

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

*na attabetu na parassa hetu
na puttamicche na dhanam na ratttham
na iccheyya adhammena samiddhimattano
sa silavā paññavā dhammiko siyā.*

—Dhammapada 84

One who, neither for oneself nor for the sake of another,
craves for sons, wealth, or kingdom,
and does not wish for success by unjust means,
is indeed virtuous, wise and righteous.

Self-Observation and Self-Correction

by S. N. Goenka

(Goenkaji came to North Rehabilitation Facility (NRF) in Seattle, Washington in the summer of 2002 during his North American tour. He met the course students and others on mettā day and later addressed the Day 11 assembly gathered for the last men's course to be held there. His address has been edited and adapted for the Newsletter.)

Friends, I am so glad to be here with you all this morning. You have given this technique a good trial and you have received good results. Now you have to maintain the practice, and apply it in day-to-day life. Merely taking a course of ten days is not sufficient although it is very important. You learned the technique by practicing under an experienced guide. Now, applying it in life is very important. Nobody else can correct you; you have to correct yourself; you have to develop self-awareness. Keep examining yourself; keep correcting yourself.

You have two great friends to help you. One friend is your own respiration and the other is sensations on your body. More and more, as you become established in this technique, these two friends will be there to help you throughout your life. Whenever the mind becomes unbalanced with some negativity, you will notice that your breath loses its normality. It will be slightly hard, slightly fast. It is giving you a warning, "Look, something is wrong in your mind!" And you will try to make your mind more balanced.

The second good guide and friend is your sensations, physical sensations, which you have learned about in these ten days. Whenever you find you are generating any negativity, it will become so clear that you are the first victim of your negativity. As soon as you generate anger, hatred, illwill, animosity, being a good Vipassana meditator, you will notice there is a burning sensation throughout the body. The heartbeat increases, tensions build up. Misery! "Look, I am making myself miserable!"

Immediately, you start observing the sensations, observing the breath, with equanimity. You try to maintain perfect balance of the mind, perfect equilibrium of the mind, and you find that you are coming out of the negativity. Your mind becomes purer and purer, and the law of nature is such that when the mind is pure it becomes full of love, compassion, goodwill, tolerance. These qualities will arise, provided the purity of mind is maintained.

Not that in ten days, you will become so perfect that there will be no more defilements. Oh no! The old habit patterns are still there, they continue to arise, but now you have a technique that will help you to come out of them. Don't allow them to multiply and overpower you. When you are unaware of what is happening deep inside you will only see things happening outside: "Someone has insulted me." That thought becomes predominant in your mind, and you keep thinking, "So and so has insulted me; that's why I am generating anger."

You generate anger to retaliate, to take revenge, to harm this person without understanding that you have started harming yourself. You can't harm anybody without first harming yourself. You have to generate some defilement or other in your mind to harm somebody and whenever you generate any defilement in the mind, say anger, hatred, illwill, passion, fear, ego, then you become miserable. You don't want to harm yourself. And yet, out of ignorance, without knowing what is happening at the depth of the mind, you keep generating impurity after impurity, defilement after defilement, more and more anger, hatred, jealousy, ego. And the sensations that you get at that time make you feel very miserable.

Before learning Vipassana, you used to react in a certain way in a situation. Now, a similar situation has arisen, ask yourself, "Am I reacting in the same way or has some positive change developed in my behaviour?" Now with self-awareness and self-examination, you are your own

master. Nobody else can correct you, you have to correct yourself. It is not necessary for anybody else to warn you.

You have to warn yourself, “Oh, look, what I am doing is so harmful. I am harming myself. I can’t harm anybody else without harming myself. When I generate negativity, I become so miserable and I keep on throwing this misery on others. Anyone who comes in contact with me at that time becomes miserable. The entire atmosphere becomes so tense. Full of misery! Throughout my life, I have continued harming myself and harming others. This is not the proper way of life.

When I am free of these negativities, my mind is pure, full of love, compassion, goodwill. I feel so much peace and harmony. The entire atmosphere around me becomes permeated with the vibrations of peace and harmony. Anybody who comes in contact with me starts to experience peace and harmony. This is the correct way of life.”

Now, morning and evening—you must practice every day. Just as when you learn to do any kind of physical exercise but don’t practice it, it won’t be of any help to you, so this technique, this mental exercise, will not be of help to you unless you practice regularly.

The technique you have learned during this course is an invaluable jewel that will help you throughout your life. Maintain it and keep progressing on the path. I would advise those of you who have not experienced this technique to spare ten days of your life. Don’t assume that those who are in prison are the only prisoners. Those who are outside the walls of the prison are also prisoners. Everyone is a prisoner of the unwholesome habit patterns of their mind at the deepest level. Come out of this prison! Come out of the defilements and enjoy life! You will find such a big change in your life. With my experience, I found I gained so much peace, it was a total change of life. I wanted to share my peace and harmony with others, and now thousands of people around the world are sharing it. They are practicing, they are getting the same results. This technique helps you to become very peaceful. It is good for you and good for others. ❖

Staff and inmates, even those who had never taken a course, appreciated the extraordinary nature of this event and found a shared sense of gratitude and optimism. Many former inmates who had taken their first Vipassana course at NRF returned to see Goenkaji and thank him. After the reception, Goenkaji met staff members, old students and their families in the jail library. Some people took the opportunity to meet him and ask questions or express their gratitude, others watched quietly, staying until Goenkaji left. That day, no one expressed any regrets or concerns about NRF’s imminent closure, only gratitude for benefits received and hopefulness for the future.

Several former NRF residents took the opportunity to tell how Vipassana has positively impacted their lives:

One male student said: “I took the course here at NRF. Through the course, I’ve learned the Vipassana meditation technique and it puts my mind at peace. When I left NRF, I was transferred to another prison, another jail. I was put in confinement where it was pretty isolated. I contacted *Dhamma Kuñja* and they sent me many pamphlets and information. I sat and meditated in the morning and evening, pretty much a lot of time all day. And I read my

journal and books. I noticed I was being treated differently by the guards. Other inmates were coming up to me and asking, ‘What do you have?’ So I talked about Vipassana with them and told them that this is an ancient teaching that has been handed down through the ages in its purest form. I have not been in one bit of trouble since I’ve been out of prison. I’ve followed the path of right speech, right action, right thought. I’ve taken care of business and made the practice of Vipassana my Dhamma.”

Another old male student: “I had been drunk all my life before taking the first Vipassana course at NRF in 1997. Since then I have not had a fight, not a drink. I have a family life. My family appreciates you so much.” ♦

VIPASSANA WORKSHOPS IN 2003

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

Logicstat Farmhouse, Delhi

Workshop for Assistant Teachers: October 21 to 26.

Workshop for Trustees and Dhamma workers: October 21 to 26.

Dhamma Lakkhana, Lucknow (U.P.)

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

Dharmashrīga, 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.)

HINDI PATRIKA ON THE WEBSITE

Current and past issues of the Hindi Vipassana Patrika can be downloaded from the VRI website:

www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html

www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/oldissueshindi.html

FIRST PRISON COURSE IN MEXICO

The first course in a Mexican prison was held at Penal de Santiaguito in Almoloya de Juarez in central Mexico from 18 to 29 March 2003. This was also the first prison course in Latin America.

Initially, an employee from the General Direction of the Mexican Penal system took a course about a year back and talked to her boss about Vipassana. The boss saw *Doing Time Doing Vipassana* and was very impressed. Thereafter, 12 people from different departments joined Vipassana courses before the first prison course was organized in Almoloya.

Almoloya’s Facility has about 1500 inmates. This facility has been a model for different Latin American Prisons for some years and has again become a pioneer by organizing a Vipassana course. The course was conducted in a separate facility where each inmate had his own room. Eighteen inmates began the course and all completed the course successfully. None of the students asked to leave the course at any time.

At the reception after the successful conclusion of the course, all the participants expressed their gratitude and their determination to change their life. Encouraged by the success of the first course, the prison authorities want to establish a long-term Vipassana program in prisons.

THE BLESSING OF VIPASSANA

We have all heard the phrase *blessing in disguise* but may not have experienced its true meaning in our lives. In the year 1997, I found myself in circumstances that made me realize what is a true blessing in disguise!

At that time I was not doing well in any aspect of life. I had been through different therapies and nothing seemed to work for me. The amount of restlessness and anxiety I carried with me made it impossible to have a moment of peace. I always had to be doing something, being by myself and doing nothing was terrifying. My relationships with others involved a lot of lying and anger and since that is all I had to give that is all I received in return. There were exceptions, of course; some people were kind to me regardless of how I acted towards them.

I used to feel a ball of burning fire inside me and I lived with the fear of this fire-ball bursting one day and getting me and others into a lot of trouble. I looked and searched everywhere for a way out of this unhappiness but the way was nowhere to be found! I did come across a lot of intellectual advice but I was just too miserable to derive any benefit from it.

It was in this frame of mind that I found myself inside Tihar jail in New Delhi, India—a place not well known for bringing out the best in human beings. Now there was no end to my misery: my worst nightmare had come true. I was actually confined inside a physical boundary and could not move about as I pleased. Just when I thought things could not get any worse for me, they did, and I landed up in a 10 day Vipassana meditation course, where not only I was confined to an even smaller physical boundary, but I also had to sit for hours without speaking!

There is a small story as to how I landed up in that meditation course. While living in jail I got this idea that I should teach meditation to others. I had learned and read up on all kinds of meditation practices and considered myself an expert and so I talked to the officials and impressed them with my knowledge of meditation and requested that I be allowed to teach others. One of the officials kindly suggested that there was already a place in jail where they teach meditation and perhaps I should go and check it out first. I went to this place and was surprised to meet smiling and happy faces which impressed me enough to try this meditation myself, but I did not realize what I was getting myself into!

My desire to find peace and harmony got a big jolt as soon as I was introduced to the timetable of the course. By the second day, whatever peace and harmony I was carrying along slowly left me and I was left with pains that I had never experienced before. I wanted to run away, but felt ashamed to do so for I had impressed the jail officials as to what a great meditator I was and if I ran away they would laugh at me and I was not about to let that happen.

I would go to the teacher and complain about the pain and he would ask me to observe it with equanimity, which I thought I was doing anyway, but with a constant desire to be rid of it! To me awareness and observation were one and the same thing and I did not click into the possibility of being aware of pain without wishing for it to go away, which I later found out is called observation with equanimity, which the teacher was referring to.

Like this, nine days passed and nothing happened, or so I thought! On the tenth day it was the last sitting before lunch and during that sitting something happened that turned my world upside down (the right side up this time!) All of a sudden, the ball of fire I used to feel inside got punctured and lava started pouring out of it and it got so heavy that the whole place could hear my loud breathing. It was unbelievable, the stuff that was coming out of it and how I was relaxing as it was emptying out. I opened my eyes several times during the sitting to see if it was really happening, and every time I opened my eyes the world seemed less and less threatening, as if everything has been okay all this time and only I perceived it to be bad. I cried like a baby out of joy, but mostly out of relief, my body and mind had never felt lighter or more at peace. Then everything started to make sense and I clicked into the reason why I had come to Tihar Jail.

It has been a journey since that day and everything has changed for the better. Life finally has a sense of purpose and direction. What I experienced in the first course seemed at that time to be a one-shot deal. Actually it was just the first small step, for suffering has very deep roots. The good part is that every step brings an extra bit of relief that I clearly feel in my life and motivates me to continue. Finally, I have found something that actually works for me, slowly, but surely!

One reason why I feel I have benefited from Vipassana is that I have always been open to learning things that make sense to me, regardless of who is teaching them. I feel that a true searcher should be open to accepting the truth for truth's sake alone and not allow any personal baggage to come in the way. May all who read these words find happiness in life, may all beings be happy.

FIRST PRISON COURSE IN SPAIN

The Centro Penitenciario Brians on the outskirts of Barcelona is essentially a high security prison. This prison is regarded to be at the cutting edge of the prison service in the whole of Spain. It is charged by the Catalan Government to experiment with new ways of transforming prisoners to reduce recidivism. Its staff to inmate ratio is a witness to that: 600 staff for 1,400 inmates.

In April 2002, members of the Spanish Trust were invited by the Sub-Director of the prison to make a presentation about Vipassana. About 30 lawyers, sociologists, psychologists, criminologists, a judge and other associated professionals attended the presentation, which included the showing of *Changing From Inside*.

Soon after the initial meetings, the Sub-Director was promoted to Director and was thus in a stronger position to make decisions on his own. In October 2002, four members of staff attended a course at *Dhamma Neru*, which is just an hour's drive from the prison. They completed the course successfully and were most positive about Vipassana.

On the strength of this, the Director put in the application to the Catalan Government for the course to go ahead. Nineteen inmates volunteered to take part in the course. Their crimes were mostly drug-related, including armed robbery and attempted murder, carrying sentences from 3 to 21 years.

The course started on 1st April in a large ward with 33 cells, allowing the students to have a room on their own. The increasing seriousness with which the inmates worked was moving and inspiring. Several of the students who had been really struggling on Day 8 were at peace and smiling by the end of Day 9. So, *mettā* day saw 16 very changed inmates emerge from the meditation hall.

At the reception on the last day of the course, most of the students were very positive about their experience and clearly deeply affected by it. The Director said that for more than twenty years they had been looking for something that would substantially change the outlook and prospects of the inmates. Now they were confident that Vipassana is such a means of change. Family members and friends of the students expressed their gratitude to the servers because they saw that these men had received something very special.

To ensure continuity of practice after the course, a room has been made available for daily afternoon group sittings in Ward 4, where 11 of the 16 students live. Follow-up research and observation will be carried out on the students to note changes in behaviour, drug taking, willingness to co-operate, levels of aggression, and so on.

The Director has requested that another course be held in the autumn of this year for about 30 students. In the meantime, other members of staff are becoming interested in attending a course at *Dhamma Neru*.

The Vipassana teacher who conducted this course remarked: "I have met these inmates regularly over a period of six weeks. I have seen their faces turn from etched suffering, to guarded suspicion, to fear, to hope, and to tranquility and happiness. If ever one needed proof that Dhamma works, this is it."

DHAMMA SURINDA—NEW VIPASSANA CENTRE

In Surendranagar, Gujarat, five acres of land has been transferred in the name of the newly formed Vipassana Trust. The Trust plans to buy the adjoining land (Rs 65,000 per acre) and to build a small Dhamma hall. Meanwhile, group sittings will be arranged every Sunday in a tent at the site. Goenkaji has named the new centre, *Dhamma Surinda*. Meditators wanting to help may contact: 1. Karunaben Mahasati, 10, Bankers Society, Near C U Shah English School, Surendranagar 363002. Tel: 02752-242030. 2. Dr. Navin Bavishi, Tel: 232564.

CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Date	Place	Eligibility	Registration
8-6	Andheri	Std. 5 to 7	5 & 6-6
8-6	Ulhasnagar	Std. 5 to 7	5 & 6-6
29-6	Matunga	Std. 5 to 7	26 & 27-6
13-7	Andheri	13-16 yrs	10 & 11-7
13-7	Ulhasnagar	13-16 yrs	10 & 11-7

Course Timing: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Tel. No. for Registration:** 26834820 and 22812416. (10 a.m. to 12 noon and 4 to 8 p.m.) **Venues:** **Andheri:** Dadasaheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Ambedkar Road, Four Bunglows, Near RTO Corner, Andheri (W). **Ulhasnagar:** RKT College, Shivaji Chowk, Ulhasnagar-3. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amichand Vidyalaya, Kidwai Road, Near S.N.D.T. College, King's Circle, Matunga (C.R.).

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Bhikkhu Ācārya:

Ven. Shraddhananda

Senior Assistant Teachers:

Mr. Mohanlal & Mrs. Sheela Kela, *Indore*

Mr Raghunath Kurup, *Chennai*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. & 2. Mr. Gobind Parkash & Mrs. Bina Agarwal, *Mumbai*

3. Mr. Dharma Man Newa, *Nepal*

4. Mr. Sharda Man Shakya, *Nepal*

5. Mr. Bhimbar Singh Thapa, *Nepal*

6. Dr. (Mrs.) Yashodhara Pradhan, *Nepal*

7. Mrs. Laxmi Manandhar, *Nepal*

8. Ms. Chandra Devi Manandhar, *Nepal*

9. & 10. Mr. Johann Wuketits & Mrs. Martina Urleb, *Austria*

11. & 12. Mr. Scott Corley & Mrs. Kathleen O'Grady, *USA*

Children Course Teachers

1. Mrs. Roshan Mirajkar, *Pune* 2. Ms. Panchsheela Tabhane, *Nashik*

3. Anagarika Nyanawati, *Nepal* 4. Anagarika Kusum, *Nepal*

5. Mr. Triratna Shahi, *Nepal* 6. Mr. Krishna Prasad Bhandari, *Nepal*

7. Ms. Neeta Keshari Shrestha, *Nepal*

8. Mrs. Chandra Shakya, *Nepal* 9. Mrs. Nanda Maya Nakarmi, *Nepal*

10. Mrs. Sumitra Rajkarnikar, *Nepal* 11. Ms. Kanchan Lata Tamrakar, *Nepal*

12. Mrs. Naina Chitrakar, *Nepal*

13. Mr. Sandeep Bhatia, *USA* 14. Ms. Caroline Coons, *USA*

15. Mr. Matt Iverson, *USA*

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