



Vipassana Prison Newsletter

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Words of Dhamma

Ubhinna mattham carati, attano ca parassa ca; param sankupitam natva, yo sato upasammati.

*Knowing that the other person is angry, one who remains mindful and calm
acts for one's own best interest and for the other's interest, too.*

Samyutta Nikaya 1.188

CHECKING YOUR PROGRESS ON THE PATH

To benefit from Vipassana meditation, it's important to practice properly. S.N. Goenka offers the following advice in the Day 4 discourse. It also appears in his 1987 book "The Discourse Summaries."

When practicing Vipassana, be careful not to play the game of sensations, becoming elated with pleasant ones and depressed with unpleasant ones. Observe every sensation objectively. If you practice Vipassana properly, a change must come for better in your life. You should check your progress on the path by checking your conduct in daily situations, in your behavior and dealings with other people.

Instead of harming others, have you started helping them? When unwanted situations occur, do you remain balanced? If negativity starts in the mind, how quickly are you aware of it? How quickly are you aware of the sensations that arise along with the negativity? How quickly do you start observing the sensations? How quickly do you regain a mental balance, and start generating love and compassion? In this way examine yourself, and keep progressing on the path.

Whatever you have attained here, not only preserve it, but make it grow. Keep applying Dhamma in your life. Enjoy all the benefits of this technique, and live a happy, peaceful, harmonious life, good for you and for all others.



WISE WORDS FOR TROUBLED TIMES

S.N. Goenka learned to meditate under the guidance of the Burmese teacher Sayagyi U Ba Khin. The following selection of U Ba Khin's sayings first appeared in the Vipassana International Newsletter in January 2011.



A balanced mind is necessary to balance the unbalanced mind of others.

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Just as the light of a candle has the power to dispel darkness in a room, so also the light developed in one man can help dispel darkness in several others.

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To imagine that good can be done by the means of evil is an illusion, a nightmare.

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Dhamma eradicates suffering and gives happiness. Who gives this happiness? It is not the Buddha, but the Dhamma, the knowledge of anicca within the body, which gives this happiness. That is why you must meditate and be aware of anicca continually.

The more one is attached to self, the greater is the suffering.

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Only those who take to meditation with good intentions can be assured of success. With the development of the purity and power of the mind, backed by the insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one may be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind.

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Anicca when properly developed will solve almost all your problems. It might not even be necessary for you to ask questions for answers. As the appreciation of anicca grows, so will the veil of ignorance fade away. When the way becomes clear for right understanding, doubts and fears will disappear automatically. You will then see things in the true perspective.

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For progress in Vipassana meditation, a student must keep knowing anicca as continuously as possible. The last words of the Buddha just before he breathed his last . . . were: "Decay (or anicca) is inherent in all component things. Work out your own salvation with diligence." This is, in fact, the essence of all his teachings during the 45 years of his ministry. If you will keep up the awareness of the anicca that is inherent in all component things, you are sure to reach the goal in the course of time.

INSIGHTS FOUND INSIDE A BRAZILIAN PRISON

The film "Vipassana: The Path of Liberation" documents the first course in a Brazilian prison. In it, inmate students discuss their experiences. Below are some of their comments, printed with the permission of the filmmaker.

— The first day, the second day, they said one hour. Not even ten minutes had passed and my body was already prickly, itching. I felt like getting up and leaving. Then I told myself: no, my objective was to come here and stay the ten days, so I need to do this.

— I thought it would be a little lighter; we go through a lot to reach the end of the ten days. You put up with it. From the first day to the third day you want to give up, but you want so much to find out what they tell us about, what the teacher tells us. You don't stop wanting to make it to the end.

— On the third day a bunch of memories came into my head, and I felt like running out of the meditation hall. I even moved as if to run. Then I focused on my breath, like the teacher says, came back to normal, and the bad thoughts vanished. The fourth day was calmer: I managed not to move for an hour.

— Oh, I was invited to meditate. At first, it seemed crazy, right, I didn't even want to consider it. Count me out, I said, this is for loonies. Then they invited us to watch the video (the Dhamma Brothers), which showed another side of what we were seeing. So I got interested.

— I came with the intention of leaving on the second, third day. Scared, right? Because I would never be able to not talk for ten days. But we went on meditating. At the beginning a lot of bad stuff comes into your mind. But those bad things start going away and all of a sudden you feel better, your mind starts to think better. Your bad thoughts start to go away, and all you think about is doing good.

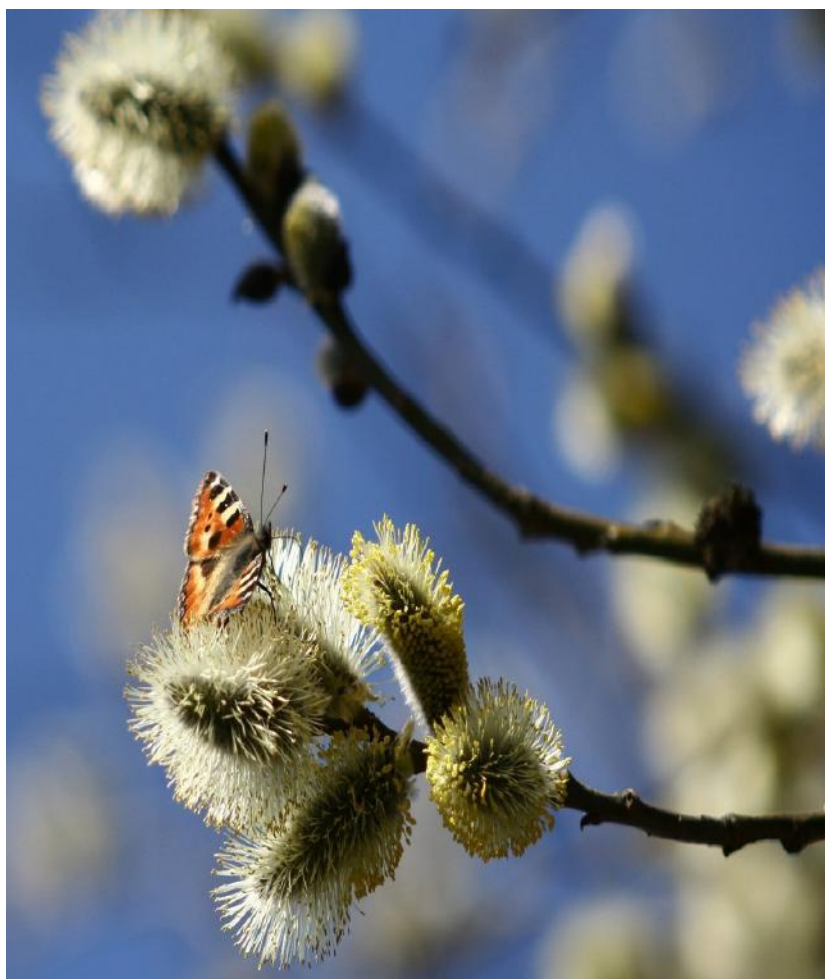
— Your entire life story comes up. All the good, all the bad stuff I ever did. It all comes up.

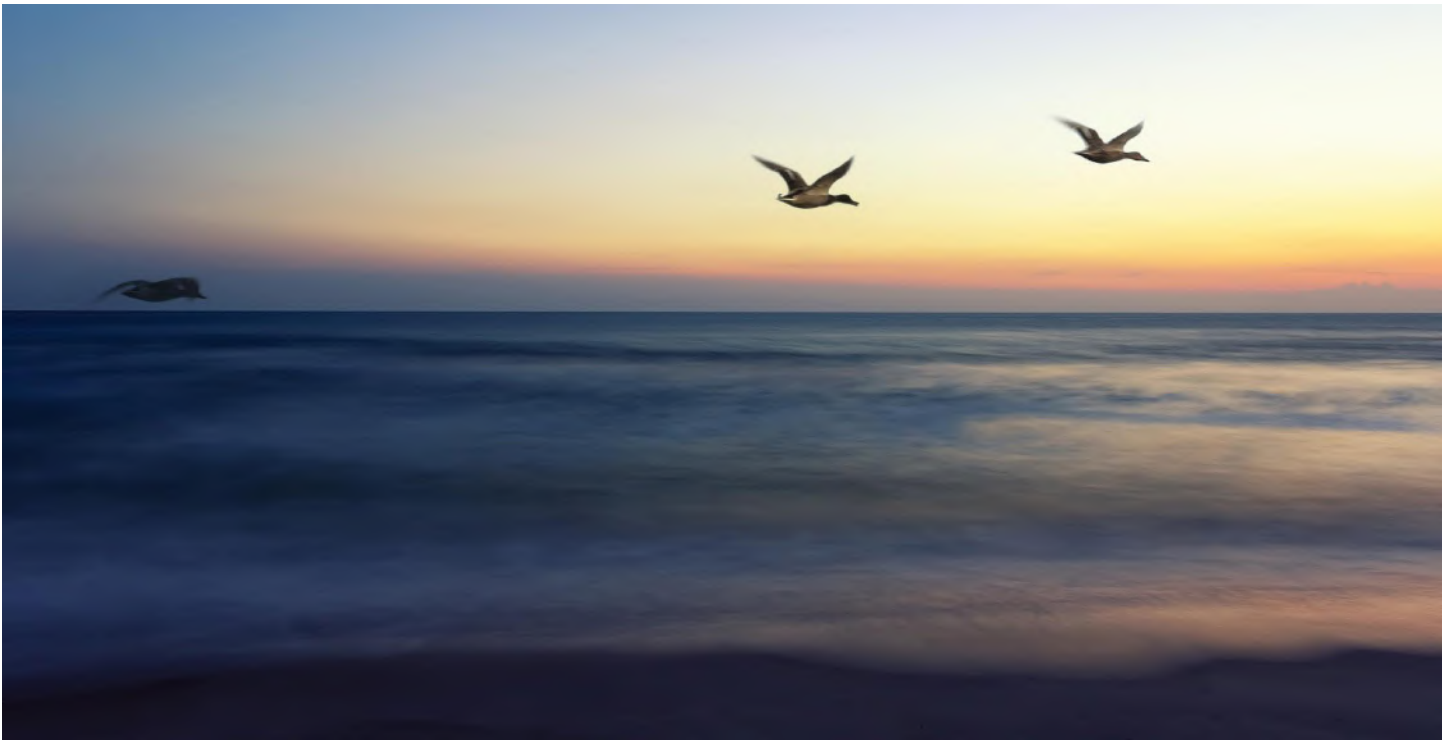
— I really looked back over my life. Why am I here? Could it be my actions? Then I began to imagine: what led me to this life? I saw my part of the blame, admitted I was also guilty for what happened. And felt really sorry.

— You see it's no good just doing stuff, without thinking, pushed by the old dirty mind. Today my mind is cleaner. I have started thinking of better things, a different future in life.

— My issues, the issues I had from the world outside, when I came here disturbed me. I felt I needed to get back at what harmed me. Since passing through these ten days of meditation, I have begun to get rid of a lot of disturbing stuff: the bitterness, the hatred, the grudges I held in my heart.

— I've been inside for eleven years. Because I live with other inmates, and not everyone gets along, I was always stressing over every little thing. Today I'm calmer, more at peace. I've learned how to control my anger and anxiety, and I think that's good. Because if we don't control our mind, we end up doing something stupid.





THE FREEDOM OF SELF-CONTROL

By Bhikkhu Bodhi, an American monk who was trained in Asia and now lives in the New York area. This excerpt is from a book of his collected essays, "Dhamma Reflections", published in 2015.

When our contemporaries first encounter the Dhamma they often find themselves confronted at the outset by one particular feature which, clashing with their familiar modes of thought, strikes them intellectually as a contradiction and emotionally as a stumbling block. This is the fact that while the Dhamma purports to be a pathway to liberation, a Teaching pervaded throughout by the taste of freedom, it yet requires from its followers the practice of a regimen that seems the very antithesis of freedom, a regimen built upon discipline, restraint and self-control.

On the one hand we seek freedom, our contemporaries object, and on the other we are told that to reach this freedom, our deeds, words and thoughts must be curbed and controlled. What are we to make of this astonishing thesis the Buddha's Teaching appears to advance: that to achieve freedom, freedom must be curtailed? Can freedom as an end really be achieved by means that involve the very denial of freedom? The solution to this seeming paradox lies in the distinction between two kinds of freedom, between freedom as license and freedom as spiritual autonomy.

Contemporary man, for the most part, identifies freedom with license. For him, freedom means the license to pursue unhindered his impulses, passions and whims. To be free, he believes, he must be at liberty to do whatever he wants, to say whatever he wants and to think whatever he wants. Every restriction laid upon this license he sees as an encroachment upon his freedom; hence a practical regimen calling for restraint of deed, word and thought, for discipline and self-control, strikes him as a form of bondage.

But the freedom spoken of in the Buddha's Teaching is not the same as license. The freedom to which the Buddha points is spiritual freedom, an inward autonomy of the mind which follows upon the destruction of the defilements, manifests itself in an emancipation from . . . impulsive and compulsive patterns of behavior, and culminates in final deliverance from [suffering]. In contrast to license, spiritual freedom cannot be acquired by external means. It can only be acquired inwardly, through a course of training requiring the renunciation of passion and impulse in the interest of a higher end.

DONALDSON COURSE SCHEDULE 2019

January 27 – February 10 (10-day Course)

March 23 – April 6 (10-day Course)

August 17 – 24 (10-day Course)

October 12 – 26 (10-day Course)

November 30 – December 14 (10-day Course)