



Vipassana Newsletter (HK Edition)

September 2007

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

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WORDS OF DHAMMA

Siladassanasampannam,
dhammattham saccavedinam;
attano kamma kubbānam,
tam jano kurute piyam.

One who is perfect in virtue, and insight,
Is established in the Dhamma;
Has realized the Truth and fulfils his own duties—
Is dear to people.

Dhammapada 217

Sayings of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

The world is facing serious problems. It is just the right time for everyone to take to Vipassana meditation and learn how to find a deep pool of quiet in the midst of all that is happening today.

The Dhamma can stand the test of those who are anxious to do so. They can know for themselves what the benefits are.

The more one is attached to self, the greater is the suffering.

To imagine that good can be done by the means of evil is an illusion, a nightmare.

A balanced mind is necessary to balance the mind of others.

Only those who take to meditation with good intentions can be assured of success. With the development of the purity and the power of the mind backed by the insight into the ultimate truth of nature, one may be able to do a lot of things in the right direction for the benefit of mankind.

Just as the light of a candle has the power to dispel darkness in a room, so also the light developed in one man can help dispel darkness in several others.

For progress in Vipassana meditation, a student must keep knowing *anicca* as continuously as possible.

Dhamma eradicates suffering and gives happiness. Who gives this happiness? It is not the Buddha but the Dhamma, the knowledge of *anicca* within the body, which gives this happiness. That is why you must meditate and be aware of *anicca* continually.

What is happiness? For all that science has achieved in the field of materialism, are the peoples of the world happy? They may find sensual pleasures off and on, but in their hearts of hearts, they are not happy when they realise what has happened, and what may happen next. Why? This is because, while man has mastery over matter, he is still lacking in mastery over his mind.

Anicca is inside of everybody. It is within reach of everybody. Just a look into oneself and there it is. *Anicca* is, for the householder, the gem of life which he will treasure to create a reservoir of calm and balanced energy for their own well-being and for the welfare of society.

Anicca when properly developed will solve almost all your problems. It might not even be necessary for you to ask questions for answers. As the appreciation of *anicca* grows, so will the veil of ignorance fade away. When the way becomes clear for right understanding, doubts and fears will disappear automatically. You will then see things in the true perspective.

Continuous awareness of *anicca*, and so of *dukkha* and *anattā*, is the secret of success.

Vipassana Comes to a Prison in Israel

Years of patient effort came to fruition this past December when a Vipassana course took place within Israel's Hermon Prison — the first such course ever held within the country's prison system.

Some 10 years ago, the makers of Doing Time, Doing Vipassana had been invited to show their film to officials in Israel's Prison Service. The response was highly positive, and plans were set in motion to organize a

course. But doing this is a major undertaking, and always some obstacle came up. The idea began to seem like an impossible dream.

At least a few people, however, refused to stop trying to realize the dream. In July 2006 they at last achieved a breakthrough when the Service decided to hold a course in Hermon Prison.

Hermon is a minimum-security rehabilitation facility located in a quiet area of the Lower Galilee, not far from Tiberias and Tzefat. Around it are rolling hills with rocky outcrops showing through the sparse vegetation. It is a thinly populated region and at night jackals call from the hills.

Hermon helps inmates to reclaim their lives and find a place for themselves in the world. The emphasis is on treating drug and alcohol addiction. Many of the staff members are trained social workers and education specialists with extraordinary dedication to their job. The prison is the only facility of its kind in Israel.

Hermon has a population of some 500 men. All follow a rigorous daily regimen starting at 5:00 a.m. and running until 11:00 p.m. They go through a series of programs designed to break the cycle of addiction and patterns of violence. They are taught to be self-aware, handle responsibility and work together as a team.

Despite this, rehabilitation is a huge challenge. The habits of a lifetime are deeply ingrained. All too often men are released only to find themselves back inside the prison system after a short time.

This is why prison officials were willing to take a chance on Vipassana. If a course could help some men break free of habit patterns that hurt themselves and others, it would be worth it.

Preparations

In September 2006 a series of orientation sessions started at Hermon. Eventually 13 participants were selected ranging in age from 21 to 44. They included native speakers of English, Hebrew, Russian and Arabic; among them were Jews, Muslims and Christians. Most were recovering addicts. Several were repeat offenders and one was serving a 15-year sentence. Some had spent most of their adult lives in jail. Almost all had suffered abuse as children or had grown up in difficult circumstances.

A strong team was assembled for the course. Conducting it was the teacher responsible for Israel, supported by two local assistant teachers who acted as managers. Also in the management was an old student who was a senior member of the prison staff.

Other old students volunteered to prepare the meals. An unusual feature was that they were given a place to work in the main prison kitchen, alongside staff and inmates. Their sleeping quarters were within the prison but outside the meditation compound – a difficult experience for them. They had to follow strict security procedures, such as never leaving a knife unattended and counting all the cutlery three times a day. Any mistake, they knew, could have grave repercussions. During the course they had to answer many questions, sometimes about Vipassana and sometimes simply about what they were cooking. They

were treated with courtesy and respect, and given exemplary cooperation.

Meal menus were the same as at a regular course. Students were initially suspicious of the vegetarian diet but came to enjoy it. At the end of the course several mentioned how much they appreciated the care and attention evident in the food prepared for them.

On the day the course was to begin, the participants each had a private interview with the teacher. As they waited their turn, they sat outdoors in the winter sunshine, laughing and joking. But many were also nervous. Despite the preparation they had received, they felt they were embarking on a journey to an unknown destination. Nearby was the course compound where they would spend the next 10 days. This consisted of a one-room dormitory with bunk beds, a dining room, toilets and makeshift showers, rooms for the teacher and managers, and a meditation hall. Surrounding the site was a fence made of a tarpaulin stretched between metal poles. It proved to be a less than perfect barrier: participants could hear their friends only a few metres away, and from some points they could see them too. This made the work of introspection all the harder.

The course begins

The plan had been to offer the teaching in English and Hebrew, as is customary in Israel. This is how the course began, but it quickly became apparent that a number of participants had limited understanding of these languages. The course therefore became increasingly trilingual: as far as possible, instructions were played in Russian as well.

From the start, the students found it hard to ignore fellow meditators in the confined area of the compound. Nevertheless they began working very seriously, more so than students in a regular course. On Day 2, when the head of the prison came to see what was happening, she was surprised to find all sitting silently in the hall.

By Day 3 the atmosphere had become remarkably quiet. The course was having an impact on the entire prison, which re-arranged break schedules to minimize the disturbance to meditators.

On Day 4 students started Vipassana. At once the technique began working within them, bringing up feelings of agitation and other difficulties. In the following days many went through storms. At the same time they kept working seriously. Within the hall the meditative atmosphere was intense, and many students commented on how quiet their minds had become.

On Day 8, again the prison head came to check on the course. Once again she was amazed that prison inmates could keep meditating so seriously for so many days.

A Vipassana course is never easy, and some of the meditators found it particularly hard. One student had had problems from the beginning: He was not comfortable on the floor, in a chair or leaning against a wall. He accumulated a mound of cushions, but still he was restless and had difficulty concentrating. After Day 4 his troubles continued with Vipassana; when asked what he experienced, he would reply, "Nothing special." This went on day after day. Finally on Day 8 the teacher

told him, "You have the brains and strength for this. All you need is to decide that you will do it."

The next day this student put back most of the cushions he had accumulated and started working seriously. In the afternoon he told one of the managers, "I've understood the technique!" His face and manner softened. He had regained confidence in himself.

There were smiles and relief after silence ended on Day 10. The destination was in sight; the journey had been worthwhile. One student said, "If everyone felt the way I do now, the world would be a better place."

The last day

After the end of the course on Day 11, the prison staff organized a closing ceremony, as is done after any program at Hermon. Students were able to invite their friends; also present were very senior officials from the Prison Service. The meditators each received a card with a message of congratulations from S. N. Goenka, translated into Hebrew. Several spoke movingly about their experience.

One said, "I understood that every time I craved for a cigarette or anything else, I was craving for pleasant sensations. That was a big discovery." Another told of the times he had thought of leaving the course: "Suddenly I realized this is what I had been doing all my life – running away without facing the situation. I understood that the problem was within me, and that now I had a tool to help me change this habit pattern."

It was then time to separate and return to ordinary life.

After the course

In the following days, most of the students adjusted well and were reported to be happy and cooperative. One cut back on cigarettes; another stopped smoking altogether. One student went before a parole board and was granted early release. Another chose not to apply for early release.

Instead he decided to remain in the prison in order to help youngsters who had become involved with drugs, so that they could avoid the years of suffering he had experienced.

All the students were interviewed for an academic study commissioned by the Prison Service. Many had impressive things to report. One said, "Before, I had known about the things we learned in the course. But that was all in my head. Now it is deep inside me." Follow-up interviews will be conducted after three months.

Immediately after the course, officials from Hermon and the Prison Service were enthusiastic and spoke about setting up an ongoing Vipassana program. No firm decision has yet been taken. But what matters was that this course was an undeniable success.

The credit for that must go to the meditators themselves. Despite all the difficulties, they worked hard and seriously. Perhaps this was because they knew firsthand the reality of suffering and the danger of running after pleasant experiences. They knew that to have any sort of decent future, they had to free themselves from unwholesome habit patterns. It was a matter of life and death for them.

Now of course the students face an uphill struggle. To help them, group sittings have been set up four times a week, with the participation of staff members who have taken Vipassana courses. An assistant teacher will try to come in regularly.

There is no guarantee that all will be easy. But the students have gained a valuable tool that can help them choose a good direction for their life. Sooner or later they will use it to achieve real peace, real harmony, real happiness.

First Vipassana Course at Dhamma Ketana

The first ten-day course was successfully conducted at *Dhamma Ketana* from 21 December 2006 to 1 January 2007 for 27 students. The pre-existing house was renovated and used for accommodation for the students. In addition, temporary buildings were used for the meditation hall, dining hall, kitchen and male dormitory. Construction of a mini Dhamma hall and AT room has already started, which will be followed by accommodation for 30 men and roads.

The course schedule for 2007 includes a ten-day course every month, besides 3-day courses and courses for children. Group sittings every Sunday and one-day courses every month are also being organized since August 2006.

Meditators wishing to help with development work may contact: 1. Raghunath Kurup, (0479) 2361293, Mobile: 94441-75179. 2. B. Raveendran, Tel: (0484) 253-9891. Mobile: 98465-69891. Email: info@ketana.dhamma.org

First Course in the Czech Republic

The first ten-day Vipassana course in the Czech Republic took place during the Christmas holiday from 21 December 2006 to 1 January 2007. The course site, a summer youth camp near the small town of Zihle, lies close to the capital, Prague, situated in a beautiful forest location. The course was attended by 40 new and 34 old students who had travelled from Czech, Germany and other European countries to attend.

This course was the result of a new and inspiring collaboration between local Czech students and the German Vipassana trust at Dhamma Dvāra. The

enthusiasm of the Czech students to bring Dhamma to their home country, together with the experience and maturity of the German meditators who helped support the preparation and organisation throughout, created a very smooth and successful course despite the initial difficulties of adapting the rented site to our needs.

This was the first trilingual course to be held in Europe and all instructions and discourses were given in English, Czech and German. A smaller hall was used for German students to listen to the Anapana, Vipassana, Metta and longer instructions. At all other times, students meditated

together in the main hall with instructions given in three languages. This format worked well and was easy to manage as the course got underway.

The success of this first trilingual course opens up the possibility for future courses to be organised with the support of neighbouring countries and conducted in more than two languages. Such courses greatly benefit those newer countries facing challenges to start up. The contribution from experienced students proved an

important factor in providing a strong, successful management base for the first course.

Another beneficial outcome was that places could be offered for students from Germany who would normally face difficulties in obtaining a place during the holiday season when there are long waiting lists. On this occasion, more than 50 German nationals attended this course.

Dhamma Dohas

*Mere sukha mein, śānti mein, bhāga sabhī kā hoyā;
Isa maṅgalamaya dharma kā, lābha sabhī ko hoyā!*

May my happiness and peace be shared by everyone;
May this benevolent Dhamma benefit one and all!
*Vyāpe vishva Vipashyanā, bahujana hitasukha hoyā;
Jana-jana kā kalyāna ho, jana-jana mangala hoyā.*

May Vipassana spread for the happiness of many!
May all beings be happy and peaceful!

*Dūra rahe durbhavanā, dvesha hoyā saba dūra;
Nirmala nirmala citta se, pyaar bhare bharpūra .*

May all animosity and aversion be dispelled;
May the purified heart overflow with love for all.

*Mana-mānasa mein pyaar hī, tarala tarangita hoyā;
Roma-roma se dvani ute, sabakā mangala hoyā.*

May the mind be filled with the rapture of love;
May every fibre vibrate with feelings of goodwill.

Hong Kong Course Information

10- Days course for 2007: (for new and old students)

Course No. 81: 2007/09/26 ~ 10/07

Course No. 82: 2007/10/17 ~10/28

Course No. 83: 2007/11/14 ~ 11/25

Course No. 84: 2007/12/19 ~ 12/30

Old Student Course: (For old students only)

2007/9/7 ~ 16 (Satipatthana Course)

2007/9/22 ~ 23 (Dhamma Worker Workshop)

2007/11/04 (Children Course – for age 8 to 12)

2007/12/02 (1-day Course)

Remarks: Old students must fulfill the requirements below to be qualified for the Satipatthana Course:

- 1) Have completed at least three full 10-day courses with S. N. Goenkaji or one of his appointed assistant teachers.
- 2) Have practiced this technique for at least one year.
- 3) Have not practiced any other meditation techniques since the last course with S. N. Goenkaji or his appointed assistant teachers.
- 4) Have tried the best to maintain daily practice. (One hour in the morning and evening)
- 5) Endeavor to undertake five precepts in daily life, and must undertake to observe in particular the 3rd precept (abstaining from sexual misconduct) and the 5th precept (abstaining from intoxicants) once registered for the course.

Children Course: Children's Anapana Meditation Course is offered to children aged 8-12. Introductory Notes, Parent or Guardian Information Sheet, Code of Conduct and Application Form, are available at www.hk.dhamma.org/Children.htm (Chinese version) and www.hk.dhamma.org/ChildrenEng.htm (English version).

* For new students, old students and dhamma workers, please submit your application form at least **ONE** week before the commencement of the course.

Address: Lot 7A, Section 3, Ngai Yuen New Village, Hang Tau, Sheung Shui, N.T.

Tel: 2671 7031 **Fax :** 8147 3312 **E-mail :** info@hk.dhamma.org

HK Vipassana Meditation Center Website: <http://www.hk.dhamma.org>

International Homepage of Vipassana Meditation: <http://www.dhamma.org>

(If you wish to recommend the course to your friends or family, you can obtain useful information about the course and the center facilities from the above website.)

★ Register On-line! Fast & Convenient! Visit HK Vipassana Meditation Center website www.hk.dhamma.org, To choose your course date from the list by click course date and application form. Fill in the On-line Registration Form and submit.

The existing Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Center is a temporary center. We are allowed to use the site for free by the compassionate land owner even though the lease has long been expired. However, we may move out of the site anytime. We hope this precious facility can be fully utilized by your efforts in spreading the 10 day Vipassana course to your friends and family members, for the benefits of many, for the real happiness, real peace and real harmony!

Latest News of Hong Kong Vipassana

1) Termination of Group Sitting in Yau Ma Tei

Please be informed the termination of contract at Yau Ma Tei Group Sitting Place effectively 1st October 2007. Old students group sitting remain available for the September month, every Thursday (7:15pm-8:30pm) and Saturday (2:15pm-3:30pm). Address: Rm. 502, 7th floor, Tongha Mansion, 504 Nathan Road, Kln.(MTR Yamatei Station, exit C). Last meditaion date is 26 September (Saturday).

2) New Responsibilities

- i) Ms. Lydia Yung – Children Course Teacher.
- ii) Ms. Edith Tai – Children Course Teacher.

3) Vacancies

- a) **Site supervision:** A long term supervisor is needed to maintain the proper function of the site and as a coordinator for the repair and maintenance for the buildings. This is an important task to ensure the smooth running of the courses and provide minimum comfort for the meditators. Applicants who are able to serve six months or above preferred.
- b) **Course Dhamma Worker:** Course Manager, Dhamma Workers, Interpreters and Kitchen Workers are needed to serve the above listed courses. Brief training meetings will be held before the courses. S. N. Goenkaji repeatedly emphasizing the importance of serving. By giving dhamma service, one not only helps others but also develops one's paramis and applies dhamma into practice. Dhamma worker can serve part-time or full-time.
- c) **Old students or Dhamma Servers who wish to assist:**
 - in setting up 10 days course preparation on Day 0 and supervising on closing Day 11.
 - Site renovation works
 - Translation for Hong Kong Vipassana Newsletters and other bulletins

For details, please contact Eva Kwok at Tel: 6410 8796 or Savinna Fung at Tel: 9012 6411 or Judy Ma at Tel: 9197 2770 or write to: info@hk.dhamma.org

d) **Projector**

There is a need for a high resolution, functional, portable projector in the centre. If any student wishes to dana (donate) a new or used machine, please email info@hk.dhamma.org specifying model, specification, your name and contact number, we will contact you.

4) Monthly Vipassana Trustee's Meeting

For old students who are interested in knowing about the operation of the Hong Kong Centre and willing to help for the centre's affairs are welcome to participate. One-hour pre-meeting group sitting will start at 10:00am, and the Trustee's Meeting will take place at 11:15am and ends at around 1:00pm.

Meeting Schedule: 2 Sep, 14 Oct, 11 Nov, and 9 Dec (Sundays)

5) Protect the Environment, Save Paper / Update Your Contact Details

Old students who wish to receive <Vipassana Newsletter> by email, or who have changed the contact details, please email your name in Chinese and English, new address, email address and telephone no. to: info@hk.dhamma.org or fax to 8157 3312.

6) Donation

If old students wish to practice their dana paramis (donation), please:

a) **Direct Transfer**

Beneficiary Bank: Hang Seng Bank Ltd.

Bank Address: 83, Des Voeux Road Central, Central, Hong Kong

Beneficiary Account No.:

263-279812-668 (for HK Dollars account)

263-279812-201 (for US Dollars account)

Beneficiary Name:

Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd.

Swift Code: H A S E H K H H

b) Via Cheque

Please send your crossed cheque payable to “**Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd.**” to Box 5185, GPO, Hong Kong. We should be grateful if you could provide the relevant information after you made the donation to us via email: info@hk.dhamma.org or fax: (852) 8147 3312.

As Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre is a registered Charitable Organization, donation to Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd. is tax deductible. Please provide us your full name and correspondence address for receipt purpose.