

Vipassana Newsletter

Vipassana Meditation as taught by S.N. Goenka in the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

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Since 1974

Words of Dhamma

*Sūriyassa, bhikkhave, udayato etaṃ
pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittam,
yadidaṃ – aruṇuggaṃ. Evamevaṃ kho,
bhikkhave, kusālānaṃ dhammānaṃ etaṃ
pubbaṅgamaṃ etaṃ pubbanimittam, yad
idiṃ – sammādiṭṭhi.*

Bhikkhus, just as the red glow on the horizon foretells the rising of the sun, so too does right view herald the arising of wholesome states.

Anguttara Nikaya 10.121

Right Understanding

By Patrick Given-Wilson

Right understanding has to illuminate every single part of the practice of Vipassana.

The Buddha called it *sammā diṭṭhi*. In Pali, the language spoken in India in his time, *diṭṭhi* literally meant a view or a philosophy. Then as now, many different kinds of philosophies were current. But *sammā diṭṭhi*, right understanding, has nothing to do with any philosophy or intellectual position. Even with great devotion, an absolute and total conviction of the truth of every single word of the Buddha will not liberate anybody. Conviction merely turns the teaching into a belief system like any other, and so it becomes a trap. The Buddha carefully used the word *sammā*, meaning “right”; and *sammā diṭṭhi* only becomes *sammā* when it is practiced. This is the critical difference, and this is what purifies the individual: the practice.

Sammā diṭṭhi is merely the observation and understanding of reality, the practical experience of reality within the physical and mental structure. It requires the understanding of the reality of the Four Noble Truths: suffering, the arising of suffering, the cessation of suffering, and the path to leading to the cessation of suffering. Right understanding is only present when the four are actually experienced.

Initially on a 10-day course, students may come with different philosophical views or religious backgrounds. They may be skeptical. They start with *sīla*, morality, and proceed to *samādhi*, just observing natural breath, to which there can be no objection. Then, as the mind becomes calmer, it becomes sharper and capable of feeling the sensations on the body. At this point Vipassana is given and *sammā diṭṭhi* is introduced, the practice of mere observation, without reacting, with the understanding of *anicca*: the understanding that every single thing within the physical and mental structure is constantly arising and passing. Through experience, this becomes right understanding. Then, in the practice of

Vipassana, there is no ignorance, no possibility of reacting, and the meditator is just aware from moment to moment. This is *paññā*, the wisdom of impermanence, which leads on to the understanding of *dukkha* and *anattā*.

Thus *sammā diṭṭhi* is a proper starting point for a meditator. Once it arises, it starts purifying every other part of the Noble Eightfold Path.

Sammā saṅkappa means right thought, without any thought of violence, aversion, hatred, lust or passion. *Sammā diṭṭhi* involves the understanding that any impurity, any such thought is dangerous.

The meditator just accepts and observes the impurity at the level of sensation, and it passes away layer after layer. The whole attitude changes: thoughts of anger, passion and craving turn into thoughts of love, compassion and giving. There is also determination: to walk the path and not to deviate from it.

It is the same with *sīla*. *Sammā vācā*, right speech, involves abstaining from false, harsh words that hurt others, or useless words. *Sammā kammanta*, right action, involves refraining from unwholesome physical actions, such as killing, stealing, sexual misconduct or taking intoxicants. Simi-

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larly, *sammā ājīva*, right livelihood, requires avoidance of dealing in weapons, poisons, meat, or any trade or profession that pollutes society by encouraging others to break their *sīla*.

Of course, people understand that they may be punished by the laws of a state, or lose their reputation in society. But laws are capricious, and people can hide their misdemeanors from others. People may even fear punishment after death. But *sammā diṭṭhi* is based on the present experience within. It is the understanding that no wrong speech, action or livelihood can be undertaken without first generating great impurity in the mind, and that generating impurity is self-harming. The meditator chooses not to do that, and every aspect of *sīla* develops not out of fear or blind belief but with right understanding. As the Buddha said:

*Mano-pubbaṅgamā dhammā
Manoseṭṭhā manomayā*

Mind precedes all phenomena.
Mind matters most;
everything originates in the mind.

Any action, vocal or physical, performed with the base of an impure mind brings nothing but suffering. *Sammā diṭṭhi* develops this understanding: it is the mental volition that counts, that gives the result. A pure mind inevitably brings happiness; an impure mind, suffering. As the Buddha said, “Be selfish, but know where your real self-interest lies.”

Sammā vāyāma, right effort, is the effort not to generate new impurities, to eradicate old impurities, and to generate and develop good qualities. *Sammā diṭṭhi*, working with sensations, is the understanding of how harmful these impurities are. It is also the understanding of how to eradicate them: how the mind naturally becomes purer and develops positive qualities.

Sammā sati, right awareness, is knowing that any moment without awareness of reality is a moment of ignorance. It is

not just the awareness of a circus performer. It is the understanding that in every moment of ignorance, without knowing what is happening inside, some impurity is generated. With this understanding, the meditator tries to be aware within the framework of the body every moment.

As *sammā sati* develops, and as the meditator progresses, *sammā diṭṭhi* also deepens. At the initial stages, gross, unpleasant sensations arise. With *sammā diṭṭhi*, the meditator develops the ability to be patient, to understand that they will pass. Equanimity begins. Then the stage of *bhaṅga* is encountered: a free flow of subtle sensations throughout the body, a very pleasant, thrilling experience. But it is also a potential pitfall because of the old, lifelong habit of attachment to pleasant sensations. *Sammā diṭṭhi* must be there to remind the meditator that this experience also is *anicca*, that it is not permanent and that any attachment to it is dangerous. Only with this understanding will the meditator progress.

A stage of deep tranquillity then is reached. Again *sammā diṭṭhi* must be there to remind that this experience also is not permanent, it is still within the field of mind and matter. Even now a subtle oscillation can be felt; this is the signal, the message that the experience is *anicca*. The meditator becomes alert, and now *sammā samādhi* starts to develop. Again, even when the meditator becomes very deeply concentrated and absorbed in the object, *sammā diṭṭhi*, the understanding of *anicca*, must still be there. Only then is it pure *sammā samādhi*. At this point a very deep equanimity must develop, with mere observation, without craving for the goal, without attachment to anything. This *sammā samādhi* becomes the *samādhi* of liberation.

In this way, *sammā diṭṭhi*, right understanding, should be present from the beginning to the end, to illuminate every step of a meditator’s progress. As the meditator practices properly, *sammā diṭṭhi* supports the meditator, and is itself deepened by the practice. This becomes a virtuous circle, ultimately leading to full enlightenment.



Ariya aṭṭhangika magga – The Noble Eightfold Path

<i>Sīla</i> – morality	<i>Sammā vācā</i> – right speech
	<i>Sammā kammanta</i> – right action
	<i>Sammā ājīva</i> – right livelihood
<i>Samādhi</i> – mastery of the mind	<i>Sammā vāyāma</i> – right effort
	<i>Sammā sati</i> – right awareness
	<i>Sammā samādhi</i> – right concentration
<i>Paññā</i> – wisdom	<i>Sammā saṅkappa</i> – right thought
	<i>Sammā diṭṭhi</i> – right understanding

Questions and Answers with Goenkaji

My professional life involves dishonesty. I cannot easily take up another line of work. What should I do?

Practice Vipassana and your mind will become strong. At present you are a slave of your mind, which keeps forcing you to do things you do not want to do. By the practice of Vipassana, you will get the strength to come out of this easily. Then you will find some other profession that will be helpful to you and wholesome.

What would you say is the purpose of life?

To come out of misery. A human being has the wonderful ability to go deep inside, observe reality and come out of suffering. Not to use this ability is to waste one's life. Use it to live a really healthy, happy life!

How should we practice Vipassana in daily life?

Take a Vipassana course and then you will understand how to apply the practice in your life. If you just take a course and don't apply it in life, Vipassana will become a rite, ritual or religious ceremony. It won't help you. Vipassana is for living a good life every day, every moment.

What comes after death?

Every moment one takes birth, every moment one is dying. Understand this process of life and death. This will make you very happy, and you will understand what happens after death.

What is the ultimate goal of life?

The ultimate goal is here and now. If you keep looking for something in the future but you don't gain anything now, this is a delusion. If you have started experiencing peace and harmony now, there is every likelihood that you will reach the goal, which is nothing but peace and harmony. So experience it now, this moment. Then you are really on the right path.

International News

Goenkaji Health Update

Goenkaji underwent an operation for a spinal problem on November 8. After the surgery, as a precaution he was kept under observation in intensive care for five days. He was then shifted to a regular hospital room and was discharged from hospital on November 19. The surgery was successful and the incision has healed. The doctors are satisfied with the outcome of surgery and Goenkaji's recovery thus far. After a period of rest, he should be able to resume his normal level of activity.

New Center in the Southeastern United States

Dhamma Patapa

The Southeast Vipassana Trust has purchased a 40-acre parcel of land near the small town of Jesup, Georgia. The site is well located to serve students in the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida and other surrounding states. The property is a beautiful, secluded, wooded lot, with some open areas. It is ideal for our purposes in many ways.

[For pictures of the new location, please see the Web site]

The Trust paid \$100,000 in cash for the property. There are plans to start preparing architectural drawings immediately, to apply for a construction loan and to start building as soon as possible. Goenkaji has named the new center Dhamma Patapa (Majesty of Dhamma).

There is the possibility of developing a planned Dhamma community beside the center. For more information about the property or how to give dana, go to: www.se.us.dhamma.org, old student page (user ID oldstudent, password behappy).

First 45-day course outside of India

After 23 years, Dhamma Dhara, the first center to be established in the West, held the first 45-day course outside of India from September 28 to November 13, 2005. The 27 students came from all over the United States and Canada, as well as Taiwan and Mexico. All had private accommodation with attached bathroom. Another 32 students attended a concurrent 30-day course.

In view of the success of this course, Dhamma Dhara plans to schedule 30- and 45-day courses in the fall of each year. Applications are already coming in for September 2006!



Dhamma Dhara

New Centers in India

Dhammārāma, Andhra Pradesh

This new center is located on four acres of land in Kumudavalli village, Andhra Pradesh. The first phase of construction will provide for a Dhamma hall to seat about 70 students and accommodation for 16 male students. A pagoda with 80 cells and accommodation for female students will be built in the second phase. Goenkaji has named this center Dhammārāma (“Abode of Dhamma”).

Kondapur, near Hyderabad

The center consists of 10 acres surrounded mostly by farms and forest. It is situated in Kondapur, Medak district, about 69 kilometers from Hyderabad Railway Station and 6 kilometers off the Hyderabad-Mumbai Highway. Goenkaji has named the center Dhamma Kondañña (after Kondañña, one of the first five disciples of the Buddha).

New Center in Mongolia

Dhamma Mahana, Mongolia

The Government of Mongolia has given about 100 acres of land to the Vipassana Trust on a long-term lease for development of a meditation center. The site is 22 kilometers from Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. The wooded site is close to a highway, and has access to water and electricity. Goenkaji has named it Dhamma Mahana (“Great Dhamma”).

The first course on the land was held in August 2005, with 37 students using tents and huts for the Dhamma hall and residences. Among the students were a cabinet minister in the Mongolian government and the deputy director of Mongolian National Radio and Television. An old student from Europe also joined the course.

The Mongolia Vipassana Trust plans to organize more courses at the site and undertake construction. There are 200 to 300 old students in the region who are willing to serve.

First Vipassana course in Angola

The first 10-day course in Angola took place in December 2005, in the town of Benguela. A total of seven students, all of them Angolans, completed the course. Another course will be held during school holidays either in April or December 2006. For more information or support, please contact info@ao.dhamma.org

Vipassana courses in Central America

The year 2005 saw the first 10-day Vipassana course held in Nicaragua. A course is planned for El Salvador in April 2006. For information, contact info@sv.dhamma.org.

Vipassana courses in Manitoba, Canada

The first Vipassana course in Manitoba, Canada, was held in May 2003. More recently, a course was held in September 2005. The site for both courses was the International Peace Garden – a large and beautifully located facility on the border between Manitoba and the U.S. state of North Dakota. Approximately 30 students attended each course. There are plans for more frequent courses in the near future.

Grateful Commemoration

Mr. N.H. Parikh, Vipassana Teacher passed away peacefully in Mumbai. He was among the first assistant teachers appointed by Goenkaji. He served Dhamma in various capacities for many years and made a significant contribution to the spread of Vipassana. He is survived by his wife, Mrs. Kausalyaben Parikh, who is also a Vipassana Teacher.

May he be happy, peaceful and liberated!

They served the Dhamma selflessly and lived exemplary lives full of Dhamma. They will continue to be inspiring examples in the way they lived their lives.

*Idha nandati pecca nandati,
katapuñño ubhayattha nandati;
puññaṃ me katanti nandati,
bhiyyo nandati suggaṭṭi gato.
- Dhammapada 18*

Here one is happy, hereafter one is happy,
The doer of good deeds is happy in both existences.
"Good have I done"--thinking thus he is happy,
He is happier still when he goes to a blissful state.

New Responsibilities

Acaryas (Teachers)

Mr. Dirk Taveirne & Mrs. Mieke De Wilde, Belgium

To serve Dhamma Pajjota

Mr. Ratilal & Mrs. Chanchal Savla, Mumbai

To serve Gulf Cooperation Council countries, including the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Bahrain, and Dhamma Vahini, Titwala, near Mumbai

Senior Assistant Teachers

Mr. Arthur Rosenfeld & Mrs. Ana Teixido, Netherlands

Mr. Robert & Mrs. Sarah Doyle, U.K.

Assistant Teachers

Clara Jiménez, Spain (appointed July 2005)

Mrs. Prema Suresh Sarda, Aurangabad

Dr. Myo Aung & Daw Khin Than Hmi, Myanmar

Dr. U Thein Kyi & Dr. Daw Than Than Htay, Myanmar

Ms. Anna Schlink, Australia

Ms. Deborah Coy, USA

Mr. K. R. Lakshmappa, Bangalore