

Guidelines for Practising Vipassana Meditation

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

(only for old students)



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The information in this booklet is for the benefit of those who have completed a 10-day course with S. N. Goenka or one of his authorised assistant teachers. Others wishing to learn the technique of Vipassana are advised to join such a course. This is not a do-it-yourself manual for meditation, and using it as such is strongly discouraged.

A Vipassana course is truly valuable if it makes a change in your life, and a change will come only if you keep practising the technique daily.

Outline of the practice

Sīla

In daily life this is practised by following the Five Precepts:

- to abstain from killing any living being
- to abstain from stealing
- to abstain from sexual misconduct
- to abstain from wrong speech
- to abstain from all intoxicants.

Meditation

The minimum needed to maintain the practice:

- one hour in the morning and one hour in the evening
- five minutes while lying in bed before you fall asleep and after you wake up
- if possible, meditation once a week for one hour with other meditators practising this technique of Vipassana
- a 10-day course or self-course once a year and
- other free time for meditation.

How to meditate daily

Anapana

Practise this if the mind is dull or agitated, if it is difficult to feel sensations or not to react to them. You can begin with Anapana and then switch to Vipassana, or if needed, continue observing the breath for the entire hour. To practise Anapana, keep the attention in the area below the nostrils and above the upper lip. Remain aware of each breath as it enters or leaves. If the mind is very dull or agitated, breathe deliberately and slightly harder for some time. Otherwise the breathing should be natural.

Vipassana

Move your attention systematically from head to feet and feet to head, observing each and every part of the body by feeling all the sensations that you come across. Observe objectively; that is, remain equanimous with all the sensations that you experience, whether pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, by appreciating their impermanent nature. Keep your attention moving. Never stay more than a few minutes at any one place. Do not allow the practice to become mechanical. Work in different ways according to the type of sensations you experience. Areas of the body having different gross sensations should be observed separately by moving the attention part by part. Symmetrical parts, such as both arms or both legs, having similar subtle sensations, may be observed simultaneously. If you experience subtle sensations throughout the physical structure, you may at times sweep the entire body and then again work part by part.

Mettā

At the end of the hour sitting, relax, letting any mental or physical agitation subside. Then for a few minutes, focus your attention on subtle sensations in the body, and fill your mind with thoughts of goodwill for all beings.

Outside of Meditation Periods

Give your full and undivided attention to any important tasks before you, but check from time to time whether you are maintaining awareness and equanimity. When a problem arises, if possible be aware of breath or sensations, even for a few seconds. This will help you to maintain the balance of your mind.

Dāna

Share whatever good you have acquired with others. Doing so helps to eradicate the old habit of self-centredness. Meditators realise that the most valuable thing they have to share is Dhamma, so they do what they can to help others receive the technique of Vipassana. With this pure volition they donate toward the expenses of other students.

This *dāna* is the sole source of funding for Vipassana courses and centres around the world.

Selfless Service

A still greater *dāna* is to give one's time and effort by helping to organise or run courses or by doing other Dhamma work. All who help (including the Teachers and assistant teachers)

give their service as *dāna* without receiving anything in return. This service not only benefits others, but also helps those who offer it to eradicate egotism, to understand the teaching more deeply, and thus to advance on the path.

One Path Only

Do not mix anything else with this technique. If you have been practising something else, then as soon as possible choose the one you find most suitable and beneficial and devote yourself to it in order to reach the final goal of full liberation.

Telling Others About Vipassana

You may describe the technique to others, but do not teach them. Otherwise you might confuse rather than help them. Encourage those who want to meditate to join a course, where there is a properly trained guide to teach the technique.

In General

Progress comes gradually. Accept that you are bound to make mistakes, and learn from them. When you realise you have been unsuccessful, smile and start again!

Do not have unrealistic expectations of yourself. It is common to experience drowsiness, agitation, mind-wandering and other difficulties in meditation but if you persevere, you will be successful. You are welcome to contact the Teacher or assistant teachers for guidance.

Make use of the support of your fellow meditators. Sitting with them will give you strength.

Make use of the meditative atmosphere at Vipassana centres by going to meditate there whenever you can, even for a few hours or days. As an old student you are also welcome to come for part of a ten-day course, depending on the availability of space.

Real wisdom is recognising and accepting that every experience is impermanent. With this insight you will not be overwhelmed by the ups and downs of life. When you are able to maintain inner balance, you will be able to act in ways that will create happiness for yourself and for others. Living each moment happily with an equanimous mind, you will surely progress toward the ultimate goal of liberation from all suffering.

Frequently Used Terms

The three trainings

sīla—morality

samādhi—concentration, mastery of the mind

paññā—wisdom, insight that purifies the mind

The Triple Gem

Buddha—one who is fully enlightened

Dhamma—the law of nature; the teaching of an enlightened person; the way to liberation

Saṅgha—one who has practised Dhamma and has become a pure-minded saintly person

The three roots of all mental defilements

rāga/lobha—craving

dosa—aversion

moha—ignorance

The Noble Eightfold Path

sammā-vācā—right speech

sammā-kammanta—right action

sammā-ājīva—right livelihood

sammā-vāyāma—right effort

sammā-sati—right awareness

sammā-samādhi—right concentration

sammā-saṅkappa—right thought

sammā-diṭṭhi—right understanding

Nibbāna

the unconditioned; the ultimate reality which is beyond mind and matter (*nirvāṇa*)

The three characteristics of phenomena

anicca—impermanence

dukkha—suffering

anattā—egolessness

The three kinds of wisdom

suta-mayā paññā—wisdom gained by listening to others

cintā-mayā paññā—intellectual understanding

bhāvanā-mayā paññā—wisdom based on direct personal experience

Kamma

action; specifically, an action one performs that will have an effect on one's future (Sanskrit *karma*)

The Four Noble Truths

dukkha-sacca–the truth of suffering

samudaya-sacca–the origin of suffering (craving)

nirodha-sacca–the eradication of suffering

magga-sacca–the path leading to the eradication of suffering

The five aggregates of which a human being is composed

rūpa–matter, the physical body composed of subatomic particles (*kalāpa*)

viññāṇa–consciousness

saññā–perception

vedanā–sensation

saṅkhāra–reaction; mental conditioning

The four material elements

paṭhavī–earth (solidity, weight)

āpo–water (fluidity, cohesion)

vāyo–air (gaseousness, motion)

tejo–fire (temperature)

The five hindrances or enemies

kāmacchanda–craving

vyāpāda–aversion

thīna-middha–physical sloth and mental torpor

uddhacca-kukkucca–agitation and worry

vicikicchā–doubt, uncertainty

The five strengths or friends

saddhā–faith

virīya–effort

sati–awareness

samādhi–concentration

paññā–wisdom

The four causes for the arising of matter

food

environment/atmosphere

a present mental reaction

a past mental reaction

Satipaṭṭhāna

the establishing of awareness; synonym for Vipassana.

The four *satipaṭṭhānas* are–

Kāyānupassanā–observation of the body

Vedanānupassanā–observation of body sensations

Cittānupassanā–observation of the mind

Dhammānupassanā–observation of mental contents

The ten pāramīs or mental perfections

nekkhamma–renunciation

sīla–morality

virīya–effort

khanti–tolerance

sacca–truthfulness

adhiṭṭhāna–strong determination

paññā–wisdom

upekkhā–equanimity

mettā–selfless love

dāna–generosity, donation

Bhavatu sabba maṅgalaṃ!

May all beings be happy!

Sādhu, sādhu, sādhu!

Well said, well done; we agree, we share this wish!

Dear Travellers on the Path of Dhamma,
Be happy!

Keep the torch of Dhamma alight. Let it shine brightly in your daily life. Always remember, Dhamma is not an escape. It is an art of living: living in peace and harmony with oneself and also with all others. Hence, try to live a Dhamma life.

Do not miss your daily sittings each morning and evening.

Whenever possible, attend weekly group sittings with other Vipassana meditators.

Have an annual retreat of a 10-day course. This is essential to keep you going strong.

With all confidence, face the spikes around you bravely and smilingly.

Renounce hatred and aversion, ill will and animosity. Generate love and compassion, especially for all those who do not understand Dhamma and are living an unhappy life.

May your Dhamma behaviour show them the path of peace and harmony. May the glow of Dhamma on your faces attract more and more suffering people to this path of real happiness.

May all beings be happy, peaceful, liberated.

With all my *mettā*,

S. N. Goenka