



Vipassana Prison Newsletter

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Manopakopam rakkheyya; manasā samvuto siyā.
Manoduccaritam hitvā, manasā sucaritam care.

Let one guard oneself against irritability in thought; let one be controlled in mind.
Abandoning mental misconduct, let one practice good conduct in thought.

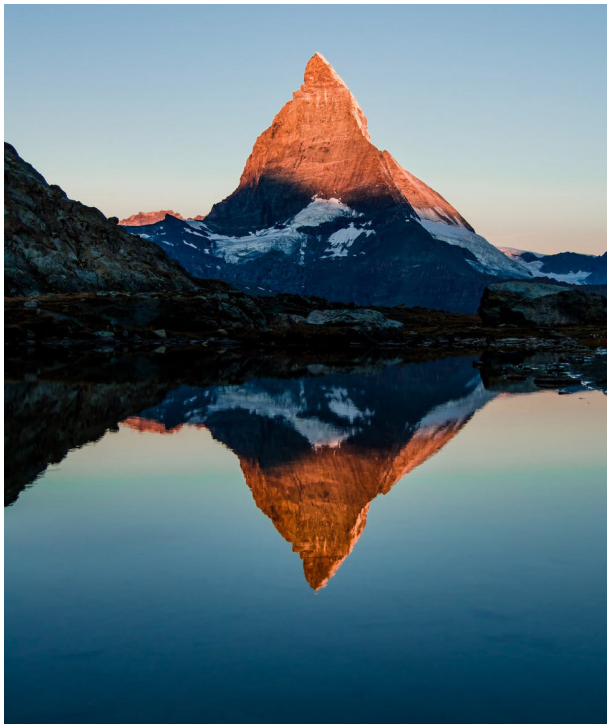
Dhammapada 17.233

FROM DOUBT, TO FOCUS, TO HAPPY REALIZATION

From the Vipassana Research Institute Newsletter, July 2019

The following is a translation of an article by S. N. Goenka published in the October 2005 issue of the Vipassana Patrika.

The first of September, 1955! An extremely important day of my life! The incurable and unbearable migraine headaches, which had been a terrible curse, now became a boon for me. I joined the Vipassana meditation course of my revered teacher, Sayagyi U Ba Khin, for ten days. I had serious doubts about the course. Still, I went and



gained astonishing benefits. I joined the course because Sayagyi U Ba Khin told me that nothing would be taught other than sila (morality), samadhi (mastery over the mind) and panna (experiential wisdom). Living a life of morality, developing mastery over the mind and purifying the mind by developing wisdom – how can any reasonable person object to these three teachings?

I wanted to get rid of my mental defilements such as anger and egotism. These resulted in a life full of tension, and were the root cause of the migraine headaches. In addition, the family in which I was born and the atmosphere in which I grew up gave great importance to the ideal of abstaining from unwholesome conduct, the practice of moral conduct and keeping the mind free from negativity.

Still, some doubt lingered. I decided that I would practice only sila, samadhi and panna in the course and would not accept anything else. At the end of the ten days I saw that, in accordance with Sayagyi's statement, nothing other than sila, samadhi and panna was taught in the course. The claim that this technique gave

results here and now proved to be true. The practice of only ten days had started to eradicate my mental defilements. My tension started to decrease and, as a result, the migraine was cured. I was also relieved forever from the misery caused by taking morphine injections and sleeping tablets for the migraines. Doing a daily practice of Vipassana weakened my mental defilements. My misery started decreasing. I did not find any fault in the technique: it was totally flawless. I could not see any harm in the technique: it was truly benevolent.

To develop in Vipassana, every day I meditated one hour in the morning and evening and joined at least one ten-day course every year. I found Vipassana very rational and logical, practical and scientific. There was no place for blind belief in it. There was no insistence on a belief just because my teacher had said it, or the Buddha had said it. One understood the teaching at the intellectual level, then at the level of experience, and only then accepted it. One did not accept without knowing, without understanding and without experiencing.

MEDITATION THRIVING IN U.S. HEARTLAND

This is an update of an article that first appeared in the Vipassana International Newsletter in June 2014

The first course that Goenkaji gave in the United States was not in California or New England. It was in the central heartland, in 1980. The state was Illinois. On a former farm surrounded by miles of corn and soybeans, the Illinois Vipassana Center will soon celebrate its 18th anniversary.

Dhamma Pakasa is near Pecatonica, a village with a population of 2,000. (The name Pecatonica comes from two words in the local Native American language meaning “slow water.”) This may be the only Vipassana center anywhere that regularly hosts Canada geese – up to dozens of the big birds at a time. Sometimes, especially if goslings (baby geese) are nearby, a three-foot-tall goose may approach a meditator and spread its huge wings. This is not dangerous, but looks it.

Of all of the meditation centers in the U.S. and Canada, Dhamma Pakasa is the one with the most people living within 100 miles. Most students come from three nearby cities: in the state of Wisconsin, Madison has 250,000 residents and Milwaukee has 600,000. In Illinois, Chicago has over four million. Still, out on the farm, it’s quiet. “You don’t hear any noise,” says an assistant teacher who lives not far away. “It’s quiet and peaceful. The most noise you hear is from the geese.” Along with that is the sigh of the wind in the center’s old maple, oak and walnut trees.



For years after Goenkaji’s course in 1980, local meditators had to travel long distances to join retreats. Then, in 1996, a three-day course was conducted by Dr. Om Prakash, a close friend of Goenkaji and a student of Sayagyi U Ba Khin. At the end of that course, a group of students decided the time was right to lay the groundwork for a center. Goenkaji returned in 2000 and 2002 to give public talks to large audiences and also to look at possible sites for purchase. A couple of locations came close to being selected, including a llama farm. In 2003 the search led to the farmhouse near Pecatonica.

Goenkaji named the new center Dhamma Pakasa in memory of his dear friend, Dr. Prakash, who had passed away a few years before. But the Pali meaning is equally appropriate: “Radiance of the Dhamma.” “Right next door is the retired county sheriff,” the local assistant teacher says. “He called county sheriffs in other states to ask, ‘What are Vipassana people like?’ And then he gave the thumbs-up to our being here.” At first the center held single-gender courses, with 15 students sleeping in the farmhouse and meditating in the living room. After a 50-bed dorm was built, the number of students per course tripled. In the first 10 years nearly 8,000 students registered for courses. After that, the local trust purchased five adjacent acres of land, allowing the center to be expanded to accommodate up to 150 occupants.

The Illinois assistant teacher says that where there is determination to meditate, good things happen. “They say ‘Dhamma works,’” the assistant teacher laughs. “It’s great to know that intellectually, but then you see it. The right people are there at the right time. We have to do our due diligence, but there is support and help around us.”

THE SCIENCE OF MIND AND MATTER

From a pariyatti.org transcript of S. N. Goenka's address to a 2001 Massachusetts conference called Insights from an Ancient Tradition

To me, Buddha was a super-scientist, he was not a founder of a religion. Buddha never founded any religion. He was a spiritual super-scientist. To say his teachings are Buddhism is totally wrong, to call the followers of Buddha "Buddhist" to me is totally wrong. He just taught Dhamma. Dhamma means universal law of nature, and those who understood that and lived according to the law of nature were called Dhammiko, followers of Dhamma. The word "Buddhism" or "Buddhist" is not anywhere in the words of Buddha, in the teachings of Buddha – and not only in the teachings of Buddha, but also in all the commentaries, sub-commentaries: nowhere.

To me it was degradation of Buddha's teaching when you say Buddhist, when you say Buddhism. He taught Dhamma, Dhamma for all: Universal Teaching. The moment you say Buddhism it becomes a sect, and in the words of Buddha – he was so very much against sectarianism – sectarianism is the difference between man and man in the name of this sect, or that sect. He was so clear. Unfortunately, in his name many sects cropped up. Still, Dhamma is the real teaching of Buddha, and that is nothing but science. Science of mind and matter.



He discovered certain realities which were not known to humanity. He discovered, as a scientist discovers. The realities were there – they are today, and they were there before Buddha – and by discovering those realities he made use of them for his own liberation. And then out of compassion, infinite compassion, he started distributing it to people. One very, very important reality that he discovered: the mind keeps on influencing matter, the body, and in return the body keeps on influencing the mind, at a very deep level. At the level of conscious mind one does not know what is happening deep inside. But he found out what is happening deep inside.

This is where the cause of misery arises, because this is where defilement arises. It arises, multiplies, and overpowers you. And when you're overpowered you act in a wrong way, which normally you would not have acted. How to come out of it? One must go to the root of where this defilement arises – anger, hatred, ego, fear, all the defilements which make the mind unbalanced. Anything that arises in the mind generates a sensation on the body – a great discovery. And another big discovery: that the mind starts reacting to these body sensations.

The teaching was there – don't react to sensual objects, like a shape, or a form, or a color. Or a light, when it comes to the eyes; sound comes to the ear; a smell comes in contact with the nose; taste comes in contact with the tongue; something tangible comes in contact with the body; or a thought comes in contact with the mind. Don't react: that was the teaching. Don't react with craving, don't react with aversion, otherwise you are harming yourself. Because he was a super-scientist, he kept on discovering the truth, deeper, deeper, dividing, dissecting, disintegrating, dissolving the entire physical structure, the mental structure. So the mind is reacting to the sensations on the body. With every pleasant sensation the mind starts reacting, craving, craving, clinging, clinging. With every unpleasant sensation the mind starts reacting with aversion, hatred, aversion, hatred. These are at the root level.

All other defilements are the product of craving, aversion, craving, aversion. Because of the false ego, one doesn't know what is happening. An imaginary ego – one lives in the life of imaginary ego. What is there? Mere interaction of mind and matter, mind and matter, mind and matter. This was a great discovery, which helped mankind in those days and is helping still.

AVOID LETTING PERSONALITY CLASHES BLAZE OUT OF CONTROL

From the Vipassana International Newsletter, March 2015

Following is an edited extract from a talk given in December 2014 at the assistant teacher meeting held at Dhamma Giri, India. The speaker was Ven. Bhikkhu Udawana Ratanapala, a Bhikkhu Teacher who resides in Sri Lanka and has traveled widely to share the teaching of Dhamma with others.

After a first Vipassana course, I think most if not all people feel that they have gained something, experienced something making them better than they were before. But if you had asked me what I experienced in my first course, I would have drawn a big zero. I did not understand anything. After that first 10-day course I was doing



meditation – that is, Anapana and Metta – but not Vipassana. By good fortune, however, 11 years later I was in India and met a group of people from Myanmar (formerly Burma). They said they were on their way to Goenkaji's center, and I became inspired and decided to join them. Very kindly and compassionately, these people took me with them.

That was my second course, after a long gap, and I felt the benefit. Meditation simply changed me. If I had not had the teaching of Vipassana, today I would not be here in this hall. Because of Goenkaji, I was able to save my life as

a monk. Practicing Vipassana, we gradually get rid of craving, aversion and ignorance, and we develop generosity, compassion and wisdom. We have to be very mindful. If there is no mindfulness at any time craving, aversion or ignorance can arise, bringing suffering.

Goenkaji worked day and night to spread Dhamma. As a result, the family of Vipassana started growing. Without expecting name or fame, he kept on working. By his efforts, Dhamma spread throughout India and far beyond its borders, reaching countries east and west, north and south, everywhere. The people practicing Vipassana in those countries speak different languages and represent different cultural backgrounds. But when they come to Dhamma, they are all one.

As Dhamma spread and the Vipassana family started growing, Goenkaji warned us that differences of opinion might emerge, that personality clashes might start. People might become attached to their own opinions. He warned us to be very careful of such a situation. It is like fire. The best is not to allow a fire to start; but if it has begun, see that it is extinguished immediately. Don't allow it to spread. Always remember the Buddha's words: seeing danger in dispute and security in concord, dwell together in friendship. We have to work hard to develop loving kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity; this will make it easy to solve any problem.

On one occasion, Goenkaji told his assistant teachers, quoting the great Indian poet Kabir: "Cut off your head (that is, your ego) if you wish to follow Dhamma." That is very good guidance for us today. We have to keep strengthening the Dhamma within ourselves. If we find any weakness within us, we should continue to practice and develop loving kindness, compassion and sympathetic joy. Conflicts arise because of mental impurities. We have to keep purifying our minds through daily practice of Vipassana.

May you be able to spread Dhamma by developing your own good qualities, developing your own Dhamma, for the benefit and welfare of many. May you be happy.