

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*P³j±rahe p³jayato,
buddhe yadi va s±vake;
papañcasamatikkante,
ti^oasokapariddave.*

One reveres those worthy of reverence,
whether Buddhas or their disciples;
who have overcome all obstacles and
have rid themselves of grief and lamentation.

—Dhammapada 195

Goenkaji in the Dhamma Island of Sri Lanka—10 to 19 May, 2006

10 May 2006: Goenkaji set out for Sri Lanka early in the morning from Mumbai, accompanied by about three hundred Vipassana meditators. It has been more than a decade since his last visit to this sacred Dhamma Island. He earnestly wanted to visit Sri Lanka again. Therefore, when he was invited by the President of Sri Lanka, he readily accepted the invitation.

Goenkaji had travelled extensively in Sri Lanka during the 80s and early 90s. When the pioneering efforts of Ven. Siddhartha Ratwatte (formerly Mr. Brindley Ratwatte) and Mrs. Damayanthi Ratwatte had culminated in the establishment of *Dhamma K³ja* in the scenic mountains near Kandy, Goenkaji attended the inauguration of this first Vipassana centre in Sri Lanka.

In 2004, a meditator donated land for the second Vipassana centre, *Dhamma Sobh±*, at Kosgama, an hour's drive from Colombo but no construction had been done. However, in anticipation of Goenkaji's visit and because of the gentle encouragement of Ven. Ratanapala, the Bhikkhu Acariya from Sri Lanka who has been conducting Vipassana courses all over the world, there was a sudden surge of activity at *Dhamma Sobh±* in the last few months.

11 May 2006: Goenkaji was interviewed by a journalist from the Sunday Times before lunch. In the evening, he gave his first talk at the Sambodhi Viharaya. He has been invited by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court on behalf of Sambodhi Viharaya to give a series of talks there.

12 May 2006: This day was the full moon day of Vesaka (Vaishakha). Full moon days, no moon days and the eighth days of both halves of the lunar month are observed as Uposatha (Poya) days by many followers of the Buddha. In Sri Lanka, the Vesaka Poya is the most important Uposatha day. Goenkaji gave a talk in the morning and again gave a concluding talk in the evening. These talks at Sambodhi Viharaya on the Poya day were broadcast live on the national TV channel.

Goenkaji expressed great joy to see so many devotees coming to pay respect to the Buddha. The Eightfold Noble path shown by the Buddha is an *uju patha*, a straight path, leading one to liberation from all sufferings. One must understand that no God, no *deva*, no *brahma* or even a Buddha can liberate us from our bondages. One has to work out one's own salvation; the Buddha only shows the path.

One cannot hope to be truly happy without *s²la*—morality, *sam±dhi*—mastery over the mind and *paññ±*—experiential wisdom into the real nature of our existence. One begins to observe morality for the peace and harmony of the society but as one continues on the path of truth, realizing the reality as it is (*yath±bhuta*), one understands that morality is essential for one's own happiness.

He described how one starts with Anapana on a ten-day course, and having achieved some concentration of mind, one develops the ability to feel sensations below the nostrils above the upper lip. One then learns to observe the sensations throughout the body objectively, understanding their true nature of impermanence. Thus, the purification process of the mind begins. As one progresses on the path of Dhamma, selfless love, goodwill and compassion become second nature. A fountain of pure love springs forth from within.

In his talks, Goenkaji emphasized the non-sectarian nature of the teaching of the Buddha. The Buddha said to those who were unwilling to give a trial to this teaching that he was not interested in making them his disciples or snatching them from their teachers.

He told his opponents that they should give a trial to the technique of Vipassana, for only seven days. His gift of Dhamma was only for their welfare, for their emancipation from all sufferings. Goenkaji said that he follows the example of the Buddha. He requests all to give a trial of ten days to Vipassana meditation, the quintessence of the Buddha's teaching.

Everyone, whether Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Jew or Buddhist, wants to come out of misery. Buddha had shown the way out of misery. Anyone can practice the Noble Eightfold Path given by the Buddha. To understand the rational, scientific nature of the Buddha's teaching at the intellectual level is good but it is not enough. True benefit comes only from the actual practice.

For someone who practices Vipassana, the feelings of deep respect and gratitude to the Buddha come naturally. Anyone who follows the path of *s²la*, *sam±dhi* and *paññ±* is a true follower of the Buddha. It does not matter whether one calls oneself by this name or that name.

13 May 2006: Goenkaji met and answered questions from assistant teachers, trustees and Dhamma servers. A big group had travelled from Kandy to attend this meeting. Bhikkhu Acariya Ven. Ratanapalaji was also present. Goenkaji talked about the importance of having uniformity throughout the worldwide Vipassana organization. It will be more effective in the spread of Vipassana if there is uniformity in the teaching methodology and also in the principles that govern administrative matters.

Goenkaji requested Ven. Ratanapalaji to supervise the training of assistant teachers, trustees and Dhamma servers. Mrs. Ratwatte reported that all the course materials had been translated into Sinhalese.

In the evening, Goenkaji received visitors including the Speaker of the Parliament who had a keen interest in *Pariyatti* and was well versed in the *suttas*. Goenkaji explained the importance of *Pajjipatti* (meditation practice) and encouraged him to participate in a ten-day course.

14 May 2006: It was a momentous day for the Dhamma workers at *Dhamma Sobhā*. They had been working tirelessly for more than a month to create enough facilities to host a one-day course on a steep green hill including the laying of roads. Goenkaji was going to spend the day at the centre. The construction of the Teachers' residence was completed within just five weeks. A few meditators from the West had come to help, braving the heat, humidity and very basic facilities. A pre-existing thatched building and a couple of big temporary tents were used for meditation.

More than a thousand people joined the course. Pilgrims from India and other countries were seated in a temporary tent near the future Dhamma hall. Despite the heat, the humidity and the steep climb, all the pilgrims came to give their support to this centre. Goenkaji addressed them after lunch and narrated the important role of Sri Lanka in preserving the teaching of the Buddha.

When the great Indian Emperor Asoka became a follower of the Buddha's teaching, he gave up conquest through violent wars. Now his only aim was to conquer the hearts of the people of other countries. He wanted to serve them, not to rule them. His son Bhikkhu Mahinda came to Sri Lanka as a Dhamma *d³ta* (messenger of Dhamma) and since then, Buddha Dhamma has been diligently preserved in Sri Lanka. Asoka's daughter, Bhikkhuni² Sa^aghamittā brought a branch of the original Bodhi tree to this Dhamma Island. She also taught the Dhamma to many women in Sri Lanka. This ancient tree at Anuradhapura, the ancient capital of Sri Lanka, bears witness to more than 2300 years history of Buddha Dhamma here.

After India had lost the tradition of *Tipiṅkadharas* (those who have perfectly memorized the entire *Tipiṅka*), Sri Lanka convened the fourth *Sa^ag^gyana* (Synod) and committed the entire *Tipiṅka* to writing for the first time in a systematic manner. Without the words of the Buddha, the practice of Buddha Dhamma would have been lost. Myanmar and Sri Lanka supported each other in preserving the Dhamma and Vinaya. In addition, Myanmar kept the purity and the continuity of the practice of Vipassana.

In the evening, Goenkaji gave a short talk to the students who had gathered for the one-day course and to the local visitors. He went to the course site seated in a wheel chair and delivered his talk. It was pleasing to see numerous lay people dressed in white gathered on the verdant hill along with many Bhikkhus. Lay people (householders) used to wear white during the time of the Buddha and were often referred to as 'white-clothed laity'. Goenkaji told them that

for the *mettā* to be strong and effective, it has to come from deep within. For this, one must practice *mettā* with the awareness of sensations.

His return journey to Colombo was slowed due to heavy traffic of the Vesaka celebrations. Innumerable lanterns were lit along the streets and various scenes from the Buddha's life and Jatakas were depicted at public places drawing huge crowds. Many people had set up stalls along the road to offer free food and drinks to passers-by. It was on the full moon day of the Vesaka (*Vaishakh*) month that Buddha was born, attained enlightenment and passed away. Therefore, it is an immensely significant week for the followers of the Buddha.

15 May 2006: A very hectic and festive day for the pilgrims. Sangha Dāna was offered in Nagavihara at Kotte in Colombo in the morning. About 125 Bhikkhus from all the Nikayas came from various parts of the island to participate in the Sangha Dāna. Bhikkhus from Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, and Laos, as well as nuns attended this special occasion. The pilgrims patiently waited and joyfully served the bhikkhus. About 85 of the Bhikkhus who participated were old students of this tradition. The Bhikkhu Sangha gave their blessings to Goenkaji.

Goenkaji gave a brief speech in which he expressed his gratitude to the Sangha for accepting alms. He said that in some countries the teaching of Dhamma spreads primarily through the benevolent efforts of the Sangha. He then cordially invited the bhikkhus to join Vipassana courses for their own benefit and for the benefit of others.

In the evening, Kotte Sri Kalyani Samagri Dharma Maha Sangha Sabha, a 150-year old congregation of senior bhikkhus from various monasteries, felicitated Goenkaji and conferred on him the honorary title of *Pariyatti Visāraḍa* (Master of Doctrine) in deep appreciation of his immense and invaluable contribution to disseminate the Dhamma through very lucid and clear exposition of the original teaching of the Buddha and to bring solace and peace to thousands through the practice of Vipassana meditation by establishing the Vipassana centres in India and around the world."

The Maha Nayaka Thera commended Goenkaji's work. Ven. Chandavimala Mahathera who had rendered valuable help in the Pali project at the VRI spoke in Sinhala and Hindi. Referring to Goenkaji as Guruji as is customary among Indian meditators, he said, "So well-known is Guruji's work among serious practitioners that 'Goenka' doesn't need the addition of a title".

Ven. Ratanapalaji gave a short speech about how he first came in contact with Goenkaji. He also spoke in Hindi. He talked about Goenkaji's mission with his characteristic simplicity and brevity. Most of the pilgrims sat all around the central aisle witnessing the love and affection that their teacher was receiving from the Bhikkhu Sangha. Among the audience were many senior teachers of Vipassana including Mrs. Damayanthi Ratwatte.

In reply to the felicitation, Goenkaji said that he felt embarrassed by this honour from the Bhikkhu Sangha. He likened it to a grandparent lovingly caressing a child to encourage him. He said that he gained great strength for his Dhamma service due to the blessings of the Sangha.

16 May 2006: Goenkaji was scheduled to deliver a talk at the prestigious Bandaranayake Memorial International Convention Hall (BMICH) on invitation from the Ministry of Religious Affairs as part of the celebrations of the 2550th year of Buddha's *mahāparinibbāna*. People started arriving

around 9.30 am for the talk that was scheduled to begin at 10.30 am. Many Bhikkhus came to listen to his speech. The clergy and people from various religious traditions also attended his discourse here and at other venues.

Goenkaji delivered his speech to a gathering of about one thousand people. He explained his own experience and how he accepted the teaching of the Buddha despite his earlier deep prejudices against it. The Buddha was a super-scientist who discovered the root of the misery, and the way out of it, leading to ultimate happiness. Everything that arises in the mind has arisen with sensations on the body. One keeps on reacting to the sensations and generates more and more misery for oneself. If one learns to observe sensations equanimously with the understanding of impermanence, one starts to come out of misery. The discourse was followed by a lively session of questions and answers.

After the talk, the pilgrims set out on their pilgrimage but Goenkaji remained in Colombo. The pilgrims went to Anuradhapura, Dambulla and Polonnaruwa. They had earlier visited the Tooth Relic Temple in Kandy and Aluvihara—the site where the fourth *Sa^ag^yana* was held.

In the evening, Goenkaji met the Dhamma servers who were serving at *Dhamma Sobh[±]* and on the tour. These servers had been busy with their tasks that they could not attend earlier meetings. Ven. Ratanapalaji introduced them to Goenkaji and explained to the gathering the importance of selfless service.

Goenkaji said: "The gift of Dhamma excels all gifts. It is not only the teachers or assistant teachers who give the gift of Dhamma to students. All the servers who work in various fields that facilitate the work of the Principal Teacher and the assistant teachers are also integral part of this Dhamma *d[±]na*—the gift of Dhamma."

He said to them that there was a very strong need for a second centre in Sri Lanka. *Dhamma Sobh[±]* would benefit innumerable people with ripened *p[±]ram²s*, not only in Sri Lanka but from all over the world.

17 May 2006: Goenkaji was felicitated by the Prime Minister of the Government of Sri Lanka at a public function in BMICH. Later, he was felicitated by the President and conferred the title of *Jina S[±]sana Sobhana Pajipatti Dhaja*, (literally the banner of the practice of Dhamma that adorns the teaching of the Buddha) on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka. Heads of the Sanghas of various countries and their representatives were present. Goenkaji was requested to give a Dhamma talk.

He said that for peace to prevail in a country, the leaders of the country have to walk on the path of *s²la, sam[±]dhi* and *pa[±]ñ[±]*. He expressed his confidence that peace will come soon to this country that has such a long history of Dhamma. Vipassana will help very much in this regard.

Goenkaji was tired after travelling to two different venues and participating in two separate functions on the same evening, but he still found time to meet the people who were involved in the construction of *Dhamma Sobh[±]*. Most of these people had been working day and night in order to build facilities for the one-day course including the roads. They were delighted to have the opportunity to meet Goenkaji in person, and promised to complete the construction of *Dhamma Sobh[±]* within six months.

18 May 2006: Goenkaji received some visitors in the morning. In the evening, he gave a momentous talk at the Ramakrishna Mission in Colombo. The talk was translated into Tamil simultaneously by an assistant teacher from

Tamil Nadu who had come to Sri Lanka to spread awareness about Vipassana in the Tamil community.

The talk for the Tamil community in Colombo was scheduled to be held in a small public hall with capacity for about 250 people. However, the organizers realized the increased interest about Goenkaji's visit and requested Swami Atmaghananandaji to provide a bigger auditorium. Swamiji kindly arranged for a bigger auditorium. This proved to be very useful as about 800 people turned up for the talk. The Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament also came with his family.

Goenkaji told the audience how he himself had so many misconceptions about the Buddha's teaching in the beginning and how he found out from his own experience that the teaching was beneficial for one and all. He assured them that by practicing Vipassana, they will go closer to their cultural roots and that their culture will be strengthened.

The Sri Lankan meditators were excited and enthusiastic about Goenkaji's visit but they were also apprehensive because of the reports of his ill health. They were delighted to meet their teacher in person and were happy that he was in good health in spite of the busy schedule. They were very happy at the impetus Vipassana had received due to Goenkaji's visit. Goenkaji left Sri Lanka for Chennai on the afternoon of 19 May.

The recent pilgrimages of meditators from India to Myanmar and Sri Lanka indicate a reverse flow. For the people of these countries, Nepal and India were worthy of pilgrimage, as the holy places where the Buddha was born, became enlightened and taught Dhamma. Now the Vipassana meditators from India and other countries go to Myanmar and Sri Lanka out of respect, gratitude and devotion as they had played such an important role in keeping the purity of Dhamma and Vinaya.

At the end of the pilgrimage, local Sri Lankan meditators presented to each of the pilgrims a poster of the picture of the Bodhi Tree at Anuradhapura. This tree in many ways is symbolic of Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka. The Buddha Dhamma in Sri Lanka would benefit much from more support of *Pajipatti*. It is hoped that an Indian Dhamma Teacher's (Goenkaji's) visit will further nourish the tree of Dhamma that originally came from India such a long time ago and benefited the island for centuries while it was lost in India.

May peace and prosperity prevail in Sri Lanka! ☺

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I, Ram Pratap Yadav, declare that the above-mentioned information is true to the best of my knowledge.

Ram Pratap Yadav
Printer, Publisher and Editor

4 June 2006

CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

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

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
18 June	Ghatkopar	10-12 years	15 & 16 June
25 June	Matunga	13-16 years	22 & 23 June
2 July	South Mumbai	13-16 years	28 & 29 June
9 July	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	6 & 7 July
16 July	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	13 & 14 July
30 July	Matunga	10-12 years	27 & 28 July
6 Aug	South Mumbai	10-12 years	3 & 4 Aug
13 Aug	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	10 & 11 Aug
13 Aug	Andheri	13-16 years	10 & 11 Aug
20 Aug	Ghatkopar	10-12 years	17 & 18 Aug
27 Aug	JNPT	10-12 years	24 & 25 Aug

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

Course Venues: **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Babasaheb Ambedkar Marg, RTO Corner, Four Bungalows, Andheri (W), Tel:2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Ghatkopar:** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar West, opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086, Tel: 25101096, 25162505. **JNPT:** Trainee Hostel Bldg, Sector 3, Sheva Taluka, Uran, Navi Mumbai. 98923-87145, 98218-08488, 2747-2554. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. **Ulhasnagar:** Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Tel: (0251) 252-2693. **South Mumbai:** Times of India Bldg., Opp CST station. For registration, call 2308-1622 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.

FIRST VIPASSANA CENTRE IN KERALA

Kerala Vipassana Samiti has selected a five-acre piece of land in Cherianad Village, Chengannur Taluka, Alleppey district for the first Vipassana centre in Kerala. It is eight kms from Chengannur Railway station and well connected by good roads. It is about four hours drive from Trivandrum and Kochi airports. The cost of land is Rs. 32 lacs (3.2 million).

Kerala Vipassana Samiti is registered as a charitable trust and has been conducting courses since 1991. The Samiti has conducted 65 Vipassana courses in Kerala. It plans to conduct residential courses as soon as the land is acquired. Vipassana meditators wishing to offer help with the purchase of land and its development may contact: Mr. B. Ravindran, Tel: (0484) 2539891, Mobile: 98465-69891.

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers: 1. Mr. K. Ravi Kumar Reddy, *Eluru* 2. Mrs. S. Saraswati Reddy, *Hyderabad* 3. Mr. Paul Topham, *UK* 4. Mr. Kenneth Truedsson, *Sweden*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Children's Course Teachers: 1. & 2. Mr. Udaram & Mrs. Vijaya Waware, *Bhopal* 3. & 4. Mr. B. S. Achutha & Mrs. Saraswati Naik, *Bhopal* 5. Mrs. Neeru A. Jindal, *Chandigarh* 6. Mrs. Tracy Hudson, *USA* 7. Mr. Patrick Murphy, *USA*

IN MEMORIAM

Mrs. Manorama Gajbhiye, Assistant teacher of Vipassana from Nagpur, India passed away peacefully on 3 May 2006. She played an important role in the spread of Dhamma in Nagpur.

May she be happy, peaceful and liberated!

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Aisī jage Vipassānā, samatā citta samāya;
Eka eka kara pāpa kī, parata utaratī jāya.*

May Vipassana arise to suffuse the mind with equanimity;
One after another, may each layer of negativity
be stripped away.

*Bāhara bhītara ekarasa, sarala svaccha vyavahāra;
Kathanī karanī eka sī, yahī Dharama kā sāra.*

Inside and outside alike, straight and clean in dealings;
Oneness in words and deeds—this is the essence of Dhamma.

*With much metta,
A Vipassana meditator*

*Jyōñ jyōñ antarajagata meñ, samatā chātī jāya;
Kāyā vāñī citta ke, karama sudharate jāñya.*

As equanimity spreads in the inner world;
The actions of body, speech and mind are transformed.

*Kapāta rabe nā kuṭilatā, rabe na mithyācāra;
Śuddha Dharama aisā jage, jage svaccha vyavahāra.*

Let there be no deceit or malice, let there be no wrong action.
Let pure Dhamma arise, making your conduct upright.

With best compliments from

MOTILAL BANARSIDASS

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