

Vipassana Newsletter

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

**Sabbattha ve sappurisā cajantī
na kāmakāmā lapayanti santo.**

**Sukhena phuṭṭhā athavā dukhena
Na uccāvacaṃ paṇḍitā dassayanti.**

— *Dhammapada- 83, Paṇḍitavaggo.*

The good give up (attachment for) everything; the saintly prattle not with sensual craving whether affected by happiness or by pain, the wise show neither elation nor depression.

The First Householder Vipassana Teacher – Saya Thet Gyi (2/2)

*(The following account is partially based on a translation of the book **Saya Thetgyi** by Dhammācariya U Htay Hlaing, Myanmar.)*
[Continued ...from Oct.17 issue]

... After meeting with Ledi Sayadaw, Saya Thetgyi and his relatives returned to their village in southern Burma. They discussed with other family members the plans for carrying out the tall order from Ledi Sayadaw. Saya Thetgyi considered travelling around Burma, thinking that he would have more contact with people that way. But his sister-in-law said, “You have a Dhamma hall here, and we can support you in your work by preparing food for the students. Why not stay here and give courses? There are many who will come here to learn Vipassana.” He agreed and began holding regular courses at his sala in Pyawbwegyi.

As his sister-in-law had predicted, many did start coming, and Saya Thetgyi’s reputation as a meditation teacher spread. He taught simple farmers and labourers as well as those who were well-versed in the Pāli texts. The village was not far from Rangoon, which was the capital of Burma under the British, so government employees and urbanites, like U Ba Khin, also came.

As more and more meditators came to learn meditation, Saya Thetgyi appointed as assistant teachers some of the older, experienced meditators like U Nyo, U Ba Soe, and U Aung Nyunt.

The centre progressed year by year and there were up to two hundred students, including monks and nuns, in the courses. There was not enough room in the sala, so the more experienced students practised meditation in their homes and came to the sala only for the discourses.

From the time he returned from Ledi Sayadaw’s centre, Saya Thetgyi lived by himself and ate only one meal a day, in solitude and silence. Like the bhikkhus, he never discussed his meditation attainments. If questioned, he would never say what stage of meditation he or any other student had achieved, although it was widely believed in Burma that he was an *anāgāmi* (a person having achieved the stage before final liberation). He was known in Burma as “Anāgāmi Saya Thetgyi.”

Since lay teachers of Vipassana were rare at that time, Saya Thetgyi faced certain difficulties that monk teachers did not face. For example, he was opposed by some because he was not as learned in the scriptures. Saya Thetgyi simply ignored these criticisms and allowed the results of the practice to speak for themselves.

On one occasion some of the labourers who worked on his rice farm took advantage of him, accusing him of withholding their share of the harvest. Although he had retired from any direct involvement in the farm management, he went out of his way to settle the affair so that the accusers would not continue to generate anger and thereby create more unwholesome conditioning for themselves.

For thirty years he taught meditation to all who came to him, guided by his own experience and using Ledi Sayadaw’s manuals as a reference. By 1945, when he was seventy-two, he had fulfilled his mission of teaching thousands. His wife had died; his sister-in-law had become paralyzed, and his own health was failing. So he distributed all his property to his nieces and nephews, setting aside fifty acres of rice paddy for the maintenance of his Dhamma hall.

He had twenty water buffaloes that had tilled his fields for years. He distributed them to people who he knew would treat them kindly, and sent them off with the invocation, “You have been my benefactors. Thanks to you the rice has been grown. Now you are free from your work. May you be released from this kind of life for a better existence.”

Saya Thetgyi moved to Rangoon both for treatment and to see his students there. He told some of his pupils that he would die in Rangoon and that his body would be cremated in a place where no cremation had taken place before. He also said that his ashes should not be kept in holy places because he was not entirely free from defilements – that is, he was not an Arahant (fully enlightened being).

One of his students had established a meditation centre at Arzanigone, on the northern slope of the Shwedagon Pagoda. Nearby was a bomb shelter that had been built during the Second World War. Saya Thetgyi used this shelter as his meditation cave. At night he stayed with one of his assistant teachers. His students from Rangoon (including the Accountant General, U Ba Khin, and the Commissioner of Income Tax, U San Thein) came to see him as much as time permitted.

He instructed all who came to see him to be diligent in their practice; to treat the monks and nuns who came to practise meditation with respect; to be well-disciplined in

body, speech and mind; and to pay respects to the Buddha in everything they did.

Saya Thetgyi was accustomed to go to Shwedagon Pagoda every evening, but after about a week he caught a cold and fever from sitting in the dugout shelter. Despite being treated by physicians, his condition deteriorated. As his state worsened, his nieces and nephews came from Pyawbwegyi to Rangoon. Every night his students, numbering about fifty, sat in meditation together. During these group meditations, Saya Thetgyi himself did not say anything but silently meditated.

One night at about 10:00 p.m., Saya Thetgyi was with a number of his students. (U Ba Khin was unable to be present.) He was lying on his back, and his breathing became loud and prolonged. Two of the students were watching intently, while the rest were silently meditating. At exactly 11:00 p.m., the breathing became deeper. It seemed as if each inhalation and expiration took about five minutes. After three breaths of this kind, the breathing stopped altogether, and Saya Thetgyi passed away.

His body was cremated on the northern slope of Shwedagon Pagoda and Sayagyi U Ba Khin and his disciples later built a small pagoda on the spot. But perhaps the most fitting and enduring memorial to this singular teacher is the fact that the task given him by Ledi Sayadaw of spreading the Dhamma in all strata of society is continuing.



Saya Thetgyi: Anecdotes

by S.N. Goenka

The Farmer Teacher

In a village across the river from Rangoon lived a farmer by the name of U Thet. Every year, after harvesting his crop, this farmer travelled up and down the country in search of someone to teach him meditation. Finally, he found a teacher who showed him how to concentrate the mind by observing respiration (Anapana). For seven years he went to this teacher, spending months at a time with him. He achieved great mastery in concentration. Then he went in search of someone to teach him Vipassana, and fortunately, he encountered Ledi Sayadaw. This well-respected monk found him to be a worthy pupil and taught him the technique. For another seven years, U Thet kept going to Ledi Sayadaw and attained proficiency in insight as well. Now he could not resist teaching what he had learned to others. With the permission of Ledi Sayadaw, he returned to his village and offered to show the technique to others.

At first, however, no one would come to him. "What can this man know about the Dhamma?" people scoffed. "He is a layman like us. His head is not shaven, and he does not wear the yellow robe of a monk. What can he know about Vipassana?"

Saya Thetgyi was not disconcerted. On his farm were some hired labourers. He called them and said, "Ordinarily you work in the fields, but if you are willing, I will give you the same wages for working in my house."

"As you like, sir. It's all the same to us so long as we are paid." Saya Thetgyi led them to a curtained room. "All right, now," he told them, "Sit down, close your eyes, and focus your attention on your breath."

The men were astonished. "Is this the work we have to do here?" They thought to themselves, "Our master has gone crazy! He says that he will pay and feed us just to watch our breath! Well, if that is what he wants us to do, we'll do it!" And so they followed the instructions of Saya Thetgyi. These men

passed through the process of Vipassana and emerged smiling and happy. Whether one is an illiterate labourer or a highly educated professor, the technique works for one and all.

After the course, the labourers began to tell others, "Our master can teach a wonderful technique of meditation that brings real peace of mind!" But others would not listen to them, thinking that U Thetgyi had paid his workers to sing his praises, in an effort to lure students to him.

After a few months, however, it became clear to the whole village that a big change had come in the workers of U Thetgyi. Many of them had been rough and rowdy characters, always drinking and fighting, but now they were mild-mannered and peaceable. Becoming curious, the villagers began to ask these men, "What was it that your master taught you?" The men explained as best they could, and the villagers could not help but be impressed: "Well, that is what the Buddhist scriptures say. Perhaps this man really does know something. Let us go to him just to see what he teaches."

Whatever the motives that bring people to courses, if they work in the proper way they are bound to get results. So the renown of Saya Thetgyi began to spread, and he became the foremost disciple of Ledi Sayadaw.



Playing With Fire

Among those who came to learn meditation from Saya Thetgyi was a Buddhist scholar, a very learned man. Unfortunately, he seemed to be more interested in the theory of Vipassana than in experiencing it for himself. Still, he completed his ten-day course successfully and left well-pleased with what he had accomplished.

A few months later this man returned to visit Saya Thetgyi and respectfully placed before him one or two volumes. "Sir," he said, "I have written a book explaining how to meditate, and I have dedicated it to you as my teacher."

Saya Thetgyi asked, "Are only these copies that you brought here dedicated to me?"

"Oh no, sir! All contain the dedication."

"Well, if you wish to dedicate them all to me, bring all the copies of your book here." The scholar happily agreed to do so, thinking perhaps that Saya Thetgyi would perform a ceremony to bless his work. After a few days, he returned with a cartload of books.

"Are these all the copies of your book?" asked Saya Thetgyi.

"Yes, sir," the man replied proudly.

"Very well," said Saya Thetgyi, "Put them in the fallow field over there." The scholar did as Saya Thet directed, arranging the books in a neat pile.

"Now," said the teacher, "Go the kitchen and get a bottle of kerosene and some matches."

"Kerosene, sir? Matches?" The man was bewildered. What use could Saya Thetgyi have for these in the ceremony?

"Yes, kerosene and matches." Once again the scholar did as he was told, though somewhat reluctantly. When he returned with the bottle and matches, Saya Thetgyi said, "Good! Now sprinkle the kerosene over the books and set them alight."

The scholar could restrain himself no longer. "What, sir! You must be joking! I have laboured so many months to write this book."

Saya Thetgyi replied, "You would have better used your time to meditate. How can you explain meditation to others unless you have meditated deeply yourself? And even if you yourself had understood it properly, how could you expect others to learn meditation from a book? They would only burn themselves as surely as children playing with fire. Better to burn the books

(From The Sayagyi U Ba Khin Journal)



The Museum at the Global Pagoda - A Dhamma Journey

We are all fortunate to have received Dhamma in its pristine purity from our revered Teacher Shri S. N. Goenkaji. He in his infinite wisdom and with superhuman effort re-established this many-faceted Dhamma tradition consisting of Vipassana centres throughout the world, dedicated dhamma servers contributing in various capacities – as teachers, trustees, and course management and staff – recorded course material translated into many languages, codes of conduct, guidelines, a research organisation and an extensive body of publications and talks that will preserve Dhamma for posterity.

With far-reaching vision, he had the majestic Global Pagoda built to serve multiple purposes – a receptacle of Buddha relics, a meditation hall, and a symbol of Dhamma drawing innumerable curious visitors with its clarion call of *ehi passiko*, come and see. The Pagoda campus also consists of an exhibition centre and auditorium for the visitors.

In order to commemorate the revival of Dhamma, the second Buddha Sasana, and trace its amazing progress from a faint trickle into a gushing torrent, a twin project of Museum and Archives is being proposed by the Trust Board of the Global Vipassana Foundation. While the archives will mainly be on a digital platform, the museum will be established in a section of the Pagoda complex.

This will acquaint the multitude of visitors with the life and teachings of the Principal Teachers, particularly Venerable Ledi Sayadaw, Saya Thetgyi, Sayagyi U Ba Khin and S. N. Goenkaji. Goenkaji's life, in particular his Dhamma journey, will be depicted in this facility.

This, it is hoped, will help convey to people the greatness of the teaching which inspired these teachers to strive hard for its widespread sharing, and inspire them to partake of the sublime *rasa* (taste) of Dhamma by joining a Vipassana course, or initially an Anapana course available at the site.

It will also add to the Dhamma *samvega* (resolve to progress in Dhamma) of the *sadhak* (meditator) pilgrims who visit the Pagoda to meditate there.

A huge effort is foreseen in conceptualizing and executing the physical and technical aspects of this mammoth task. It is hoped that many volunteers from around the globe will come forward to contribute in its multifarious aspects.

We all have our unique experiences and memories of Respected Goenkaji and may even have memorabilia such as photos, letters, etc that deserve to be a part of history. A digital App has been developed which will make it easy for anyone to contribute these electronically. This will be available in December and the link announced in the newsletter.

It is a wonderful time to express our gratitude, and we welcome support and participation by contributing material, or by becoming a volunteer for this meritorious project.

With regards and Metta,
Manager, Archives Centre, Vipassana Research Institute,
Global Pagoda site, Gorai Khadi, Borivali (W), Mumbai-400091
Email: dhammaarchives@globalpagoda.org

Importance of Lighting a Pagoda

Respected Goenkaji always said that it is of special importance that any Pagoda where relics are kept be well lit throughout the night. This helps maintain the Dhamma atmosphere. Anyone wishing to donate for the lighting of the Global Pagoda in the name of their near and dear ones may do so. The cost per night is Rs. 5000/-. For further information Contact: 1. Mr. Derik Pegado, 9921227057. or 2. Sri Bipin Mehta, Mo. 9920052156, Email: audits@globalpagoda.org

10 Day Course at Dongyu Gatsaling Nunnery, HP

In Aug 2017, a 10-day course was conducted at Dongyu Gatsaling Nunnery in Kangra, Himachal Pradesh which is run by Jetsunma Tenzing Palmo. 62 participants benefitted; of these 60 were Tibetan nuns, and 2 were upasikas. The course was conducted by a

Female SAT and served by 3 other female ATs and one female dhamma server. The feedback was very positive. The Nunnery has requested another course in 2018.

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Data Storage at Pagoda site

A major project called 'Digital Archives Centre' will be established at the Global Pagoda, in which all available materials from the time Respected Goenkaji started teaching and spreading Vipassana until now, will be brought together at one place. This will include the entire collection of photos, documents, notes, letters, audio, and video of Resp. Goenkaji, plus the VRI research work, as well as Pagoda photos, drawings, documents, etc.

It will take at least two years to complete this project. In the first phase, computers, scanners, and storage hardware will be purchased. Also, salaries of the workers need to be planned for. The primary project cost for procuring equipment is approximately 25 lakh rupees and the salaries for 1 year approximately 15-20 lakh rupees. VRI is registered under section 35(1)(3) where donors will get 125% income tax exemption on their donations. **Contact:** 1. Mr. Derik Pegado, 9921227057. or 2. Sri Bipin Mehta, Mo. 9920052156, A/c. Office: 022-62427512/62427510 (9:30AM—5:30PM)

Email: audits@globalpagoda.org; Bank Details of VRI- 'Vipassana Research Institute', Axis Bank Ltd., Sonimur Apartments, Timber Estate, Malad (W), Mumbai - 400064, Branch - Malad (W). Bank A/c No. - 911010004132846; IFSC No.- UTIB0000062; Swift code: AXISINBB062.

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Pali - Hindi basic course

Date: 7th April to 22nd May 2018; **Eligibility:** 3 ten-Day course and 1 STP, 12th Pass, AT recommendation required. **Venue:** Pariyatti Bhavan, Global Pagoda campus. **Application forms** are available on: <http://www.vridhamma.org/Theory-And-Practice-Courses>; **Contact:** 022- 62427560 (9:30AM to 5:30PM), Email: mumbai@vridhamma.org

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Newly Appointed Senior Assistant Teachers	2. Mrs. Jyoti Moliya, Rajkot
1. Mrs Ujjwala Addiga, Secunderabad	3. Mrs Goli Geetanjali Hyderabad
	4. Mr. Suketu Oza, Mumbai
New appointments Assistant teachers	Children course teachers
1. Mr. Bihari Chaur, Vasai Road (Thane)	1. Mr. Preecha Seesaeng, Thailand
	2. Mr. Arthit Intarasit, Thailand

Children's Meditation Courses in Mumbai

Date: 19-11, 17-12; **Place:** Goregaon; (Age 10 to 16 Only) Registration before Course Thursday and Friday. **Other places as under:**

Date	Course site
First Sunday	Ulhasnagar, Wadala, Khar
Second Sunday	Dombivili, Andheri
Third Sunday	Ghatkopar
Fourth Sunday	Airoli, Kalyan

(Age 10-16 Registration 2 days before Course)
"Please call or send a text sms message with the name & age of the child two days in advance for registration"

Course Timing: 8:30 am to 2:30 pm. **Registration Timing:** 11 am to 1 pm on the specified numbers and dates for each location. **Course Venues:** **Goregaon:** Vipassana Counselling and Research Centre, Siddharth Municipal General Hospital, Goregaon (W), Mob. 98924-15803, Tel: 2624-2025. **Ulhasnagar:** A Block 703/1405, Gokul Nagar, Behind Netaji School, Near Mahesh Granite, Tel. 9970755130, **Wadala:** "BMC School – Sewri Wadala Estate Road No: 7A Behind Lijjat Papad Building **Contact:** Mobile: 98922-18186, 98201-50336, **Khar:** Mahabodhi Buddha Vihar, Baudha Smashan Bhumi, Carter Rd. Danda, Khar West, Mumbai-52,

Mob. 9930962652, 9869281410, **Dombivili:** Tilak School, Tilak Nagar, Dombivli, Mob. 9029423540. **Andheri:** Mayfair Meridian Meditation Hall, Ceaser Road, Off S.V. Road, Amboli, Near St. Blaise Mob. 9967480865, 9967813478. **Ghatkopar:** SNTD School, New Building, Cama Lane, Ghatkopar (W), Opp Vidyut Society, Mumbai 400086. Tel: 25011096, 25162505. **Airoli:** Dnyandeep School, sector 2, Airoli, Mobile: 9969267720, 9969950901. **Kalyan:** Krishanrao Dhulup KDM school No. 4, Ram baug lane no 5, Near old Vani Vidyalay. Mob. 9987425633. -- Please call two days in advance for registration. **NB:** *Please bring a cushion. *Please register on the specified phone numbers. If unable to attend after registration, please *Inform in advance. *Please arrive on time for the course.



Residential Accommodation in Global Pagoda for Dhamma Servers and Meditators

One Day Mega Courses are held in Global Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai every year. People at times come from far off places to participate but are inconvenienced as there are no residential quarters for an overnight stay. Hence a 3-4 storey residential accommodation building is being planned where servers who are staying on the premises and the meditators arriving from afar may stay in rooms/dormitories which will either be on sharing or single occupancy basis. This will help meditators rest well and begin their 1-day meditation course the next morning on a fresh note. Anyone wanting to participate in this noble project may **Contact:** 1. Mr. Derik Pegado: 9921227057. or 2: Shri Bipin Mehta: 9920052156, **Email:** audits@globalpagoda.org



Facility for students at Pagoda site

Meditators who want to meditate in the vicinity of the Buddha Relics and the Bodhi Tree can avail themselves of rooms at Dhammalaya Guest House next to the Global Vipassana Pagoda, Mumbai and make the most of their meditation sessions. The splendour of the Pagoda at night is also a marvel worth witnessing. 34

twin occupancy rooms and 2 suites (all a/c) with breakfast, lunch, snacks and dinner included. For reservations and additional information please contact – Mr Mahesh Modi 022 62427599, 8291894645 email: info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org

Special concession of 50% in room charges at Dhammalaya Guest House for the period 13 January 2018 to 15 January 2018 on occasion of **one day Mega course** at Global Pagoda on 14 January 2018 in Gratitude of Resp. Mataji Illaichidevi and Resp. Sayagi U Ba Khin.



Sangha-Dana on Occasion of Respected Mataji's & Sayaji U Ba Khin's Death Anniversaries And One-day Mega course

On **14th** January 2018 at 10 am Mega Sangha Dana will be held on the occasion of Respected Mataji's Death Anniversary (5th Jan.) as well as respected Sayagi U Ba Khin's Death Anniversary (19th Jan.) followed by **one day mega course** at **GVP** 11 am - 4 pm. Non-meditators may participate in the 3 pm discourse. Taking benefit of this meritorious opportunity of Dana anyone wishing to contribute may **Contact:** Mr. Derik Pegado or Mr. Bipin Mehta, A/c office: 022-62427512/ 62427510 (9:30am to 5:30pm), **Email:** audits@globalpagoda.org

For Mega course please come only with prior registration. **Samaggānaṃ tapo sukho:** Avail of the immense benefit of meditating in large group. For registration **Contact:** 022-62427544, 022-28451170 Extn: 9 Mob. 8291894644 (Tel booking: **11** am to **5** pm daily). **Online registration:** www.oneday.globalpagoda.org.

DHAMMA DOHA

*Dhanya paḍosī deśa ke, santa aura arahanta,
Rakṣita rakha saddharma ko, maṅgala kiyā ananta.*
Blessed are the saints and Arahantas of the neighbouring country [Myanmar] as they have preserved the Dhamma in pristine purity and have done infinite good.
*Janama milā jisa deśa meṃ, dharma milā jisa deśa,
Jāge hṛdaya kṛtajñatā, śraddhā jage aśeṣa.*
I feel grateful to and have infinite reverence for the country where I was born and where I came in contact with Dhamma.

*Dharma sadā jāgrta rahe, prajñā paḍe na manda,
Aindriya sukha ko bhrāntivaśa, māna na nityānanda.*
Let Dhamma work forever and let not wisdom be dull.
Let us not regard sensual pleasure as eternal and unchanging out of ignorance.
*Antara-gaṅgā dharma kī, satata pravāhita hoyā,
Pratipala sajava taṣṭha raha, mukta dukhoṃ se hoyā.*
Let the inner Ganges of Dhamma flow constantly and let us be mindful and equanimous every moment to be free from suffering.

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243238 Fax: [91] (02553) 244176
Email: vri_admin@dhamma.net.in
Website: www.vridhamma.org