The messenger of inner peace: Satya Narayan Goenka

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It was late afternoon of a long day toward the end of August 2000. In the United Nations General Assembly Hall in New York, delegates to the Millennium World Peace Summit were weary and a little jaded. This was the first global gathering of religious and spiritual leaders at the UN, and it had descended into acrimony. Far from finding common ground, the delegates had sharply differed over the question of conversion. Some delegates were highly critical of the practice; others representing some of the leading religions rejected those views. Over the years, the hall had often been the setting for this sort of wrangle involving politicians; it was disappointing to see spiritual leaders doing no better.

To close the session, a lesser-known figure made his way to the podium, helped by an assistant. His silver hair gleamed; he wore a smartly tailored Indian suit. Carefully he paid respects and smilingly surveyed the crowd. Then he started speaking, and within seconds he had caught the attention of the assembled dignitaries.

“Religion is religion only when it unites,” he said. “Religion is no religion when it divides. Religion is not for dividing people. It is for uniting people.”

The words were greeted with a sudden burst of applause. This was not more of the same argument that had been dragging on all day. The delegates started to pay attention.
The speaker picked up his thread: “So much has been said for and against conversion. I am for conversion, not against it. But conversion not from one organized religion to another organized religion—no. Conversion from misery to happiness. Conversion from bondage to liberation. Conversion from cruelty to compassion. That is the conversion needed today.”

Applause greeted almost every statement. The speaker warmed to his theme:

“If I have an agitated mind full of anger, hatred, ill will and animosity, how can I give peace to the world?

“Therefore all the sages and saints and seers of the world have said, ‘Know thyself.’ Not merely at the intellectual, emotional or devotional level, but at the actual level. When you know the truth about yourself at the experiential level, many of the problems get solved. You start understanding the universal law of nature or God, which is applicable to one and all.

“When I observe myself and find that I am generating anger, ill will or animosity, I realize that I am the first victim of the hatred or animosity I am generating within myself. Only afterwards do I start harming others. And if I am free from these negativities, nature or God Almighty starts rewarding me: I feel so peaceful.

“Whether I call myself a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian or a Jain, it makes no difference: a human being is a human being. Human mind is human mind. Conversion should be from impurity of the mind to purity of the mind. This is the real conversion that is necessary—nothing else.”

The gong had rung, indicating that the speaker’s time was up. But he begged indulgence to deliver a message from a past ruler of his country. Quoting and then paraphrasing, the speaker said:

“Every religion has the wholesome core of love, compassion and good will. The outer shell differs, but give importance to the inner essence and there will be no quarrel. Don’t condemn anything, give importance to the essence of every religion and there will be real peace and harmony.”

The ruler referred to was the great Emperor Ashoka of India, who had issued the message—the world’s first call for religious tolerance—more than two millennia before. And the messenger was a man who always regarded Ashoka as a hero and had devoted his life to teaching a way to inner peace: Satya Narayan Goenka.

**Early life**

Goenkaji’s journey to deliver the message started in 1924 in Mandalay, the former royal capital of Myanmar. Less than 50 years before, a king still
ruled there but the British had overrun the south. In their wake, a wave of immigrants entered the country from India, and one of them was Goenkaji’s grandfather. Like most of the newcomers, he was seeking his fortune. But he was an upright, honest man who was spiritually inclined; and though a Hindu, he quickly developed a deep respect for the Myanmar people and their traditions.

He conveyed that respect to his grandson. When he was a child, Goenkaji recalled, his grandfather took him to the famous Maha Myat Muni pagoda on the outskirts of Mandalay. There the old man sat with eyes closed, engaged in silent contemplation. Meanwhile the boy waited and watched patiently, absorbing the atmosphere of peace. In the child, respect turned to a profound love for the land of his birth. That love never wavered throughout his long life.

The boy grew up and graduated from high school at the top of his class. Although the idea of continuing his studies was attractive, he dutifully entered the family textile business. Then the cataclysm of the Second World War intervened. As the Japanese army invaded Myanmar in 1942, Goenkaji helped to lead a large group of family members overland through mountain and jungle to safety in India. They were more fortunate than the thousands of people who died on the arduous journey.

The family spent the war years in southern India, where a friend helped them to make a new start. After the Japanese defeat and withdrawal, they returned to Myanmar. By then Goenkaji was in his 20s. He quickly showed his extraordinary flair for business and became a leader of the Indian community. But as he has often recounted, wealth and prominence gave him no peace. Instead, mental tension triggered debilitating migraines that could be treated only with doses of highly addictive morphine. Goenkaji traveled to consult doctors in Japan, Europe and America; none of them could help.

**Encounter with Vipassana**

It was then that a friend suggested going to the International Meditation Centre in northern Yangon, established a few years earlier by Sayagyi U Ba Khin. Born into a poor family, U Ba Khin had risen to become a top-level civil servant in the government of Myanmar, renowned for his integrity and effectiveness. At the same time he was a lay teacher of Vipassana, a technique of self-introspection that had been handed down from ancient times by the community of Buddhist monks in Myanmar.

Goenkaji took his friend’s suggestion and arranged a visit to see the meditation center and learn about what was taught there. As the young man...
approached, U Ba Khin recognized that here was someone who would be instrumental in the fulfillment of his mission as a Vipassana teacher.

Despite that, Sayagyi initially refused the visitor’s request to join a 10-day course. Goenkaji had frankly said that he was seeking relief from his migraines. “You are devaluing the technique if you come to cure a physical disease,” said U Ba Khin. “Come to relieve your mind of tension and suffering; the physical benefits will automatically follow.”

Goenkaji agreed. After hesitating a few months, in 1955 he attended his first course. Though he wanted to run away on the second day, he persevered and found benefits he had never dreamed of. For the rest of his life, in his morning chanting he would express his deep gratitude to Sayagyi U Ba Khin.

In the following years, Goenkaji returned regularly to the International Meditation Centre and brought many family members and friends. Along with meditation, he pursued his business interests. But in 1963 came a turning point when the newly installed military government launched a program of nationalization. Overnight, Goenkaji lost the industries he had established and much of his fortune as well. His name also appeared on a list of capitalists targeted for execution. He accepted this situation smilingly and urged his former employees to keep working hard for the good of their country. He also composed the following verse:

If nature so wills ... may every atom of my body be mingled with the dust of this sacred land. And if it is the will of nature for me to live longer, may every breath of my life flow with gratitude toward my motherland. (paraphrase of the original Rajasthani)

The golden years

In the end, the threat to his life was dropped and Goenkaji entered what he later called his golden years. Freed from business responsibilities, he spent more and more time with his teacher, immersing himself in the Dhamma, the teaching of liberation. For himself, he wanted nothing more than this. But U Ba Khin had other plans. He recalled the ancient prophecy that 2,500 years after the Buddha, the teaching would return from Myanmar to the land of its origin, India, and would spread from there around the world.

U Ba Khin’s dearest wish was to fulfill the prophecy by re-establishing the technique of Vipassana—the essence of the Buddha’s teaching—in India. Unfortunately, in the 1960s the Government of Myanmar did not normally allow its nationals to go abroad. But since Goenkaji was of Indian descent, he might be given permission.

The opportunity came in 1969. Goenkaji’s parents had earlier left for India, and his mother had fallen sick. The government was willing to give him a passport valid for travel to India.

Before Goenkaji left on his journey, U Ba Khin formally appointed him a teacher of Vipassana. On two courses for the Indian community in Myanmar, Goenkaji taught with his teacher by his side. The sites were chosen to provide the kind of conditions
Goenkaji could expect to face in India. The first course was on the rooftop of a building in downtown Mandalay, located between two cinemas from which film music blared. The accommodation consisted of shelters made of bamboo matting. But this did not bother the students, and Goenkaji had the good fortune to receive on-the-job training from a master teacher.

With U Ba Khin at his elbow, for the first time Goenkaji gave the discourses that were to become so familiar. Since the course participants were Indians, he spoke in Hindi. Sayagyi understood the language even if he did not speak it very well; every so often he would lean over and whisper to Goenkaji, “Now tell them about some of the disciples of the Buddha! Tell about Mother Visākhā! Tell them about Aṅgulimālā!” And Goenkaji would drop whatever he was saying to do as his teacher directed. Later he would say that for him, giving one of his talks was like simply opening a faucet: without any effort, the words poured forth.

**To India**

In June 1969, Goenkaji boarded a plane from Yangon to Kolkata in India. Before they parted, his teacher had said to him, “You are not the one going—I am going, the Dhamma is going!” U Ba Khin himself could not leave Myanmar, but he was sending his pupil as his representative, as a Dhamma-dūta (Pali, “emissary of the Dhamma”).

Goenkaji was very aware that this was a historic moment. Still, he clung to the thought that his stay in India would be brief and he would soon return to his revered teacher and belovèd homeland. In fact, more than two decades were to elapse before he again saw Myanmar.

He arrived in a country where few people knew him and the teaching of the Buddha was held in low regard. The very word “Vipassana” had been forgotten. But with the help of his family, Goenkaji was soon conducting his first 10-day course in Mumbai. Among the participants were his parents and a handful of other people, including a woman from France. On the last day, she invited Goenkaji to her country; he told her to ask him again in 10 years.

The first course led to another, and another, and so the Wheel of Dhamma started turning in the land of its origin. The return to Myanmar would have to wait; there were people eager to learn Vipassana, and the Dhamma emissary could not refuse them. Goenkaji crisscrossed the country, often traveling third class in the crowded Indian trains. He had no old students to help him; instead he himself would assign rooms at the course site, and at meals he might sit with the students or serve the food. Often a tent functioned as the meditation hall. One night in Rajgir, a storm blew down the tent. But early next morning Goenkaji was on his seat, chanting to encourage the meditators.

The conditions were often rough; he had little money and less support; he was alone since his wife Ilaichi (called by meditators “Mataji”) had remained behind in Myanmar at first. Yet he radiated joy—the joy of someone doing what he had been born to do.
In those first years, Goenkaji taught in Hindi only. He knew English but he had learned it for business purposes, and he thought his command of the language was inadequate for teaching Vipassana meditation. But as his reputation grew, non-Indians clamored to learn from him. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there were many Westerners who had come to India in search of something they could not necessarily identify. Some of them urged Goenkaji to accept them in his courses, but he cited the language difficulty. Undeterred, the students then wrote to U Ba Khin in Myanmar. Soon a letter arrived from Yangon, ordering Goenkaji to offer courses in English. As always, he complied with his teacher’s wishes.

The first English course was in October 1970 in Dalhousie, a hill station in the Himalayas. There and later in Bodh Gaya, the site of the Buddha’s Enlightenment, a steady stream of young Westerners came to Goenkaji. Some of them were half-naked with the long, matted hair of Hindu ascetics. Others wore clothes more suited to a beach holiday. Most of the men were bearded; most of the women wore their hair long, flowing loose down their backs—not neatly braided, as proper Indian women wore theirs. To Goenkaji, their disheveled appearance made no difference; he shared the treasure of the Dhamma with all who came to him. Some of them joined a 10-day retreat and then were never seen again. Others followed Goenkaji across the country from course to course. Among them were people who went on to become well-known figures in different traditions. Among them also were people who now are the most senior teachers appointed by Goenkaji.

Soon, in coffee shops and restaurants that catered to the Western travelers, there were notices of Vipassana courses. Sometimes the teacher was referred to as “the singing guru,” because of Goenkaji’s rich and melodious voice. He used it to chant ancient compositions about the Buddha’s teaching and also for his own verses in Hindi and Rajasthani. In the hush of the meditation hall on a chilly morning or late in the evening, the sounds vibrated in the air, comforting, guiding and uplifting.

At the start of a course, he came in, sat down and waited quietly as the students found their places, arranged their cushions and fell silent. Then he opened his mouth, and within instants he had transformed the shabby rented room or drafty tent into a place outside time, where all were engaged in a fascinating exploration of inner truth. Hour after hour he would be there with the students. He did everything live—the chantings, the instructions throughout the day, the evening talks. The Dhamma poured out of him.

At 9:00 p.m. the daily program came to an end. After a long day that had started in the pre-dawn chill, the students were tired. But almost all of
them remained in the hall; they did not want to miss the evening question period. People would line up or cluster near Goenkaji’s seat. Some questioners clearly wanted to challenge or debate with him. Others were genuinely confused or agitated. Some wanted confirmation that their own views were right. Others sought to prove him wrong. Goenkaji handled each one smilingly, tenderly, often laughing. Usually they would end up laughing with him. They might not even remember the words but they felt they had received the answer they needed.

At the end of a course, he gave a closing talk and meditated with the students for a few minutes. Then he walked out of the hall, continuing to chant in Hindi, “Saba kā mangala—May all be happy, may all be happy.” Slowly the sound of his chanting faded away. The meditators were back in a shabby room somewhere in an Indian city, with street vendors crying their wares outside, dogs barking, friends or loved ones to meet, letters to read, trains to catch, plans to make. But for many of them, something had changed. Life would never be the same.

This is the only repayment

Goenkaji kept reporting back to his teacher, and U Ba Khin took great pleasure in his letters. On one course there had been 37 students, and U Ba Khin was delighted: “Thirty-seven for the 37 factors of enlightenment!” he said, referring to a term in the ancient Pali texts. He was still more pleased when Goenkaji reported that he had conducted a course for 100 students. Little did anyone imagine that some day that would be considered a small course.

Goenkaji was teaching at the Burmese Buddhist Vihara in Bodh Gaya in January 1971 when a telegram arrived to tell him that Sayagyi U Ba Khin had breathed his last. “The light has gone out,” he told the students. He keenly felt the loss. But he soon realized that he was aware of his teacher’s presence more strongly than ever. It was as if U Ba Khin had finally joined him in India.

What was there to do now except to carry on? His teacher had helped him when it seemed that there was no way out of his suffering. U Ba Khin had lovingly taught him Vipassana and trained him to teach. He had appointed Goenkaji a teacher, given him a mission and sent him on his way. Goenkaji would continue this mission to the end of his life. Every day of a course, he himself declared in his morning chanting:

From every pore flows gratitude,  
I can never repay this debt.  
Living the life of Dhamma,  
Serving suffering people,  
Sharing the happiness of Dhamma with all—  
This is the only repayment.

So that is what he did. From the far south of India to the Himalayas, from the deserts of western Gujarat to the jungles of Bengal, Goenkaji continued on his way. The landscape changed, the faces changed, he himself would change and age, but the journey went on.

Goenkaji answers questions, with Mataji beside him, early 1970s, Bodh Gaya.
The Hill of Dhamma

In those first years, the courses were in temporary facilities—ashrams, viharas, churches, schools, pilgrims’ rest houses, hostels, sanatoriums, wherever space might be cheaply available. Each site worked but each had its drawbacks, and always there were the tasks of setting up at the start of a course and dismantling the site at the end. So the search started for a place specifically for Vipassana meditation, where courses would be offered year-round.

This is why, late in 1973 in the town of Igatpuri, a shopkeeper and a young municipal worker flagged down Goenkaji’s car on the way from a course in the town of Deolali to his home in Mumbai. They had found a few possible sites outside the town, and they begged Goenkaji to stop and have a look. He agreed reluctantly; his leg was in a cast from a recent fracture and he did not want to delay his return home.

The first two sites were obviously not appropriate, but there was one more to see. The car turned onto a rutted path, long out of use. It led up to a hilltop dotted with huge mango trees that shadowed buildings dating from the days of the British Raj. Some of them were in poor repair, and goats wandered in and out of one bungalow. Behind loomed a bare mountainside.

Goenkaji closed his eyes for a few moments. Then he said, “Yes, a suitable place.” At once the businessman traveling with him offered to buy the land. This was the start of what became known as Dhamma Giri, the Hill of Dhamma.

The center started modestly, with a handful of mainly Western meditators taking up residence. They wrote to Goenkaji, asking how they should spend their time. He replied, “Meditate, meditate, meditate. Clean yourselves and clean the meditation center.” They set to work first with scrub brushes and water from the well. Once they had space, they devoted six to eight hours a day to the real task of sitting. Soon more people arrived, and then construction started. Dhamma Giri officially opened in October 1976.

It was an exciting moment but also a difficult one. As often happens, there had been cost overruns. The trust owed money to the contractors and was unable to pay them. For example, it lacked funds to pay for the new teacher’s residence. When Goenkaji found out, he refused to stay there. Instead, he and his wife Mataji moved into one of the dorms even though it had no plumbing. Bamboo matting screened a bathing enclosure for them next to the dormitory, and they used the common toilets like everyone else. This is what they did for the first half-year that Dhamma Giri was in operation, until the trust was able to pay the contractors.

Eventually more funds came in, more buildings sprang up and construction began of a pagoda like the one at U Ba Khin’s center in Yangon. A team of Western volunteers worked alongside the Indian laborers; the resident monk at the Burmese Vihara in Bodh Gaya came to help with the ornamental plastering. In early 1979, the pagoda officially opened. Present for the occasion were Sayama Daw Mya Thwin (who had assisted U Ba Khin with students at his center) and her husband U Chit Tin (who had worked for Sayagyi in the government).

The original pagoda at Dhamma Giri, shortly after its completion in 1979
Not long after came another breakthrough: Goenkaji boarded a plane to teach his first courses in the West. The woman who had invited him 10 years before remembered what he had said. Now she contacted him again, this time armed with an invitation from the French Federation of Yoga Teachers.

**From India to the world**

The time had ripened, Goenkaji felt. The ancient prophecy—that the Dhamma would return from Myanmar to India—had come to pass. But the prophecy also said that the Dhamma would spread from India around the world. The task remained to fulfill those words.

Before he could take up that task, Goenkaji needed to be able to travel to other countries. His passport from Myanmar was valid only for India. He had tried but failed to obtain further endorsements. Reluctantly, he realized he would have to change his citizenship and apply for an Indian passport. It was one more tie snapped with the country he still considered home, but as an emissary of the Dhamma he had to do it.

To his surprise, it was not so easy to become an Indian citizen and get a new passport. Reportedly, undercover agents came to Dhamma Giri to see what Goenkaji was doing. At every step, there were delays. But at the very last minute the roadblocks were removed, and Goenkaji and Mataji boarded the plane for Paris. It was almost exactly 10 years to the day since he had arrived in India from Myanmar.

That year Goenkaji taught two courses in France, followed by one in Canada and two in the U.K. Old students turned out in large numbers but there were also many people who had never before learned Vipassana. The following winter, some of them made the trip to Dhamma Giri. This became a pattern over the next two decades. During that time Goenkaji traveled yearly outside India. He visited not only Europe and North America but also Japan, Taiwan, Australia, New Zealand, Sri Lanka and Thailand ... and eventually Myanmar, making his first return home in 1990. In all these places and more, centers sprang up dedicated to providing opportunities for learning and practicing Vipassana as taught by Goenkaji.

**A new focus**

Goenkaji’s mission had taken a great leap forward, but now he faced a new problem: How could he serve the large numbers of people wanting to learn Vipassana? He taught alone, and even on a large course there was a limit to the number of students he could personally handle.
There was only one answer. Starting in late 1981, he began training and appointing assistant teachers to conduct courses as his representatives, using recordings of his teachings. Fittingly, the very first 10-day course led by an assistant teacher took place at the Burmese Vihara in Bodh Gaya, the pilgrims’ guesthouse where Goenkaji himself had spent so much time. Within months, courses were being offered around the world. Today there are hundreds of assistant teachers conducting approximately 2,500 courses yearly for close to 150,000 people, at more than 150 permanent centers as well as in temporary facilities. Beginning in 1994, Goenkaji also appointed the most experienced assistants as full teachers; there are over 300 of them around the world, guiding the program of courses and the centers where they are offered.

The assistant teacher program enabled Goenkaji to focus on other large projects. He devoted more time to public speaking and appeared at many events, including the 2000 World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. He founded the Vipassana Research Institute, which made the Pali-language Tipitaka—the oldest texts recording the teaching of the Buddha—widely available free of charge in the scripts of many different countries. He oversaw the development of an ongoing program of Vipassana courses for inmates at Delhi’s Tihar Prison and in many other correctional facilities, and he himself led the “Course for a Thousand” at Tihar in April 1994. He initiated a program of children’s courses. He wrote extensively on Vipassana and the teaching of the Buddha. And he inspired the construction of the Global Vipassana Pagoda on the outskirts of Mumbai. This slightly smaller replica of the Shwedagon Pagoda in Yangon is intended to attract many to learn about the teaching of the Buddha. It is also intended to be a lasting symbol of gratitude to Myanmar and to Sayagyi U Ba Khin for returning to India the gift of Vipassana.

As the years passed, honors and awards poured in. Goenkaji received the titles of “Ocean of Knowledge,” “Torchbearer of Dhamma,” “Master of Doctrine,” “Great Lay World Teacher of Vipassana,” and more. The governments of Myanmar and Sri Lanka invited him as a state guest, and in 2012 the Government of India conferred on him the Padma Bhushan (“Precious Lotus”), one of its highest civilian awards. All of these, Goenkaji insisted, were really honors for the Dhamma.

Last years

In the last years of his life, Goenkaji’s health was failing. He was confined to a wheelchair; that rich, thrilling voice became weak; speaking at length became difficult. But even as he experienced the sufferings of sickness and old age, he never set
aside his task. To the best of his ability, he continued teaching the Dhamma and inspiring others to practice it.

As his fame increased, so did the respect in which he was held, and some began treating him like a traditional Indian guru—a role he had always rejected. When he appeared at the Global Pagoda, people swarmed to touch him as if he had some magic to offer them. This type of behavior dismayed him because it had nothing to do with his job as a Dhamma emissary. “I am just an average person,” he said in 2002 after giving a public talk in New York. In India, any teacher might be called “Guruji,” and some of Goenkaji’s students affectionately used that name for him. But if he had to use a title, he preferred the traditional Pali title of kalyāṇa-mitta—“friend for one’s own welfare.”

He could not stop his students from photographing him, although he teased them as they aimed their cameras. “What,” he would say, “don’t you have enough pictures of me?” Beyond the joking, he refused to allow his photo to be displayed in the meditation hall or any other public place at Vipassana centers. When asked whether he was enlightened, he would reply, “As much as I have freed my mind of anger, hatred or ill will, to that extent I am enlightened.” He never claimed that he had achieved any special stage; at most, he would gently suggest that he was a few steps further along the path than those who had come to learn from him.

Many times people would thank him at the end of a course. His answer was always the same: “I am only an instrument. Thank Dhamma! And also thank yourself for working hard.”

In 2010, he said, “U Ba Khin is more important than the person who brought Dhamma. People have forgotten the names of the messengers sent by Emperor Ashoka long ago to bring Dhamma to different countries neighboring India. So today in this new era of the Buddha’s teaching, people must remember U Ba Khin, U Ba Khin.” He did not care whether people would remember him.

Nevertheless, for those who knew him, Goenkaji will remain unforgettable.

Long ago, U Ba Khin said, “The time clock of Vipassana has now struck.” To many around the world, it was Satya Narayan Goenka who brought that message. For them, he was a living embodiment of the Dhamma—of wisdom, humility, compassion, selflessness and equanimity. He often talked about the sweetness of the Dhamma. His own sweetness will long remain, like the sound of his voice as he left the hall chanting, “May all be happy ... be happy ... be happy.”
Shri Satya Narayan Goenka peacefully breathed his last on Sunday evening September 29, at his home in Mumbai, India. He was in his 90th year and had served half his life as a teacher of Vipassana meditation. Following cremation in Mumbai, his ashes were flown to Myanmar and scattered in the Irrawaddy River, reuniting him forever with his belovèd homeland.

Our deep gratitude to him for the gift of Dhamma.

May he be happy, peaceful, liberated!
Following is Goenkaji’s Hindi chanting before the closing discourse of a 10-day course.

Namaskāra hai buddha ko, kaise karunāgāra; dukkha mitāvana patha diyā, sukhī karaṇa sansāra.

Homage to the Buddha, what a treasure-house of compassion! He showed the way to end suffering and bring happiness to the world.

Namaskāra hai dhamra ko, kaisa pāvana pantha; jo bhi cale isa pantha para, vahī bana gaye santa.

Homage to the Dhamma, what a pure path! Whoever walks upon the path becomes a saintly person.

Namaskāra hai saṅgha ko, kaise śravaka santa; dharma dhāra ujale huve, nirmala huve bhadanta.

Homage to the Sangha, what noble disciples! Practicing Dhamma, these venerable ones have become radiant and stainless.

Namaskāra janani janaka, hai upakāra ananta.
Namaskāra arihanta saba, namaskāra saba santa.

Homage to mother and father, infinite gratitude to you! Homage to all liberated ones, homage to all saints!

Namaskāra gurudeva ko, kaise santa sujāna; kitane karunā citta se diyā dharama kā dāna.

Homage to my revered teacher, what a saint and sage! With such overflowing compassion he gave the gift of Dhamma.

Aisā cakhāya dharama rasa, biṣayana rasa na lubhāya; dharama sāra aisā diyā, chilake diye chuḍāya.

He let me taste the Dhamma nectar; now no sensual pleasure can allure.

He gave the inner essence of Dhamma and the outer husk dropped away.

Roma roma kirataga huā, ṛṇa na cukāya jāya; jiūn jivana dharama kā, dukhiyana kī sevā karun, yahi eka upāya.

From every pore flows gratitude; I can never repay this debt.

Living a life of Dhamma, serving suffering people—this is the only repayment.
Isa sevā ke puṇya se
dharama ujāgara hoya;
jana jana kā hita-sukha sadhe
jana jana maṅgala hoya,
saba kā maṅgala hoya.

By the merits of this service
may the Dhamma shine forth.
May everyone enjoy well-being,
may everyone be happy,
may all be happy.

_Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ_

*May all beings be happy!*
In 2012, Goenkaji named the teachers responsible for centers as his successors. Teachers in each region will continue working together on a collegial basis, cooperating with teachers in other areas. Vipassana courses will continue to be offered exactly as they have been, and the Wheel of Dhamma will keep turning for the good and happiness of many.

The article “The messenger of inner peace” was prepared by Bill Hart, one of the teachers appointed by S.N. Goenka and author of the book The Art of Living. The sources included Goenkaji’s writings and public talks, private conversations with Goenkaji, and reminiscences of others who sat with Goenkaji in the early years.

Do you have recollections, photos or recordings of Goenkaji that you would be willing to share? If so, please contact the Newsletter at editor@news.dhamma.org.
1) Group Sitting Venues

Group Sitting is opened for old students at the following venues:

**Fo Tan Venue**

**Date and time:** Every Sunday Morning 9:50 am to 11:30 am  
**Address:** Flat A, 10/F, Valiant Industrial Building, Au Pui Wan Street, Fo Tan (Fo Tan Train Station Exit D)  
**Registration:** Please contact Timothy Wong  
**Tel:** 9012 7697  
**Email:** timothycenter-dhamma@yahoo.com.hk

Please bring meditation cushion if necessary.

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 sent to you to claim for tax deduction.

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 at around 1:00pm.

**2014 Meeting Schedule:**

Feb 9, Mar 16, Apr 6, May 11, Jun 3, Jul 20, Aug 10, Sep 21, Oct 12, Nov 9, Dec 28. (meeting dates are subject to change without further notice)

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 the 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
The Development Project of the New Centre in Tung Wan, Lantau Island

Background
The campus of the Centre, totally 7540 sq m, locates in Tung Wan of Shek Pik, a remote corner of the Lantau Island. The site is a virgin land with average gradient ranging between 1:10 to 1:5 and level difference between the lowest point and the highest point 23 m. The area is entirely covered up by dense shrubs and over 172 nos. of trees with girth length exceeding 300mm. Two stream courses on either side of the Site flowing in a north-east to south-west direction.

After hard negotiation and lobbying with the HKSAR Government by the Centre, the Grant of the Centre was effective 3 years ago on 6th December, 2010 with numerous stringent conditions. These conditions include providing of 280m long 4.5m wide paved access road outside the lot, sourcing independent water supply, installing sewage treatment plant, providing independent street fire hydrant system, carrying out natural terrain hazard study, providing abundant car parking spaces and lorry loading area and above all, requiring the operation of the Centre before 6th December. 2014.

The Centre, therefore, contains substantial portion of civil engineering element which is uncommon in ordinary development project in Hong Kong. The construction of the Centre also requires prior approval by numerous government agencies such as the approval of Building Plans under the Buildings Ordinance, the approval of Design and Disposition of the project under the Grant conditions, the approval of the sewage system under the Environment Protection Ordinance, the approval of using water under the Water Work Ordinances, the approval of fire services installation under the Fire Services Ordinance and Fire Safety (commercial Premises) Ordinance,... etc. The implementation of the project is therefore complicated by numerous statutory hurdles some of which are interlocking with one and other.

Implementation History
The development of a project in a completely virgin land is not an easy task. The following incidences may demonstrate the statutory hurdles that had encountered:

The trees felling/ transplanting issue
The tree surveying of the site was commenced at about June, 2011. The report for compensation of tree was submitted to District Land Office (DLO) on 5-12- 2011 but the Tree felling and Compensatory Planting Proposal was only approved on 9-8-2013. Over 20 months was lapsed for this process.
The Access outside the Lot
Proposal of the design was already submitted to DLO on 24-4-2013 but formal approval was obtained only on 7-1-2014, over 8 months was lapsed for this process.

The approval of the General Building Plan (GBP)
The GBP of the Centre, after discussion among the various personnel for over 9 months, was formally submitted to BD on 19th October, 2011. The First Approval of the GBP was finally obtained on 13th June, 2012. Totally 7 months was lapsed.

Design and Disposition Clause in the Grant
The AP formally submitted the GBP to DLO on 13th April, 2012 seeking the approval for Design and Disposition. In due course the AP amended the GBP several times to suit the various feedback of the other statutory submissions and thus the revision of design by the Project Team. The approval of Design and Disposition Clause was finally obtained on 25th October, 2013. Totally over 16 months was lapsed. According to the Special Conditions of the Grant, no building work is allowed to be carried out without the prior approval of this clause.

The Geotechnical issues
The Natural Terrain Hazard Study (NTHS) related with the boulders at the slope outside the eastern boundary had been submitted to Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) in January, 2013. Formal approval subject to submission of supplementary information should be obtained in the coming months. Totally about 14 months shall be lapsed in the process. No consent for commencement of site formation work shall be issued without the prior approval of the NTHS.

The water supply issue
The Water Services Department (WSD) formally replied in the letter dated 19-5-2011 that only 20mm diameter water pipe for portable water is available for connection of the site and no flushing water is available for the Centre. Fire service water was also confirmed not available in WSD’s letter dated 30-8-2011. The layout of the Centre had to be amended accordingly and stream water is proposed to be used as flushing water and fire service water. The Project Team member is hard working to achieve the target. Over 30 months had been lapsed but the problem is still pending solving.

The sewage disposal proposal
Several proposals had been considered and reviewed since the commencement of the project in early 2011. Feedback from the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) was obtained in January, 2014. Sewage treatment plant providers was invited to render their quotation thus sourcing the most optimal solution for submission to EPD, the approval of which is essential for the approval of the Drainage Plan by BD. Over 30 months had been lapsed but the problem is still pending solving.

Re-submission of Plans
Owing to the soaring of cost in the construction industry in recent years, the project was found exceeding the budget during the tendering process in June/July 2013. The project had to be curtailed and cut down into phases to suit the financial capability. All the statutory plans, which include the GBP, the Site Formation Plan, the ELS Plan, the Foundation Plan, the Structural Plan and the Drainage Plan, had to be amended to a smaller scale to suit the financial reality. The submission schedule is as follows:

General Building Plan
11th December, 2013 (submitted already)

Site Formation Plan & ELS plan
End of January, 2014 (submission under process)

Foundation Plan and Structural Plan
Mid February, 2014

Drainage Plan
March, 2014
Construction Activities
1. Trees of the site were felled in September, 2013 and the felled tree trunks were re-moved off site in December, 2013.

2. The site surface profile after the felling of trees was found to have discrepancy from the original topographical survey. The topographical survey was carried out again in January, 2014 and was just completed.

3. The construction of the 280m long x 4.5m wide paved access was commenced in mid January. The U-channel alongside the access road is under construction.

4. The planning of the viaduct for the transmission of the stream water to site is undergoing. The construction of this viaduct, which is likely to be a 185m long x 75mm diameter GMS pipe, shall commence construction after the Lunar New Year. We are now waiting for the quotation from contractors.

5. The transplanting of trees, especially for several precious trees which had been confirmed for conservation, shall be carried out in the coming spring once the stream water supply is available.

6. The construction of the project will commence before May 2014, once the consent from BD is available.

For full version of the update report, please visit:
http://www.vnl.dhamma.org/local/ap/hk/
(Dhamma Mutta Special Edition)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item No.</th>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Max No. of Units</th>
<th>Estimated Cost / unit*</th>
<th>Wish to donate HK$</th>
<th>Nos.</th>
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*The estimated cost is only an indicative value and may not be the actual purchased price. 估價只作指示性用途，並不代表實際購買成本.*
# Project Dhamma Mutta 法之明珠建造工程 - Dāna Pledge Form 佈施表格

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<td>h - Working Tables 工作檯</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>i - Drinking Water Boilers 飲用熱水爐</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1500</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sub-Total 小計</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Sewage Treatment Plant 污水處理器</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>500,000</td>
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<td>12. Washing Machines 洗衣機</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Tree Planting &amp; Landscaping 植樹和園林設計</td>
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<td>a - Transplanting Tree 樹木移植</td>
<td>12</td>
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<td>b - New Tree 新樹栽種</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>c - Shrubs 灌木栽種</td>
<td>1,000</td>
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<td>d - Main Gate 主閘</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>Sub-Total 小計</td>
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<td>14. No Earmark Donation 不指定項目捐款</td>
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<td>Total Donation 捐款總額 (HK$):</td>
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</table>

To: Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd., 致：香港內觀靜坐中心有限公司

1. I agree that my donation can be used for any other expenditures in constructing of Dhamma Mutta if the item(s) I have chosen has/have already been donated.

倘若我所選擇的項目（某一項或多項）已有其他人士捐贈，我同意把我的捐款用於興建法之明珠的其他開支上。

2. I agree that my donation can be used for other more urgent needs in constructing Dhamma Mutta, and accept that my selected item(s) may be constructed or installed subsequently.

倘若興建法之明珠的開支上遇上其他項目有更迫切需要，我同意把我的捐款用於興建法之明珠的其他開支上，和接受延遲建造或安裝我所選擇的項目。

3. □ I enclose a cheque no. ___________________ for HK$ ___________________ as my donation to Dhamma Mutta project. 我謹附上支票號碼 ___________________ 銀碼為港幣 ___________________ 作為我對法之明珠工程的佈施。

*劃線支票抬頭「香港內觀靜坐中心有限公司」Crossed cheque payable to 「Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd」

□ I have deposited my amount of HK$ ___________________ to Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd’s Bank of China (HK) Account No: 012-875114-65302 on Date ___________. 我已於 ________ 年 ________ 月 ________ 日把我的捐款，銀碼為港幣 ___________________ 存至 香港內觀靜坐中心的中國銀行(香港)戶口號碼: 012-875114-65302。

4. Please send the receipt for my donation to the following address 請把我的捐款收據郵寄到以下地址：

Name 姓名: ___________________ Signature 簽名: ___________________

Contact Tel. No. 聯絡電話: ___________________ Date 日期: ___________
Web Versions of the Hong Kong Vipassana Newsletter

Hong Kong Vipassana Newsletter can be viewed and downloaded from:

http://www.vnldhamma.org/local/ap/hk/

Vipassana Websites

**Vipassana introduction**: 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
Contains information about Vipassana Research Institute, Vipassana Newsletter, Indian Vipassana centres, schedule of courses, etc.

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

**Vipassana Newsletters**: www.vri.dhamma.org/newsletters

**Pāli Tipitaka website**: www.tipitaka.org
Contains the Chattha Sangāyana Tipitaka with commentaries in Unicode Roman script.

**Global Pagoda website**: www.globalpagoda.org
Contains updated information including facility for online donation.

**Prison course website**: www.prison.dhamma.org

**Executive course website**: www.executive.dhamma.org
我願意捐款給 香港內觀靜坐中心有限公司：
I would like to make a contribution to the Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd:

- ☐ 以購買東灣土地及興建新中心
  For purchase of land and development of the proposed Centre at Tung Wan
- ☐ 以作課程及日常營運經費
  For course and operating expenses

姓名 Name: __________________________
聯絡電話 Phone No. ____________
電郵 Email Address: ______________________________
連絡地址 Address: _______________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>捐款形式</th>
<th>Donation:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ 一次過捐款 One-off Donation</td>
<td>HK$ ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 每月捐款 Monthly contribution of</td>
<td>HK$ ____________</td>
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<tr>
<td>☐ 免息貸款 Interest-free Loan of</td>
<td>HK$ ____________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ 低息貸款 Low-Interest Loan of</td>
<td>HK$ ____________</td>
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捐款辦法 Payment method:

- ☐ 直接轉帳 / By direct transfer :
  - 恆生銀行 (024) / Hang Seng Bank (024) (Swift code: HASEHKHH)
  - 帳戶 / Account No.: 228 261715 883
  - 受款人 / Beneficiary: 香港內觀靜坐中心有限公司
  - Beneficiary: Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd

- ☐ 劃線支票或匯票 / By sending a crossed cheque or money order :
  - 抬頭: 香港內觀靜坐中心有限公司
  - Payable to: Hong Kong Vipassana Meditation Centre Ltd

超過港幣100元之捐款在香港是可以稅的。請選擇本中心簽發收據之形式。
Donations of over HK$ 100 are tax-deductible in Hong Kong. Please tick the appropriate box if you wish / or do not wish to receive any receipts.

- ☐ 每六個月 Bi-annually  ☐ 每年 Annually  ☐ 不需要 Not Necessary

捐款請填妥 捐款承諾書 寄回本中心
Please print clearly using BLOCK LETTERS and return to following address

• 地址 Address:香港郵政總局信箱5185 號 / Postal address: GPO Box 5185, Hong Kong

查詢 Enquiry : Eva Kwok 郭小姐  TEL: 9155-7688  EMAIL: evakwok2006@yahoo.com.hk