

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

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Vipassana Research Institute
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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Tisso im±, bhikkhave, vedan±. Katam± tisso? Sukh± vedan±, dukkh± vedan±, adukkamasukh± vedan±. Im± kho, bhikkhave, tisso vedan±. Im±sa½ kho, bhikkhave, tissanna½ vedan±na½ abhiññ±ya pariññ±ya parikkhay±ya pah±n±ya... aya½ ariyo aññha^agiko maggo bh±vetabbo'ti.⁷

—Sa½yutta Nik±ya 3.5.169

There are these three types of bodily sensations. What are the three? Pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations, and neutral sensations. Meditators, the Noble Eightfold Path should be practised for the complete knowledge, the full realization, the gradual eradication and the abandonment of these three bodily sensations.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF VEDANĀ IN VIPASSANA

by Vipassana Research Institute

Vedan± (sensations) are of diverse types (*vividh±*)¹, and are experienced every moment within the body. Broadly speaking, however, there are three kinds—pleasant (*sukha*), unpleasant (*dukkha*), and neutral (*adukkhamasukh±*). The sensations arise within the body as a result of contact (*phassa*) and sooner or later pass away.²

The experience of painful contact within the body results in an unpleasant sensation that is unpalatable, distressful, painful, sorrowful, and an affliction. Faced with such an experience, an ordinary person becomes distressed, disturbed and unbalanced. When the pain is intense, he weeps, laments, cries, falls into despair and becomes deluded.³ Experiencing an unpleasant sensation, he desperately makes every possible effort to get rid of it, to pull himself out of it. He musters his will to free himself as quickly as possible. Because of this bodily pain and affliction, he becomes unhappy, restless, worried, disturbed and mentally distressed. He is thus miserable and troubled, both bodily and mentally, as if pierced by two arrows at the same time.⁴ This is due to his attachment to the sensations.⁵ He is ignorant, not knowing their true nature and hence is unable to have a dispassionate attitude towards them. He makes every effort to repel the cause of his pain. He does so because of the latent tendency of repugnance (*pajigh±nusaya*) so deeply rooted in him. He fails to understand that this tendency (*anusaya*) is a defilement. Instead, he multiplies and perpetuates it. He is carried away by this *anusaya* and continues to flow with it.⁶

Even while striving to get over the unpleasant sensation, he indulges himself in craving for imaginary situations where there is no unpleasant sensation whatsoever. He starts enjoying this imaginary state and thereby develops lust for it. What a pity that an ignorant person though distressed by his unpleasant sensation also delights in and craves for the sensual desire (*k±masukha*)

that he has created in his mind.⁷ Why can he not maintain a balanced, dispassionate state of mind when experiencing an unpleasant sensation? He is unable to do so because he becomes attached to the sensation and is overpowered by it. Out of ignorance, he does not comprehend the true transitory nature (*anicca*) of the sensation. He does not realise its arising (*samudaya*), its passing away (*attha^agama*), the relishing of it (*ass±da*), the danger in it (*±d²nava*) or the escape from it (*nissara^oa*). He is further unaware of his *anusaya* (tendency of repugnance) which he, out of ignorance, is also multiplying. Such an ignorant person is not only attached to the unpleasant sensation, he is also bound up with all types of sensations, and therefore, with all the miseries in the world—birth, decay and death, and so on.⁸

When a pleasant contact arises in the body, an ignorant person experiences it as pleasant, as it apparently is. Not comprehending its true nature, he becomes involved and attached and starts taking pleasure in it.⁹ He does not understand that the pleasant sensation that has arisen due to bodily contact is transitory, ephemeral, impermanent, and sooner or later is bound to pass away. Being ignorant of it, he tends to develop craving for its continuance. He is also unaware of his dormant tendency of lust (*r±g±nusaya*), the deep-rooted defilement in him. Because of his attachment,¹⁰ he keeps increasing his craving and continues to flow with it.¹¹ Not understanding the true nature of a pleasant sensation as it really is—the arising of it (*samudaya*), the passing away of it (*attha^agama*), the relishing of it (*ass±da*), the danger in it (*±d²nava*) or the escape from it (*nissara^oa*)—he is attached to it, and thus, is subject to lamentation and sorrow.

There arise situations in which an ordinary person experiences neither pleasant nor unpleasant sensations (*adukkhamasukh± vedan±*) and is delighted and satisfied with this. Such an attitude indicates his *avijj±* (ignorance),

as he does not know that this experience is also transitory, ephemeral and still within the sphere of *n±ma-r³pa* (mind and matter). Being unaware of the dormant tendency of ignorance (*avijj±nusaya*) within him, he acts in such a way as to multiply it, and continues to flow with it. He is deluded¹² and therefore falls into despair and becomes unhappy.

Both an ordinary person and a well-trained Vipassana meditator, who has reached the stage of saintliness, can experience the same sensations in the body. But there is a vast difference in their comprehension and outlook. As stated above, since a *puthujjana* (ignorant person) is the victim of the *anusayas* (dormant tendencies), he immediately starts reacting blindly when he experiences any sensation arising in the body. Being unaware of the true nature of these sensations, he remains attached (*sa½yutta*) to them. In contrast, an *ariyas±vaka* (noble disciple) practises by minutely observing the impermanence of the sensations (*anicc±nupass² viharati*), their passing away (*vay±nupass² viharati*). He does not cling to them (*vir±g±nupass² viharati*), he observes the ceasing of them (*nirodh±nupass² viharati*), and thus, emerges from them (*pajinissagg±nupass² viharati*).¹³ In this way, he eradicates all the latent tendencies (*anusaya*) which can no longer defile him. When he experiences an unpleasant sensation, he is not disturbed by it. He observes it as a wound on his body, (*sallato*), keeps a dispassionate attitude towards it and remains unattached to it.¹⁴ He maintains a balanced state of mind and is not disturbed mentally.¹⁵

Further, if he experiences a pleasant sensation, he does not take any pleasure in it. He fully understands its true nature of *anicca*, and so develops no lust for it, which would eventually lead to misery. Thus he keeps himself detached from the sensations.¹⁶ He knows correctly that sooner or later they will pass away. He has no tendency towards lust (*r±g±nusaya*) in him. When he experiences a neutral sensation of peace and tranquillity of mind, he does not get deluded by it. Rather, he keeps himself detached. A developed Vipassana student fully understands that this tranquil and peaceful state of mind is not the final stage. It too is impermanent (*anicca*) and, like the other sensations, is in the field of *n±ma-r³pa*. He does not take any delight in it and keeps a balanced, dispassionate state of mind. He is always mindful and attentive (*sato*) and keeps a constant understanding of *anicca* (*sampaj±no*) towards his sensations. Since his *avijj±nusaya* (tendency of ignorance) is destroyed, he truly knows the arising (*samudaya*) and passing away of it (*attha±gama*), the relishing of it (*ass±da*), danger in it (*±d²nava*) and the escape (*nissara±a*) from the sensations, it is said—

*Sam±hito sampaj±no, sato Buddhassa s±vako;
vedan± ca paj±n±ti, vedan±nañca sambhava½.
Yattha cet± nirujjhanti, maggañca khayag±mina½;
vedan±na½ khay± bhikkhu, nicch±to parinibbuto ±ti.*¹⁷

A follower of the Buddha, with concentration, awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, knows with wisdom the sensations, their arising, their cessation and the path leading to their end. A meditator who has reached the end (has experienced the entire range) of sensations (and has gone beyond) is freed from craving, fully liberated.

This is the main aim of Vipassana and the ultimate purpose of this practice. This is the consummation of *brahmacariya* (The Path of Truth). The Buddha praises a well-trained practitioner who has perfectly understood the true nature of sensations and is not attached to them. He says—

*Na vedana½ vedayati sapañño,
sukha½ pi dukkha½ pi bahussuto pi;
aya½ ca, dh²rassa puthujjanena,
mah± viseso kusalassa hoti.
Sa±kh±tadhammassa bahussutassa,
vipassato lokamima½ para½ ca;
ijj±hassa dhamm± na mathenti citta½,
anijj±hato na pajigh±tameti.*¹⁸

A wise, well-trained practitioner is not afflicted (mentally) either experiencing a pleasant or unpleasant sensation (or otherwise). This is the vast difference between an ordinary person and a skilful, wise person (*pa±ita*). For he who has mastered the Truth, is well-trained and has correctly viewed this world and beyond, neither desirable things churn in his mind, nor do undesirable ones harm him.

The practice of Vipassana is fulfilled only when a practitioner comes to realise perfectly the true transitory nature of sensations and remains ever mindful (*sato*) with constant thorough understanding (*sampaj±no*) of them. This is the ultimate aim of Vipassana and this is the crux of the practice.

Notes

(All references: VRI edition)

1. *Sa½yutta Nik±ya* 2.4.260
2. Ibid. 2.4.252, *Sar²rik±ya vedan±ya*. Also Ibid. 2.4.258, *Vedan± phassaj± phassam³lak±, phassanid±n±, phassapaccay±*.
3. Ibid. 2.4.254, *Sammoha½ ±pajjati*.
4. Ibid. 2.4.254, *So dvisallena vedana½ vedayati... So dve vedan± vedayati k±yika½ ca cetasika½ ca*.
5. Loc. cit., *Saññutto hoti*.
6. Loc. cit., *Dukkha±ya vedan±ya pajighavanta½, yo dukkha±ya vedan±ya pajigh±nusayo so anuseti*.
7. Loc. cit., *So dukkha±ya vedan±ya phujj±ho sam±no k±masukha½ abhinandati*.
8. Loc. cit., *Dukkha½ ce vedana½ vedayati saññutto na½ vedayati. Assutav± puthujjano saññutto j±tiy± jar±ya mara±ena sokehi...*
9. Loc. cit., *Saññutta hoti... abhinandati*.
10. Loc. cit., *Sukha½ ce vedana½, vedayati, saññutto na½ vedayati*.
11. Loc. cit., *Yo sukha±ya vedan±ya r±g±nusayo, so anuseti*.
12. Ibid. 2.4.252, *Sammoha½ ±pajjati*.
13. *Sa½yutta Nik±ya* 2.4.255-256, *Pajhamagelañña-Sutta* and *Dutiya-gelañña-Sutta*.
14. Ibid. 2.4.254, *visaññutto na½ vedayati*.
15. Ibid. 2.4.254, *K±yika½ vedayati na cetasika½*.
16. Ibid. 2.4.254, *visaññutto na½ vedayati*.
17. Ibid. 2.4.249
18. Ibid. 2.4.254

Grand Vipassana Pagoda

It is a joy to inform all Vipassana meditators that the foundation work for the Grand Vipassana Pagoda has been completed. Goenkaji undertook this historic project to commemorate the memory of his beloved teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

The Pagoda will include a hall that will seat thousands of meditators and an information gallery surrounding the hall. The gallery will use the latest technology to explain the historical truths about the Buddha and his universal, non-sectarian teaching.

The stone construction will ensure that the Pagoda has a life of centuries with minimum maintenance. Thus, this magnificent project will play an important role in keeping the practice of Vipassana in its pristine purity for centuries to come.

The foundation of this 325-foot tall structure is as high as a three-storey building. At many places, it is twenty feet wide and more than nine hundred feet long! Three thousand truckloads of stone and one thousand truckloads of sand have been used in the foundation. Forty thousand man-hours have gone into the work so far.

Though the need for such a structure was apparent to all even at the time of its conception, the immensity of the project and the huge resources required had made it a daunting task. The completion of this massive first stage has provided a fresh enthusiasm and renewed impetus to continue the work on this majestic structure.

The next step of construction up to the *parikrama* (circumambulation) level has already begun. This important stage of constructing the walls of the enclosed meditation hall will take the height of the Pagoda to about thirty-five feet. The estimated cost is Rs. 11 crore.

This is a wonderful opportunity for meditators to participate in this meritorious and historic work.

One may want to contribute depending on one's financial situation with the volition: "Let me share the merits of this work by contributing even one stone (of the meditation hall or pagoda) or one brick (of the display gallery) to the pagoda."

The approximate cost of providing space for one meditator is about Rs. 10,000. One may wish to earn the merits of providing facilities for *one meditator for centuries* to come by contributing Rs. 10,000, or in multiples of Rs. 10,000 to provide facilities for more meditators. The contribution can be paid in equal instalments for 10 months. This contribution is entitled to deduction under Section 80-G of the Income Tax Act.

The donation may be sent as cheque or demand draft drawn on Global Vipassana Foundation, Bank of India, Account No. 11244, Mumbai to:

Global Vipassana Foundation,
C/o Khimjee Kunverjee,
52, Bombay Mutual Bldg.,
P. M. Road, Mumbai 400 001

Dhamma News

Sayagyi U Ba Khin Village: In the benevolent shadow of *Dhamma Giri*, the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Village is gradually taking shape. This village will provide meditators a unique opportunity to reside in a Dhamma atmosphere. Twenty-one bungalows have already been booked, which are expected to be ready for occupation by the end of December 2001. Work has started on a new scheme of one- and two-room flats with kitchen.

Dhamma Tapovana: The second phase of construction has been completed at the first centre dedicated exclusively for long courses. Forty new accommodation blocks and fifty new meditation cells have been built, taking the total number of rooms to 102 and the total number of cells in the pagoda to 150. The dining hall has been extended and construction of roads and of a large water tank have been completed. Gardening and landscaping are also in progress. Preparations are in full swing for the first 60-day course from 2 January to 4 March 2002.

Goenkaji's Discourses on Television: Goenkaji's discourses in Hindi are being broadcast on Aastha TV channel daily at 5:00 p.m.

Nashik Vipassana Meditation Centre: The Nashik Municipal Corporation has given a secluded plot of land for development of a Vipassana centre in the city. The land was formally handed over to the Nashik Vipassana Trust by the elected representatives of Nashik and the municipal commissioner at a simple public function.

Goenkaji has given many public talks in Nashik. He has also conducted non-centre courses here in the early days of Vipassana. He has named the centre *Dhamma N±sik±* (the nose of Dhamma).

The eleven-acre triangular plot is situated on a high piece of land and protected on all sides. On one side is a proposed 100-foot road, on one side forested land and on the remaining side the boundary of the municipal area. This site is away from the hustle and bustle of the city and yet within convenient distance. Construction work will begin immediately. The plan is to organize ten-day courses here within a year.

Nashik has a large population of Vipassana meditators and because courses at *Dhamma Giri* are always full, there is a demand for more centres in this area. The Nashik Vipassana centre will help to meet this need.

North India Regional Vipassana Conference: The third North India Regional Vipassana Conference will be held by Vipassana Sadhana Sansthan from 26 October (2:00 p.m.) to 28 October (5:00 p.m.) at Logicstatic Farm, Opposite Radha Soami Satsang Phase IV, Village Bhatti, Chattarpur Temple Road, New Delhi-110 030. Tel: (011) 6653178. Teachers, assistant teachers, trustees, children course teachers, Dhamma servers and meditators from Vipassana centres in North India are welcome to attend the conference.

NEW TELEPHONE AND FAX NUMBERS OF DHAMMA GIRI:
The telephone and fax numbers of *Dhamma Giri* have changed. The new numbers are:
Tel: [91] (02553) 44076, 44086; Fax: (02553) 44186

HATRED IS NEVER APPEASED BY HATRED

(Message from Goenkaji)

The recent tragedy in New York and Washington has shaken us all. We grieve for all the victims of this tragedy. And we grieve for all those innocent people who now live in the shadow of fear in the aftermath of this tragedy.

When there is darkness, light is needed.

This horrifying act has brought to our attention the dark side of the modern age. It has also put to the test our courage to face this tragic situation. I am sure that each Vipassana mediator must have generated love and compassion for all the victims of this tragedy. We wish that the perpetrators come to their senses and not repeat such crimes. We condemn the crime but have only compassion for the perpetrators. We understand the Universal Law of Nature, as taught by Buddha, "Hatred does not cease by hatred; by love alone it ceases. This is an eternal law." This law has nothing to do with Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Judaism, Sikhism or any other "ism". All peace-loving people understand this. And who doesn't want peace? When millions around the world greet each other with "*Salaam walekum*—May peace be with you" they do so with the same love for peace. My teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, used to say, "Purity of mind is the greatest common denominator of all religions." No one with a pure mind can indulge in such dastardly acts.

It will be another great tragedy if this incident creates sweeping aversion against a particular community. Criminals are always very few compared to the common people of a particular society. Dhamma does not preach to blame those who are innocent. Division of human society into the compartments of religion is against Dhamma. Dhamma never divides; it unites. This is the time for us to express solidarity with innumerable peace-loving Muslims and Arabs. The Buddha used to say that all good and bad qualities are found in all the classes of society. Let us remember that. Let not the cowardly act of a few affect our perception of an entire faith. Let us be peaceful in this hour of crisis. "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God"!

We know that all such acts are the product of hatred and ignorance. Therefore let us work towards removing these from everyone's minds. Let us all meditate together and practise loving kindness for all the victims of the recent tragedy in New York and Washington and for all the people of the world.

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Question: A magnificent pagoda has been built at *Dhamma Giri*. What connection does it have with our practice of Vipassana?

Goenkaji: Well, the decoration on the pagoda is like the decoration on a cake. It is the taste of the cake that is important, not merely its decoration. So the pagoda is important for the Vipassana meditators who meditate in the cells. The decoration of the pagoda is a demonstration of gratitude. When Dhamma went from this country to neighbouring countries, the people there adopted Indian architecture as a way of remembering that this Dhamma came from India, the land of the Buddha. To this day people have so much respect and gratitude towards India because of this. When Dhamma went to Myanmar the original stupas built there were in the Sanchi style found near here, though later on different decorations evolved.

Similarly now, after twenty centuries Dhamma has returned from Myanmar. It is fitting that people here should understand this and generate feelings of gratitude towards Myanmar. Myanmar is such a wonderful Dhamma country; it maintained the purity of the technique. So all this architectural design is to remind people that the Vipassana technique comes to them from Myanmar and this is the reason why they're able to benefit from it.

Question: But one danger envisaged in this is that the pagoda is so beautiful that it might linger in our minds while meditating.

Goenkaji: Well, it is beautiful because Dhamma is beautiful. It is a symbol of Dhamma. If it comes in your mind while meditating it will teach you the meaning behind the symbol: *anicca, anicca, anicca*; changing, changing, changing.

(21 January 1995, Annual Meeting: *Dhamma Giri*)

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

ආචාර්ය

Mr Volker Bochmann & Mrs Doris Herrmann
To serve Dhamma Pad'pa (Western Australia)

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. Mr Om Prakash Sharma, *Ajmer*
2. Mr Bhanwar Singh Sahwal, *Ajmer*
3. Mr Prabhu Dayal Songara, *Jodhpur*
4. Mrs Manju Vaish, *Delhi*

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