opened for him. And when one learns to remain equanimous to the sensations, not only has the door of liberation opened but one has entered it and has started walking on the path of liberation. In Vipassana we experience different types of sensations on different parts of the body and maintain equanimity towards them. A wise meditator understands from experience how the practice benefits one in daily life. Every step taken on this path takes one closer and closer to the final goal. No effort is wasted; each effort bears fruit.

Lack of awareness of sensations takes us on the path of misery. Blind reaction to them out of ignorance results in misery, deep misery—*dukkhasamudayagāminīpaṭipadā*. Awareness of sensations and equanimity towards them takes us on the path that leads to liberation from all suffering—*dukkhanirodhagāminīpaṭipadā*. If we experience sensations and react to them—react with craving to pleasant sensations and with aversion to unpleasant sensations—we are on the path of bondage. This is the teaching of the Buddha; this is the enlightenment of the Buddha.

At the time of death, some sensation will arise, and if we are not aware and react with aversion, we will go to lower planes of existence. But a good meditator who remains equanimous to these sensations at the time of death

will go to a favourable plane. This is how we make our own future. Death can come at any time. We do not have an agreement with death that it should come only when we are ready. We are ready whenever it comes. This is not an ordinary technique. It is a priceless gem that can liberate us from the cycle of birth and death and can improve not only this life but also future lives ultimately leading to full liberation.

“But we do not have time. We have too much work.” We squander an invaluable jewel by making these excuses. Whenever there is sorrow or despair or dullness in daily life due to any reason, this technique will help us. Just understand, “At this moment there is sorrow or despair or dullness in my mind,” and start observing breath or sensations. The external reason is not important.

Vedanā samosaraṇā sabbe dhammā.

Whatever arises in the mind is called *dhamma*. A sensation arises on the body with whatever *dhamma* arises in the mind: this is the law of nature. The mind and the body are interrelated. When a defilement arises in the mind, some sensation will arise in the body. Whatever sensation arises in the body at that time is connected to the defilement in the mind. This is what the Buddha taught. One understands that there is a defilement in the mind and observes sensation in the body. One practises this thoroughly, not just once or twice, but again and again—every sensation is impermanent. So the defilement that is connected to it is also impermanent, how long will it last? We are observing sensations and also observing how long the defilement lasts. It becomes weak and ceases, like a thief who enters a house, and finding that the master of the house is awake, runs away. Take the example of anger. When anger arises due to any reason, one understands, “At this moment there is anger in the mind. Now let me observe what sensation has arisen in the body.” It does not matter what is the cause of this anger. One is observing sensation and understanding that it is impermanent. This anger is also impermanent. It would have increased and overpowered one completely. Now it becomes weaker and weaker and passes away. It is such a great benefit. No matter what defilement arises, whether lust or egotism or envy or fear or anything else, one does not get overpowered by it. Now that we have learnt this technique, we have learnt the art of living. All that we have to do is to accept, “This defilement has arisen. Let me face this enemy. Let me see what is happening in my body. It is impermanent, *anicca, anicca*.” The enemy starts getting weaker and runs away. Defilements will keep coming throughout our entire life, sometimes for this reason, sometimes for that reason. When you become fully liberated from all defilements, you will become a fully liberated person, an *arahant*. At present, that stage is far away. Now in ordinary life, one has to face these difficulties. We have found a very effective weapon in the form of these sensations. No enemy will be able to overpower us for the whole life, how will it overpower us at the time of death? It cannot overpower us. We are the masters. This is the technique for becoming our own master.

We have learned the art of living. How can there be sorrow in our lives? Sorrow is caused by defilements, not by external events. An external event has occurred, we do not generate a defilement, we do not become miserable. An

external event has occurred, we generate a defilement, we become miserable. We are responsible for our misery. Unfavourable external events will continue to occur and if we are strong and do not generate defilements, our lives will be filled with happiness and peace. We do not harm others; we help ourselves and help others. Every meditator should understand that one has to meditate regularly so that one is happy and peaceful for the whole life. All those who have come on the path of Vipassana should understand that they have received an invaluable jewel.

May all beings be happy, be peaceful, be liberated.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question: My mind still remains immersed in lust, as a result of which the continuity of practise is not maintained. Kindly suggest a way out.

Goenkaji: Fight out your battle. Lust is something that keeps on following you from life to life. It is a very deep *sañkhāra*. Whenever lust arises in the mind, don't get involved in the object of the lust. Just accept the fact: lust as lust. "At this moment my mind is full of lust." Accept this, and see what sensation you have. At that moment whatever sensation you are feeling predominantly anywhere in the body, start observing it—understanding *anicca*, *anicca*, this is not permanent, this is not permanent. This lust that has come is also not permanent, let me see how long it lasts. If you do this, the lust becomes weaker and weaker and passes away.

Question: Lack of will-power and laziness are obstructing my meditation. Could you kindly give me some advice.

Goenkaji: Develop will-power, strong will-power. If you are so weak that you keep on breaking your decision to meditate every day in the morning and evening, then decide that you won't take your breakfast without having sat for one hour. How many days will you miss your breakfast? You will start practising daily. And so far as laziness or drowsiness is concerned, just examine yourself. If the laziness is because of lack of sleep, then sleep for some time. Get refreshed. But if you find this laziness is because of your mental impurity, which has become a barrier for you, then fight it out. Have hard breathing for some time, sprinkle some cold water on the eyes, stand up, walk. Somehow or the other, get rid of it.

NEW VRI PUBLICATIONS

VRI has published four new Hindi books for the benefit of Vipassana meditators.

1. Mangal Jage Grihi Jivan Rs 25.00

2. Kya Buddha Dukhvadi The Rs 20.00
3. Dhamma Vani Sangraha Rs 20.00
4. Vipassana Pagoda Smarika Rs 100.00

Payment must be made only by crossed Demand Draft in favour of Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri-422 403. (e-mail: dhamma@vsnl.com) Please add postage and handling charges as follows:

For India and Nepal: (Registered Printed Matter postage)

Single book: Rs 20.00. All four books: Rs 30.00.

Outside India: (Registered Printed Matter airmail postage)

Single book: Rs 200.00. All four books: Rs 300.00

PALI STUDIES PROGRAMME

The Vipassana Research Institute offers a program of Pali studies for serious Vipassana meditators fully committed to this tradition. The program provides a thorough grounding in both the theory (*pariyatti*) and practice (*paṭipatti*) of Dhamma. The course introduces students to Pali, the language in which the teachings of the Buddha are preserved. It does this in the environment of a meditation centre where the teachings are actually practised. This combination of scholarly and meditative approaches makes this program unique.

The texts used are primarily the Pali passages quoted and chanted by Goenkaji in a ten-day Vipassana course. Additional texts relevant to the technique will be studied as time permits. Periods of academic study alternate with participation in the *Dhamma Giri* meditation program. Meditation (both daily practice and intensive courses) as well as Dhamma service are integral parts of the curriculum: they give depth to the academic experience, and this in turn deepens the experience of meditation and service.

The level of the program is roughly equivalent to that of an introductory undergraduate course at a western university. Since instruction is given in English, the participants are required to have a good working knowledge of this language.

The program is of one year's duration. During this time participants reside at *Dhamma Giri*. Separate accommodation will be provided for them. Staying for an extended period in the strong Dhamma atmosphere of an established meditation center is itself a valuable experience. Applicants should be prepared to live and work in this environment. The best preparation is naturally to have spent time at *Dhamma Giri* both meditating and serving. They are further advised to discuss their plans with an assistant teacher. All applicants (who meet the requirements) must submit the recommendation of an assistant teacher from their area on the form provided, as well as a completed Pali Course application form.

Minimum requirements for admission:

Five ten-day courses and a Satipaṭṭhāna course;

Daily practice for at least two years, and

Observance of the five precepts for at least one year.

For more details, please contact: VRI, *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri-422403; e-mail: dhamma@vsnl.com

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VIPASSANA PILGRIMAGE 2001

The special train for the Vipassana Pilgrimage 2001 will start from Bombay Central Railway Station on 18 February 2001. The timetable is as follows:

Station	Arrival	Departure
Bombay Central		5:25 a.m.
Valsad	8:30 a.m.	8:45 a.m.
Surat	10:45 a.m.	11:05 a.m.

Nandurbar	2:20 p.m.	2:30 p.m.
Jalgaon	6:35 p.m.	

After Jalgaon, the timetable will be set by Central Railways. The train will return through Lucknow, Agra, Kota route. Please carry warm clothing and blanket.

GOENKAJI'S DISCOURSES ON ZEE TV

Goenkaji's series of 44 discourses in Hindi are being broadcast on Zee TV every Monday from 7:00 to 7:30 a.m.

DHAMMA GIRI WEBSITE

This website <www.vri.dhamma.org> contains information about Vipassana, *Dhamma Giri*, VRI, Goenkaji's Itinerary, Latest Developments in Dhamma, Vipassana Centres in India, Questions & Answers, VRI English Newsletters, Spread of Dhamma, Dhamma News, Dhamma Discourses, Information about *Chattha Saigāyana* CD-ROM, Vipassana Seminars, VRI Publications, Updated schedule of courses including one day courses and group sittings in India as well as centre addresses, and updated information on *Dhamma Pattana*, *Dhamma Tapovana*, and Sayagi U Ba Khin Vipassana Village.

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Ācāryas:

- Mr Barry & Mrs Kate Lapping
To serve Dhamma Dharā (Massachusetts), Chicago, Vietnam, and Archives
- Mr Steve & Mrs Olwen Smith
To serve France
- Mr Michael & Mrs Trish Barnes, Australia
To serve Dhamma Niketana, South Australia

Senior Assistant Teachers:

- Mr Chris & Mrs Kerry Waters, Australia

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

- Mr Manik Chikate, Chandrapur
- Mrs Uma D. Choudhary, Nagpur

- Ms Bhavana Dee Decew, Auroville
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- Mrs Shyama Khobragade, Balaghat
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