

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Yo sahaṣṣaṃ sahaṣṣena
saṅgāme mānuse jine
ekañca jeyyamattānaṃ
sa ve saṅgāmajuttamo.*

Though one may conquer
a thousand men a thousand times;
yet the one who conquers oneself
is the noblest victor.

—Dhammapada 103

The Ten Soldiers of Māra by Sayagyi U Ba Khin

(The following is condensed from a translation of a discourse by Sayagyi U Ba Khin to Vipassana students during a course. It was first published in the Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal and has been adapted for the Newsletter.)

You have to be very careful. You have to stand firm and face many difficulties, so that you can know true *anicca* (impermanence) with your own experience. You must work very hard—that is why we repeatedly remind you. Difficulties come at this stage of the course. During the time of our great benefactor, Saya Thetgyi, students would experience various difficulties in meditation, such as not being able to feel the object of meditation at all. When asked to focus their attention on the top of their heads, they couldn't feel anything. During *Anapana* they couldn't feel the area around the nostrils. Some could not feel their breath while they were breathing. Some said that they could not feel their bodies. While you are here, you too will find these things happening. Sometimes you will not be able to feel sensations and you won't be able to maintain your attention.

Some think that they have attained *nibbāna* (the ultimate reality) when they cannot feel their bodies. If you cannot feel the presence of your body, just hit it with your hand, or punch yourself and see. There is no need to ask the Teacher. You will know if your body is there or not. These uncertainties are rather disconcerting, aren't they?

The nature of *vipallāsa* (mental distortion, corruption) makes fools of you. These are undesirable defilements hidden inside people. They are present in every one of us. When there is understanding of *anicca* the defilements have to leave; but they don't want to—they want this understanding to leave instead. The *nibbāna* nature of *anicca* is very potent, so Māra (personification of negative forces) fights against it. The *Padhāna Sutta* describes the ten soldiers of Māra. We have to be careful of these ten soldiers, as they are the destroyers of meditation.

The first soldier of Māra is the desire to enjoy sense pleasures. Some people have come to meditate but not to attain *nibbāna* at all. They come with ulterior motives such as, "If I become close to Sayagyi, who knows so many people in high positions, I may get a promotion in my job." There are some persons like that. They come with greed in their hearts. They cannot be successful in their meditation. There must be no greed. When you asked for the technique of

Vipassana you said, "*Nibbānassa sacchikaraṇatthāya me bhante*"—in order to realize *nibbāna*... I will teach you to understand the Four Noble Truths, but if you are not interested, and intend to take your time about it, what can I do?

The second soldier of Māra is unwillingness to reside or be happy in a quiet place such as a forest dwelling.

Yesterday somebody planned to run away. He got up early and packed his belongings. He planned to sit at half past seven with you all, and then leave while I was checking the students at eight. He was planning to run like mad, catch a bus, and get home. He thought he would collect his bags at some later date. Luckily, I don't know why, I gave the one hour *adhiṭṭhāna* (strong determination) sitting earlier, and he had to sit that one hour. There he was—trapped! After the *adhiṭṭhāna* sitting, Māra left him, and he didn't want to leave anymore.

When unwillingness to reside in a quiet place arises, the person wants to leave and run away. He may inform us that he wishes to leave or he may just quietly leave. The second soldier does not want to stay in a quiet secluded place because of the turmoil inside.

The third soldier of Māra is hunger—not being satisfied with food. One student came with boxes full of food and said that he could not stay without eating, so I said, "In that case you may eat, but try one, two or three days and see for yourself." However, he was not hungry at all during the ten days.

Another student said that after about three days of eating only twice a day, he would become shaky, and that in all his life, he had never done that for more than three days at a time. He asked for permission to eat and I said, "Of course, if needed." When he got here, he meditated the first day, the second day, and so on, and was not hungry at all. One does not feel hungry if the meditation is progressing, but only when the meditation is not going well. Something inside is making one hungry. One cannot control the hunger then. Once the meditator is established in meditation, he does not feel hunger anymore.

The fourth soldier of Māra is the craving for various tastes and foods. We provide the best food we can so that everyone will eat well and enjoy it.

What happens when very tasty, delicious food is eaten?

Doesn't this stimulate more craving for food? Is it possible to eat without any appreciation of the taste of the food? Only the *arahant* (fully liberated person) can do this. Wasn't the purpose of your coming here for this course to get rid of the *kilesa* (mental impurities), to get rid of the *taṇhā* (craving)? If you keep your eyes closed nothing can be seen, so you will not be craving and clinging for visual objects. The same goes for hearing. There is no one here with a tape recorder or radio playing songs. You don't have to listen to them. It is the same with smell. Nobody here goes around wearing perfume, so there need not be any craving and clinging for any sense of smell. There is nothing here for you to feel that will give you pleasant bodily sensations. But the tongue—can it avoid taste? Only if you don't eat, and in that case a doctor would have to give you glucose injections for sustenance. Taste will occur when food comes in contact with the tongue. If you eat less tasty food, then craving and clinging for taste will be reduced.

Since you have come here to get rid of your defilements of craving, we should help you by providing the best environment so that they don't increase, shouldn't we? You are trying to annihilate them. We don't want to eradicate craving on the one hand, and increase it by food on the other. We do not provide an evening meal. By not providing it we have so much less to do. It is better for us and better for you too, because you are sure to become drowsy if you eat an evening meal. So you can do without it. If you eat well in the morning and at lunchtime the two meals will provide enough for your body's requirements.

The fifth soldier of Māra is drowsiness, sloth and torpor. You can understand this. Even Mahā Moggallāna (one of Buddha's chief disciples) suffered from it. Some of you can fall asleep while sitting. When I used to go for my meditation retreats, there was an old man who accompanied me. We sat in Saya Thetgyi's meditation centre in the meditation room and he sat behind me wearing a big yogi shawl. A little while later, he started snoring aloud. Normally there are not many people who can sit and snore, but there are many meditators who can do this—sit and snore, then wake up! This is called *thīna-middha* (sloth and torpor). *Thīna-middha* cannot be avoided. When insight and wisdom become sharpened, the peaceful nature of *nibbāna* is felt; and when the wholesome and unwholesome natures clash, a reaction occurs and produces heat. Then the person becomes drowsy and sleepy.

If you feel drowsy at times, just breathe a bit harder; you've lost your *samādhi* (concentration). This is a kick from within. Your *samādhi* has gone. If you lose your *samādhi*, focus your attention on the nostrils again, breathe harder and try to calm down. Sometimes when the *aniccaviijā* (the wisdom of impermanence) becomes stronger, you experience the meeting of physical and mental experience in your body and your insight-intuition becomes very sharp and very strong. Then there's a very strong kick from within and you lose your understanding of *anicca* and become disoriented. You can't understand what happened and you ask the Teacher.

If such a thing happens suddenly, there are two ways to cope with it. One method is to try and work to get re-established in *samādhi*, as I have told you. Or, you can go outside and wake yourself up and the reaction will pass away. Do not go and sleep when this reaction happens. I am giving you methods to cope. They are important from the practical aspect. Drowsiness always occurs when *sankhāras* (impurities) come up. Then we have to apply *anicca* firmly. It should not be just paying lip service to *anicca*, not just

from the mouth. It should be the actual knowledge of the changing nature of the body with the awareness of sensations. If you practise in this way, you will overcome and win.

The sixth soldier of Māra is not wishing to be alone and being afraid of solitude. Some cannot sit in one room but keep changing rooms, looking for company and feel frightened when alone. One female student was afraid of solitude. Her house is very big but she did not dare to stay by herself in any room; she needed a companion at all times. She came here to meditate and brought a maid with her. She asked my permission to keep the lights on when she meditated in her room, so I allowed her to do so. Not only that, but somebody had to sit quite close to her when she meditated. She did not dare to stay alone. When she was by herself she felt flushes all over her body. After staying for a course, she got a little better. After the next course she was in the little cell by herself in the dark. She came regularly for ten days every month and benefited quite well from it. She was first class in being afraid but her fear is gone now.

The seventh soldier of Māra is doubt about whether one can be successful in meditation. I suppose this is true of everybody—wondering if his or her meditation will be successful or not. (That girl is laughing.) You *can* succeed. The important thing is to wash away the *akusala* (unwholesome conditioning), and *kilesa* (mental defilements) embedded in us. That is important.

The eighth soldier of Māra is becoming proud and arrogant when the meditation is successful. When the meditation improves, one can feel it inside. The defilements become lighter and one tends to get conceited and arrogant, and think, "That fellow does not seem to be doing too well. I'd better help him." I am saying this from my personal experience.

A long time ago when this meditation centre was started, there was no Dhamma hall. There was a ten-foot square hut that was here when we bought the land. One day one student came out after the morning sitting and said, "Look." He hitched up his *longyi* and there were little lumps all over his thighs and legs just like the skin of a plucked duck. The kick from within was so strong that all those lumps appeared. He hitched his *longyi* up and showed us saying, "Please look. See how strong the kick from within was. You too, please try hard, please try hard." The next day he could not meditate. He could not feel any sensations and had to approach Sayagyi for guidance. When he preached, there was ego in it, the "I" was in it, "I am doing well. These people don't seem to be getting anywhere." He played very good soccer, was very short-tempered, ready to hit, strike and punch. When a very bad-tempered person with a lot of heat has a kick from inside, it shows up on the body surface.

This is why I am telling you all not to preach. If there is anything that you want to ask, ask me. If there is anything that you want to say, tell me. If you progress in your practice, just stay quiet and proceed with your own meditation.

The ninth soldier of Māra refers to the Teacher and concerns becoming well known, receiving many offerings, gaining much respect and homage. I receive a lot of homage and offerings. I have to control myself to not get conceited. Look here, isn't it likely to cause conceit? I have to guard myself. We started this work here for the people of the Accountant General's office so they could meditate in their free time, but there are so few of them here now. We started this not on the basis of money, but on the basis of Dhamma. Any office worker who meditates for ten days becomes a member. The admission fee is ten days of meditation. Isn't it

good? No need to pay a cent of subscription. Just meditate steadily, guard your practice, do not lose it. We started from that and have come to this. Money can't do it. It was Dhamma that did it. We believe in this, and we do not have any money either.

This centre does not belong to me. U Ba Khin should not get conceited, saying this is U Ba Khin's centre. I do not own it. It belongs to the Vipassana Association of the Accountant General's Office. I will have to leave if they drive me out. See, how nice! I do not own it. I have to be re-elected each year. Only if they re-elect me will I be here. If they say that they have found someone better than me, and elect that person, it's over for me. Or some members from the committee may not like me, they may say I talk too much and elect someone else. Then I would have to leave. I do not own the place.

The tenth soldier of Māra is following a false Dhamma, creating a new and special Dhamma, in order to acquire abundant offerings, praising oneself and looking down on others. This is why I do not want to say too much about others. Let others speak as they like about us, isn't that right? Some teachers get attached to receiving offerings, so as to get more students. They teach what the students would like—false teachings, teachings that are not Buddha's teachings—simply because they want the homage and offerings. They stop working with true Dhamma. That is the tenth soldier of Māra.

Dhamma dissolves sorrows and miseries and gives happiness. Who gives this happiness? The Buddha does not give it, it is the *aniccavijjā* (wisdom of impermanence) inside you that gives it. We should practise Vipassana so that the *aniccavijjā* will neither stop nor disappear. How do we practise? Focus your attention on the four elements, be calm, cultivate *samādhi* and do not let *sīla* (moral precepts) be broken.

Telling lies is the one that I am afraid of among the precepts. I am not afraid of the others, because, by lying the basis of *sīla* is weakened. When *sīla* is weakened, *samādhi* will get weakened and *paññā* (wisdom) will also get weakened. Speak truthfully, work regularly, build up *samādhi* and pay attention to what is happening in your body; then the nature of *anicca* will come up naturally.

Our benefactor Saya Thetgyi said, "Very fast, vibrating incessantly, helter-skelter, broken up, burnt down, the destruction of the body—these are the signs of impermanence." It is the body that is changing. The thought that knows that the *rūpa* (matter) is changing is the *nāma* (mind). When the *rūpa* changes and has gone, the *nāma* which knew about the changed-and-gone *rūpa*, also is changed and goes. Both *rūpa* and *nāma* are *anicca*. Keep this in your mind, be aware of it.

Focus your attention on the top of your head, and move down through the whole body, from the top of the head to the forehead and then the face, from the face to the neck, the neck to the shoulders, from the shoulders along to the hands. Wherever the mind goes it may be like touching with a small torch and feeling the heat wherever the torch touches, wherever the mind goes. Why? Because there is burning and annihilation taking place inside; it is the innate nature of combustion of atomic units within. This is certainly present. Learn to be sensitive to it so that you can feel it. Try it with an attentive mind and you will know.

Once the meditation is practised and once one becomes aware and observes with Vipassana knowledge, the defilements, the *samudaya akusala* (arisen unwholesomeness) cannot remain much longer. They have to

leave gradually and when they are all gone, the person becomes controlled and stable, and able to live well.

How long will one have to work? Until all the immeasurable, uncountable old *akusala kamma* (unwholesome actions) accumulated along one's journey through the *samsāra* (cycle of rebirth) are eradicated by observing the nature of *anicca*. Then one becomes *sotāpanna* (one who has reached the first stage of saintliness, has experienced *nibbāna*), and *ariyapuggala* (noble person). This cannot be achieved easily.

To reach the final *nibbāna* where all the *saṅkhāras* are abolished is very far off, but wouldn't you like to try and see for yourself the minor *nibbāna*? If it could be tasted only after death, these foreigners would never practise this meditation. They have tasted a bit, liked it and have kept coming back from near and far. They send their friends and acquaintances who also come from afar. Why is this? Because they have experienced the taste of Dhamma.

It is important that there is a Teacher to help students to have a taste of Dhamma. But students have to work to experience the taste. What is this taste called? It is called the *Dhamma rasa*.

"*Sabba rasaṃ dhamma rasaṃ jināti.*"

The taste of Dhamma is the best.

You have to try to work hard to get that taste. Just as the human monarch enjoys human pleasures, the *devas* (celestial beings) enjoy the *deva* pleasures and *brahmās* (higher celestial beings) enjoy *brahmā* pleasures; the noble *ariyas* (saintly persons) such as the Buddha and *arahants* can also enjoy the taste of the Dhamma that they have obtained. You must try hard until you too can enjoy this taste, but please do not work to the extreme, without moderation. Try to work according to the schedule we have given, work at the right time, to the fullest, with great care and effort. ☸

Pali-English / Hindi Classes Dhamma Giri

Three-month Pali-English intensive course will be conducted from 18 May to 18 August 2010. (Western students are required to come on student visa only).

One-month Pali-Hindi intensive course will be conducted from 1 May to 30 May 2010. (Students are required to come to Dhamma Giri by 29 April 2010.)

Eligibility: three 10-day courses and one Satipatthana course; one year regular practice of two hours at home daily; observance of five precepts since last one year; and minimum 12th class pass. Recommendation by Area Teacher or Senior Assistant Teacher is necessary. Last date for submission of forms: 31 January 2010.

Contact VRI for admission forms or visit: <http://www.vridhamma.org/Pali-Study-Programme.aspx>

IN MEMORIAM

Mr Laxminarayan Khemka, Senior Assistant Teacher from Surat, Gujarat, passed away at home on 25 September 2009. He was 79 years old. Mr Khemka was an enthusiastic assistant teacher and conducted several courses all over India and in Myanmar.

Mrs. Usha Modak, Vipassana Teacher from Pune, India passed away peacefully on 29 September after a brief illness at the age of 86. She was alert till the end and refused life-support. She played a very important role in the spread of Vipassana, especially in Maharashtra. She was one of the earliest teachers to be appointed by Goenkaji and conducted courses all over the world.

May they be happy, peaceful and liberated!

Children's Courses in Mumbai

To serve children's courses in Mumbai, call 98200-22990.

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
15-11	Ghatkopar	9-16 years	12 & 13-11
6-12	South Mumbai	9-16 years	3 & 4-12
20-12	Ghatkopar	9-16 years	17 & 18-12
27-12	Goregaon	9-16 years	23 & 24-12

Course Timings: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration:** 11 am to 1 pm

Course Venues: Ghatkopar (W): SNTD School, New Bldg., Cama Lane, Opp. Vidyut Soc. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Goregaon (W):** Siddharth Municipal Hospital, Opp. Motilal Nagar Post Office. Tel: 2308-1622. **South Mumbai:** Tel: 2308-1622.

NB Please: *bring cushion, *register on specified phone numbers, *inform in advance if unable to attend after registration, *arrive on time for the course.

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ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācaryas:

1. & 2. Dr. Hamir & Dr. (Mrs.) Nirmala Ganla, *Pune*
To serve Goa, Konkan and Western Maharashtra including Dhammānanda, Dhamma Puṇṇa, and Dhammālaya
3. & 4. Dr. Roop and Mrs Beena Jyoti, *Nepal*
To serve Dhamma Citavana and Dhamma Tarāi

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācaryas:

1. Mr. Janak Raj Adhikari, *Nepal*
To assist centre teachers in serving Dhamma Citavana
2. Brig. Gen.(Retd) Purna Prasad Dhakal, *Nepal*
To assist the centre teachers in serving Dhamma Birāṭa
3. Mr. Bhakta Prasad Poudyal, *Nepal*
To assist the centre teachers in serving Dhamma Tarāi
4. Mr. Kenneth Truedsson, *Sweden*
To serve Dhamma Sobhana

Senior Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Kishore Desai, *Mumbai*
2. Mr. John Jacob, *Kottayam*
3. Mr. B. Ravendran, *Kochi*
4. Mrs. Renuka Mehta, *Madurai*
5. Mrs. Norma Liu, *Taiwan*
6. & 7. Mr. Laith & Mrs. Melanie Wark, *Australia*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers:

1. Mr. Ghanashyam Gautam (a) U Soc Thu, *Myanmar*
2. Mr. Michael Abbott, *UK*
3. Mr. Adam Roberts, *UK*
4. Ms. Annie Del' Bove, *France*

Children's Course Teachers:

1. Samanera Anuradhapura Chandaratana, *Sri Lanka*
2. Mr. Sagar Kulkarni, *Latur*
3. Mrs. Niruben Patel, *Surat*
4. Ms. Pravina Parmar, *Surat*
5. & 6. Mr. Utkarsha & Mrs. Kinnary Desai, *Navsari*

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Apāne apāne karama ke, hama hī to karatāra;
Apāne sukha ke dukha ke, hama hī jimmedāra.*
Of our own actions, we ourselves are the authors;
For our happiness or unhappiness,
we alone are responsible.

*Jaba taka mana meṅ rāga hai, jaba taka mana meṅ dveṣa;
Taba taka dukha hī dukha hai, miṭeṅ na mana ke kleṣa.*
As long as there is craving in the mind,
as long as there is aversion in the mind,
there will be suffering, only suffering;
the mind cannot be purged of affliction.

*With much mettā,
A Vipassana meditator*

*Jitanā gaharā rāga hai, utanā gaharā dveṣa;
Jitanā gaharā dveṣa hai, utanā gaharā kleṣa.*
Deeper the craving, deeper is the aversion.
Deeper the aversion, deeper is the affliction.

*Rāga sadṛṣa nā roga hai, dveṣa sadṛṣa nā doṣa;
Moha sadṛṣa nā mūḍhatā, Dharama sadṛṣa nā hoṣa.*
There is no disease like craving, there is no frailty like aversion;
there is no folly like ignorance, there is no sanity like Dhamma.

*With best compliments from
MOTILAL BANARSIDASS*

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