

# Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

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## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*anāvassutacittassa  
ananvāhatacetaso  
puññapāpaphīnassa  
natthi jāgarato bhayaṃ.*

—Dhammapada 39

One whose mind is not soaked by lust,  
One who is not affected by hatred,  
One who has transcended both good and evil—  
for such a vigilant one there is no fear.

## Buddha: The Super-Scientist of Peace

by S. N. Goenka

*(This address by S. N. Goenka was delivered at the United Nations on the occasion of Vesakha, the full moon day of May, which is celebrated each year as the day marking the birth, the enlightenment and the passing away of Gotama the Buddha. In 2002, Goenkaji was touring North America during the month of Vesakha, teaching Dhamma and giving public addresses in 35 cities over a period of nearly four months.)*

Venerable monks and peace-loving friends:

I thank the United Nations and the organizers of this magnificent *Vesakha* celebration, especially the Myanmar and Sri Lankan delegations, for the opportunity offered to me to address this distinguished gathering.

One feels so sorry when one looks at what is happening in the world. Man has become the enemy of man. There is no personal enmity; people are being killed only because they belong to a particular sect or community, a particular ethnic group or country. Such is the level of cruelty that a person kills other human beings even if they are innocent, even if they are helpless women and children. Modern technology makes this tragic violence terrifyingly devastating—perhaps worse than ever before in human history. Therefore, more than ever before, a basic change is needed today to protect humanity from these inhuman, heinous crimes arising out of negative emotions.

The world is afflicted with the malady of hatred, anxiety and fear. It needs a remedy from an extraordinary physician. The Buddha was such an extraordinary physician, a great physician of peace and happiness. His teaching of peace and harmony is as

relevant today as it was twenty-six centuries back, when he set in motion the Wheel of Dhamma, the Wheel of Peace. Indeed, it is much more relevant today. We have gathered here this afternoon to honor the teaching of this outstanding person in human history. Let us see how his teaching eliminates the negative emotions that are at the root of cruel violence, and how these can be changed to positive compassion. Most of the time, blind belief and strong attachment to one's views cause negativity, which in turn produces such atrocities.

I came in contact with the Buddha's teaching when I took my first Vipassana course in my motherland of Myanmar. I remember that before the course started, my teacher gave me a booklet to read. It began with a quotation from a discourse of the Buddha to the Kālāmas.

The Buddha advises:

Don't accept something:

- because you have heard it many times;
- because it has been believed traditionally for generations;
- because it is believed by a large number of people;
- because it is in accordance with your scriptures;
- because it seems logical;
- because it is in line with your own beliefs;
- because it is proclaimed by your teacher, who has an attractive personality and for whom you have great respect.

Accept it only after you have realized it yourself at the experiential level and have found it to be wholesome and beneficial to one and all. Then, not only accept it but also live up to it.

This message was like a magnetic pull. I was born and brought up in a different tradition, where I was taught to accept the words of the scriptures and the teacher without asking any questions. At the age of thirty-one, these were the very first words of the Buddha that I came across. I was thrilled to read them.

This was perhaps the first charter of freedom of thought in human history. It became clear to me that there is no scope for blind belief or blind faith in the teaching of the Enlightened One. I decided to give it a fair trial with an open mind, accepting the truth as I experienced it. As I walked on the path, the experience of each day convinced me that the path is rational, pragmatic and scientific. There is no need for any blind acceptance. There were no doubts, as I was told to accept a truth only after I had experienced it. I also found that every step on the path is universal and non-sectarian. This gave me great confidence.

At the end of the ten-day course, I found the teaching to be completely results-oriented. It proved so beneficial to me physically, mentally and spiritually. Therefore, at the end of the first course I accepted it wholeheartedly and thereafter, I continued to walk on the path as taught by the Enlightened One.

After about fifteen years, I was authorized by my teacher to teach Vipassana courses in India and throughout the world. Hundreds of thousands of people from different countries, belonging to different sects and various traditions, have achieved the same good results. The teaching attracts people from all walks of life because they find that it is totally non-sectarian and results-oriented.

### The Teaching: The Dhamma

The qualities of the path given by the Buddha are:

1. *Svākkhāto*—It is simple and well-defined so that anyone can practice it without any confusion in the mind.
2. *Sanditthiko*—Every step is based on the reality of this moment. There is no imagination, no speculation, no auto-suggestion or outer suggestion.
3. *Akāliko*—Every step gives wholesome results here and now in this very life. No effort on the path goes waste.
4. *Ehi-passiko*—The teaching invites you to come and see for yourself, to experience the truth yourself.
5. *Opaneyyiko*—The path is straight; every step on it takes one nearer and nearer to the final goal of liberation from all misery.
6. *Paccattam veditabbo viññūhī'ti*—It is for every sensible and rational person from every community to experience the truth within oneself by oneself.

As one continues to walk on the path and goes through the words of the Buddha, it becomes clearer

and clearer that the teaching is not intended to convert people from one organized religion to another. The teaching itself is not an organized religion. It can be practiced by one and all.

When one reads the words of the Buddha and the commentaries and sub-commentaries, one is surprised to find that throughout the literature the words “Buddhism” and “Buddhist” are conspicuously missing. The Buddha never used these words. His followers also did not use these words for a number of centuries. He called his teaching the Dhamma—that means the Law, the Truth. He called his followers *Dhammi*, *Dhammattho*, *Dhammiko*, *Dhammacāri*, *Dhammavibhāri*, and so on. In Indian languages, the word for “Buddhism” or “Buddhist” is *Bauddha*—a word without equivalent in the vast Pāli literature.

If the word “Buddhism” is used for the Buddha’s teaching, it becomes limited to a particular community, but Dhamma is limitless—*appamāṇo Dhammo*. It is not for one particular community or religion. It is for all. We all know that the word “Buddhism” has now gained currency and is convenient to use. Many who use the word also understand that they are using it for the universal Dhamma or Dharma.

### The Noble Eightfold Path

Let us understand what is the Buddha’s teaching. It is the Noble Eightfold Path. The path is noble in the sense that anyone who walks on this path diligently becomes a noble person, a saintly person, a pure-hearted person.

The Noble Eightfold Path is divided into three divisions.

The first is *sīla*—morality, which is summed up as:

*Sabba pāpassa akaraṇaṃ*

Abstain from all sinful actions—that is, all unwholesome actions, physical or vocal, which hurt other beings and disturb their peace and harmony.

The second part of the Path is *samādhi*—one-pointed concentration of wholesome mind, summed up as:

*Kusalassa upasampadā*

Perform wholesome actions with concentrated, wholesome mind.

The third part is *paññā*—wisdom or insight, summed up as:

*Sacittapariyodapanam*

Purify the totality of mind by developing insight.

These three trainings are the teaching of all the Buddhas of the past and will be the teaching of all the Buddhas of the future. That is why it is said,

*Etam Buddhāna sāsanaṃ.*

This is the teaching of all the Buddhas. ☸

(to be continued)

## Questions and Answers with Goenkaji: Dhamma Ābhā, Thailand, 3 July 2001

**Question:** Why do you give so much importance to the observation of normal respiration?

**Goenkaji:** Because the Buddha wanted you to. He is very clear that one must observe the breath as it is—*yathābhūta*. If it is long, you are aware, “it is long”; if it is short, you are aware, “it is short”. *Yathābhūta*. If you make your respiration unnatural, artificial, you will give more attention to change the respiration according to your wishes. Your attention will not be with the reality as it is, but with something that you have created.

Therefore, we emphasize it must be always natural breath—as it comes in naturally, as it goes out naturally. If it is long, just be aware that it is long. Don’t try to make it short. If it is short, just be aware that it is short. Don’t try to make it long. If it is going through the right nostril, then observe that it is going through the right nostril. If it is going through the left nostril, then observe it through the left nostril. When it passes through both the nostrils, observe the flow through both the nostrils.

Then you are working according to the instructions of the Enlightened One. Don’t try to interfere with the natural flow of the breath. And if you find that the mind is wandering too much and you cannot feel the natural breath, then you may take a few—only a few—intentional breaths, slightly hard breaths, so that you can bring your mind back to the observation of the breath. You have to keep in mind that your aim is to feel the natural breath. However soft it is, however subtle it is, you must be able to feel it. That is the aim.

**Question:** Why do you want us to keep our attention at the entrance of the nostrils and above the upper lip while practicing *ānāpānassati*?

**Goenkaji:** Because again, it is a very clear instruction given by the Enlightened One. In *Paṭisambhidāmagga*, he clearly says that you must be aware of the incoming breath, the outgoing breath, and *mukha*—this area above the mouth. He calls it *mukhanimitta*. It is clearly explained in *Paṭisambhidāmagga* and in *Vibhaṅga*, what is *mukhanimitta*: it means *nāsikagge*, the front portion of the nose at the entrance of the nostrils. Also, the Buddha says that it must be *Uttaroṭṭhassa majjhimappadesa*. *Uttara* means above; *oṭṭha* is lip; and *majjhimappadesa* is the middle portion. And in the *Mahāsatiṭṭhāna sutta*, he says, establish your awareness here, *parimukhaṃ satim upatthapetvā*. *Sati* means awareness; *parimukhaṃ* means the area above the lips.

The Buddha is so clear in his instructions. We cannot deviate from his instructions. And as you practice, it becomes very clear why the Buddha chose this small area. This is the area over which the incoming breath and the outgoing breath must pass. The incoming and outgoing breath touches the area at the entrance of the nostrils and above the upper lip. That is why he wanted you to keep your attention here. For those with long noses, the breath is likely to touch the entrance of the nostrils. For those with short noses, it usually touches the area above the upper lip. So he chose this area—either at the entrance of the nostril, *nāsikagge*, or the middle part of the upper lip.

The Buddha does not want us to imagine that the breath is coming in or the breath is going out, you must

actually feel it. When you are attentive, you can feel its touch somewhere in this area.

For a very new student, we say even if you feel the breath inside the nostrils, it is okay. But ultimately you have to be aware of the touch of the breath in this area. Why? Because for *samādhi*, concentration of mind, *citta ekaggatā* [one-pointedness of the mind] is very important. For a new student, a bigger triangle including the whole area of the nose is okay. But within a day or two, the student is asked to observe a smaller area. It becomes very clear, as you keep on progressing on the path given by the Buddha, that the area of concentration must be as small as possible.

It also becomes clear that the object of concentration must be very subtle. That is why when the mind is wandering too much, you are allowed to take a few hard breaths, but after that, you must come back to the natural breath. And as your mind gets concentrated, the breath will become softer and softer, finer and finer, shorter and shorter. You won’t have to make any effort. It happens naturally. Sometimes the breath becomes so short, so fine, like a thin thread, that it feels as if immediately after coming out it makes a U-turn and enters the nostrils again. So when the area is small, the object of concentration is very subtle, and you continue without interruption, the mind becomes very sharp.

The Buddha was *sabbaññu*—he knew everything so clearly. There is an important nerve centre in this area. When your mind is sharp and you are aware of this area, your mind becomes so sensitive that you start feeling some sensation in this area. The purpose of Anapana, the purpose of *samādhi*, is to take the next step of Vipassana. Vipassana is not Vipassana if you don’t feel sensations.

Therefore, he taught us in a very systematic manner. Start on a small area with the natural breath. The breath will become subtler and subtler; the mind will become sharper and sharper. This area will become very sensitive and you will start feeling sensations. Everywhere around the world, people coming to the courses and practicing the technique given by the Enlightened One, start feeling sensations in this area on the second or third day. The Buddha taught the technique, the path, very systematically. We don’t want to deviate from what he taught.

Coming back to the first question of why we work with the natural breath—there are other techniques especially in India where one controls the breath, for example, the technique of Pranayama. One takes a deep breath and stops for some time; one exhales and stops for some time. We don’t condemn other techniques. We understand that Pranayama is good for physical health. But the Buddha wanted us to use the awareness of the natural breath to reach the next step of feeling sensations. This controlled breathing, Pranayama, is not suitable because it is artificial breath.

Buddha wanted us to observe natural breath because it takes us to the stage where we can practice Vipassana. Those who want to practice Pranayama for health reasons, let them practice it separately. Don’t connect it with Vipassana. When you practice Vipassana, natural breath is important, *yathābhūta*, as it is. 🙏

## VIPASSANA WORKSHOPS IN 2003

(For contact details of venues of the workshops, see the enclosed Schedule of Vipassana Courses).

### Dhamma Tapovana, Igatpuri

Workshop for Assistant Teachers: April 20 to May 1  
Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma Workers: May 2 to 7  
CCT Workshop: May 8 to 11

### Dhamma Khetta, Hyderabad (A.P.)

Children's Course Workshop: May 11 to 18

### Logicstat Farmhouse, Delhi

"Value Inculcation Through Vipassana" Workshop (for school and college teachers): May 15 (10:00 a.m.) to 29  
Workshop for Assistant Teachers: October 21 to 26  
Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma workers: October 21 to 26

### Dhamma Puṇṇa, Pune

"Value Inculcation Through Vipassana" Workshop (for school and college teachers): May 16 (10:00 a.m.) to 30

### Dhamma Lakkhaṇa, Lucknow (U.P.)

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

### Dharmashṛṅga, Kathmandu

"Ghar Ghar mein Pali" Workshop: October 1 to 11  
Workshop for Assistant Teachers: October 12 to 16  
Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma workers: October 17 to 19  
(These workshops will start at 8:00 p.m. on the first day and end at 11:00 a.m. on the last day.)

## VIPASSANA WEBSITES

### Dhamma Giri: <[www.vri.dhamma.org](http://www.vri.dhamma.org)>

Contains information about Indian Vipassana centres and Schedule of Courses, VRI Newsletters, VRI publications, research papers about Vipassana, etc.

### Vipassana (introduction): <[www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)>

Contains information about Goenkaji, Course Schedules of Vipassana centres worldwide, Code of Discipline, Application Form for ten-day courses, etc.

### Vipassana (old students only): <[www.dhamma.org/os](http://www.dhamma.org/os)>

Contains information for old students of Vipassana including International Vipassana Newsletters and reference material. (username: oldstudent; password: behappy)

### Pali Tipiṭaka Website: <http://www.tipitaka.org>

Contains the Chaṭṭha Saṅgāyana Tipiṭaka in Roman script with commentaries, sub-commentaries and related Pali texts.

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## NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

### Ācāryas:

1. & 2. Prof. Pyare Lal & Mrs. Sushila Dhar  
*AT Training, To serve Bhutan, Dhamma Tihar and Dhamma Rakkhaka, Research for jail courses, police courses etc.*
3. & 4. Mr. Vishwambhar & Mrs. Nalini Dahat  
*To serve Vidarbha except Dhamma N±ga*
5. Mr. N. Y. Lokhande  
*Spread of Dhamma*
6. Mrs. Jaya Modi  
*Spread of Dhamma*
7. & 8. Dr. Geo & Mrs. Cathy Poland  
*Spread of Dhamma*

### Senior Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Dinesh Meshram  
*To serve Dhamma K±hana*
2. & 3. Mr. Sureshchandra & Mrs. Kanta Kathane  
*To serve Dhamma Ketu*
4. & 5. Mr. Gopal Sharan & Mrs. Pushpa Singh  
*To serve Dhamma Lakkha±a*
6. & 7. Mr. Mark & Mrs. Petra Lennon

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

### Assistant Teachers

1. & 2. Dr. Sharad & Dr (Mrs.) Pushplata Badole, *Bhilai*
3. Mr. Kailashchand Bagdiya, *Raipur*
4. & 5. Mr. Guy & Mrs. Tamar Gelbgisser, *Israel*
6. Mr. Guy Hertzog, *Israel*      7. Mrs. Ann Aston, *U.K.*

## GOENKAJI'S PUBLIC TALKS IN MUMBAI

Venue: Shivaji Park, Dadar. Dates: May 10 to 16, 2003.  
Timings: 6:30 to 8:00 p.m.

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