



# Vipassana Prison Newsletter

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## WORDS OF DHAMMA

*Dunnigahassa lahuno, yatthakāmanipātino. Cittassa damatho sādhu, cittam dantam sukhāvaham.*

Wonderful it is to train the mind, so swiftly moving, seizing whatever it wants.  
Good is it to have a well-trained mind, for a well-trained mind brings happiness.

*Dhammapada 3.35*

## FIVE YEARS OF ANAPANA AT A JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

(From the Vipassana International Newsletter.)

July 2020 marked five years that one-day meditation courses have been taught at a juvenile detention center in the Canadian province of Manitoba. Before 2015, courses of this kind had not been offered by the Vipassana Prison Trust. The first participants were 11 young men aged 15 to 18, and the location was the Manitoba Youth Center in Winnipeg. One of the teachers at the facility happened to be a Vipassana meditator, and over the previous year the teens had practiced Anapana meditation with her for 10 minutes a day. When some of the young men expressed a wish for more, the center invited the Prison Trust to come in and present a one-day program. The Trust agreed, but first it had to design the program and develop materials.



By mid-2015, the Trust was ready. The day before the workshop, a team of three came to the detention center to prepare a classroom for the workshop. Staff and residents helped move furniture. They then set out cushions for the participants and a folding dais for the teacher. By the time they finished, the classroom looked like a real meditation hall, all ready for use. The next day, the participants filed into the room for the start of their six-hour program. It included meditation periods, stories related to the practice, and a screening of the documentary film *Doing Time, Doing Vipassana*. Lunch was food everyone enjoyed: macaroni and cheese, served with coleslaw and followed by fresh watermelon. The workshop was challenging for the participants, but all made an effort. By the end of the day, the hall felt quiet and peaceful.

Afterwards, the young men talked about how

Anapana has helped them stay calm in what would normally be agitating circumstances – for example, a court appearance, a disagreement with staff or other residents, or a difficult phone conversation. Since that first course, the Manitoba Youth Center has continued to host one-day Anapana courses. Some are for young men and others for young women. Residents have welcomed this development, and staff members are strongly supportive. After the first course, a staff member commented, “I could really see the difference in overall unit behavior.” He noted that the young women who had meditated seemed more relaxed than those who had not. He recognized that other factors could be involved. Still, he reported, “Several weeks have passed and the (young women) that were in attendance have continued to maintain a calmer approach to the day-to-day difficulties that come with institutional life.”

## HE FOUND WHAT HE WAS LOOKING FOR: THE ART OF LIVING

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(From the Vipassana Research Institute.)

Due to my deepest gratitude towards my respected Teacher, Mr. S. N. Goenka – who taught me this very wonderful technique of Vipassana Meditation with limitless compassionate love – I’m writing some lines about my experience, from the last 21 years of my practice, and the last 13 years of conducting courses. I was born and grew up in a Muslim Family and received a MS degree at University. I had a good, comfortable life, but lacked a pure, calm, quiet and equanimous mind in the day-to-day life. As a Muslim, I was very much eager to have pure morality and mastery over my own mind, but I could not obtain it. I could not concentrate my mind on my work as a computer system operator, manager and network manager in a company.

I became easily agitated by small mistakes or facing anything wrong. Death of a near and dear one or even sickness of anyone made me very sad. It was for me a stage of not being happy and not being satisfied at all in my life, even after having worked hard and living well at a material level. To dissolve my problem I started practicing yoga, and later Tai Chi, and other things, and then with the advice of a friend started mantra meditation. But none of these were the right solution for me, and I continued looking for a solution to my problems.

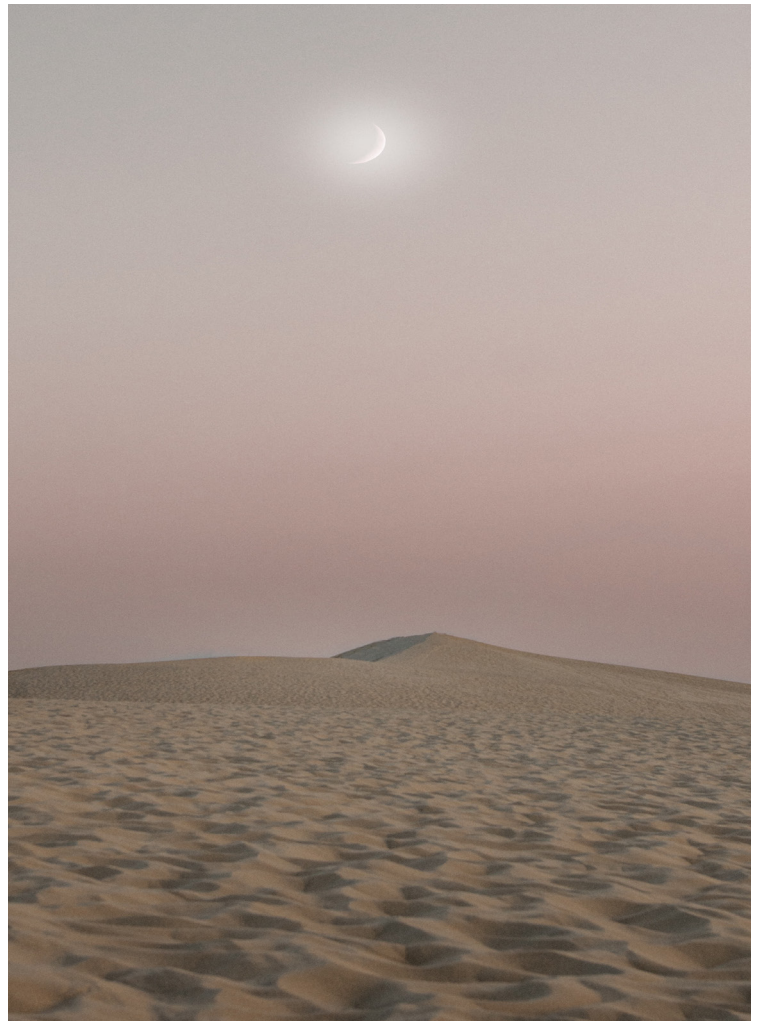
Finally I came in contact with Vipassana Meditation as taught by S. N. Goenka. In the first course I worked very hard to understand the technique at the experiential level, with all my agitation and conditioned mind, and I got a wonderful result. By applying Vipassana Meditation in my day-to-day life, my life started to change progressively for the better. I found what was missing in my life – a wonderful technique, a unique science of mind and matter which could directly deal with the mind, purify and concentrate it without taking me into any rite or ritual or any blind belief or dogma, nor converting me to any other religion. The only conversion was to happiness.

In the last 13 years I conducted many courses under the guidance of my respected Teacher Mr. S. N. Goenka, in many places, for many people from all backgrounds of religion and region. Among them there have been around 5,000 Muslims who received a lot of benefits as they worked with the technique, understanding that it is unique, universal for everyone from everywhere, a wonderful science of mind and matter which can help everyone to come out of all kinds of suffering.

Many Muslims on the courses keep reminding me of the saying of the Prophet Mohammad: “Every Muslim has to learn all science even if it is in China (literally far away).” And here is the art of living, the science of mind and matter which is so important for all of us in daily life. Among them, there have been people who have been very sad, facing agitation in their day-to-day life. By applying this scientific, universal technique of Vipassana Meditation they have come out of their sadness, agitation and suffering. They have started to become happier from within, and able to live more harmoniously with their relatives and friends.

May all beings be happy, be peaceful and be liberated from all kinds of suffering!

– Daryush in Igatpuri, India





## TO FEEL PEACEFUL, ONE HAS TO WORK

(From the Vipassana Research Institute.)

*During his long life S. N. Goenka spoke to many prisoners. This is an excerpt of a talk he gave to prisoners in Nasik Jail in India on February 16, 1996.*

A life of bondage is full of sorrow. There is no greater suffering than bondage, and no greater happiness than freedom. I can very well understand how much sorrow there is in your hearts. I myself have stayed for twenty days in one jail and ten days in another jail with prisoners like you, listening to their problems and their sufferings. And having shown them a way to get out of their suffering, I felt immense pleasure.

These prisoners are away from their families; even if they get to meet them once in a while, they cannot stay together for long. However bad conditions may be at home, it is still a home. You cannot get the same feeling here, the same freedom here. To stay amidst these walls itself is suffering. But there is another suffering greater than this. These thoughts which keep arising in the mind – of the family, about one's father, wife, children, brothers, sisters – these thoughts bring worry about them, about oneself. At the same time there is this worry whether society will accept us or not. How to join society again; worry about the future.

Then one more thought comes to the mind: "Oh, I did this wrong action in my life for which I got punished." So one repents and these thoughts keep coming in the mind, and this brings suffering. Another thought comes to mind, that "I would never have landed in this place had it not been for that fellow who testified against me, or cheated me, or that particular officer who got after me and caught me." Then anger arises in the mind against such persons; one wants to take revenge and then one becomes upset, tense. As and when anger arises in the mind, the person becomes unhappy and tense. You cannot generate anger and ill will towards others and hope to feel peaceful yourself.

So what should one do? There may or may not be freedom from these four walls someday, but this other jail of the mind – where one keeps generating defilements like anger, animosity and ill will, and becomes miserable – there is a way out of this jail. We are all prisoners of this mental jail, where the mind has formed a pattern of behaviour and keeps generating defilements and making us miserable. The moment one learns to observe oneself, he begins to come out of his suffering. The moment anger arises, or revengeful thoughts arise in the mind, if you can learn to look within yourself in that moment you will see yourself burning. Your heartbeat has increased. There is so much misery, so much tension.

To find peace and happiness within, one has to work for it. Anybody can understand that he should not generate anger. If he does so, then he only becomes miserable; he only ends up punishing himself. He may understand this very well, but what to do? One keeps repeating the same thing. Why? Because our mind is not in our control. We are not the master of our mind. The mind is our master, we dance to its tunes. If we cannot master our own mind, how can we hope to improve it?



## HELPFUL ANSWERS TO SERIOUS QUESTIONS

(From the Vipassana Research Institute.)

S. N. Goenka answered questions at thousands of talks during more than 50 years as a Vipassana teacher. Here are some questions and answers that followed a talk Goenkaji gave in Ashland, Oregon on June 15, 2002.

*Q: Now there are many different Vipassana centers around the world, but there is still misery, struggle and war. Is there something wrong in Vipassana? Can't Vipassana make the world peaceful? If we cannot stop wars, the future surely will be in ruins. What more can we do for the sake of world peace?*

Goenkaji: If there is peace within each person, there is bound to be peace in the world. Unless there is peace within, you can't expect peace in the world. Vipassana is teaching peace within the individual so that it spreads as peace in the world. Without confusing your mind with all such questions, carry on meditating and see that you get the benefit yourself. If you get the benefit, others will also benefit. And this is how there will be peace. If more and more people practice Vipassana, there is greater chance of world peace. There can't be world peace unless there is peace within individual human beings. If more and more people live a peaceful life, we are approaching closer to world peace.

*Q: It's still common for me to have to use respiration, as it is physically and mentally demanding to go through my body with the meditation. Most of the time, to really keep sharp attention, I had to use respiration. Is that all right?*

Goenkaji: Yes, respiration is always helpful. Whenever you find that either the mind is very agitated or the mind has become very sluggish, then respiration will help you. Come back to respiration for a few minutes. Then you can work properly. Even while you are moving through the body, you can use your respiration. With one breath you move here from, say, the upper arm; with another breath you move to the lower arm, and then the next place. You are aware of respiration, you are aware of sensation in each part of the body. The mind wandering will lessen. It will be helpful.

*Q: I am always aware of the subtle sensations on the body with the understanding of anicca (impermanence) and anattā (not-self). However, I have not yet reached the desired goal. I feel that I am lacking in something. What else should I be doing?*

Goenkaji: If you keep looking for the goal, you won't practice properly. Your job is to keep on practicing. The goal will come automatically. Don't crave for the goal.

