

Vipassana Newsletter

P.O. Box 9426 Berkeley California 94709

Summer 1983 [2526 B.E.] Published Quarterly

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

Vipassana Meditation

A Vipassana meditator soon realizes the difference between apparent and actual truth; that what appears solid, hard, and impenetrable at the gross level is actually nothing but wavelets and vibrations at the subtlest level. By simply observing objectively and feeling equanimously the sensations in one's own body in a systematic way, part by part, piece by piece, bit by bit, one can easily reach a stage where even the most solid parts of the body are experienced as they really are nothing but the oscillations of sub-atomic particles (Kalapas).

With this same awareness, one can observe and realize that even the four aspects of mind, Vinana (Cognitions), Sanna (Perception), Vedana (Feelings), and Sankhara (Volition) are also nothing but vibrations arising and vanishing with even greater rapidity. Nothing but wavelets, wavelets. The entire phenomena (Papanca) of mind and matter has this fixed nature of arising and instantly passing away. This is the Ultimate Truth (Paramattha Sacca) of mind and matter permanently impermanent, nothing but a mass of tiny little bubbles or ripples, disintegrating as soon as they arise. This realization of the basic characteristic of all phenomena as Anicca (Changing) leads one to the realization of the characteristic of Anatta (Not I, not me, not my soul) as obviously one has no control over them. This in turn makes one realize the nature of Dukkha (Suffering), as by experience one understands that identifying oneself with the changing impersonal phenomena is nothing but suffering.

The more one is established at this level of Ultimate Truth, the stronger and more steadfast will one be established in real wisdom, the highest state of which is called variously Vijja-Sampanno, Purito Panno in Pali or Sthit-Pragya in Sanskrit. Contrast to this, anyone who is entangled in ignorance will imagine that any sensation becomes the cause for generating craving for their continuation and unpleasant sensations produce craving for their cessation. This reaction of the mind or volition based on craving and aversion is the strongest bondage.

Initially the meditator will find himself in a tug-of-war between his knowledge of phenomena as impermanent

and transitory and the pull of the old attachments toward the flow of Sankharas. But with practice he can learn the fine art of differentiating between what is real and what illusory, what is known and what is imagined and what is true knowledge and what is not. For longer and longer periods truth will predominate. Each sensation felt is known as impermanent; hence the perception that accompanies each cognition is free from the "Selfconsciousness" of "I" and "Mine". The Sanna turns into Panna.

The truth that the sensation immediately passes away predominates, not the craving for it to continue, nor the craving for it to cease. There can be no liking or disliking sensations which pass away as fast as they arise. It is this liking and disliking which turns into the very strong attachments that condition the mind and produce the Kamma, pushing individuals into the endless rounds of becoming (Kammabhava).

A non-reacting mind produces no new conditionings. The law of nature is such that the old accumulation of conditionings in the flow of the consciousness (Bhavanga-citta) will automatically rise to the surface and ripen when no new Sankharas are given as input. Here again it is the practice of Vipassana which enables the meditator silently and attentively to observe these old bond-ages of the past as they arise in their true impermanent nature. With heightened equanimity the cravings and aversions lose their grip. In a non-reacting mind the fruit of the past kammās can not spread like cancer. This "Khinam Puranam" which means that each old Sankhara or conditioning is eradicated as soon as it arises without being allowed to multiply. It is the purifying fire of Panna which burns the new seed accompanying the fruits of all these old Sankharas.

Sometimes, however, the fruition of the old Kamma is so intense that one loses all balance of the mind. Wis-

Contents

Vipassana Meditation	1
Other News	2

dom fades away and the true perspective is blurred. He loses his impersonal attitude towards the pain and begins to identify with the sensations. He may try intellectually to come out of his reactions, but actually he begins treating his pain as if it will never end, and the reaction continues.

To fully realize the impermanent nature of all phenomena and to break the apparent solidity of perceptions, a meditator must reach the stage of “Uppadavaya Dhammino” - the instantaneous arising and vanishing of the fundamental vibrations or wavelets of Nama-rupa (Mind and Matter). This stage can be reached only by the practice of Vipassana meditation, the sure way to break these intense bondages. In fact, Vipassana meditation is for the purpose of “dhanamanassa pure katam rajam” - a process of combing out all the old defilements from the fabric of consciousness. The vibrating string of the pure mind beats out all the impurities of the past. This combing process cannot be said to be complete while even the smallest knot remains unopened. In the same way, the practice of Vipassana must continue until all impressions of solidity anywhere in the framework of the physical and mental structure have been removed.

How to achieve this stage? Let us see:

As it is written: “Puran kamma vipakajam dukkham tibbam katukam vedanam adhivasento,” which means that the meditator endures the fruition of his past actions, no matter how severe. How is this possible? Not enduring by becoming agitated or crying over the past - this would be completely opposite to the process of purification. He can only endure such intense sensations by developing awareness with equanimity. It is because he knows perfectly well the true nature of the situation that he is able to bear these fruits of the past without strong reactions. He becomes an impartial observer of the suffering rather than being the sufferer. This detachment allows the old bondages to get eradicated and very soon there will be no observer, but mere observation and so also no sufferer but mere suffering. Anatta! Anatta!

MAY ALL BEINGS BE LIBERATED!

S.N. Goenka

Other News

V.M.C.: Norm Schmitz's course ending on September 4th marks the 18th course to take place at V.M.C. in one year - a full year of hard work by the assistant teachers and by those who have been serving the Dhamma there.

A commercial kitchen and bath house capable of handling 200 students is just coming to completion in time

for Goenka's course in August. Students' help in the building came from as far away as Seattle and Utah.

Although Goenka's course is already full, there is still room on Norm's course for those who would like to attend. A work weekend is scheduled for August 6 and 7. Workers are also needed for the two days before Goenka's course to help set up as there is a lot to be done. Servers are needed for Norm's course also. If you think you would like to help, call the center at (413)625-2160.

Vancouver: Due to the success of the Dhamma House in Vancouver, the Western Canadian Committee discussed at their July meeting the possibility of moving the Dhamma House to one with more space. This is good news for the Vancouver area. For the present their plans are to remain in the downtown area and in a about a year move to the country. There they would be able to have assistant teacher courses on a regular basis.

Australia: The construction of the first three buildings of the Vipassana Meditation Center in Australia is proceeding, although hampered to some extent by inclement weather. However, the rain has not been able to dampen the enthusiasm of workers who are giving service here. Work continues generally for seven days a week and only heavy rain can be a sufficient reason to take a well-earned day off.

At present there are nine people giving full time service, including five who have come from Dhammagiri especially for this purpose. The piers, bearers and joists are finished for the Meditation Hall and Caretakers Building, with the frames for the walls about to begin. The footings have been poured for the Ablutions Block and the slab for the floor will be poured as soon as weather permits. Approval has been granted by the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board to pump to main sewerage, and negotiations with neighboring property owners will commence immediately. Although this will add considerably to the total cost of the project, it will allow much greater flexibility in the use of the center in years to come.

Now that Goenkaji has rearranged his program to come to Australia and give two courses in November, there is much more hope that the most basic aspects of the building can be completed in time.