

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Bāhusaccañca sippañca,
vinayo ca susikkhito;
subhāsītā ca yā vācā—
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Great learning and skill,
Well-mastered discipline,
Well-spoken words—
This is the highest blessing.

—Khuddaka pāṭha 5.5, Maṅgala Sutta

The Universal Appeal of the Buddha Dhamma : A Personal Experience - II

S. N. Goenka

(The following is the concluding part of the lecture given by Goenkaji at the Fourth World Buddhist Summit, Yangon, Myanmar on 10 December 2004. It has been adapted for the Newsletter.)

One can purify the mind at the surface level. One can even purify the mind at a little deeper level. But the way to purify the mind at the deepest level, at the root level, was missing. The Buddha discovered how to eradicate all the *anusaya kilesas* (latent mental impurities). The roots of these impurities have to be taken out. So long as these *kilesas* are there, as explained in the Chain of Conditioned Arising (*paṭiccasamuppāda*), craving (*taṇhā*), clinging (*upādāna*) and the process of becoming (*bhava*) follow. One keeps on rolling in misery; one cannot come out of misery. One may keep on taking births in very high celestial or brahmic planes. Still, one is living in the field of suffering.

The *anusaya kilesas* are the seeds of *bhava*. They give rise to one *bhava* after another, one *bhava* after another. One does not come out of misery as long as the *anusaya kilesas* are not eradicated.

The Buddha said that Dhamma is *paripunnamaṃ*. Nothing else needs to be added. The entire Dhamma is included in it. Nothing is missing. In these three—*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—nothing is missing. Dhamma is *parisuddham*—so pure that nothing needs to be removed. Nothing needs to be taken out and nothing else needs to be added. It is complete and pure—*kevalapariṇāmanāṃ parisuddham*.

Now we see that Vipassana, this technique of the Buddha, has travelled round the world. Intellectuals, scientists, engineers, doctors, psychiatrists—all have learnt it and benefited from it. People from different sects come to these courses: Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jains, Jews, Parsis, Sikhs, and Buddhists. Even people from communities that have been

traditionally opposed to the Buddha, when they come to Vipassana courses, find it acceptable.

This is the beauty of the Buddha's teaching. It is so simple, pragmatic, universal, and acceptable to all. One just practises *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*. Enough. It is so pure that nothing needs to be taken out. Nobody can point out anything wrong in *sīla*. Nobody can point out anything wrong in *samādhi*. Nobody can point out anything wrong in *paññā*.

The essence of the Buddha's teaching—*sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*—is acceptable to all. This is because all religions have an inner core, an inner essence that focuses on the purification of mind. All religions also have an outer shell that is concerned more with appearances, festivals, rites, and rituals. So long as one gives importance to the inner essence, it doesn't matter if the outer shell differs from one religion to another. However, when the outer shell is given all importance, the inner core is lost and a religion fails to bring peace and harmony. The Buddha's teaching helps to live according to the inner essence. It gives benefits here and now.

I benefited so much from the practice of Vipassana that I started reading the words of the Buddha as per my teacher's advice. I had been told from childhood that the Buddha incorporated good points from the Hindu tradition in his teaching and then added delusion to it; and that he had not discovered anything new. Since I found the Buddha's teaching to be very beneficial, I further explored the truth about these statements. Reading the words of the Buddha (*Tipitaka*) gave me so much joy! How wrong my earlier information turned out to be! It showed me how the Buddha's emphasis was on actual experience of the truth. The *Tipitaka* is so inspiring and there is such a wonderful description of the *Dhammakāyā* of the Buddha in it.

When the Buddha taught Dhamma to people, he said: “I have no interest in making you my disciples. I have no interest in snatching you away from your old teachers. I have found the way out of misery. Give it a trial.” At one time, while talking to some ascetics who were sceptical of Dhamma, he exhorted them to give a trial only for seven days.

If more and more people in the world start calling themselves Buddhists, how will they benefit? Yes, if they start practising *sīla*, *samādhi*, *paññā* then yes, they will surely get the best fruit of the Buddha’s teaching. If one calls oneself a Buddhist, but does not practise *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā*, how will one benefit from the teaching of the Buddha?

The Buddha had no interest in changing the names of his disciples. Moggallāna remained Moggallāna; Kaccāna remained Kaccāna; Bhāradvāja remained Bhāradvāja. These were brahmin names, the names of brahmin clans.

The Buddha’s teaching is so simple and yet so profound. But to actually practise Dhamma, one has to work hard. My Sayagi used to say, “It is very easy. And yet, it is so difficult!”

Listening to discourses or reading scriptures is very beneficial—*Kālena dhammassavanam etam maṅgalamuttamam*¹. Discussing Dhamma is wonderful—*kālena dhammasākacchā etam maṅgalamuttamam*². But if one just keeps on discussing and debating, and one doesn’t practise Dhamma, then it doesn’t work. One has to start walking on the Path. If one doesn’t walk on the path of Dhamma, one doesn’t get any benefit.

The Buddha teaches Dhamma, the law of nature, the universal law of nature, which is applicable to one and all. He teaches in such a simple language and in such a lucid manner. When we don’t practise it we make a philosophy out of it and we start fighting: “Your belief is wrong. My belief is all right. Your belief is wrong, my belief is correct.” What do we gain? Even if my belief is all right, very good, yet if I don’t practise, what is the use of this belief?

I was born in Myanmar. I feel very grateful, and proud also, that I was born in this Dhamma land. More than eighty percent of the people here do not believe that there is a soul inside. They do not believe that there is a creator of this universe, a God Almighty. Now, for the last more than three decades, I have been living in a country and I often have been travelling in countries, where more than eighty percent of people believe that there is a soul inside. They believe in God Almighty as the creator of the universe.

There could be thousands of arguments to prove that there is no soul and an equal number of arguments to prove that there is an eternal soul. Similarly, there may be arguments for and against the existence of God Almighty. These arguments are useless.

When one practises Dhamma, one experiences oneself that the entire phenomenon is nothing but the interaction of mind and matter. At the apparent level, it looks so solid, so substantive, and so lasting. This is

paññatti; it appears to be so. The Buddha’s teaching is a journey from the apparent truth (*paññatti*) to the ultimate truth (*paramattha*). One has to go beyond the apparent truth to reach the ultimate truth. This is what Vipassana is—*paññatti thapetvā vīsesena passatīti vipassanā*³. When one looks within, one starts to realise that everything in the field of mind and matter is impermanent—*anicca*. Everything keeps changing.

Whatever keeps changing cannot be a source of lasting happiness. One realises that whatever happiness one experiences, sooner or later, turns into unhappiness. Unhappiness is inherent in transient happiness. As one continues on the path, one realises that suffering is inherent in every experience in the field of mind and matter—*yaṃ kiñci vedayitam taṃ dukkhasmiṃ*⁴.

As one observes the phenomenon objectively, the way the Buddha taught, one will find that there is no solidity. One’s own investigation of the mind-matter phenomenon leads to the discovery that everything is mere vibration. *Sabbo pajjalito loko, sabbo loko pakampito*⁵. The entire universe is nothing but combustion and vibration. There is no lasting substance in it. One has no control over it. There is nothing that one can point out as “I” or “mine” or “my soul”

The experience of *anicca* at the experiential level changes *saññā* to *anicca-saññā*, which naturally leads to *anattā*. This leads to the experience of *nibbāna*—*Anicca-saññīno hi, anattasaññā saṅghāti, anattasaññī asmimānasamuggahātam pāpunāti dittheva dhamme nibbānan’ti*⁶.

This has to be experienced. One may keep on saying: “There is no soul,” but if one is full of ego, the Buddha’s teaching doesn’t help. One’s ego is so strong. If one doesn’t experience *anattā* but makes a philosophy out of it, it won’t help. But when one experiences this oneself, one is liberated. That is *anattā*.

Paññā takes one to the stage where the ego naturally gets dissolved by experiential understanding. It is neither an intellectual game nor an emotional or devotional game. It is not a blind belief; it is not a dogma; it is not a cult; it is not a philosophy. It is a truth that can be realised by one and all: a Christian or a Muslim, a Hindu or a Jain, a Myanmar or a Thai, an Indian or a Pakistani, an American or a Russian or a Chinese. It makes no difference. The law of nature is universal—it is applicable to everyone.

This was the discovery made by the Buddha. Some accepted it in the past and some didn’t. The Buddha shows the path. He doesn’t want you to accept blindly. He gives you a way to find out the truth for yourself.

Galileo discovered that the earth is round. He also discovered that the earth is rotating on its own axis. Some believed it; some didn’t believe it. Later on, all people accepted this as the truth. The earth was round even before Galileo. The earth was round at the time of Galileo. The earth remains round after Galileo. Newton found out that there is a law of gravity. He announced it. The law of gravity was there even before Newton, at the

time of Newton, and will remain after Newton.

Similarly, the law of *paṭiccasamuppāda* was there—even before the Buddha, at the time of the Buddha, and it will remain after the Buddha. This is the law of nature. Whether there is a Buddha or no Buddha, *Dhamma niyāmatā* remains eternal. The Buddha said: *Uppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ anuppādā vā tathāgatānaṃ, thitāva sā dhātu dhammatthitā dhammaniyāmatā idappaccayatā.*⁷

Due to ignorance (*avijjā*), one does not know what is happening within the framework of mind and matter (*nāma-rūpa*). Every moment there is some sensation or the other, throughout the body. Wherever there is life, there is a sensation. All these six sense organs come in contact with their respective objects; there is a sensation (*vedanā*)—*phassa-paccayā vedanā*. If one does not have the ability to feel the *vedanā*, how can one understand that with the base of sensation, craving and aversion arise—*vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*.

Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā was there before the Buddha, at the time of the Buddha and it will also remain after the Buddha. That is why this law, the Dhamma, is eternal—*esa dhammo sanantano*.

The Buddha discovers it and makes use of it for his own liberation, and with all compassion, distributes it to others. “Look, this is how you are miserable. *Vedanā-paccayā taṇhā, vedanā-paccayā taṇhā*. I will teach you a way by which you can come out of it. Now *vedanā* is there, but no more *taṇhā*. Every time you experience *vedanā, paññā* must arise. Oh *anicca, anicca*. This *vedanā* or that *vedanā*, it is *anicca*.”

Again, if it becomes a philosophy that every *vedanā* is *anicca*, one doesn't gain anything, it is merely one's belief. But if one experiences: “Look, a sensation has arisen. Sooner or later, it passes away. However unpleasant a sensation may be, it is bound to pass away. However pleasant a sensation may be it is bound to pass away.”

One has to remain aware of this arising and passing away—*Samudaya-dhammānupassī viharati, vaya-dhammānupassī viharati*.⁸ It seems that *vedanā* stays for some time but sooner or later it passes away. However, a meditator realises with his or her own experience that every moment it arises and passes away without any gap. As it arises so it passes away with great rapidity—*samudaya-vaya-dhammānupassī viharati*.⁹

Vedanā is there all the time. It arises and passes away. One keeps on reacting to it. If it is pleasant, one reacts with *lobha*. If it is unpleasant, one reacts with *dosa*. This is what one does for the whole life and creates more and more misery for oneself. One keeps on multiplying one's misery. Look, there is a way to come out of misery. With the cessation of sensation, craving and aversion cease; with the cessation of craving and aversion, attachment ceases—*vedanā-nirodhā taṇhā-nirodho. Taṇhā-nirodhā, upādāna nirodhā*.¹⁰ One reaches the stage where one transcends the field of mind and matter.

The Buddha did not merely give sermons. Mere sermons would have made him just one among so many

philosophers in the world. He experienced the ultimate truth himself to become the Buddha and taught others to experience it.

The Buddha's teaching fascinated me because of its practical aspect. If it were only an intellectual exercise, I doubt that I would have gone on the path taught by the Buddha. I would have said: “Very good. Our *Gita* also says so. Our *Upanishads* also says so. This is wonderful.” I would not have walked on this path. I was convinced because I was given the way: “Look, this is how you can come out of craving and aversion.”

I feel very fortunate that I was born in this wonderful land, the land of Dhamma. I am very fortunate to be born in a country where the teaching of the Buddha is preserved in its pristine purity. Vipassana—the way it should be practised—is maintained here. I feel very fortunate that I came in contact with a saintly person who taught so compassionately without expecting anything in return.

Myanmar has a special place in the life of the Buddha. After his enlightenment, after enjoying the bliss of enlightenment for seven weeks, the first meal he took was Myanmar rice and honey offered to him by two businessmen from Myanmar, Tapassu and Bhallika. They became the first lay devotees by taking refuge in the Buddha and the Dhamma (*dvevācika upāsakas*). This was the first and only *dvisaraṇa gamana* (refuge in the Buddha and Dhamma). The Buddha plucked out a few strands of his hair (*kesa-dhātu*) and gave them to the two Myanmar businessmen.

The *dhātu* given in his own lifetime, personally gifted by him, and that too the only time he ever gave such a gift in his lifetime is very special indeed. This *Buddha-dhātu* that was gifted in his very lifetime came to Myanmar—and the Shwedagon is such a glorious tribute to that fact. Myanmar preserved more than just the *kesa-dhātu* of the Buddha. Through the millennia, it preserved the *Saddhamma, pariyatti* as well as *paṭipatti*, especially the practice of Vipassana.

Now Vipassana is spreading round the world. Whether one is from Myanmar, from India, from other Theravadin countries, from a Mahayana country or from any other part of the world—the most important thing is to take actual steps on the path of Dhamma.

May all of you get the opportunity to taste pure Dhamma at the experiential level! May all of you come out of your misery! May all of you enjoy real peace, real harmony, real happiness!

Bhavatu Sabba Maṅgalaṃ—May all beings be happy! ☺

Notes:

1. *Khuddaka Nikāya, Khuddakapāṭha, Maṅgalasutta* 2. *Ibid.*
3. *Paṭisambhidāmagga Aṭṭhakathā, Nānakathā*
4. *Majjhima Nikāya, III, Mahākammavibhaṅgasutta*
5. *Samyutta Nikāya, Sagāthāvagga, Upacālāsutta*
6. *Āṅuttara Nikāya, Navakanipāta, Sambodhisutta*
7. *Samyutta Nidānavagga, Nidānasamyutta, Paccayasutta*
8. *Dīgha Nikāya II, Mahāsatipatthānasutta* 9. *Ibid.* 10. *Ibid.*

ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Every second Sunday at **Ulhasnagar**: Tel: (0251) 252-2693

Every second Sunday at **Andheri** (Gaikwad Hall): Tel: 2633-6671

Every third Sunday at **Ghatkopar**: Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
13/02/05	Matunga	10-12 years	10th and 11th Feb 05
13/02/05	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	10th and 11th Feb 05
13/03/05	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	10th and 11th March 05

Course Timing: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Registration Timings:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **Course Venues:** **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: (0251) 252-2693. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 2510-1096, 2516-2505. [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.]

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

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DHAMMA SERVICE AT DHAMMA GIRI

There is now a good opportunity for long-stay service in *Dhamma Giri*. Meditators who wish to serve for shorter durations are also welcome to apply. Dhamma servers with electrical, plumbing, gardening and landscaping skills are particularly required. For more details, contact the centre management.

GOENKAJI'S INTERVIEW ON ZEE TV

Zee TV is telecasting a program called *Urja* featuring Goenkaji every Friday at 12:30 pm. In this program, Goenkaji answers questions about different aspects of Dhamma (Dharma). Meditators may inform their family and friends about the opportunity to hear Goenkaji expound on the universal Dhamma.

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Kāyika karma sudhāra le, vācika karma sudhāra.
Manasā karma sudhāra le, yahi Dharama kā sāra.*

Transform your deeds of body; transform your deeds of speech;
Transform your mental deeds—this is the essence of Dhamma.

*Sadācaraṇa hī Dharama hai, durācaraṇa hī pāpa.
Sadācaraṇa se sukha jage, durācaraṇa dukha tāpa.*

Right action is Dhamma; wrong action is sin.
From right action comes happiness;
From wrong action, suffering and torment.

With warm regards and much metta,

Dhamma Traders

501, Bhosale-Shinde Arcade, 5th Floor,
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*Paropakāra hī puṇya hai, para-pīḍana hī pāpa.
Puṇya kiye sukha hī jage, pāpa kiye santāpa.*

Helping others is virtue; harming others is sin.
Virtue brings happiness; sin causes torment.

*Tīna bāta bandhana bandhen, rāga dveṣa abhimāna.
Tīna bāta bandhana khulen, śīla samādhi gyāna.*

Threefold is our bondage: craving, aversion, egotism.
Threefold is the liberation from bondage:
Morality, concentration and wisdom.

With warm regards and much metta,

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