

# Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

Vol. 13, No. 7: 13 July 2003

Published every month

Vipassana Research Institute

Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Na vedanam vedayati sapañño,  
sukhampi dukkhampi bahussuto'pi.  
ayañca dhīrassa puthujjanena  
mahā viseso kusalassa hoti.*

The wise one is not affected by sensation,  
Either pleasant or unpleasant, being well-trained.  
Between the sage and the worldling,  
Great is the difference in skill.

—Salla Sutta, Saṃyutta Nikāya, 36.6

## THE CAUSES OF VEDANĀ

by Vipassana Research Institute

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

Although *vedanā* (sensations) have played an important role in many meditation practices, there were no practitioners in the past, save the Buddha, who investigated their real nature. These *vedanā* are sometimes gross and sometimes subtle, the latter becoming more distinct when the mind is concentrated. However, the mind becomes agitated when it encounters more intense *vedanā*, and the meditator finds it difficult to observe them objectively and to investigate their true nature.

Many of the *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* of the past who practiced meditation, held that these *vedanā* arise only due to the ripening of *kamma* (deeds committed in past lives). They therefore attempted to deliberately create *vedanā* through various austere practices and bodily torture. They believed that in this way they could destroy all the effects of their past actions manifesting as these *vedanā*, and achieve the *summum bonum*, the highest stage of ultimate peace.

The Buddha, however, instead of stressing the causes of *vedanā*, instructed his followers to try to comprehend their true nature of impermanence (*anicca*) and thereby purify the mind. He advised them to maintain equanimity of mind, neither craving for pleasant *vedanā* nor having aversion to unpleasant *vedanā*, understanding that all *vedanā* are intrinsically impermanent in nature, and are bound to pass away. The meditator must learn to observe them as they really are—arising (*samudaya*) and passing away (*atthaṅgama*). He must learn to recognize the danger (*ādīnava*) of relishing them (*assāda*), and must observe their cessation (*nirodha*) and the way leading to their cessation (*nirodha-gāmini-ṭṭipadā*).

The Buddha taught that one could purify the mind only by observing and understanding the real nature of *vedanā* as impermanent. In this way, the meditator can be freed from the cycle of birth and death, and thereby, attain the stage beyond mind and matter, which is free from all suffering.

The Buddha says—

*Samāhito sampajāno, sato Buddhassa sāvako;*

*vedanā ca pajānāti, vedanānam ca sambhavam.*

*Yattha cetā nirujjhanti, maggaṃ ca khayagāminam;*

*vedanānam khayā bhikkhu, nicchāto parinibbuto.*

A follower of Buddha, with concentration, awareness and constant thorough understanding of impermanence, understands clearly 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, is fully liberated.

An interesting story is narrated in the *Sīvaka Sutta* of the *Saṃyutta Nikāya*. Moliyasivaka, a sectarian mendicant, came to the Buddha, and told him there were *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* who held the view that *vedanā* arise only due to the ripening of previous *kamma* (deeds). The Buddha replied that *samaṇas* and *brāhmaṇas* who held this view indeed 'run to extremes' (*atidhāvanti*) as they do not take other causes of *vedanā* into account. Others held the view that the only cause of *vedanā* was bile (*pitta*), and they were also going to extremes. Both of these opinions are *micchā* (incorrect). Believing that previous actions are the sole cause of *vedanā*, one indulges in different futile austere penances, hoping to eradicate the evil deeds committed in the past and reach a stage of purity and peace. It is equally incorrect to regard bile as the sole cause of *vedanā*.

The Buddha, having comprehensive understanding of

reality, pointed out other factors that may cause *vedanā*. For instance, bile may be a cause, the increase of phlegm (*sembha*) may also be a cause. Additionally, wind (*vāta*) in the body may be aggravated and cause different *vedanā*. At times, all three of these may become unbalanced and due to the diffusion of chemical reactions in the body (*sannipāta*), one may feel various *vedanā*. *Vedanā* may also be caused by seasonal variations (*utūni*). For example, one feels certain *vedanā* in cold weather and different *vedanā* when the weather is hot. Also, the equilibrium of the mind and body may be disturbed (*visamaṃ*) in adverse circumstances or when one is frightened. Different *vedanā* will then be experienced. In addition, a person may have to undergo physical punishment or he may deliberately adopt austere penances and torture himself as mentioned above, falsely believing that he can thereby erase his sins and attain a pure and steadfast life (*opakkamikaṃ*). In this instance also, different *vedanā* may be experienced. Finally, the ripening of previous *kamma* may cause *vedanā* to arise in the body. Thus, by abandoning both extreme viewpoints, that of previous *kamma* as the sole cause or that of bile as the sole cause, the Buddha delineated eight causes of *vedanā*—

*Pittaṃ semhaṃ ca vāto ca,  
sannipātā utūni ca;  
Visamaṃ opakkamikaṃ,  
kammavipākena atthamīti.*

Bile, phlegm, and wind,  
Union of body humors and seasonal changes,  
Imbalance and adverse external circumstances,  
With the fruit of past deeds as the eighth.

The Buddha advised his followers to meditate on *vedanā* arising every moment within the body, whatever their cause, and to learn to maintain a dispassionate state of mind towards them, knowing that they are bound to pass away. By this training, a disciple of the Buddha can go beyond the sphere of all *vedanā* and experience the cessation of misery. This is the experience of *nibbāna*. ☸

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

**Question:** Why do you want us to observe sensations?

**Goenkaji:** Because this is exactly what the Buddha wanted us to practice—awareness of *vedanā* (sensations). It was a great discovery of Buddha, which was not known to the people before the time of the Buddha. The teachers before the time of the Buddha, at the time of Buddha, and after the Buddha didn't know that we react to *vedanā*.

The teachers before the Buddha and at the time of the Buddha were advising people not to react to the sensual objects that come in contact with the sense doors: eyes with visual object, nose with smell, ear with sound, etc. "When sensual objects come in contact with your senses, don't react, by judging them as good or bad; don't react with craving or aversion." This was their

teaching.

But the Buddha says that actually you are not reacting to these objects. If that were the case, he would have said,

*salāyatana paccayā taṇhā.*

(With the base of the six senses, craving arises.)

He didn't say that. He said,

*salāyatana paccayā phassa;*

*phassa paccayā vedanā;*

*vedanā paccayā taṇhā.*

(With the base of the six senses, contact arises;

With the base of contact, sensation arises;

With the base of sensation, craving arises.)

Not, *salāyatana paccayā taṇhā*.

This was the great discovery of the Enlightened One. He became an enlightened person because of this discovery.

There were many other people who were saying that one should not react to the *salāyatana*. But they didn't become Buddhas. We have historical proof of teachers who were saying that one should come out of *rāga* (craving) and *dosa* (aversion), *lobha* (greed) and *dosa*. There were teachers who taught that one should not generate *lobha* and *dosa*.

The Buddha said that *rāga* and *dosa* would last as long as there was *moha*. Therefore, one has to come out of *moha*. And what is *moha*? *Moha* is *avijjā* (ignorance). You don't know what is happening inside; you don't know the real cause of *lobha* and *dosa*; you are ignorant.

How will you come out of this ignorance? You have to strike at the root of the problem and come out of misery by working on sensations. So long as you are not aware of sensations, you are fighting with outside objects, "This is ugly." and "This is not ugly." You are working on the surface.

The discovery of *paṭiccasamuppāda* (Chain of Conditioned Arising) made him an Enlightened One. This was not known to anyone before the Buddha. There are three important links in the *paṭiccasamuppāda*.

One is *sankhāra paccayā viññāna* (with the base of reaction, consciousness arises). Because of your old stock of *sankhāra*, you get a new life—*paṭisandhi viññāna*.

Another important link is *bhava paccayā jāti* (with the base of the process of becoming, birth arises). This life turns into the next life.

The third important link is *vedanā paccayā taṇhā*. (with the base of sensation, craving arises).

We cannot change *sankhāra paccayā viññāna*. It is already past. We are here with this *nāma* and *rūpa* (mind and body), with these *salāyatanas*. We cannot change that. We have to be careful about the future. *Bhava paccayā jāti*—more and more becoming, more and more births. We don't know when death will come.

That is why the Buddha gave us this wonderful path. Remain in the present moment. You are the master of your present moment. You are the master of your future.

*Attā hi attano nātho, attā hi attano gati.*

(You are your own master, you make your own future.)

If you are the master of your present moment, the future will automatically be all right. You need not worry. Remain in the present moment. Don't generate craving and aversion towards sensations. If there is ignorance—*avijjā*—you are not aware of *vedanā*. Then you keep reacting with craving or aversion.

The Buddha wanted us to remain aware of the *vedanā* of the present moment without reacting, to maintain equanimity. The old habit pattern was to keep on reacting to the *vedanā* with craving and aversion, that is, to keep on multiplying misery. This was the old habit pattern.

The Buddha gave us this wonderful technique. You are in the present moment, and whatever the sensation, you are aware of it. *Paññā* means the reality of the present moment—arising and passing; arising and passing, *anicca*, impermanent. Then you are with *vijjā*; there is no *avijjā*. Thus, you have changed the path.

Previously, you were on the path of misery because you were generating *lobha-dosa* in response to sensations—you were generating misery, life after life. Now you have changed. No *lobha*, no *dosa*. You are equanimous. You have changed your direction.

*Vedanā* is like the junction of a road or a railway. From this junction, it is either *dukkhasamudayaḡāminī-paṭipadā* (path leading to the arising of suffering) or *dukkhanirodhagāminī-paṭipadā* (path leading to the cessation of suffering). It is for you to decide. The Buddha does not want you to accept his words blindly. The Buddha never wanted anybody to follow him blindly. No blind faith. You must experience the truth for yourself, and if you find that it is good for you, then you accept it. Then not only accept it, but also walk on the path.

That is why it makes no difference whether people coming to a ten-day course are from this sect or that sect. They experience the truth for themselves—sensations are there: if they react to them, they are miserable; if they don't react, they are happy.

Again, one must be careful not to condemn anybody who does not practice this way. Though they don't feel *vedanā*, if they at least understand that they must not generate *lobha* and *dosa* at the intellectual level, their intellect is becoming purer. However, those who are practicing according to Buddha's teaching should understand that if we miss *vedanā*, if we are working only at the intellectual level, then we are purifying our mind only at the surface level.

Siddhattha Gotama was not satisfied with this surface purification. He wanted to purify the mind in its totality—total purification. That requires purification at the root level of the mind—the deepest part of the mind, which is always in contact with bodily sensations. Where there is *vedanā*, reaction starts. If you forget *vedanā*, then *lobha* and *dosa* continue without your even knowing about it. He was very clear that the mind must be purified in its totality. His teaching is so clear:

*sabba pāpassa akaranam*

Don't commit any sinful or unwholesome action.

*Kusalassa upasampadā*—samadhi that is *kusalacittassa ekaggatta*—concentration of the wholesome mind.

But one can have *ekaggatta*, that is one-pointedness, even with an *akusala* object. A pickpocket needs concentration to pick pockets. Even to perform unwholesome actions, one has to keep the mind concentrated. But that is not *sammā-samadhi*. You are clear that you are not going to harm anybody and your mind is concentrated—*kusalassa upasampadā*.

But Buddha says that that is not sufficient. Something more is needed. Then he says,

*sacittapariyodapanam*

The mind has to be purified in its totality.

*Pari* means "in totality." And that is possible only if you work with *vedanā* and purify at that level. Then the whole mind gets purified. Otherwise, Buddha says, *anusaya kilesa* (latent impurities) will remain. These sleeping volcanoes of all the impurities that you have accumulated in the past will erupt at any time and make you miserable.

The Buddha found out this technique of working with *vedanā* to enable one to eradicate all *anusaya*. His words are so clear, "Eradicate your *rāḡānusaya* when you have pleasant sensations." That means that whenever you have pleasant sensations, that is the time to eradicate your *rāḡa*. The old habit is that when there is a pleasant sensation, you generate *rāḡa*, *rāḡa*. If your *rāḡānusaya* is there, you keep on multiplying it.

Similarly, he says to eradicate all your *dosānusaya*, that is, *paṭighānusaya*, whenever you have unpleasant sensations. The old habit was to generate *paṭigha* (aversion) towards unpleasant sensations. Now you are equanimous and don't generate *dosa*. This is how *paṭighānusaya* is eradicated.

At the time of Buddha and before him, there were teachers who taught that one should come out of *rāḡa* and *dosa*, but they did not know how to come out of the *anusaya*. Buddha says that you can come out of *rāḡa* with the help of pleasant sensations, and from *dosa* with the help of unpleasant sensations. Otherwise you are not following the Buddha's advice.

We should not condemn people who don't work with sensations. If you have understood Buddha properly, then work exactly as Buddha wanted you to work. 🙏

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER 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](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html)

[www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/oldissueshindi.html](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/oldissueshindi.html)

Current and past issues of the English Vipassana Newsletter can be also downloaded from this website:

[www.vri.dhamma.org/Newsletters/index.html](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/Newsletters/index.html)

**Note: Meditators who wish to subscribe to the Vipassana Newsletter or Patrika are requested to send payment only by crossed bank draft in favour of Vipassana Research Institute. Payment by cheque will not be accepted.**

## GRATEFUL COMMEMORATION

The following Vipassana Teachers and Assistant Teachers have passed away recently.

Mr. Laxmi Narayan Rathi – Vipassana Ācārya  
Dr. Bhogilal Gandhi – Vipassana Ācārya  
Mr. Gurmukh Sidhu - Vipassana Ācārya  
Mrs. Geetadevi Chowdhary – Assistant Teacher  
Mr. Paul Blamey - Assistant Teacher

They served the Dhamma selflessly and lived exemplary lives full of Dhamma. They will continue to be inspiring examples in the way they lived their lives.

*idha nandati pecca nandati,  
katapuñño ubhayattha nandati;  
puññam me katanti nandati,  
bhiyyo nandati suggatim gato.*

—Dhammapada 18

Here one is happy, hereafter one is happy,  
The doer of good deeds is happy in both existences.  
“Good have I done” (thinking thus), he is happy,  
He is happier still when he goes to a blissful state.  
May they be happy, peaceful and liberated!

## VIPASSANA WORKSHOPS IN 2003

### Logicstat Farmhouse, Delhi

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

### 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.)

## GOENKAJI'S INTERVIEWS ON ZEE TV

Zee TV is broadcasting a program called *Urja* featuring Goenkaji every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. from June 2003. In this program, Goenkaji answers questions about the different aspects of Dhamma (Dharma). Meditators may inform their family and friends about the opportunity to hear Goenkaji expound on the universal Dhamma. Questions for Goenkaji may be sent to [response@zeenetwork.com](mailto:response@zeenetwork.com) (Please put ‘Urja’ in the subject line.)

## CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Date	Place	Eligibility	Registration
31-8	Mulund	13-16 yrs	28 & 29-8
7-9	Matunga	13-16 yrs	4 & 5-9
14-9	Andheri	Std. 5 to 7	11 & 12-9
14-9	Ulhasnagar	8-16 yrs	11 & 12-9

Course Timing: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

Course Address & Registration Phone Nos (4 to 7 p.m.):

**Mulund:** Mulund College of Commerce, Sarojini Naidu Road, Near Ration office and Court, Mulund (W), Mumbai. Tel: 2281-2416. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amichand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, Near S.N.D.T. College, King's Circle, Matunga (C.R.) Mumbai 19. Tel: 2683-4820. **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (West), Tel: 2683-4820. **Ulhasnagar:** R K T College, Shivaji Chawk, Ulhasnagar-3. Tel: 9822029400.

[NB \*Please bring cushion. \*Please register on the specified phone numbers. If you are unable to attend after registration, please inform in advance. \*Please arrive on time for the course.]

## NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācāryas:

Mr. Bruce and Mrs. Maureen Stewart  
To serve South-east USA

## NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. Dr. Subhash Sethi, *Delhi*
2. Mr. Anand Kulkarni, *Aurangabad*
3. & 4. Mr. Om Prakash & Mrs. Sharda Devi Mathuriya, *Ajmer*
5. & 6. Mr. Michael & Mrs. Penny Gelber, *Canada*

Children Course Teachers

1. Dr. Kaushal Kumar Bhardwaj, *Delhi*
2. Mrs. Rajkumari, *Delhi*
3. Mrs. Alpa Thakker, *Gandhidham*
4. Mrs. Kalpana Vaja, *Mandbvi*
5. Mr. Niranjan Ghosh, *Ahmedabad*
6. Mrs. Anoma Kumarihamy, *Sri Lanka*
7. Mrs. Malani Kumarapperuma, *Sri Lanka*
8. Mr. Passan Athula Pathirana, *Sri Lanka*
9. Mr. Rupasinghe Aratchige Kamal Priyantha, *Sri Lanka*
10. Mr Itamar Sofer, *Israel*
11. Mrs. Latifa Laabissi, *France*
12. Mrs. Anne Mahe, *France*
13. Mr. Jean-Marie Fouilleul, *France*
14. Ms. Heike Kratzenstein, *Germany*

SUBSCRIPTION TO ENGLISH/HINDI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: ANNUAL: RS 20 (U.S. \$10 OUTSIDE INDIA); LIFE SUBSCRIPTION: RS 250 (U.S. \$100 OUTSIDE INDIA) BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF VRI.

Edited and published by R. P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri 422 403 and printed at Akshar Chitra Press, 69B-Road, Satpur, Nashik 422007.

13 July 2003

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 - LICENCE NUMBER – AR/NSK/WP-13  
POSTAL REG. NO. AR/NSK 39/2003-2005

PRINTED MATTER

If undelivered, please return to:

Vipassana Research Institute

Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403,

Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

Tel: [91] (02553) 244076, 244086; Fax: 244176

Email: [info@giri.dhamma.org](mailto:info@giri.dhamma.org)

Website: [www.vri.dhamma.org](http://www.vri.dhamma.org)