

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*vassik± viya pupph±ni
maddav±ni pamuñcati
eva½ r±gañca dosañca
vipamuñcetha bhikkhavo.*

—Dhammapada 377

As the jasmine (*vassikā*) plant sheds its withered flowers, even so, O bhikkhus, should you totally cast off lust and hatred.

SAMPAJAÑÑA

by Vipassana Research Institute

(The following is an extract from *The Importance of Vedan± and Sampajañña* published by Vipassana Research Institute.)

There are several technical terms in Pali which are of significance both in the field of *pariyatti* (theory) and *pajipatti* (practice). One such word is *sampajaññasampajañña*.

This term often occurs along with *satisati* in the expressions such as *sati sampajañña½*, or *sato ca sampaj±no*, or *sato sampaj±no*. As a result, it has been widely interpreted as an exhortation to be mindful, and has been defined as being nearly synonymous with *sato*¹ (awareness), merely indicating a greater intensity of awareness. However, the texts of the *Abhidhamma Piṭaka* suggest a different rendering of this word. In the *Dhammasa^aga^o*, *Vibha^aga* and *Dh±tukhath±* we find the following definition of *sampaj±no*—

Sampaj±no ti tattha katama½ sampajañña½? Ya paññ± paj±nan± vicayo pavicayo dhammavicayo sallalakkha^o± upalakkha^o± paccupalakkha^oa pa^o±icca½ kosalla½ nepuñña½ vebhabya cint± upaparikkh± bh³r² medh± pari^o±yik± vipassan± sampajañña½... samm±dijjhi—ida½ vuccati sampajañña½.²

What is *sampajañña*? That which is wisdom, understanding, investigation, deep investigation, truth investigation, discernment, discrimination, differentiation, erudition, proficiency, skill, analysis, consideration, close examination, breadth, sagacity, guidance, insight, thorough understanding of impermanence,... right view—this is called *sampajañña*.

This plethora of nouns and metaphors clearly convey that *sampajañña* is not awareness but wisdom. This definition is confirmed by the etymology of the word, formed by the addition of the prefix 'sa½'³ to 'paj±nan±',⁴ 'knowing with wisdomknowing with wisdom'. Rather it refers to an intensified kind of understanding—knowing correctly with wisdom or knowing in totality with thorough understanding. The exhortation of the Buddha is

to develop not simply awareness but also wisdom. That is why the text states—

*Sampajañña½ ti paññ±. sampajañña½ ti paññ±
Sampajañña is wisdom.*

The commentaries explain more precisely what *sampajañña* consists of—

Samm± pak±rehi anicc±d²ni j±n±t² ti sampajañña½.⁵

One who knows impermanence in a right way (as well as suffering and egolessness), has wisdom, *sampajañña*.

Samantato pak±rehi pakajjha½ v± savisesa½ j±n±t² ti sampaj±no.⁶

One who understands the totality clearly with wisdom from all angles (of whatever is happening moment to moment), or who knows distinctly (the ultimate), has *sampajañña*.

The Buddha always taught that wisdom (*paññ±*) is knowing things from different angles in the correct way. He used these descriptions—*samm± pak±rehi j±nana½* (seeing from different perspectivesseeing from different perspectives in totality); *samantato pak±rehi-j±nana½* (having a complete and correct picture, so that nothing is left unseen and unknown);

Samm±, samantato, s±mañca paj±nanto sampaj±no.⁷

One who knows in a right way in totality through one's wisdom is *sampaj±no*.

In particular, as meditators we must see not only the superficial, external appearances of things, that is, the apparent truth (*sammuti saccasammuti sacca*), but also the ultimate (*paramattha saccaparamattha sacca*) or subtle understanding of reality. The apparent truth about the world and ourselves is that we exist as individual separate entities, but the ultimate truthultimate truth is that every moment, everything, both the world as well as ourselves, is in constant fluxconstant flux. This fact of impermanence has to be realized on the basis of experience, not merely at the intellectual level. It is only when we experience this reality of arising and passing away that we emerge from suffering (*dukkha*) and egotism (*att±*). This is what

sampajañña enables us to do.

Therefore, for a meditator, *sampajañña* is complete understanding. It is insight into all aspects of the human phenomenon, mental as well as physical. One must understand that whenever the mind encounters an object, it perceives and evaluates it in a distorted way through the coloured lens of past conditioning; it therefore reacts with ignorance, craving or aversion. This is the process that produces suffering because wisdom is lacking.

Mind is reflected in the body and it is through its physical manifestation that we can clearly grasp its nature of arising and passing away. This is why we find in the *Mahāsatipajjhāna Suttamahāsatipajjhāna sutta* that the paragraph on *sampajañña* is contained in the section on the observation of body (*kāyānupassanā*). To realize the fact of impermanence of our bodily activities, we must experience them at the level of sensations (*vedanā*) felt within the body. At a deep intuitive level these enable us to recognize our ephemeral nature our ephemeral nature.

Thus, *sampajañña* is the realisation of our own ephemeral nature at the deepest level. Far from being the equivalent of *sati*, it is the complement of *sati*.

The uniting of these two faculties is *satipajjhāna*, the establishing of awareness, by means of which we can reach the goal of freedom from suffering. 🌸

Notes: (All references VRI edition)

1. For examples see *Pali-English Dictionary*, ed. T. W. Rhys Davids, Pali Text Society London, 1925, entries for *sampajañña* and *sampajāno*
2. *Dhammasaṅgāyī*, 1359; *Vibhaṅga* 360; *Puggalapaññatti*, 80
3. See *A Dictionary of the Pali Language*, ed. R. C. Childers, Kegan Paul Ltd. London, 1909, p. 423, under entry for *sam*
4. *pa + jānana = pajānana*—know with wisdom
5. *Dhammasaṅgāyī Aṅgahakathā*, 16, *Kāyānupassanāvacarakusala-bhāṅgajāmiya* 1/2; *Pajjāsamābhidaṅga Aṅgahakathā*, 1.1.108 - 9
6. *Dīgha Nikāya Yīk* 2.373

TWENTY IN, TWENTY OUT, TWENTY STRONG

Along with two other men, old students, I had the good fortune to serve on the recent ten-day Vipassana course at the Donaldson maximum-security prison in Alabama. It was one of the most moving and inspiring events of my life. It was certainly a challenge for the twenty students and everyone involved. But at the end of the course, an inmate commented, "Twenty in, twenty out, twenty strong!"

Donaldson is the end of the line in the Alabama State Department of Corrections, a system in the news last summer as underfunded, understaffed and overcrowded. That a ten-day Vipassana course was held at this facility, in the buckle of the Bible belt, is astonishing in itself. Donaldson is a very dangerous place, a dumping ground for the most troublesome prisoners. Before the course started we had a security briefing during which we were instructed on how to handle ourselves should we be taken hostage. During our stay we were repeatedly reminded, "Always remember where you are; they're nice guys but they'll kill you." Not a comforting thought; however, we naively felt safe in our meditation haven. At times, the dichotomy of the situation seemed almost surreal: three of us, locked down in the middle of this hell realm, assisting in bringing the lofty teaching of Dhamma to these needy

and deeply suffering human beings. We sometimes laughed at the irony of the situation, yet we were keenly aware of its serious nature.

We were also aware that this was perhaps the first time ever that "free civilians" had entered a maximum-security prison and been locked down with the inmates for such a long period of time. It was a commendable and courageous decision on the part of the warden that allowed this to happen.

Our sleeping quarters were in a guard tower directly above the gym where the course was held. We slept on mattresses on the concrete floor. There was an open toilet and sink, which provided the basic requirements but little privacy. Each night the correctional officer (the CO or guard) locked us down, separating us from the inmate-students.

On day one, during the routine afternoon head count, which occurred in the middle of the 2:30 to 3:30 group sitting, an announcement crackled over the COs' radios: "West gym reporting. Head count 20 and all meditating." One can imagine the speculation and interest this created in the rough prison environment. We learned that bets had been made about how many would complete these ten arduous days. Very few, if any, would have predicted "twenty in, twenty out, twenty strong." Our students, certainly not inmates in our eyes, were an inspiration not only to us but also to the COs and the administration of the prison. The COs especially were dumbfounded by what was going on before them. Their respect and admiration for their captives soared as the days passed, and they soon became protective allies. On several occasions, they reprimanded inmates and fellow officers also, for intruding into our students' silent Dhamma bubble. They were also intrigued by the delicious vegetarian food we were serving the inmates—this prison serves no milk, bread, fresh vegetables or fruit, and breakfast is from 2:00 to 3:00 a.m. The first indication of the effect of the course came when the COs began to serve themselves food and sit down at the same tables and eat with the inmates—an unheard-of situation in such a hostile environment. When the weather turned cold, COs scrambled to find cardboard to block a drafty vent close to the students' beds. These bulky men, who had no doubt in the past used force on some of these inmates, were now serving them with such touching thoughtfulness. Other effects of the course must have rippled throughout the facility in ways that we shall never know.

As the course settled down and gained momentum, the strong and positive vibrations being created became powerfully tangible. Our students bravely faced their personal demons. For ten to twelve hours each day, Vipassana took these earnest meditators deep into their subconscious minds where all inherent misery lies. One can only guess how difficult it was for them to face their past and present predicaments. We were unsure whether one student, who concerned us deeply, would stick with it for the duration. He was clearly "shut down", his face stiff and expressionless, his surly body language mimicking a caged animal. Our numerous efforts to encourage him and win his confidence were rebuffed with almost inaudible murmurs. This went on for days and finally, as often happens, the breakthrough came: a smile—the

acknowledgment that he was now working deeply within—and a change in his posture. We felt relieved and joyous at his progress. Soon after silence was broken, this student spoke openly of his disturbed and violent past. It was a significant step in turning the tide of misery that had haunted him for so many years.

The efforts of these men were truly amazing as they battled the storms that inevitably arise during this deep process. Some correction officials have called Vipassana courses a mental boot camp; others have likened them to a mental detoxification. It is no small feat to complete the full ten days. Yet, in spite of enormous difficulties, caused partly by the inadequate conditions—one shower, two toilets, and a sink—the students hung in with determination and tenacity. It was obvious that suffering is a silent and constant companion in these men's lives and clearly their awareness of it was a strong motivating factor. Sometimes we urged them to back off and work less intensely. One of the more seemingly unlikely students had spent 31 of his last 35 years in prison and had endured numerous stabbings and beatings during his violent life. Yet this man took to meditation like the proverbial duck to water. Even during break periods he could be seen sitting in the makeshift meditation hall, moment by moment observing the realities that arose within. Part way through the course he grinned his toothless grin and proclaimed: "If it gets any better, I won't be able to stand it!"

At last, when it came time for the graduation ceremony (done only in prison and jail courses), there was apprehension about what these student-inmates might say. By now they were extremely joyous and excited at their own achievement. These are men who are much more familiar with the gloom of failure than the dizzy elation of success. Our concern was that, in their excitement, they would be inappropriately "over the top." But once again these guys came through. Each one of them rose to his feet and articulately told his story with heartfelt respect and thankfulness. Among the students were three imams (prayer leaders) of various Muslim traditions, as well as two devoted Gospel and Baptist followers. All spoke of how Vipassana had helped them gain a deeper and more meaningful perspective of their own religion. One man, who for much of the course had struggled with a deep fear that his anger would one day again overpower him and land him back in prison, turned to us with tears pouring down his face. His words were few, but the sense of remorse for his past actions, hope for the future, and gratitude for this teaching of Dhamma, were infinitely moving.

Just as *ehi-passiko* (come and see) works in the "free world," it also works in the prison environment. As the (now old) students moved back into the prison population, word of this transforming experience soon spread. As a

result, 24 inmates have now signed up for the next course. The prison administration made it clear that they had made no announcements nor coaxed anyone into applying. COs and the warden have also indicated their desire to participate in a course.

The Donaldson administration has continued to support these men's efforts by setting aside two times each day when the students can go to a designated room for group sittings. Every Sunday, when the prison is quiet, they meditate continuously for three hours, starting at 5:30 a.m.

(Goenkaji visited the facility on 16th May 2002 on the last day of the second course there, during his *Meditation Now—Inner Peace through Inner Wisdom* tour.) ♦

GRATITUDE TO VIPASSANA

I sat my first Vipassana course in 1989 after my sister came to visit. The change in her behaviour and attitude was so dramatic after her first course that I decided to go. Three weeks after I returned home from my course, my husband decided to sit one as well.

Vipassana has changed everything about my life for the better but the most dramatic example came in 1995 when I had an accident in the mountains. I fell about 200 feet down a steep rocky slope where I was stranded, unable to move and in great pain for over 24 hours. I was with a friend who cared for me overnight and then she hiked out and sent a helicopter to take me to hospital. I was left without the use of my arms or legs for many months and only gradually learned to walk again. I still have some physical difficulties, not least of which is sitting for any length of time and that has meant I do not sit regular courses very often.

Ten months later I was quite well recovered when my car was run off the road by a drunk driver. I again found myself in hospital and in a wheelchair for a time. Eventually I regained partial recovery of my physical body. I had premonitions of a sort before both accidents and knew that something was wrong. Yet I was unable to avoid either accident. Even though the physical difficulties have been great and are with me every day, the experience on the whole was of profound benefit to me.

I want to express my deepest gratitude to Goenkaji and to all my teachers and my sister for bringing Vipassana into my life. Vipassana was a lifeline for me during the entire experience and continues to give me the strength to deal with life in a more balanced way. During the first few weeks of my hospital care I was unable to do anything but meditate all of my waking hours. Mostly it was Anapana but I was somehow focussed on my deep internal self. I do believe that it was what kept me alive. Without Vipassana I am certain I would not have been able to face my destiny in such a way. Everyday, no matter how or when I am sitting, Vipassana is with me. I am forever grateful. ♦

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IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT: Vipassana Newsletter or Patrika is being sent to all new students in India free of charge as a special privilege. If you wish to continue receiving privilege copies of the Newsletter in 2003, you are requested to cut this portion and send it, along with the pasted label on the reverse, to VRI, Patrika Section, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403. Otherwise, it will be assumed that you do not wish to receive the Newsletter and further copies will not be sent. You can also choose to become a lifetime or annual subscriber of the Vipassana Newsletter.
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VIPASSANA WORKSHOPS

The following workshops have been organized in 2003:

Dhamma Tapovana, Igatpuri

AT Workshop: 20 April to 1 May

Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma Workers: 2 to 7 May

CCT Workshop: 8 to 11 May

Dharmashāga, Nepal Vipassana Centre, Kathmandu:

"Ghar Ghar mein Pali" Workshop: 1 to 11 October 2003 -

Workshop for Assistant Teachers: 12 to 16 October

Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma workers: 17 to 19

October. (These workshops will start at 8:00 p.m. on the first day and end at 11: 00 a.m. on the last day.)

Logicstat Farmhouse, Delhi

'Value Inculcation Through Vipassana' workshop: 15 to 29 May

Workshop for Assistant Teachers: 21 to 26 October

Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma workers: 21 to 26 October

Dhamma Lakkhaṇa, Lucknow (U.P.)

'Value Inculcation Through Vipassana' workshop for school teachers: 13 June (8:00 a.m.) to 27 June (7:00 a.m.).

Dhamma Khetta, Hyderabad (A.P.)

Children course Workshop: 11 to 18 May.

VIDEO AND AUDIO CDs

Audio CDs: The following audio and video CDs are available at VRI, *Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri:

10-day course morning chanting (set of 5 CDs): Rs 250.00,

10-day course dohas (set of 10 CDs): Rs 500.00 and

Chennai Group Sitting CD: Rs 50.00

Dubai Group Sitting CD: Rs 50.00

Tikapajjhāna chanting by Sayagyi U Ba Khin CD: Rs 50.00

Video CDs:

Hindi discourses (set of 22 VCDs): Rs 1000.00

Pilgrimage to Dhamma Land of Myanmar VCD: Rs 100.00

(*video documentary of Myanmar yatra by Karuna Films*)

Islands of Dhamma: Rs 100.00

(*video documentary of Vipassana centers around the world by Karuna Films*)

GOENKAJI'S DISCOURSES ON TELEVISION

Goenkaji's discourses in Hindi are being broadcast on **Aastha** TV channel daily from 10:00 to 10:20 a.m. and 3:00 to 3:20 a.m.

VIPASSANA CENTRE IN NASHIK

The construction of *Dhamma Nṛsika* has begun on 11 acres of land given by the Nashik Municipal Corporation. The centre, surrounded by verdant woods and farms, is located on a beautiful hill adjacent to the Shivaji Nagar Water Purification Plant in Satpur. Though on the outskirts of the city, it is easily accessible by road.

Dhamma Nṛsika will host the first one-day course for old students in February 2003.

The first phase of construction includes Dhamma Hall, residences for Assistant Teachers as well as male and female students, administrative block, dining hall and kitchen. The estimated cost for the creation of facilities for 100 students is about Rs 1.35 crore. This includes infrastructure costs—roads, water tanks, plantation and land scaping, and other facilities.

Vipassana meditators wishing to share the merits of this noble endeavor may contact Nashik Vipassana Centre, C/o 1. Mr Shraavan Kumar Agarwal, 'Upvan Bungalow', 28, Sharda Nagar, Gangapur Road, Nashik-422 005. Tel: 0253-2357908. 2. Mr Om Prakash Shirsath, Tel: 0253-2312284.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

SENIOR ASSISTANT TEACHERS

Mrs Maria Claxton, *Australia*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

ASSISTANT TEACHERS

1. & 2. Mr Dinanath & Mrs Lata Dalvi, *Mumbai*

3. & 4. Mr Sharat & Mrs Sudha Jain, *USA*

5. & 6. Mr Carl Franz & Mrs Lorena Havens, *USA*

7. Mr James O'Donovan, *Ireland* 8. Ms Robin Russ, *USA*

9. Ms Carole Anne Potter, *USA* 10. Ms Benelle Reeble, *USA*

CHILDREN COURSE TEACHERS:

1. Mr Datta Kohinkar, *Pune* 2. Dr Janakisharan Agarwal,

Ghaziabad 3. Mr Milind Khobragade, *Jabalpur* 4. Mrs Anita

Ramteke, *Bhopal* 5. Mrs Sudha Bhutda, *Bhopal* 6. Dr (Mrs)

Beena Muktesh, *Delhi* 7. Mr Indrajit Verma, *Delhi* 8. Mr

Suresh Laxman Gaikwad, *Wada* 9. Mr Chandrakant Misal,

Wada 10. & 11. Mr Sunil & Mrs Dolly Tamrakar, *Indore*

12. Mr Ole Bosch, *South Africa* 13. Mr Gal Mayroz, *Israel*

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