

# Vipassana Newsletter

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

Vol. 15, No. 2: 24 February 2005  
Published every month

Vipassana Research Institute  
Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri-422 403, Maharashtra

## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Dānañca dhammacariyā ca,  
ñātakānañca saṅgaho,  
anavajjāni kammāni—  
etaṃ maṅgalamuttamaṃ.*

Generosity, a life of Dhamma,  
caring for relatives,  
blameless deeds—  
this is the highest blessing.

—*Khuddaka pāṭha 5.7, Maṅgala Sutta*

## Acharya S. N. Goenka in the Golden Land of Myanmar

From 16 November to 1 December 2004, Goenkaji and Mataji meditated along with 540 students from around the world, at their annual Teachers' self-course at Dhamma Giri. One week later, on 8 December, they travelled to the Golden Land of Myanmar. Some 400 Vipassana meditators had the good fortune to join the Teachers on the *yatra* (pilgrimage) to this sacred land, which preserved the priceless Dhamma after it was lost in India, the country of its origin. The pilgrims were from 33 countries and diverse religious backgrounds: Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Parsi and Jain.

As the plane descended to land at Yangon (Rangoon), Goenkaji could be heard chanting:

*Jisa dharatī ne janama diyā,  
usa dharatī ko hama namana karen;  
jisa dharatī ne dharama diyā,  
usa dharatī ko hama naman karen...*

To the land that gave me birth,  
To that land I pay respect;  
To the land that gave me Dhamma,  
To that land I pay respect...

On 10 December, Goenkaji addressed the World Buddhist Summit at the Mahā Pāsāna Cave at Kaba Aye. Goenkaji's address emphasized the universal appeal of the Buddha's teaching and how it transcends religious divisions.

The Mahā Pāsāna Cave (lit., 'great rock cave') is the historic place where learned *bhikkhus* (monks) from all over the world gathered for the *Chatṭha Saṅgāyana* (Sixth Synod, or Council), which was held in Yangon from 1954 to 1956. The entire Tipiṭaka was collectively recited and edited to preserve it in its pure form, and was subsequently printed in book form in Myanmar script. This formed the basis for the *Chatṭha Saṅgāyana* CD produced by the Vipassana Research Institute.

One of many highlights for the pilgrims were group meditation sittings at the Shwe Dagon Pagoda led by Goenkaji and Mataji every evening for the first four days.

Shwe Dagon is a sacred site that links Myanmar directly to the Buddha. The first meal that the Buddha took after his enlightenment was the honey-rice of Myanmar offered to him by two traders from Myanmar named Tapussa and Bhallika. The Enlightened One in turn gave eight strands of his hair to the travellers, which they took back to their country and enshrined in the Shwe Dagon.

Shwe Dagon has another significance for Vipassana meditators. When Goenkaji undertook to build a monumental pagoda in Mumbai, the commercial capital and most populated city of India, he decided to make a replica of the revered Shwe Dagon.

The Global Vipassana Pagoda, currently under construction in Mumbai, is one of the most ambitious construction projects ever undertaken. When completed, this awe-inspiring structure will be the world's largest freestanding stone dome, reaching 325 feet into the air. To give an idea of its magnitude: two of the St Peter's Basilicas in Rome would be able to fit into its hollow interior. Unsupported by any pillar, it is an engineering marvel, being composed of tens of thousands of huge, individually sculpted stones, transported by thousands of truckloads from quarries located miles away.

The Global Pagoda is not merely a monument celebrating the memory of past greatness. Its arresting exterior beauty and magnitude will definitely attract attention. But the vast interior clear-space will be significantly functional: it will be a meditation hall seating thousands of meditators. The waves of purity of mind and compassion towards all beings generated by the meditations of the practitioners gathered in this unique structure will certainly be a boon. Additionally,

the display gallery located on the outside of the pagoda will provide an invaluable service. It will offer to the general public authentic educational and inspirational material to illumine the truth about the Buddha and his teaching, the Dhamma.

In Yangon, the pilgrims visited the International Meditation Centre, the meditation centre established by Sayagyi U Ba Khin, where Goenkaji first learned Vipassana. Goenkaji has referred to IMC as his second birthland, where the shell of ignorance was broken through the liberating practice of Dhamma. The pilgrims undertook another meaningful journey to meditate and pay respects at the meditation centre of Sayagyi's teacher, Saya Thetgyi. They crossed the Yangon river and travelled to the small village of Pyawbwegyi. The pilgrims were able to meditate in the room where the young U Ba Khin first learned Vipassana meditation in January, 1937.

The meditators were able to give alms and other offerings to the Bhikkhu Sangha (the order of monks) of Myanmar at *Dhamma Joti*, the Yangon Vipassana meditation centre, as well as at Goenkaji's residence.

The pilgrims then undertook a 16-hour journey from Yangon to Mandalay in a special train provided by the government. The next day, they went to Kyaukse to visit the monastery of Webu Sayadaw. The Ven. Webu Sayadaw is an important figure in the Vipassana lineage. He was the eminent and saintly monk who exhorted Sayagyi U Ba Khin, in what appears to be a chance meeting, to start teaching meditation. For the rest of U Ba Khin's life, their spiritual bond was very close. It was at the same Kyaukse station that Sayagyi U Ba Khin taught meditation for the first time to the assistant railway station-master.

The next stop was Bagan, one of Southeast Asia's most extensive, graceful and impressive archeological sites. Here the pilgrims beheld the devotion to the Enlightened One imprinted upon the landscape in the form of thousands of magnificent pagodas. The meditators visited several prominent pagodas and meditated at different locations. They meditated together at the monastery of Shin Araham (Arahant Dhammadasa) who was instrumental in purifying the Sangha and spreading the teaching of Vipassana. Shin Araham is an important link in the chain of teachers, starting from Buddha himself, because of whom the Vipassana meditators have received the peerless Dhamma in the modern age.

Goenkaji was unable to travel to Bagan and Kyautse with the pilgrims. However, he was in Mandalay to lead the group meditation at the historic Mahamuni temple. This temple is very meaningful to Goenkaji. He used to visit it regularly as a child of seven years with his beloved grandfather, Baba. The next day, the meditators visited *Dhamma Mandala*, the Mandalay Vipassana centre. The pilgrims were happy to see this beautiful centre and received the warm hospitality of a large and warm gathering of Dhamma brothers and sisters. Although construction of the centre has been completed only

recently, it is fully equipped with comfortable residential facilities, a spacious Dhamma hall, well-tended gardens, and a pagoda-cell complex, set against the striking backdrop of a steep mountain. The pilgrims again had the opportunity to offer alms to the noble Bhikkhu Sangha of Myanmar. Goenkaji thanked the noble Sangha of Myanmar for preserving the theory and practice of Dhamma through the millennia. He also thanked the people of Myanmar who have been looking after the Sangha so that the Sangha could preserve Dhamma in its purity.

Later, the pilgrims visited the Kutho Daw Gyi where the entire Tipitaka has been enshrined on 729 marble slabs by King Mindon Min. King Mindon was a generous supporter of the Bhikkhu Sangha and organized the historic fifth *Saṅgāyana* (Council) in 1871.

The Yatra then proceeded to Monywa. The pilgrims visited the Monywa Sudaungpyi Pagoda. Many Vipassana courses have been conducted in a building of this pagoda-complex and there are daily group sittings here. The local meditators had arranged lunch for the pilgrims here. The Monywa Vipassana trust has acquired land for a new Vipassana centre. Goenkaji has named it "*Dhamma Nāṇadhaja*" (Banner of Knowledge of Dhamma) in honour of Venerable Bhikkhu Nāṇadhaja, more widely known as Ledi Sayadaw.

After lunch, the pilgrims visited the cave where Ledi Sayadaw regularly meditated. To meditate even for a few moments in the meditation cell of this saintly scholar-monk and Dhamma great-grandfather of Goenkaji, was for many pilgrims a high point of their Dhamma journey to Myanmar. The Ven. Ledi Sayadaw was one of the brightest stars in the galaxy of Vipassana teachers of the modern age. It was due to him that the doors to Dhamma were opened for householders. He not only taught Vipassana to lay people but also appointed Saya Thetgyi, a householder, to teach Vipassana.

Sayagyi U Ba Khin learned Vipassana from Saya Thetgyi, the disciple of the Ven. Ledi Sayadaw. Sayagyi had a Dhamma volition: to return Vipassana to India, its country of origin. Sayagyi's disciple S.N. Goenka made it the mission of his life to make Sayagyi's vision a reality. There were about 200 Indian meditators on the pilgrimage to Myanmar, testament to the fact that Vipassana has taken firm roots in India. In many Indian languages, Myanmar is called "*Brahmadesh*" meaning the land of *brahmas*, the highest plane of existence. Vipassana meditators have developed an even higher esteem for this Golden Land where the jewel of Dhamma was preserved by the noble Bhikkhu Sangha.

After a very inspiring pilgrimage, most of the meditators left Myanmar on the 20th of December.

Goenkaji stayed on in Myanmar. He met many venerable *bhikkhus*, scholars, old acquaintances and meditators. He also met the local assistant teachers, teachers and trustees to discuss Vipassana activities in Myanmar. He visited *Dhamma Joti* for group meditation and gave guidance on future development of the centre.

Goenkaji used most of his time in Myanmar to work

on the writing of the first two *maṅgalas* (welfares) in the *Mangala Sutta*. The booklet “*Sangat Sajjana kī Bhali*” [Beneficial is the company of saintly people] is almost ready for printing and should be available to meditators by March 2005.

Myanmar has the largest Bhikkhu Sangha (order of monks). The exemplary *bhikkhus* in Myanmar are very heedful about following the *Vinaya* (rules of conduct) laid down by the Buddha. A *bhikkhu* is ordained only after the age of twenty years. Up until that age one remains a *sāmaṇera* (novice). There are thousands of *sāmaṇeras* (novices) from the age of seven onwards who live and study in the monasteries of Myanmar. According to the rule laid down by the Buddha, one can become a *sāmaṇera* or a *bhikkhu* only after getting permission from one’s parents.

Recently quite a few young *sāmaṇeras* have taken children’s Anapana courses. Goenkaji gave a special Anapana session for the *sāmaṇeras* at *Dhamma Joti* on 30 December in which 269 *sāmaṇeras* participated. It was a great joy to see these young novices from 7 to 16 years of age meditating in the meditation hall at *Dhamma Joti*.

Goenkaji told the young practitioners about the prince Siddhattha who had practiced Anapana at the age of seven. The ascetic prince Siddhattha discovered that all the other *samādhis* as well as the most severe austerities did not eradicate all suffering.

The young prince then remembered that as a child he had once practised awareness of respiration under a tree while his attendants had gone to take part in local festivities. This experience had brought him much peace and joy. Now after leaving aside the two extremes (of self-mortification and excessive indulgence in sensual pleasures), he embarked on the journey to liberation by starting with the awareness of natural respiration. Anapana led Siddhattha to Vipassana and thenceforth to liberation. Thus, Anapana has a very special place in *sammā-samādhi* (right concentration of mind) taught by the Buddha.

Goenkaji also related the story of Rahula, the Buddha’s son, who was also ordained as a novice at the age of seven; and about various other young boys such as Revata, Sivali, and Pandita who ordained at the age of seven or eight and became *arabats*.

The novices were very inspired by Goenkaji’s talk. Many of them wrote letters after the course saying that they wanted to grow up to be virtuous monks established in meditation and to serve humanity by spreading Dhamma.

Earlier in his stay, Goenkaji could not accept invitations to give public talks due to his health. Happily, his health later improved a little, so he accepted an invitation to give a talk at the University of Yangon on 19 January. The hall filled up and people sat in the corridors and stood outside to listen to the first talk. The organizers therefore urged Goenkaji to give two more talks on 20 and 21 January. The audience consisted of university students and academicians in addition to Vipassana meditators. Goenkaji explained what is taught

in the Vipassana courses and explained why the Buddha gave importance to respiration as an object of *samādhi* (concentration) and how *vedanā* (sensation) is so important in the field of *paññā* (wisdom).

Another series of three public talks was organized at the Abhidhamma Society, Yangon on 26, 27 and 28 January. In his first lecture, Goenkaji talked about *sīla* (morality). According to the Buddha, morality is important not merely as a social code or to avoid censure from society or to avoid punishment from the government. Neither is it merely a behavior that one expects from others in the society, causing one to follow it as an obligation. One who walks on the path of Dhamma understands that the reason why it is important to practise morality is that every time one indulges in any immoral vocal or physical action, one generates some defilement or the other in the mind and thus makes oneself miserable. One understands this from one’s own experience. A meditator understands that unwholesome (immoral) actions originate from a defiled mind.

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā,  
manoseṭṭhā manomayā;  
manasā ce paduṭṭhena,  
bhāsati vā karoti vā;  
tato naṃ dukkhamanvveti,  
cakkamva vabato padam.*

Mind precedes all phenomena;  
mind is their chief; all phenomena are mind-made.  
If, with an impure mind,  
one should speak or act,  
suffering follows one  
as the cart-wheel follows the foot of the ox.

Goenkaji further explained that an unwholesome action produces misery not just once. The Buddha said that misery follows one just as the cart-wheel follows the ox yoked to the cart. This is because, through ignorance, one continually reinforces the habit of committing unwholesome actions.

One understands that wholesome (moral) actions originate from a pure mind.

*Manopubbaṅgamā dhammā,  
manoseṭṭhā manomayā;  
manasā ce pasannena,  
bhāsati vā karoti vā;  
tato naṃ sukhamanvveti,  
chāyāva anapāyini.*

Mind precedes all phenomena;  
mind is their chief; all phenomena are mind-made.  
If, with a pure mind,  
one should either speak or act,  
happiness follows one  
as one’s shadow that never leaves.

This is because one forms a habit of *kusala* (wholesome) actions and these *kusala* actions keep one happy and peaceful. ■

(to be concluded)

## ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
06-03-05	Mulund	10-12 years	3rd and 4th Mar
13-03-05	Andheri	10-12 years	10th and 11th March 05
13-03-05	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	10th and 11th March 05
10-04-05	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	7th and 8th April

**Course Timings:** 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. **Registration Timings:** 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. **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, inform in advance. \*Please arrive on time for the course.] **Residential Course** (age: 13-16 years): 23 and 24 April at Khadavli Ashram. **Contact** 2510-1096, 2516-2505 on 14 and 15 April

## COURSE FOR TEENAGERS IN DELHI

The course was held from 26 December 2004 to 3 January 2005 at Logicstat Farmhouse, Delhi and was attended by 20 teenagers. The second day brought its share of difficulties and at least four or five students requested permission to leave. Persuaded to stay, they applied themselves and by the end of the course, along with the rest of their colleagues, felt very happy that

they had come to partake of such an excellent teaching. 17 of them were from the same educational institution where one of their lecturers is a meditator. He was the principal motivator for them to sit this course and received formal permission to introduce Vipassana to students as a human resource and personality development tool.

## FIRST VIPASSANA COURSE AT IRIEEN

A ten-day Vipassana course was held at the Indian Railways Institute of Electrical Engineering (IRIEEN) at Nashik Road from 5 to 16 January 2005. The course had 26 participants, most of whom were high ranking railway officers.

## TELEVISION PROGRAMS FEATURING GOENKAJI

**Zee TV: 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.

**Aastha TV:** discourse by Goenkaji daily at 10 a.m. and dohas every hour.

**In the US:** Aastha Broadcasting Network will be broadcasting Goenkaji's discourses in English at 6 p.m. EST (Monday to Friday) on the WORLDDIRECT platform of DIRECTV on channel no. 2005.

## DHAMMA DOHAS

*Cāndī sā cāvāla aṭhai, iṅ sonai rai desa;  
Tīna ratana jagamaga jagai, gūṅjai buddha sandesa.*

Abundant silver rice grows in this golden land  
The Triple Gem shines brightly in this land,  
which resonates with the message of the Buddha.

*Swedagona mindara bhalo! Biramā bhalo sudesā;  
Bābā! Bhalī bipassanā! Bhalo buddha upadesa!*

How great is the Shwe Dagon and this noble country;  
Baba! great is Vipassana and the teaching of the Buddha!

*With much metta,*

**NAKODA**

1 Nakoda Court,  
110, Shivaji Nagar, Pune 411 005  
Tel: (020) 401 2826, Mobile: 98225-15800  
Email: sandeep@nakodahealthcare.com  
Website: www.nakodahealthcare.com

*Pāyo dharama sudharama yo, pāyo desa sudesā;  
Bābā! Patha pāyo iso, dālada huigya sesa.*

Baba! In this wonderful land, I received this pure Dhamma;  
I found this marvellous path,  
which relieved me of all suffering.

*Īṅ dharatī rai garabha manha, bharyā ratana āgāra;  
Paṇa bābā! Anamoḷa to, dharama ratana bhaṃḍāra.*

The lap of this land is full of precious gems;  
But invaluable, Baba, is its magnificent store of Dhamma-gems.

*With much metta,*

**RAMSUKH CONSTRUCTIONS**

'Suyash,' 766/2, Opp. Deccan Gymkhana  
Near Hotel Ajit, Pune 411004  
Tel/Fax: (020) 2565 9783, 2565 4942/53/60  
Email: prahladrathi@ramsukh.com  
Website: www.ramsukh.com

SUBSCRIPTION TO ENGLISH/HINDI MONTHLY NEWSLETTER: ANNUAL: RS 30 (U.S. \$10 OUTSIDE INDIA);  
LIFE SUBSCRIPTION: RS 500 (U.S. \$100 OUTSIDE INDIA) BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF VRI.

Edited and published by R. P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri 422 403 and printed at Akshar Chitra Press, 69B-Road, Satpur, Nashik 422 007.

24 February 2005

Posted at Igatpuri, Dist. Nashik

Posting Day: *Purnima* of every month

POSTAL CLAUSE NO. 232 REG. NO. 49916/90  
LICENSED TO POST WITHOUT PREPAYMENT OF POSTAGE - LICENCE NUMBER - AR/NSK/WP-13  
POSTAL REG. NO. AR/NSK 39/2003-2005

PRINTED MATTER

If undelivered, please return to:

Vipassana Research Institute

*Dhamma Giri*, Igatpuri-422 403,  
Dist. Nashik, Maharashtra, India.

Tel: [91] (02553) 244076, 244086; Fax: 244176

Email: info@giri.dhamma.org

Website: www.vri.dhamma.org