

# Vipassana Newsletter

*In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,*

*as taught by S. N. Goenka*

Vol. 11, No. 5: 7 May 2001  
Published every month

Vipassana Research Institute  
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Ānāpānasatī yassa, paripunṇā subhāvitā;  
anupubbaṃ paricīṭā, yathā buddhena desitā  
somaṃ lokaṃ pabhāseti, abbhā muttova candimā.  
—Theragāthāpāli,*

One who has perfected, developed and practised in proper order,  
mindfulness of breathing as taught by the Buddha,  
lights up this world like the moon freed from the clouds.

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## Awareness Of Natural Respiration

by S. N. Goenka

*(The following has been translated and adapted from the sixth in a series of 44 Hindi discourses broadcast on Zee TV. It was originally published in the January 1999 issue of the Vipassana Patrikā.)*

The goal of Vipassana meditation is to purify the mind completely by eradicating all mental impurities such as anger, hatred, passion, fear etc. For this, one must gain complete knowledge of the body, of the mind and of the mental impurities at the experiential level, which is done with the help of respiration.

If one wants to understand one's own physical and mental nature, one must use a pure object of concentration—natural, normal respiration. One should not try to regulate the breath or do any breathing exercise. Nor should one repeat any word or mantra or visualize any shape, form or imaginary object along with awareness of respiration. One should observe bare respiration, as it is.

When one observes respiration, one begins to understand the nature of the mind. One reality about the mind becomes very clear: the mind is very fleeting, very fickle. It wanders repeatedly from one object to another. Where does it wander? It wanders to so many objects. Even if one kept a diary, one would not be able to make a list of all the objects. But, if the meditator is attentive, he will see that the mind wanders in two areas only: either in the past or in the future. It recalls some past incident and starts to roll in thoughts of the past, "This had happened; this had not happened." Suddenly it may jump to the future and start rolling in thoughts of the future, "This must happen; this must not happen."

The meditator observes this present reality: he witnesses the nature of the mind objectively. Sometimes the mind wanders in the past, sometimes in the future. It never stays in the present. But one has to live in the present, not in the past. The past moment is gone forever. One cannot bring back that moment in return for all the wealth in the world. Similarly, one cannot live in the future. When the future becomes the present, only then can

one live in it. So one can live neither in the past nor in the future. One has to live in the present, and yet, the mind constantly tries to escape into a past or future that is unattainable. One has not learned how to live; one has not learned the art of living.

Life can be really lived only in the present. Therefore, the first step of this technique is to develop awareness of a present reality: the breath entering or leaving the nostrils. The breath may pass through the left nostril, through the right nostril, or through both the nostrils simultaneously. One may find that after observing one or two breaths, the mind wanders away. One accepts this fact smilingly and again brings the mind back to respiration. The mind wanders again and again and one keeps returning to the awareness of respiration.

This does not mean that when one learns this technique one forgets the past completely or does not plan for the future. Oh no! After one learns the art of living in the present, one can easily recall things of the past whenever necessary and make suitable decisions about the future much more effectively.

One has to change the mind's habit of constantly wandering in the past or in the future. One has to train the mind to remain in the present. As one continues to meditate, one recognises the tendency of the mind to constantly roll in thoughts. Of what type are these thoughts? The meditator sees that there are only two types of thoughts. Whether the mind wanders in the past or in the future, the thoughts that arise are either agreeable or disagreeable.

One is investigating the truth about oneself like a scientist, trying to understand the truth at the experiential level. One finds that whenever an agreeable thought arises in the mind about the past or the future, one feels very happy. And whenever a disagreeable thought arises in the mind about the past or the future, one feels very unhappy.

When an agreeable thought of the past or the future arises in the mind and it feels pleasant, one part of the

mind starts reacting, “Oh, very good, I want more of it, I want more of it.” and this habit of “wanting, wanting” continues all the time. Similarly, we find that as soon as a disagreeable thought of the past or the future arises in the mind, a part of the mind starts reacting, “Oh, I don’t want it, I do not want it. Let this never happen.” and this habit of “not wanting, not wanting” continues all the time. In India’s ancient language, this habit of “wanting, wanting” was called *rāga* (craving); and the habit of “not wanting, not wanting” was called *dosa* (aversion). One generates these thoughts of craving and aversion continuously in the mind. Agreeable or disagreeable thoughts, either of the past or of the future, cause pleasant or unpleasant feelings and result in craving or aversion continuously.

Sometimes a thought may arise in the mind and before it is completed, another thought arises. Before that thought is completed, a third thought arises. Thoughts arise without any sequence or meaning. Such mental behaviour is commonly regarded as a sign of madness.

An example:

A plate of food is served to a mad person who has been hungry since many days. He is happy because he was very hungry. He takes a morsel but before he can eat, another thought arises in his mind—“I am in the bathroom, I have come here to have a bath and this is a cake of soap,” and he starts rubbing the food on his body. Then another thought arises—“This person standing before me is my enemy, he has come to kill me. Before he kills me, let me kill him. How can I kill him? These are hand-bombs. If I throw them at him, he will die.” So he throws all the food away. Such a person is called mad.

A discerning meditator discovers that his mind is also full of delusions, full of ignorance. In the ancient language, this was called *moha* (ignorance). Because of this habit of continuously generating craving, aversion or ignorance, the mind is unhappy and agitated. At the surface level of the mind, one tries to remain aware and to avoid generating craving and aversion. At times, one may feel that the surface part of the mind has become very wise and does not generate craving, aversion or ignorance any longer. But this is a very small part of the mind. The larger part of the mind, its deeper layers, is generating craving, aversion or ignorance every moment. All mental impurities arise because of the stock of these impurities in the mind. The deeper layers of the mind are unable to come out of this strong habit pattern of craving, aversion, and ignorance.

During the whole day, there may be only a few moments when one is able to cut oneself off from the past as well as the future and remain in the present. The mind is fully concentrated on respiration, the truth of the present moment. There is no delusion, no ignorance. One does not generate craving for incoming breath or aversion towards outgoing breath. One simply observes the breath entering and leaving the nostrils objectively without reacting to it. In such a moment, the mind is free from craving, aversion, and delusion; it is completely pure. This moment of purity at the conscious level has a strong impact on the old impurities accumulated in the deeper levels of the mind. The burning coals of craving, aversion and ignorance that one has accumulated within are smouldering. One has put thick layers of ash on them. “*Bhāsmācchanno va pāvako*” The Buddha said that it is like burning coals covered by ash. It may seem that there is no fire under the layer of ash. But one is burning within because of these impurities. The

contact of this internal burning with the coolness of this one moment of purity is like the contact of positive and negative forces. It produces an explosion, like the eruption of a volcano within. Some of the deep-rooted impurities may come to the surface and manifest as various physical or mental discomforts such as pain in the legs or in the head, or fear or agitation. What seems to be a problem is actually a sign of success in the meditation. When one cuts open an abscess, pus is bound to come to the surface. Similarly, the operation of the mind has started and some of the underlying pus has started to come out of the wound. Although the process is unpleasant, this is the only way to get rid of the pus, to remove the impurities. If one continues to work in the proper way, all these difficulties will gradually diminish.

When one pours a handful of water on a coal-stove to extinguish the fire, there is a reaction; there is a sound, “*chung*”. When cold water is poured again, there is the sound of “*chung*” again. The hot stove will continue to make that sound until its temperature is the same as that of the water. Once this happens, it will not make any more sound when more water is poured on it. Similarly, when drops of this cool water of mental purity fall on the burning coals of the impurities within, it produces an explosion. Because of that, the meditator will feel restless. This is another reason why one is advised to learn the technique at a meditation centre under the guidance of an experienced teacher.

If one works according to the instructions of an experienced guide at a meditation centre, one learns to be equanimous in all situations. When one learns to keep the mind balanced, the mind becomes purer and purer. The purpose of meditation is to purify the mind. The development of a pure mind results in real happiness, real peace, real harmony, real liberation.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

**Question:** In my daily sitting of one hour, I devote at least thirty minutes to Anapana. Is it all right?

**Goenkaji:** Nothing wrong. Anapana is just a tool to help you to practise Vipassana properly. Whenever you find your mind is very agitated, make use of Anapana. You can carry on with Anapana for thirty or forty minutes, or even for the whole hour and the next sitting will be much better. So Anapana is to stabilise your mind, to make it quiet and more sensitive to feel the sensations.

**Question:** If there is a blockage or blank area during meditation, I become disappointed even though I should not. What should I do?

**Goenkaji:** Understand that you have accumulated so much craving and aversion in you. When you become disappointed, or you feel bored, that shows that you are craving for a situation where this blockage will go away. And you have a tremendous amount of aversion towards this blockage, towards this unpleasant sensation, and you want to get rid of it. So understand the reality, “I have not understood Vipassana properly. Let me start again with Anapana. Let me come back to kindergarten and then I will proceed further.”

(20 January 1996, Annual Meeting: Dhamma Giri)

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## “VALUE INCULCATION THROUGH VIPASSANA” WORKSHOPS

Two residential workshops for college and school teachers are being organised to practically demonstrate how universal human values like loving kindness, compassion, truthfulness, forgiveness, generosity, etc. can actually be inculcated by a scientific practice of self observation.

These 15-day workshops will be held at Pune Vipassana Centre from 18 May to 2 June 2001 and 8 June to 23 June 2001. The workshops will begin at 10:00 a.m. of the first day with about two days of discussions, followed by a ten-day Vipassana course, and will conclude with another two days of discussions and practice of integrating Vipassana with day-to-day life. The workshop will end at 10:00 a.m. on the final day.

College and school teachers wanting to participate in these workshops may contact:

Pune Vipassana Samiti,  
Dadawadi, Opposite Nehru Stadium,  
Near Anand Mangal Karyalaya, Pune 411 002  
Tel: (020) 4446767  
e-mail: webmaster@pune.dhamma.org

A special workshop for assistant teachers on “Value Inculcation through Vipassana” is also being organised from 3rd June (10 a.m.) to 7th June (10 a.m.) at Pune Vipassana Centre. Assistant teachers wanting to attend the workshop may contact Pune centre at the above address.

## TRAINING OF RCCCs AND CCTs

The programme for training of Regional Children Course Co-ordinators and Children Course Teachers is as follows:

10 and 11 May: Ghasiram Chaudhary Bhavan, Ahmedabad

12 and 13 May: *Dhamma Koṭa*, Rajkot

15 and 16 May: *Dhamma Sindhu*, Bada

1 to 3 June: *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri

9 and 10 June: Logistat Vana, New Delhi

6 and 7 July: *Dhamma Thalī*, Jaipur

21 and 22 July: Varanasi

28 and 29 July: *Dhamma Gaṅgā*, Calcutta

All RCCCs and CCTs can attend these workshops. ATs, SATs and Teachers are also welcome to join as observers. Please refer to Schedule of Vipassana Courses for contact details of the venues.

## CONSTRUCTION OF PAGODA AT DHAMMA DHAJA

Regular ten-day courses are being conducted at *Dhamma Dhaja*, Punjab Vipassana Centre since 1998. The Punjab Trust has decided to construct a pagoda with meditation cells so that meditators can gain more benefit. Old students are welcome to share in the merits of this noble project. For more details, contact: Punjab Vipassana Trust, P. O. Mehlanwali, Dist Hoshiarpur, Village Anandgarh-146110, Punjab. Tel: (01882) 272333

## PRISON COURSE IN PUNJAB

Sixteen students, thirteen inmates and three officers, took part in a ten-day Vipassana course at Sangrur Jail, Punjab from 14 to 25 March 2001. Before the prison course, the Jail Superintendent had participated in a course at *Dhamma Dhaja*, Punjab Vipassana centre and gained much benefit. He wanted only one student to be accommodated in each cell (instead of three) for better results.

The Inspector General (Prisons), Punjab and other officials visited the jail on the concluding day of the course. After hearing the experiences of the students, they were keen to establish a permanent Vipassana centre at Sangrur Jail and planned to request the Punjab State Government to organise such courses in all jails in Punjab.

## NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

### Ācāryas:

Dr Khin Maung Aye & Dr (Mrs) Kyi Sein  
*To serve Myanmar*  
Mr Bruce & Mrs Maureen Stewart  
*Spread of Dhamma*

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

### Children Course Teachers:

1. Ms Alka Marwaha, *Gurgaon* 2. Mrs Shobha Chhuttani, *New Delhi*

## DHAMMA GIRI WEBSITE

This website <www.vri.dhamma.org> contains information about Vipassana, *Dhamma Giri*, VRI, Goenkaji's Itinerary, Latest Developments in spread of Dhamma, Vipassana Centres in India, Questions & Answers, VRI English Newsletters, 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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Edited and published by R. P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri 422 403 and printed at Akshar Chitra Press, 69B-Road, Satpur, Nashik 422007.

7 May 2001

Posted at Igatpuri, Dist. Nashik

Posting Day: *Purnima* of every month

POSTAL CLAUSE NO. 232 REG. NO. 49916/90  
LICENSED TO POST WITHOUT PREPAYMENT OF POSTAGE  
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