

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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

WORDS OF DHAMMA

The Buddha spoke the following verses to the merchants of Rājagaha who donated the first dwellings for meditation to the *Saṅgha*.

*Leṇatthañca sukhatthañca,
jhāyituñca vipassitum;
vihāradānaṃ saṅghassa,
aggam Buddhena vaṇṇitaṃ.*

Sheltering and conducive
To concentration and insight,
A place of meditation is praised by the Buddha
As the greatest gift to the Saṅgha.

*Tasmā hi paṇḍito poso,
sampassam atthamattano;
vihāre kāraye ramme,
vāsayettha bahussute.*

Therefore, a wise man, considering his own welfare,
Should build pleasant dwellings in which those
Who have heard much about the Dhamma
May stay (and practise it).

—Cūlavagga 295

THE GIFT OF DHAMMA

S. N. Goenka

Goenkaji has often talked about the gifts of dāna, the mental volition of the giver and the many ways to give dāna. He talks about the supreme gift of Dhammadāna, the transmission of the Dhamma in its pure form from teacher to student through the generations. In addition, he points out that there are ways to share in the giving of Dhammadāna, even for those who are not teachers. Following is the concluding part of a selection of his words on this topic, drawn from various articles and talks and adapted for the Newsletter.

The Dhammadāna of Service

From a talk given by Goenkaji to Dhamma servers at Dhamma Giri in June 1986 and printed in 'For the Benefit of Many.'

What is the purpose of Dhamma service? Certainly, it is not to receive board and lodging nor to pass the time in a comfortable environment nor to escape from the responsibilities of daily life. Dhamma servers know this well.

Such persons have practiced Vipassana and realized by direct experience the benefits it offers. They have seen the selfless service of the teachers, management and Dhamma servers—service that enabled them to taste the incomparable flavor of Dhamma. They have begun to

take steps on the Noble Path, and naturally have started to develop the rare quality of gratitude, the wish to repay this debt for all that they have received.

Of course, the teacher, management and Dhamma servers gave their service without expecting anything in return nor will they accept any material remuneration. The only way to pay back the debt to them is by helping to keep the Wheel of Dhamma rotating, to give to others the same selfless service. This is the noble volition with which to give Dhamma service.

As Vipassana meditators progress on the path, they emerge from the old habit pattern of self-centeredness and start to concern themselves with others. They notice how everywhere people are suffering: young or old, men or women, black or white, wealthy or poor, all are suffering. Meditators realize that they themselves were miserable until they encountered the Dhamma. They know that, like them, others have started to enjoy real happiness and peace by following the Path. Seeing this change stimulates a feeling of sympathetic joy and strengthens the wish to help suffering people come out of their misery with Vipassana. Compassion overflows, and with it, the volition to help others find relief from their suffering.

Dāna of Right Thought, Speech and Actions

The following message by Goenkaji discusses the opening of the first center in Europe, Dhamma Mahi. It was written for publication in Nouvelles de Vipassana, the French edition of the Vipassana Newsletter, appearing in June 1988.

The hour of Vipassana has struck in Europe. For many years, devoted students in France and neighboring countries have worked hard to make the Dhamma available to others. Now, with the purchase of a center, those efforts of so many students are coming to fruition. I am deeply pleased to see the good results of your work.

The establishing of a center marks a new stage in the growth of Dhamma. It is important to understand its significance.

A center for Vipassana meditation is not a commune where members of a sect can live in isolation from the outside world, according to their own peculiar rules. It is not a club designed for the enjoyment of its members. It is not a temple in which to perform religious ceremonies. It is not a place for socializing.

A center is, instead, a school which teaches one subject: Dhamma, the art of living. All who come to a center, whether to meditate or to serve, come to receive this teaching.

To ensure that the Dhamma is offered in its strength and purity, you follow the discipline in all centers. The more carefully this is maintained, the stronger the center will be. Many ordinary activities are forbidden by this discipline, not because there is anything wrong in them but because they are inappropriate at a center for Vipassana meditation. Remember, this is the only place in your country where one can learn this type of Vipassana. The discipline is a way of preserving this unique purpose of *Dhamma Mahi*; guard it carefully.

The foundation of the edifice of Dhamma that you will construct here is *sīla* (moral conduct). As you know, undertaking *sīla* is the essential first step in a Vipassana course since, without it, meditation will be weak. It is equally essential that all who serve at a center keep the Five Precepts as carefully as possible. The rule of Dhamma has been established at *Dhamma Mahi*. From now on, there should be no killing on this land, no stealing, no sexual activity, no wrong speech, no use of intoxicants. This will create a calm and peaceful atmosphere conducive to the work of self-purification.

With the firm base of *sīla*, the practice of self-purification can proceed. Keep in mind that this is the most important task at the center—first, last and always. All who come to serve at the center, even for a few hours, must not neglect their duty to meditate here as well. By doing so, they strengthen the Dhamma atmosphere and give support to other meditators.

This is not, of course, the only place in Europe at which meditation and the teachings of the Buddha are practiced; but it is the only place devoted to this particular transmission of the teachings and this

particular form of Vipassana. See that the center is kept at all times specifically for this purpose.

The final essential part of the technique is *mettā*, and this too must be practiced by all who come to the center, whether to sit or serve. For your meditation and service to be beneficial, you must perform it joyfully, selflessly, and lovingly. Whatever task you undertake, do it with the volition that by your action all beings may be happy. Whenever welcoming others to the center, whether meditators or visitors, do so with *mettā*. Permeate this land with vibrations of love and good will, so that all who come here feel that they have entered a sanctuary of peace.

From a talk given on March 14, 1982 at Dhamma Thali to inaugurate construction of its pagoda.

There are so many ways to help. One can help physically. One can help by speaking. If someone has wealth, then one can help financially. These are essential; however, the best way to help is by meditating.

The more old students meditate on this land, the more their efforts will become instrumental in the welfare of many. During the lifetime of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, there were so many of his students who had reached the stage of *nibbāna* and could experience it whenever they wished and as long as they wished. One could ask, "How did they become free of their debt to the Dhamma, the center and their teacher?" Others might give *dāna* of physical effort or wealth or other kinds of help to become free of their debts. But for such good meditators, it is proper that at least once a week, they visit this place and sitting in some cell for an hour, they enter *nibbāna*. That is such a great service. The whole center will become suffused with those Dhamma vibrations. The Dhamma strength of the vibrations generated by each meditator will depend upon how much he or she has meditated and what stage has been attained, but all right effort will benefit those who come to the center.

Building meditation cells for students is in itself a very meritorious act. However, it is much more meritorious for every meditator to come here once a week to meditate. This is the *dāna* of our meditation. It is the *dāna* of our meditative vibrations that will purify the land, will ripen it, thereby making it easier for future students to gain more with less effort. Each person has to put in effort, has made an effort to fight the defilements within. However, if the environment around is charged with Dhamma vibrations, the effort becomes easier. If the vibrations at the center are impure, they hinder progress, making it more difficult for the student to face the defilements within. They prevent the student from working properly. If students receive the protection of pure Dhamma vibrations, they gain great strength, great help.

Meditators should generate *mettā* within. By meditating at the center, we certainly benefit ourselves. We cannot say how many others will also benefit by our meditation, will gain from our work. People will benefit for centuries. They will automatically become attracted

to a place where Dhamma vibrations arise. So long as the Dhamma is maintained in its pure form, people will meditate and benefit for centuries. ☺

S. N. Goenka has often said that Dhamma service is an integral part of an old student's growth and development on this Path. Giving Dhamma service in accordance with the *Code of Conduct for Dhamma Workers* strengthens a student of Vipassana for living a Dhamma life in the outside world.

Over the years, thousands of young Vipassana meditators have benefited tremendously by giving Dhamma service during college vacations or soon after completing their studies. The training they receive during Dhamma service is an ideal preparation to begin a successful career. Serving in a Dhamma land is an essential part of one's progress in Dhamma.

Those who wish to give Dhamma service, may contact the Course Manager, Dhamma Giri, Igatpuri 422 403. Tel: (02553) 244076, 244086; Email: info@giri.dhamma.org or the Course Manager of the Vipassana center in their area.

The *Code of Discipline for Dhamma service* and the *Dhamma service application form* are available at <http://www.dhamma.org/os>.

(Username: oldstudent. Password: behappy)

Mere sukha meṃ śhānti meṃ, bhāga sabhī kā hoyā.

Isa maṅgalamaya Dharma kā, lābha sabhī ko hoyā.

May my happiness and peace be shared by one and all.

May this munificent Dhamma benefit one and all.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

(The following is from "The Clock of Vipassana Has Struck" published by VRI.)

Question: The way to liberate the mind is essentially practical but how does one develop these mental qualities of awareness and equanimity you have just pointed out?

S. N. Goenka: A way was found which could be understood and practiced. It is the Fourth Noble Truth, that is, the Noble Eightfold Path.

To start with, one should at least abstain from vocal and physical actions which contribute to one's mental agitation. One should refrain from speaking lies, harsh words, or slanderous talk, or idle gossip. One should refrain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, and intoxicants. One should avoid a means of livelihood that causes harm to others. With the base of this morality (*sīla*), one makes proper efforts and begins to develop awareness of sensations, at least in one small area of the body. To do so, one sits quietly with closed eyes, observing the flow of in-breath and out-breath at the entrance to the nostrils. Working for some time with this awareness of respiration, one develops the ability to keep the mind fixed on a single object of attention: the area below the nostrils, above the upper lip. With this

heightened concentration (*samādhi*), one becomes capable of experiencing the natural, normal, physical sensations in this area.

The mind is now sharp enough to begin experiencing sensations throughout the physical structure.

Systematically, diligently, and repeatedly, one moves the attention through the body, gradually strengthening awareness of sensations, increasing one's ability not to react to them. With this training—the awareness of the reality, in the present moment, and equanimity—the pattern of thought begins to change, from thoughts of craving, aversion, ignorance to thoughts of Dhamma, or the way out of suffering.

But thinking, even of Dhamma, will not lead to liberation from suffering. For that, one must continue developing awareness and equanimity. Without elation about pleasant sensations or depression in the face of unpleasant ones, one understands not merely intellectually but experientially that these sensations are nothing but manifestations of the contact of mind and matter—phenomena which are as impermanent and ephemeral as the sensations themselves. Something so ephemeral as these sensations cannot be a basis for real happiness; rather, they will be a source of misery. One also starts realizing at the experiential level that the entire mental phenomenon, the physical phenomenon, and the combination of these two is certainly not 'I', not 'mine', not 'my soul'. In this way, by experiencing reality as it is, in its nature, with its true characteristics, the meditator develops real wisdom (*paññā*), and emerges from illusions and delusions.

Thus, by maintaining awareness and equanimity, one gradually weakens the old habits of craving and aversion. Even when reaction does occur, it is less intense and passes away more quickly. It no longer has such a powerful impact on the mind.

The more one remains fully aware and equanimous, not allowing new reactions of craving and aversion to occur, the more one gives an opportunity to one's stock of old reactions, of suppressed mental defilements, to rise to the conscious level of the mind, one by one, to be eradicated. Layer after layer, these past conditionings come to the surface. By maintaining equanimity, one eradicates them and thus finds relief from misery.

Whatever defilements are eradicated, to that degree one is free of suffering. Step by step, remaining aware and not reacting, one advances on the path, until sooner or later one reaches the stage when the entire accumulation of past reactions has been eradicated, and the habit of reaction itself has disappeared. Freed from all craving, aversion, ignorance—past, present and future—one experiences total freedom from suffering.

To reach this stage, one has to work and work strenuously. Simply reading articles or engaging in discussions or debates will not suffice. The only way to achieve liberation is by one's own efforts—the effort to observe the reality of oneself, within the framework of one's body, without reacting to it. This is the way to

achieve the end of suffering. ☺

VIPASSANA IN IRAN

The first Vipassana course was held in Iran in 1999. Since then, a small but growing number of dedicated old students have ensured that Iran continues to benefit from Dhamma. This year, eight 10-day Vipassana courses and two 3-day courses (and a few one-day courses) were organized in Tehran, Iran. About 166 new students and 56 old students participated in courses in 2003.

The courses are being held in Varangerood, a pleasant holiday resort in the mountains to the north of Tehran, and in northern cities of Klardasht and in the region south of the Caspian Sea as well as Mashhad, a big city in Iran. Most of the courses are being held in various private homes in Tehran.

Separate courses are held for male and female students. Regular group sittings are being organized in different parts of Tehran. Participants have come from all strata of society. Most students have expressed joy at how beneficial Vipassana is to them, and how the teaching appears to be like a long-lost precious part of Iranian culture.

Old students in Iran are hoping that Satipatthana sutta course and longer courses will soon be held in their country. 'The Art of Living', 'Healing the Healer' and 'Discourse Summaries' have been published in Farsi language. The search has also begun for land in Teheran and its suburbs for the first Vipassana centre in Iran.

For more details of Vipassana activities in Iran, contact: Email: vipassana_ir@hotmail.com or daryushn@yahoo.com

VIPASSANA GLOBAL PAGODA

Work has been completed on one of the four small pagodas (each the size of the Pagoda at *Dhamma Giri* and *Dhamma Tapovana*). The work on the main Pagoda has reached a height of 30 feet on the outside and 25 feet on the inside.

One-day courses are conducted every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Those wishing to visit the Pagoda site may

contact: Tel: (022) 28452112, 28452111, 28452261 Fax: 28452112. Email: globalpagoda@hotmail.com

VIPASSANA NEWSLETTER ON THE WEBSITE

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

<http://www.vri.dhamma.org/NewslettersHindi/index.html>

<http://www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters/index.html>

Note: The subscription charges for the Vipassana Patrika and Newsletter have been increased because of the increased expenses of publication and dispatch.

Annual Subscription: Rs 30.00; Life Subscription: Rs 500.00

(By crossed bank draft, payable at Igatpuri to Vipassana Research Institute. Payment by cheque will not be accepted.)

CHILDREN COURSES IN MUMBAI

| Date | Place | Age | Registration Date |
|------|---------|--------------|-------------------|
| 25-1 | Matunga | 10 to 12 yrs | 22 & 23-1-04 |
| 8-2 | Andheri | 10 to 12 yrs | 5 & 6-2 |
| 29-2 | Matunga | 13 to 16 yrs | 26 & 27-2 |

Course Timings: 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Registration Timings: 4:00 p.m. to 7 p.m.

Registration Phone No.: 26834820. Contact: **Matunga:** Amulakh Amichand School, Kidwai Road, Near SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (C.R.). **Andheri:** Dada Saheb Gaikwad Sansthan, Baba Saheb Ambedkar Road, Four Bungalows, R.T.O. Corner, Andheri (W).

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers

1. & 2. Mr. Edward & Mrs. Junko Giorgilli, *Japan*
3. Dr. (Ms.) Yu-Fen Shih, *Taiwan*
4. Mrs. Usha Kiran Talwar, New Delhi
5. Mr. Mahasukh J. Sheth, Morbi

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. Mrs. Karon Samaranayake, *Sri Lanka*
2. Mr. Lionel Pilimatalawe, *Sri Lanka*
3. Mrs. Chintamani Pilimatalawe, *Sri Lanka*
4. Mr. Riban Ulrich, *USA*
5. Mr. Mike Cacciola, *USA*

GOENKAJI'S INTERVIEW ON ZEE TV

Zee TV is broadcasting a program called *Urja* featuring Goenkaji every Saturday at 10:00 a.m. In this program, Goenkaji answers questions about the different aspects of Dhamma (Dharma). Meditators may inform their family and friends about the opportunity to hear Goenkaji expound on the universal Dhamma.

Questions for Goenkaji may be sent to: *Urja*, Zee TV, Post Box No. 1, Andheri (W), Mumbai 400 099.

Email: response@zeenetwork.com

(Please put 'Urja' in the subject line.)

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