

# Vipassana Newsletter

*In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,*

*as taught by S. N. Goenka*

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## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Sabbadānaṃ dhammadānaṃ jināti,  
sabbāṃ rasaṃ dhammaraso jināti;  
sabbāṃ ratim dhammarati jināti,  
taṇhakkhayo sabbadukkhaṃ jināti.*

—Dhammapada - 354

The gift of Dhamma excels all other gifts,  
The flavour of Dhamma excels all other flavours;  
The pleasure of Dhamma excels all other pleasures,  
One who has eradicated craving overcomes all sorrow.

## RELIEF FOR THE EARTHQUAKE-AFFECTED

by S. N. Goenka

*(The following has been translated and adapted from an article by Goenkaji published in the March 2001 issue of the Vipassana Patrikā.)*

How catastrophic was the wrath of nature! The earth trembled and shook violently. Such a massive earthquake! Such a terrible earthquake! Such a destructive earthquake! Such a devastating earthquake! It seemed as if the whole region has been affected by the frenzied dance of death.

The breast of the earth was torn open and developed wide cracks in it. As a result, cracks were also produced in the walls of houses. Small huts as well as big buildings began to shake uncontrollably. Many of them collapsed like castles of sand, like houses of cards.

Those who were outside by chance or had left their homes earlier survived. But the remaining thousands of people fell victim to this cruel misfortune. Many were killed, many were crippled, many were injured. A great disaster had befallen the people leaving them sorely distressed. The sound of crying, the sound of weeping, the sound of lamentation, the sound of wailing could be heard all around. Wherever one looked, there was ruin and desolation. Such great devastation was wrought within just a few minutes. It was a heart-rending sight, a terrifying spectacle of death and destruction.

A beloved husband was buried in the ground. A loved child was buried forever. A mother had died, leaving her weeping child behind. A father had departed leaving his loved ones without protection. The only child of a family had died, extinguishing the family line. The support of elderly parents was snatched away. Life was shrouded by darkness. The cries of those wounded and trapped beneath the rubble of the fallen buildings were heart-rending. What was the condition of those trapped beneath the rubble? Were they alive or dead or near death?

This great disaster took place so swiftly that it was not possible for anyone to help others. At some places, whole villages were buried; whole localities were destroyed. Who was left to save others, to help others, to console others, to comfort others?

The entire family as well as the shops and godowns of a wealthy person were completely wiped out. He was the only one to survive—weak and helpless. A poor person who lived in a hut with his family and eked his livelihood by running a small tea-shop in front of his hut had also lost everything. He was also the only one to survive—weak and helpless. Rich or poor, nature did not spare anyone. Hindu or Muslim, Buddhist or Jain, all of them fell victim to this earthquake. This catastrophe affected all of them equally. Thousands were suddenly rendered homeless and destitute. There was no food, no water, no clothes, no bedding, no shelter, and no protection. The groans from their battered hearts, the painful sighs from their distressed minds were unbearable. There was no limit to their suffering; it was so intense that it was beyond imagination.

Many people from India and other countries as well as organisations and governments came forward to help them as much as possible. Food, water, tents, blankets, medicines and other material began to arrive there. Though this was very little in comparison to the amount needed, at least the relief work had started.

The Buddha said that *kālika dāna* (timely aid) is most beneficial, most meritorious. If whatever is essential to save someone's life is given immediately, that is called *kālika dāna*. The people affected by this natural calamity are in dire need of this kind of assistance. Such aid should definitely be given. But this material aid only is not sufficient.

The wounds of the body will heal but what about the deep wounds on the mind? One whose house has been buried in the ground can build a new house but what about

the one whose mind is mired in a bottomless pit of despair? There used to be an invaluable technique in ancient India for this purpose that fortunately has again arisen in this country. The Buddha said that the *dhammadāna* (of Vipassana) is the greatest of all gifts. But he also said that it is necessary to give *kālika dāna* first.

An incident from his life:

Once an extremely distressed person came to him. People beseeched the Buddha to teach Dhamma to this person so that he could gain liberation from his misery. The Buddha looked at him and asked,

“Have you had food?”

“No.” was the reply.

“Did you have food yesterday?”

“No.”

“Oh, he has been hungry for two days! First, give him food. Only then, I will teach him Dhamma.”

Therefore, even though the *dāna* of Dhamma is supreme, it is extremely important to give *kālika dāna* first. After the people get relief by this *kālika dāna*, they should be given the gift of spiritual peace and happiness.

The greatest destruction by this cataclysmic earthquake was caused in Kutch, Kathiawad and Ahmedabad. There are Vipassana meditation centres already at these three places: *Dhamma Sindhu* at Bada near Bhuj, *Dhamma Koṭa* at Rajkot, and *Dhamma Pīṭha* near Ahmedabad. People join ten-day courses at these centres to strengthen and purify their minds and gain much benefit.

It is good that many Vipassana meditators have already undertaken the meritorious work of giving *kālika dāna*, individually and in groups. Now continuous courses will be organised at these three meditation centres as soon as possible so that those who have been afflicted by the earthquake can join these courses in large numbers and gain mental strength to rebuild their lives. So far, about 100 to 150 people have been taking part in these courses here because there were facilities only for this number. But now, with the use of tents, courses for 500 to 1000 meditators will be organised here so that the quake-afflicted can gain relief from their mental trauma. Vipassana works as a healing balm on the wounds of the mind; it does the work of healing broken hearts.

In such great adversity, the practice of Vipassana enables one to live an equanimous life. The unbalanced mind becomes balanced; the agitated mind becomes calm; the suffering mind becomes free from suffering. This has been confirmed by the experience of thousands of Vipassana meditators.

Just now, I have received a message that a meditator, Meena Asher, from Kutch passed away peacefully and equanimously in this earthquake. She had done her first Vipassana course in 1978 and had been meditating regularly for the past twenty-three years. She benefited greatly from it and inspired her brothers, sisters and other members of her family to take part in Vipassana courses. Today, five of them are serving as assistant teachers of Vipassana and conducting courses at various places.

Like everyone else, this Dhamma daughter also had to face many ups and downs in her life. Because of her practice of Vipassana she always maintained the balance of

her mind. She lived an exemplary life: accepting all situations with composure without ever complaining about anyone. Her life was exemplary. When the earthquake struck at 8:50 a.m. on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2001, she was working in the kitchen and was trapped under the rubble of the collapsed building. The bones of her neck and back were broken. The others—her only daughter and her elder sister-in-law with her son and daughter—were also crushed near her and passed away. We cannot imagine the mental state of a woman trapped under the debris of stone and brick, who is alive but cannot make the slightest movement. How must she have passed each moment! One cannot imagine how painful each moment must have been waiting and hoping that someone would remove the pile of rubble or at least hoping to hear someone’s voice or to see a ray of light from outside.

She was trapped under the rubble in this unbearable condition not merely for one or two hours but for ten hours. She was finally rescued from the rubble at about 7:00 p.m. that day. People saw that there was not the slightest sign of agitation on her face. The pain in her back and neck must certainly have been unbearable. But, let alone crying or lamenting, she did not even sigh in pain. Nor did she have any tears in her eyes. She was lying peacefully with her head on the lap of her nephew, who had survived because he had been outside at the time of the earthquake. It was not that she was unconscious; she was fully conscious. She asked for water to drink. But there was no sign of misery on her face or in her voice. Lying in this condition and practising Vipassana, she passed away peacefully after an hour and a quarter. Truly, she had learned the art of dying. She used to say repeatedly that Vipassana had taught her the art of living. The technique that taught her the art of living happily and equanimously in every situation had also taught her the art of dying peacefully even in the presence of excruciating pain. In the present history of Vipassana, there have been many meditators who have peacefully embraced a painful death in this way. Among them, there have been some who refused to take narcotic painkillers even while suffering from the extreme agony of the terminal stage of cancer, choosing instead to observe the pain dispassionately, and passed away peacefully. This meditator also has left an ideal example of an inspiring Dhamma death.

The technique of Vipassana teaches one to live a life of peace and harmony even in the face of the greatest adversity. May it benefit all those affected by the earthquake. May their broken hearts be healed. May they get the strength to start their lives anew. May they become peaceful! May they become contented!

If you want to change society, you have to change the individual. ...If a whole jungle has withered away and you want to see it green again, each individual tree has to become green. Each tree must be watered properly at its root. When each individual tree becomes healthy, the entire jungle will become healthy. If individuals become healthy, society becomes healthy. Vipassana is doing its own job. It may take time; that can't be helped. But the results are coming and I am quite hopeful that it will change society.

S. N. Goenka, Annual Meeting, January 1995

## GUIDELINES FOR PRACTISING VIPASSANA MEDITATION

(The following information is for the benefit of those who have completed a 10-day course with S. N. Goenka or one of his authorised assistant teachers. Others wishing to learn the technique of Vipassana are advised to join such a course.)

A Vipassana course is truly valuable if it makes a change in your life, and a change will come only if you keep practising the technique daily. The following outline of what you have learned is offered with best wishes for your continued success in meditation.

### OUTLINE OF THE PRACTICE

#### Sila

In daily life this is practised by following the Five Precepts:

1. to abstain from killing any living being;
2. to abstain from stealing;
3. to abstain from sexual misconduct;
4. to abstain from wrong speech; and
5. to abstain from all intoxicants.

#### Meditation

The minimum needed to maintain the practice:

- \* one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening;
- \* five minutes while lying in bed before you fall asleep and after you wake up;
- \* if possible, sitting once a week for one hour with other meditators practising this technique of Vipassana;
- \* a 10-day course or self-course once a year;
- \* and other free time for meditation.

### HOW TO MEDITATE DAILY

#### Anapana

Practise this if the mind is dull or agitated, if it is difficult to feel sensations or not to react to them. You can begin with Anapana and then switch to Vipassana, or if needed, continue observing the breath for the entire hour. To practise Anapana, keep the attention in the area below the nostrils and above the upper lip. Remain aware of each breath as it enters or leaves. If the mind is very dull or agitated, breathe deliberately and slightly harder for some time. Otherwise the breathing should be natural.

#### Vipassana

Move your attention systematically from head to feet and feet to head, observing in order each and every part of the body by feeling all the sensations that you come across. Observe objectively; that is, remain equanimous with all the sensations that you experience, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, by appreciating their impermanent nature. Keep your attention moving. Never stay more than a few minutes at any one place. Do not allow the practice to become mechanical. Work in different ways according to the type of sensations you experience. Areas of the body having different gross sensations should be observed separately by moving the attention part by part. Symmetrical parts, such as both arms or both legs, having similar subtle sensations, may be observed together simultaneously. If you experience subtle sensations throughout the physical structure, you may at times sweep the entire body and then again work part by part.

#### Mettā

At the end of the hour relax, letting any mental or physical agitation subside. Then focus your attention for a few minutes on subtle sensations in the body, and fill your mind and body with thoughts and feelings of goodwill for all beings.

#### Outside of Meditation Periods

Give your full and undivided attention to any important tasks before you, but check from time to time whether you are maintaining your awareness and equanimity. Whenever a problem arises, if possible be aware of your breath or sensations, even for a few seconds. This will help you to maintain balance of mind in various situations.

#### Dāna

Share whatever good you have acquired with others. Doing so helps to eradicate the old habit of self-centredness. Meditators realise that the most valuable thing they have to share is Dhamma, so they do what they can to help others learn the technique of Vipassana. With this pure volition they donate toward the expenses of other students.

This *dāna* is the sole source of funding for courses and centres around the world.

#### Selfless Service

A still greater *dāna* is to give one's time and effort by helping to organise or run courses or by doing other Dhamma work. All who help (including the Teachers and assistant teachers) give their service as *dāna* without receiving anything in return. This service not only benefits others, but also helps those who offer it to eradicate egotism, to understand the teaching more deeply, and thus to advance on the path.

#### One Path Only

Do not mix anything else with this technique. If you have been practising something else, then as soon as possible choose the one you find most suitable and beneficial, and devote yourself to it.

### TELLING OTHERS ABOUT VIPASSANA

You may describe the technique to others, but do not teach them. Otherwise you might confuse rather than help them. Encourage people who want to meditate to join a course, where there is a properly trained guide.

#### In General

- \* Progress comes gradually. Mistakes are bound to be made—learn from them. When you realise you have made a mistake, smile and start again!
- \* It is common to experience drowsiness, agitation, mind-wandering and other difficulties in meditation, but if you persevere you will be successful.
- \* You are welcome to contact the Teacher or assistant teachers for guidance.
- \* Make use of the support of your fellow meditators. Sitting with them will give you strength.
- \* Make use of the meditative atmosphere at Vipassana centres by going there to sit whenever you can, even for a few hours or days. As an old student you are also welcome to come for part of a 10-day course, depending on the availability of space.
- \* Real wisdom is recognising and accepting that every experience is impermanent. With this insight you will not be overwhelmed by the ups and downs of life. And when you are able to maintain an inner balance, you can choose to act in ways that will create happiness for you and for others. Living each moment happily with an equanimous mind, you will surely progress toward the ultimate goal of liberation from all suffering.

#### NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

#### Bhikkhu Ācāryas:

Ven. Bhikkhu Ben-yuan, USA Taiwan

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

### Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr Hari Bahadur Bijucche, *Nepal*
2. U Kyaw Khin, *Myanmar*
3. Dr Daw Mya Mya, *Myanmar*
4. Dr Daw Saw Mya Yi, *Myanmar*
5. U Khin Maung Toe, *Myanmar*
6. Daw Win Kyi, *Myanmar*

### Children Course Teachers:

1. Mr Satyajit Chandrikapure, *Nagpur*
2. Mr Manohar Motghare, *Nagpur*
3. Mr Umashankar Thubrikar &
4. Mrs Pragati Thubrikar, *Nagpur*
5. Mr Narendra Khobragade, *Nagpur*
6. Mr Santosh Jambulkar, *Nagpur*
7. Mr Gyaneshwar Waghmare, *Wardha*
8. Mr Bhupatlal Sahu, *Khariyar Road*
9. Ms Alka Sahu, *Khariyar Road*
10. Mr P. K. Nandi, *Bhilai*
11. Mr Gilbert Joseph, *Bhilai*
12. Ms Suneeta Verma, *Rajnandgaon*
13. Mrs Meenakshi Mate, *Assam*
14. Mr Bishnu Prasad Paneru, *Nepal*
15. Mr Bhimbar Singh Thapa, *Nepal*
16. Mr Pritam Lal Pradhan, *Nepal*
17. Mr Bibek Dangar, *Nepal*
18. Mr Shankar Kunwar, *Nepal*

## NEW VIPASSANA CENTRE

A new Vipassana centre has been started at Pocharam Village, 13 kilometres from Nizamabad city, in Andhra Pradesh. The centre is located on a piece of land that already includes a Dhamma House with meditation hall, dining hall and five additional rooms. The old students of Nizamabad have successfully organised a ten-day course for 63 students and are conducting one-day courses twice every month. The management has decided to build a meditation hall and a dormitory for male students in the first phase of construction. Goenkaji has named the new centre *Dhamma Nijjhāna*.

For more details, contact:

**Dhamma Nijjhāna** 2-28, Pocharam Village, Yedpally Mandal, Via Sarangapur, Dist Nizamabad, Andhra Pradesh.

## WORKSHOP FOR BHIKKHUS

The first workshop for *bhikkhus* was conducted at *Dhamma Giri* from 6 to 14 February 2001. Fifteen *bhikkhus* took part in the workshop and benefited immensely. Goenkaji gave an inspiring address on the first day of the workshop.

## NEW VRI PUBLICATIONS

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

Mangal Jage Grihi Jivan	Rs 25.00
Kya Buddha Dukhvadi The?	Rs 20.00
Dhamma Vani Sangraha	Rs 20.00
Vipassana Pagoda Smarika	Rs 100.00

Payment must be made only by crossed Demand Draft in favour of Vipassana Research Institute, Igatpuri 422403. 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.

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

## DHAMMA GIRI WEBSITE

This website <[www.vri.dhamma.org](http://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 *Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana* 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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I, Ram Pratap Yadav, declare that the above-mentioned information is true to the best of my knowledge.

20 February 2001  
**Ram Pratap Yadav**  
Printer, Publisher and Editor

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