

# Vipassana Newsletter

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

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## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Siladassanasampannam,  
dhammattham saccavedinam;  
attano kamma kubbānam,  
tam jano kurute piyam.*

One who is perfect in virtue and insight,  
is established in the Dhamma, and  
has realized the Truths—  
is held dear by all.

—Dhammapada 217

## Fulfilling the Teaching of the Buddha

S. N. Goenka

The following is a condensed and edited version of a discourse given by Goenkaji on Day 41 of a 45-day course.

You have to live Dhamma very seriously, to make best use of this valuable human life. You come to courses to eradicate as much impurity as possible and also to understand Dhamma more deeply. As layers of ignorance are eradicated, the Dhamma becomes clearer and you think, “Oh, this is Dhamma!”

There cannot be any doubt about Dhamma. The teaching of the Buddha becomes so clear. Here is a person who is teaching Dhamma not to establish a sect of believers in a particular philosophy. Not at all. The Buddha is the Compassionate One. Out of compassion he teaches Dhamma so that people can come out of misery. He has himself come out of misery by practicing Dhamma, not merely by believing in the theory of Dhamma. Such a person would never give emphasis to mere belief. His entire emphasis will always be on the creative part of Dhamma, the practice of Dhamma.

The Buddha said that throughout his life he taught only two things: suffering (*dukkha*) and the total eradication of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*). That’s all he taught. How will establishing a sect eradicate *dukkha*? How will establishing a belief in a particular philosophy eradicate *dukkha*? A Buddha is not interested in all those things. He is interested only in actual *dukkha-nirodha*. All his teaching is directed only towards the actual eradication of *dukkha*.

But these two things, *dukkha* and *dukkha-nirodha*, logically become four. To understand *dukkha*, you must understand *dukkha samudaya*, how *dukkha* arises. To realize *dukkha-nirodha*, you must understand *magga*—the way, process or path leading to the eradication of *dukkha*. Thus we have the Four Noble Truths.

Now what if the Buddha had been interested only in

the theory of these four truths: “Oh people of the world, understand there is *dukkha*, understand that craving is the cause of *dukkha*, understand that there is total eradication of *dukkha* and understand that there is a way to the total eradication of *dukkha*.”? If all his teaching had ended there, he would have been no different from any other teacher of those days or later times.

But that was not his interest. He had become the Buddha not by mere belief in these four truths. He knew that just accepting the Four Truths does not help. One has to do something about them—in Pali language, this is *kicca*, to be done or put into practice. Then one can say, as the Buddha did, “I have done what is to be done about these Four Truths. The work is done—*katam*.”

However good a philosophy may be, however true it may be, it will not help people to come out of their misery unless the *kicca* becomes *katam*. Each individual must do whatever has to be done concerning the Four Noble Truths.

This is why a Buddha never teaches mere philosophy, and anyone who makes the teaching a philosophy does not benefit from it. Each person must work as the Dhamma intended, as the Buddha intended. And however much they succeed in doing what must be done concerning these four truths, to that extent they have come out of their misery.

For the First Noble Truth of *dukkha*, what has to be done? Explore the entire reality of it, the totality of it—*pariññeya*. If even a small part is left out, you have not explored it all. You can say you have explored the totality only when you have transcended the field of suffering and gone beyond it. And transcending *dukkha* is *dukkha-nirodha*, the eradication of misery.

At the same time, exploring *dukkha* involves

observing the Second Noble Truth of *dukkha-samudaya*, the arising of misery. You observe, “Look how *dukkha* starts!” And by understanding that, you keep on eradicating the tendency of the mind that is responsible for the arising of *dukkha*. You observe until no more *dukkha* arises; you have done what is to be done concerning the Second Noble Truth.

And how did you do it? How did you reach the stage of *dukkha-nirodha*? Every step you have taken to explore the entire field of *dukkha* is part of the process through which you have passed, the path over which you have walked. You have walked step by step over the entire path. You have accomplished the Fourth Noble Truth, the truth of the path leading to the eradication of suffering.

By doing what is to be done concerning the First Noble Truth, you automatically do what is to be done concerning the other three. And how do you do what is to be done concerning the first? How do you explore the entire field of *dukkha*? You start experiencing *dukkha*, you start feeling *dukkha*. In the language used by the Buddha, the words are *vedana*, *anubhavana*. You must feel it. You must experience it. You are not here simply to play an intellectual game. You start observing sensations.

The exploration started with *dukkha-vedanā*—unpleasant, gross sensation. As you understood in detail its reality by feeling it, you also understood that there is an ingrained tendency to react with aversion toward this unpleasant sensation. And it also becomes clear that every time you react with aversion, you become more miserable. Every reaction of aversion brings misery. You realize, “Oh, there is an unpleasant feeling in the body, and I am reacting with aversion. That means I am making use of my misery to multiply misery. Instead I must make use of this misery to come out of misery.” And it becomes clear that if you do not react, you do not multiply misery. You understand, “Oh, the best thing is for me not to react.”

Working in this way with unpleasant sensations, sometimes you succeed in not reacting and sometimes you fail. The old habit pattern keeps on overpowering you at times and you react with aversion. Then you remember that there shouldn’t be any reaction of aversion and you have a few moments when you do not react. This is how you start your work. Exploring the field of *dukkha* at the level of unpleasant sensations, you are experiencing *dukkha*, the First Noble Truth.

Then a time comes when the unpleasant sensations turn into *sukha-vedanā*—pleasant sensations—partly because some *sañkhāras* have been eradicated and partly because this is the law of nature. From time to time changes naturally come, whatever the reason may be. You have started experiencing pleasant sensations, subtle vibrations.

Now, if your understanding of Dhamma is not very clear, you won’t know what to do. The old tendency of reacting to the pleasant sensations with craving will start overpowering you, and you will keep on reacting.

You will think, “This is wonderful! The unpleasant has gone, now the experience is pleasant. I am free from misery. Dhamma has worked, I am liberated! Look, there are pleasant sensations, everything is good.” And you are generating craving, craving.

But as the unpleasant sensations sooner or later turn into pleasant ones, the pleasant sensations eventually turn unpleasant. This is the law of nature. Someone who understands properly will think, “Look, because I developed clinging to the pleasant sensations, when unpleasant sensations arise again I become more miserable than I was in the first place. Oh, my aversion toward unpleasant sensations is the result of my clinging toward pleasant sensations.” The more one clings to pleasure, the more one generates aversion toward pain.

In daily life also, when something desirable happens, you become elated and develop attachment to it. And when it passes away and something undesirable happens, you become depressed. Because you have developed attachment to the desirable, you are bound to have aversion toward the undesirable. Now it is becoming clear at the depth of the mind, where the sensations are experienced. Then wisdom starts arising with the experience: “Every time I react with craving toward the pleasant sensations, I am sowing seeds of misery, nothing but misery. I am allowing myself to be overpowered by ignorance. This is misery.”

Because the pleasant sensations reinforce the tendency to react with craving, actually they are misery. This is more dangerous than unpleasant sensation, which is obviously *dukkha*. When experiencing the unpleasant, it is easy to remember that any aversion will be harmful; one thinks, “I’d better observe, I’d better wait, I’d better remain equanimous.” But when the pleasant experience comes, one reacts blindly. Instead one should realize, “Oh, this is a dangerous situation. This pleasant sensation is also *dukkha*.”

With this realization, one starts coming out of the habit of reacting with aversion toward the unpleasant and craving toward the pleasant. Gradually one changes the habit pattern of the mind and keeps working. When many of the *sañkhāras* have gone away, one starts experiencing calm, quiet and tranquil feelings.

What you call unpleasant sensation is no longer there. But what you call pleasant sensation also is no longer there. The pleasant sensations came like the flow of a river, or like waves on the sea, or like strong electric currents. There is no such thing happening now—just calmness, tranquillity and a very subtle oscillation. This is what the Buddha called *asukhamadukkha-vedanā*, neither *sukha* nor *dukkha*. It is not the so-called neutral sensation you experienced when you first started meditating. That was a superficial sensation that you eventually found boring; you developed aversion toward it.

But now you do not become bored; you wish to remain immersed in the experience. You think it is wonderful because it is so peaceful and quiet. And so a

new danger arises. First was the danger of reacting with aversion toward unpleasant sensation, then the danger of reacting with craving toward pleasant sensation. Now there is the danger that ignorance will overpower you. You think, “Ah, this is what I wanted. I’ve got it now. This tranquil, peaceful experience is *nibbāna*.” In fact you are mistaken. Yes, you are nearing *nibbāna*, but the experience of tranquillity is still within the field of mind and matter, the sensory field.

If wisdom arises, one recalls, “Look, this is still not beyond mind and matter. There is an oscillation going on. There is *anicca*.” And this very subtle oscillation disturbs you. It disturbs the feeling of quietude, tranquillity, and you think, “Oh this is misery.”

Only when you realize this can you come out of suffering and experience something beyond it. Otherwise you remain stuck at this stage, as someone might become stuck with the free flow of subtle vibrations. The gross, unpleasant sensation is *dukkha*. The pleasant sensation is *dukkha*. And this subtle oscillation, which is neither pleasant nor unpleasant, this stage of tranquillity is also *dukkha*.

Then the words of Buddha become clear: “*Yam kiñci vediyatiṃ taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*: Whatever sensation you experience is of the nature of *dukkha*.” You have to realize this reality. When you do, you transcend it and experience the stage of *dukkha-nirodha*, the cessation of suffering. Then one can say, “*Pariññāta*—I have explored the entire field of *dukkha*.”

And how have you explored the entire field of *dukkha*? By exploring the entire field of *vedanā*. When the Buddha says that you must explore the entire field of *dukkha*, he also says that you have to explore the entire field of *vedanā*. When he says that you must walk on the Noble Eightfold Path to come out of *dukkha*, he says you have to do so by exploring the entire field of *vedanā*: “*Tissannaṃ vedanānaṃ pariññāya ariyo aṭṭhaṅgiko maggo bhāvetabbo*—You have to practice the Noble Eightfold Path to explore the entire field of these three *vedanās*, pleasant, unpleasant and neutral.”

Similarly, when the Buddha tells you to practice the four *satipaṭṭhānas*, he says, “*Tissannaṃ vedanānaṃ pariññāya cattāro satipaṭṭhāna bhāvetabbo*—You have to practice the four *satipaṭṭhānas* by exploring these three *vedanās*.” Without exploring the entire field of *vedanā*, you cannot explore the entire field of *dukkha*. You can not fulfill even the First Noble Truth and can never fulfill the other three.

With all four *satipaṭṭhānas*—observation of the body, observation of sensation, observation of mind and observation of mental contents—you must keep on understanding the arising and passing of *vedanā* at the experiential level, from moment to moment. With all four *satipaṭṭhānas*, the Buddha emphasized the importance of exploring the entire field of *dukkha* at the level of *vedanā*. Without it, there is every possibility of clinging to some experience. You cannot transcend all sensory experiences unless you understand that every sensory experience is *dukkha*.

Thus everything taught by the Buddha must at a deeper level be with *vedanā*. This is true even of what is normally thought of as the preliminary step of observing *sīla*, the moral precepts—that is, abstaining from unwholesome actions of body and speech. For example, a situation has arisen where there is a strong likelihood that you will break a particular *sīla* by killing, or stealing, or performing sexual misconduct, or speaking lies and deceiving others, or becoming intoxicated. But you stop, you refrain from doing that. You are able to stop because you observe sensations in the body. Then you are not merely working at the surface of the mind. You are not merely restraining your physical and vocal actions. You are working at the deep mental level as well.

The urge to break a *sīla* originates because of the sensation that arises, pleasant or unpleasant. And because of this particular sensation, the volition in turn arises to do something physically or vocally that is not in your own interests or the interests of others.

However, when you are with sensation, you are working at the deepest level of the mind. And you are following the instructions of the Buddha to explore the entire field of *vedanā*. And as with *sīla*, when you practice *samādhi*, developing concentration, you have to remain aware of the sensations, pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. And when you develop your *paññā*, wisdom, you have to be aware of sensations. *Sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā*—the entire practice of the Buddha’s teaching must be with the awareness of sensation.

If you remain aware of sensation and understand that it is arising, passing, arising, passing, you will eventually reach the stage of *nirodha*. You will be able to say, “*Kataṃ buddhāna-sāsanaṃ*—The Buddha’s teaching, what he wanted me to do, has been done completely. *Natthi dāni punabbhavo’ti*—there is no new life for me. I have finished, I have done what the Buddha intended me to do, what the Dhamma intended me to do.”

Work diligently, intelligently, understanding Dhamma, understanding the pitfalls. Keep working hard to become firm in Dhamma and attain real happiness.

*Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ*—May all beings be happy! •

#### ADVANCED PALI-ENGLISH COURSE AT VRI

VRI is planning to introduce Advanced Pali-English residential course for the first time from mid-February to October end in 2008. Eligibility criteria: same as in the Basic Course plus completion of the Basic Pali course or equivalent. Area teacher’s recommendation is mandatory. Applications form is available on the VRI website. Last date for applying is December 2007.

#### IN MEMORIAM

Mr. Savit Pinthusophon, an Assistant Teacher of Vipassana, from Thailand, passed away on October 2, 2007 in Bangkok due to heart attack. He had just turned sixty.

A humble man and a tireless server, he gave many years of exemplary service to the growth of Dhamma in Thailand.

May he be happy, peaceful and liberated.

## CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

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

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
4 Nov	South Mumbai	13-16 yrs	2 & 3 Nov
11 Nov	Ulhasnagar	10-12 yrs	8 & 9 Nov
18 Nov	Ghatkopar	13-16 yrs	15 & 16 Nov
2 Dec	South Mumbai	10-12 yrs	29 & 30 Nov
2 Dec	Matunga	13-16 yrs	29 & 30 Nov
9 Dec	Andheri	10-12 yrs	6 & 7 Dec
9 Dec	Ulhasnagar	13-16 yrs	6 & 7 Dec
16 Dec	Ghatkopar	10-12 yrs	13 & 14 Dec

**Course Timing:** 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration:** 11 am to 1 pm.**Course Venues:** **Andheri (W):** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Ghatkopar (W):** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Opp Vidyut Society. Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR). Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **South Mumbai:** Tel: 2308-1622.**Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: (0251) 252-2693. NB Please: \*bring cushion, \*register on the specified phone numbers, \*inform in advance if unable to attend after registration, \*arrive on time for the course.**Three-Day Residential Children's Courses:**For girls (12 to 16 years): 11 to 13 Nov. For boys (12 to 16 years): 14 to 16 Nov. **Contact:** *Dhamma Saritā*, Khadavli Vipassana centre, Matoshri Vriddhashram, Sorgaon, Padgha, Tal. Bhivandi, Dist. Thane 421101 Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505.

## ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

**Ācaryas:**Mr. Gopal Sharan & Mrs. Pushpa Singh, Lucknow  
To serve *Dhamma Salila (Dehradun)*, *Dhamma Licchavī (Vaisbali)*, *Dhamma Bodhi (Bodh Gaya)* and *Vipassana activities in Bihar as well as Dhamma Lakṣhaṇa (Lucknow)* and *Dhamma Suvattḥi (Sravasti)*.**Senior Assistant Teachers:**Mr. Sushil Kumar & Mrs. Beena Mehrotra, Varanasi  
To assist the area teachers in serving *Dhamma Salila (Dehradun)* and *Dhamma Cakka (Sarnath)***NEW RESPONSIBILITIES****Senior Assistant Teachers:** Mrs. Manorama Tiwari, Lucknow**NEW APPOINTMENTS****Assistant Teachers:**1. & 2. Mr. Vinod Kumar & Mrs. Sudha Chiripal, Kolkata  
3. Mr. Bhardwaj Jairam Dass, Hissar 4. Mr. Debabrata Datta, Khardah 5. Ms. Shashi Kamal, Jaipur 6. Mrs. Charulata Roy, Rajkot 7. & 8. Mr. Dinesh & Mrs. Shobhana Shah, Ahmedabad 9. Mr. Mahesh Dutt Sharma, Jaipur 10. Mrs. Jayashri Shelat, Ahmedabad 11. Mrs. Tai, Ming Chiao (Wendy), Taiwan 12. Mrs. Weng Hsiu-Yueh, Taiwan 13. & 14. Mr. David & Mrs. Line Lander, Germany  
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## DHAMMA DOHAS

*Baira baira se nā miṭe, badhe dveṣa duṣkarma;*  
*Baira miṭe maitrī kiye, yabi sanātana dharmā.*  
Hatred does not cease by hatred;  
it breeds aversion and unwholesome deeds;  
By love alone hatred ceases; this is the eternal truth.*Maitrī karuṇā pyāra se, tana mana pulakita hoyā;*  
*Mānava jīvana safala ho, saba vidhi maṅgala hoyā.*  
Let the body and mind be suffused with love,  
goodwill and compassion;  
Let this human life become happy and fruitful in every way.*With much metta,*  
**A Vipassana meditator***Jyota jage phira dharmā kī, dūra hoyā aṅdbiyāra;*  
*Bahujana kā hita sukha sadhe, ho bahujana upakāra.*  
May the light of Dhamma arise again dispelling the darkness;  
For the good and happiness of many, for the benefit of many.*Kareṇ mitra se pyāra saba, yabi jagata vyavahāra;*  
*Lekina sajjana to kareṇ, bairi se bhī pyāra.*  
Everyone treats friends with affection; this is the way of the world;  
But the saintly person treats even his enemies with love.*With best compliments from*  
**MOTILAL BANARSIDASS**

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