

# Vipassana Newsletter

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

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## Words of Dhamma

*Yaṃ kiñci ratanaṃ loke, vijjati vividhā puthu;  
Ratanaṃ dhamma samaṃ natthi, tasmā sotthi bhavantu te.*

– *Abhaya Paritta - 7,*

– There are precious gems in the world, none of them is like the gem of Dhamma. By this truth may you be blessed.

## Gift of the Jewel of Dhamma : Kings Pukkusāti and Bimbisāra

In the context of a discourse given by Lord Buddha on Vipassana meditation, an immensely beneficent picture depicting the Dhamma friendliness of the king of Magadha, Bimbisāra, appears before us.

At that time, there was neither fast transport nor instant communication like today. Hence, it was not easy to establish mutual political discourse and relations with far-flung regions. It was Bimbisāra's habit to try to establish amicable relations with the rulers of distant kingdoms; thus, he was constantly on the lookout for opportunities to fulfill his intent.

Once some traders from Takkasilā, the kingdom of Gandhāra, came to Rājagaha, the capital of Magadha, to trade in produce from their region and return with produce from this kingdom. In those days, traders' caravans were the way the two kingdoms carried out their trade. Following the custom of those times, these traders reached Emperor Bimbisāra's palace in Rājagaha with gifts and offerings that they carried.

After initial pleasantries, the king asked, "From which kingdom have you come?"

"Takkasilā, the capital city of Gandhāra, lord."

"Who is your ruler?"

"The king Pukkusāti, sir."

"Is he a dhammic king?"

"Very dhammic, sir. He looks after his people like his children, taking their joys and pains as his own."

"What is his age?"

"As much as yours, sir."

"My age? And also fulfilling the ruler's dhamma of being gentle and loving towards his people, just like me! I would certainly like to establish friendly relations with such a person. Oh traders, will you help me fulfill a wish?"

"Certainly sir!"

"Then, after you have finished your trading, come and meet me again before returning to your kingdom." Through you, I will send a friendly message to your king.

"We will be pleased to do so, lord!"

After some days, having done their business of selling and purchasing Gandhāra and Magadha goods, respectively, they visited the king as per their promise.

The king Bimbisāra said, "When you meet the king Pukkusāti, having asked about his well-being a few times, tell him that I am eager to make him my friend. Convey a deep sense of friendliness on my behalf."

Agreeing to do so, the traders returned to Takkasilā happily. They went to meet the Gandhāran king Pukkusāti and conveyed the emperor Bimbisāra's message. The king was very pleased and expressed his gratitude towards the traders. To be friends with the Emperor of such a vast and powerful kingdom as Magadha was truly a matter of great pride for him. To strengthen this friendship, he took many judicious political steps.

After a few days, a caravan of traders reached Takkasilā from Magadha for trade purposes. When they came to the king with their offerings, the king was pleased. After enquiring about the well-being of the king of Magadha, he declared, "These traders have come from my friend's kingdom; hence, they are my guests, the guests of Gandhāra." He then had the town crier go around Takkasilā, announcing that traders who come from his friend, the Magadha king's kingdom for trade, whether singly or in a group, whether on foot or in a caravan, should be considered as royal guests. Additionally, since they are citizens of my friend's country, extra security measures must be taken. They should be housed in a royal guest house and should have no difficulty in our country. The goods that they bring for commerce shouldn't be subject to customs duties.

Upon learning of this, Emperor Bimbisāra dispatched

a town crier around announcing that all traders from the Gandhāran realm should get the same privileges and benefits as those granted to traders from Magadha. He also referred to King Pukkusāti as his unseen friend.

Travellers and traders who conduct business in friendly nations continue to receive special treatment even now. It's possible that they will also have reduced or no customs duties to pay. Declared the ‘Most Favoured Nation,’ the friendly nation has the benefit of ‘Duty Free or Duty Preference.’ The public discourse of the past is reflected in the current political structure. However, what is evident is that, due to the restricted number of travellers in those days, they were treated with the dignity of being royal or state visitors.

Whatever the case, this suggests that these kinds of amenities were offered to preserve friendly relations between these two ancient Indian rulers. Even while it was true that the personal friendship between the two rulers was changed into a friendship between the two nations because of monarchical institutions, the friendship between Bimbisāra and Pukkusāti benefited the people of the two nations and their trade.

The kings grew closer to one another. Though they were unable to meet, their relationship grew stronger over time via letters and priceless gifts. In the same manner as it is now done.

Gandhāra's Kashmir was the home of the finest woollen shawls. They were rare in Magadha because it was on the Central Plains. Pukkusāti presented eight of the most exquisite, expensive, vibrant, and skillfully crafted shawls. With much fanfare, a gift box of these shawls was transported to Rājagaha, where, amidst a large function in the presence of royal couriers and leading citizens, it was opened. All were amazed. They had never seen such beautiful shawls, let alone used them. Such pleasing colours! And the fabric is so delicate to touch. Every shawl was large—eight arms-length wide and 16 arms-length long.

Expressing their joy, all pressed their fingers together and threw their dupattas (loose cloth put around shoulders) in the air, just like people may express their approval today by clapping their hands. Bimbisāra, too, was happy. He sent four of these shawls to Lord Buddha in his vihara, and four were sent to his palace.

The fact that Pukkusāti had sent these valuable gifts was much talked about in the country. Bimbisāra mused, in return for these jewel-like gifts, I should send something more valuable. Is there not a better gem than this that can be sent as an offering? Yes, there is.

After coming into contact with the Buddha, Bimbisāra, through his meditation of observing within, had attained the stage of Sotāpanna, the eternal, ever-present, immutable nectar of Nibbāna. And since then, the most valuable and attractive materials of the world have lost their charm for him. Although he fulfilled his worldly responsibilities well, his attachments were breaking. Now he had turned true

judge of what was a jewel. His musings took this direction: “There exist many gems in the world. Living gems are more precious as compared to lifeless ones like emeralds and diamonds. Among the living gems like elephants and horses, human beings are the best gems. In comparison to ordinary humans, the noble renunciate is superior. In comparison to the gem-like noble renunciate, the gem of the Buddha is the finest. I am very fortunate to have the Buddha, the most precious of all gems, in my country.”

Bimbisāra asked the travellers from Gandhāra: “Does your kingdom have gems like the Buddha, Dhamma, and Sangha?”

“No, sir,” they replied.

Then this is the gem I must send, Bimbisāra thought, as it offers the highest welfare to my friend and the citizenry of that nation. Lord Buddha has just returned from Vesāli, which had suffered from famine and innumerable ailments. As soon as he reached there, the famine had turned into abundance, mitigating all the suffering. As people turned towards the teachings of the Buddha, the doors to their welfare opened wide. Similarly, if this jewel of Dhamma reaches Gandhāra, it will truly bring about their welfare.

That land is so far from this central region that it does not seem appropriate to request the Lord to go there. I cannot even request his chief disciples, Sariputta and Mahā Moggallāna, to go there, since I get profound assurance from their presence here. Even when they go to far-off regions on Dhamma cārika, after some time I have to dispatch a messenger requesting them to return to Rājagaha. I feel lost in their absence. I cannot send them so far, either. What should I do?

Then a thought arose: if Dhamma reaches my friend, then it is as good as the Buddha or Sangha reaching there. After all, Dhamma is that jewel that is present in the Buddha and the Sangha. Hence, I must send Dhamma as a gift to my friend. Having decided, Bimbisāra got busy sending Dhamma as a gift immediately.

He ordered goldsmiths to make a very long golden sheet, not so thin as to break upon being folded nor so thick that it could not fold. When it was ready, the king, having bathed early in the morning, got dressed in simple, clean white clothes. He did not anoint himself with creams and perfumes, nor wear jewels or beads. Taking eight precepts, he had an early breakfast and came and sat on the open verandah. Taking a golden pen and dipping it in special colours made from powdered red herbs, he then, full of reverence, began to write on that golden sheet.

In the world, there is a Tathāgata born. He is an Arahant, a fully enlightened Buddha, abounding in wisdom, he has destroyed all negativities, he is the knower of the world, he is the unequalled charioteer who guides people on the right path, and he is the teacher of both devas and humans. Such is the Lord Buddha.

Thereafter, writing in brief about his birth, great renunciation, austere ascetic practice, and becoming a

Fully Enlightened Buddha, under the Bodhi Tree, and going from place to place on Dhamma cārika for the benefit of all, he further mentioned that there is no gem finer than the Tathāgata in this world or the next.

Then he wrote about Dhamma, with an utmost sense of reverence, that is taught by the Buddha, which is well explained; it does not confuse nor is it secretive. It is not imaginary, but well understood. It gives fruit immediately, here and now. It is to be seen by oneself; it takes one straight to liberation, and it must be experienced by every sensible person.

Then again, he briefly described the Lord’s teaching about the 37 Bodhi-pakkhiya-dhammas. Writing that when he teaches Dhamma practice, one goes into samādhi, and such a samādhi is not a worldly one but one that takes a person beyond the six senses. Indeed, it leads one to Nibbāna.

“*Samādhimānantarikaññamāhu.*”

Nothing can compare to this samādhi. This is the invaluable jewel in Dhamma.

Then, expounding on the gem of Sangha, he wrote that the Lord’s Sangha is on the rightful path, leading straight to the goal, is the path of wisdom, and is logical. The Lord considers the Sangha as only those who are either Sotāpanna (stream enterer), Sakadāgāmi (once returner), Anāgāmi (non returner), or one who has attained Arahant hood (full liberation).

Truly, such beings are very worthy of reverence. There are many who have renounced the throne, couriers who have renounced posts of prime minister or military commandership, and ordained as monks. Then, by observing strict sila and controlling the senses with awareness and equanimity, they have learned to discipline the mind, and by purifying their minds of all defilements, they have attained Arahant hood.

Thereafter, he expounded upon 16 types of Anapana meditation practice. When the letter he had been writing was coming to an end, a thought suddenly occurred to him that certainly his friend must be abundant in past-life pāramīs and will be very impressed with the theoretical aspect of Dhamma and will be drawn towards Dhamma upon reading the letter. But how will he indeed receive the supreme path of liberation, Vipassana? The people of the Central region, like me, are certainly very fortunate that they are able to learn this teaching straight from the Tathāgata while dispensing their worldly responsibilities, but for my friend Pukkusaṭi, this will not be possible.

It would be more preferable if he absolved himself of the responsibility of ruling the kingdom on behalf of someone suitable and, after leaving home and having been ordained, learned Vipassana from the Buddha, achieving the greatest happiness of liberation. At this idea, he wrote near the end of the letter, “If urgency arises in your heart towards Dhamma, then please come here and get ordained by the Lord and find the way to liberation.” ...

(Continued next month)

VNL Hindi April 1991

## PAGODA CORPUS FUND

### For the Operations of Global Vipassana Pagoda

Pujya Guruji Shri S.N. Goenka ji had the vision to develop this historical monument as a symbol of gratitude to his teacher, and the chain of teachers back to the Buddha, and to help preserve and promote the technique of Vipassana, the ancient cultural heritage of India, as well as to provide a place for people from all over the world to come and meditate together, in the huge meditation hall, under the Buddha relics that are being preserved here.

It has been decided to set up a Centuries Corpus Fund to fulfil the above vision and meet the daily expenses for the period of the second Sasana of the Buddha. It has been calculated that if 1,39,000 persons were to donate Rs 9000/- (Rs. Nine Thousand) per person then the total would amount to Rs. 125 crores. The interest earned from this amount could then meet the daily expenses of operations and maintenance of the Global Pagoda.

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Information on future Courses is available on the internet. All types of bookings are currently available online only as per the Government’s new rules due to Covid-19. Applications will not be accepted on paper. Therefore, you are requested to check the following link and apply online directly for your appropriate course or for dhamma service at Dhammagiri:

<https://www.dhamma.org/en/schedules/schgiri>

Please apply similarly as per the schedule of other centres. Here is the link for all Indian centres:

<https://www.dhamma.org/en-US/locations/directory#IN>

New VRI website for applying for courses:

<https://schedule.vridhamma.org/>

and for worldwide courses: [www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)

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You may now register for various types of courses such as:

- 10-day course, - Executive course, - Children’s course,
- 3-day course, - etc.

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Once an application is filed, you can also view the application status on the app. Enable daily logging of meditation for your own personal record.

Currently these new features are available only for Android phones and will be soon available for iOS (iPhones).

Download App Link: <http://vridhamma.org/applink.html>

**N.B.:-**

*You may read all Vipassana Newsletters in many languages on this App.*

## One-Day Mega Courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai

### 1). One-day Mega courses on Sundays:

1. 21-7- Dhammacakka Pavattana-day,
2. 29-9 Goenkaji's Demise-day and Sharad Purnima,
3. 19-1-2025 Sayagi U Ba Khin's and Mataji's Demise-day.

2). In addition there are **Daily One-Day Courses** being held in the Pagoda for Vipassana Students. Please follow the link to join and take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group. **Contact:** 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm).

**Online registration:** <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>

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## DHAMMA DOHAS

*Dharama ratana sā jagata meṃ, anya ratana nā koya;  
Jo pāe samṛddha ho, duḥkha-dainyatā khoya.*

The gem of Dhamma is unlike any other in the world. The recipient becomes affluent and escapes poverty and suffering.

*Buddha ratana meṃ dharama hī, ratana pramukhatama hoyā;  
Mahākāruṇika jagata hita, dharmā-prakāśaka hoyā.*

The gem of Dhamma is foremost in the jewel of Buddha, who, filled with compassion for the welfare of the world, lights the lamp of Dhamma.

*Samgha ratana meṃ dharama hī, ratana pramukhatama hoyā;  
Kāyā vāṇī citta ke, karma dharmamaya hoyā.*

The gem of Dhamma is foremost in the jewel of Sangha, whose actions of body, speech, and mind are filled with Dhamma.

*Tīna ratana kī śaraṇa meṃ, dharama ratana hī jāna;  
Dharama ratana dhāraṇa kare, to hī ho kalyāṇa.*

Upon taking refuge in the Three Gems, recognize that the Dhamma is the Gem inside; imbibing it results in one's optimal welfare.

*Jo apāne kalyāṇa meṃ, satata sahāyaka hoyā;  
Kalyāṇamitra bhavamukti meṃ, sahayogī hī hoyā.*

He who is always helpful in our highest welfare—such an auspicious friend—is the most beneficial in achieving liberation.

*Aise maṅgala mitra se, saccā hita sukha hoyā;  
śuddha dharama kā patha mile, mukti dukhoṃ se hoyā.*

True happiness results from such a benefactor; finding the means to true Dhamma, which liberates us from suffering.

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