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Responses: General

1

Sat, 25 Mar 2006

Have read you lines and I am accepting them. Some spontaneous remarks: You thoughts are unusual but still interesting. I personally think it is quite normal that it is not fitting for everyone and I consider that totally o.k. When I read your lines I start to think that you see this tradition very critically - which is completely all right.

But tell me, could you still sit a retreat in this tradition without all your doubts coming up all the time? Doubts are quite normal - but if they overtake one has to question oneself, if one still can meditate reasonable in such a case?

2

Sun, 26 Mar 2006

Your question, if I still could sit a course in our tradition I want to answer with a definite 'Yes'. But with this page I seem to have taken my final farewell. A call to John Luxford (the Achariya who exiled me) still could have straightened everything out - exactly this policy makes a return impossible to me:

If an own opinion, without wanting to force it on anyone, is no more allowed - than I have been deceived about the allegedly non-existing sectarianism all these years.

As soon as an exchange of opinion - without becoming sanctioned or disparaged because of ones distinct views - becomes possible again, then one is again working together - in wanting the very best for all pertaining.

That I have to work with doubt, with feelings of refusal, during Vipassana-courses - in that I don't think to be a great exception - and exactly that work makes it so important, and that's why our organization is so close to my heart

5

Mon, 27 Mar 2006

Lot of thanks for your discussion and Dhamma-materials. I sent your letter to Dr. Dhananjay. You can see what he will say for Goenka Ji.

6

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

I've received your message where you mentioned you would forward my text - with my points of questions - to Dhananjay (Secretary of S.N. Goenka). Well, already in August last year Dhananjay wrote me back, that he read and forwarded my letter to Goenkaji. But without being able to promise me that Goenkaji would find the time to read - let alone - answer my questions.

9

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

... because of my Dhamma-service as a web master. I wish you much success in your quest for clarity and happiness. I too have received much benefit from Vipassana, and wish that others can share in this journey towards brightness and sunshine, while traveling open-eyed through the muddy, rough, uneven, path through this life.

It has been greatly puzzling and surprising to learn that the difficulty I have felt in practicing Vipassana is paralleled by other students difficulties, and often others report that they have to struggle even more than I, or that Vipassana is not for them.

Vipassana has brought happiness and understanding to me because it (apparently) has uncovered the very core of my life, the raw experience of perceiving, feeling, acting, reacting this world around me and within me, and shown me ways to make better decisions, even as I sometimes struggle to act appropriately.

I understand very much your desire to question and debate and understand the teaching of Vipassana that we have received. But, surprisingly enough, my experience tells me that the intellectual mind is a poor tool for finding insight, and that even with years of practice and Dhamma service I still feel like a really solid understanding of Vipassana, that can survive debating and discussing, is beyond me.

So it would be difficult to comment directly on the many points you bring up. I work in education, and am very much in favor of constructive criticism and clear explanations. So I hope you are able to receive the feedback you need, and can be a positive influence on others. Be happy!

10

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

... Also I myself do not hope to survive such a discussion - and that would be more than I can wish for, as this would be a resurrection of such skillful speech as it happened so often at the time of the Buddha. You seem to understand, that I only want to support a reconnection to our ancient and foresighted tradition. And how I'm struggling to find the proper means to it.

Your letter expresses as much trust in the Dhamma as I have and does not fear that any harm could ever come by investigating truth - as Goenkaji assures us too with his advise of speaking truth (Kiriya-sacca) as a means to real healing

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

in your letter I read a lot of attachment to your personal situation. I know many serious meditators who are not allowed to give Dhamma-service. Your kick-out is for me only one step on the long way of the natural process of the dissolving of an institution.

When an institution becomes bigger and bigger than there is a need to formulate more and more rules to conserve the essence. By this the original idea loses the freshness and people who like stiff rules dominate the institution by the time. Finally the essence is lost and some people will relaunch the original idea.

When Goenka is dead there will be a lot of changes. If you don't want to wait it will be best to organize 10-days-courses by your own. Complaining only separates, we all have the love of Vipassana together. Metta

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

Thanks for your interesting remarks to my text. But in my view - which I never proposed to be much more than a humble contribution to a much wider reflection - our organization is merely co-dependently-arising together with us, its meditators and Dhamma-workers. As much as we - each one of us - is able to accept other views beside ones own - as much we are true brothers in Dhamma. That would never change, it would merely proliferate if Dhamma-siblings separate. As this seems to be the case today, whom to you assume me to separate?

The 90 percent of first time meditators who leave for good after a first course? Or those who don't continue much more than a couple more courses? Or those few who remain hedging off against so many others. Already having left the Dhammist-fold by this very act?

We indeed have the love for Vipassana together. But I guess this does not apply to the same extent about our trust in true Dhamma. I will never take refuge in a worldly organization, but in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the real Sangha (which never would exclude others merely due to their differing opinions - as well as most members of Goenkaji's organization never would).

Yes, I don't want to wait to see confusion come. I take the advise of the Buddha to heart and try to support a mutually respecting assembly. As soon as we are able to really listen to each other - it again will become possible to understand one another.

Surely this will solve all the problems I see today, in one stroke

13

Thu, 13 Apr 2006

thank you for your long answer. It must be a lot of work to answer all the mails. Metta

14

An email send by Assistant teachers to German meditators:

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

Dear Friends, with many the email of Mr. Lindner has left a number of question-marks. Out of his letter it becomes clear, that he doesn't feel at home in our tradition and that he is not happy about what and how Goenkaji teaches. That is o.k., as each one has to get his own opinion, and to make his mind up into which path he puts his confidence.

Mr. Lindner - as it is apparent in his exposition - knows a lot of different traditions and will certainly find another tradition, with which he feels more at home and can cope with. We can only wish him every luck to find his way. But we can not see any value to become involved in a discussion about the fundamentals of this tradition, which he meanwhile refuses for its prevailing parts.

Who experiences himself, how he makes progress in courses with Goenkaji and his assistant teachers and wants to develop further on this path, will not serve oneself well by responding to Mr. Lindner's discussion-invitation. And questions Vipassana - as taught by Goenkaji - so categorically.

When the confidence in our teacher and the foundations of our courses are questioned so far - any further practice and further progresses on this path become impossible. If there are questions or doubts, you should better clarify it with a teacher of your confidence. In particular - as fast as possible - and don't get tempted to stoke such 'discussions' with other students any further.

That is the way which Goenkaji recommends and the teacher and assistant teacher will happily take all the time necessary to answer questions and take away doubts. For this it is essential that the confidence in Goenkaji and his A.T.s remains as before - confidence is the base - without confidence no intensive practice - and along with it no real progress on this path is possible. Who intentionally makes his way into a situation which aim is to stoke unsettling and distrust, is depriving himself of this very base.

We only hope that Mr. Lindner finds a way which appeals more to him. And that he understands that it will be very negative for his own progress in Dhamma too, if he tries to unsettle others and to stoke doubts with his action - or to divert them from their chosen path.

To promote someone on this bad path, be it through contribution of his mail or active contributions to his action, one eventually harms him in this way - as well as oneself. Of this we are convinced. Surely those teachers who know him well will be able, with their experience and their metta, to advise him the best as they can.

So far our certain opinion. I hope it helps to a bit more clarity with those who didn't knew for sure what to do with this mail now. With the best greetings and Metta, Heinz & Brunhilde

Tue, 04 Apr 2006

I don't know if you have noticed this email. I received it by ... I was quite shocked about its content, rather, the manner of its explanations. They sound like a 'kick-out', and remember me strongly to the methods with which the catholic church or 'sects' deal with ordained/members, who do not show themselves completely conform.

It certainly should be left to each one how one deals with doubts! Once again one can see a lack of human- and social-competence here. And a tendency to the effect that you should let others think for yourself, which I can not support at all.

Really alarming seems to me the sentence: "... that it will be very negative for his own progress in Dhamma too, if he tries to unsettle others with his action and stoke doubts - or to divert them from their chosen path..."!

In comparison your sentence: "As you've probably read in my letter, it is my intention to create a place where Vipassana-meditators can exchange their experiences and opinions without fears. I really believe - if that becomes possible - than many of our problems will be solved through mutual understanding very easily."

I strongly doubt in this context that your undertaking will bear fruits, if the 'authorities' of this organization have such a rigid opinion, rather reject every open dialog. Nevertheless, I am wishing you much luck! It is important that discrepancies and grievances are pointed out, only in this way something can change to the positive.

Sat, 15 Apr 2006

I am an organic farmer & serve Dhamma as much as I can. I also serve as CCT = children course teacher. Good to hear that you've done long courses.

My vocabulary is limited & farming tasks don't allow much time to write, but I agree that the quest for clarity should be supported.

In your case no response from Goenkaji or competent subordinate Teachers is sad, what to say ? "kalam aagmeya" ?

Much m e t t a

Sun, 16 Apr 2006

I guess a little bit over 10 years ago I had a seriously disturbing incident with one of Goenka's teachers in the USA. Since Goenka resolved the issue, since it was a long time ago, I will avoid mentioning any more details for now. One thing I learned from my experience which may help you is that Goenka's organization is not as unified as it seems.

My situation with Goenka's organization ended, after several years, with meeting Goenka in person when he traveled to my country and invited me to talk to him about the issue. Goenka made it clear that the teacher involved was inappropriately speaking and acting on his own views, not Goenka's. That same teacher was in the room when Goenka had this conversation with me.

When I met Goenka he was a man of very advanced years and delicate health. That was over 10 years ago. He also has a personal entourage tending to his affairs in addition to the huge organization around him. He may not be ignoring you, your communications may not have reached him or he may not be in a position to do anything about it yet.

> Of course I know what the Buddha taught on how to teach the Dhamma. But that is not what I want. I would have to keep silent if I follow the Buddha's advice - for example: not alluding to myself and others. Beside - that's not the point. I'm far away from the position to teach...<

I went through much of this 10 years ago. At the time I was fortunate enough to have a serious Sutta class near me. Avoiding divisive speech is not the same as complicity.

If your issue is truly important to you I would encourage you to pursue it, but you should be aware that its resolution will not be quick or pleasant. The situation I was involved with took years to resolve. In the beginning I did many of the things you did and had the same experiences. I had to do things to create pressure on the organization and I received a significant amount of hostility from many different sets of people before I saw results.

However, you should be aware that Buddhists and Goenka enthusiasts are still human beings. As flawed human beings we can often find ourselves in the situation of reacting with hostility to someone who is speaking the truth about something we hold close to our hearts, even if that person is trying to

be constructive and trying to be kind. No matter what you decide to do about your issue - you should be prepared for this reaction. Good Luck

36

Sun, 16 Apr 2006

What a coincidence you experienced something similar 10 years ago. And I'm glad to hear, you could settle it then with Goenkaji himself.

> One thing I learned from my experience which may help you is that Goenka's organization is not as unified as it seems. <

This only lesson you mention from your experience is for me the very reason that makes it so important to create a place where disciples of Goenka have an opportunity to think independently. I really don't know if there is still enough time to get it across - but in the Sutta there would be enough guidance not to become fooled by possible successors.

Yes, this organization is not as united - and as soon as this teacher is gone it might very easily disintegrate in different fractions. I believe only by dependence on the Dhamma alone this can be avoided. And I will take it patiently to be called a 'divider of the Sangha', while pointing again and again to the Suttas in my attempt to unite.

I met him for the last time 5 years ago in Yangon - although his age made him look quite fragile - but when he spoke he still was very vigorous and clear. I read, since November he again had to struggle with his bad health ...

37

Sun, 16 Apr 2006

... I meditate since 5 years with continual adherence to the daily meditation hours - and I am very pleased about the positive effects and changes which

have come about by this special kind of meditation. I sat a 20-day course and a couple of Satipatthana-courses...

In respect to your honest exchange: Goenka says it in the 10-day courses very clearly that one is not forced to accept any theoretical background of the teaching at all - but should only accept that which correlates with one's own experience. That's why I really don't understand the teacher wanting to force you.

About ancient tradition: It is interesting that U Ba Khin taught verbalizations too. Were these verbalizations taught to beginners who couldn't accomplish to concentrate on the breath alone? As a simplification right at the beginning, so to speak? How about Ven. Mahasi? If it actually was this way, this could mean that such a bridge to concentrate really could help some to practice better.

A friend - who sat three 10-day courses - told about particularly strong problems with concentration. Thoughts would beat her up while meditating, she told. She has a lot of stress in daily life too, that's why she cannot concentrate on a daily meditation either and has again given up a short time after. It would probably help her to use a simpler method to be able to concentrate at least a bit.

Giving Donations: Why you should work for 1 year for the Vipassana organization? We have to understand this as the penance in the Catholic Church, as in the middle age? Goenka says: Anybody can come from any background! Therefore you should be able to come further on - also if you have a critical opinion. Or is this now thought too simple? Or do you want to change the whole kind and manner, how the courses (especially the 10-day courses) are run?

Out of plain curiosity: Have you sat a course with Mother Sayama or Ruth Denison?...

Teachers, Teachings & Pupils: Goenka says that the extent of equanimity of someone is a sign of his progress on this path. Equanimity is purity, he says. And if this purity of equanimity has reached a certain high level, then compassion will naturally follow. But if one still recognizes craving and aversion within oneself that only means one has to work further. And why should this in any way be related to the years one has practiced Vipassana?!

It very well can be that one has to practice many more lives to reach the stage of Sotapanna. Why this Achariya thinks that after 10 years one has to behave in a certain way? That appears almost ridiculous to me! Where has the Khanti-parami gone??? (tolerance and patience)

...You have described a lot and inspired me to investigate - and that is good this way. The teacher on my last 10-day course told me on Metta-day, when I asked him at lunch break about the stages to Arahathship - that he could not give me precise explanations because he himself hasn't realized the stage of a Sotapanna yet. He meditated for 30 years, he said. That was very instructive for me. I would really like to meet one who has realized it.

I am very, very much interested in an exchange of opinions. I believe I miss the sharing with other meditators just as well. Instead I read a lot, also a lot of secondary Buddhist literature to increase my understanding in general and particular. I will be glad to hear from you and I hope that you can make something out of my words. A lot of true Metta for you from the bottom of my heart

38

Wed, 19 Apr 2006

.. with that I already arrive at your question: If I would like to change everything about our 10-day courses? Not at all. What actually counts is the practice - and that I could do - if I would be allowed. Changed opinions wouldn't change anything about that. But what would be helpful - according to my humble understanding - for our practice-tradition to delay its future decay:.

- that one aspires to live what one has taught (such things which should never have led to my exclusion).
- so that certain co-meditators could get confidence again (those who can not trust in teachers - which can not emphasis or contradict themselves).
- that one is allowed to follow those yardsticks in daily live - which have been experienced to be for one's own and others benefit by oneself.
- that by all means one tries to understand one's own practice out of one's own refuge - for me with never-ending gratitude to Goenkaji - the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha.
- that one commits oneself on all levels to truth - despite temporary backbiting or exclusion.

- that the Dhamma is freely given - and not made available in exchange for money or work.
- that other Vipassana traditions don't get discredited.
- that one actively stands up against splitting the followers of the Buddha.
- that in Vipassana centers the same standards for every ordinary meditator - as for friends of Goenka - are met.
- that teachers who gives guidance in such serious meditation are really able - or educated - to recognize the mental state of a meditator sufficiently - and out of lack of alternatives, with psychological/client-oriented counseling methods (in some cases: by learning the language).
- that a teacher has so much benefited by his practice and - through that encouragement - feels at home with the discourses in the Suttas too - and therefore is able connect these 2 areas to give inspiring Dhamma-talks.
- that the progress in Vipassana is dependent on the development of Confidence, One-pointedness, Awareness, Effort and Wisdom in oneself - and the skillful guidance of a teacher - and not at all on a unexplainable Metta- or Nibbana-Dhatu .
- that one can express and exchange ones experiences and opinions without fear of threats or sanctions.

... I myself have only practiced Vipassana the way Goenkaji teaches, although I have done many additional self-retreats. Among others - 2 years in a Burmese forest-monastery - where the same Anapana is practiced.

Concerning your wish to meet one day a Sotapanna: In the Sutta-commentaries there are stories in which monks lived for years together and couldn't even recognize an Arahat who lived with them! I believe you would be entirely disappointed. Because, from a worldly view, they are totally unspectacular.

One should be clear that in a monk's life the first 5 years are lived and meditated in apprenticeship under the guidance of a Thera. Therefore - years of meditation are quite relative - as you have found out yourself. Wishing you interesting lectures and in no case a slackening in your meditation

47

Tue, 18 Apr 2006

Just as a solid rock is not shaken by the storm, even so the wise are not affected by praise or blame. (Dhammapada 81)

55

Tue, 9 May 2006

I had written a fairly long response that I decided not to send because it fell into the trap of criticism (and others). When I find myself criticizing others in my practice and in my life, I point it inwards and ask the same question about myself. This usually moves me into a state of compassion or humbleness. Sometimes it starts a long line of thought and introspection.

I believe you are seeking answers/approval/acknowledgment from others, which is completely understandable. I have no answers for you, and don't know enough about your situation to either approve or disapprove of your choices/views/actions/beliefs.

It takes a lot to get beyond right and wrong, and I realized that criticism or praise would not help in that process. Metta

56

Fri, 12 May 2006

You wrote you fell in the trap of criticism. Further you more or less tell me - if I understood you right - after following your line of inquiry you end up with - what the Buddha called: Why this Dhamma is visible here and now.

Thanks for your compliment ;-) I am just kidding. But I really had the luck to observe that process already a few times with very sincere persons, who wanted to give me the criticism, I asked for. Honestly, that really makes me happy. Although I will never get myself criticized this way.

To go beyond right and wrong - to be able to make the other really understand how one is experiencing with ones own eyes - is very deep indeed and the concepts implied by praise or blame really have nothing to do with that. - It's Samma-vaca. I can think of many more silly things I do in my personal live, than to stumble and try and stumble again and again for reaching out for such depths. Thanks for your presence

57

Tue, 9 May 2006

...I am now looking at other traditions on my own, trying to get back to the source as much as is possible, and letting go of the past experiences, which admittedly, is hard. It was nice to have the group, but the dynamics were such that it became impossible. And in the end, meditation is not a group sport.

And I love how people will say that speaking out causes dissent which is evil. That's just used to cover their tracks so they can collect new members and thus more money. And to keep the issues that need to be raised - i.e. accountability for their actions - from being raised.

Here's a list of things to watch out for: '[Warning Signs](#)'

58

Sat, 13 May 2006

... until now I always thought the organization - I thank so much for - very malleable, because it's made by us, its members. And, because its leader soon will be no more, sort of urgent to create an awareness for the issues to be resolved. In your warnings the group (and not the individual) is taken at the same level of authority as the leader, and I - sadly - start to think, that the leader is really very difficult to think without the group and its ways. In the end they really can only be thought as interrelated.

But up to now, I still think it too early to give up my attempt to create an awareness exactly for these issues. The majority of the group-members - of those I know - would certainly never agree with such developments as you paint and I can see. Especially, because in the past - its leader did resolve such issues, as in ... example. I can't deny how much it helped myself - leaving aside all these power games. But I seem to end up writing a manual on how to utilize this organization for a helpful practice - and how to avoid its pitfalls.

It is possible that such helpful utilization might only work with very self-dependent, authentic persons. But on the other side - I only became that way with exactly the hindrances put up with the particular kind of such an organization! I still don't know any easy answer to all of it. Generally to warn from giving it a try - I see absolutely no point in it - as only after one could really know. Also yourself would probably not deny, how much it helped you at a certain point in your life

75

Fri, 19 May 2006

Nice to see compassionate communication incorporated into your discussion.
Good luck, with metta

76

Sat, 20 May 2006

I am happy to hear you appreciate compassionate communication as much as I do. I only feel a little bit sad, because I wasn't really able myself to incorporate it within my own text as I wanted to

77

Sat, 20 May 2006

... I am truly sorry to hear that you have been struggling immensely with the organization, or certain members of it. I am not sure if you have been getting a lot of feedback, but ... advice seems to have made a lot of sense to me. It is very easy to lose the bigger picture when getting hyper-involved with the details. A balance between the two is essential if we are to walk the path of compassion (which is not just towards others, but towards oneself as well).

Some questions, I think, that are imperative to ask must concern your motivations and what you really intend on achieving by sending out a 70-page anti-Goenka rant mixed with Dhamma verses and commentaries. If this whole battle is truly worth the enormous headache (a wise person once told me: "You have two choices in life: to be right OR to be happy"), then I think a far more delicate approach is needed. If you want a real, interactive, liberating dialogue to occur, then you cannot begin from a place of angry (and vague) assumptions and accusations that most readers cannot relate to.

After filling the heart with love and compassion, perhaps begin with a clear description of what you think the problem is, what measures can be taken to prevent it from getting worse, and what solutions you envision on the horizon. This difficult process can not be done in an offensive manner; otherwise no one will pay attention and all your energy will have been wasted.

Perhaps once the blazing fire is cooled, START AGAIN and try contacting other senior teachers in your area or other areas or get in touch with Goenkaji personally (he is a busy man who receives hundreds of letters of every week, most of which I imagine are filtered). Alternatively, once the fire

dies out, you may also realize that this whole pursuit may not even be worth your time. You know the practice... I truly wish you all the best

78

Sun, 21 May 2006

thanks for replying. Best to respond to the points you mention in your order: I have been struggling out of fear to slipper into wrong speech by speaking out what I thought. But since I became honest to my concerns - to unite what at the moment seems to disintegrate and to warn others from becoming excluded - I feel indeed more and more Metta flowing. Just after reading your letter I questioned myself again, sad an extra hour, and yes, it is.

I have included all received feedback in my page, except a few of those who seem to accuse me for attacking-sake and don't want to help me to understand, in which words of mine they see the defilement they accused me of (they have been added now). That's probably what you mean with compassion towards my self.

Motivations? - has been answered. Anti-Goenka? - please read again without the glasses of having to defend something I never questioned: Your own confidence in Dhamma. - No battle or headache here. Because I don't want to be right - but to be allowed to have my own opinions after conscientious investigations - as I respect everyone else to have. You are right - that's exactly why I am happy.

> angry (and vague) assumptions and accusations that most readers cannot relate to
<

I delineate very clearly: - I have to believe blindly? - I have to give work in exchange for Dhamma? - I have to remain silent if the Sangha seems to be slandered? ... if first-time meditators are harmed? - I only ask - you have to give the answers to these questions to yourself if you are relating to them. Otherwise, where is the problem? I only ask those who feel concerned. If you wouldn't - why you didn't delete my note as I asked for?

I understand very well that you could not read my page in detail if you became so furious right away (now I am assuming as you did, to let you know how such feels yourself - and I apologize if I'm wrong). So you could not know that I repeatedly contacted Goenkaji? Why you have so much to fear from investigating truth?

> perhaps begin with a clear description of what you think the problem is, what measures can be taken to prevent it from getting worse, and what solutions you envision on the horizon. This difficult process can not be done in an offensive manner <

Please take a couple of deep breaths - and read the introduction of my page again. Then tell me how you would write only this one page for you not to appear offensive. I bet - you will never do - there are many who already accused me exactly the same, but being asked - till now only 1 Dhamma-friend gave extended and concise answers. For which I felt really grateful and incorporated many changes he recommended to me.

No fire here, time will show. All the best, in Dhamma

79

Mon, 22 May 2006

I would just like to say that your undertaking has not made me furious or fearful, I was simply empathizing with you (as dangers of sectarianism and dogmatism by those engulfed with wrong views have also concerned me in the past) and offering some suggestions and comments about the process that you have begun. With that said, I think that it would be helpful for you to find an English speaking editor. Not only do I have difficulty in understanding the meaning of what you are trying to say (which leaves a tremendous amount of room for misinterpretation), but you may also be misunderstanding what others are saying to you.

> I have included all received feedback in my page, except a few of those who seem to accuse me for attacking-sake and don't want to help me to understand, in which words of mine they see the defilement they accused me of. <

Where are other people's comments? I could not find them on your site. Also, if your goal is to have an open-forum, then everyone's opinions must be included, even those who attack you. Suppression of voice is another form of oppression, which is something I gather you are trying to knock down rather than perpetuate.

> That's probably what you mean with compassion towards my self. <

Not really. We westerners have a tendency to be too hard on ourselves, we often (not always) take ourselves too seriously and give ourselves too much importance. Self-compassion just means loving and laughing at oneself; it is accepting our beauty and ugliness, radiance and darkness, intelligence and foolishness. I find that when I give myself a hard time, I make myself even more miserable than I already am/was.

> Why you have so much to fear from investigating truth? <

If I had this fear, I would not have bothered replying to your original arguments or assumptions of how I think and feel. May your undertaking help the Dhamma Wheel continue to spin. Be Well

80

Tue, 23 May 2006

I am happy to hear that I was wrong in assuming you to be furious (for which I foresightedly apologized in my last letter). For me this impression came up, because in my page I only asked questions to avoid blind assumptions (which always could be wrong) and by trying to stick as much as possible to the description of situations.

While you didn't ask or described anything on which you based your assumptions of me being allegedly - I quote - > hyper-involved with the details < - > a 70-page anti-Goenka rant < - > whole battle not worth the enormous headache < - > from a place of angry (and vague) assumptions and accusations < - > an offensive manner < - > once the fire dies out, you may also realize < - > this blazing fire < - > whole pursuit ... not even be worth <

Sorry, you have every right to accuse me of these things if you also give me a chance to understand in which of my words you read this. - But you don't give me this kindness to make me understand, nor to you apologize with your words: 'That you only empathized' (with your assumptions?). These new words seem only to be used to divert that you again give me the fault for you having misinterpreted me!

Without founding it on anything I said, again. (I did announce that I called you furious to make you understand, how such assumption of you do make me feel - and I instantly apologized for this experiment)

Well, I had my text edited by an American friend who lives nearby and earns his money by writing for an international business-journal. He was working for 10 hours

non-stop on it, and during that time I had to work hard to calm him down, because it made him so upset to read how a spiritual organization is dealing with someone with such serious concerns. And how I still could offer a hand in friendship to them.
(only small portions have been added unedited afterwards)

You understood my letter - but my edited website, not even the introduction - you could not? That is really interesting. And a good excuse for having lost my bet! A compassionate reader would take the time necessary, if he wants to understand what I wanted to say without feeling compelled to give suggestions blindly - out of not understanding. Before he would come to any conclusions - he certainly would ask how it was meant. You still don't ask? - Therefore: I still do believe: One needs a certain kind of colored glasses to misinterpret something so one-sidedly. But only you can really know yourself. And I - as always - could be wrong.

I put a link to general responses at ... Someone wrote, he could not even find my email address in my page - it really shouldn't be in these cases I guess. The main reason I hesitated to include general criticism which doesn't give any reverence to anything done or spoken is exactly because of this style, I find in your letters too. I probably will have to ask you again and again in every following letter: Where you see the things done - of which you accuse me of?

That's why my answers to such letters are often much longer and quite frank to get the writer off his buttocks and come forth with really concise explanations. Because only then I could improve - but that rarely seems the original intent of such criticizers. Usually the writers of such general accusation will just continue without responding to precise questions, they will say things like: 'Because they wanted your best'. In the end they stop responding without having given any answer on which grounds they accused me of so many things in the first place. The more considerate do apologize. I am simply bored of people playing such silly games.

In fact, you are the first complaining I would make it too difficult to include such silly speech. No, I really don't want to knock down right speech - you pretty misunderstood me there. For anyone to indulge in such speech there are plenty of open forums just to join at anytime. I still will include all replies - but those who seem to increase unwholesome states of mind only at the very last, so that readers who want to know everything ready-made without putting effort into conscious reading or writing, will hardly ever get there.

I understand that you are a committed member of Goenkaji's organization. So, if you would really be as much concerned about open speech as you say: Why you want

me - now an outsider by being kicked-out for not believing blindly - to include every denunciation spoken of me? While Goenkaji's, your organization on the other side - doesn't seem to give me even the slightest space to clarify such public denunciations?

Though you can avoid giving me any answers to my questions again - I am just asking. And you will have to give the answer to yourself - if you want to remain true to yourself.

> May your undertaking help the Dhamma Wheel continue to spin <

Wow, now this turning point is really difficult for me to understand. Suddenly you did understand me perfectly? If this is really the case - then I take everything back, I said before.

> (as dangers of sectarianism and dogmatism by those engulfed with wrong views have also concerned me in the past) <

How was it for you? How did you overcome your concerns? There are many who would be interested how others could live with that too. Please take this sentence out of its brackets, because it makes it appear you still just suppress your concerns for truth with these very brackets.

Oops, now something very particular became clear about non-constructive letters ... seems I became the place to vent off all this dammed up speech - for which in Goenka's organization is not the slightest space given.

Well, I just join with all Indians, who most probably would say: 'No Problem!' :-)
As soon as this pressure is puffed off, real authentic and constructive things can sprout - I am sure - and it won't be a waste of time at all (and as always - good intentions never are). With much Metta

Wed, 24 May 2006

I did not refer to anything specifically or provide a point-by-point commentary because to be quite honest, I don't have the time and energy for such an endeavor right now. While I agreed with some of the arguments in your essay, I was not impressed with the overall aggressive and biased

tone. I hoped that my general comments would suffice in letting you know that I felt that a clearer and less antagonistic approach would be helpful in overcoming the dilemma that you and others may face; I am sorry that they did not. In no way did I mean to insult or attack you.

How did I overcome my concerns of sectarianism and dogmatism you ask?

To be honest, I haven't yet and don't think I ever will. But that's OK. I realize that the organization is made up of unenlightened human beings who are prone to making mistakes - this is human nature. When I see errors being made, I try to approach the situation as an opportunity for cultivating wisdom and compassion by keeping a balanced state of mind because I am aware that my own negativity is worse (to me and others) than whatever the other person might be doing or saying.

I have faith that in the end, everything will be exactly as it is supposed to be. At this point, despite the faults I see with the organization, the gains far outweigh the costs: hundreds of thousands of people are getting a taste of the excellent Dhamma (even though a few might not benefit due to misdirection or clash of personality, which occurred during the Buddha's time as well) and I personally am getting the best opportunity available to serve both myself and others along the path towards liberation.

Wolfgang, my sincere wish is that you grow on the path of Dhamma - whether it is with Goenkaji's organization, another Teacher's organization, or no organization at all. Our human lives are short and precious, may we use them wisely. Yours in Truth

Sat, 27 May 2006

I feel much gratefulness for the part in your latest letter, where you finally became more true to yourself. So I will be honest as well: I don't want to impress anyone, certainly not as a writer. Nor do I claim any holy stages - and I do get upset if people are hurt. Everyone wishes a savior, a hero - intentionally I rather choose never to become. Because such heroes lead exactly to the mess of having all responsibility placed onto one. And further into the dilemma you finally also acknowledge Goenka-disciples can find themselves in: Having to bend the truth.

Your present situation reminds me to my own: I compared the costs to the gains too - and the later always felt far to outweigh: Me to shut up. I have the same

faith that everything will come to its end as it should - if only stayed with - and with plenty of good intentions. Equally, I stayed with my 'negativities' - but then I could not perceive them worse than any others - as you still do. Further I found, never to become able to encompass others negativities with compassion - if I would fail already with my own.

Here we differ: What never seems to have concerned you - right from the beginning these were my burning questions: "What is the reason that makes this method so helpful for me? What do 90 percent differently, who never come to such courses again?" - Again: "Why is it failing so badly with some, who suicide right after their first?" - As time passed by - I did find answers by practice, with help of the Suttas and with counseling approaches.

In the end: It all changed, and now it's hard to understand how I ever conceived it - 'negativities'. Straight forward Dukkha it is, and keeping it down - pretending - really is what makes it negative. This got really curious: I only served little because the sharing during Dhamma-service made it so difficult for me to keep concerns down - compared to - in the silence of sitting. That made me suspicious and being frank, kicked-out. Only with John's exclusion - thanks to his gesture - it got its place to really be able to serve.

Here we seem to meet each other again: > and I personally am getting the best opportunity available to serve both myself and others along the path towards liberation. <

In my humble opinion - what would be helpful for our practice-tradition to delay its future decay:

- [that one aspires to ... \(click to read helpful advises\)](#)

I also can understand why you find my text too aggressive, too antagonistic, too biased - because: If you took my advises too idealistically - forgetting that humans always will remain prone to mistakes - you really could get the impression I would like to change the 10-day courses totally. And that must appear existentially threatening. - But for me the real change is only in the attitude. In the acceptance of Dukkha and allowing it to touch. First one's own - only after it becomes possible with others too. And then all my common-sense advises would become superfluous too.

Of course, my disclaimer at the end can intentionally be overseen and doubted. Especially if my sentences just before have been taken as a value judgment about one's own attainments in Dhamma . And by identifying with such - knowing no better help than to despise my of the spreading of doubts:

> If I wrote about the benefits of Vipassana practice - in its relation to the Dhamma - it would have become much a larger page. But I see no need to - as this is not suppressed in the same imbalanced way. The same applies to my gratefulness and respect to anyone teaching the Dhamma as good as he can! <

I am left now with nothing more than to depend on truth alone. No wonder that can appear too antagonistic for a few fencing off. What to do? - I will stick to it - and as you assure me, you do.

As honest as I am: Now you have written already your 3rd letter and you have not been able to give me only one page, just a small paragraph, 1 little sentence, even one tiny example - to point it out to me - what you accuse me of anew: - > overall aggressive < - > biased tone < - > antagonistic approach < - With 3 written pages you should since long have been able to give me merely one small example. But you simply could not. - Yet, I feel so glad to see your agitation to become so much less.

Now I want to ask you to do me a favor - maybe appearing quite amusing to you - and you are really free to do or not. And only do when you really feel secure and at ease: Could you please pass on my kindest regards to this somehow unpleasant feeling inside of you - and please don't call it 'negativity', 'cos then it will forever hide and sabotage. *Just stay a bit with it,* and give it Metta in my name - tell: I just appreciate the pain - finally say 'will see you again'. For a few minutes will do.

Thanks for so many good wishes - covering every possible case. With Karuna

Mon, 29 May 2006

...Brief comments to your questions:

> "What is the reason that makes this method so helpful for me?" <

It works!

> "What do 90 percent differently, who never come to such courses again?"
<

90 is a high number. At our center in Quebec it is in the 60s. Nevertheless, many people find benefit and change their lives after one course but never feel like doing it again for whatever reasons. That is their business and it is rather arrogant to pass evaluation on them or on the organization for doing a poor job. Who are we judge things that we don't (and can't) understand, especially in such black and white terms such as success and failure (these terms are highly subjective).

The fact is that courses are full and (most) people are leaving happy, confident, and with a tool to help them in their daily lives. In addition, many people only do one course and then practice regularly or semi-regularly at home. As Goenkaji says, some people are coming to get the seeds and some are coming to get better established. The latter come for several courses and services and for the former, perhaps one course is enough intensive Dhamma instruction for that particular karma to handle in this lifetime.

> Again: "Why is it failing so badly with some, who suicide right after their first?" <

This is extremely rare. These people should not have attempted to do Vipassana at that stage of their lives. People with suicidal tendencies need proper psychiatric counseling, not a deep mental operation like a 10-day intensive course. This is why the application process in North America is becoming increasingly strict.

> "I did find answers by practice, with help of the Suttas and with counseling approaches." <

Great!

Wolfgang, all of your suggestions for improvement are very good. I am confident that serious practitioners try to implement them, but like I said before, we are all human and prone to mistakes. That's where the art of forgiveness comes in.

In answer to why I don't give specific examples is because I don't feel like searching your entire document again. When I say "overall" I mean "overall", try re-reading your entire document yourself while asking if there are less

aggressive ways of saying the same thing. I wrote my initial letter to you suggesting that you improve your general approach, not waste your time attacking me with your frivolous insults or ranting about how misunderstood you are.

I wish you well and hope that you find your place once again along the path, whether with Goenka or without. I can no longer continue with these letters, not because I am afraid of the Truth or whatever other spiritual quality you may think I am lacking, but because my time is limited to other projects. I leave you with a piece of advice that a wise teacher once left me: "If you need to criticize, criticize yourself; if you need to praise, praise others". Take care

84

Wed, 31 May 2006

This time I want to answer your latest email in the backward order. And don't feel compelled to answer it again - if you don't want to - or out of lack of time. Having the last word never has any value in itself. From my side - you are really free.

Your last advice is actually what I used as a strategy for not to become hurt by criticism throughout my life. I have enough personal reasons out of my life's experience to really change this habit pattern - without wanting to go into details now. And I won't go into its opposite extreme either.

> When I say "overall" I mean "overall" <

A friend with whom I exchanged already twice as many letters as we did - and after so many pages accusing me of an overall egotistic-tone - finally I got him to give me at least one example: It was the word - 'despising' - which I mistakenly took for - 'suspecting'. I think, such words here and there could make it up for 'overall' - and therefore I still do appreciate it much, if anyone gives me such singular examples.

If my attempt - to get answerers with general criticism to become more particular - did make you feel 'attacked' or 'frivolously insulted', as you lately write - than I really apologize: That has never been my intent.

What appeared to you > 'ranting on about how misunderstood...' < - is actually a way of speech found already in the discussions of the Buddha - and today again in

counseling: With it I just repeat what I heard you say, and usually your next response will not only tell me if I understood you right or wrong - but you either will feel better understood and can proceed with what for you follows out of it. Or, if I misinterpreted you: Then you will be able to express it more to the point, and get an even clearer picture of it yourself. And I, as a listener, too. Which of course - does not work, if you don't want or have no time to. I didn't want to make it appear that I feel myself a victim - which I don't.

> "... who suicide right after their first?" - This is extremely rare... <

I met 3 in my first year of practicing - in total 10 - who came out of a first 10-day course in a much worse state of mind, than they have been before. Although that doesn't mean it happens often - it certainly happens quite regularly. I heard such accidents happened right from the beginning since Goenkaji teaches. But only since the late 'nineties the application-forms have become juristically more precise. Because - as one Canadian A.T. has told me - such casualties as I experienced - in the United States could cause the financial ruin.

People come to take courses in 'the 4 noble truth' to come out of suffering, and most certainly lie on application-forms to be allowed to. As you say: 'Hundred of thousands' - come to take courses - and statistically about 1 out of 100 is prone to suffer schizophrenia at one point in his life. Altogether, assuming it low: Maybe 1 or 2 thousands? (here I mean: to get serious psychic-problems - luckily, the suicides I came to know of first-timers were all unsuccessful attempts)

The only way for us to come out of this dilemma is to get the A.T.s educated in basic counseling skills with which in the first interview of a 10-day course the mental-state of a student could easily be evaluated with only a few words. - But what instead is the state of the art? - Just recently I heard again of a western AT not listening to the advice of a Dhamma-server, who knew of one student's mental-problem - and which again ended in the psychiatric ward.

People do make mistakes and I am always ready to forgive. But 30 years of such mistakes - without learning anything out of it - is simply too much. In this point - and the longer it gets protracted - the more I will become aggressive. Not because I am - but, as Goenkaji says in his discourses: 'Some seem to need a strong language!'

90 percent was the figure given by the V.R.I. itself - for all the courses given all over the world since Goenkaji started to teach in India up to 1997, almost 30 years.

Years later I was told the quote for the west is around 85 percent. If you claim it for Quebec only around 60 - I congratulate. But that would mean: Somewhere it would be ridiculously worse? - That's difficult to believe.

You say it seems arrogant to evaluate what I would not understand? I talked to many people about Vipassana in a very balanced way - of its positive and negative sides. Despite the drawbacks, so many became inspired by my enthusiasm and went straight to take their first. - Of course, I also talked to those first-time students who thought not to come back - the reasons they gave: Allegedly it is too masochistic, too dogmatic, too hypnotic chanting, too much personality-cult and too much of a patronizing attitude of the teachers, for them. - That, in the end, they appear happy to be over with? What is there too difficult to understand?

So many more become disappointed after 3, 4 courses - and I know enough who, with 10 courses, still tell me: 'They come to these courses, because in them they can experience that this impermanent body is something different from the eternal soul!' ?!

The argument that people would get seeds of Dhamma would count, if they really would get established in 'Right View'. But such is only possible if meditation is assisted by precise study, discussion and questioning (according to the Buddha). Usually the minimum one learns - in a first 10-day course - is to experience one's own craving and aversion. (which of course, is an essential beginning)

Only in the Satipatthana-courses Goenkaji really starts to emphasize - and in the long courses it is taught: That the noble 8-fold starts with 'right view' - and right view has to be there with every of the following 7 limbs of this path. Without 'right view' it leads to nowhere, he says (well, after all, heaven - compared to worldly goods - is not to be despised either ...if it wouldn't be impermanent too...)

If people say - for everything not understood or if something appears to be a lucky miracle - "Dhamma works".

- I know such a belief is not what made Dhamma work for me!

The Buddha pointed out that there are indeed followers out of belief: 'Saddhanusaris' (in Goenkaji's view: "at least with my understanding I don't know how such could ever work"?!) - beside those who follow out of investigation: 'Pannanusaris'.

To come to a conclusion: I probably belong to the later - that's where I think our differences in approaching this issue comes from (already 8 letters are only testifying to it). But I do believe the Buddha that both are equally valid paths.

I only went on with my 'rant' - because you exaggerated so one-sidedly its alleged success. Wishing you much time for all your other projects, in Dhamma

94

Sat, 1 Jul 2006

...Thank you, first of all, for your very interesting and informative Web site. It was fascinating to read how the jhanas and other elements of the practice are discussed in long courses.

Based on my understanding of this tradition, the "kick-out" that you experienced is par for the course. Are you aware that Goenkaji himself was expunged from the lineage in a dispute with Mother Sayama? He was kicked out. And how did he react? Apparently he did not react at all. He simply continued along the path.

Ruth Denison also was kicked out. This tradition is hilarious in that respect, with people kicking each other out, creating these illusionary divisions between "us" and "them," between "I" and "you." What is it about this Vipassana tradition that makes us love to kick people out?

Most importantly, Wolfgang, as I'm sure you know, your practice does not need to hinge on admission to 10-day courses or any course. Of course beliefs are not a prerequisite for practicing Dhamma. So they've kicked you out. My advice is to be grateful. What an insult to the ego. What a wonderful opportunity you now have to practice selflessness, to go deep into that feeling. Be there with it. That's my advice. Metta

95

Sun, 2 Jul 2006

thanks for you feedback. You really need not to worry about your identity. If there is one main aim with my website, then it is about stopping this 'us'- and 'them'- business - and no one ever to become kicked out again.

... you seem to be certain that, contrary to my information, Goenkaji was kicked out - and not as I thought - Mother Sayama and Ruth Denison? As I spread a possible misinformation - I would gladly correct it. - But for that, I would need some more precise details about it. If you would be willing to share. I, and all other readers, would really appreciate that.

You know, I must be really dull, I haven't even considered it as an insult to my ego. Otherwise, yours would have really been a very skillful consideration. Before, actually I felt the fear of becoming expunged for speaking up. However, now I feel quite glad becoming truer to myself.

As a layperson and through my life I am now in a situation where I consider it of utmost importance to stay skillfully truthful with my speech. - That for I was kicked out, and that for I recently lost my job. So I still have something to learn in respect to skillfulness, I guess...

96

Wed, 5 Jul 2006

I'm sorry to hear that you recently lost your job. I hope things work out for you.

This whole history of who kicked out whom is pretty confusing, and I'd love to hear an independent account from someone, if such an account exists. Do you know of one?

My information regarding Goenkaji's expungement from the lineage is taken from 'Dancing in the Dharma', a biography of Ruth Denison by Sandy Boucher. Ms. Boucher writes that Denison and Goenkaji both got the boot after conflicts with Mother Sayama and her husband.

Ms. Boucher writes that when Denison became a teacher, she originally was authorized to teach only women. When she began teaching men, and also mixing some Zen influence with her instruction, she came into conflict with Mother Sayama, according to the book. The book recounts how Denison was

deeply troubled when she was kicked out, but decided to continue teaching nonetheless.

The book seems authoritative, but it does not give much detail on what happened between Goenkaji and Mother Sayama. Do you know whether anything has been written about their disagreement?

95

Thu, 6 Jul 2006

thanks for your reply. Of course, until now I can handle my life's situation. Thanks for asking.

As I wrote, I only heard it of different A.T.s that Mother Sayama and Ruth Denison were kicked out for charging for courses. To get an independent account - of how this really happened - will be rather difficult now, as most knowledgeable will probably take side and speak in favor of their traditions.

Thanks for providing the source from where you have your information. Unluckily, I do not have any written sources - on what happened between Goenkaji and Mother Sayama - other than what I heard from A.T.s already years ago - I would not even remember those A.T.s names.

Once I read the first edition of the 'Sayagi U Ba Khin Journal' of 1971, I remember it right. In there were articles of different teachers, like Hover, and all about what was going on in those days.

So I guess, in one of this Journal's later editions, one could find an account when and why any teacher were disauthorized. However, at present I have no access to specialized libraries, or to any U Ba Khin veterans.

The only thing I can do is to add our mail-exchange to my side and hope, someone adds some more pieces to our puzzle. Kind regards

96

Thu, 6 Jul 2006

I saw you wondered about other teachers of the U Ba Khin method including Robert Hover. His website is: '[Internal Moving Healing](#)'

97

Fri, 7 Jul 2006

many thanks for the link, I was really shocked! - I didn't know, should I laugh or cry? How far can one move from Dhamma after a life of practice, I thought. Hover already in the seventies wrote wired stuff, but that should not become worse. Now, at least, it becomes understandable why Goenkaji would separate from him.

Hover is known as the ballistic-missile engineer in Goenka's 10-day course discourses. Goenka tells the story that he was send by Sayagyi U Ba Khin to check how Robert Hover was doing in his meditation cell. Sri Narayan Goenka was quite surprised, as he saw Hover standing up side down on his shoulders, violently shaking with his whole body. U Ba Khin allegedly only laughed and added, it would be OK, let all his sankharas come out. ... the strong sankharas of one who constructed ballistic missiles for atomic bombs ...

98

Sat, 8 Jul 2006

Greetings friend! My name is ... and I am replying to your website. To give you a little background, I have been practicing in this tradition (Goenka) for about 2 years, albeit consistently for the last 10 months. Quite a "newbie" compared to you or most of your respondents!

At this moment, part of me wishes to encourage you to pursue whatever it is that you need to pursue with as little regrets as possible. Another part relates to your situation and is struggling with some of the same feelings

and/or thoughts. That said, I believe that encouraging a particular view of "yes, you should be concerned" or "no, don't be concerned" would not be helpful to anybody. So let's not do that.

My gut feeling is that you will have to do more than solicit conversations on the Internet. What that is, I do not know.

It is my hope that you will be able to resolve this situation and put your experience to good use. Perhaps I am looking to you as a role-model of sorts, somebody that offer inspiration for people like me that are a bit too critically-minded and lexically-inclined.

Good luck and I wish you the best. May you (and all of us) find true happiness.

99

Tue, 11 Jul 2006

thanks for your encouragements. I wholly agree with you that anyone should be free to express his concerns - however, thereby not making others - who are not concerned - feel guilty. Because English is my second language - I would be grateful if you could point it out where in my website this impression arose for you.

Just as you - I do not know what I could do - other than to solicit a open discussion on the Internet.

Right now I start to feel a real opposition to my website. For example, I posted my concerns in 5 already existing '[e-sangha forum](#)' threads, which were critical of Goenkaji's courses. Although my posts where much more moderate than some really despising posts before me - only after my post, with the link to my website - four of these forum threads where deleted and in one my link!

Therefore, some seem really concerned about my website and I think that will lead to at least some adaptations of how the courses are guided and run - hopefully.

You are right not to get fooled by a too critical mind. All the best

100

Fri, 14 Jul 2006

Hello! Dear ones,

it's been far too long since I've written (No 75) - this link is not about Village Action, but is a beautiful message which I deeply wish for you: '[We Send You Our Blessings](#)'

love, ...

101

Sun, 16 Jul 2006

Dear ..., my speechless thanks! Just the day you send your beautiful message I've got a new job - serving asylum seekers. Now I am happy that a bit of the blessings - I received from mother India - are possible to be passed on in this way again. In
Dhamma

Responses: Suffering Disciples

3

Sun, 26 Mar 2006

... don't you have the impression that the danger of a mental break-down has been recognized and been taken in account with certain questions in the application-forms? (at least tentatively) Of course, the application-forms assume you are responsible for yourself, just as in the courses. And that they have to. Although - taking up ones responsibility - is not really developed with many people yet. That's why we do such practice, don't we? A so called 'independent evaluation' I don't consider worthwhile - or possible - it sound like arrogance and selection. The approach of psychological training to avoid the escalation of psychic problems - on the other side - I consider useful and I hope it will become implemented.

4

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

The newer application-forms - in my opinion - only took legal inconveniences into account (one teacher told me that such grave incidences as I came to know - in the United States could have caused the financial ruin). That the teachers would get training-sessions in client-centered counseling - one could hope in vain for decades. But with public pressure many incorrigible already have improved.

7

Mon, 27 Mar 2006

... when I wanted to take my 3rd course, I mistakenly put on the application-form that I practiced Reiki - but that lay already many years back. Why I did that? - I don't know. In any case, a short time later followed a call in which I was remembered and exhorted that a serious student is not allowed to practice any other methods - especially no energetic healing-methods.

I found this call quite strange, because I haven't had anything to do with this organization - I only meditated by my self at home. Also I could never get real confidence to any of the always changing teachers of the courses. With questions asked during courses, I always received similar answers - going little into any depths - therefore, at one point I just gave up asking anything. I again felt inconsistencies.

Nevertheless, I visited the next 10-day course. This time immense and fundamental anxieties came up. Through the deprivation of sleep my nerves lay so bare, I couldn't oppose anything against it and fell in a permanent condition of panic-attacks and crying fits - out of which I could not free myself through the prescribed methods. I consulted the teacher - this time not an European, but a Burmese man. Soon I noticed that I could not expect any help from him - also the course-manager was not in the position to help at all.

I knew I had to leave the course, because I already had light hallucinations. Of course, it was attempted to make me stay. In the conversation with the teacher I became aware that he was on a completely different level and very likely with a huge difference in the cultural background too - I was (and am) not enlightened, and I still have very human anxieties.

That he laughed about me, when I sat full of tears in front of him, I perceived as psychologically off the mark. In the end they let me go and I was very relieved and glad, to be able - at last - to talk about my experiences with 'normal' human beings again.

Despite this, in 2005, I completed the next course which went relatively quite. But for me it was clear that this method could not be the real thing. I started with Kundalini-yoga, a method which really works differently. There I found teachers who could give me complex answers to my questions. I could observe positive changes in my personality very fast - and more important:

There is no dogmatic refusal to practice also other methods! A very trustworthy teacher of Goenka told me, I could continue with my practice of Vipassana, but better with a time-period in between. For example: in the morning yoga, evenings Vipassana - because there really is a energetic difference.

Here it is completely allowed to receive help from other people, because at times one doesn't get any further without active help. And if I can't cope with a point out of the philosophical super-structure of yoga, I don't have to deal with it or I'm even allowed to criticize and doubt openly - without being threatened with restrictions.

Important is what works - and that is really meant if someone says this. Overall I feel that Kundalini-yogis are more heartier and a real Sangha, whereas the Vipassana-organization appears rather cold to me.

I too, see a contradiction that Metta-bhavana is given, what in my eye is an active energetic help - but other kinds of energetic help are refused.

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

... that some of Goenka's co-worker give such an unfriendly impression I attribute to the unfortunate circumstance - that to partake in the meditation and Dhamma-work - one has to blind fundamental things out. Unfortunately, upright essential qualities which would be supportive to the practice of Vipassana. No wonder, if such co-workers appear less and less compassionate - especially with themselves.

In the end - the first of the four noble truths deals with suffering - and many seem to think, that self-perpetuated suffering would not be opposed to the path.

Beside the cultural perplexity - this might have been another reason for the laughing of your Burmese teacher about your huge inner pain - I guess he might equaled your suffering with the evolving realization of the first noble truth. With a Burmese meditator he probably would have been right and reacted with his joy consenting (just speculating).

Luckily, I met on my path enough Buddhist co-meditators and teachers, who truly do justice to the teachings of the Buddha - as you did in Kundalini-yoga. All the qualities you ascribe to your yoga teachers - also a teacher of the Dhamma should have, as far as he really is one.

I am glad to hear, you found a way to leave those hindrances behind and that you continue on your path - as it appears to me - with big steps. Especially that you didn't get fooled by the alleged harmfulness of the use of different methods - but only by your own experience of what is wholesome for you - and by that for others too.

Thu, 30 Mar 2006

Many thanks for you most interesting text. I have not had time yet to fully consider its contents but I am assured that your motives are honorable. I think the biggest challenge Vipassana faces is that it harks back 2000 years and does not recognize the intervening achievements of people seeking (and finding) ways to live a more enlightened life. I found that my practice of Vipassana could not help me through certain challenges in my life, while other techniques that I discovered could.

Especially with regard to psychological 'illness' I think the technique does not provide help to those who cannot supplement the meanings of the old Pali texts by recognizing their links to more modern ways of understanding the human psyche. I believe there is a place for Vipassana, and that giving people an opportunity for retreat from the values of Western society is valuable in its own right. I also believe that Vipassana does put individuals in touch with themselves, however, it doesn't always provide the best way of dealing with that awareness.

17

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

I agree quite in some aspects with your view: That not being able to see connections, for example, in practical approaches of psychology to the many adapting ways of the Buddha to help seekers - makes Vipassana become merely a technique and not a very helpful to so many, who are not ready for it without any preparation.

And I do start to consider such practical approaches like '[Focusing-assistance](#)' (by Eugene Gendlin, client-oriented) - with its emphasis of awareness with body sensations and investigation and insight in the meaning of such phenomena - with its result to skillfully listen and speak to help wholesomeness states develop in both - the listener and speaker - to complement the 8-fold path in just this area of skillful 'right speech'. An area which usually is absent in Goenka's way of training or guidance by his teachers.

But for me Vipassana remains the essential practice. Just not for everyone at anytime - not because it would not provide a very skillful way of relating with such awareness - but because of lack of skill in differentiating its ways of relating by our teachers, and as it was done at the time of the Buddha as it is described vaguely in the Pali Suttas.

And without devaluing other methods as being allegedly only for those of lesser capabilities, thereby coming dangerously close to slander. It doesn't help to assure in a second sentence that one doesn't want to - if it is repeatedly done at first - and replays such discourses a hundred thousand times.

The fundamental problem in Goenka's Vipassana I see more in forgetting that Sila, Samadhi and Panna has 8 limbs. And if one is not able to integrate something so important as 'right - wholesome - speech', oppositely painting such an integration as a mixing of 'techniques', competing with Satipatthana - as if those practicing Satipatthana could do without, because they are more advanced - all of it becomes lost. If you would like to share - I would be really interested in your personal findings in this respect, as we seem to differ a bit in our opinions.

18

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

many thanks for your detailed reply, which I look forward to replying to in detail. For now let me say that I share your respect for the Vipassana technique. And for me the crucial moment in our practice comes when we leave the retreat center, or rise from our daily cushion, and recreate ourselves in the world through language. Here the notion of right-speech is useful, however the technique does not offer much on articulating right speech or right action in a way that fully fully embraces the possibilities of our short span of 21st century conscious life. More to follow.

19

Wed, 17 May 2006

... I guess, you are fully embracing the possibilities of our short span of 21st century conscious life?

20

Wed, 17 May 2006

Ha Ha Wolfgang, you're damn right! My thoughts are on marriage and family. But I'm constantly reminded about the essential quality of all experience, especially those as they react with, what I consider myself, an addictive personality.

I will have a look at your Dhamma thoughts as soon as I can. You know? - I think you should do more yoga. With love and best wishes

48

Fri, 21 Apr 2006

Thank you for your enormous courage in taking on the challenging of a structure. Like Luther and all before you who did this, you are in for a bumpy ride, but all will come clear in the end.

In all my experience of the teachers, no matter what I asked or how distressed I became, I was just told to, and I quote: "Keep on meditating" or at times: "Are you feeling the sensations?" - On my first course the female teacher could not even speak English and so none of my questions were understood, and that was just to do with the technique, never mind any deeper mental shit, which I did not even bother to raise.

There was certainly no effort made on other courses to go into any psychological help as that was seen as noise of the mind. As someone who spent years familiar with the suicidal impulse, I know that at that level of mental distress, Vipassana would be damaging, as the ego is screaming for help, and to essentially tell it, it is of no importance, while certainly being true, is miss-timed in those circumstances.

I have been through the Vipassana process and come out the other side freer than I was, but in my opinion, which is based on my experience and therefore will not be true for anybody else, I think Vipassana was a starting block, and work I did afterwards has helped me further to actually go beyond Vipassana. Vipassana is a structure, and anything that has structure, discipline, rules, denial, etc: becomes a cage.

If I may share with you the amazing mind of Krishnamurti who said exactly that. Whatever you try to enforce, whether a rule or a method, becomes in itself an attachment. As well as whatever you try to give up, you

immediately become married to it! The stronger the resistance, the more you are holding on, actually.

Anthony de Mello, whom I also recommend as a wonderful teacher, said that when monks come for counseling, all they talk about is sex, and when the whores come, all they talk about is god! Beware of structures and resistance to what is. Krishnamurti said the trick is to understand what is, accept it and find that indeed you are free in the accepting of it, which removes resistance, and FROM THAT NON-RESISTING STATE OF MIND you take steps to change the situation, if needs be.

The line is very fine and requires a quiet mind. Krishnamurti's definition of quiet mind certainly does not indicate one that is concentrating on something, whether it is breathing, or sensations. You do not concentrate, you merely notice. There is a difference. In Vipassana there is not much care given to point that out, although I do think that is what they are trying to teach.

Also, the concentration is something you can do initially, but it is easy to mistake the process of quieting the mind for the meditation. Krishnamurti's definition of what meditation IS is very far from what most people understand it to be, including what people seem to think of Vipassana.

Krishnamurti also said that to get lost in words is very easy because the words are not the thing or the experience itself, but we have to try and communicate. I recommend reading his work - he answered a lot for me that Vipassana WOULD NOT, never mind could not.

I wish you all the love in all the whole shebang of this grand project, and you may quote anything I have said in future writing, but I would ask you not to distribute my mail address, as I may get floods of letters from the furious, and I am not as courageous as you are in facing that! With all my love, and metta (which I humbly feel should be practiced whatever the physical or mental state because "love is not something you DO, love is something you ARE")

... times have changed: Nowadays no courage is needed to speak out what one thinks - than certainly Luther must have had. Except maybe, for daring to write things not really matured yet. But if one's pretence is not to speak as a wise, than there is

nothing wrong in becoming blamed lack of intelligence. As long as I'm offered something to investigate in exchange ...

Of course, I really appreciate Krishnamurti's freeing way of speaking. But I want to explain why I consider some traditions - as Krishnamurti's - almost poisonous to me: When I came to Vipassana I badly needed a way to bring me back to life - which was going on all the time within my body. Before in life - I became very skilled in blinding out all 'bad' emotions with a system of thought - very, very similar to Krishnamurti's. But without claim of having understood his profound depths.

I also do know a friend who lost quite much of her bearings after Krishnamurti had died. She was left with a deep-rooted aversion to any form of trying to change a situation, or to meditate. It always seemed she waited for a teacher like Krishnamurti - and meanwhile led her life past by (my impression only). I see with every person - who really speaks wise - the danger for others to become enchanted and leave their thinking to such much respected.

By my search to find a way of speech which really encourages enquiry and listening to one's own depths, and not to place ones confidence in the experiences of experts, brought me to - admittedly another method - *focusing*: Being a process- and experience-oriented counseling method basically based on feeling sensations and inquiring into their reflected meaning to life - it gave me a glimpse of what it could mean to exercise real listening and skillful speaking. Something completely ignored in Goenkajis tradition.

And what's more - not to become associated with authority other than the one the listener finds in himself. I really don't give much into not using any 'self-improving' techniques, if they only open up to see what's there. And as you say - that can be aimless love - if one is looking only deep enough.

It seems with either teacher it can give rise to the same self-defeating assumptions: The belief that only one method would be proper - like the only one Goenkaji knows to teach and how it helped him. - I guess it a similar mistake to take the experience of Krishnamurti, that any way to get somewhere would lead only to more self-inflicted suffering - as long as this is not ones own experience - a pretty debilitating belief.

For me I could not imagine any other way than to try to find out for myself. Ending up with self-inflicted suffering and - through such personal experience - become

very glad in let it all go. - Out of my experience - to try to let go, without having experienced with full force ones own grip and fear and deeply suffer from it - could merely become a pose. Maybe this only holds true for myself.

After reading your letter a second time it seems I have only expressed - what you wrote - with my own words and particular background. Somehow, I really can relate to it - though not in the sense of taking to books of Krishnamurti. But if I merely imposed my words on something which could imply much more to you, please feel free to reply at any time.

50

Mon, 24 Apr 2006

I hear what you say about your friend who lost her way after Krishnamurti died. Again we see the danger of attaching to anything, be it a tradition, a method and especially a teacher. Krishnamurti himself was very strong in his teaching that you can only ever find things out for yourself and must never give importance to the authority of another. You can follow a way another has walked, but your walk is your own.

Vipassana teaches that too. He would also have not blocked out bad thoughts, but encouraged investigating them. He did not teach body sensation awareness as an aid to investigation, which is why Vipassana (kept pure) is a wonderful tool.

I also got a message this morning from a friend in ... who teased me because he could not make head or tail of Krishnamurti. I laughed because neither did I before I did Vipassana! It was my experience of Vipassana that opened the way for me to understand Krishnamurti! For that I am so grateful.

But I stay careful to move through each experience and each learning, and move on so I do not stay clinging to any particular method, teaching, etc. Accepting my life and everything that occurs in it moment by moment IS the teaching put into practice. Of course I still find myself clinging to this and that, sometimes to a person and so on.

Vipassana has given me the gift of awareness. Krishnamurti gave me the gift of understanding that it is all right if I do not resist the moment as it is, but keep moving through it. As always, it is quite hard to explain states of mind with words, as many of the experiences go beyond words.

If anyone attacks you, then they are themselves in doubt, for you only attack if you feel threatened. What you are doing for them is giving an opportunity for them to question their own attachments and doubts, but most people find it uncomfortable so would rather blame and attack another. Again I wish you love for I see you as a very determined and devoted person and you deserve encouragement and may the very best come to you..

[link to an exchange which turned to this topic in the general responses section >](#)

The evening-talks of the long-courses could clarify many simplifications of the 10-day courses (but also add some other). And many essential beginners meditation-instructions would be taught there. For this reason I really recommend them to every serious meditator.

But, because many would have to become dishonest about their Sila - with very self-defeating results - I noted the teachings of a 20-day course for interested Goenka-disciples down (out of memory with the possibility of mistakes - and certainly with a different emphasis).

And please don't give too much importance to such things as Jhanas - which seem to be interpreted by every Buddhist teacher differently. Best of all these interpreters still remains Ven. Buddhaghosa with the biggest Chapter in his Vissudhimagga: 'Samadhi'. Where he gives the statistic: Out of 1 to 10 million meditators - who try to practice Jhanas - only 1 would reach mastery of the 1st Jhana !

day 0

The Formalities - The taking of refuge and surrender to the teacher: By repeating the Pali-words played by a tape-player.

day 1

Ekayano-Maggo only means: Sila, Samadhi and Panna.

The 5 requirements for serious meditation in long courses are: Devotion, good health, no self-deception, effort and wisdom. In comparison - the requirements asked of a student to be allowed to long courses are only superficial.

day 2

The 5 requirements: Devotion, good health, no self-deception, effort and wisdom.

The 3 ways of breaking Sila: Doing it, encouraging it, or applaud it.

The 3 necessary components for it to be considered to be broken Sila: An intention to, a tool to, and a visible living being (not going to extremes, for example with bacteria in the air).

Be self-dependent - don't rely on the guiding teacher or the Dhamma-worker. Keep eyes downcast.

day 3

The importance of Sila as foundation for meditation. About right livelihood.

This Dhamma-land (i.e. meditation-center) has very fertile soil, and of every deed done - be it wholesome or unwholesome - the fruits will become multiplied by the purity of the Dhamma-land. Which is not to be believed blindly, but because of the law of nature.

The story of a former physician who became Arahant-monk and thereafter refused to treat his own mother with medicine. But instead gave her truth - to heal her - by exclaiming: By the truth of my virtue of not looking intentionally up to a female since my ordination ... (i.e. Kiriya-sacca).

The 3 kinds of help in ones meditation: Keep eyes downcast, looking only 2-3 steps ahead - keep complete silence - knowing the right measurement of food.

At the time of the Buddha the monks received meditation instructions - and then left to practice in solitude until they became liberated.

day 4

Anapana: Observing the in- and out-flow of respiration through sensations at the upper lip, without any verbalization.

There is no I doing it, but Anatta - bare awareness and mere observation.

Mental storms will come and go, face them with equanimity and bravely. If the storm becomes too strong - use right thought (Samma-sankappo) to overcome them, but only temporarily: Thoughts about the Buddha, the Dhamma, the Sangha, about Dana given, the Sila one has kept, ones devotion, etc. The simile about the first rain after the hot season - making the air smell earthen. Likewise this work towards purity of mind will cause defilements to come up.

day 5

Protect Sila as your own life.

Use hard breathing only for a view minutes and so subtle - even your neighboring meditator could not hear it. In Anapana one goes from the gross to the subtle, from deep to short and shallow breathing.

There are many wrong ways of Anapana, 4 alone in Burma:

- Description of Ven. Sunlun Sayadaw's Anapana, where one could hear the heavy breathing a hundred yards away from the meditation center;
- Imagining the in and out breath with colors;
- Counting the breath and verbalizing it ('in' - 'out');
- In India Pranayama is practiced for good health and feeling good.

But all these methods will not lead to the liberation the Buddha intended. Only observation as it is - the natural breath - will liberate.

Mental Storms can be handled with hard breathing - or by recollecting ones Paramis, or the triple gem, etc. - but always come back to respiration and sensation.

As concentration develops: Light- or Vision-nimittas can appear - but this is not a necessity - never take them as meditation-object! Nimittas are only milestones passed by - if one stops to glare at these milestones - every progress stops. Remain with respiration and sensation.

Mara - which for example could be ones Sankharas, or a celestial being - will try to tempt you: For example with other meditation objects, fantasies, discontent, good-yogi conceit, etc.

Good Samadhi with Anapana will also bring good results in daily living: For example at the moment of ones death to keep a balanced mind; and as an initial object, which brings ones awareness instantly back to body-sensations.

Keep eyes downcast, keep complete silence, know the amount of food you need.

Sila helps Samadhi, Samadhi helps Panna. Each is interrelated with each other, like: Panna helps Samadhi, Samadhi helps Sila.

By facing mental storms, they strengthen us. But when storms become overwhelming - better use Yoniso-manosikara (wise consideration). For example about the amount of necessary Paramis to be admitted to such a long-course.

Or to be reborn a human at a time when Vipassana-teachings are available. Such a time was lasting only for 500 years after the Buddha's Parinibbana. Another 500 years later Samadhi was gone, again 500 years later Sila, then Dana, and 500 years - before our fortunate period began - only scriptures were in use. Of course - this is not to be believed blindly.

If we are concentrated only for a moment it is called Khanika-samadhi, which is already enough to start with Vipassana. In long courses this period of concentration prolongs up to 10, 15, 20 minutes, than it is called access-concentration or Upacara-samadhi - which enables to go much deeper with Vipassana.

Finally there would come absorption-concentration - Apana-samadhi.

By overcoming the 5 hindrances we get strength.

There are 2 sorts of Sila - like the 2 sides of a coin - and only when both sides are developed it becomes perfect Sila:

1. Varita Sila, Sila of abstention (5 precepts)
2. Carita Sila, Sila of a pure mind full with love.

By keeping Varita Sila one develops Samadhi and Panna - which lead to Carita Sila.

Keep complete silence, eyes downcast, and know the right amount food you need .

day 7

Protect Sila as your own life - to develop Samadhi and Panna.

Story of Ven. Mahatissa, a Sri Lankan monk, who practiced in the forest, became sick and therefore couldn't go for Pinda-pat (alms-round) anymore. He became weaker and weaker. Finally he decided, that he had to get help from the village. On his way - while passing through a mango-grove - out of

his weakness fell and couldn't get up anymore. But he wouldn't eat the overly-ripe mangoes lying all around him - despite being starved for days - for not to break his Sila.

Then the owner of the mango-trees came and gave him the Mangoes to eat. Very impressed by this steadfast monk, the owner of the mango-grove promised Ven. Mahatissa to bring him from now onward his food - until he would become healthy again. And carried Ven. Mahatissa on his back home.

While being carried on the back of the lay devotee, Mahatissa reflected on: How wonderfully Sila has helped me - which filled his mind with gladness and joy (Pamojja and Piti) and his body with pleasant sensations (Sukkha). Thereby he became calm (Passaddhi) and he entered Samadhi with Sampajanna. Further Ven. Mahatissa proceeded through 1., 2., 3., and finally Arahata-phala, still on the back of the Lay person.

How much Sila-, Buddha-, Dhamma-, Sangha- and especially Maranupassana can help us to strengthen in Samadhi.

The Story of a criminal, who was promised freedom from prosecution by the king, by walking with a full cup of oil across a crowded fair-ground - without spilling over even one drop. Similarly, don't miss even on breath in view of an uncertain death.

The 8 Jhanas: with the momentary-, access- and absorption- stage of each. How their value is in using them with Sampajanna. And how the Buddha's Dhamma gets misrepresented - if the Jhanas are not only a mean - but its end. Leading only to other planes of existence, but not out of cyclic existence.

day 8

Entering the field of Panna, with Anicca-vijja, Anatta-vijja, and Dukkha-vijja of all the 5 aggregates. Turn every Kalapa of your body into Panna (with Anicca-vijja, Anatta-vijja, and Dukkha-vijja).

Use Anapana as needed. Keep your Sila strong. Follow all rules and regulations of this meditation center.

Meditate day and night, except during deep sleep. But don't force yourself up, like some meditation-centers in Burma ask to. Also don't start to worry if you don't find any sleep: Become instantly aware of Anicca, Anatta, Dukkha.

Keep your eyes Downcast, at least for the 19 days of this course. But not to such extremes like in the story of a monk, who kept his eyes downcast for 60 years, never seeing the painting on the wall of his cave, etc. Have a good measurement of the food you need.

In Vipassana one goes from apparent- to ultimate reality - from apparent solid matter to the ultimate flow of Kalapas - where matter is dissolved. From solidified mind and mental-concomitants, to the dissolving of it into mere wave-lets (by way of observation of the sensations on the body) till one experiences for the first time Nibbana (Sotapanna-phala - with only 7 more rebirths left, etc.), an experience completely beyond mind and matter. But one has to know all this on the experiential - and not only the intellectual level - to become liberated.

day 9

The same as above: The whole world is nothing than vibrations. Every Sanna (recognizing, distinctions, valuating through the colored glasses of past conditioning, i.e. Sankharas) has to turn into Anicca-sanna, Panna, Dhamma-dhatu, and Bodhi-dhatu - which will develop into Nibbana-dhatu.

The 4 noble truths. The first noble truth - Dukkha on 3 levels:

1. on an ordinary level
2. on the level when pleasure ends, it turns into Dukkha
3. on the level of atomic life - with its friction, radiation, etc. - is not peaceful at all, but agitated and painful.

The second noble truth - the cause of pain lies in us (and not outside of us) by our reaction with craving and aversion.

The third noble truth - pain ends as much as we have let gone of our reactions.

The fourth noble truth - the path: Sila - Samadhi - Panna.

But not the intellectual-, but only the actual experiential-wisdom will help.

The story of a monk who saw in a passing by beauty nothing but a heap of bones (a mass of bubbles = Panna).

day 10

Sila is the base to strengthen Samadhi - with strong Samadhi one develops Panna.

Anicca-vijja, which chases away the habit pattern of the mind. Dhamma-dhatu, the understanding of Dhamma. Bodhi-dhatu, the enlightenment of experiential truth which ultimately leads to Nibbana-dhatu.

The story of a monk, who plucked a Lotus flower from a pond where other people had done the same: A nearby celestial being (Deva) warns him of his broken Sila, explaining that a serious monk is like a clean cloth and every little stain is already too much on such a bright cloth.

Therefore - never compare yourself with others, who are already dirty. The monk, very glad about this celestial warning, asks the Deva to become his guard and to warn him in future too. The Deva rebukes the monk for his silly plea.

Dhamma should make a serious meditator to be self-dependent. Don't expect warnings from others.

Everyone - not gone to the end of the path like the Buddha - will form a philosophical belief, a sect altogether, from what he had experienced till the stage he reached on the path.

The 62 main philosophical views. But only one who has experienced the 4 noble truths completely can have real Samma-ditthi.

About Sampajanna: to the continuous experience of arising and passing away, one has to exercise it like Anapana - when the mind wanders away, just bring it back till it stays Sampajanna - like when Samadhi becomes good.

day 11

Having done a few 10-day courses, where you always succeed from a base of Sila - now - with some more experience of the path you can start the 8fold noble path in the right way: With 'right-understanding' as its very first step.

...62 major wrong views (as the day before), like:

Everything is determined by God, or Kamma, or by chance.

In all these 3 views there is no possibility for liberation.

Also all scientific-curiosity (except for livelihood) don't help.

Only when one has experienced the 4 noble truth within oneself (and not only intellectual) - one arrives at Samma-ditthi.

Samma-sankappo also has to be with right view: That the mind matters most - everything is mind made - in a deed (kamma) done always the volitions counts.

Samma-ditthi - in the same way - has to be with Samma-vaca, Samma-kammanta, Samma-ajiva, Samma-vayamo and Samma-sati: Awareness of the body-sensations, with their arising and passing away, i.e. Sampajanna.

Only Samma-samadhi with Sampajanna (on the level of body sensations) from the very first Jhana onward will liberate. In this way one has to include Samma-ditthi on every step on the noble 8fold path.

day 12

Again: Every step on the noble 8fold path has to be with Samma-ditthi, Sampajanna, Anicca-vijja-nana, Bhavana-maya-panna, etc.

The story of a recluse, who wanted to reach beyond the world by walking to the end of the world. The Buddha advised him: Only within oneself can one go beyond the 31 (Buddhist) planes of existence - by way of the 8fold path and Sampajanna on the level of body-sensations.

At first, all those Sankharas - which could drag one at the next rebirth to the 4 lower planes, are cleared out. Until this kind of Sankhara is completely gone - and one experiences for the first time Nibbana, and becomes Sotapanna etc.

Only with Anicca-vijja on the level of body-sensation one eradicates Sankharas. But when one very strong Sankhara threatens completely to overpower you - than use temporarily for your help: Work a bit (laundry), lie down; Sila-, Dana-, Buddha-, Dhamma-, Sangha-, Maranupassana, Metta-bhavana, hard breathing, etc.

Daily repeated Instruction:

'Every moment, moment to moment -
every moment, moment to moment - every moment, moment to moment -

may you all experience Dhamma-dhatu, arise Bodhi-dhatu:

The awakening to the truth on the experiential level pertaining to the 5 aggregates.

Mind and Matter, Mind and Matter, constantly arising and passing away -
arising and passing away - arising and passing away.

Realizing this reality,
surveying the whole body from head to feet and from feet to head in different ways.

Keep on realizing this reality - keep on realizing this reality -

keep on developing Dhamma-dhatu, Bodhi-dhatu,

which ultimately will turn into Nibbana-dhatu.

Keep on working - keep on working - keep working - keep working.'

day 13

Between 2 Sammasambuddha the teaching always gets lost. Because the teachings are taken to extremes: Like giving too much importance to only 1 of the 5 Silas (like not to kill, extreme fasting etc.). Thereby the middle-path is lost. And even by only a little diversion from the path - liberation can not be reached.

Also the 8 Jhanas without Sampajanna and Anicca-vijja only leads to higher Brahmic-planes and after death (after many eternities) Brahmans are reborn

in a lower realm with a lot of pain - because the Bhava-sankharas, which lead to such destinations - have only been suppressed.

The 8 Jhanas, which lead to higher planes are called Lokia-jhanas (worldly-Jhanas).

Starting, for example, with a Kasina in a disc form: The first stage with an acquired sign, called Parikamma-nimitta comes with Khanika-samadhi (momentary-).

The second stage with Uppaha-nimitta relates to access-concentration.

At the third stage, called Apana-samadhi, the Nimitta becomes Patibhaga.

The elements of the 1st Jhana are:

1. Vicara (attention to the object)
2. Vitakka (continued attention to the object)
3. Piti (mental joy)
4. Sukkha (pleasant bodily sensations)
5. Citta-ekagata (one-pointedness of the mind)

For changing to the 2nd Jhana: one proceeds through Khanika-, Upacara- and Apana-samadhi - absorption of the 2nd Jhana - where the 1st and 2nd elements: Vicara and Vitakka, subside.

For going into the 3rd Jhana one follows the same approach as before -and Piti will subside.

At the 4th Jhana: Sukkha together with all 5 sense-door-impressions of the body (Rupa) subside completely. And only Citta-ekagata and Upekkha (equanimity) remains.

The object for the 5th Jhana is infinite sky.

For the 6th: Infinite consciousness.

At the 7th: Nothing is there.

At the 8th Jhana the object is: Neither Sanna (recognizing, valuating) nor Non-sanna.

These 8 Jhanas purify only partially.

But only with Sampajanna on the level of body sensations - this happens to the depth of the mind - and already with Khanika- or Upacara Samadhi.

If you can not enter the stream of Sotapanna, at least by Sampajanna you are entering the stream of Dhamma and become a Cula-sotapanna (lesser Sotapanna: who will find good conditions in his next life for practice again).

While doing a long course, one starts to see the Dhamma clearer and clearer. As scientist knows the cause and its effect, so a Sammasambuddha knows cause and effect of mind and matter together.

To show the relation of what's necessary to know - of the noble 8fold path for the ending of suffering - and what is superfluous to know: The Buddha equaled the few leaves in his hand to those leaves of the whole forest.

A Sammasambuddha knows as much as there are leaves in a forest - compared to the leaves one hand can hold - and what is really necessary to know about cause and effect.

By eradicating this cause - that effect is eradicated. As in Paticca-samupada. The Buddha said: One who knows the Paticca-samupada - knows the Dhamma (and vis-versa).

It is Vedana which leads to clinging. But the real cause is Ignorance by which all Sankharas start. With Anicca-vijja-nana - Avijja get eradicated and no Sankhara can start.

Mind and Matter cause 6 sense-bases, 6 sense-bases cause contact, contact causes Vedana, Vedana causes Sanna to give a valuation, valuation causes Vedana to turn pleasant or unpleasant, such Vedana causes clinging or aversion etc. ...

But with Vijja (Sampajanna) - vibrations (sense-objects) meet other vibrations (sense-doors) which cause further vibrations (Vedana all over the body) - and no more reaction (craving or aversion) will occur. In this way misery is eradicated.

The story of Sariputta who became Sotapanna only after hearing second-hand about the Dhamma: Everything arises on the mind because of an cause - with the eradication of that cause everything ceases.

Remain Sampajanna day and night - know the arising and passing away at the 6 sense-doors - continuously.

Paticca-samupada is the law of nature (same as above).

What is Avijja? It is the ignorance of this law and the 4 noble truth, which also implies the reverse order of Paticca-samupada.

The only remedy: Anicca-vijja-nana - constantly Sampajanna on the level of body sensations.

About birth, death and Bhava-sankharas.

day 16

Paticca-samupada. With Vedana there is a crossroad: one leading to Dukkha, the other to the ending of Dukkha.

A Sutta: Many winds blow on a mountain... alike many different feelings are found in the body. Be aware of sensations with the understanding of impermanence, continuously.

Anicca-vijja-nana - Sampajanna day and night: Half fallen asleep, but still aware of sensations: Arising and passing - but without forcing yourself (don't go to extremes).

Asava, the flow of intoxication, is the flow of hormones in the blood circulation during occurrence of defilements. An-asava is the complete freedom of such influences. First one has to learn to remain equanimous with unpleasant sensations, which is relatively easy. Next one has to learn to be equanimous with the pleasant sensation (Bhanga), which is full of danger and fearful - because in the name of Vipassana one starts to create Sankharas of craving, which are nothing than agitation and misery.

Finally one experiences neutral sensations in a very calm state of mind, i.e. Passaddhi, before one reaches Vedana-nirodha.

day 17

The Buddha's advice to meditators was: Be Sato, be Sampajanno and let the time ripen by itself (be aware of sensations - know that they arise and pass away - and leave the rest to Dhamma).

Equanimity with the understanding of impermanence will bring up the sleeping defilements (Anusaja-kilesa). With equanimity alone - as in the 4th Jhana they wouldn't come up - but only become suppressed.

Story of Ananda, trying hard to become Arahant for the first Buddhist Council of 500 Arahants right after the Buddha's death. As long as he struggled too much for it - with too much ego involved - he failed. The moment he relaxed and gave up, just before sunrise of the day the council to be held, laying down - and before touching the pillow with his head - Ananda proceeded from Sotapanna (which he already was) through Sakadagamin, and Anagamin to Arahant.

Never give a time-limit to success in your meditation efforts!

The 5 Nivaranas (called: enemies) keep us away from being continuous Sampajanna.

But the 5 friends (Indriyas, Balas) will help us (Saddha, Viriya, Samadhi, Sati, Panna).

Also the 7 enlightenment-factors (Bojjhngas) will help - as they develop 1 by 1 to full strength:

Sati: Sampajanna with sensations.

Dhamma-vicaya: dissecting, diverting, disintegrating. Analyzing and investigating reality - for example the 4 elements of the body as they arise and pass away - or of the mind: Vedana - arising and passing. The same with Sanna and Sankharas. Even with Vinnana one has to be aware of arising and passing of the 6 different Vinnanas at the 6 sense-doors, conditioned by the contact of sense-objects and sense-organs;

Bhanga is full of danger - Adinava - and full of threat - Bhaya - because it is so easy to crave for it. And by craving also pain and unpleasantness get conditioned at the same time.

day 18

Be continuously Sampajanna and try to understand Dhamma clearer and clearer.

The 7 enlightenment factors are:

1. Sati: continuous awareness of arising and passing away

2. Dhamma Vicaya: analyzing the elements of body and mind and experience continuously their arising and passing away

3. Piti: pleasant sensations. First one makes unpleasant sensations to tools to eradicate the Sankharas of aversion (with Sampajanna). Once the worst of these unpleasant sensations are gone, one has to do the same with pleasant sensations - like a flow of subtle vibrations and Bhanga - in respect to Sankharas of craving. But here one has to be very alert and see the danger and threat (Adinava + Bhaya) of craving for it.

The story of a parrot, who got many times warned of a certain hunter. The parrot learned and repeated the warnings verbally again and again. Yet, finally he was caught by the hunter. This is a warning of mere intellectual understanding. When one craves - one only creates further misery for oneself.

But if one experiences Bhanga with Anicca-vijja-nana, then Piti turns into an enlightenment-factor

4. Viriya: the effort to stay in the present moment with Anicca-vijja-nana, and not in thoughts of the future or the past.

5. Passaddhi: calmness, with which the ignorance related to neutral sensations can get eradicated. One has to be very alert not to mistake this calmness as Nibbana, as there are no more thoughts - but one has to look-out for a tiny oscillation with the understanding of Anicca - to turn it into a Bojjhanga

6. Samadhi: a concentration without thoughts but the understanding of Anicca, to make it a Bojjhanga.

7. Upekkha: equanimity with Anicca-vijja, for it to become a Bojjhanga. Otherwise it cant help, as the Upekkha of the 4th Jhana.

Once the worst Sankharas are gone, who would otherwise lead to the lower planes of existence, one experience for the first time Nibbana of the Sotapanna stage. Then one has to continue the work in the same way... till reaching Arahant stage.

But even as an enterer of the stream of Dhamma, one will be reborn in a place where one can practice: 'Atapi Sampajanna Satima' (the teaching of the Satipatthana-discourse course).

The 37 elements pertaining to the path: The noble 8-fold path, 5 faculties, 5 strengths, 7 factors of enlightenment, 4 efforts (Patthana), 4 Satipatthanas (Kaya-, Vedana-, Citta-, and Dhammanupassana) and the 4 bases to spiritual power (Iddipada):

1. Canda: determination, one knows with the first 10-day course: this is the path and stays on it.
2. Citta: concentration, one is very skilled in Jhanas
3. Viriya: effort, one who is very energetic in meditation
4. Muncita: one with strong analytical understanding.

Every yogi has all 4 bases - but usually one is very predominant, because of its development in former lives.

The 7 Visuddhis (Sutta of the 7 relays-chariots of a king): Sila-, Citta- (Samadhi), Ditthi-, Doubt-, Maggo-amaggo-, the 9 Insight-knowledges: Udaya/Baya, Bhanga, Adinava, Bhaya, (the story of a man with his hair on fire), Nibbida, etc.

The work always remains the same: Anicca-vijja-nana, day and night, 'Atapi Sampajanna Satima!'

Day 16 and 28 of a 30-day course - 'Bhavanga Instructions':

Certainly, many Dhamma-friends would dissuade me to publish this highest teachings of Goenkaji. But in reality, already in a 10-day course Goenka instructs to penetrate any point in the body for a minute or two where gross sensations remained - with awareness of Anicca - and after so-called Bhanga has occurred!

Because it happens quite naturally with many meditators that already in 10-day courses at the heart such spots remain - one can read about this centerpoint-method of Sayagyi U Ba Khin elsewhere too - and the teachers in 10-day courses make quite a fuss and don't want to clarify this alleged advanced instruction and keep it secret only for meditators in the long courses - I consider it very helpful to publish it here.

The warning - such advanced instructions could do harm (many meditators experience a pain similar to a heart-attack with it) - doesn't count, because already with the ordinary 10-days meditation-instructions one plays around with these body-energies equally - and in this very vulnerable mental state of a retreat:

! Which already does harm to a few - without any teacher seem to know: That by concentration on any point of the body (first for 3 days at the upper-lips, than at the top of the head) one accumulates natural life-energy there, and then - by moving increasingly faster with this concentrated life-energy through ones body - energy-blockades are blown up there (often caused by traumatic childhood experiences) !

As Goenkaji says in the Satipatthana-discourse question & answer talk: 'Silly talk about Kundalini - everywhere in the body is energy - Kundalini can even be felt in the small finger.'

'Once the surface and the inside of the body-sensations have dissolved,
even if there are still some gross sensations left -
but a undercurrent of subtle vibrations going through them -
it is considered Bhanga-state.

In this case one may stay 1-2 minutes one-pointedly at the center-point
below the chest bone,
the place of the physical heart,
the solar plexus and Bhavanga -
the deepest level of the subconscious mind.

After that always spread your awareness of sensations for 1-2 minutes over
the whole body.

Finally sweep the whole body in one breath.

But don't force anything,

just let it happen.

In the case one has experience with this center-point technique,
one may stay up to 5 minutes with Bhavanga.

Whatever the experience may be,
moving from place to place with gross sensations,
or sweeping the whole body in one breath,
or piercing the spine,
or with Bhavanga,
or feeling the whole body at once,
it does not matter!

Only by not reacting and remaining equanimous with the prevailing
sensations -

with the understanding of impermanence -

defilements and misery get eradicated.'

Please remain aware, that all of these meditation-instructions are noted out of
memory, and could contain possible misrepresentations.

I strongly dissuade everyone to follow the Bhavanga-instructions
- unless one has received them from a qualified teacher !

Be warned of the seriousness of such an undertaking -
and try to become proficient in the protective practices Goenka teaches
first!

Any hurt or harm suffered - as in the long- and even beginner-courses - out of not understanding my warning and dissuasion, nobody can be made liable, than yourself.

If such happens accidentally in a first 10-day course and you experience what seems to be hallucinations and paranoia - **and** you can not handle these experiences anymore - (such experiences many meditators do have, but still can handle them - the Buddha to be had to go through such ordeals too):

Stop to meditate ! Don't believe a teacher or Dhamma-worker - who might try to convince you that by stopping you could do harm to yourself. By this statement they show their non-competence in psychological assistance. Only you can really know yourself. Be kind to yourself, eat much and spicy, do lots of bodily demanding work or sports. Talk to gentle people and ask them to be with you - to assist you in going through such a psychosis. Although painful to ones core, people do come out more matured after such experiences. In most cases meditation-induced hallucinations will end soon after leaving the meditation.

If it continues and you have no one to assist you - or can't take it any longer - get psychiatric help. They can help you to dive through such experiences - by suppressing its symptoms - but can not really heal it either. You might end up on medication the rest of you life. This applies in particular to one percent of all citizens, who - according to statistics - suffer at one point in their life schizophrenia (of which about 50 percent heal spontaneously) - and which could be ignited by a first course. And to others, more vulnerable through childhood-abuse or life-long inclination to depressions, suicidal thoughts, etc.

Responses: First Course Disciples

39

Sun, 16 April 2006

Wolfgang, I'm sending this to you personally... to support you, not to denigrate others or the institutions they work for.

I do not have the same amount of sitting time as you do, but I had a similar path in some respects, and within minutes of first practicing Vipassana had a powerful experience, which still reverberates years later. Also like you, I had some unpleasant experience, so I did not return, but tried to keep my practice going on my own, which has been difficult.

As far as "belief" in Goenka is concerned, the very thought of that is anti-Vipassana. What I found through practice is an inner sense that I can trust, from knowing how much water to put in the rice pan to knowing how to be someplace at the right time, to knowing when to speak and when not. The idea of Vipassana for me is that no books, no church, no liturgy, no spoken words are needed, one connects with a source (Dhamma) and one has a flow of correctness inside that never fails.

The trick is to keep the connection open and flowing, not constricted by intellectual constructions, and that's where a 10-day is handy, the energy there is strong and one can reconnect more easily, just like a few hard breaths help you find your breath again when doing Anapana. So perhaps the answer was to not damn the whole thing because of the defects. We have a saying in this country, which is often misused by politicians trying to explain laziness or corruption: "The perfect is the enemy of the good."

If you want to do a 10-day you might look into the Insight Meditation Society in Massachusetts, but they do charge for their classes. Or look at non-center courses, there are several in the US and Canada, so probably Europe as well.

I cannot judge the confrontation with the teacher as well as you can. It would have never occurred to me to confront the teacher, because I went there for my own purposes and wasn't concerned with what they believed. I have had issues with Goenka's people, but not so extreme. If you are interested in the details, I can share them with you. Also, the book about Dipa Ma might be useful to you and your practice; she had a practical

approach to Vipassana and the anecdotes in the book have been useful to me. Best wishes

Links: - [Great Western Vehicle: Goenka + Vipassana Cult](#). - I'm not saying I agree, just pointing to them. I like Goenka - have nothing against him, but I also am not well-read.

40

Mon, 17 Apr 2006

thanks for your mail with many hints. If you read the new version of my text - you will understand me much better and know: I am such a Goenka Enthusiastic who would never condemn it. And, yes - I have to check my perfectionism. But you don't have to be concerned about where I could practice now - not without reason I am so glad about this path and even use the Pali word for gladness in my email address.

You will also know how it came to my confrontation. Well - that was how you worded it - for me it was more the exchange of opinions, where one usually can recognize how far one went in Dhamma: By one's ability to be able to listen and accommodate and contribute to different views without attacking the other personally. And sometimes - by becoming attacked - there might be something growing out of it which in the end becomes even more than it was intended for.

The links you send I read. - Well, what to say. They are mostly from the 90 percent of first time students, who never come back. And I do not agree with their way of expression - they are just very good example in not being constructive at all - without wanting to blame them for. For their positions are so understandable to me.

For me the problem lies more in lack of wisdom - not differentiating between the monks and the laymen's path - and therefore: Being too demanding and becoming too entrenched in ones own style. And yes, that would be Goenkaji's responsibility he was never able to get up to. As so many others who teach what helped them the most and can't imagine any other ways of approach.

Of course I am very interested in the issues you had with Goenka-bums. It's now one of my intentions to create a place where meditators can talk more skillfully about what concerned them without personally attacking. So that those who might have done wrongly can listen to it without having right away the feeling to have to

justify themselves and to defend their very core. This is very difficult once you read how much I, myself, have to criticize. All the best, in Dhamma

41

Tue, 18 Apr 2006

I read your text, not all the attributions, but what you wrote. And I read through the pamphlet at the end, very interesting - liked the Asimov article.

My situation with the Goenksters was kind of lightweight by comparison to yours. I'm no philosophy scholar. I'm a reader, but mostly for fun. The sutras put me to sleep quickly, they remind me of what Mark Twain said about: The 'Book of Mormon'... "chloroform in print". I do get Pariyatti's "Word's of the Buddha" in my email every day, and once a month I go through them and see if there are any new ones.

I really do not understand why all the words and definitions and such are needed when one can just "be" and "do". If one is pure, what one is and does will be pure. I'm not interested in striving, because I can't really say that anyone else is equipped to judge what I should do better than I am. For this same reason I think modern medicine is crazy.

Also, the "now" is the only time for right action, the important thing is to be here now. I like learning from others, but not from one other. I'm a shopper. So I liked Goenka's method because - from my perspective - he looked at Buddhism like a businessman, hard and straight. What works and what doesn't? Let's cut that part out, it's silly - and let's accentuate what works.

And, while he was doing this sorting, he invented Heavy Metal. I could not listen to his chanting without being tempted to play air guitar. That's where they all got their chops. Seriously, listen to his chants and substitute an overdriven guitar. Wes Nisker wrote a book about the cultural changes in the 50's and 60's, and he took a course directly from Goenka in the 60's. Surely many musicians were doing the same thing.

Anyway, I liked his method and had good results, but then there was this problem: Which came in the form of a gay man from NYC, who became interested in me. When I arrived at the center I had been celibate for 9 years, nearly 10, because I have severe psoriasis. But it's not on my face or other normally visible areas. And when I was active I was hetero, without any interest in any other way of porking.

So I'm sitting there on orientation night, and he comes up and asks for my room number. I thought it was odd, but remembered that I had seen double-occupancy rooms when moving in. I told him that I had a single room. He said: "Well! I was just as-king", and huffed off. I forgot about him in seconds, I was there to do serious work and went back to paying close attention to how things worked.

Then he started following me around during breaks. I am most comfortable in nature, so I would walk down to the creek and hang out, listening to the wind and water, watching for wildlife, communing. I'd look up, and there he was, out in the rain, sitting up on the embankment above me.

I couldn't talk now, no way to tell him ...off, so I'd go elsewhere. So would he. I would be eating and he would be staring at me from another table. Once he tried to sit across from me and I got right up and he did too, blushing, and we both went to different tables. I would come out of the meditation cells (I went early and during breaks) and his sandals would be on top of mine.

So I went to the manager, and he told me I was probably imagining things. I should have left, because the anxiety I felt was derailing my practice and pissing me off. Our rooms had only curtains for doors, so I started carrying any personal documents with me in my trousers (wore the same pair of pants for the 10 days, worn pair of camo BDU's) and hiding other things as best I could.

I had to take full changes to the showers, because he would brush his teeth at the end sink and wait to watch me to step out of the shower. I considered stepping out shirtless, so he could see the huge red scaly patches, but decided it would disturb others who were not involved in this problem.

I went again to the manager, and he said there was nothing he could do unless he personally observed the issue, but he refused to eat with me in the cafeteria or go with me to the creek for break. So it came down to breaking my silence, staying, or leaving. I felt absolutely betrayed by the Sangha with this behavior.

The manager's job was to protect me (or at least referee) from this kind of crap, that's why the women were on the other side of the fence. There was an issue reported somewhere about a gay woman being denied application to a 30-day, but I read that Goenka overturned that ruling.

So I haven't gone back, don't want to be in that helpless position again. If I do go back and something similar happens I'll probably scare the infidel with a sharp noise, ala Zen master. Although I'm certainly not one - it often does

work. So my take on Goenka's people is that they are very mixed in their skill levels, and that not nearly all of them possess wisdom.

This is very much like any corporate structure, and surely Goenka built the organization like he would a business. I watched his people struggle with other things when the answer was immediately apparent to me, can't give you any examples. They try, they really do, but they aren't fully realized themselves, this is the price for a corporate structure with mostly volunteer help.

Even Ford and GM are in deep trouble right now, with highly-paid CEO's, because they cannot see clearly. Their inability to discern a real issue from an imagined one is what showed me the level of wisdom I was dealing with. And yes, that guy did try to talk to me the minute we were allowed to speak again. I kept silent with him, which was better than screaming. So much for the clumsy Metta practice at the end...

From the reading I've done, I'd say that Goenka's method is optimized towards making new students interested in the practice, and the way to do that is through immediate results. So it's optimized towards something happening quickly, and the peril is that the method might be too advanced for some students and they lose it. One woman in that group screamed for days. Canon fodder?...&^)

This also means that it is inappropriate for advanced students, because it's an edited practice, focused on initial interest and not on deep readings of the teachings. The healthiest postings I've read are from people who used it as a first step, then went on to other things. All of them wrote that they were glad it was there, because it got them interested and compelled them to go forward. But they all used something else to continue their path.

That strategy makes the most sense to me, just using his centers as a place to recharge once a year, not as a place to lean upon for guidance or knowledge. It's sort of a "fast-food" Buddhism; it fills you up, but a steady diet could kill you....&^) One poster apparently registers under a different name every time, to keep them from tracking him.

And meanwhile, the most important part cannot be taken away, which is the easy-to-follow method, which works amazingly well for something stripped down, like an old hot-rod without fenders that can disappear over the horizon in a blink.

One place for more inquiry and discussion is this website, here's a link to a 4-page forum entry on - [Goenka Vipassana Meditation](#). - You could sign up

and post concerns there, although I did notice that they ban the very mention of four practices (which I then googled and read about).

Also, here's a link to the book I mentioned yesterday, I found it helpful and inspiring - [Dipa Ma: The Life and Legacy of a Buddhist Master](#). - It's got another angle on Vipassana, you might find it useful even though it's simply written. Meanwhile keep going, no looking back...

42

Mon, 18 Apr 2006

thanks again for your sharing. Nowadays I am similar in experiencing the Suttas like sleeping pills. But they did give me a much wider understanding - where Goenkaji's teachers just confused by contradicting themselves. So for a clarification of the context from which this practice is better understood - than through Goenka's simplifications - they are the best there is.

But I am - like you - not really a scholar. I mostly read anthologies to avoid the repetitions. Although during my time in the forest-monastery in Burma it definitely was like that - the Buddha drove his points home as if he were speaking to me - by reading only one Sutta a day. Things are changing.

You are right that you are the judge of what is best for you. But in a huge organization like Goenka's such will lead only to dissent and fencing off - as in my case. In organizations such guidelines - as there are in the Pali - are very valuable in settling issues under consideration of each one's point of view - and quite democratically.

Of course, I learn what is helping me the most at any given time of any other. But I have to admit, that I readily call myself a Buddhist, because none other than the Buddha made it so clear that ULTIMATE TRUTH ('paramattha sacca' - I search this word in the Pali Sutta and could find it only once with the following understanding:) - people only claim for their own aggrandizement and to beat others in arguments.

As a Buddhist I can practice peacefully without getting involved in telling others what would be best for them - more or less telling: "You are too stupid to know yourself". What is just the opposite in helping the other to find strength in him to

be able to depend on his own experience alone. And sadly, supporting in this way only dependence.

You are right that Goenkaji did cut out and kept what was most useful for his own practice. The problem: Most people are different from Goenka. That still would not make much of a problem - everyone can just leave after having given it a serious try. The problem starts when one gives it a serious try and one hasn't found it fitting, one has been offended as a 'weak-minded person' for 10 days. And that is for no good - especially with the vulnerability - part and parcel of such retreats. Certainly it is not good in finding confidence in ones own experience of what's wholesome and what isn't.

Now some words to your disappointment with 'Goenksters' - how it just appears to me after reading your account in comparison to my experience: What really struck me first was that in one year of Goenka retreats I never had such an experience! - Which on top of it, caused you never to come back.

Right after my first course I did a retreat with Christopher Titmus and other western teachers in the Thai Temple in Bodhgaya. Because I thought: Goenka wants you to decide which tradition to follow to admit you to his advanced courses. And because I rightly assumed that in those advanced courses he would be more reasonable - I didn't want to delay that any further without having at least tried one other Vipassana tradition.

After Christopher's retreat, which I really appreciated, I knew Goenka's tradition would be the tradition to stick with. The biggest difference for me was: Men and Women (about 130 in total) were sitting in a very small hall all mixed up. But contrary to Goenkaji's retreats (mainly after that) I felt no sexual desire at all!

I, like you, lived quite similar long times without any sexual relation, although I really appreciate woman and I call more of them closer friends than men - but sex compared to friendship just doesn't have an importance in my life. Except my times in Goenka-retreat. This artificial separation between men and women - in the Indian context certainly very appropriate - just gave me a delirious desire for sex. God thanks - that desire always ended together with the retreats.

But in Christopher's retreat most of the time just Metta flowed - certainly for its relaxed atmosphere - as it did in Goenka's retreat only for short moments. For other practitioners this is just the opposite: They feel more desirous without separation. So, in my eyes, there is no easy solution to this question about

separation. Contrary to you I tend to think - to lift this contradiction of separating hetero and not gays - is to abolish it, at least in the west. Many would probably disagree with me. But to be honest, this is just not an important issue to me at all.

The important thing for me was to gain access of a part of my underworld which was always lurking there, influencing unconsciously and always ready to attack (given the circumstances trigger it). Call it genes, demons, kamma or asavas - I don't care - put to become familiar with them.

Therefore, I see your experience from this standpoint: You didn't even mentioned this anger of yours as a demon, you only saw some other do such wrong. Beside that, so many women becoming harassed not only during 10-days, and not only with polite expression of silent interest. This guy was just facing his demon on that retreat, and he was not skilled at that as you were. Probably a first time student too.

But how did he react after you ignored him on day 10? - Probably he left his demon at that retreat - as most others do - and didn't continue to stalk you in your daily life. Maybe he never came back to a retreat like you, because he found the demons - that arise in a Goenka retreat - are too overwhelming. There are so many reasons to become angry or desirous at Goenka's retreats. Especially, because this meditation technique does something deliberately to unleash such demons to be able to become familiar with them. This is its very aim.

You, and that is very understandable, seem to be concerned about how to remove your triggers. And thereby only solidify triggers for others: Like me, just as an example, where the separation of sexes causes my demons of sexual desire to arise. Contrary to you, I don't want to make Goenka courses become more restrictive than they already are.

But I am pretty sure you were right in your decision never to come back to this tradition. Because I can promise you from my own experience, with every course - certainly equanimity gets stronger - but the demons as well - unbelievable so - too.

You write: Don't look back. For me one thing became very clear out of what ever was happening to me in Goenka-retreats: Well, that's me. - Meaning the part which was suffering, and there one can really learn to let go, forgive oneself and be with it, however terrible it is - in the present moment.

Wishing you the best on your path, in Dhamma

43

Tue, 2 May 2006

Wolfgang, thanks for all that. I read it carefully and am considering it all (ruminating?). I'm at a place where it's difficult to write back, not much time or energy left at the end of the day, and a shared connection. Will try to do so later.

Also been looking at going back for a 10-day, could use a refill of clarity, or a draining of mud, whichever it is. I'm only a couple of hours from the one in Mass. Will write more sometime ...

44

Wed, 3 May 2006

I'm glad to hear from you. When I wrote my last email I felt quite ambiguous: On one side it brought it to the point what I wanted to say - on the other side it could have easily been misunderstood (- as if I would know it somehow better). And that, after showing your kindness in your letter by supporting me.

I just trusted my gut feeling - that you could distinguish very well what could have been only a speculation on my side - and which part of my letter would resonate with that - which is really true for yourself. Good to hear, you did. Please take your time to write back. How lucky you are to live so close to Massachusetts. Greetings

45

Tue, 30 May 2006

Ya know, maybe it's time to recognize that the people who run the centers aren't worth arguing with, it's like trying to argue with any other zealot/robot/tron/tool. Their minds make good walls for playing handball, but that's about it. And I don't think you feel secure about your role in what happened, otherwise you wouldn't be asking for other's opinions about it.

I still have doubt about going back myself, and still think that the rules need to be enforced on men and women and gays alike. I really do not feel that I invited that *** in any way, I was just sitting there as inside as I could be,

just tried to be too "nice", or indirect with him, rather than punching him or reporting him then and there. I'm learning that I cannot assume that others are as serious or enlightened as I am. And that I need to be pro active about protecting myself, since subtle answers often aren't enough for uncultivated minds.

The important thing is not the retreat. The whole point, far as I can see, is to develop and nourish an internal guidance system, cultivating a relationship with - and trust in - the quiet internal guidance that exists in all of us, but is often ignored in the bustle and flow of modern life.

The idea is to "take it out in traffic" as a friend of mine says, to use it in the real world. One of the first things I used it for was to measure water for rice. Good (still/unstimulated) mind, good rice. Scattered/angry/agitated mind, rice needs help, more or less water. When I first got out I made good rice every time for a while, now I've been traveling so so long it's been months since I made rice. If it was good rice now it would be luck, most likely.

So I'm thinking about going back because I need to restart my practice. I'm doing other things, one that's interesting is a mindful yoga-influenced stretching, based on what the body wants to do, and not the brain. Often takes some time to get down to that layer, but it's worth it. I always feel refreshed and centered afterwards, and I can do it anywhere. No one taught me, it just started to happen one day and I went with it, its blissful and freeing, but not as intense and self-changing as a retreat.

But the ability to sit is gone, couldn't hold two seconds right now. Anyway, if you really want to go back, use another name to register, saw that others on the forums do that to get back in. And go there for yourself, not someone else. As Sakyamuni said, tend your own sheep. I'm starting to really appreciate that concept in my own life.

Sat, 3 Jun 2006

I consider everyone worth to enter in an exchange of opinion. And if you don't want to become a wall for playing handball yourself - it is always better to ask. Everyone experiences his life out of his particular valid perspective. And to be only interested in one's own would come dangerously close to dogma. Real life never is so solid. - But there is a time for everything - and yours might just be to tend your own sheep for a while.

As I already wrote: This *** was no different in that he had to face a Sankhara (using Goenkaji's terminology) of craving - as you yours of aversion. - You've been subtler then - but to rave about it for years I don't consider particular enlightened. I would have been really better you punched him then and there, instead of still punching yourself until today.

I would not think it foresighted for me - to lie to be able to meditate in Goenka courses. 'Right Intention' comes right after 'Right View' and one really forms one's realities with it. - Once you wrote, your situation with the 'Goenksters' was kind of lightweight by comparison to mine. I start to think it possible to be the other way round: After all, my opinions didn't keep me away from practicing 1 year in such retreats, and 2 1/2 further on my own!

And such really helped me not to worry anymore about 'taking it out in the traffic'. But I am sure, you will find the right amount of water just in time for the rice to become tasty again. Many good wishes

Responses: Critiques

These pages will remain in the process of email exchange added. The reason why, up to here, almost only letters in support for my inquiry and little critique is included: I only received critiques in which I generally get accused, for example, of wanting to split the Sangha - or that I wrote this page only because of my own deluded and defiled mind - and without giving my a chance to understand in which of my words this was seen, or by giving any Sutta references. Some don't want to be published even anonymous.

Meanwhile - until I receive more challenging critiques - I add such conversations below. I always got the impression that their aim is to dissuade me from making my concerns public - otherwise, why they never became concise? It is certainly not because I am without faults (by adding Pali-references I could discover and correct many mistakes myself). But by all means - I don't consider these conversations particularly helpful to become more wholesome about it - and therefore put them at the very end of this page.

Some advised me, for my aim - to create a place where disciples of Goenka could exchange their experiences and opinions without fears - a discussion group would be much more appropriate. But as there still seems to be no real demand for a serious discussion about the issues I raise for inquiry, I think this page - for now - will do. But I tried to put up '[a blog](#)' (without been given as much response as this page) and a few posts too, where I ask for help to improve this page. For example:

["How to criticize constructively"](#)

["Dhamma for disciples of Goenkaji"](#)

For my practice in Khanti-parami

(uffh.., still such a long way to go..)

3

Sun, 26 Mar 2006

... after all it's 43 pages and I won't read it in the nearer future ... With the title I don't understand how you mean 'inquiry'. 'Inquiry' means acquisition request or assay in the sense of questioning witnesses or experts? But what exactly you want to know of us - to whom you send these pages?

... And by that I am already at its content: Purely formal, your pages contain many questions - but for its bigger part they are only rhetoric questions

which more or less directly aim at the discrediting of Goenkaji and his motivation. I don't consider Goenkaji or the structure of the organization he founded, unimpeachable or above every critique. That they should not be. But the manner of your critique is in many parts not objective and appears strongly carried by your deeply perceived hurt of your 'kick-out'.

I consider it wrong to refuse your participation at courses and group-sittings, but I also see other possible motivations for this decision as merely the demand for blind obedience. Don't you consider it slightly possible that this decision fell out of compassion and could be for your very best? - I do.

Metta by all means is not a pure willing-act and particularly not a 'foremost pleasant sensation'. The causality 'Metta despite cut-off limbs, therefore volition', is as well a fallacy as the assumption: 'If a minimal fraction of A is the precondition for B, than B is mainly A'. Even if Goenkaji would claim that a minimal portion of pleasant sensations would be necessary to give Metta - as far as I know he doesn't - your conclusions would still be wrong. Your errors base, as I believe, on fundamental misunderstandings and/or inaccuracies in your thinking. With that I don't want to offend you, I believe such thinking errors happen very easily.

Also a bid illogical appears to me: Since 10 years you visit courses - apparently quite often - despite your big mistrust in the organization. What are you seeking in an organization you don't have trust in and if you are mainly occupied with the method? You could use the technique without this organization too!

Accordingly I find your demand contradicting: That Goenkaji has to answer you personally. On one side you adjudge him the utmost authority and give him the power to speak the last word in your concerns - on the other side you feed doubt in his authority and write a long pamphlet to undermine it.

When Goenkaji - as an old human with a fairly filled appointment calendar - decides: Not to answer you as one of x-thousands of disciples - than this is his very right. He maybe trusts in the existing structures, as the seed he sowed - whereas you postulate the concern about the future of our organization after his death. Maybe already now he isn't anymore the integrative-figure as you would like to see him. And the structures you are wishing, are already there.

... I hope in any case that it will be possible for you, to keep your daily practice and develop equanimity further. If you ever come to ... you are welcome and we could sit together. With much Metta

Tue, 28 Mar 2006

...'Inquiry' is not meant in the sense of questioning experts or witnesses, but as an investigation and exploration with old students of Goenkaji - those who came to know our organization. And of such co-meditators I would like to know how they perceive our organization. For me there is also a connection to the awakening-factor: 'Investigation of Phenomena'.

And the urgent creation of a possibility where one can exchange one's experiences and opinions - without becoming sanctioned or disparaged because of one's distinct opinions or views about a more wholesome Sasana. If that becomes possible - despite the differences - than one is again working in the one together: To want the very best for all.

Because such a prohibition of one's own opinions lead to the effect, that many serious disciples don't speak out openly and only think their own parts - to be able to participate with this beneficial meditation further on. And only very few bother to tell the truth to the teachers anymore (after my kick-out there will be even less).

Brought to the point: I ask these questions to lift pressure on both sides - the disciples and the teachers. One outcome of this could be that the teacher gives guidance where the disciples are at - and not where they should be, according to the prescribed creed.

About the manner of my text (which you call the content): Here I agree with you, already since months I chaffer around with it, but I find it almost impossible to make someone think about his Sila unless I ask, for example:

'Is this behavior not what slander is about?'

That such a question does not become perceived to the discredit of Goenkaji and his motivation, for that I desperately still seek a better language. That's why I also ask: How to write - as you say - factual, and without wiping it under the carpet?

For example: That since years in Goenkaji's discourses untruths about Ven. Mahasi Sayadaw's Vipassana are taught. If you can give me - as an example - a better formulation for only that one situation - then I agree with you. But if you also

cannot, and can not point it out concisely which parts of my text appear not objective to you - as long this remains an unfounded accusations on your side - something I at least wanted to avoid by trying to voice it as questions, and by sticking as much as possible to a description of it.

Your second assumption: I would only write out of hurt feelings. - Here I assume on your side the view that 'hurt feelings' are not factual for you. If I saw it that way: I would not have left any yardstick for right speech.

That I consider it not only slightly possible that the decision of the Achariya - to exclude me - was taken out of compassion, and not to the good for myself only - I already answered in the last sentence of the 13 pages of my main text.

Referring to Metta: Volition versus Sensation. I believe here we have both inaccuracies in our thinking and I don't feel offended at all. I asked my questions - although you have perceived it differently - not rhetorically or because I wanted to expose others. But to what I wanted to get at: If I make Metta dependent on a teacher, and not on what spontaneously springs forth - do I support with that teaching someone really on the path to liberation - or do I uphold dependence?

So this is not at all a question of either/or - but what is effected with a particular representation. The Buddha said it this way: 'Who, under the strongest pain of a torture, does not react with loving kindness toward his torturers, is not worth to be called a disciple of the Buddha.' (please differentiate: here he talks about his monks and not about us lay people) Can you really call it loving kindness - if there are no good intentions? I believe, here you really think too theoretical.

You call it illogical that I remained for 10 years with an organization which I criticize. I criticize our organization as much as I criticize myself - with myself I also can't just walk away. And I would be only too willing to forgive, as I also repeatedly have to forgive myself. But for such forgiving the other would have to be ready for an exchange.

Further, with this text I asked Goenkaji for the 3rd time to elucidate on these misunderstandings. That's the way we Dhammists to such things - already at the time of the Buddha - before we stop questioning. That out of my plea - in your opinion - suddenly became a demand? That I precisely wanted to receive a word of his authority - you write - I wanted to undermine it? How such associations on your side came about - I leave that to you.

According to your opinion: Goenkaji would already not be the integrative-figure. But sadly the Dhamma of the Buddha neither. And I request the subsequent structures to reveal themselves clear cut - without going to peddle around with the Buddha, the Sangha, S.N. Goenka, or an allegedly non-sectarian truth - if they no more aspire to live up to it.

... thanks for your invitation and again thanks for your well-founded remarks about my grammars. Through your carefulness in grammars I would have wished - honestly said - a bit more substance in respect to its content. Nevertheless, wishing you all the best, in Dhamma

22

Thu, 30 Mar 2006

My man, Wolfgang, listen, I will try to hmmm... well to be as honest as possible and to let you into my thoughts and emotions on the subject you have brought up. English is not my native tongue as well, so I might not be that articulate in expressing myself.

First of all, I had not read all your document, but it seems that you have put a lot of effort into the contemplation and designing of this article. Although it might be superficial of me, I still feel that the exact ins-and-outs of what you have wrote in that article are not that important. What struck me was the mental state, which I felt, would lead someone to such a deed.

I have been practicing Vipassana for almost 4 years now and have taken some courses and Satipatthana courses as well. I have been through many doubts and hesitations concerning this path in general, and Goenkaji's method of expounding that path, in particular.

I am an ... guy, having born to the ... religion, having a very non-eastern background. My first doubts were concerning why was it that I was born ..., I asked myself. If I was meant to be a Buddha follower, why was I not born with at least a religion which in some manner is proximate to the Buddha's background.

For a while I got closer to my native religion but continued taking courses, although I was not practicing regularly. This was the time of pot/hash smoking for me. During that period which lasted for about 6 months (on and off) the doubts that I had concerning Dhamma radiated directly unto my practice and influenced it greatly.

I had many doubts concerning Goenkaji as a person, and I literally threw my mental and personality defects unto him, and actually believed that he was - what later on turned to have been - my own reflection, with all its imperfections.

After a long and unexplainable process of mental forces, and eventually, Vipassana won over ..., since gradually I came to realize that it is more rational, more practical, completely non-sectarian, universal, and absolutely and almost mathematically precise and scientific, to the best of my intuition, intellect and cognitive abilities.

About a year later, I decided to give up smoking and to take Dhamma much more seriously. ...too much seriously. I was so keen on attaining results, and as fast as possible, that I became completely unbalanced to the point of becoming destructive towards myself.

Of course, at that time, during all that time, I was totally unaware of that. Teachers advises passed through me without me giving any attention to them. I sat in Satipatthana courses, simultaneously manipulating Goenkaji's words (recited directly from the Buddha's discourses) to my own satisfaction.

I actually remember sitting at the Dhamma hall during the discourses hearing Goenkaji saying something in a very clear manner, and having a bargaining and debating with him inside my mind - actually fighting with him to prove him wrong. Eventually I always won theses arguments and felt relaxed, having the point of view I wanted to hold on to, and that I was having so much attachment towards, remaining intact. Let me emphasize that what Goenkaji had said could be interpreted wrongly only by a tremendous effort, fueled by a very deep Sankhara of doubt (or any other, for that matter).

Anyhow, that same period of my life was the period of doubts concerning the path of Indian shamanism. I used to read a lot of Castaneda's books ('the teachings of Don Juan', etc.). At that point my story starts a bit more to resemble yours. My great and unbalanced (to say the least) enthusiasm to attain quick and profound results, led me almost without realizing it, to start mixing another technique of meditation into Vipassana. That technique was mentioned in one of Castaneda's books and this also was interpreted to my own liking of what I wanted it to be.

I started practicing Anapana in a different manner, just slightly different - just actively pushing thoughts away and only then returning to the observation of breath - instead of immediately returning to the observation of breath, having it wandered away to thinking. A very slight difference of interpretation, but a huge difference in the mind's attitude, and a much more enormous difference in the results to come...

And indeed, in no time, I had encountered great depths of mind, enormous depths of mind... enormous to the extent of life hazard. The place I had reached was the total absence of light, devoid of sense-doors and their objects, and condensed with and composed of primal fear. Without any more elaboration of these experiences (which will most certainly lead me to lying more that I already probably have), I will note that it was much too big for me.

But me, being me, I felt so unique and so much of a spiritual chosen-one, and my ego inflated so much that I actually tried to endure that 'place', that in the beginning was not right to go to, and not conducive to proper meditation. Having tried that I came to the stage of loosing myself, and loosing Dhamma.

At that point I was desperate and afraid for my life, and started asking teachers what to do, having described to them my situation. But even so, I was still so much attached to that egocentric feeling that I am the only one, or at least one amongst so many, that is so capable to have reached that 'stage', that again.

I was not able to listen to advises from them. I remember that almost, if not all, the times that I turned to teachers for advise, I omitted the most crucial fact: I was mixing another method of meditation, and a very aggressive one, as well. I did not say that.

You wanna know why? Because I did not want to be saved. I did not want to give up my only uniqueness, the only uniqueness I had managed to achieve in my entire life. This was my only way of proving to myself that I am actually worth something. I was not ripened to have given that up, yet.

Nevertheless, at that time I did not know that, and so out of my great fear and mental dismay and confusion, I turned to Goenkaji for advise. My letter to him was demanding, crude, impolite, aggressive, condescending, and confused. In this manner I did explain my entire situation over that very long and elaborate letter, and also gave references from the Sayagyi U Ba Khin journal, the Maha Satipatthana Sutta, and from discourses by Ven. Webu Sayadaw, that allegedly proved that I was right in my point of view (whatever exactly that was), and that his teaching was wrong - literally so.

I actually questioned his authority in the same letter which I sent to him in order to seek his advise. How low can you get, man... anyway, again I omitted the fact that I was mixing techniques. Today I know that at that time, I did not realize to the fullest that I was doing that.

Again, my ego was so strong, that it managed to convince me in a very natural way, by the very actuality of having been myself, that there is no point of doubting myself, no point of doubting the source of the doubt that has arisen concerning my practice, and that there is no possibility that these doubts about myself or about what I am doing, are correct.

Anyhow, Goenkaji returned to me with a very simple answer, saying to me that what I am practicing is not Vipassana. That there are no black voids in Vipassana, that I am probably just very rapidly multiplying Sankharas of Ignorance, and that I should contact my closest teacher or my regional teacher for further advise. He cc'd that reply to the teacher in charge of ... and to the teacher in charge of ...

Again I was stubborn and stiff and debated with my girlfriend and told her that he is stupidly wrong. I said to her: "How can he say that there are no black voids in Vipassana if I ACTUALLY FELT THEM AND SAW THEM WITH MY DIVINE EYE!?!?!?"... even for myself I could not realize that I was wrong. And later on, even after having realized that I was wrong, even to myself it took time to admit that fact. My ego was so strong, so powerful.

The day after I got Goenkaji's answer by email, I sat for morning meditation and felt Goenkaji's superb Metta overwhelming me with unconditional love. This Metta was stamped by Goenkaji's presence and so I knew that it was him. Goenkaji loved me like no one have ever loved me before or after. Despite my abusiveness, despite my ego, despite me rebelling his authority to his face, despite me challenging him to a dual - despite me, he loved me so much.

Even so, it took some time, but that Metta softened me a bit, and I started coming to senses and realizing, that I should seek help. I contacted ..., which was the teacher in charge of ..., and that I felt the closest to. And she discussed my problem with Bill Hart (the author of 'the art of living'), and he in turn, gave me the advise to sit a 10-days course like a new student, meaning to really try to hear all the instructions for the first time.

That was 3 years ago, and I am still recovering from the damages I had caused myself by those experiences. But let me tell you something: They were right, they were all right, all along. I was wrong, I had made a mistake and was too dumb to listen for their advise.

Did you try to contact Goenkaji again? Did you try to find out if perhaps your letter/email had not reached him, by any reason? Did you try to contact another teacher in person, to whom you feel closer, and have tried to discuss that problem? Have you continued practicing since that incident?

Have you realized fully, that no one, and I mean NO ONE can take Dhamma away from you? Do you understand that, brother? You have Dhamma, it is yours, and can not be taken away from you! Incoming breaths are yours, outgoing breaths are yours, sensations are yours, the ability to observe objectively is yours. All these are yours, they are within you, they are your own self - anywhere, everywhere, anytime, anyhow - always. :-)

Sometimes we have to learn the hard way. If you can actually avoid making mistakes - good. But many times we can not. Make mistakes. That's ok. Anyhow, concerning some of the 'technical' issues that you have brought up in your file:

1. As to the 'punishment' that you had received. Man... I doubt that, I really do, that someone will not be allowed to sit anymore 10-days courses for believing or not believing in some theoretical part or whole of the god damn theory, for that matter. I would have understood that kind of decision concerning long courses, because for them you really have to be strong and consolidated in mind, in all terms of your faith and confidence in the path, the technique, the teacher, the tradition, and so forth.

But 10-days courses are for those who are not yet sure, who are not yet matured, who are inquiring, asking, wondering and pondering. Talk to a teacher, talk to ... He became a senior A.T. already at 1996, so who knows where he is now. And he's German (although perhaps he's residing in France now), so it should be easier for you to talk to him.

Whatever you do, my advise to you is to stop immediately that Internet-debate that you are trying to initiate, because it feels to me dangerously close to the commitment of one of the 5 unforgivable sins: matricide, parricide, killing a Buddha, wounding a Buddha, and causing a schism in the Sangha. Don't do that - be very careful and aware of your motives - you are the only judge of your true intentions.

2. The Buddha did teach other techniques besides Anapana and Vipassana but only to people who where too gross-minded to start with the observation of reality, as it is. Being a Buddha he had the ability to see their mental backgrounds, their mind capacity and inclination, and to determine instantly the proper meditation object to suit them, and that will eventually lead them to be able to practice Anapana and Vipassana.

See, it is very clearly stated in the Maha Satipatthana Sutta that the only way to purify the mind is by observing sensations objectively, by the means of Sampajanno. Please discuss this with a teacher, who can elaborate on that subject without making any errors, as I probably will. You can even read the commented Maha Satipatthana Sutta booklet. You can also read the book "Buddha and His Teaching" by Narada.

That book is also authorized by the V.R.I. as proper reading material. That book, in general, is very inspiring and very informative, and also very readable. That which concerns that issue in particular can be found on pages 519 and onwards. These pages deal with different mental types, and all the 40 different meditation techniques taught by the Buddha, to fit those mental types.

That's all I have for now. You can email me back if you have any comments, questions, or if you just wanna say something, regardless. My little Metta

23

Sat, 1 Apr 2006

Dear ..., dear brother, thanks for writing such an extensive response to my letter.

You are right in assuming me to have put much effort in writing this text. But contrary to your opinion - this happened on account of my stuporous try to reconnect Goenkaji's organization with our ancient and foresighted tradition of the Buddha. If you try to reconstruct any bad intentions on my side, well, as Goenkaji says, that is your present to me - but one that I will not accept - and which will remain with you.

You write, the actual points of my text are not so important - so, that means to me that you don't start to worry if your teacher - Goenkaji - would break, for example, his Sila? - The very foundation of all of us on this path?

I feel grateful for your sharing with openness your detailed account of your path, struggling and conquests, in meditation. But I don't see a way in which your path of meditation would be the same to mine. Especially when it comes to mixing techniques or imposing personal views. Of course, I guess you went to such lengths in your report to eventually help me to be able to see similarities to my own.

I'm sorry to say - but this is not the case, as I never wanted to prove how I am right and Goenkaji wrong. Nor did I mix methods. I just want to be allowed to

Speak of my experiences and understandings deriving from my practice exactly as Goenkaji teaches, and in the context of how the Buddha understood it, as far as I am able to follow.

Of course, I already send my letter to Dhananjay in July 2005 (the secretary of Goenkaji), then again in September, and simultaneously to the email address of Goenkaji, given to me by the secretary. Dhananjay did read it and passed it on, but without being able to promise me Goenkaji finding his time to read, let alone, answer my letter.

You mention secondary literature. Do you give contemporary books really more importance than the Pali scriptures? So you can not know that the Buddha gives the advise to compare anyone claiming to teach the Dhamma with his, the Buddha's word - and not at all with the words of the V.R.I. - Alike, you cannot assume me having done that for my own good in a very conscientious manner? Why you advise me to read commentaries before you even have read the originals in different available translations yourself?

I take refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha each day - for which I will remain for ever indebted to beloved Goenkaji with never-ending gratitude. So why you say with such emphasis, that Dhamma could never be taken away? I never took refuge to Goenka, the V.R.I. or any worldly organization.

I believe you, not to believe me to be prohibited (not punished, as you write) to attend group-sittings, not to talk about 10-day-, or even long-courses. In this point, at least I really feel empathy from your side for my situation. Now, maybe you can believe me, that only such a grave breach - not acting what our organization is teaching - could move me in deciding - if given continued silent consent - to publish such a critical inquiry on the world-wide-web.

In this point I can not ask anyone for correction of these misunderstandings than Goenkaji himself. Because the teacher who gave me this unbelievable prohibition is John Luxford - as far as I know, the most senior teacher in Europe. (and with whom I sat a 30-day course 2 years before this incident)

You accuse me of wanting to split the Sangha? But you know that a real Sangha would never send anyone off without serious wrong-doings or merely differing opinions - unless this Sangha is guilty of the very act of splitting? I am sure you will not be willing to differentiate in this point - and it is not at all my intention to

destroy your faith in Goenkaji's organization, as it seems so essential to your wholesome practice and where you have taken refuge.

But I ask you to accept that I have the same right of taking refuge in the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha. And that I see no other way to improve mutual understanding in our organization than to publish what kind of splitting in reality is already going on. Only an open discussion will stop such unhealthiness within our organization!

Finally I want to ask you if you would agree to eventually use your response as one of its initial contribution to such a healthy and balanced discussion. I guess your experience - of adapting the instruction of Goenkaji only slightly - is very interesting for such meditators, who don't want to end up in pitch blackness as you did. If you don't want that, or only in parts, that's fine with me too. Just let me know.

Wishing you all the best for the furthering on your path, in Dhamma

24

Sun, 2 Apr 2006

Hey there Wolfgang. I read your email, and I got the sense that you by some reason felt attacked by me. I need to defuse that, as long as my side of it is concerned. I did not, in any conscious way, criticize you or the situation that you are in.

I cannot say that some amount of pride and condescending attitude did not arise in me, as by being in the "Winners" side, so to speak. But it not go to the extent of patronizing you. However, it is important to me, to apologize if my words or the way I said them caused you to be in some way offended.

Anyhow, after reading that email, I have decided to read you memo in better care and see... what I feel about it. As for now, at least, before I am done reading your memo, and having some solid opinion concerning the issues brought up there, I would not want you to use what I wrote to you as part of that web discussion. Right now, it still feels to me wrong to do that. Again I apologize, but that is not intended to you in person. I'll keep in touch

Sun, 2 Apr 2006

thanks for your fast reply. In reality I didn't felt offended - I just felt told to have such and such state of mind, have to read this and stop that, and by your long account of how you went wrong - I assumed you went so far in telling me, to show me that I also changed the technique or wanted to prove others wrong.

So I wanted to clarify my side to it - in my last answer to your response. Despite that - I am glad, that you think it so important to assure me of your goodwill. One reason it would be difficult to be offended by you is - you are really openhearted, showing at every turn what kind of emotion went along with your words - and that makes it very easy to understand your way. That's very skillful.

Also, I'm easily falling in the role of having to defend myself, because some responses to my text are accusing me of bad intentions - without giving it a try to consider any of my questions. In my search to clarity I seem to be - till now - the only one who finds mistakes and adulterations in my text - as I'm in the progress to write footnotes and cross references to it. It is almost as one could write anything.
- There seem to be very very few who give it a serious thought.

Still have not given up my hope here. With kind regards

Thu, 13 Apr 2006

I read your detailed paper thoroughly. In the beginning and for a few days I was working intensively writing back to you, and eventually came up with a paper almost as long as yours, covering in specific almost each and every issue that you have brought up in your paper.

But there was this internal debate going on inside of me, and eventually I realized that my intentions are not good. I was trying to prove you wrong just so that I will come out right. I was even thinking of CC'ing the answer to John Luxford, so that he will see what a wise and devout student I am. This thought alone filled me with exhortation.

But although realizing that, it was still hard to give up that ripened opportunity to earn a few credit points with the "powers that be" (and that's

my defiled mind that has these schemes, so don't make a conspiracy theory out of this as well... :-)) Conning mind, crooked mind...

Anyhow yesterday I decided to discard that which I wrote and be as brief as possible without missing the point, and without losing that little compassion which I have towards you.

The chief point that I want to convey is that, if you give it a closer thought, you will realize that there is no possible way on earth, that either of us is wiser, more matured, more spiritually developed, and more literate in the scriptures, the commentaries, the Suttas, the Abhidhamma and the history of the Buddha's teachings than our teacher, Goenkaji.

Once you realize that, really, you will also realize that there is no way possible that any of your accusations, insinuations, insights or improvements suggestions have any substantial and realistic base to stand upon, and that therefore they derive exclusively from your own deluding Ego. Please try to understand that I am not trying to condescend you now. I have been in that situation as well, and I might just be in it again in the future... you can never know.

Accusing and criticizing is fairly easy. All you need is ill-will and that we all have in abundance. Actually making a change is more than difficult. Goenkaji took upon himself a monumental task of spreading the Dhamma all over the world. He is doing that successfully, wisely, equanimously, patiently, persistently, bravely, efficiently, and undoubtedly, in the best way and as good-willed as possible.

However he is a human being and humans make mistakes and as long as they are not Arahats. So perhaps he made some mistakes, perhaps not. Consider that suggesting merely the ultimate is not contributive to anything. You also have to have substantial means of realizing your improvement suggestions. Therefore (for example), training all the A.T.s to become social workers or psychologists is not realistic in any given aspect of the issue, and so forth.

Again, the points to bear in mind are Goenkaji's undoubtedly and superhuman good will and his unfathomable maturity and wisdom. We are nothing compared to him - there is nothing for us to teach him, there is nothing that we see that he doesn't - Period.

The only advice I have to you (also contaminated with ego, of course), is to stop that "inquiry" at once. Your innate intentions cannot hold good will - it is clearly evident by the words, phrasings and tone of speech you have chosen to articulate yourself, and in any way, this will not lead you anywhere.

The most you will have is a bunch of immature and deluded people looking up to you, and saying: "Yes he does have a point" - And then what? If you really want to 'correct the organization of Goenkaji', start with yourself. I have already told you, that in my opinion, this is dangerously close to causing a schism in the Sangha.

I hope that you will realize the wisdom in John Luxford's decision, and the even greater wisdom of he who provided you with the Dhamma that changed your life for the better. I hope that you will evolve from this ordeal and grow as you can grow. I hope that one day, not far ahead, you will remember smilingly how sure you were of your mistake. Good luck, my friend

27

Apr, 2006

here my responses to your considerations:

> The chief point that I want to convey is that, if you give it a closer thought, you will realize that there is no possible way on earth, that either of us is wiser, more matured, more spiritually developed, and more literate in the scriptures, the commentaries, the Suttas, the Abhidhamma and the history of the Buddha's Teachings then our Teacher, Goenkaji. <

I asked Goenkaji trice, and only: If he agrees with John prohibiting me to attend any group-sittings and 10-day courses. All the other points are my own opinions, which I added to make everybody understand what kind of differing opinions led to my prohibition. Although it would make me very happy - to get answers to my questions to be able to correct possible misunderstandings (as I already could do myself, by adding cross references) - I did not demand any answer from my teacher to these theoretical points, also because of the preciousness of his time.

But if my teacher - be it John or Goenka - refuses to answer my request to give understanding merely about my kick-out, then he makes it very clear that he intentionally quits to be my teacher. As wise as he may be, he does not want to share his wisdom with me any more. But in reality it is much more plausible that he has no reasonable answers to my kick out - unless he would have to admit that he expects his experienced students to believe him blindly!

> ... there is no way possible that any of your accusations, insinuations, insights or improvements suggestions have any substantial and realistic base to stand upon, and that therefore they derive exclusively from your own deluding Ego. <

I am kicked out because my opinions differ in some theoretical points (based on the Pali Suttas related to my meditative experiences). That is a fact. Although you try to distort this reality - I can accommodate your distortions as such, as they seem to be an essential protection for you to keep faith. Explicitly: I never claimed any holiness for myself, nor does Goenkaji claim Arahata (i.e. in the Satipatthana Course Discourses). And I tried my best to clarify possible misunderstandings with my teacher by unremitting questioning.

> training all the A.T.s to become social workers or psychologists is not realistic <

From my own experience as a care-assistant I can testify to you that it takes about two 3-days seminars to learn - for example - 'Focusing' -assistance, a client-oriented counseling approach, with which one starts to understand the state of mind of the person with whom one is conversing (and that by friendliness in observation of body sensations coupled with investigation!). Of course, then one has to keep exercising to become proficient at it.

> - there is nothing for us to teach him, there is nothing that we see that he doesn't - Period. <

If he talks continuously about Vipassana as having nothing to do with blind faith - then after 10 years - blind faith is suddenly and without further explanation expected from me? - In this way he exactly does not live what he teaches and has badly deceived everyone concerning his true intention by continuous talk about non-sectarianism!

Although you do not agree with me - if our organization keeps intentionally deceiving new-students about its true agenda - I consider it very wholesome to warn about this aspect of our organization. Beside that: I will continue to recommend our 10-day courses. - Just be wary about telling your true opinions after years of practice in our organization! - In this way: Everyone after me will be able to avoid being split!

> Accusing and criticizing is fairly easy. ... Actually making a change is more than difficult. <

Your answers to my letter still does not seriously comment on even one point of my questions. That shows to me that you yourself where not able to word even one constructive criticism to my points (I assume: your not believing me to be kicked out, is a sign you agree with me - at least - that this would be sectarian) - because you fear to be accused in the same line of unreasonable reasoning as you are accusing me...

> ...derive exclusively from your own deluding Ego. <

You are blindly accusing me without explaining in which actual words, or which lines of reasoning you see the actual deed done on which you superimpose Ego. In this way you give me no change to learn anything than through what kind of glasses you perceive me, but nothing in which I could improve. At least - in my paper - it was possible to avoid this mistake. As you say: I t's always easier to criticize - you make it even easier than that - by criticizing generally without giving account which word and for which reason you actually criticize.

I , like you, am appalled by the (in parts) senseless talk on the I nternet. And I will take precaution that such will not happen - I can promise you. I nterestingly, I saw two postings opening in I nternet Groups, both on 6. April in a distance of only 10 minutes in between. Their names: 'Vipassana Discussion' and 'Satipatthana Discussion'. I t seems someone tries to take over this discussion - since their sole text is not to the point: Our organization is deceiving new-comers about its alleged non-sectarianism!

What you have not understood yet: I am not in an ordeal at all. All I want to do is to create a place, where everyone can express his opinions or experiences without any fear of being kicked out. Only in this way is it possible to enhance mutual understanding and compassion with each another within our organization - and between students and teachers. Only such could solve all the problems.

I see this as my opportunity to give real Dana to pay back a tiny bit of my gratefulness. And no reason for you to worry about my practice - beside my 1 year of Goenka-courses I have done another 2 1/2 years of self-retreats - and there is nothing that can destroy my confidence in this 'noble 8fold path'; what belongs to it - and what does not.

As I already wrote in my last sentences of my paper, I do indeed feel gratefulness for the wisdom of John's decision - in that no one ever could start such a vital and

essential discussion still depending on our organization, but depending sufficiently on the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha alone. All the best in Dhamma

P.S.: Some A.T.s have send the warning, that to participate in such a discussion would become detrimental to one's own development in Dhamma. Observing you, being quite in a process of becoming more and more aware of mental states in yourself - in your attempt to add something wholesome to such a discussion -just the opposite is the case:

"How is this Dhamma visible here and now? - By knowing that craving, aversion or delusion being present in oneself, or not! (The Buddha)"

51

Mon, 24 April 2006

comment on Achariya S.N. Goenka Meditation: It seems that you have not tried to practice and learn Vipassana with an open mind. You have mentioned only negative examples, there are hundreds and thousands who have been benefited including me. Repeated entries to the caps is solid example to this. This type of malice is against true path of Dhamma. Regards

52

Wed, April 26 2006

thanks for your reply. You write: I have mentioned only negative examples. Didn't you read also my last words? (just before the notes section): "If I wrote about the benefits of Vipassana-practice - in its relation to the Dhamma - it would have become much a larger page. But I see no need to - as this is not suppressed in the same imbalanced way. The same applies to my gratefulness and respect to anyone teaching the Dhamma as good as he can!"

You write: 'Repeated entries to the caps ...' Sorry - but what is the meaning of the word 'caps'? In my dictionary it is explained as 'a cover of ones head'. I don't understand this sentence.

I have been excluded to practice Vipassana with our organization for the simple reason that I do not believe in some theories of Goenkaji. In Goenkaji's own word: this is sectarian. But I received so many benefits from the Vipassana-practice itself - I will try as much as I can to warn our organization from becoming sectarian. You really believe - I have done 1 year of Vipassana-courses within 10 years and kept a daily practice - out of malice?!

Beside that, I really can not believe that Goenkaji does agree with my exclusion. I also told some of my opinions to Indian Achariyas - and because of this, they didn't exclude me from meditation. I think - what is really happening - our Vipassana organization is already splitting in a very sectarian western and - a less so - eastern part. Already since years the recommendations for long-courses signed by Indian Achariyas - here in the west - are not the paper worth they are written on.

So I consider it of utmost importance that Goenkaji - once and for all - makes it clear, that to practice Vipassana is not a question of 'believing'. He has not much time left, if he wants to avoid his Sassana to become a sect and become spitted after his death. If Goenkaji fails to make this clear, at least all other old students can avoid - from now onward - to become excluded. Because it has been made public - that contrary to Goenkaji's assurance - to practice Vipassana in our organization:

"One has to believe in theories blindly!" - Just don't tell your private opinions and you will not be excluded! - It is as simple as that, but one should know beforehand.

Otherwise one would have been deceived. Wishing you all the best on the furthering of your path. In Dhamma

Thu, 27 April 2006

Caps should be read as VIPASSANA CAMPS. If you call Rev Goenkaji sectarian it seems you have not understood him and Vipassana properly, attending even 100 camps is not a milestone for a true Vipassana student. Unfortunately spiritualism has been hacked by religion and saints all over the world and Rev Guruji is a brightest example of the exception. He is against

mixing of Vipassana with any other techniques of meditation, as this may not lose its pristine purity. Regards

54

Sat, 29 April 2006

I really do understand your serious concern for our Vipassana meditation - not to lose its pure and original intentions of our Lord - the Buddha. This is also my concern - we only seem to disagree in what we perceive as pure.

I did not write: Goenkaji is sectarian - but that he calls it sectarian if one has to believe in theories blindly. And I am convinced: Goenkaji would agree with me - in this point - at any time. Goenkaji derives the purity of his method by saying - it dates back to the historical Buddha, while other methods would not. But if already Sayagyi U By Khin taught such other methods - than such a historical exclusive purity deriving from the Buddha has never been there.

I disagree with your opinion that spiritualism can ever be hacked: Either a pure mind is worked for - or one mixes one's impure intentions with it. Like striving for power, by disparaging others, earning a living in exchange for Dhamma, etc... Which would be - at the most - spiritual egoism, and not pure yet.

Nevertheless, this is a process of purification and time given - to Vipassana - I am convinced even the biggest spiritual ego can become purified. You are right in that - attending even a 100 camps - is nothing compared to a pure mind. And for this purity of mind we all attend camps, some take more of them - some less.

But we should not only refrain from judging another person by the number, or lack, of his courses - furthermore it is the proclaimed sign of a really pure mind, that he is never conceiving himself: Better, equal or worse than any other! - I can not claim such purity for myself. Nor do you, as your judgments about me show again. But hopefully we will never stop working for such purity.

In your first letter you say: >... who have been benefited including me. Repeated entries to the camps is solid example to this ...<
And in your second letter you contradict yourself by saying: >... attending even a 100 camps is not a milestone ...< ?

In the same way - you did not make it clear what 'purity' actually means to you. From what you write, you conceive it to be a historical purity? - and not of ones own mind?

69

Wed, 10 May 2006

Why must you see the banning as a negative thing? - It is because you cling to the desire to attend. Relinquish the desire to attend, and seek your own path to salvation! The Buddha banned *himself* from groups that he found were not helping him to achieve enlightenment. See this banning as a gift of good karma.

As for criticizing, there are two times when one criticizes (I didn't say, when one *should* criticize):

The first is when one is not asked for his opinion. If you see someone mistreating an animal, you might intervene and stop that person from further inflicting pain. Your actions comprise *criticism*. When one offers criticism under these circumstances - uninvited criticism - it is bound to cause offense, and cannot be offered *constructively*.

The second time when one offers criticism is when one is asked for his opinions. Then, one can couch the criticism in a way that respects the other person's feelings (say unto others as you would have others say unto yourself).

In your group discussions, were you asked to offer criticism, or did you intervene to save harm to another? If you intervened without being asked, there was no way to offer your comments without causing offense.

If you were asked for you comments and these subsequently caused offense, offer your sincerest apologies. Either way, do not cling to the desire to return to the group. Respectfully

70

Sat, 13 May 2006

thanks for your suggestions. I see the banning for having my own opinions as a thing, which is in opposition to what I've been told for 10 years: 'Nobody has to believe anything blindly'. In my opinion: I have been deceived for that long. My clinging does not change anything about that. It will last as long as everyone's until one becomes an Arahant. And if one would have become an Arahant, that deception would yield even worse results for the deceiver. Not the Arahant.

Of course - about my case practicing there - I could only - and did let it go. I just consider it a service to all after me to become warned - so none will be deceived anymore or become kicked-out.

... I really would be interested from where you got this idea of 2 kinds of criticism. I am a very practical person. If I make a mistake, I expect my Dhamma-friends to warn me - asked for or not. One - who would not do that - is just not interested in my welfare and I don't consider him a real friend. So please explain why unasked criticism is always bound to offend - is that your personal experience?

And you don't confuse shame and conscience with offense? In my case whenever I've got criticized in my life - even if greatly exaggerated or with my ego hurt - I always could learn something out of it about myself. And if the critique wasn't true at all, I didn't feel offended but could learn something about the realities of the criticizer.

So I indeed hope my deed of unasked constructive criticism will lead to the kamma-vipaka: That whenever I would come into the position to teach - in long distant future lives - to become criticized equally, if I would not live what I teach. I see it as a kind of more-than-one-life-insurance never to get lost on such wrong paths!

So I do say unto others as I would like others say unto myself - with my criticism. That is constructive, because: Even if I will feel offended because I have been conceiving myself - that means nothing compared to the results of adhering to wrong paths. I am just speaking for myself.

Also, I try to intervene to spare others from becoming deceived - or to deceive. And there is no way to avoid offense - breaking Sila always hurts - both the doer and the receiver of such actions. In my eyes it is encouraging others to continue - if I would not criticize. I don't add hurt - I make it visible.

To apologize sincerely, if I have not done any wrong but only made visible - I would not be honest - it would merely be a mind-clouding gesture. But I can assure you, that I am willing to forgive very readily - if I would only be asked to. And I ask forgiveness - if anyone feels hurt.

Now - I didn't oppose to your suggestions - merely because I felt right and you must be wrong. But to encourage you - to give me your real reasons for your assumption - like:

- don't criticize because it is never constructive (- which, in my life, never was true)
- if not asked for, criticism always hurts (shame and conscience hurt, but did help me to increase wholesomeness, which - in the long run - always was more beneficial)
- if you're not an Arahant, even so: Just don't cling (if you've been hurt, just pretend you're an Arahant?)

When the Buddha said: This Dhamma is visible here and now - by knowing when there is clinging, ill-will or delusion present in one's mind - or when they are absent. You would like to have it: Only if these defilements are invisible is the Dhamma visible?

I can see no scriptural evidence for such assumptions - that's why I ask. Is this your experience or you are writing from a standpoint not based on the Pali Suttas? Or are you talking from an Asian cultural-background? The Buddha did discuss with all kind of followers of all kind of sects - he did not ban himself to speak with them very wisely - he even discussed and criticized well-reasoned.

Still, if you hold just the opposite views - I readily accept. I just would like to understand your standpoint. Maybe I misunderstood and you only wanted me to take a course of action with the least resistance, easy going and trying to avoid me becoming hurt? In this case, thanks for your kind gesture. But momentary hurt I willingly take, compared to the multiplied in future lives (which very unlikely would even be 'my own'). Wishing you all you want on your path

Yes, we all cling, otherwise we would be Arahats. But we each cling to different things. Some cling to alcohol, others cling to cigarettes, others cling to retreats? I cling to television broadcasts! What am I doing about it? It takes time to develop an indifference to clinging to this or that.

It is in the Dhammapada that the Buddha said: do not offer advice without first being asked. Unfortunately, I cannot give you a direct quote with verse. I believe you might fruitfully search for it in Google.

Definitely, it has been my experience that offering uninvited advice leads to agitation. Why don't you set up an experiment to see if this suggestion is useful? For sometime, offer advice to everyone you meet. Then gauge the reactions. For some other time, only offer advice when asked. Then gauge the reactions. After that, choose for yourself which path makes sense.

Not everyone is high-minded as someone earnestly seeking enlightenment. If you do not feel offended by criticism that you think is unfair, that is not how many other people react. In fact, other people probably feel MORE offended by unfair criticism. They say, can you imagine, he didn't even know what he was talking about, and yet he could criticize me!

Truly, if your intention was to warn others from falling into the trap of misdirection as you had suffered, then it is perfectly OK to withdraw from the group and give your parting reasons why. However, you cannot say, You have misdirected me all this while, but I would like to come back for more instructions!

What does that mean? Which teacher would accept a student who feels he is not being taught properly? Surely the best thing for the student would be to find another teacher in whom he felt more confidence? This is not a punishment, it is only trying to make things more comfortable for the students and the teacher.

It is the duty of the Buddhist to seek out words he uses that are relativistic. Constructive is such a word. What is constructive is that which leads to peace and moves away from ego. If your words led to peace and moved away from ego, then you were constructive.

If you say. I have done this for them, and they do respect ME for what I was doing for them, so I will stay away from them because they are beneath ME and what I offered through MY constructive intervention I believe we can see ego strewn all over the place here. Furthermore, that you asked your question originally, we see that peace does not reign supreme in your heart from your actions.

Karma is not always a thing of future lifetimes. Sometimes, it is returned instantly, and I would say, if you are unhappy right now with the situation arising from your actions, then the karma has already resulted.

'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you', sounds nice but doesn't work in practice. If you ran into a servant of the Crocodile God of Lower Egypt, who wanted to be fed to crocodiles of Nile, you wouldn't want him to do to you as he would have you do to him? I don't think that the Buddha ever said anything like this.

The Buddhist wants to do unto others as provided by the noble eightfold path. In the case of this discussion, that would include Right Speech. Here is what the Buddha said about Right Speech:

- to abstain from false speech, especially not to tell deliberate lies and not to speak deceitfully
- to abstain from slanderous speech and not to use words maliciously against others
- to abstain from harsh words that offend or hurt others
- to abstain from idle chatter that lacks purpose or depth.

Let us specifically ask whether No. 3 above was adhered to when you were speaking to the group?

It is an error to try save those who have not been asked to be saved. Just look at the result of the intervention in Iraq! Without being an Arahant, I don't know that you can successfully find out who should be allowed to fall into the trap of that group to amend past bad karma, and who should be prevented from joining. But those with good karma wouldn't join; those with good sense might accidentally join, and then quickly come out again. Why not trust the law of Karma to sort it out? Why intervene in this way? If you spend all your time striving to become an Arahant, then you teach us what you know, would that not be a thousand times more effective and beneficial?

- don't criticize because it is never constructive. I meant, don't criticize unless you have been asked to.

- if not asked for, criticism always hurts. I have always found this to be true. I invite you to experiment and observe for yourself.

- just don't cling. This is the heart of Vipassana practice. Initially, we need to pretend that we are watching our breath, or whatever, even though we are strongly distracted. Then, over time, what we used to pretend was true, becomes true. Likewise, to notice hurt, and then to discard it, to pretend it doesn't hurt any longer, will eventually become true (sabbe dukkha anatta).

The Buddha, speaking to his followers, who were there to accept his teachings, could not have given offense. It would have been a proud thing to be guided by this wise one! I cannot see in any of the discourses where the Buddha ever said: YOU are like this, and this is YOUR error. Always he said: It is like ONE who does this, and this is what such a person will see. By abstracting in this way, the Buddha did not give offense.

Of course I want you take the easy way, the path of least resistance. Ultimately, the Buddhist way is the easy way, because any other way leads to temporary happiness and eternal unhappiness. Is it not easier to be eternally content rather than eternally discontent? What is wrong with taking an easy way, if it is also the Right Way?

Well, I think this has been a very long message, and I hope we have both benefited from the exchange. Peace of the Buddha be upon you always

72

Sun, 14 May 2006

> It takes time to develop an indifference to clinging to this or that. <
I've been patient with my clinging. You seemed not to be with mine.

> It is in the Dhammapada that the Buddha said: do not offer advice without first being asked. Unfortunately, I cannot give you a direct quote with verse. I believe you might fruitfully search for it in Google. <

Sorry, but if you want to support a point you made, you have to give the reference. Meanwhile, I found an article to this point written by a monk - and attach it for you to read.

> it has been my experience that offering uninvited advice leads to agitation ... For sometime, offer advice to everyone you meet. <

Although I respect your experience to be valid for you - I never talked about 'everyone'! I only talked about my spiritual friend and my concerns of his harming himself - if I'm right and he broke his Sila - which only he really can know. In my page I am only asking.

> You have misdirected me all this while, but I would like to come back for more instructions <

Sorry again, but you seem not to know that in long-courses every meditator is completely self-dependent, the instructions are already given in the very first 10-day course. In long courses nobody asks for instructions since a long time ago, but puts them into practice. If you really read my website you would know that I followed exactly and with much benefit the meditation instructions given since I started to meditate Vipassana 10 years ago.

> This is not a punishment <

As before and after - these are your words.

I said: 'that it was not lived afterwards - what was taught at first.'

I don't make myself feel like a victim. I warn from becoming victimized by the breaking of Sila.

> If you say. I have done this for them, and they do respect ME for what I was doing for them, so I will stay away from them because they are beneath ME and what I offered through MY constructive intervention. I believe we can see ego strewn all over the place here. <

I already don't understand the meaning of your first sentence in exclamation marks. Nor can I relate it to anything even far to what I said. The last sentence becomes even more so a blind accusation and polemical, without giving one reason - or one example I really said - or in which of my writings you see this.

This is a paramount example of a kind of a general condemnation without giving the criticized the slightest chance to improve his behavior, because no concrete behavior is mentioned. I am glad I could avoid such useless criticism on my site.

Again you would give me this silly fault of not being an Arahant?

> Furthermore, that you asked your question originally, we see that peace does not reign supreme in your heart from your act <
Unless you could read my mind this remains a fruitless accusation and your private opinion. Please read more Pali Suttas. You just repeat your assumptions. I doesn't become more true by repeating unfounded claims.

> I would say, if you are unhappy right now with the situation arising from your actions, then the karma has already resulted. <

I'm glad to report that I am very happy right now. Sorry - but how boastful can one get if you feel 'right' and put the other down by suggesting he became unhappy through - what you consider: a bad deed?

> 'Do unto others as you would have others do unto you', sounds nice ... I don't think
that the Buddha ever said anything like this. <

This was your argument in your first reply! And I just stated that I could agree with your argument - which you brought up to suggest, that I allegedly could not. But if you don't remember your arguments a few days later - how much sense does this discussion with you make? - If you would have read more Pali Suttas you could even find out for yourself that your line of argument can be found in the Sutta.

Much of what follows - except the paragraph about right speech - seems to be a sign to me that you are just in the mood to argue without contributing anything useful. You don't even answer one question - like: Are you confusing hurt with shame and conscience? By not giving an answer you really seem to confuse them. You just repeat unfounded arguments all over again.

To your last sentence: I really prefer to end this useless conversation if you don't have the same kindness and:

- don't give answers to my questions (of my first reply)
- give not even one reference to the Suttas
- but only attack me personally without giving me any idea, in which sentences of mine you see the deeds done you accuse me of.

I already had enough of such conversations where I took the work and wrote back very concise and conscientiously - and only get back blind attacks. "No, thanks!" - to such one-sided and boring conversations. As Goenkaji says: These gift of abuse you wanted to give me - I do not accept - it will remain with you.

Sorry dude. I'm just honest. Nevertheless, my good wishes remain with you. :-)

73

Mon, 15 May 2006

Dear Wolfgang, I was only trying to help. I am sorry if you feel offended. Please forgive me.

I see no point in carrying this conversation further. Peace of the Buddha be with you

74

Mon, 15 May 2006

Dear ... don't worry. I did not feel offended. I just wanted to tell you what would have been helpful for me (like criticizing in particular and not in general, giving Sutta references, answering questions). And I very readily believe you that you were writing out of good intentions. So really nothing there to forgive you.

It was my mistake that I somehow had overseen your name - which would have given me the certain hint of speaking with someone out of the Asian-cultural background.

With much Metta, Wolfgang

86

Send by an Israeli teacher to forty meditators:

Sun, 21 May 2006

Erase my address!

Mr. Wolfgang, I have no idea who you are and am not interested to get any of your emails. You are requested hereby to erase my address and never use it again.

It was brought to my attention that you got my address as well as so many others by misusing your Israeli friend's email message which by mistake contained our names as CC, and now you keep using our addresses despite his request to respect his privacy.

May you be happy

87

Mon, 22 May 2006

Sorry Eilona, I really apologize. I used these addresses because it was indeed cc'd by an Israeli friend, who wanted to bring to attention the suffering people of Sudan with that particular email to his friends. Because I recognized so many Vipassana-meditators in these addresses - I used them with the understanding: I would instantly be informed if my mail hasn't been welcome, and as others have done. In those cases I never have send any email again.

That's why I would be really interested: Who requested his privacy? And I , against his wishes, allegedly didn't comply? - I can only explain it to my self with an error of the email-program. Otherwise, if you don't want to write anything to my anymore - I of course respect that too. I would not have been so obsessed to send any more emails about my concerns anyway.

... using this opportunity: thanks for your beautiful movie!

88

Answered by another A.T:

Mon, 29 May 2006

Hello Wolfgang, my name is ..., and I'm ... brother. I was the one who recognized that you were using his addresses, and told Eilona I would write to you and ask you to stop using these addresses (since he is sitting in Myanmar, have no access to email, and cannot write to you).

Unfortunately I have forgotten to send you the mail, and you already used these addresses again. You see, in this list there are family members, and family friends, some of whom have only heard of Vipassana through us, never taking a course yet - and your mail might have put a barrier in their way. In any case, I feel that using other people's address lists without their permission, is something that should never be done. So please stop using these addresses, all of them.

Hope you will manage to find more constructive ways to deliver your concerns to the organization, without taking on yourself the risk (and Karma) of creating doubts in student's (and non-students) minds, which may create serious barriers on their path. With Metta

Mon, 29 May 2006

thanks for clarifying this mistake. I already get copies of Eilona's mail of these addressees, I mailed to. That's why I asked Eilona to put it straight again, after she had it send to everyone: I wouldn't respect someone's privacy. Because she apparently hasn't done so - I ask you to do, please.

Being accused of spreading doubt by making it public - that I have been prohibited meditation only for not believing blindly - is already enough. And I really think our organization is doing incredible harm to itself - with such exclusions. I just don't know any better to avoid it in the future - than to make it public. With my good intentions I don't have to fear anything. You know.

As I already wrote to Eilona, after having it announced - first for getting criticized to improve my style - than for having it put up as a web-page - so there isn't any further reason for me to send any mails again. - So much spam all the time - but I did respect it, if someone asked me never to send anything again!

After all, my concern is about fencing others out from practicing. Though it might have changed a bit, meanwhile: even 85 percent who never come back and badmouth it afterwards - should be enough reason to really look deep what is going wrong. -

Than I know so many, who - after I have told them the positives as well as the negative sides - right on wanted to give it a try.

I am happy to hear ... is still in Myanmar practicing. Wishing you the very best, in
Dhamma

Mon, 19 June 2006

It took me some time to reply.

Actually I was quite amazed from your request that I send a clarification mail to all of ... addresses, which you have used without permission, to tell them that before the second time you have used their mails you haven't received any request to stop using it. Does it make sense to you? These people don't know you anyway, you have used their mails wrongly even the first time,

and you want me to disturb them again with a mail that is irrelevant to them?

Hope things are settling down for you, wishing you happiness and growth in Dhamma, with Metta

91

Wed, 21 June 2006

I asked Ailona, and after that, you - a second time - for a clarification of the following wrongly made accusation:

> ...now you keep using our addresses despite his request to respect his privacy.<

Actually, I received such replies, which I did respect:

> Please take me off your list. Thanks, <

Because I made the experience that now some of Goenkaji's disciples simply brush aside my serious concerns, by accusing me of things wrongly. As also accidentally Ailona did - because you forgot to ask me for your privacy. It would have been different if Ailona would have send it as a private request to me, but she spread this wrong accusation also to all the other addressees; also to those I already have taken off my list after their personal request.

I understand if you think me having done wrong in the first place. However, as I already told, I get so many spam-mail without having the possibility to be put of the lists. - I simply do not see it as such a wrongdoing - as to pay it back by doing more wrong - as Ailona, and you now do - by not apologizing for accusing me publicly of something wrongly. - So I request you a further time to straighten this accusation out, which happened by your negligence.

> ..and you want me to disturb them again with a mail that is irrelevant to them? <

Everyone would have been able to ask with a short note to be put of my list. Ailona did not ask either if her wrong accusation was welcome or not.

Thanks in advance. You know that things settled down the moment I found words for what has happened. - The all-pervading fear of exclusion gone. Kind regard