

# Vipassana Newsletter

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

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Vipassana Research Institute

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## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Yo ca vassasatam jīve,  
duppañño asamāhito;  
ekāham jīvitam seyyo,  
paññāvantassa jhāyino.*

Better than a hundred years of one  
without wisdom and control;  
is the single day of one  
who is wise and meditative.

—Dhammapada 111

## Fifty Years on the Path of Dhamma

*(The following is a translation of an article by S. N. Goenka published in the October 2005 issue of the Vipassana Patrika. It has been adapted for the Vipassana Newsletter.)*

1 September 1955! An extremely important day of my life! The incurable and unbearable migraine headaches, which had been a terrible curse, now became a boon for me. I joined the Vipassana meditation course of my revered teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, for ten days. I had serious doubts about the course. Still I went for the course and gained astonishing benefits from the course. This is well known.

My main reservation about Vipassana was that it was a Buddhist meditation technique. What if it made me leave my Hindu religion? What if I became a Buddhist? Surely I would go astray and become debased if I left my religion! Though I had devotion towards the Buddha, I had nothing but disdain for his teaching! Even then I joined the course because Sayagyi convinced me that in the Vipassana course, nothing else would be taught other than *sīla* (morality), *samādhi* (concentration of mind) and *paññā* (wisdom). How could a Hindu like me or any person of any religion object to morality, concentration of mind and wisdom?

Living a life of morality, developing mastery over the mind and purifying the mind by developing wisdom—how can any reasonable person object to these three teachings? I wanted to get rid of my mental defilements such as anger and egotism that resulted in a life full of tension and was the root cause of the migraine headaches. In addition, the family in which I was born and the atmosphere in which I grew up gave great importance to the ideal of abstaining from unwholesome conduct, practice of moral conduct and

keeping the mind free from negativity. Therefore, I was reassured to some extent when Sayagyi stated that this is what the Buddha taught and only this will be taught in the Vipassana course, nothing else. Still, some doubt lingered. I decided that I would practice only *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* in the course and would not accept anything else.

I thought that it was indeed true that there were good things in the Buddha Dhamma and that was why it had been accepted and honoured in so many countries and by so many people. But all the good elements had been taken from our Vedic texts. I decided to stay away from the rest.

At the end of the ten days, I saw that in accordance with Sayagyi's statement, nothing other than *sīla*, *samādhi* and *paññā* was taught in the course. The claim that this technique gave results here and now proved to be true. The practice of only ten days had started to eradicate my mental defilements. My tension started to decrease and, as a result, the migraine was cured. I was also relieved forever from the misery caused by the morphine injections and the need to take sleeping tablets. Daily practice of Vipassana weakened my mental defilements. My misery started decreasing. I did not find any fault in the technique. It was totally flawless. I could not see any harm in the technique. It was truly benevolent.

In the first course itself, my spiritual search was fully satisfied. I found Vipassana so pure that I did not feel the necessity to go anywhere else in search of another meditation technique. To develop in Vipassana, every day I meditated one hour in the morning and evening and joined at least one ten-day course every year. Sometimes, I joined a long course of one month, which gave me a deeper understanding at the experiential level. I found Vipassana very rational

and logical, practical and scientific. There was no place for blind belief in it. There was no insistence on a belief just because my teacher had said it or the Buddha had said it or it was given in the Tipitaka. One understood the teaching at the intellectual level, then at the level of experience, and only then accepted it. One did not accept without knowing, without understanding and without experiencing.

The Arya Samaj made me a rational thinker and kept me away from blind beliefs. This, itself, was a great benefit. Vipassana went further. It liberated me from dry intellectual philosophical arguments and the frenzy of sentimental devotion and taught me to experience true spirituality. Accepting whatever truths I actually experienced, I progressed further and experienced subtler truths. I continued to examine whether my mental defilements were becoming weaker or not. The emphasis of the teaching on actual improvement in the present appealed to me. I understood that if the present improved, the future would improve automatically. If this life improves, the next life will improve automatically. It also became clear to me that I was fully responsible for defiling my mind. Why should any external invisible force defile my mind? Similarly, I alone had the responsibility of purifying my mind. The teacher would, with great compassion, show us the path. But I would have to walk on the path step by step. I became free from the delusion that someone else would liberate me.

This technique did not teach me to develop contempt or aversion towards invisible gods and goddesses but taught me to develop *mettā* for them. The sentiment of “*Apnī mukti, apne hātha, apnā pariśrama, apnā puruṣārtha*—our liberation is in our own hands; it depends on our own diligence and efforts,” did not result in egotism but generated humble awareness of my own responsibility. I liked this self-reliance. I was filled with rapture on recalling these words of a poet: “*Svāvalanbana kī eka jhalaka para nyauchāvara Kubera kā koṣa*—renounced is the treasury of Kubera (the god of wealth) for one glimpse of self-dependence.” My life was transformed. I felt as if I had been born anew.

1954 was the last year of the first Buddha *sāsana* of 2500 years. In this year, I came in contact with the Buddha *sāsana* for the first time when I was appointed as a member of the food organization committee for providing vegetarian food during the *Chatṭha Saṅgāyana*. 1955 was the first year of the second Buddha *sāsana*. In this year, I learned Vipassana meditation. It seems that this first year of the second Buddha *sāsana* was the sunrise of my good fortune. The final year of the first Buddha *sāsana* was the dawn signaling this auspicious sunrise. The fifty years of this Dhamma journey have made my life meaningful, made it successful. I feel blessed.

May the rest of my life be dedicated to Dhamma.  
Wayfarer on the path of Dhamma,  
S. N. Goenka ❀

## Goenkaji in Dubai, U.A.E.

Goenkaji has been travelling around the world for the spread of Dhamma for many years. Most of these travels have been during the Indian monsoon season. Earlier, he used to visit the West more often but of late, responding to the enthusiasm for Dhamma in certain Asian regions, he has been travelling more in Asia. Old age and age-related health issues play an important role in his itinerary. These allow him less and less time for the various Dhamma projects he has taken up. Usually, Goenkaji gets more free time for his writing during his stay at the Nepal Vipassana Centre, Kathmandu and in Dubai.

The main focus of Goenkaji’s work has always been the practical aspect of the Buddha’s teaching. The centuries-old misconceptions about the Buddha’s teaching in India need to be removed in order to put his teaching in the right context and to facilitate the spread of Vipassana. As long as these misconceptions have currency in society, people hesitate to learn and practise Vipassana. To counter the misunderstandings Goenkaji has written many essays and books such as “Was the Buddha a Pessimist?”

A false allegation against the Buddha that has been making the rounds for centuries is that he is a *nastik*—a term with a strong derogatory connotation that has meant different things at different times in the history in India. *Nastik* may be loosely translated as non-believer in English. It implies that if someone is a *nastik*, those who follow him will be led astray. In the past few months, Goenkaji has undertaken an in-depth study to analyse the evolution of the term and its impact on the teaching of the Buddha and other teachers. Goenkaji also studied the usage of *nastik* and its implications in the times before the Buddha and after the Buddha, which involved the comparative study of various spiritual traditions in India. This study has culminated in the writing of the book “*Kya Buddha Nastik The?*” (Was the Buddha a *nastik*?). This book, in Hindi, will be available to meditators by the end of 2005. When Goenkaji and Mataji arrived in Dubai on August 11, completion of this book was the primary object. During his stay in Dubai, he was able to review related literature and has almost completed writing this detailed work.

Though Goenkaji spent most of his time on this book, he also worked on several other topics during this period. He edited the booklet on the royal physician Jivaka who was also the Buddha’s physician. This booklet titled *Agrapala Rajvaidya Jivaka* will be published shortly. Goenkaji also wrote an essay on his natural mother. (Goenkaji was adopted by his paternal

uncle and aunt during his childhood. His article on the death of his adoptive mother has been published in the Vipassana Newsletter.) He also edited a book on the King of Magadha, Bimbisara which is mostly a compilation of his earlier articles on the king and his family. Bimbisara was the first king to become a disciple of the Buddha and attained the stage of stream-enterer (*sotāpanna*).

Vipassana meditators in the rapidly growing city of Dubai were delighted to have Goenkaji among them. They were able to meditate with him at the weekly group sitting at the end of which he would answer a few selected questions. One meditator, who has been meditating for many years, had only recently come from the USA to work as a professor in a local university. She came to the group sitting not realising that it would be conducted by Goenkaji. Needless to say, she then joined all the subsequent group sittings.

A ten-day course was held in August at a temporary camp-site in a neighbouring Emirate. 28 August was the *mettā* day of this course. In spite of cautionary words from his assistants about his ill-health, Goenkaji insisted on making the journey to give the *mettā* session live to the students on this course. After the *mettā* session, he met the students and Dhamma servers for almost an hour. One meditator from Kerala, who had joined a ten-day course for the first time, asked Goenkaji, "I joined the course because one of my friends in Mumbai told me about it. Now I have experienced firsthand what a wonderful teaching this is! Why is it not widely known in Kerala? This must spread in Kerala!" Goenkaji laughed and told him that it is the meditators who spread awareness about Vipassana, organize courses and establish centres. This student's enthusiasm was not empty. Within a few days, he approached Goenkaji requesting a brief interview for an English programme on the Malayalam channel, Asianet. On 5 September, he recorded Goenkaji's interview.

On 11 September, Goenkaji gave a public talk in Hindi at the Sindhi Ceremonial Centre. The topic was "*Vipassana—Sukhi Jivan ka Vigyan*". After the talk he answered questions for more than half an hour. On 15 September, he recorded an interview for "Dubai Eye", a local radio station. On 29 September, he gave a public talk in English at the Sindhi Ceremonial Centre on "*Vipassana—the Science of Happiness*" and then answered questions from the audience.

Awareness of Vipassana is spreading in the Middle East and there are regular group sittings in Bahrain and Muscat. Meditators from the neighbouring countries of Oman and Bahrain came for a group sitting to Dubai. The meditators who were instrumental in organizing a ten-day course in Bahrain recently came to meet Goenkaji and sought guidance from him.

Goenkaji and Mataji returned to Bombay on 8 October after a very fruitful stay.

*May all beings be happy!*

#### ONE-DAY COURSE AT GLOBAL PAGODA WITH GOENKAJI

A one-day course has been organized at the Global Pagoda on 11 December 2005 from 11 am to 5 pm. Goenkaji will be present during the course. For registration, Vipassana meditators who have completed at least one ten-day course may contact: Mr. Derek Pegado, Tel: (022) 2845-2261 or 2845-2111.

**One-day courses at Global Pagoda:** every Sunday, 11 am to 5 pm. Those wishing to visit the Pagoda site may call for gate pass: Tel: (022) 2845-2111, 2845-2261 Tel/Fax: 2845-2112. Email: globalpagoda@hotmail.com Website: www.globalpagoda.org

#### NEW VIPASSANA CENTRES

**Dhammārāma, Andhra Pradesh:** This new centre is located on four acres of land in Kumudavalli village in Andhra Pradesh. The first phase of construction will provide for a Dhamma Hall to seat about 70 students and accommodation for 16 male students. A pagoda with 80 cells and accommodation for female students will be built in the second phase. The total estimate for building this Dhamma centre is Rs 110 lakhs (11 million). Goenkaji has named this centre *Dhammārāma* (Abode of Dhamma).

Presently, group sittings every Sunday and one-day courses on the second and fourth Sunday are organized here every month. For more information, contact: VIMC, Kumudavalli village, Bhimavaram Mandal, West Godavari district, Andhra Pradesh. Tel: (08816) 236566.

**Dhamma Mahāna, Mongolia:** Land of about 100 acres has been given to the Vipassana trust on long term lease by the Government of Mongolia for development of a Vipassana centre. It is located on the north-western hill side, 22 km from Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. The centre is close to the highway, has access to water and electricity and has many trees around. Goenkaji has named it *Dhamma Mahāna* (Great Dhamma).

There are no buildings on the land. The first course on the land was held from 20 to 31 August 2005, with 37 students using tents and huts for the Dhamma hall and residences. Among the students were a cabinet minister of Mongolia and Deputy Director of Mongolian National Radio and Television. An old student from Europe too joined the course. The Mongolia Vipassana trust plans to organize more courses there. There are about 200-300 old students in the region who are willing to serve. Estimated cost of construction is about \$350,000.

For more details, contact: *Dhamma Mahāna*, Vipassana center trust of Mongolia, Eronkhy said Amaryn Gudamj, Soyolyn Tov Orgoo, 9th floor, Suite 909, Mongolia. Tel: [976] 9118-9192, 9915-6348. Mailing address: Central Post Office, PO Box 2146, Ulaanbaatar 211213, Mongolia. Email: info@mongolia.dhamma.org

#### GOENKAJI'S DISCOURSES ON TELEVISION

**India:** A new series of Hindi discourses by Goenkaji is being telecast daily at about 9:45 am on Aastha TV channel.

**Zee TV:** Daily at 4:30 am. Please confirm exact timings.

**USA:** Aastha will be telecasting Goenkaji's discourses at 6 pm EST (Monday to Friday) on the WORLDDIRECT platform of DIRECTV on channel no. 2005.

## ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Residential Children's Course: 4 to 6 Nov at JNPT (13-16 years).

Contact: Tel: (022) 2510-1096, 2516-2505 on 27 & 28 Oct

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
06 Nov	South Mumbai	13-16 years	3 & 4 Nov
13 Nov	Andheri	13-16 years	10 & 11 Nov
13 Nov	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	10 & 11 Nov
20 Nov	Ghatkopar	10-12 years	17 & 18 Nov
27 Nov	Matunga	10-12 years	24 & 25 Nov
04 Dec	South Mumbai	10-12 years	1 & 2 Dec
11 Dec	Andheri	10-12 years	8 & 9 Dec
11 Dec	Ulhasnagar	13-16 years	8 & 9 Dec
18 Dec	Ghatkopar	13-16 years	15 & 16 Dec
25 Dec	Matunga	10-12 years	22 & 23 Dec

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 **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. **JNPT Vipassana Center:** JNPT Township, Trainee Hostel Bldg, Sector 3, Sheva Taluka, Uran, Navi Mumbai. 98923-87145, 98218-08488, 2747-2554. **Dhamma Sarita:** Jivan Sandhya Mangal Sansthan, near Khadavli station -Tel: 25101096, 25162505 **South Mumbai:** Times of India Bldg., Opp CST Station. For registration and information call Tel: 23081622 **Ghatkopar:** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar West, Opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086, Tel: 25101096,

25162505. 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. (To serve children's courses in Mumbai, call 98200-22990.)

### NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers:

Mrs. Maria Claxton, *Australia*

To assist the area teachers in serving *Dhamma Pabbā, Tasmania*

### NEW APPOINTMENTS

Children Course Teachers:

1. Mr. Kishan Rao Jadhav, *Indore* 2. Mr. Jagdish Prasad Sharma, *Jaipur* 3. & 4. Mr. Pragnesh and Mrs. Gayatri Trivedi, *Modasa* 5. Mrs. Shobhana Dineshkumar Shah, *Abmedabad* 6. Ms. Cheng, Ching-Fen, *Taiwan* 7. Mrs. Lin, Ying Mao, *Taiwan* 8. Ms. Su, Tz Hsiou, *Taiwan* 9. Mr. Paiboon Tantrasuwan, *Thailand* 10. Mrs. Chamborin Mao, *France* 11. Mr. Eric Cohen, *France* 12. Mr. Gregoire Delabre, *France* 13. Mrs. Marushka Delabre, *France* 14. Mr. David Fumadó, *Spain* 15. Mrs. Lidia Salvador Ferez, *Spain* 16. Ms. Hema Shivji, *UK* 17. Mr. Simon Binks, *UK* 18. & 19. Mr. Arvin Barkhordarian & Mrs. Veronika Pena de la Jara, *UK*

### Vipassana Newsletters on the VRI website

Current and past issues of the Hindi Vipassana Patrika and English Newsletter can be downloaded from the VRI website:

[www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters/index.html](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters/index.html)

[www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html)

## 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 meñ rāga hai, jaba taka mana meñ dveṣa;  
Taba taka dukha hī dukha hai, miṭeñ na mana ke kleṣa.*

As long as there is craving in the mind,  
as long as in the mind is aversion,  
there will be suffering, only suffering;  
the mind cannot be purged of affliction.

*With much metta,  
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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