

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, as taught by S. N. Goenka

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Sukarāni asādhūni,
attano abhitāni ca;
yaṃ ve hitaṇca sādhuṇca,
taṃ ve paramadukkaraṃ.*

Easy to do are things that are unwholesome
and harmful to oneself,
but extremely difficult to do is that
which is beneficial and good.

—Dhammapada 163

THE PRACTICAL WAY OUT OF SUFFERING

by S. N. Goenka

(The following is from "The Clock of Vipassana Has Struck" published by VRI.)

Question: More than all the Buddhist interpretations of the universe, it seems that the most important understanding for the practice is the realization of the Four Noble Truths.

S. N. Goenka: Yes, because these Four Noble Truths are universal truths. Nobody can deny the First Noble Truth, the reality of suffering. Association with undesirables [undesirable objects, people, situations] and disassociation from the desirable brings suffering. So the First Noble Truth, the truth of suffering, of misery, is universal. The Second Noble Truth, the cause of misery, looks different from the inside and from the outside. It seems that I am miserable because something happened outside that I didn't want to happen, or something didn't happen according to my wishes. But deep inside, everyone can realize: "The misery I am suffering is caused by my reaction of craving or aversion. I like something, and I generate craving. I dislike something, and I generate aversion." This Second Noble Truth is common to all.

So, too, the way to come out of misery is common to all, because you have to eradicate the root of your misery, where craving and aversion start. At a gross level, a good way to do that is to practice *sīla*—that is, don't perform any action, physical or verbal, that will disturb or harm other beings, because simultaneously it will harm you. Then work with *samādhi*; control your mind. But mere control is not sufficient; you must go deep and purify your mind. Once it is purified, craving and aversion are gone, and you have

reached the stage where there is no misery at all. It's all so scientific; people accept it so easily. Of course, if we keep fighting over dogma, difficulties arise. But I say, just practice and see: "Are you suffering or not? Isn't this the cause of the suffering? And isn't it eradicated by practicing in this way?"

Question: Perhaps at the intellectual level, one can come to understand this reasoning about the Four Noble Truths, but how is it possible to explain, in a way that is understandable for the common person, that life is suffering and that the practical realization of this Noble Truth can lead to freedom from suffering?

S. N. Goenka: This is *dukkha*—this is a universally bitter truth which cannot be eliminated by ignoring it or by turning away from it. We cannot close our eyes to it and wish it away. We cannot make it go by any speculation or argument. To accept the reality of *dukkha* is to accept the truth. When we accept the truth of *dukkha*, only then can we seek a way to come out of it.

Can there be any impediment to accepting the truth of *dukkha*? How evident is this truth, how clear is this fact? How the lives of all living beings are infused with *dukkha*! We cannot even imagine how great is the suffering of all sentient beings. In this tiny span of time while I am engaged in speaking these sentences, on this earth countless smaller beings are being devoured and crushed in bloody jaws; they are being ruthlessly swallowed without any pity. Can we ever measure their agony, their pain, their *dukkha*?

Even if we leave aside the suffering of the sentient

beings of the animal kingdom, how immeasurable and limitless is the *dukkha* of man alone? In this one moment of existence, how many sick people in the hospitals of the world are groaning in agony? How many, having sensed impending death, are crying in vain, in fear and anguish? How many, at the loss of their wealth, prestige, their position, their power, are beset at this moment with pain? Who can have any reason for not accepting the truth of suffering while living in this universe where there is suffering everywhere?

We certainly do not wish to say that in life there is only *dukkha* and not a vestige of any pleasure. But are the pleasures of the senses really something that can be called happiness? Does not that glitter of happiness contain within it the shadow of pain? There is no sensual pleasure which is permanent, unchanging, everlasting. There is not a single pleasure in the sensual sphere which one can enjoy with satisfaction forever. All pleasures are impermanent, are changing, must come to an end. Whatever is impermanent is unsatisfactory, after all. When we get attached to something because it seems pleasurable to us, how great is the sorrow when that pleasure is no more; the pain becomes intense.

In the eyes of the world, a person may be considered very happy or even consider himself very happy. How long do people enjoy such pleasures? How quickly does the momentary brightness turn to darkness! As much as a person gets involved in and attached to these pleasures, to the same degree he involves himself in inevitable suffering. But one who enjoys pleasantness with detachment—clearly understanding its impermanent nature—is always safe from the suffering when pleasure ends. Therefore, while enjoying these pleasures, if we are aware of their changing, impermanent nature, if we are aware of the inherent *dukkha* in them, then we remain free of the pain that comes along when these pleasures end. To see *dukkha* in our pleasures is to see the truth which destroys *dukkha*; this is a righteous way of life which ensures our well-being.

The purpose of seeing the truth of *dukkha* is that as soon as the *dukkha* raises its head, we see it, we apprehend it, and at once extinguish the fire of this *dukkha* so it cannot spread. If we are aware of the *dukkha* involved in attachment to pleasure, then we will not allow the fire to spread. While enjoying the pleasure, we will tend not to get tense or excited, and when the pleasure ends, even then we won't become miserable, because all along we have understood the ephemeral nature of pleasure. So, the ceasing of the pleasure does not necessarily become a cause for suffering.

Everyone, without any exception, experiences some of the truth of suffering, but it is only when the

suffering is experienced and observed objectively, rather than indulged in, that the truth of it becomes beneficial. Then it becomes a Noble Truth. To cry, to whimper, to writhe in pain because of some physical suffering is, no doubt, seeing the truth of suffering, but to observe and understand the suffering underlying the apparent enjoyment of boisterous laughter, wine and song is to really see the Noble Truth of suffering.

As long as we are unable to observe the real nature of sense pleasures, we shall continue to cling to them, we shall continue to yearn for them—and this is, after all, the main cause of all our suffering.

So, if we are to fully understand, fully comprehend *dukkha*, then we have to understand and consider the subtle reality. At the level of experience, within the framework of one's own body, one observes the transitory, impermanent nature of reality and thus realizes the nature of the entire mind-matter universe. The world of the senses is impermanent, and whatever is impermanent is suffering.

To understand and to observe this reality is to comprehend, to appreciate the First Noble Truth; and it is this understanding of the Noble Truth of suffering which can take us toward freedom from all suffering.

Question: Often we are able to understand and accept at the intellectual level what has been said but still miss what the deepest cause of our suffering is.

S. N. Goenka: At the root of all our suffering there is always some attachment, there is always some craving. Let us try to understand desire more thoroughly, more completely and in greater depth.

We are constantly experiencing an infinity of cravings. We see a form with our eyes which seems beautiful, and our desire is stimulated. We hear something, we smell something, taste something, touch something tangible which is pleasant, and at once desire it. Our attachment raises its head. Similarly, when we recall some sense pleasure which gave us intense pleasure—we at once become desirous of experiencing it again. Or if we imagine some sense pleasure which we have not so far experienced, then the craving to experience it manifests itself.

The desire for the objects of these six senses arises because the objects of the senses make us restless. For what we do not possess, there arises a strong craving. We get only dissatisfaction from what we have. Where there is clinging, there is dissatisfaction, and where there is dissatisfaction, there has to be clinging. Dissatisfaction with what is and craving for what is not, both these keep us miserable.

Even if we were to realize the suffering of greed and clinging at an intellectual level, still we could not come out of this misery by means of such intellectual

knowledge. Throughout life, we have been involved in a spirit of greedy competition. Right from childhood, the constant desire has been to get ahead of others. In the mad spirit of competition, life has become a free-for-all—the law of the jungle, survival of the fittest prevails. Life has become tense and full of restlessness and striving.

But where do we find happiness and well-being in this rat-race, when before we achieve the object of our desire, we are disturbed with discontentment. In our efforts to achieve, we lose the equilibrium of our minds. And having succeeded in our achievement, instead of enjoying the satisfaction of possession, we become still more agitated to acquire more, to hoard more.

All such activity—which in its beginning begets anxiety, restlessness, tensions, suffering; which brings more of these undesirable states of mind as it expands; and which ends in more suffering—how could this seeming progress at the material level usher in an era of peace and prosperity?

This does not mean that householders should shun all material activity and spend their lives in poverty. People must work to eliminate their own poverty as well as that of others too. They should really work hard but also maintain a balanced mind while they are engaged in work. If, under the influence of attachment and craving, they were to lose their human dignity, peace and equilibrium, despite having amassed material wealth they certainly would not have achieved any real happiness. To achieve real happiness, one must maintain equilibrium of the mind, reasonableness of the mind.

The disease of clinging and competition spreads like an infectious illness and constantly keeps on spreading throughout humanity. Mankind thus loses peace and tranquillity. This inordinate competition and desire thus becomes the breeding ground for our misery, not our happiness. Peace lies in keeping it at bay. Peace lies in keeping it at arm's length, peace lies in keeping ourselves beyond the reach of the tentacles of inordinate craving and useless competition, and in keeping our mind always balanced and equanimous.

Question: In face of these situations which we encounter daily, what is the way to end the suffering and agitation that is in us?

S. N. Goenka: If a thing arises due to a certain cause, it can certainly be eradicated by eradicating the cause. Suffering, we have seen, arises because of craving and aversion. If these are completely eliminated, then as a matter of course, suffering will also be eliminated.

It is easy to accept this truth at the theoretical level but so difficult to realize it at the experiential level. And unless one experiences in practice the eradication of the causes, the resultant end of suffering can never

be attained. A truly liberated person does not merely expound the theory of the eradication of suffering; he shows the way to achieve this end. Thus, the way to come out of misery is essentially practical, not merely theoretical.

To eradicate the sources of suffering—craving and aversion—one must know how and where they arise. Through personal experience, a liberated person discovers and then teaches that they always arise whenever there is a sensation. And a sensation arises whenever there is contact of a sense-object with a sense-door—of material vision with the eyes; of sound with the ears; of odor with the nose; of taste with the tongue; of touch with the body; of thought with the mind.

We must eradicate craving and aversion at their source—that is, where the sensation arises. To do so, we must develop the ability to be aware of all the sensations within the body. For this purpose, we should train our minds to become sharp and sensitive enough to feel the sensations at all levels. Along with this distinct awareness, we must also develop the faculty of maintaining equanimity towards all the sensations—pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral. If we maintain this awareness and equanimity, we will certainly not react; when sensation arises, one will not again generate craving or aversion. 🌸

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

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

<http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html>

<http://www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters/index.html>

Note: The subscription charges for the Vipassana Patrika and Newsletter have been increased because of the increased expenses of publication and dispatch.

Annual Subscription: Rs 30.00; Life Subscription: Rs 500.00

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NB Donations to VRI have 125% Income Tax exemption.

CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

<u>Date</u>	<u>Place</u>	<u>Eligibility</u>	<u>Registration</u>
9-11	Andheri	13-16 yrs	6 & 7-11
30-11	Mulund	Std. 5 to 7	27 & 28-11
7-12	Matunga	Std. 5 to 7	4 & 5-12
14-12	Andheri	Std. 5 to 7	11 & 12-12

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

Registration Phone No. (4 to 7 p.m.): Tel: (022) 2683-4820

Course Addresses: **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W). **Mulund:** Mulund College of Commerce, Sarojini Naidu Road, Near Ration Office and Court, Mulund (W).

Matunga: Amulakh Amichand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, Near S.N.D.T. College, King's Circle, Matunga (C.R.).

[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.]

GOENKAJI'S DHAMMA TOUR—NORTH INDIA

Goenkaji and Mataji will be touring Delhi and Jaipur from 29 December 2003 to 10 January 2004. Their tentative itinerary is as follows:

- 30th Dec.: Visit to *Dhamma Patṭhāna* and *mettā* to students.
31st Dec.: Group Meditation and discussion with Vipassana teachers and trustees.
1st Jan.: Anapana to ten-day course students at *Dhamma Sota*.
2nd Jan.: Public talk at Talkatora Stadium from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.
3rd Jan.: Visit to *Dhamma Tibar* and *mettā* to students.
4th Jan.: Discourse from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon and thereafter *mettā* to one-day students at Logicstat Farmhouse.
5th Jan.: Departure to Jaipur.
6 to 10 Jan.: Various programs at Dhamma Thali and Jaipur.

EXECUTIVE COURSES AT DHAMMA TAPOVANA

The following ten-day courses have been arranged in *Dhamma Tapovana*, Igatpuri for high-ranking government officials and business executives.

- 23 November to 4 December 2003: (Hindi/English)
7 to 18 December 2003. (Hindi/English)
28 December to 8 January 2004 (English only - mainly for executives from the West.)

Registration for all the executive courses will be done at:
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403.
Tel. [91] (02553) 244076; Fax: (02553) 244176;
Email: info@giri.dhamma.org

PROGRAMS AT DHAMMA GIRI IN DECEMBER

22nd to 24th December 2003: Workshop for assistant teachers
24th December 2003: VRI Research Council Meeting
(One-day course has been organized at Global Pagoda on 25th December 2003.).

GOENKAJI'S INTERVIEW ON ZEE TV

Zee TV is broadcasting a program called *Urja* featuring Goenkaji every Sunday at 9:00 a.m. 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: *Urja*, Zee TV, Post Box No. 1, Andheri (W), Mumbai 400 099.
Email: response@zeenetwork.com
(Please put 'Urja' in the subject line.)

NEW VIPASSANA CENTER IN VENEZUELA

Land has been recently acquired for the first Vipassana center in Venezuela. The property is approximately ten hectares in size, with electricity and water supply (including a large water tank) and one storage building. The property is located in the countryside, ninety minutes from the city of Merida, a University city in the Andes Mountains. It has road access to the main road. Because the sky is so blue in this area, the nearby town is called Azulita. The word "Azul" is Spanish means "blue". Goenkaji has named the new center *Dhamma Mariyādā* (Discipline of Dhamma).

Construction is expected to start soon. For more information about the new center and about Dhamma service for construction, please contact:
Vipassana Venezuela, Email: info@ve.dhamma.org.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers

Mr. Rémi Oriot & Mrs. Marie Fouilleul-Oriot, *France*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

Mr. Jeong Soo & Mrs. Dong Hwan Lee, *South Korea*

Children's Course Teachers

1. Dr. (Ms.) Surekha Bhalerao, *Mumbai*
2. Mr. Pares M. Thakkar, *Thane*
3. Mr. Ram Menghrajani, *Ulhasnagar*
4. Mr. O. N. Vakole, *Ulhasnagar*
5. Mrs. Mamata Sarcar, *Kolkata*
6. Ms. Kumkum Rawat, *Kolkata*
7. Mrs. Hemlata Shah, *Jabalpur*
8. Dr. (Mrs.) Vandana Sangram Jondhale, *Nanded*
9. Mrs. Sujata Mahendra Deshpande, *Nanded*
10. Mr. Gautam Marutu Bhave, *Nanded*
11. Mr. Sharad Kumar Chalikwar, *Nanded*
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19. & 20. Mr. Teck & Mrs. Yanni Wong, *Dubai, UAE*
21. Mrs. Shiva Ahyaee, *Iran*
22. & 23. Mr. Roger Foxius & Mrs. Ineke Sommer, *Belgium*

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