What is the purpose of Dhamma service? Certainly not to receive board and lodging, nor to pass the time in a comfortable environment, nor to escape from the responsibilities of daily life. Dhamma workers know this well.

These people have practiced Vipassana and realized by direct experience the benefits it offers. They have seen the selfless service of the teachers, management and Dhamma workers—service that enabled them to taste the incomparable flavor of Dhamma. They have begun to take steps on the Noble Path, and naturally have started to develop the rare quality of gratitude, the wish to repay their debt for all that they have received.

Of course the teacher, management and Dhamma workers gave their service without expecting anything in return, nor will they accept any material remuneration. The only way to pay back the debt to them is by helping to keep the Wheel of Dhamma rotating, to give to others the same selfless service. This is the noble volition with which to give Dhamma service.

And as Vipassana meditators progress on the path, they emerge from the old habit pattern of self-centeredness and start to concern themselves with others. They notice how everywhere people are suffering: young or old, men or women, black or white, haves or have-nots; all are suffering. The meditators realize that they themselves were miserable until they encountered the Dhamma. They know that, like them, others have started to enjoy real happiness and peace by following the Path. Seeing this change stimulates a feeling of sympathetic joy, and strengthens the wish to help suffering people come out of their misery with Vipassana. Compassion overflows, and with it the volition to help others find relief from their suffering.

Of course it takes time to develop the maturity and receive the training necessary to teach Dhamma. But there are many other ways to serve people who have come to join a course, and all of them are invaluable. Truly it is a noble aspiration to be a Dhamma worker—a simple, humble Dhamma worker.

And those who practice Vipassana start realizing the law of nature: actions of body or speech that harm others will also harm those who commit them; while actions that help others, bring peace and happiness to those who perform them. Thus helping others is also helping oneself. It is therefore in one’s own interest to serve. Doing so develops one’s pārami (wholesome qualities) and makes it possible to advance more quickly and surely on the Path. Serving others is, in fact, also serving oneself. Understanding this truth stimulates the wish to join in the noble mission of helping others to come out of their misery.

But what is the proper way to serve? Without knowing this, workers cannot help others or themselves; instead, they might even do harm. However noble the Dhamma mission may be, there can be no true benefit in serving if the volition of the worker is not sound. The service will not be beneficial if it is given to inflate the worker’s ego, or to obtain something in return—even if only words of praise or appreciation.

The following is an excerpt from a talk given by S.N. Goenka at the Vipassana Meditation Centre, Blackheath, New South Wales, Australia.

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Understand that you are learning how to apply Dhamma in day-to-day life. After all, Dhamma is not an escape from daily responsibilities. By learning to act according to the Dhamma in dealing with the students and situations here in the little world of a meditation course or center, you train yourself to act in the same way in the world outside. Despite the unwanted behavior of another person, you practice trying to keep the balance of your mind, and to generate love and compassion in response. This is the lesson you are trying to master here. You are a student as much as those who are sitting in the course. Keep on learning while serving others humbly. Keep thinking, “I am here in training, to practice serving without expecting anything in return. I am working so that others may benefit from the Dhamma. Let me help them by setting a good example, and in doing so help myself as well.”

May all of you who give Dhamma service become strengthened in Dhamma. May you learn to develop your good will, love and compassion for others. May all of you progress in Dhamma, to enjoy real peace, real harmony, real happiness.

**Goenkaji Visits Sri Lanka**

This spring Goenkaji was invited to participate in the centenary celebrations of the Maha Bodhi Society of Sri Lanka. While there, he conducted a 10-day course in the village of Bentota near Colombo, attended by 245 students. He also gave three public talks attended by over 1000 people in all.

During his visit, he met with a number of eminent Pali scholars (monks as well as lay people) in Colombo. They discussed the technique of Vipassana and its sources in the Pali canon. The talks focused in particular on the meaning of the words *vedanā* and *sampajāña*, and their interpretation in light of the experience of meditation.

**Interpreting Vedanā and Sampajaña**

The following text is excerpted from papers presented at the Second International Seminar on Vipassana Meditation, held at Dhammadgiri in 1990.

No matter how rich a language is, at times it is difficult to find appropriate words to translate technical terms used by Buddha to explain Vipassana. Hence, misunderstanding can be created in the minds of students who want to practice meditation as Buddha taught it. Also in certain cases, when the translator is not a meditator, the interpretation does not match experiential knowledge. The practical experience of meditation allows a deeper understanding of the words that describe the experience, and the work of interpretation and translation becomes less hypothetical and more sharply defined.

There are several technical terms in Pali which are of significance in the fields of both theory and practice. One such word is *sampajāña*, a term that often occurs with *sati* (awareness). It has been widely interpreted as a synonym for that word, as a more intensive form of awareness. However, the *Abhidhamma* texts suggest a different meaning:

That which is wisdom, understanding, investigation, deep investigation, truth investigation, discernment, discrimination, differentiation, erudition, proficiency, skill, analysis, consideration, close examination, breadth, sagacity, guidance, insight, thorough understanding of impermanence...right view—this is called *sampajāña*.

This definition clearly identifies *sampajāña* not as awareness but as wisdom. Such an interpretation is confirmed by the etymology of the word, which is formed by the addition of the prefix *samm* to *pajānā*, “knowing with wisdom.” *Sampajāña* refers to an intensified kind of understanding: knowing correctly with wisdom—knowing in totality with thorough understanding. The Buddha paired it with *sati* when exhorting us to develop not simply awareness but also wisdom. That is why the text states, *Sampajāña ti pañña* (“Sampajāña is wisdom”).

The commentaries explain it more precisely: *Sammā pakārehi aniccidāni jānātiti sampajānaṃ* (“One who knows in a right way impermanence [as well as suffering and egolessness] has wisdom, sampajāña”). *Samantato pakārehi pakātaṃ va savisesaṃ jānātiti sampajāno* (“One who understands the totality clearly with wisdom from all angles [of whatever is happening moment to moment], or who knows distinctly [the ultimate truth], has sampajāña”).

The Buddha always taught that wisdom (*pañña*) is knowing things from different angles in the correct way. He used these descriptions: *sammā pakārehi jānānaṃ* (“seeing from different perspectives, in totality”); *samantato pakārehi jānānaṃ* (“having a complete and correct picture, so that nothing is left unseen and unknown”); *Sammā samantato samanāca pajānanto sampajāno* (“One who knows in a right way in totality through one’s wisdom is sampajāno”).

By constantly observing *vedanā* (the sensations in the body), one experiences the characteristic of arising and passing away. This objective, unremitting observation is *sampajāna* (constant and thorough understanding of impermanence). According to the Buddha, one who practices *sampajāna* is a wise person, who knows through experience how sensations arise and pass away within the body as a result of the repeated contact of sense objects. This person knows that when one starts relishing pleasant sensations and abhorring unpleasant sensations, misery is generated and multiplied.

Without *sampajāna* one remains unaware of the deeper unconscious level of the mind where reaction begins. This momentary liking or disliking soon develops into craving or aversion, the reaction repeating and intensifying innumerable times before it bursts forth into the conscious mind. If importance is given only to the conscious mind, one becomes aware of the reaction only after it has occurred repeatedly. One allows the spark of sensation to ignite into a raging fire before trying to extinguish it. The result is unskillful physical and vocal action.

But with *sampajāna* one observes sensations objectively, permitting each spark to burn itself out before it starts a conflagration. Constant observation of the changing nature of *vedanā* in this manner allows wisdom and detachment to develop. With this attitude, one not only prevents fresh reactions of craving or aversion, but also eliminates the very habit of reacting, and thereby gradually comes out of suffering by transcending all sensations and becoming what the Buddha calls a *vedagu*: one who is completely detached from *vedanā*, and who has gone beyond the entire field of *vedanā* to reach the field beyond.
An ignorant person reacts to sensation and multiplies misery. In contrast, a Vipassana meditator with the wisdom of sampajañña emerges from this old habit pattern and becomes fully liberated.

Our own bodies bear witness to the truth. By observing sensation, we can advance from merely hearing about that truth to experiencing it directly for ourselves. When we meet it face to face, we become transformed by the truth and faith arises in us based not on blind belief but on experience.

International News

Goenkaji’s 1991 World Tour

Goenkaji and Mataji began their tour this year with four days in England at the new center. They gave mettā at the conclusion of the first full 10-day course held at the new site which he named Dhamma Dīpa. Goenkaji addressed an Asian women's organization, and gave an evening talk to students and assistant teachers, emphasizing the significance of the new center for future generations.

They arrived in the United States in mid-July for a visit of one and a half months. Just before their arrival in Massachusetts, the first floor of the new pagoda was completed with 65 meditation cells. Goenkaji and Mataji inaugurated the pagoda with a 20-day course, which ran concurrently with a 10-day course. Thirty-one students were able to participate in this long course because of the generous efforts of so many students over the last two years. This pagoda will provide proper solitude for students sitting long courses, self courses, and 10-day courses. While in the Northeast, Goenkaji gave three public talks and was the keynote speaker at a seminar for mental health professionals.

Goenkaji and Mataji next visited three new centers in the southern and western United States. At Dhamma Siri in Texas, he conducted an old students day, started a 10-day course and gave four public talks.

In California, at Dhamma Mahāvāna, Goenkaji again gave the discourses for a 10-day course, and these were recorded on videotape. He gave a public talk, was interviewed for a Buddhist periodical and was the guest on an open-line radio program.

Before leaving the United States, Goenkaji and Mataji spent four days at the newly purchased center in Onalaska, Washington which he named Dhamma Kuṇja, grove of Dhamma. They led two day-long sittings for students and assistant teachers, and Goenkaji gave two public talks in Seattle and Portland.

From North America, they continued their journey westward across the Pacific to Japan, Thailand and Burma.

First Course in Israel

The first course in Israel will be held from November 28 to December 8. The site for the course will be the field school of the Society for the Protection of Nature at Mount Meron, in the beautiful hills of the Upper Galilee, near Tsfat (Safed).

For over a year, students have been preparing Hebrew translations in preparation for the course. The discourses have already been recorded, and meditation instructions will be ready before the course.

Announcements

Center Coordinators

Now that so many Vipassana centers have been established, it is no longer possible for Goenkaji to involve himself as closely as before in the running of each of them. For this reason, he has given certain assistant teachers the responsibility for guiding the operation of particular centers. The center coordinators will appoint trustees and other officers, and will define their duties. They will oversee activities at the center for which they are responsible, and will help to ensure its smooth functioning. They will regularly consult among themselves and with Goenkaji to maintain a uniform policy. If questions arise about the running of a center, they should be approached for clarification.

For the following centers, coordinators have been appointed:

Dhammathāli, Jaipur, India – Mr. and Mrs. Ram Singh
Dhammadhetta, Hyderabad, India – Mr. L.N. Rathi
Dhamma Dharā, Massachusetts, USA – Bill Hart
Dhamma Bhānu, Japan – John and Gail Beary
Dhamma Dīpa, U.K. – Drs. B.P. and K.B. Ghandi
Dhamma Medinī, New Zealand – John and Joanna Luxford
Dhamma Rasmi, Queensland, Australia – Anne Gambie
Dhamma Bhūmi, N.S.W., Australia – Pattrick & Ginnie Given-Wilson


Each year during the months from December to March, the Vipassana International Academy offers a program of intensive meditation in the presence of S.N. Goenka. This program includes: consecutive courses of 10 days for new and old students; the Teacher's annual self-course which selected old students are allowed to join; and courses of 20, 30, and 45 or more days for selected old students.

Naturally, many Vipassana meditators are eager to participate in this program in order to make significant progress in their practice of Dhamma. They will certainly progress if
they work in a balanced way that is suited to their own capacities. From the various courses offered, a selection must be made according to the needs and abilities of each person. Periods are also needed for relaxation or for the practice of applying the technique in external situations by giving service at the Academy.

Often it is not possible to give a firm decision in advance about the meditation schedule that a certain student should follow. All decisions are, in fact, provisional and may be changed according to the situation of a student when he or she arrives at the Academy. This is particularly true if someone has not previously meditated at Dhammagiri or has not recently sat a long course with S.N. Goenka.

Every decision is given with the purpose of providing the best possible meditation experience for each student. Meditators should therefore not be overly ambitious. Trying to undertake a strenuous schedule for which one is not prepared will not further one's progress on the path. Students should understand that all their time at Dhammagiri, whether sitting or serving, is a wonderful opportunity for intensive self-development, working in different ways.

For the 10-day courses no special application is required. Students should, however, notify the Academy well in advance that they wish to join these courses, as there is usually a waiting list.

For the Teacher's self-course and long courses, there are special application forms which ask more detailed questions in order to help the Teacher decide whether the applicant is truly ready for these courses. These forms are available from all centers, trusts, Dhamma associations and world contacts.

New Appointments

Goenkaji has made the following appointments:

**Senior Assistant Teachers**
Barry and Kate Lapping, United States

**Assistant Teachers**
Floh Lehmann, Germany
Parker and Laura Mills, United States
Brindley and Damayanthi Ratwatte, Sri Lanka

Questions and Answers

I still get a lot of pain, even when I meditate at home. What should I do?

Meditate; what else is there to do? You have a wonderful object on which you can meditate to help eradicate your old habit pattern of aversion. When you feel something unpleasant, the old habit of the mind is to react with aversion. You must face these unpleasant sensations to change this habit pattern. The whole purpose of Vipassana is to change the habit pattern of the mind; neither have craving towards pleasant sensations nor have aversion towards unpleasant sensations. You can come out of craving when you have pleasant sensations by observing them without attachment or reaction, understanding they are anicca. Similarly, you can come out of your habit pattern of aversion only when there are unpleasant sensations. It is good; unpleasant sensations have come; make use of them.

For a period after each course I can meditate easily, and then it becomes harder so that I cannot even pass my attention through the body. What should I do?

Continue to work; keep on fighting your battle. When you come to a Dhamma environment like this, the entire atmosphere is charged with vibrations which are anti-craving, anti-aversion, anti-ignorance, and you can work well. You gain strength while practicing here, and with that strength you can face the world outside. After all, you have to live in the world, you can’t live in a meditation center all the time. You go to the hospital to gain health, not to live there. So gain this strength, and go back outside.

If you find that, after leaving the center, your meditation is becoming weaker, understand the reason. The whole atmosphere outside is charged with the vibrations of craving and aversion; but you are meditating — an action that is anti-craving, anti-aversion. You are becoming weaker because the non-Dhamma atmosphere is overpowering you. You have to keep on fighting. When you find that you have become so weak that you can’t work with body sensations, come back to Ānāpāna. If you can’t feel your breath, then breathe intentionally, consciously. Breathe a little harder, making the object a little more gross. Working in this way, the mind becomes calm. You’ll reach a stage where you can start working again on the body.

Tapa re tapa re mānavā, 
tape hi nirmala hoya.  
Subarana bhāṭṭhi meṃ tape,  
tapa tapa kundana hoya.

Strive ardently, oh man, and burn!
Purity comes from burning away the dross.
Gold must pass through a crucible
In order to be refined.

*Hindi doha, S.N. Goenka*