

# Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin,

as taught by S. N. Goenka

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Vipassana Research Institute

Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Samaggā sammōdamānā  
avivadamānā khīrodakībhūtā  
aññamaññaṃ piyacakkhūhi  
sampassantā viharissantīti.*

They will dwell in harmony, courteous,  
Without quarrelling, like milk mixed with water,  
Looking upon one another  
With the eye of love and affection.

—*Saṃyutta Nikāya 2.4.267*

## THE AMITY OF DHAMMA

by S. N. Goenka

(The following is an excerpt from Goenkaji's address to Vipassana meditators during the Annual Meeting at Dhamma Giri, January 1992. It has been adapted for the Newsletter.)

The Buddha said that two types of people are rare. One type is the person who serves, who takes initiative in serving, which means that there is no thought in the mind about anything other than service. Instead, the volition of such a person is: *bahujana-hitāya, bahujana-sukhāya*—my service is to help others; more and more people should benefit from it. The second type is the person who has a feeling of gratitude. Develop these two qualities and certainly you are progressing on the path, certainly you are fit to help others.

The Vipassana organization is growing. But as it grows, it is quite possible that there will be differences of opinion, personality clashes might start, and there may be attachment to personal opinions. One has to be very careful. This is like fire; don't allow the fire to start. But if it has begun, see that it is extinguished immediately. Don't allow it to spread. Always remember the Buddha's words:

*Vivādaṃ bhayato disvā,  
avivādañca khemato,  
samaggā sakhilā hoṭha,  
esā buddhānusāsani.*

—*Apadānapāli 1.1.79*

Seeing danger in dispute,  
Security in concord,  
Dwell together in amity—  
This is the teaching of the Enlightened One.  
If you find a fault in somebody, certainly, you

should go and tell him or her—humbly, with *mettā* and compassion, “Well, I feel this action of yours is not according to Dhamma.” Try to convince them, but if they are not convinced, don't generate negativity—instead generate more compassion. Try again and if again this person doesn't understand, then inform an elder, let the elder try. If this is not successful, let another elder try. If this is not successful, have compassion for this person.

If you have anger and hatred, how can you help anyone else? You have not even helped yourself. Be careful. Remember: *vivādaṃ bhayato disvā*. It is a frightening situation where you create animosity or controversy. This is a family and a member of the family has become weak. The entire family should help to make this person strong. Don't condemn them or try to push them out. This person requires our compassion, not our hatred.

If we continue to have this attitude, then Dhamma remains with us all the time because we have started helping ourselves first. There should be nothing but love and compassion. This should become the guideline for every Dhamma server. ☸

*Doha*

*Dūra rabe durabhāvanā, dveṣa hoya saba dūra.  
Nirmala niramala citta meṃ, pyāra bhare bharapūra.*

May ill will be far away, may all aversion be dispelled.  
May the pure and stainless heart brim over with love.

## Questions and Answers with Goenkaji

(The following is an edited transcript of an interview of S. N. Goenka broadcast on Doordarshan Television.)

**Question:** You are a meditation teacher. But there are so many different forms of meditation that there is some confusion about what meditation really is. What is meditation according to you?

**Goenkaji:** The word 'meditation' gives the impression of one concentrating one's mind on one object and submerging into it. This is so with most meditation techniques but Vipassana meditation is different.

In Vipassana, there is an awareness of the totality of the body and mind interaction. One keeps on observing what is happening inside. Because of one's ignorance about what is happening at the depth of the mind, feelings of craving and aversion keep on multiplying until finally one is overpowered by these feelings and becomes helpless. So one performs unwholesome actions at the physical level and repents later. Vipassana meditation changes this habit pattern.

**Question:** Vipassana, the form of meditation that you teach, literally means mindfulness. To what degree is this circumscribed by Buddha's other philosophical teachings such as the four noble truths and the middle path? To what degree is a commitment to, or understanding of, those explanations and systems important to the practice of Vipassana?

**Goenkaji:** The practice of Vipassana follows the teaching of the Buddha—the four noble truths. The noble path has to be experienced and Vipassana is the way to experience it. It is not merely an intellectual game or philosophy to accept at an emotional or devotional level. One has to experience the truth—see, for example, the truth of misery. One is observing the misery and one finds the cause of the misery at the level of experience. Thus, one can come out of all misery.

**Question:** So is there a scriptural, textual, philosophical, intellectual context from which you approach this teaching? Is it purely experiential?

**Goenkaji:** Though the references of Vipassana are found in the scriptures, knowledge of the scriptures or acceptance of a particular philosophy is not necessary to learn Vipassana. It deals with reality as it exists. The Buddha himself, time and again, emphasized two words: *jāna* and *passa* (Sanskrit: *pashyab*). *Jāna* and *passa* both mean to feel, to observe, to experience. *Paññā* (Sanskrit: *Prajñā*) means knowledge, which is acquired through one's own experience, not bookish knowledge or something you learn through discussions or by intellectual inference. It has to be experienced.

**Question:** You mentioned that sometimes, if we are not mindful, we may commit certain actions which we regret later. Is there a moral framework that circumscribes Vipassana?

**Goenkaji:** The base of Vipassana is the eight-fold noble path which is divided into three sections: *sīla* or

morality; *samādhi* or mastery of the mind; and *jñāna* or wisdom. You must purify the totality of your mind by developing your own wisdom. So, all three aspects are crucial but the base is morality, without which the other two steps cannot be complete.

**Question:** Do you require your students to follow these moral structures, framework, and guidelines to be more effective practitioners?

**Goenkaji:** This is true because morality is the foundation of the entire path of Vipassana. If the foundation is weak, the structure of meditation will collapse and one will not benefit. When people go for a course, they must follow five precepts for ten days. After the course, they are their own masters. Many of them find that these precepts are good and should be followed throughout their life; they start to live a moral life. Without morality, *sammā samādhi* or right concentration of the mind cannot be achieved.

**Question:** You use the word 'wisdom' a number of times. So, Vipassana assumes that wisdom is inherent and sometimes there are defilements that need to be eliminated and then natural, spontaneous wisdom will emerge?

**Goenkaji:** This is true. The so-called surface of the mind, which is a very small part of the mind, keeps on working at this level. But the larger part of the mind is constantly a prisoner of its own habit pattern. It is constantly reacting to the sensations on the body. If one feels a pleasant sensation, one immediately reacts with craving. If the sensation is unpleasant, immediately there is aversion. So, sensations are there throughout the day, all the time. Vipassana teaches one to feel the body sensations and remain equanimous. Thus, one starts changing the habit pattern by understanding the entire physical and mental structure, which is constantly changing and in flux.

**Question:** Given this sort of intimate relationship between mind and body, modern research is looking at the biochemistry of the brain and a lot of work is being done on using chemicals to cure mental illness. How does Vipassana view the developments in the biochemistry of the brain, particularly in treating mental illness?

**Goenkaji:** Having experienced the Buddha's practical teaching and having studied his original words in the Pali language, I realized that he was not the founder of any religion but a scientist.

He understood that at the apparent level one seems to react to sensual objects. When a shape, a form, a colour comes in contact with the eyes, there is a sensation. Similarly, sound for the ear, smell for the nose, taste for the tongue, touch for the body and thought for the mind.

As soon as something comes in contact with a sense organ, another part of the mind recognizes it and evaluates it based on past experience. Depending on the evaluation, one feels pleasant or unpleasant sensations

and one reacts with either craving or aversion. Thus, one reacts to the world, to the shape and the form. The Buddha used the word 'āsava' (Sanskrit: āśrava), which means the defiling flow. This results in a flow of biochemicals, which is very intoxicating. Again, one begins to react to it and so the āsava becomes stronger and the vicious circle begins. This happens with all the defilements of the mind. Every defilement of the mind generates the secretion of particular biochemicals, which start flowing.

**Question:** You have taken pains to emphasize that the practice of Vipassana is essentially secular and can co-exist with one's faith or the practice of one's religion. Yet it does derive from the teaching of the Buddha. This teaching makes some essentially Buddhist assumptions about reincarnation, about aspects of the subtle mind, etc.

**Goenkaji:** The Buddha never taught Buddhism. He never made a single person 'Buddhist'. The entire teaching of the Buddha, which is contained in about 55,000 pages, including commentaries and sub-commentaries, does not use the word 'boudhb' or 'boddh' anywhere. In our research, we found that until about 500 years after the Buddha, the word 'Buddhism' or 'Bouddh Dharma' was never used. When we started using such words, the Buddha's teaching was degraded. The Buddha was totally against casteism: one is not high or low because of one's birth. He was against sectarianism of all kinds.

His teaching is so clear. Vipassana is not a religion at all and there is no place for prayer in the Buddha's teaching. Somebody may show you the path but you have to work for your own salvation. The Buddha said, 'I can only show the path.' The Buddha only showed the path; one has to make the entire journey oneself.

**Question:** What is the work of the teacher?

**Goenkaji:** The teacher shows the path. One must walk on the path and experience it step by step. Unless somebody walks on the path, one cannot reach the goal. Every step takes one nearer to the goal. But every step has to be taken by the person himself—there is no gurudom. The teacher cannot liberate you; you have to work out your own liberation.

**Question:** So what are the qualities of a perfect teacher?

**Goenkaji:** One must have a good understanding of the technique so that there is no deviation.

One should experience for oneself, at least to a certain extent, so that one can guide others.

One must have a lot of love, compassion and goodwill for others.

One must teach selflessly without expecting money, power, name or fame in return.

These are the four qualities on the basis of which we train people to become teachers.

Sometimes, one starts teaching and starts asking for money, which is totally prohibited in Dhamma. Every teacher must have a means of livelihood. The teaching of

Dhamma must be free service.

**Question:** You learned this teaching from your master in Myanmar at a time when you were struggling with problems of psychosomatic ailments. You used to get headaches and you went to this teacher to learn Vipassana to address a specific problem. Could you tell us what happened?

**Goenkaji:** He totally refused to teach me Vipassana, saying that if I wanted to treat the migraine, I should go to a doctor. He said that I was devaluing the great spiritual teaching of my own country by trying to use it to cure a physical ailment. This response attracted me even more towards his saintly personality. He told me to come back only if my aim was to purify my mind.

When I expressed doubt about conversion to Buddhism, he asked whether my religion had any objection to learning morality—*sīla*. Then, he said, "One cannot lead a moral life unless one had control over one's mind. Otherwise, at the depth of the mind, the behaviour patterns remain the same. In Sanskrit, you have a word, 'prajña'. *Prajña* will help you to purify the mind at the deepest level."

But I was still hesitant that this is Buddhism and these people don't believe in Soul, they don't believe in God. After a few months I decided to try it. I was an egocentric person who thought I was very intelligent. This ego made my migraine so severe. A change started coming within me after my first course and the defilements started passing away. I started to live a happier and more peaceful life. Hundreds of my Indian friends went to the same teacher and experienced the same results.

**Question:** You mentioned this aspect of happiness. There are different notions about happiness. Popular culture, popular media tells us to get the best car or a beautiful wife or handsome husband to be happy. What is your notion of happiness?

**Goenkaji:** The happiness that comes from these pleasures is not true happiness. It is transient and bound to turn into misery sooner or later. This kind of happiness is full of agitation, therefore it is unstable. Eternal happiness is something beyond mind and matter. One starts with equanimity of the mind. One tries to maintain equanimity as long as possible. Then, with purification of the mind, one transcends the entire field of mind and matter and that is the state of real happiness.

**Question:** Is that *nirvana*?

**Goenkaji:** One may call it *moksha* or *mukti* or somebody else may call it God Almighty. We are not here to quarrel about the words.

**Question:** Have you reached the experience of that stage?

**Goenkaji:** I simply say that I am a tremendously changed person from when I started forty-five years ago. I am a much happier person and I teach to share my happiness with others.

**Question:** Do you have any aspirations or goals for yourself, or will you simply carry on and surrender to the future?

**Goenkaji:** The goal comes naturally, step by step, if I practice properly. I don't have to worry about that.

I also want to do what I can to dispel the misunderstandings about the Buddha's teaching in this country. We have great respect for the Buddha. However, much of what is said about the Buddha's teaching is totally wrong, totally baseless.

I feel that the greatest son of our country was discarded. He got glory around the world but we have missed his teaching. Let us make use of his teaching, especially now when the country needs it so much. There is so much division because of casteism, because of communalism, sectarianism; there is so much unhappiness in the country. If we follow his teaching, all these divisions will go away and we will have a peaceful, prosperous and strong country. 🙏

#### 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)

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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.**

#### 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.)

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#### 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). 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: 98220-29400.

[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.]

#### VIPASSANA IN KOREA

The third ten-day Vipassana course in Korea was successfully organized from 16 to 27 April 2003. The course was conducted in Dabo temple (Chung-Book, Goesan-Gun chungchun-Myun, Sansongry 392-10) for 59 participants. The Korean Vipassana Committee has decided to organize two more courses in August at the same venue and more courses thereafter.

**Contact:** Dhammakorea Committee, 4th Floor, Seon Nam B/D, 21-28 MyeongLyoong-Dong 2-ga, Jong Lo-Goo, Seoul, South Korea, Pin 110-522. Tel: 82-2-745-2155; Mobile: 82-016-708-2156; Fax: 82-2-719-5052.

Email: [dhamma\\_korea@yahoo.co.kr](mailto:dhamma_korea@yahoo.co.kr)

Website: <http://cafe.daum.net/dhammakorea>

#### NEW APPOINTMENTS

##### Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Ramesh Pandit, *Bhopal*

2. & 3. Mr. Sushil & Mrs Beena Mehrotra, *Varanasi*

4. Mr. Savit Pinthusophon, *Thailand*

##### Children's Course Teachers

1. Ms. Deborah Poland, *USA* 2. Mr. Israeli Hertzog, *Israel*