

Admirable Friendship









The whole of the holy life

Ven. Ananda said to the Blessed One:

“This is half of the holy life, lord: admirable friendship, admirable companionship, admirable camaraderie.”

“Don't say that, Ananda, don't say that.

Admirable friendship, admirable companionship,
**admirable camaraderie is actually
the whole of the holy life.**

“When a monk has admirable people as friends,
companions and colleagues,
he can be expected to develop and pursue
the Noble Eightfold Path.”

—SN 45.2





When we come to realize the full magnitude of his achievement, when we come to fully appreciate the rich and lasting harvest of the seeds this master teacher has sown, and when meditation centers such as he has inspired dot the global village—signaling a new phase in the maturation of human consciousness—we will have occasion to be grateful, again and again, for the life and work of S.N. Goenka.

—Philip Novak (co-author,
Buddhism, A Concise Introduction)





His *mettā* force

I am more and more convinced that
it is his *mettā* force
which is giving me
all the inspiration and strength
to serve so many people.

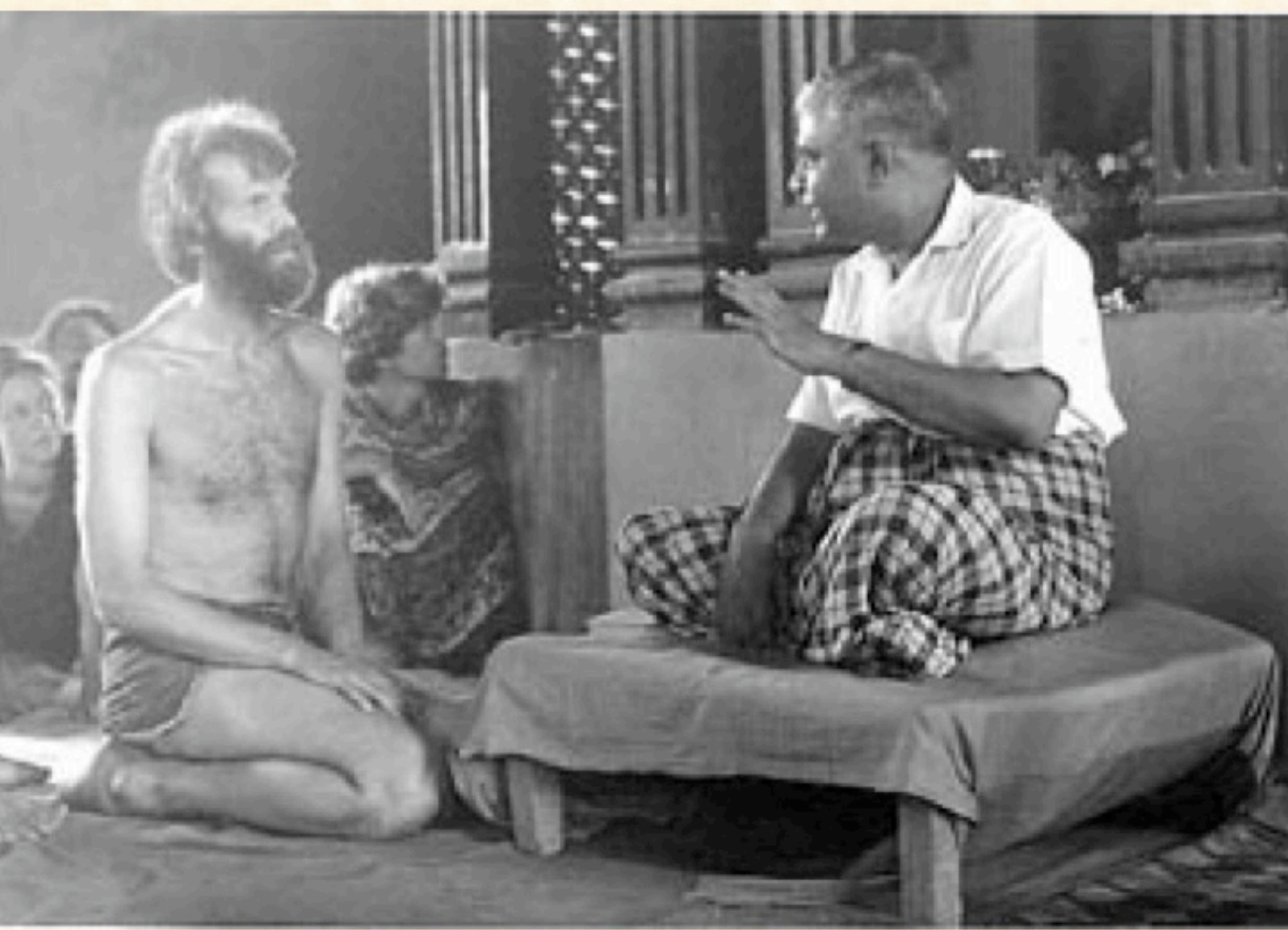
—S.N. Goenka speaking of his teacher,
Sayagyi U Ba Khin













There the birds find rest

Just as a large banyan tree, on level ground
where four roads meet, is a haven
for the birds all around, even so

a lay person of *saddhā* is a haven

for many people:
monks, nuns, male lay followers,
and female lay followers.





A massive tree
whose branches carry fruits & leaves,
with trunks & roots
& an abundance of fruits:
There the birds find rest.
In that delightful sphere
they make their home.

—*Aṅguttara Nikāya V.38 Saddhā Sutta*





A part of me will always remain
in the soil of Myanmar

Myanmar is my motherland. I was born here.

In some families, as in my family, it was a
tradition to bury the umbilical cord in the
ground of the building where one is born.

My umbilical cord is buried
here in the soil of Myanmar.

A part of me will always remain
in the soil of Myanmar.

It is not my motherland just because a part of my
physical being has become one with the soil of
Myanmar:
it is also my spiritual motherland.
Myanmar gave me two births.
The second birth is more important for me
because I got Dhamma here.

—from **The Universal Appeal of the Buddha Dhamma: A
Personal Experience** (address by S.N. Goenka at Fourth World
Buddhist Summit, Yangon, 10 Dec 2004)



One can never compete in the matter of *pāramī*

This priceless gift of the Dhamma you have shown to one and all out of compassion for mankind.

For all this we pay our respects to your energy, devotion, volition and above all, to your high *pāramī*. Without the requisite *pāramī* of a teacher one cannot do what you are doing, now matter how good volition one may have. One may compete with another in effort or determination but one can never compete with another in the matter of *pāramī*.

—from 1980 letter to S.N. Goenka from Saya U Tint Yee, President of IMC, Yangon



I would like to devote my life
to making good
householders.

—S.N. Goenka,
Vipassana Meditation Center, Mass. 1985



Goenkaji: ...unless the householders learn how to practise Dhamma, you can't get good monks. After all, monks come out from the society. If the society is corrupt and there is no Dhamma in the society, how can good monks come out of that? So let the householders be good householders. Then every monk that comes out of that householder society will be a good monk.

So, the most important thing now in the countries where Dhamma is not there... is that the family people must learn Dhamma. Later on a stage will come: out of those, monks will arise, nuns will arise and it will proceed further at a deeper



Question: ...are you still leading a family life? If so, do you think you will lead this life until your last release, I mean, till the end of your life?

Goenkaji: Certainly, if this helps people. My aim of the life is that I got Dhamma in this country which gave me so much benefit: countless, infinite benefit. And I feel so happy with that, I want to share this happiness with others. And if I keep my wife with me and that makes more and more people come to Dhamma, I will continue to do that. Because I want more and more people to get Dhamma.

Goenkaji: I want more and more people to come out of their misery and enjoy the same happiness that I am enjoying, the same peace that I am enjoying, the same harmony that I am enjoying. The aim of my life is the *dhamma-dūta* job—to spread Dhamma more and more to the people who are suffering.

—Sept 1991, public talk at Yangon University, Q/A

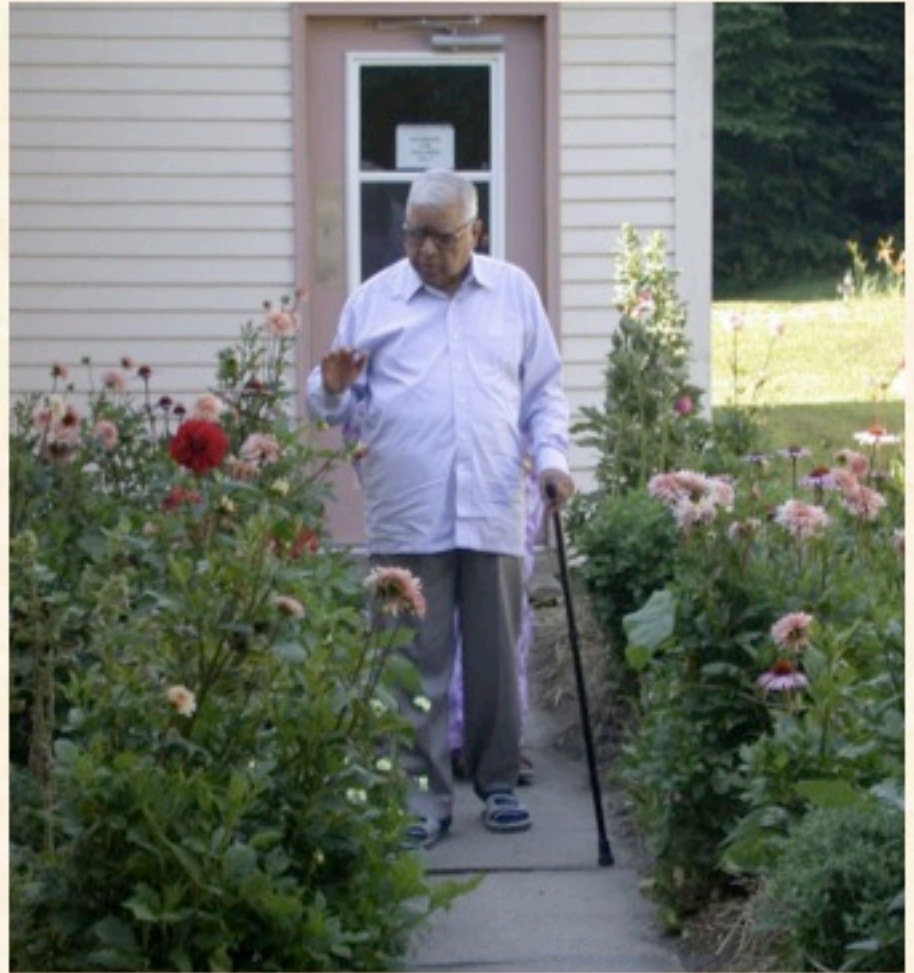






*Isa dharatī ke
taru-tr̥ṇa meṇ,
kaṇa-kaṇa meṇ
dharama samā jāye.*

May every tree,
every blade of
grass,
and every particle
of this earth
**be suffused with
Dhamma.**





From Scattered Seeds to Fruit

In 1969 or even 1979, no one could have imagined that the teaching of Vipassana would spread so widely—no one except Sayagyi U Ba Khin. He knew that the clock had struck and could not be turned back. He knew that Goenkaji, though seemingly alone, would be helped by the thousand hands of the Dhamma, and that ways would be found through all difficulties to bring the teaching of liberation to people around the world.



—from **“The Spread of Vipassana Outside India: From Scattered Seeds to Fruit”** by William Hart

He has chosen me to plant seeds of Dhamma around the world. Comparing my capacity with his, I feel very humble. And this makes me all the more confident that it is Dhamma that is working—not simply some individual. I have been chosen by my teacher as a vehicle for the Dhamma. And by helping to carry out his mission, I receive the benefits of developing my own *paramis*. With this understanding, I continue to work. And in the same way, **you of the next generation have the responsibility—the wonderful opportunity—of carrying on the work.**

—from “Sayagyi U Ba Khin, A Shining Star of Dhamma” by S.N. Goenka

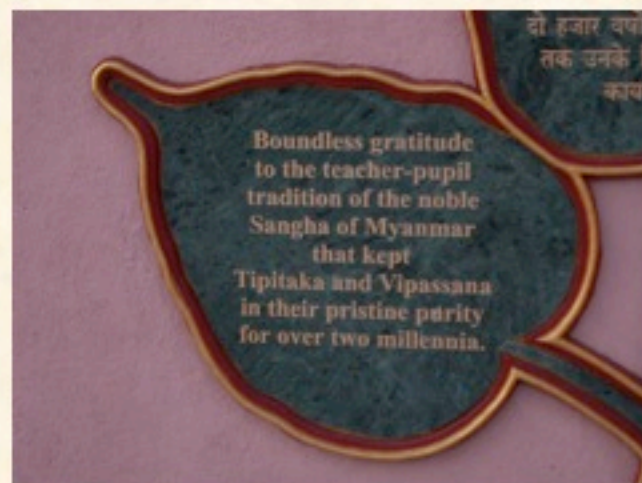


The great strength I got from my teacher

I always remember two instructions of my *sayagyi*, the late Sayagyi U Ba Khin. One was that I should not lose confidence in the prediction that the second *Buddha-sāsana* will now arise. It is sure to arise; I should not lose any confidence in this prediction. And the next thing was that I must give this teaching of Buddha as he wanted us to give it—in a very humble way, without generating even a trace of ego. He told me that there would certainly be opposition but I must generate nothing but *mettā* and *karuṇā* for those people who were opposing me....

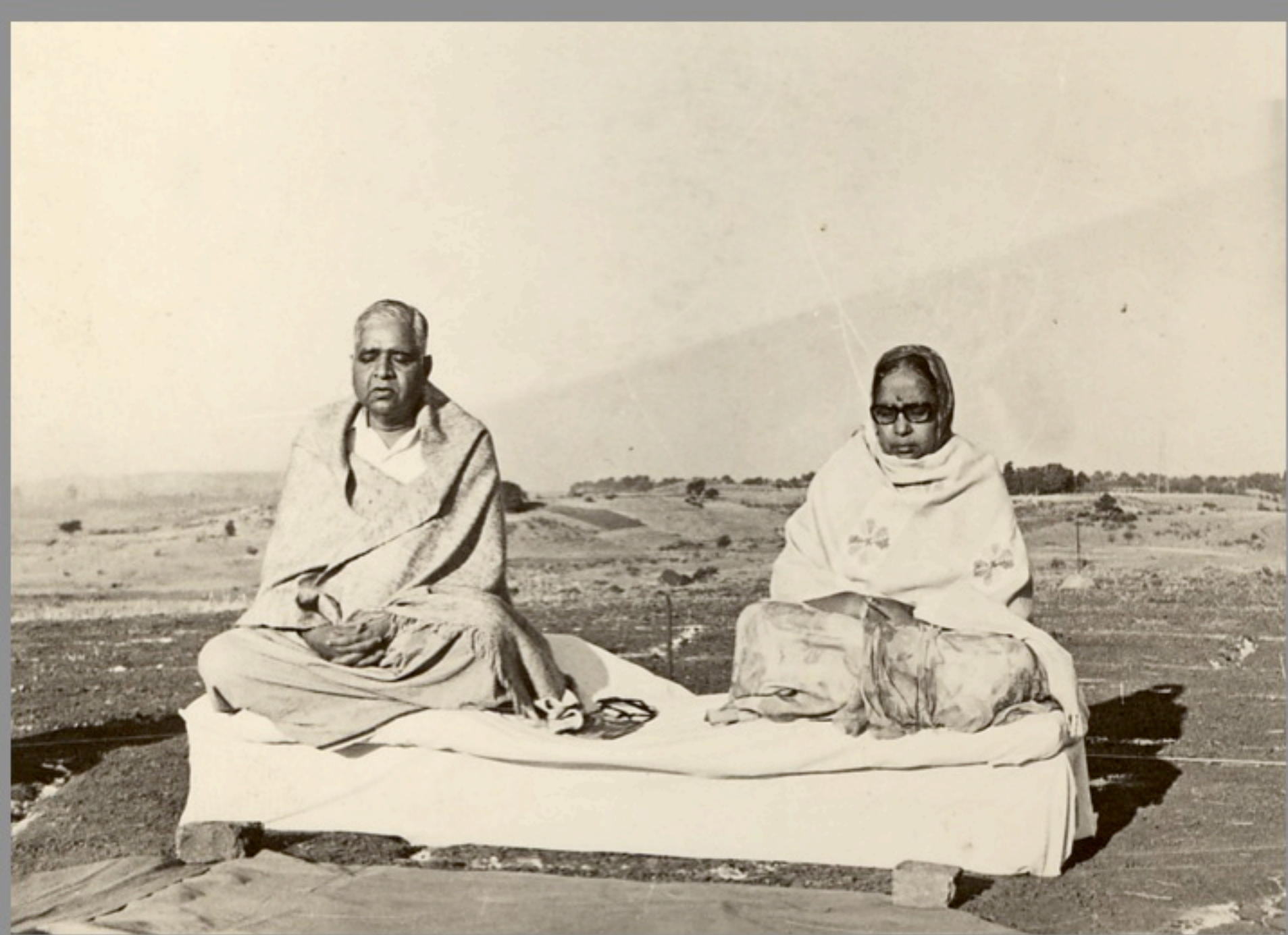
My teacher kept reminding me: “You will have to face so much opposition and yet you must be able to have *mettā* and *karuṇā* for those people because they are ignorant. They will not know why they are opposing you.” And this was the great strength I got from my teacher right from the beginning, even till today.

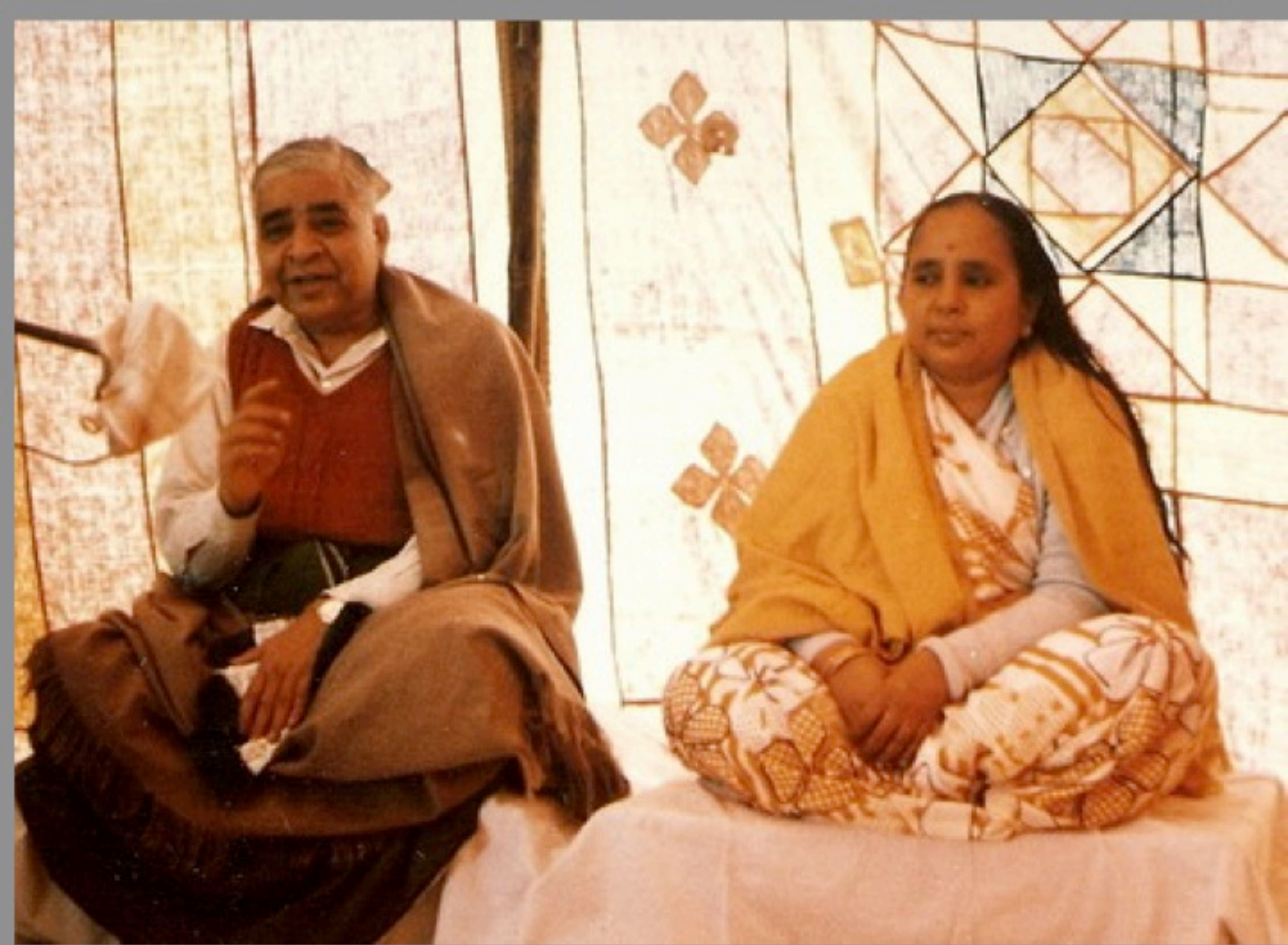
—Talk to monks at Sitagu Academy, Oct 1993











If nature so wills, may it mince every slice of my
flesh and powder the bones,
and may every atom of my body be mingled
with the dust of this sacred land.

And if it is the will of nature for me to live
longer, may every breath of my life flow
with gratitude towards my motherland.

—doha of S.N. Goenka (c. 1964) from “Benevolent
Baba”



The Path of Dhamma

The path of Dhamma is no picnic

It is a strenuous march steeply up the hill.

If all the comrades desert you,

Walk alone! Walk alone! With all the thrill!!

U S N. Goenka

The path of Dhamma is no picnic
It is a strenuous march steeply up the hill.
If all the comrades desert you,
Walk alone! Walk alone! With all the thrill!
—U S.N. Goenka

Body, mind and life

*Dveṣa aura durabhāva kā,
rahe na nāma niśāna;
sneha aura sadbhāva se,
bhara leñ tana, mana, prāṇa.*

Of hatred and ill will
may not a trace remain.
May love and goodwill
fill body, mind and life.



(Introduction to instruction of *mettā bhāvanā*,
Day Ten morning)

Sayagyi had said that on my arrival in India (1969), nature would give a sign of my future success....when I alighted from the plane in Calcutta and first set foot on this land of the Buddhas, I felt an earthquake....

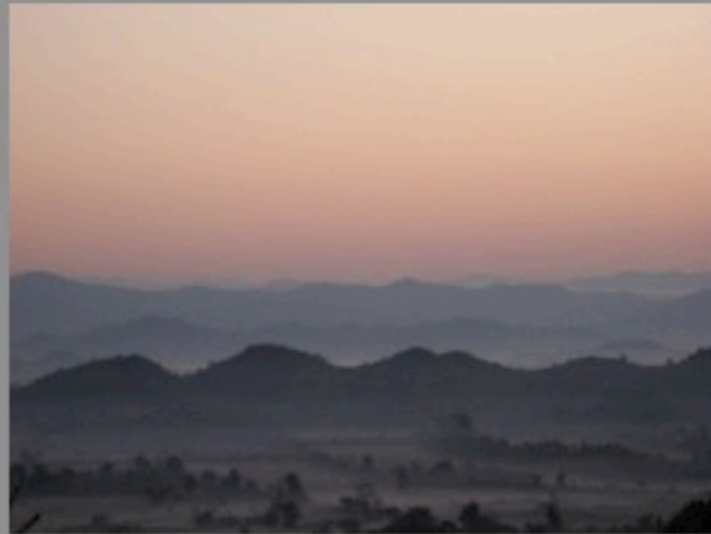
Portents of this kind had occurred in the time of the Buddha. **Was this nature's way of expressing joy** at the rebirth of the Buddha's teaching through the return of Vipassana?

—S.N. Goenka, **Global Pagoda Souvenir:
A Monument of Gratitude**

*Anumodantu taṃ sabbe,
medinī thātu sakkhike.*

May they all accept with joy
and

may the vast earth bear witness.





Does it not shine sweetly?

Light is the ship in which
he returns,
yet heavy with learning.
The vastness of the sea
and the moon's clearness
recall the virtue of the
Buddha...

Does it not shine sweetly,
this lamp that lights the
world's eyes?



—from a T'ang dynasty poem by Ts'ieu K'i, describing the mission of a Japanese pilgrim to bring Buddhist studies to Japan from China

Neither would he swerve from that unperturbable
inner radiance...drenched with passionate and
untranslatable song.

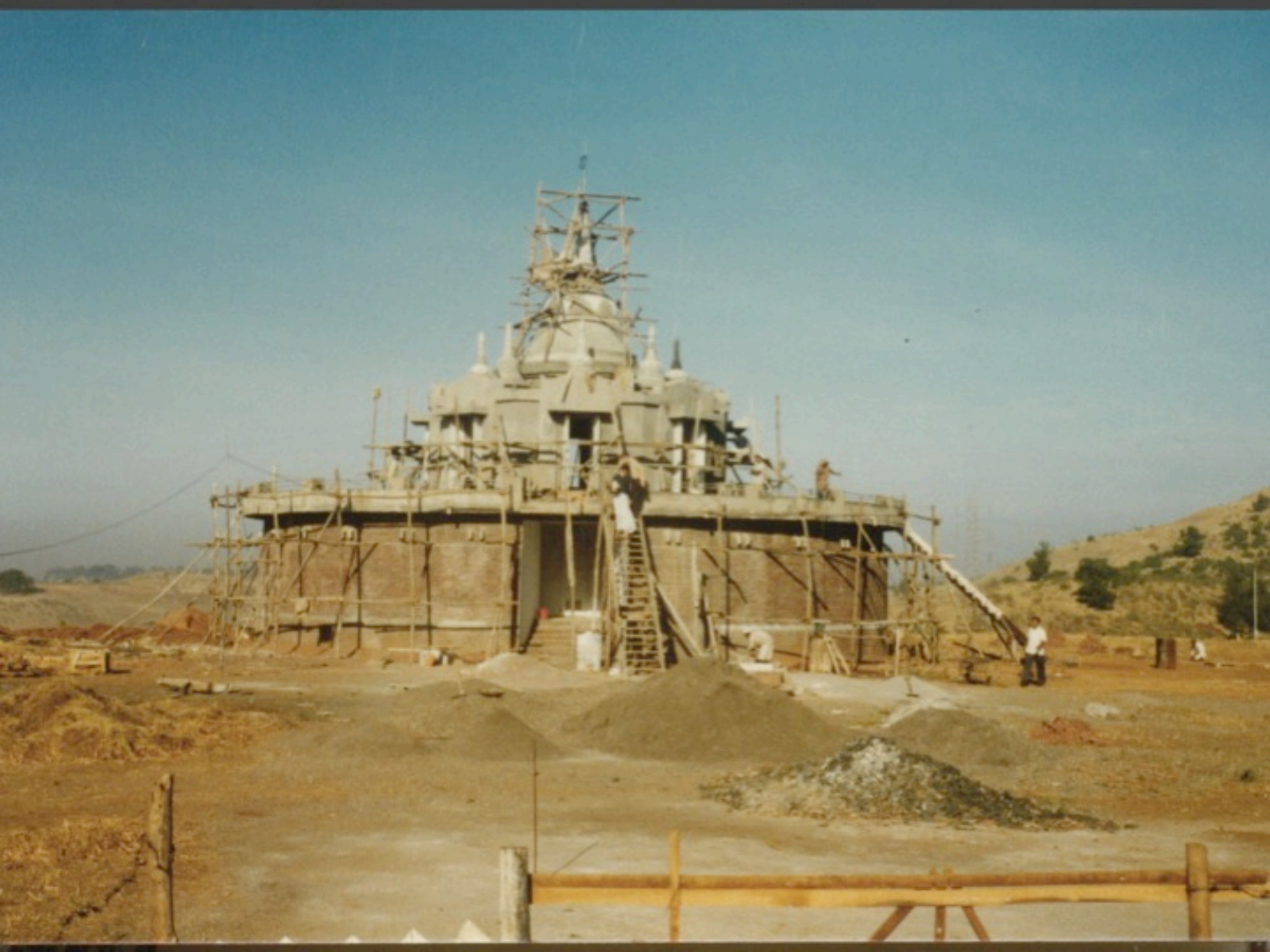
A man should want to be domestic,
steady, moral, politic, reasonable.

He should want also to be
subsumed, whirled,
to know himself as dust
in the finger of the wind.



**This was his supple, unbreakable
faith.**

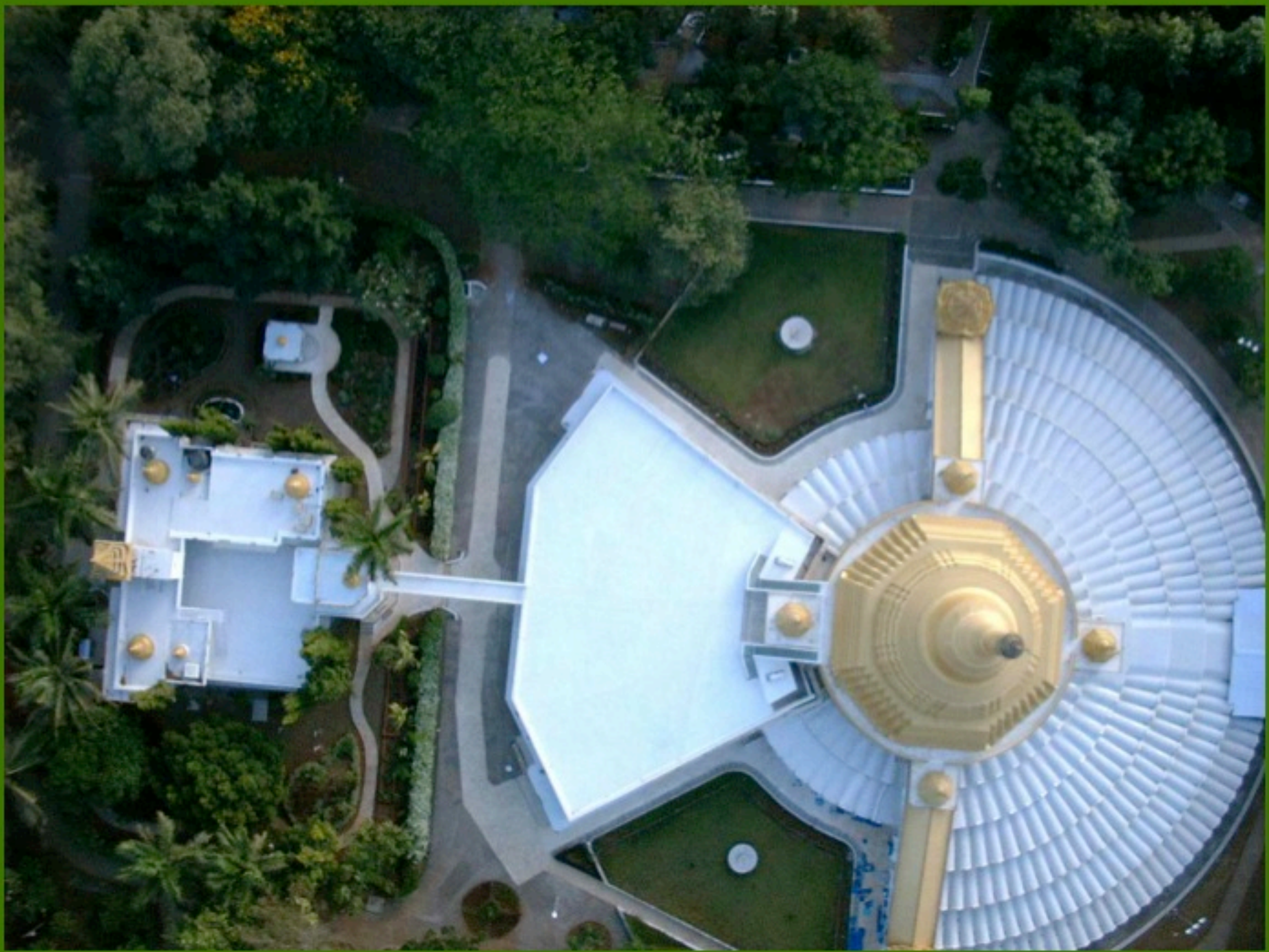
—Mary Oliver, **Long Life**











Where do you get such energy from?

Even though Sayagyi is over 60 years of age he is now holding the post of Principal, Govnt Institute of Accounts and Audits as well as that of the Director of Commercial Audit. He has served concurrently as Office on Special Duty, Trade Development Ministry, Chairman of the State Agricultural Marketing Board and as a member of the Advisory Board of the National Planning Commission.



Foreigners hearing of these splendid achievements, often raise the question: Where do you get such energy from? And the following was Sayagyi's reply: "Because I practice Buddhist meditation, I can handle many important tasks simultaneously. If you want to purify your mind and be happy, why don't you make an attempt to take a course in Buddhist Meditation?"

—from "Thray Sithu U Ba Khin" by Maung Ye Lwin (Dec 1960)





So convinced was U Ba Khin of the power of this method for clearing the mind that he insisted that all of his employees in the Accounts Department take a course of meditation from him and that a portion of the office be set aside for a meditation space. Mr Robert Hover recounts the story his teacher told him.



Sometimes U Ba Khin, attending particularly unfocused meeting of government with men of more biased minds, would in the midst of a heated argument rise from his chair and stand for some moments gazing out of the window before returning to the conference table. His colleagues thought he was off watching the world outside. In fact, U Ba Khin explained, he was busy within, reestablishing mindfulness to deal with the demands of life.

—from “U Ba Khin: An Appreciation”

by Eric Lerner



Sayagyi's compassion was enlivened

Sometime later a famine...occurred in India...

Sayagyi's compassion was enlivened...

In one corner of his center he had arranged to have erected a model of the lofty peaks of the Himalayas. He was very fond of this reminder. He would meditate beside it every day, sending his goodwill to India with the wishes: "I cannot recall how many times I was born in India and remained in that snow-clad region for so long, developing my meditation. Today the people of that country are in distress. May peace and tranquillity come to them!

May all abide in Dhamma!"

—from "My Teacher's Boundless Metta" by S.N. Goenka



The journey to the Ingyinbin forest monastery to pay respects and to venerate Webu Sayadaw

Excerpt from diary of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, 6 July 1965:

When I arrived in the presence of the Sayadaw, I venerated him, not only with material gifts, but I also venerated him by entering the folds of the Sangha, by observing the exalted Vinaya rules of the monks, and by practising meditation in this



The *dāna-kusala*, *sīla-kusala*, *bhāvanā-kusala* that I performed, together with the merit I gained by revering the Buddha, the Dhamma and the Sangha, I share with all the Brahmas, devas and humans who help me in the perfection of my *pāramīs*, and especially with those of the Vipassana Association who take responsibility in helping in the spread of the *paṭipatti-sāsana*.



May all be happy in mind and body.
May they be filled with the wisdom pertaining to
the paths (*magga*) and fruition states (*phala*).
May they attain to the Awakening (*bodhi*)
to which they aspire.

(Sayagyi gave the extended text of this entry to his disciples.)

—from **The Way to Ultimate Calm**, pp. 31, 33



The building where Sayagyi and U Ko Lay
stayed at Ingyinbin Monastery was called
Yan-aung-mingalar-kyauung:

**“the auspicious monastery for the
overcoming of danger”**

—The Way to Ultimate Calm, p. 26



Gold is purified only after passing through the most rigorous tests

I am grateful for this opportunity to speak. My name is Dr Om Prakash, I am 83 years old, and have been practicing medicine for the last 56 years. I am also a small-time Dhamma worker: I meditate, and on occasions talk about Dhamma.... **One goes through many vicissitudes in life.** My father passed away when I was 22, and I had six siblings. The responsibility of rearing them fell on my young shoulders. Somehow, I went through it.



Later during my medical career, I faced
a difficult situation
[being arbitrarily arrested without charge].

I was kept in solitary confinement for 35 days.

[Upon being taken to the jail cell] I went in and placed
my mattress on a camp-cot and lay down. I opened
one of the books at random—

**“Gold is purified only after passing through
the most rigorous tests.”**

It was a verse from the **Bhagavada Gita**.

My mind gained even more strength.... Even after 20 years, I remember this incident perfectly well. During those 35 days, I did not feel any aversion, ill will or anger towards any B.S.I. or jail officer; nor did I feel guilty or abandoned.

I had no complaints against them because I felt that they were only following the orders of their superiors; the government policy was faulty. They always treated me politely.

One friend wrote in a letter, “I still remember the look of *sthita-pragya* (one established in wisdom) on your face when you returned home from jail.” My personal opinion is that the whole credit for my success [in maintaining equanimity] goes to Vipassana. Indeed, the strength gained from Vipassana is tremendous....

Thanks to Vipassana, even at the age of 83, I can still stand on my own and talk, I am still active, I even see patients.

—Dr Om Prakash, 1995 seminar at *Dhammagiri*



Like fire he shines forth; like a celestial being he is
radiant; never abandoned by fortune is
he who does not betray friends.
Should he fall into a chasm or from a mountain or
tree,
that man will find firm footing though he is brought
low—
he who does not betray friends.



As a gale cannot harm the banyan tree,
matured in root and crown,
so **enemies have no power over
one who does not betray friends.**

—*Mittanisamsa*



These form the order of disciples of the Blessed
One: worthy of gifts, of hospitality, of offerings,
of reverent salutation:

an incomparable field of merit for the world.

Anuttaram puññakkhettaṃ lokassā'ti





Because the monk is a field of merit, no
Burmese village can exist without a monastery.
A village can do without electricity and tractors,
without radios and dispensary...

but it cannot do without a monk.

For by accepting their alms the monk makes it
possible for the villagers to acquire
what they desire above all else: merit.



There is ...no doubt that monastic offerings were and are to a great extent a measure of the veneration felt for the monkhood....

The best proof of the high veneration the people entertain for the [monks]...is the truly surprising liberality with which they gladly minister to all their wants.



They impose upon themselves great sacrifices,
incur enormous expenses, place themselves
joyfully in narrow circumstances, that they might
have the means
to build monasteries...

—from the record of Bishop Bigandet,

The Life or Legend of Gaudama the Buddha of the Burmese











တောင်ငူဆွမ်းခံကြွစဉ်





တရက် နီးလာပြီ

ယောက်ျားသွားရမဲ့ ဒီခရီး

သင်သတိထားမိရဲ့လား

တယ်အချိန် တယ်ကို တယ်လို့

သွားရမှန်း မသိနိုင်တဲ့

ဒီခရီးအတွက် အဆင်သင့် ဖြစ် ပြီလား

LEARN TO DIE WELL

LEARN TO DIE WELL (Loose translation of the Burmese)

The day is near

This journey that you will go on

Have you established your awareness?

No matter at what time

Or going to which place

Or in which manner

The fact that you are about to go cannot be
known

Have you managed to make preparations
for this upcoming journey?



Whenever it may come, we are ready

Questions and Answers, 27 April 1997; Bombay, India

(rough translation from Hindi)

Dhamma worker: We are meditating and are equanimous also. And negative thoughts are arising. If death comes at that moment, then to which *loka* will we go to?

Goenkaji: If death comes, salute it: very good! Be happy: now I am going to be promoted. Why should those practising Vipassana fear death? You will be promoted. Now you live in a small house, [then] you will get a very large house. You will get a very good place.

We can't say when it will happen. There is no certainty of death. It can happen at any stage, at any time. If you keep practising Vipassana, then death will occur in a good way....So never fear death. Whenever it may come, we are ready. When it comes, we shall go. So what?



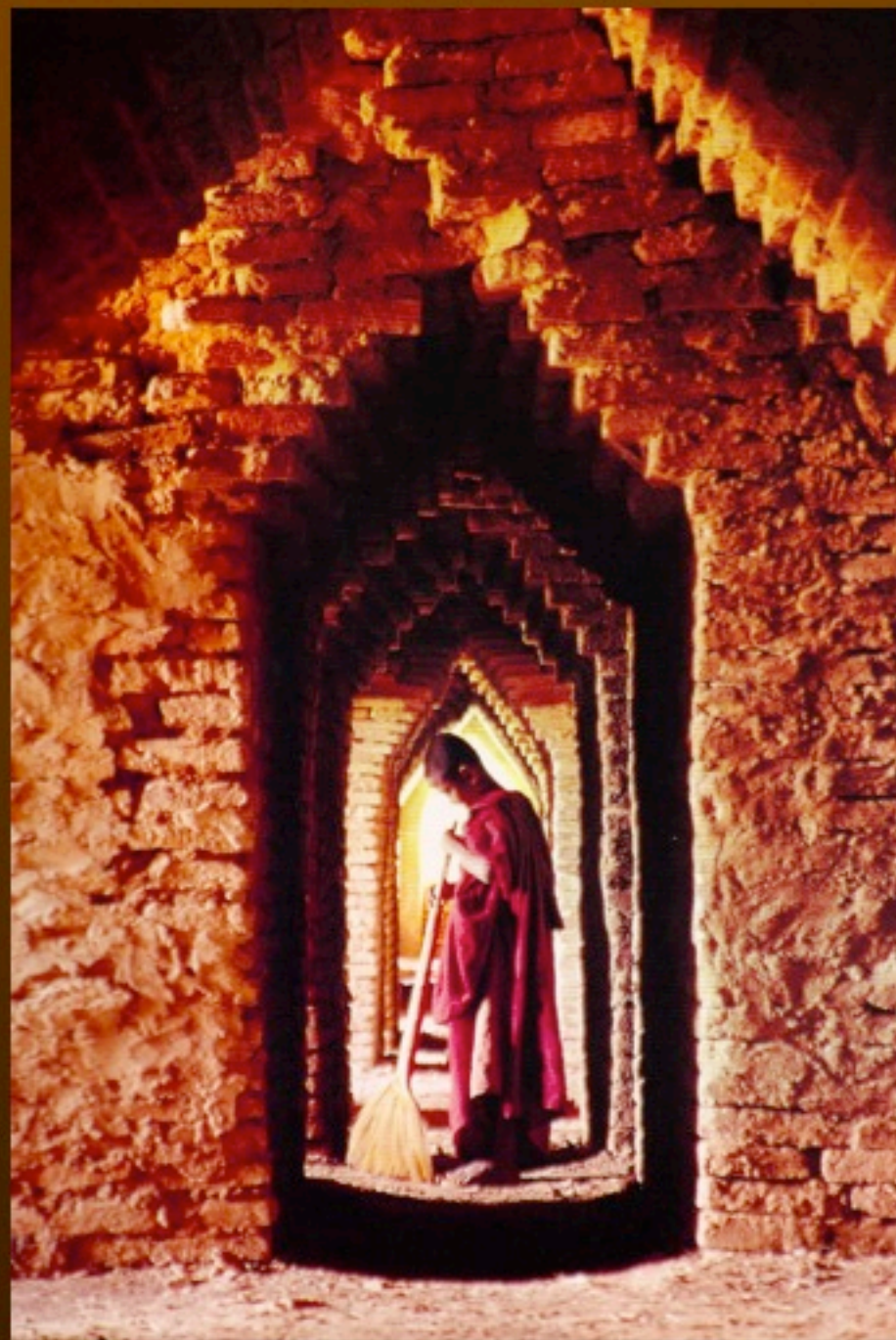
Dhamma worker: I am not fearing. I just feel a little bit...that negative thoughts have come.

Goenkaji: No, no, they will not come. If you practise Vipassana, however much negative thoughts may be arising, yet as soon as the moment of death comes, immediately and automatically sensation will arise and life will go out, while one is observing sensations.



We need not worry. If we give up Vipassana, then it is a matter for worry. If you are practising Vipassana regularly morning and evening, then automatically at the time of death, it (Vipassana) will arise. There is no doubt about that.





How can we refuse our common
human assent
to this immense endeavor
of
goodness and beauty?

— Rene Grousset, **In the Footsteps of the Buddha**











The inseparable companions of our days...

Our minds should become thoroughly saturated
by these four great qualities

[mettā, karuṇā, muditā, upekkhā]

These qualities should become the inseparable
companions of our days ...

—“Light of the Dhamma,” Jan 1961



Vipassana meditation comes from people of the past,
and is part of contemporary lives. It passes from
person to person—not from books or lectures or
mass media. The depth of feeling created by the
practice is not an abstraction, a religious ideal.

Friendship, companionship, actual human warmth
are part of the technique...

—from “The Therapeutic Action of Vipassana” by Paul R Fleischman, MD



Just as the practice is shared now,
it has been shared across time.

A sense of heritage, lineage, history is
an inevitable experience of the
Vipassana student.

—from “The Therapeutic Action of
Vipassana” by Paul R Fleischman, MD



The meeting of long separated family members

*While elaborating on the tradition of teacher and disciple,
the ninth Ledi Sayadaw addressed
Goenkaji and the pilgrims:*

The meeting together of all of us in this great place founded
by Ledi Sayadaw is like the meeting of long-separated
family members.

So very delightful! So very uplifting! The benevolent Ledi
Sayadaw, Guruji Goenkaji and all the meditators who have
come on the pilgrimage are indeed the family of our
people here!

—Centenary Myanmar pilgrimage 2001

The development of sympathetic or appreciative joy or gladness should start with the very dear companion—one who in the commentaries is called a “boon companion”; for he is always glad; he laughs first and speaks afterwards....



How does a meditator dwell pervading one
direction with his heart imbued
with sympathetic gladness?

Just as one would be glad on seeing a very
dear and beloved person, so **one pervades
all beings with sympathetic gladness.**

—The Anecdotes of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, Part I



By any standards, U Ba Khin is
a remarkable man...

he is a fascinating combination
of

worldly wisdom and ingenuousness,
inner quiet and outward good humor,
efficiency and gentleness,
relaxedness and full self-control.

The sacred and the comic are not mutually exclusive in his version of Buddhism; and hearing him relate the canonical Buddha stories, with contemporary asides and frequent salvoes of throaty “heh, heh, heh’s” is a memorable experience.

—Winston L King, “An Experience in Buddhist Meditation, 1961





Admirable friendship,
admirable companionship,
admirable camaraderie is actually
the whole of the holy life.

























“He gave thousands of bowls of gold, silver and copper, filled with jewels; thousands of horses with trappings; banners and nets of gold; carriages spread with saffron-colored blankets; ...cloth of the best flax, silk, wool and cotton....







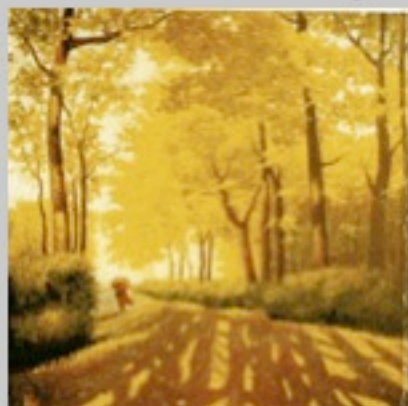


And though he fed the Order of monks
with the Buddha at its head, the fruit of
building a monastery...would have been
greater...



and though he sincerely took refuge in the Buddha,
Dhamma and the Sangha, the fruit of sincerely
undertaking the Five Moral Precepts
would have been greater.

...and though he sincerely undertook
the Five Precepts, the fruit of developing
(concentration on radiating) *mettā* —
even for just to the extent of a whiff of scent—
would have been greater.



...and though he developed universal
lovingkindness,
the fruit of cultivating the awareness of
anicca—even for the moment of a finger
snap—would have been greater.

—*Velāma Sutta* (The Scale of Good Deeds)
Aṅguttara Nikāya, Navakanipāta, Sutta 20



The Light of *Buddha Sāsana*
which has disappeared for
many centuries from India
(where Gotama Buddha had
gained Enlightenment)
has again shone forth over
the Indian Continent as a
direct result of intense
devotion and ardent
endeavours on the part of
the great *Vipassanā* teacher
Mahā Saddhamma Jotikadhaja
U Goenka....



This great Stupa will indeed bring forth
much merit which cannot be measured
as this much or that much
to untold number of men and devas.

—Venerable Bhaddanta Sobhita, Chairman, State Sangha
Mahā Nāyaka Committee, Kaba Aye, Yangon









An aeronautical engineer firmly told a bumble-bee that, by any standard norms of aviation, the bee could never fly due to its body weight being excessively disproportionate to its wing span. “You cannot fly according to known norms,” he said.

“I do not know about your norms,” the bumble-bee replied.
“But I fly an Anyway.”

—The **Global Pagoda: A Monument of Gratitude**





By perseverance the final victory will be ours

There are some *kammas* so strong that their results cannot be resisted; they can only be lived through with patience and understanding. But since we do not know whether or not certain influences in our lives are the results of such *kamma*, or, if they are, how close they may be to exhaustion, it behooves us to strive against them.

Apart from everything else, such striving has its own value. While it may appear in this life to be futile, ultimately it will bear fruit for our good. The immutable law of cause and effect ensures that no effort is wasted. Here, as elsewhere, the Dhamma urges us to set our face against every form of fatalism—that most enervating and paralyzing view of life—even in its most subtle guises. It encourages us to rise from our failures **undaunted and ever ready to try again.**

Defeats there may be—bitter and heartbreaking setbacks in the battle against craving and ignorance—but the true follower of the Buddha is one who will never admit any defeat as final.

Like an old and tried warrior, we must be prepared to lose every battle except the last, confident that **by perseverance the final victory will be ours.**

—Bhikkhu Bodhi, **Great Disciples of the Buddha**



*Abbhatītasahāyassa, atītagatasatthuno;
Natthi etādisam mittam, yathā kāyāgata sati. -
Theragāthā 1038*

For one whose friend has passed away
For one whose teacher no more lives,
There is no other friend in this world
Like mindfulness of the body.

—Ven S Dhammika, **Gemstones of the Good Dhamma**, 75

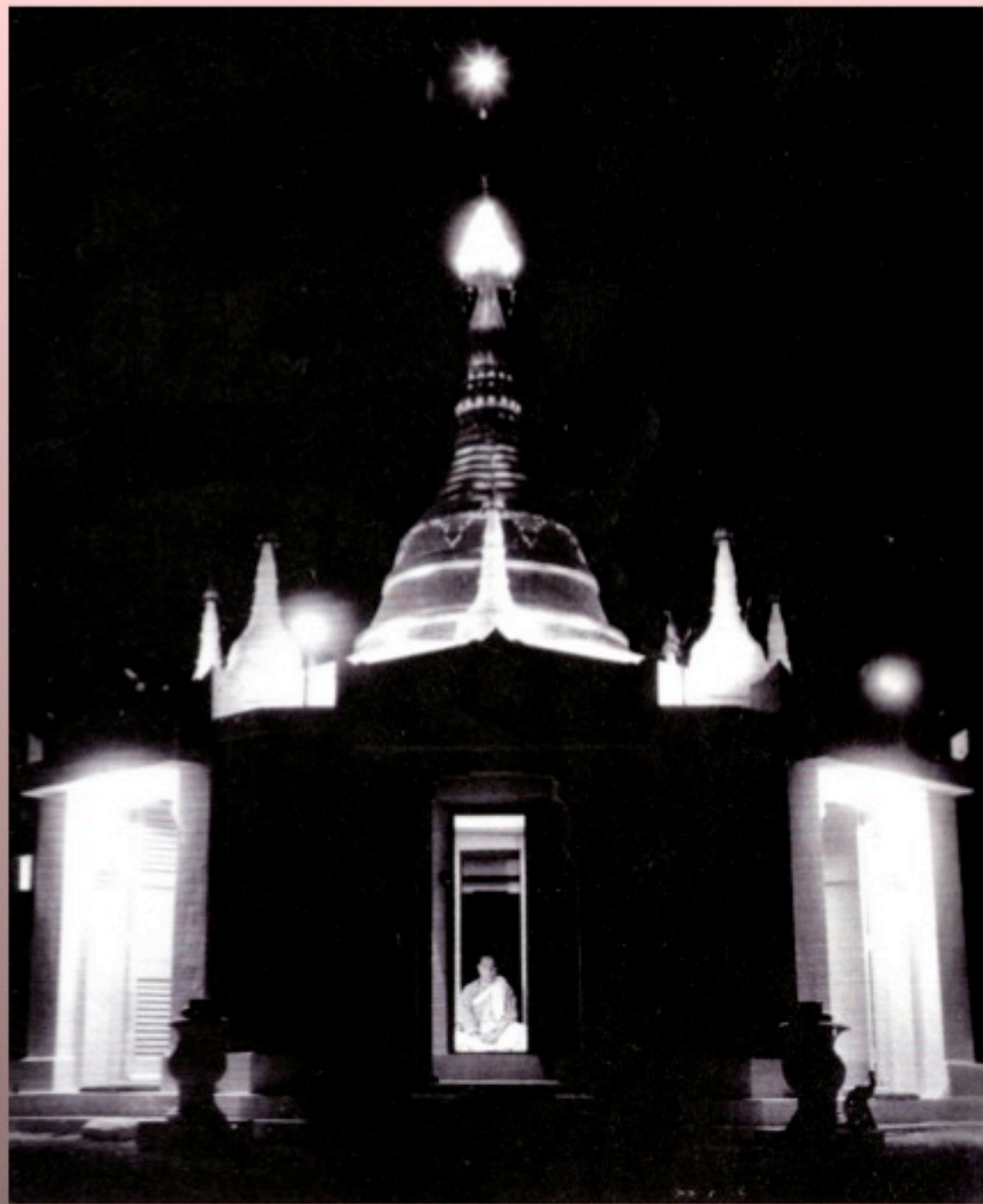


With all my students here and from myself
and my wife, I pay respect to the Sangha
and seek their blessings....

With this strength I'll keep working
till the last breath of my life.

—S.N. Goenka address to Ven Bhikkhu
Sangha, *Dhamma Joti*, Myanmar Dec. 2004





*Anumodantu taṃ sabbe,
medinī thātu sakkhike.*

May they all accept with joy
and
may the vast earth bear witness.

