

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

*Mātā yathā niyaṃ puttā,
āyusā eka-puttamanurakkhe;
evampi sabba bhūtesu,
mānasam bhāvaye aparimānaṃ.*

Just as a mother would risk her life
To protect her only child;
Similarly, one should cultivate
Boundless love towards all beings.

—Sutta Nipāta 149 (Metta-sutta)

THE PRACTICE OF METTĀ-BHĀVANĀ

Vipassana Research Institute

The practice of *mettā-bhāvanā* (meditation of loving kindness) is the closing part of the technique of Vipassana meditation. We practice *mettā* by radiating loving kindness and goodwill towards all beings, deliberately charging the atmosphere around us with the calming, positive vibrations of pure and compassionate love. The Buddha instructed us to develop *mettā* so as to live more peaceful and harmonious lives and to help others to do so as well. The practice of *mettā* gives us a way to share with all others the peace and harmony that we are developing.

The commentaries state that *mettā* is the quality that inclines one to a friendly disposition—*Mijjati sīniyhatī'ti mettā*. It is a sincere wish for the good and welfare of all, devoid of ill will. Non-aversion is *mettā—adoso'ti mettā*. The chief characteristic of *mettā* is a benevolent attitude. It culminates in the identification of oneself with all beings—a recognition of the fellowship of all life.

Mettā is not a prayer nor is it the hope that an outside agency will help. On the contrary, it is a dynamic process producing a supportive atmosphere where others can act to help themselves. *Mettā* can be directed towards all beings or towards a particular person. We must eliminate egotism and open our minds to practise *mettā*.

Intellectually, it is easy enough but it is far harder to develop such an attitude in oneself. To do so, some practice is needed, and so, we have the technique of *mettā-bhāvanā*, the systematic cultivation of goodwill towards others. To be really effective, though, *mettā-bhāvanā* must be practiced along with Vipassana meditation. So long as negativity such as aversion dominates the mind, it is futile to formulate conscious

thoughts of goodwill, and doing so becomes a ritual devoid of inner meaning. However, when negativity is removed by the practice of Vipassana, goodwill naturally wells up in the mind; and emerging from the prison of self-obsession, we begin to concern ourselves with the welfare of others.

For this reason, the technique of *mettā-bhāvanā* is introduced only at the end of a Vipassana course, after the participants have passed through the process of purification. At such a time, meditators often feel a deep wish for the well-being of others, making their practice of *mettā* truly effective. Though limited time is devoted to it in a course, *mettā* may be regarded as the culmination of the practice of Vipassana.

Nibbāna can be experienced only by those whose minds are filled with loving kindness and compassion for all beings. Simply wishing for this state is not enough; we must purify our minds to attain it.

By the practice of Vipassana, we become aware that the underlying reality of the world and of ourselves consists of arising and passing away every moment. We realize that the process of change continues without our control and regardless of our wishes. Gradually, we understand that any attachment to what is ephemeral and insubstantial produces suffering for us. We learn to be detached and to keep the balance of our minds in the face of any experience. Then we begin to experience what real happiness is: neither the satisfaction of craving nor the forestalling of fears but rather liberation from the cycles of craving and fear. As inner serenity develops, we clearly see how others are enmeshed in suffering, and naturally this wish arises, "May they find what we have found: the way out of misery, the path of peace." This is the proper

volition for the practice of *mettā-bhāvanā*.

In order to practise *mettā*, the mind must be calm, balanced and free from negativity. This is the type of mind developed by the practice of Vipassana. A meditator knows by experience how anger, antipathy, or ill will destroys peace and frustrates any efforts to help others. Only when hatred is removed and equanimity is developed can we be happy and wish happiness for others. The words, “May all beings be happy” have great force only when uttered from a pure mind. Backed by this purity, they will certainly be effective in fostering the happiness of others.

We must, therefore, examine ourselves before practising *mettā-bhāvanā* to check whether we are really capable of practising *mettā*. If we find even a tinge of hatred or aversion in our minds, we should refrain at that time and relax or lie down until the impurity or unpleasantness goes away. However, if the mind and body are filled with serenity and well-being, it is natural and appropriate to share this happiness with others: “May you be happy, may you be liberated from the defilements that are the causes of suffering. May all beings be peaceful! May all beings be happy! May all beings come out of their misery!”

In Vipassana, no verbalization, visualization or imagination is allowed. But while practising *mettā-bhāvanā*, all of these are allowed.

We can use our imagination especially with those who are near and dear, we can visualize their faces and give *mettā*: “May you be happy, may you be happy.” As we experience the vibrations, which are characteristic of arising and passing, we can say to ourselves, “These vibrations are vibrations of *mettā*, of love, of compassion.” When one is alone, one can even verbalize, “May all be happy, may all be happy”. When we are in a group, we can recite mentally to ourselves, “May all be happy, may all be peaceful, may all come out of misery.”

This loving attitude enables us to deal far more skilfully with the vicissitudes of life. Suppose, for example, one encounters a person who is acting out of deliberate ill will to harm others. The common response—to react with fear and hatred—is self-centeredness, which does nothing to improve the situation and, in fact, magnifies the negativity. It would be far more helpful to remain calm and balanced, with a feeling of goodwill for the person who is acting wrongly. This must not be merely an intellectual stance, a veneer over unresolved negativity. *Mettā* works only when it overflows spontaneously from a purified mind.

The serenity gained in Vipassana meditation naturally gives rise to feelings of *mettā*, and throughout the day, this will continue to affect us and our environment in a positive way. Thus, Vipassana

ultimately has a dual function: to bring us happiness by purifying our minds, and to help us to foster the happiness of others by preparing us to practice *mettā*. What is the purpose of freeing ourselves of negativity and egotism unless we share these benefits with others? In a retreat, we cut ourselves off from the world temporarily in order to return and share with others what we gained in solitude. These two aspects of the practice of Vipassana are inseparable.

In these times of violent unrest and widespread suffering, the need for such a practice as *mettā-bhāvanā* is clear. If peace and harmony are to reign throughout the world, they must first be established in the minds of all the inhabitants of the world.

May all beings be happy ! ☺

Mettā-Bhāvanā

Ahaṃ avero homi, abyāpajjho homi. Anīgho homi, sukhi attānaṃ pariharāmi.

May I be free from animosity, free from suffering, free from trouble. May happiness be with me always.

Mātā-pitū-ācariya-nāti-samūhā, Averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu. Anīghā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu.

May my mother, father, teachers, and relatives be free from animosity, free from aversion, free from trouble. May happiness be with them always.

Ārakkhadevatā bhūmatthadevatā rukkhathadevatā, Akāsathadevatā, averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu. Anīghā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu.

May all guardian deities, earth-bound deities, tree-bound deities, sky-bound deities be free from animosity, free from aversion, free from trouble. May happiness be with them always.

Puratthimāya disāya, puratthimāya anudisāya. Dakkhiṇāya disāya, dakkhiṇāya anudisāya. Pacchimāya disāya, pacchimāya anudisāya. Uttarāya disāya, uttarāya anudisāya. Uparimāya disāya, hetthimāya disāya.

In the direction of the east, in the direction of the south-east, in the direction of the south, in the direction of the south-west, in the direction of the west, in the direction of the north-west, in the direction of the north, in the direction of the north-east, in the direction above, in the direction below.

Sabbe sattā, sabbe pāṇā, sabbe bhūtā, sabbe puggalā, sabbe attabhāvapariyāpannā, sabba itthiyo, sabbe purisā, sabbe ariyā, sabbe anariyā, sabbe manussā, sabbe amanussā, sabbe devā, sabbe vinipātikā— averā hontu, abyāpajjhā hontu, anīghā hontu, sukhi attānaṃ pariharantu.

May all beings, all living creatures, all creatures, all individuals, all forms of life, all women, all men, all those who have attained purity of mind, all those who have not yet attained purity of mind, all *devas*, all humans, all non-humans, all celestial beings, and all those in states of woe be free from animosity, free from aversion, free from trouble. May happiness be with them always.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Question: If I am not able to experience subtle sensation in the body, how can I practise *mettā*?

Goenkaji: It is true that if you practise *mettā* with these subtle sensations, it is very strong, very effective, because you are working with the deepest level of your mind. If you are experiencing a gross sensation, it means that only the surface level of your mind is working and the *mettā* is not that effective. But it doesn't matter. In this case, just keep imagining at the intellectual, conscious level, "May all beings be happy. May all beings be happy." and keep on working. When you reach the stage where there are subtle vibrations, you will work at a deeper level and the *mettā* will be more effective.

Question: Why is it important for us—students, Dhamma servers, trustees, ATs, and teachers—to practise a few minutes of *mettā* after our daily sittings?

Goenkaji: Do this for your own benefit. *Mettā* generates good, wholesome vibrations for others and as soon as you start generating these, you yourself benefit. In the same way, when you generate unwholesome vibrations of ill will towards others you are the first victim and become miserable.

Now you have to change that habit pattern so you think, "Instead of generating ill will let me learn how to generate goodwill for others." You can't generate goodwill unless your mind is to some extent pure, so you sit for an hour to purify your mind, and then learn how to generate goodwill for others. It is an exercise that helps you to change your behaviour-pattern.

Question: Quite often it is necessary to take strong action. But as you say, this should be done with *mettā* and compassion. On such occasions, if *mettā* and compassion are not generated, should one then take no action? If so, the wrongdoer could be encouraged. What should be done in such situations?

Goenkaji: Never encourage injustice. One has to oppose injustice, but with the base of *mettā* and *karuṇā*. If you oppose someone without this base, don't justify it. Understand that this was your defect, and the next time any such thing happens you will try to generate *mettā* and *karuṇā*, and oppose the injustice with that base. If you keep justifying your mistakes, you can't rectify yourself.

Question: Is *mettā* some sort of energy? Is it limitless? Does the amount of *mettā* increase and decrease over time?

Goenkaji: Well, every individual generates *mettā*. So it increases and decreases according to the capacity of the individual. If the individual becomes purer and purer, the *mettā* becomes stronger and stronger. If the mind of the meditator is very weak or full of impurity, then the *mettā* is very weak. *Mettā* is generated by the meditator.

Question: What should I do if neither my body nor my mind is ready to practise *mettā* at the end of my daily

sitting, even after relaxing?

Goenkaji: Well, if you are not in a state to practise *mettā*, then it is better not to do *mettā*. But at least at the surface level of your mind, you can think, "May all beings be happy." It won't be very powerful, but you can try to work like that. However, if the mind is very agitated it is better not to practice *mettā*.

When there are subtle vibrations and you feel peaceful and harmonious, the *mettā* that you generate is very powerful; it helps the atmosphere around you, making it very positive.

(from "For the Benefit of Many" published by VRI)

NEW VIPASSANA CENTRE NEAR MUMBAI

In the last few years, the demand of Mumbai citizens for Vipassana courses has steadily increased so much that *Dhamma Giri* has not been able to accommodate many of the applicants. Therefore, the Mumbai-Parisar Vipassana Centre (MPVC) trust was formed to develop additional centres near Mumbai.

Last year, MPVC selected 29 acres of land on a riverbank about 15 minutes from Titwala railway station (30 minutes from Kalyan) near Mumbai. The MoUs were executed for this land costing about Rs. 20 lacs (2 million rupees). About 11 acres of land has already been registered in the name of the trust and the remaining is under process.

Goenkaji has named the upcoming centre *Dhamma Vāhīnī* (Vehicle of Dhamma). As per his guidance, MPVC plans to create multiple independent facilities for about 100 meditators each in a phased manner. The first phase costing about Rs. one crore (10 million rupees) shall include Dhamma Hall, meditation cells, kitchen, dining hall, accommodation units, administration office and related infrastructure for about 100 meditators.

The proposed centre provides immense opportunities to earn merits by contributing to the development of a new centre. All meditators are welcome to avail themselves this opportunity. Donations are exempted u/s 80 G of I.T. Act. Vipassana meditators who wish to offer Dhamma service or dana for the proposed centre may contact:

Mumbai-Parisar Vipassana Centre,
G-1, Motlibai Wadia Building, 22-D, S A Bravli Road,
Horniman Circle, Fort, Mumbai-400 001
Tel: 3094 9088; E-mail: paramiinves@vsnl.net

IMPORTANT NOTICE

The Vipassana centres at Bodh Gaya (*Dhamma Bodhi*), Sarnath (*Dhamma Cakka*) and Sravasti (*Dhamma Suvatti*) are fully operational and hosting residential courses regularly. Vipassana meditators visiting Bodh Gaya, Sarnath, and Sravasti are welcome to stay at these Vipassana centres during their pilgrimage. For more details, contact: Mr. Satya Prakash, The Raymond Shop, Kambal Ghar Enterprises, C, 27/277 B-1 Maldahiya, Varanasi-221002, Tel: Off. (0542) 2205 418; Fax (0542) 2202 285; Mobile: 94152 26862 and (0542) 311 2314; Email: kambalghar@sancharnet.in

ADDITIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

Ācaryas

Prof. Pyare Lal & Mrs. Sushila Dhar

Additional Responsibility: To coordinate Adolescents' courses in India and Nepal

Senior Assistant Teachers

Mr. Sudesh Leal

To assist in coordinating Adolescents' courses in India and Nepal

NEW RESPONSIBILITIES

Senior Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Nishkama Chaitanya, *Bangalore*
2. Mrs. Pramila Shah, *Jabalpur*
3. Mr. Mahasukh J. Sheth, *Morbi*
4. & 5. Mr. Pratap & Mrs. Shantaben Thakkar, *Gandhidham*
6. Mr. Manhar Vaghela, *Mumbai*
7. Dr. Arun Kumar Verma, *Pauri*
8. Dr. (Mrs.) Savitri Vyas, *Ahmedabad*
9. Mr. Sergio Borsa, *Switzerland*

NEW APPOINTMENTS

Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Mohanlal Agarwal, *Akot*
2. Ms. Meena Tank, *Ahmedabad*
3. Ms. Juechan Limchitti, *Thailand*
4. Mr. Craig Baugh, *USA*

NB Ven. Bhikkhu Vinaybodhi, Mumbai is no longer a Bhikkhu Teacher in this tradition (of Sayagyi U Ba Khin as taught by S. N. Goenka).

ONE-DAY CHILDREN'S COURSES IN MUMBAI

Every third Sunday at Ghatkopar.

Contact: Tel 2510-1096, 2516-2505

Date	Venue	Age	Registration
13.6.2004	Andheri	13-16 years	10 & 11.6.2004
13.6.2004	Ulhasnagar	10-12 years	10 & 11.6.2004
27.6.2004	Matunga	10-12 years	24 & 25.6.2004
22.8.2004	Matunga	13-16 years	19 & 20.8.2004

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), Phone: 2683-4820.

Ulhasnagar: Guru Nanak High School, Kurla Camp, Ulhasnagar-4. Phone: 252-2693. **Matunga:** Amulakh Amirchand High School, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai Road, New SNTD College, King's Circle, Matunga (CR), Tel: 28324820, 28988975. **[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.]**



All Vipassana meditators will be overjoyed to know that the main Global Vipassana Pagoda has reached a height of 35 feet. In the next phase of construction, which has already started in April 2004, the main pagoda will reach 100 feet. One-day courses are conducted every Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Those wishing to get more information or visit the Pagoda site may contact: Tel: (022) 28452112, 28452111, 28452261 Fax: 28452112. Email: globalpagoda@hotmail.com For updated information about the Global Vipassana Pagoda or to make online donations, visit: www.globalpagoda.com

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