The Buddha’s Path Is to Experience Reality
By Mr S. N. Goenka

You have all assembled here to understand what Vipassana is and how it helps us in our day-to-day lives; how it helps us to come out of our misery, the misery of life and death. Everyone wants to come out of misery, to live a life of peace and harmony. We simply do not know how to do this. It was Siddhattha Gotama’s enlightenment that made him realize the truth: where misery lies, how it starts, and how it can be eradicated.

There were many techniques of meditation prevailing in those days, as there are today. The Bodhisatta Gotama tried them all, but he was not satisfied because he found that he was not fully liberated from misery. Then he started to do his own research. Through his personal experience he discovered this technique of Vipassana, which eradicated misery from his life and made him a fully enlightened person.

There are many techniques that give temporary relief. When you become agitated you divert your attention to something else. Then you feel that you have come out of your misery, but you are not totally relieved.

If something undesirable has happened in life, you become agitated. You cannot bear this misery and want to run away from it. You may go to a cinema or a theatre, or you may indulge in other sensual entertainments. You may go out drinking, and so on. All this is running away from misery. Escape is no solution to the problem; indeed, the misery is multiplying.

In Buddha’s enlightenment he realized that one must face reality. Instead of running away from the problem, one must face it. He found that all the types of meditation existing in his day consisted of merely diverting the mind from its misery to another object. But he found that actually only a small part of the mind gets diverted. Deep inside one keeps reacting, one keeps generating sankharas of craving, aversion or delusion, and one keeps suffering at a deep level of the mind. The object of meditation should not be an imaginary object, it should be reality—reality as it is. One has to work with whatever reality has manifested now, whatever one experiences within the framework of one’s own body.

In the practice of Vipassana one has to explore the reality within oneself—the material structure and the mental structure, the combination of which one keeps calling “I, me, mine.” One generates a tremendous amount of attachment to this material and mental structure, and as a result becomes miserable. To practice Buddha’s path we must observe the truth of mind and matter. Their basic characteristics should be directly experienced by the meditator. This results in wisdom.

Wisdom can be of three types: wisdom gained by listening to others; wisdom gained by intellectual analysis; and wisdom developed from direct, personal experience. Before Buddha, and even at the time of Buddha, there were those who were teaching morality, were teaching concentration and who were also talking about wisdom. But this wisdom was only received or intellectualized wisdom. It was not wisdom gained by personal experience. Buddha found that people may play any number of intellectual or devotional games, but unless they experience the truth themselves and develop wisdom from their personal experience, they will not be liberated. Vipassana is personally experienced wisdom. One may listen to discourses or read scriptures. Or one may use the intellect and try to understand the Buddha’s teaching in this way. One may be deeply impressed. But that is not direct experience of wisdom.
The entire field of mind and matter—the six senses and their respective objects—has the basic characteristics of anicca (impermanence), dukkha (suffering) and anatta (egolessness). Buddha wanted us to experience this reality within ourselves. To explore the truth within the framework of the body, he designated two fields. One is the material structure: the corporeal, physical structure. The other is the mental structure with four factors: consciousness; perception; the part of the mind that feels sensation; and the part of the mind that reacts. So to explore both fields he gave us kayanupassana (observation of the body) and cittanupassana (observation of the mind).

How can you observe the body with direct experience unless you can feel it? There must be something happening in the body that you feel, that you realize. Then you can say, “Yes, I have practiced kayanupassana.” One must feel the sensations on the body: this is vedananupassana (observation of body sensations).

The same is true for cittanupassana. Unless something arises in the mind, you cannot directly experience it. Whatever arises in the mind is dhamma (mental content). Therefore dhammanupassana (observation of the contents of the mind) is necessary for cittanupassana.

This is how the Buddha divided these practices. Kayanupassana and vedananupassana pertain to the physical structure. Cittanupassana and dhammanupassana pertain to the mental structure. See from your personal experience how this mind and matter are related to each other. To believe that one understands mind and matter, without having directly experienced them, is delusion. It is only direct experience that will make us understand the reality about mind and matter. This is where Vipassana starts helping us.

In brief, understand how we practice Vipassana. We start with Anapana, awareness of respiration—natural respiration. We don’t make it a breathing exercise or regulate the breath as they do in pranayama. We observe respiration at the entrance of the nostrils. If a meditator works continuously in a congenial atmosphere without any disturbance, within two or three days some subtle reality on this part of the body will start manifesting: some sensations—natural, normal bodily sensations. Maybe heat or cold, throbbing or pulsing, or some other sensations. By the fourth or fifth day of practice, one will find that there are sensations throughout the body, from head to feet. One feels those sensations, and is asked not to react to them. Just observe; observe objectively, without identifying with the sensations.

When you work as Buddha wanted you to work, by the time you reach the seventh or the eighth day, you will move toward subtler and subtler reality. The Dhamma (natural law) will start helping you. You observe this structure that initially appears to be so solid, the entire physical structure at the level of sensation. Observing, observing you will reach the stage at which you experience that the entire physical structure is nothing but subatomic particles: throughout the body, nothing but kalapas (subatomic particles). And even these tiniest subatomic particles are not solid. They are mere vibration, just wavelets. The Buddha’s words become clear by experience:

Sabbo pajjalito loko, sabbo loko pakampito.
The entire universe is nothing but combustion and vibration.

As you experience it yourself, your kayanupassana, your vedananupassana will take you to the stage where you experience that the entire material world is nothing but vibration. Then it becomes very easy for you to practice cittanupassana and dhammanupassana.

Buddha’s teaching is to move from the gross, apparent truth to the subtlest, ultimate truth, from olarika to sukhum. The apparent truth always creates illusion and confusion in the mind. By dividing and dissecting apparent reality, you will come to the ultimate reality. As you experience the reality of matter to be vibration, you also start experiencing the reality of the mind: viññana (consciousness), sañña (perception), vedana (sensation) and sankhara (reaction). If you experience them properly with Vipassana, it will become clear how they work.

Suppose you have reached the stage where you are experiencing that the entire physical structure is just vibration. If a sound has come in contact with the ears, you will notice that this sound is nothing but vibration. The first part of the mind, consciousness, has done its job: ear consciousness has recognized that something has happened at the ear sense door. Like a gong that has been struck at one point and begins vibrating throughout its structure, so a contact with any of the senses begins a vibration that spreads throughout the body. At first this is merely a neutral vibration, neither pleasant nor unpleasant.

Then perception recognizes and evaluates the sound: “It is a word—what word? Praise! Oh, wonderful, very good!” The resulting sensation, the vibration, will become very pleasant. In the same way, if the words are words of abuse, the vibration will become very unpleasant. The vibration changes according to the evaluation given by the perception part of the mind. Next the third part of the mind starts feeling the sensation: pleasant or unpleasant.

Then the fourth part of the mind will start working. This is reaction; its job is to react. If a pleasant sensation arises, it will react with craving. If an unpleasant sensation arises, it will react with aversion. Pleasant sensation: “I like it. Very good! I want more, I want more!” Similarly, unpleasant sensation: “I dislike it. I don’t want it.” Generating craving and aversion is the part played by the fourth factor of the mind—reaction.

Understand that this process is going on constantly at one sense door or another. Every moment something or the other is happening at one of the sense doors. Every moment the consciousness associated with that sense door cognizes; the perception recognizes; the feeling part of the mind feels; and the reacting part of the mind reacts, with either craving or aversion. This happens continuously in life.
At the apparent, surface level, it seems that I am reacting with either craving or aversion to the external stimulus. Actually this is not so. Buddha found that we react to our sensations. This discovery was the enlightenment of Buddha. He said:

_Salayatana-paccaya phasso
phassa-paccaya vedana
vedana-paccaya tanha._

With the base of the six senses, contact arises; with the base of contact, sensation arises; with the base of sensation, craving arises.

It became so clear to him: The six sense organs come in contact with objects outside. Because of the contact, a sensation starts in the body that, most of the time, is either pleasant or unpleasant. Then after a pleasant or unpleasant sensation arises, craving or aversion starts—not before that. This realization was possible because Buddha went deep inside and experienced it himself. He went to the root of the problem and discovered how to eradicate the cause of suffering at the root level.

Working at the intellectual level of the mind, we try to suppress craving and aversion, but deep inside, craving and aversion continue. We are constantly rolling in craving or aversion. We are not coming out of misery through suppression.

Buddha discovered the way: whenever you experience any sensation, for whatever reason, you simply observe it:

_Samudaya dhammanupassi va kayasim viharati
vaya dhammanupassi va kayasim viharati
samudaya-vaya-dhammanupassi va kayasim viharati._

He dwells observing the phenomenon of arising in the body. He dwells observing the phenomenon of passing away in the body. He dwells observing the phenomenon of simultaneous arising and passing away in the body.

Every sensation arises and passes away. Nothing is eternal. When you practice Vipassana, you start experiencing this. However unpleasant a sensation may be—look, it arises only to pass away. However pleasant a sensation may be, it is just a vibration—arising and passing. Pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, the characteristic of impermanence remains the same. You are now experiencing the reality of anicca. You are not believing it because Buddha said so, or some scripture or tradition says so, or even because your intellect says so. You accept the truth of anicca because you directly experience it. This is how your received wisdom and intellectual understanding turn into personally experienced wisdom.

Only this experience of anicca will change the habit pattern of the mind. Feeling sensation in the body and understanding that everything is impermanent, you don’t react with craving or aversion; you are equanimous. Practicing this continually changes the habit of reacting at the deepest level. When you don’t generate any new conditioning of craving and aversion, old conditioning comes on the surface and passes away. By observing reality as it is, you become free from all your conditioning of craving and aversion.

Western psychologists refer to the “conscious mind.” The Buddha called this part of the mind the paritta citta (a very small part of the mind). There is a big barrier between the paritta citta and the rest of the mind at deeper levels. The conscious mind does not know what is happening in the unconscious or half-conscious. Vipassana breaks this barrier, taking you from the surface level of the mind to the deepest level of the mind. The practice exposes the anusaya kilesa (latent mental defilements) that are lying at the deepest level of the mind.

The so-called unconscious mind is not unconscious. It is always conscious of bodily sensations, and it keeps reacting to them. If they are unpleasant, it reacts with aversion. If they are pleasant, it reacts with craving. This is the habit pattern, the behavior pattern, of the so-called unconscious at the depth of the mind.

Here is an example to explain how the so-called unconscious mind is reacting with craving and aversion.

You are in deep sleep. A mosquito bites you and there is an unpleasant sensation. Your conscious mind does not know what has happened. The unconscious knows immediately that there is an unpleasant sensation, and it reacts with aversion. It drives away or kills the mosquito. But still there is an unpleasant sensation, so you scratch, though your conscious mind is in deep sleep. When you wake up, if somebody asks you how many mosquito bites you got during the night, you won’t know. Your conscious mind was unaware, but the unconscious knew and it reacted.

Another example: Sitting for about half an hour, some pressure starts somewhere and the unconscious mind reacts: “There is a pressure. I don't like it!” You change your position. The unconscious mind is always in contact with the bodily sensations. You make a little movement, and then after some time you move again. Just watch somebody sitting for 15 to 20 minutes. You will find that this person is fidgeting, shifting a little here, a little there. Of course, consciously he does not know what he is doing. This is because he is not aware of the sensations. He does not know that he is reacting with aversion to these sensations. This barrier is ignorance.

Vipassana breaks down this ignorance. Then one starts understanding how sensations arise and how they give rise to craving or aversion. When there is a pleasant sensation, there is craving. When there is an unpleasant sensation, there is aversion, and whenever there is craving or aversion, there is misery.

If one does not break this behavior pattern, craving or aversion will continue all the time. At the surface level you may say that you are practicing what Buddha taught, but in fact you are not. You are practicing what the other teachers at the time of Buddha taught.

Buddha taught how to go to the deepest level where suffering arises. Suffering arises because of reactions of craving or aversion. The source of craving and aversion...
must be found, and the behavior pattern must change at that level.

Buddha taught us to observe suffering and the arising of suffering. Without observing these two, we can never know the cessation of misery. Suffering arises with the sensations. If we react to sensations, then suffering arises. If we do not react, we do not suffer from them. However unpleasant a sensation may be, if you don’t react with aversion, you can smile with equanimity. You understand that this is all anicca, impermanent. The entire habit pattern of the mind changes at the deepest level.

Through the practice of Vipassana, people start to come out of all kinds of impurities of the mind—anger, passion, fear, ego and so on. Within a few months or years, the change in people becomes very evident. This is the benefit of Vipassana, here and now. In this very life you will benefit.

Make use of the teaching of Buddha at the deepest level. Don’t just remain at the surface level. Go to the deepest level where your craving arises:

Vedana paccaya tanha; 
vedana-nirodha tanha-nirodho; 
tanha-nirodha dukkha-nirodho.

Questions and Answers from Goenkaji
Questions and Answers from Goenkaji drawn from various public talks and discourses

How can we avoid addictions like smoking cigarettes?

There are so many different types of addictions. When you practise Vipassana, you will understand that your addiction is not actually to that particular substance. It seems as if you are addicted to cigarettes, alcohol, drugs, paan (betel leaf). But actually, you are addicted to a particular sensation in the body, a bio-chemical flow caused by that particular substance. Similarly, when you are addicted to anger, passion etc, these are also related to body sensations. Your addiction is to the sensations. Through Vipassana you come out of that addiction, all addictions. It is so natural, so scientific. Just try, and you will experience how it works.

What is 'atma', 'soul'?

Practice Vipassana, and you will find the reality of what is happening inside you. What you call soul, atma, you will notice, is just a reacting mind, a certain part of the mind. Yet you remain under the illusion that “this is I”. Through practice of Vipassana, you will realize that this I is not permanent. It's always changing, always ephemeral. It’s nothing but a mass of sub-atomic particles, always in a state of flux and flow. Only by directly experiencing this, the illusion of I will go away, and then the illusion of the 'soul'. With no illusions, delusions, all miseries go away. But this has to be experienced. This does not happen by merely accepting philosophical beliefs.

Sensations give rise to craving.
If sensations cease, craving ceases.
When craving ceases, suffering ceases.

When one experiences the truth of nibbana—a stage beyond the entire sensorium—all the six sense organs stop working. There can’t be any contact with objects outside, so sensation ceases. At this stage there is freedom from all suffering.

First you must reach the stage where you can feel sensations. Only then can you change the habit pattern of your mind. Work on this technique, this process, at the very deepest level. If you work at the surface level of the mind, you are only changing the conscious part of the mind, your intellect. You are not going to the root cause, the most unconscious level of the mind; you are not removing the anusaya kilesa—deep-rooted defilements of craving and aversion. They are like sleeping volcanoes that may erupt at any time. You continue to roll from birth to death; you are not coming out of misery.

Make use of this wonderful technique and come out of your misery, come out of the bondages, and enjoy real peace, real harmony, real happiness.

Bhavatu sabba mangalam — May all beings be happy!

How does one escape anger?

With the practise of Vipassana! A Vipassana student observes respiration, or the bodily sensations caused when angry. This observation is with equanimity, with no reaction. The anger soon weakens and passes away. Through continued practise of Vipassana, the habit pattern of the mind to react with anger is changed.

I can't suppress my anger, even if I try.

Don't suppress it. Observe it. The more you suppress it, the more it goes to the deeper levels of your mind. The complexes become stronger and stronger, and it so difficult to come out of them. No suppression, no expression. Just observe.

I am always full of anxiety. Can Vipassana help me?

Certainly. This is the purpose of Vipassana - to liberate you from all miseries. Anxiety and worry are the biggest miseries, and they are there because of certain impurities deep within you. With practise of Vipassana, these impurities will come on the surface and gradually pass away. Of course, it takes time. There is no magic, no miracle, no gurudom involved. Somebody will just show you the correct Path. You have to walk on the Path, work out your own liberation from all miseries.
## HK Vipassana Newsletter

**December 2008**

### Hong Kong Course Information

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**Remarks:**

* 1-day and 3-day courses are only open to those who have completed a 10-day Vipassana Meditation course with S.N. Goenka or his Assistant Teachers.

** 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. Goenka 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. Goenka 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.

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

The existing Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre is a temporary centre. We are allowed to use the site for free by the compassionate landowner 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!

★ Register On-line! Fast & Convenient! Visit HK Vipassana Meditation Centre 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.

### Teenager Course : March 8, 2009

**Children Course : November 22, 2009**

Children / Teenager Meditation Course are offered to children aged 8 – 12 and teenagers 13 – 18 respectively.

Introductory Notes, Parent or Guardian Information Sheet, Code of Conduct and Application Form, are available at www.hk.dhamma.org
Latest Updates of the Hong Kong Vipassana Centre

1) **Open Camp at the Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre**

Open camps will be held at the Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre on Sundays immediately after each 10-Day course. All students who have completed at least one 10-Day course are welcome to join. The camp will run from 9am to 5pm. There will be two group sitting sessions from 10:00 ~ 11:00 am and from 2:30 ~ 3:30 pm. Simple vegetarian lunch will be provided. Please contact Eva Kwok (Tel: 6410 8796 / Email: evakwok2006@yahoo.com.hk) or Savinna Fung (Tel: 9012 6411 / Email: savinnafung@gmail.com) for enquiries or registration.

2) **Monthly Vipassana Trustee’s Meeting**

Old students who are interested in knowing more about the operation of the Hong Kong Centre and who are willing to help with the centre’s affairs are welcome to participate in the Monthly Trustee’s Meetings. One-hour pre-meeting group sitting will start at 10:00am, and the Trustee’s Meeting will begin at 11:15am and end around 1:00pm. Meeting Schedule: Jan 18, Feb 15, Mar 15, Apr 26, May 17, Jun 7

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

Old students who would like to receive Vipassana Newsletter by email or who have changed contact details, please email your name in Chinese and English, new address, email address and telephone number to info@hk.dhamma.org or fax to 8147 3312.

4) **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: HASEHKHH

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 would send relevant information after you made the donation to us via email: info@hk.dhamma.org or fax: (852) 8147 3312.

Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre is a registered Charitable Organization. Please provide your full name and correspondence address. Receipt will be send to you for tax deduction.

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**Web Versions of the Vipassana Newsletter**

Vipassana Newsletter and Patrika can be downloaded from:

http://www.vnl.dhamma.org/local/ap/hk/

**Vipassana Websites**

- **Vipassana introduction**: [www.dhamma.org](http://www.dhamma.org)
  - Contains information about Goenkaji, Vipassana centres worldwide, Code of Discipline, Application Form for ten-day courses, etc.

- **Dhamma Giri**: [www.vri.dhamma.org](http://www.vri.dhamma.org)
  - Contains information about Vipassana Research Institute, Vipassana Newsletter and Patrika, Indian Vipassana centres, schedule of courses, etc.

- **Vipassana (old students only)**: [www.dhamma.org/os](http://www.dhamma.org/os)
  - Contains information for old students of Vipassana.

- **Vipassana Newsletters**: [www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters](http://www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters)

- **Pāli Tipitaka website**: [www.tipitaka.org](http://www.tipitaka.org)
  - Contains the Chattha Sangāyana Tipitaka with commentaries in Unicode Roman script.

- **Global Pagoda website**: [www.globalpagoda.org](http://www.globalpagoda.org)
  - Contains updated information including facility for online donation.

- **Prison course website**: [www.prison.dhamma.org](http://www.prison.dhamma.org)

- **Executive course website**: [www.executive.dhamma.org](http://www.executive.dhamma.org)
I would like to make a contribution to the Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd (“HKVMC”):

- [ ] For purchase of land and development of the proposed Centre at Tung Wan
- [ ] For course and operating expenses

Name: _____________________ Phone No. __________________
Address: __________________________________________________________

Donation:
- [ ] One-off Donation HK$ ___________
- [ ] Monthly contribution of HK$ ___________

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    - 港幣帳戶 Hong Kong Dollar account: 263-279812-668
    - 外幣帳戶 Foreign Currency account: 263-279812-201
    - 受款人 Beneficiary: Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd

- [ ] By sending a cheque or money order
  - 抬頭: Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd

Donations over HK$100 are tax-deductible in HK. To issue official receipt of HKVMC, please note your correspondent address and contact telephone. For those who deposit our bank directly, please send us your bank pay-in advise copy in advance. An official receipt is to be sent accordingly.

Please print clearly using BLOCK LETTERS and return to the above address.