

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Tisso imā, bhikkhave, vedanā.
Katamā tisso?
Sukhā vedanā, dukkhā vedanā,
adukkhamasukhā vedanā.
Imāsam kbo, bhikkhave, tissannaṃ
vedanānaṃ pariññāya ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko
maggo bhāvetabbo.*

There are, meditators, three types of *vedanā* (sensations). What are the three? They are pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations and neutral sensations. It is, meditators, for knowing these three types of sensations in totality that the Noble Eightfold Path should actually be practised.

—*Saṃyutta Nikāya* 3.5.29

THE IMPORTANCE OF VEDANĀ

Vipassana Research Institute

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

The Pali term *vedanā*, rendered in English as feeling or sensation, is derived from the root 'vid', which means 'to experience'. When an object comes in the range of a sense organ, a simple contact is thereby established with the mind, which experiences that object as sensation or *vedanā*. Therefore, the key to direct experience (*paccanubhoti*), is *vedanā*, since through it we actually encounter and experience the world. As stated in the Pali texts—

*Yā vedayati'ti vedanā, sā vedayitalakkhaṇā,
anubhavanarasā...¹*

That which feels the object is *vedanā*, its characteristic is to experience, its function is to realize the object...

It follows that in order to realize anything at the experiential level, one has to work with *vedanā*.

The Buddha described *vedanā* in various ways. In the *Bahu-Vedanīya Sutta* of the *Majjhima Nikāya*², he enumerated and analyzed several types of sensations by groups—two types, three types, five types, six types... eighteen types, up to one hundred and eight types.³ However, when defining it more precisely, he spoke of *vedanā* as having both mental and physical aspects. Without mind, matter alone cannot feel anything. It is the mind that feels, but what it feels has an inextricable physical element—the *sukhā-vedanā* (pleasant sensations), *dukkha-vedanā* (unpleasant

sensations) and *adukkhamasukhavedanā* (neutral sensations).

For the actual practice taught by the Buddha, it is this physical aspect of *vedanā*, which is of particular importance, since it is the most direct and tangible way to experience the impermanence (*anicca*) of ourselves, and so to develop wisdom. *Anicca* is a fact to be realized not by merely relating it intellectually to the outside world. Rather, it must be experienced internally. We must experience ourselves as we really are—each a transitory phenomenon, changing every moment. This experience of *anicca* at the level of sensations results in the gradual dissolution of attachment and egotism. Describing the importance of the physical aspect of *vedanā* for the realization of *nibbāna* (liberation), the Buddha said—

*Yathāpi vātā ākāse, vāyanti vividhā puthū;
puratthimā pacchimā cā pi, uttarā atha dakkhiṇā.
Sarajā arajā cā pi, sītā uṇhā ca ekadā;
adhimattā parittā ca, puthū vāyanti mālutā.
Tathevimasmim kāyasmim, samuppajanti vedanā;
sukhadukkhasamuppatti, adukkhamasukhā ca yā.
Yato ca bhikkhu ātāpī, sampajaññaṃ na riñcati,
tato so vedanā sabbā, pariñānāti paṇḍito.
So vedanā pariññāya, diṭṭhe dhamme anāsavo,
kāyassa bhedā dhammatṭho sañkhyam nopeti
vedagū'ti.⁴*

Just as in the sky different winds blow from east and west, from north and south, dust-laden or dustless, cold or hot, fierce gales or gentle

breezes—many winds blow. So also within the body arise sensations, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. When a meditator, striving ardently, does not lose his constant thorough understanding of impermanence even for a moment, such a wise person fully comprehends all sensations. Having thus comprehended sensations, within this life he becomes freed of all defilements (and becomes an *arahant* or *vedagū*). Such a person, who is *vedagū* (one who completely understands the sphere of sensations), being established in Dhamma, after death attains the indescribable state beyond the conditioned world because he knows sensations thoroughly (their arising and passing away and also the state beyond sensation).

Again emphasizing the fact that the sensation manifests in the body, he said—

*Seyyathāpi, bhikkhave, āgantukāgāraṃ, tattha puratthimāya pi disāya āgantvā vāsaṃ kappenti, pacchimāya pi disāya āgantvā vāsaṃ kappenti, uttarāya pi disāya... dakkhiṇāya pi disāya... khattiyā pi... brāhmaṇā pi... vessā pi... suddā pi... Evameva kbo, bhikkhave, imasmim kāyasmim vividhā vedanā uppajjanti. Sukhā pi vedanā uppajjati, dukkhā pi vedanā uppajjati adukkhamasukhā pi... Sāmisā pi sukhā..., sāmisa pi dukkhā..., sāmisa pi adukkhamasukhā... Nirāmisā pi sukhā... nirāmisā pi dukkhā... nirāmisā pi adukkhamasukhā vedanā uppajjati.*⁵

Suppose, meditators, there is a public guesthouse. People from the east, west, north and south come and dwell there. People who are Kshatriyas, Brahmins, Vaishyas and Shudras come and dwell there. Similarly, meditators, various sensations arise in this body—pleasant sensations, unpleasant sensations and neutral sensations arise; pleasant sensations with attachment, unpleasant... neutral... arise; pleasant... unpleasant... neutral sensations without attachment arise.

The above passage clearly describes the process of Vipassana, whereby through observation of sensations in the body (*kāyasmim*), a person can be fully liberated from suffering. First, it describes different types of sensations (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral), which a meditator easily understands and experiences by practising Vipassana. By constantly observing the sensations in the body, one experiences the characteristic of arising and passing away. This objective unremitting observation is *sampajañña* (constant thorough understanding of impermanence). According to the Buddha, one who practises *sampajañña* is a wise person, knowing experientially how sensations arise and pass away within the body as a result of the repeated contact of sense objects. This person knows that when one begins to relish the

pleasant sensations and abhor the unpleasant sensations, misery is generated and multiplies. Without *sampajañña*, one remains unaware of the deeper unconscious level of the mind. It is in the darkness of ignorance that an unconscious reaction begins towards the sensations. This momentary liking or disliking soon develops into craving or aversion, the reaction repeating and intensifying innumerable times before it bursts forth into the conscious mind. If importance is given only to what happens in the conscious mind, then because of one's ignorance of the underlying reality, one becomes aware of it only after the reaction has occurred repeatedly. One allows the spark of sensation to ignite into a raging fire before trying to extinguish it, resulting in unskilful physical and vocal actions. By practising *sampajañña*, one learns to observe the sensations within the body objectively, permitting each spark to burn itself out without starting a conflagration. By observing the physical aspect of *vedanā*, one becomes aware of the reality that the *vedanā* that has arisen is impermanent. With this understanding, one remains equanimous and prevents any reaction from occurring. Constant observation of *vedanā* in this manner by *anicca-bodha* gives rise to detachment. With this attitude, one can prevent not only fresh reactions of craving and aversion, but also eliminate the very habit of reacting, and thereby gradually come out of suffering by transcending all the sensations and becoming what the Buddha calls a *vedagū*—

*Sabbavedanāsu vitarāgo, sabbaṃ vedamaticca vedagū so.*⁶

One who is completely detached from *vedanā*, and has gone beyond the entire (field of) *vedanā* (to reach *vedanā-nirodha*) is called *vedagū*.

Emphasizing the arising of sensation in the body which results in the attainment of *nibbāna*, the Buddha said in the *Paṭṭhāna*—

*Pakatūpanissayo—kāyikaṃ sukhaṃ kāyikassa sukhassa, kāyikassa dukkhassa, phalasaṃpattiyā upanissayapaccayena paccayo. Kāyikaṃ dukkhaṃ kāyikassa sukhassa, kāyikassa dukkhassa, phalasaṃpattiyā upanissayapaccayena paccayo.*⁷

Pleasant bodily sensation is the cause for the arising of pleasant sensation of the body, unpleasant sensation of the body, and attainment of fruition (*nibbāna*) in relation to the strong dependent condition. Unpleasant bodily sensation is the cause for the arising of pleasant sensation of the body, unpleasant sensation of the body, and attainment of fruition (*nibbāna*) in relation to the strong dependent condition.

And,

*Pakatūpanissayo—kāyikaṃ sukhaṃ upanissāya... vipassanaṃ uppādeti, maggaṃ uppādeti, abhiññaṃ uppādeti, samāpattiṃ uppādeti.*⁷

Dependent on pleasant bodily sensations... Vipassana arises... Path arises... Knowledge arises... attainment (of *nibbāna*) arises.

This shows that the Buddha gave foremost importance to sensation for the realization of the ultimate truth. As he himself said—

*Ajjhattaṃ ca bahiddhā ca, vedanaṃ nābhinandato;
evaṃ satassa carato, viññānaṃ uparujjhati.*⁸

By moving with full awareness, remaining detached from the sensations within and without and observing them objectively, one reaches the cessation of consciousness.

Feeling the same pleasant or unpleasant sensations in the body, an ignorant person reacts to them and multiplies his or her *saṅkhāra*. In contrast, a Vipassana meditator with the wisdom of *sampajañña* emerges from the old habit pattern and becomes fully liberated. Thus, our bodies bear witness to the truth. By observing sensations, we can advance from merely hearing about that truth to experiencing it directly for ourselves. When we meet it face to face, we become transformed by the truth and faith arises in us, based not on blind belief but on experience. ☺

Notes: (All references VRI edition)

1. *Dhammasaṅgaṇi Atthakathā, 1, Kāmāvacarakusala-padabhājanīyaṃ*
2. *Majjhima Nikāya* 2.88
3. *Samyutta Nikāya* 2.4.270
4. *Ibid.* 194, 2.4.260
5. *Ibid.* 195, 2.4.262
6. *Suttanipāta*, 534
7. *Paṭṭhāna* 1.1.423
8. *Suttanipāta* 1.117

NEW DHAMMA HOUSE IN VADODARA

A Dhamma house has been established in Vadodara to fulfil the needs of Vipassana meditators in Vadodara city as well as the surrounding towns such as Dharmaj, Anand, Padra, Karjan, Bodeli, Bharuch, and Godhra. Goenkaji has named it *Dhamma Bhavana* (House of Dhamma).

Dhamma Bhavana has a constructed area of about 340 sq. meters as well as a large compound. An additional 95 sq. meters of construction is possible. This Dhamma House will be able to seat over 100 meditators. In addition to group sittings, children's courses, and one-day courses, training workshops for Dhamma servers, introductory Vipassana sessions, Pali workshops, and distribution of Vipassana books, CDs and cassettes will be organized here. Donations to Vadodara Vipassana Samiti qualify for income tax exemption u/s 80G. For more details, contact:

Vadodara Vipassana Samiti, 301 'B' Tower, Alkapuri Arcade, Opp. Welcomgroup Hotel, R. C. Dutt Road, Vadodara 390 007. Tel: 0265-2341375, 2343302; Fax: 2337361; Email: vvs04@hotmail.com

THE VESSEL OF THE DHAMMA

(The following is an extract from Goenkaji's opening address on 1st March, 1989 at the Annual Meeting at Dhamma Giri.)

Words are only words; to attract others to the Dhamma, far more useful is the example you set by your way of life. Therefore the great Teacher said, *Brahmacariyaṃ pakāsetha*—Be a shining example of the Dhamma by applying it yourself. This is the best way to encourage others to practise it.

Suppose you point with your finger in a particular direction and say, "This is the right path that all must follow to reach liberation. This is the direct way to happiness." Before examining the path, people will first look at your finger. If it is stained with dirt or blood, what confidence can they have in the way to which you point? Develop purity in yourself if you wish to encourage others to follow the path of purification.

The teaching is extraordinary in its simplicity: a certain cause will produce a certain effect. To remove the effect, eliminate the cause. Reacting with craving to pleasant sensations or with aversion to unpleasant ones will immediately give rise to suffering. If, instead of reacting, one smilingly observes and understands the impermanence of the experience, then no suffering will arise. This is Dhamma, the Universal Law, applicable to all regardless of religion, sex, social group or nationality. It is this essence of Dhamma that we seek to offer to others in its pristine purity.

Remember that an empty vessel has nothing to offer others. Therefore fill yourself with the Dhamma. Discover real peace and harmony within yourself, and naturally these will overflow to benefit others.

May you keep walking on the path for the good, happiness and liberation of many! May you be successful in your attempts to spread Dhamma, to spread peace and harmony!

FIRST VIPASSANA COURSE IN KYRGIZSTAN

Twenty-three students (21 female and 2 male students) successfully completed the first course in Kyrgyzstan. The course was held in the campus of a special rural school, about 85 kilometres from the capital city, Bishkek from 7th to 17th July.

At the end of the course, the participants formed a small team of volunteers to promote weekly group sitting. They plan to organize another ten-day course sometime next year. A Jesuit priest in Bishkek, who had sat three ten-day Vipassana courses in India and Nepal has offered a place for weekly group sittings. His offer will help meditators to quick-start activities for mutual strengthening in Dhamma. The students were very grateful to Goenkaji and Mataji for giving them such wonderful Dhamma.

'Value Inculcation Through Vipassana' Workshop

About 20 teachers participated in this workshop, the first to be held at *Dhamma Sikhara*, the picturesque Vipassana centre at Dharamshala. The feedback from the participants was generally positive—most felt that it had opened a new avenue in their thinking on the issue of inculcation of values in education. About 40 children aged 12 to 15 years participated in the children's course, which was part of the workshop. Most of them were 'old' Anapana meditators. The observing teachers were impressed that the children were so well behaved and worked so seriously.

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>

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers:

Mr. Rolf Beyer & Mrs. Evelyn Beyer-Peters, *Germany*
Mr. Sebastian Graubner & Mrs. Lucy Moorman, *Germany*
Ms. Eveline Schwarz, *Switzerland*
Mr. Philip Pfeifer, *USA*

ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Every **third** Sunday at **Ghatkopar**.

Contact: Tel 2510-1096, 2516-2505

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
22.8.2004	Matunga	13-16 years	19 & 20.8.2004
12.9.2004	Andheri	10-12 years	9 & 10.9.2004
12.9.2004	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	9 & 10.9.2004
10.10.2004	Andheri	13-16 years	7 & 8.10.2004
10.10.2004	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	7 & 8.10.2004
07.11.2004	Matunga	10-12 years	4 & 5.11.2004

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

Registration Timings: 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Course Venues: **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNDT College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 5601-9977. **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W), Tel: 2633-6671. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: 252-2693.

[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.]

DHAMMA DOHAS

Sukha dukha mein ulajhā rahā, sadā rahā santapta;
Sukha dukha lāge eka sā, hoyā nabīn uttapta.
Entangled in joy and sorrow, one is always in torment;
When joy and sorrow seem alike, one is free from torment.

Jo upaje so bhanga ho, Vipasyanā se dekha;
kaisā mangala shuddhi patha, rahe na dukha kī rekha.
Whatever arises passes away, observe this through Vipassana;
What a pure path of happiness, not a trace of suffering remains!

With warm regards and much metta,

DHAMMA BOOKS

501, Bhosale-Shinde Arcade, 5th floor, Old Natraj Theatre,
Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411 004. Phone: 020-4012826,
Email: dhamma@pn3.vsnl.net.in

Sukha dukha āte hī rahen, jyon āve dina raina.
Tū kyūn kbove bāvalā, apāne mana kī caina?
In life, there is joy and sorrow—like day and night;
Why do you foolishly cast away your peace of mind?

Anacāhī hove kabhī, manacāhī bhī hoyā;
Dhūpa chāha kī zindagī, kyā nāce kyā roya?
Undesirable things may happen as much as desirable.
Life contains light and shade, so why dance or weep?

With best wishes and metta,

PARAMI

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