



Vipassana Meditation
as Taught by S.N. Goenka
in the Tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin

Introduction to the Technique
and
Code of Discipline
for Meditation Courses

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May your meditation prove most beneficial to you. With best wishes for success, we offer you the following information. Please read it carefully before applying for a course.

Introduction to the Technique

Vipassana is an ancient meditation technique. Long lost to humanity, it was rediscovered by Gotama the Buddha in India more than 2500 years ago. *Vipassanā* means seeing things as they really are. It is a process of self-purification through self-observation. The process starts with the observation of the natural breath to concentrate the mind. With this sharpened awareness the student then learns to observe the changing nature of body and mind, and experiences the universal truths of impermanence, suffering and the absence of a permanent self. This truth-realization by direct experience is the process of purification. The entire path (Dhamma) is a universal remedy for universal problems. For this reason, it can be practiced freely by everyone, at any time, in any place, without conflict due to race, community or religion, and it will prove equally beneficial to one and all.

What Vipassana is:

- Vipassana is a technique that will eradicate suffering.
- It is a method of mental purification which allows one to face life's tensions and problems in a calm, balanced way.
- It is an art of living that one can use to make positive contributions to society.

What Vipassana isn't:

- Vipassana is not a rite or ritual based on blind faith.
- It is not an intellectual activity nor a philosophical entertainment.
- Its purpose is not to cure disease.
- A Vipassana course is not a rest cure, a holiday, or an opportunity for socializing.
- Vipassana practice is not an escape from the trials and tribulations of everyday life.

Vipassana meditation aims at the highest spiritual goals of liberation from all suffering, and full enlightenment. Vipassana eliminates the three causes of all unhappiness: craving, aversion and ignorance. With continued practice, the meditation releases the tensions developed in everyday life, opening the knots tied by the old habit of reacting in an unbalanced way to pleasant and unpleasant situations.

Although Vipassana was developed as a technique by the Buddha, its practice is not limited to Buddhists. There is no question of conversion. All human beings share the same fundamental problems, and a technique which can eradicate these problems will have a universal application. People from many religious denominations have experienced the benefits of Vipassana meditation, and have found no conflict with their faith.

Self Discipline and Commitments

The process of self-purification by introspection is certainly never easy—students have to work very hard at it. By their own efforts students arrive at their own realizations; no one else can do this for them. Therefore, the meditation will suit only those willing to work seriously and observe the discipline, which is there for the benefit and protection of the meditators and is an integral part of the meditation practice.

Ten days is certainly a very short time in which to penetrate the deepest levels of the unconscious mind and learn how to eradicate the complexes lying there. Continuity of the practice in seclusion is the secret of this technique's success. Rules and regulations have been developed keeping this practical aspect in mind. They are not primarily for the benefit of the teacher or the course management, nor are they negative expressions of tradition, orthodoxy or blind faith in some organized religion. Rather, they are based on the practical experience of thousands of meditators over the years and are both scientific and rational. Abiding by the rules creates a very conducive atmosphere for meditation; breaking them pollutes it.

Students make a commitment to stay for the entire period of the course. The 10-day course actually spans 12 days when you include the arrival and departure days.

Students must remain within the course boundaries throughout the course. The other rules should also be carefully considered. Only those who feel that they can honestly and scrupulously follow the discipline should apply for admission.

Mental Health Issues

People with significant mental health issues have occasionally come to Vipassana courses with the unrealistic expectation that the technique will cure or alleviate their mental health problems. Even when someone's mental health is currently stable, with or without medication, old symptoms may resurface during or after the course. Psychological conditions that have been in remission may reoccur. Vipassana meditation is not a substitute for medical or psychiatric treatment, and we do not recommend it for people with significant mental health issues.

The Code of Discipline

The foundation of the practice is *sīla*—moral conduct. *Sīla* provides a basis for the development of *samādhi*—concentration of mind; and purification of the mind is achieved through *paññā*—the wisdom of insight.

The Precepts

All who attend a Vipassana course must conscientiously follow five precepts for the duration of the course:

1. to abstain from killing any being,
2. to abstain from stealing,
3. to abstain from all sexual activity,
4. to abstain from telling lies,
5. to abstain from all intoxicants.

There are three additional precepts which are followed during the course by old students (those who have completed a course with S.N. Goenka or one of his assistant teachers):

6. to abstain from eating after midday,
7. to abstain from sensual entertainment and bodily decorations,
8. to abstain from using high or luxurious beds.

Old students observe the sixth precept by only having lemon water or tea without milk at the 5 p.m. break, whereas new students may have tea with milk and some fruit. The teacher may excuse an old student from observing this precept for health reasons.

Acceptance of the Teacher and the Technique

Students must declare their willingness to comply fully with the teacher's guidance and instructions for the duration of the course; that is, to observe the discipline and to meditate exactly as the teacher asks, without ignoring any part of the instructions, nor adding anything to them. Trust in the teacher and confidence in the technique are essential for success in meditation.

Other Techniques, Rites, and Forms of Worship

During the course it is essential that all forms of prayer, worship, or religious ceremony be discontinued. Fasting, burning incense, counting beads, reciting mantras, singing, and dancing are also not permitted. All other meditation techniques and healing or spiritual practices should also be suspended.

Only the techniques taught during the course should be practiced. This is not to condemn any other technique or practice, but to give a fair trial to the technique of Vipassana in its purity. Teachers are available during the course to answer any questions about the technique.

Interviews with the Teacher

The teacher is available to meet students privately between 12 noon and 1:00 p.m. Questions may also be asked in public between 9:00 and 9:30 p.m. in the meditation hall. The interview and question times are for clarifying the technique and for questions arising from the evening discourses.

Noble Silence

Noble Silence means silence of body, speech, and mind. Any form of communication with fellow students, whether by gestures, sign language, written notes, etc., is not allowed. All students must observe Noble Silence from the beginning of the course until the morning of the last full day, but they may speak with the teacher and management.

Separation of Men and Women

During a Vipassana course, men and women are completely separated. Couples should not contact each other in any way during the course. The same applies to friends, members of the same family, etc.

Physical Contact

Participants should have no physical contact with others while on site.

Physical Exercise

Exercise programs and any strenuous exercise should be suspended during the course. Students may exercise during rest periods by walking in designated areas.

Religious Objects, Rosaries, Crystals, Talismans, etc.

No such items should be brought to the course. If brought inadvertently, they must be deposited with the management for the duration of the course.

Intoxicants and Drugs

No drugs, alcohol, or other intoxicants should be brought to the site. Those taking medicines or drugs, with or without a doctor's prescription, should provide the details on the application form.

Tobacco and Nicotine

Smoking, vaping, e-cigarettes and chewing tobacco and similar substances are not permitted on the course.

Food

It is not possible to satisfy the food preferences and requirements of all participants. Students are asked to accept the simple vegetarian meals which provide a balanced, wholesome diet suitable for meditation. If any students have been prescribed a special diet because of ill-health, they should say so in their application. Fasting is not permitted.

Clothing

Clothing should be simple, modest, and comfortable. Tight, transparent, revealing, or otherwise striking clothing (such as shorts, short skirts, tights and leggings, sleeveless or skimpy tops) should not be worn. Sunbathing and partial nudity are not permitted. This is important in order to minimize distraction to others.

Laundry and Bathing

Washing machines and dryers are not available, so students should bring sufficient clothing. Small items can be hand-washed. Bathing and laundry may be done only in the break periods and not during meditation hours.

Outside Communication

No outside communication is allowed before the course ends. This includes messages, phone calls, and visitors. Mobile phones, smartwatches, and other electronic devices must be deposited with management until the course ends. In case of an emergency, a friend or relative may contact the management.

Entertainment, Music, Reading and Writing

Playing music, listening to or watching audio, video, news or entertainment is not permitted. No reading or writing materials or devices should be brought to the course. Students should not distract themselves by taking notes. The restriction on reading and writing is to emphasize the strictly practical nature of this meditation.

Recording Devices and Cameras

Use of any recording devices or cameras is not permitted during the course.

Course Finances

In this tradition of Vipassana as taught by S.N. Goenka, courses are run solely on a donation basis. Donations are accepted only from those who have completed at least one 10-day course in this tradition. Someone taking the course for the first time may give a donation at the end of the course.

In this way courses are supported by those who have realized for themselves the benefits of the practice. Wishing to share these benefits with others, students give a donation according to their means and volition for a future course. Such donations are the only source of funding for courses in this tradition around the world. There is no wealthy foundation or individual sponsoring them. Neither the teachers nor the organizers receive any kind of payment for their service. Thus, the spread of Vipassana is carried out with purity of purpose, free from any commercialism.

Whether a donation is large or small, it should be given with the wish to help others: “The course I have taken has been paid for through the generosity of past students; now let me give something towards the cost of a future course, so that others may also benefit from this technique.”

Summary

To clarify the spirit behind the discipline and rules, they may be summarized as follows: Take great care that your actions do not disturb anyone. Take no notice of distractions caused by others.

It may be that a student cannot understand the practical reasons for one or several of the above rules. Rather than allow negativity and doubt to develop, immediate clarification should be sought from the teacher.

It is only by taking a disciplined approach and by making maximum effort that a student can fully grasp the practice and benefit from it. The emphasis during the course is on work. A golden rule is to meditate as if one were alone, with one’s mind turned inward, ignoring any inconveniences and distractions that one may encounter.

Finally, students should note that their progress in Vipassana depends solely on their own good qualities and personal development, and on five factors: earnest efforts, confidence, sincerity, health and wisdom.

May the above information help you to obtain maximum benefit from your meditation course. We are happy to have the opportunity to serve, and wish you peace and harmony from your experience of Vipassana.

The Timetable

The following timetable for the course has been designed to maintain the continuity of practice. For best results, students are advised to follow it as closely as possible.

4:00 a.m.	Morning wake-up bell
4:30 — 6:30 a.m.	Meditate in the hall or in your room
6:30 — 8:00 a.m.	Breakfast break
8:00 — 9:00 a.m.	Group meditation in the hall
9:00 — 11:00 a.m.	Meditate in the hall or in your room according to the teacher's instructions
11:00 — 12 noon	Lunch break
12:00 — 1:00 p.m.	Rest (and interviews with the teacher)
1:00 — 2:30 p.m.	Meditate in the hall or in your room
2:30 — 3:30 p.m.	Group meditation in the hall
3:30 — 5:00 p.m.	Meditate in the hall or in your room according to the teacher's instructions
5:00 — 6:00 p.m.	Tea break
6:00 — 7:00 p.m.	Group meditation in the hall
7:00 — 8:15 p.m.	Teacher's discourse in the hall
8:15 — 9:00 p.m.	Group meditation in the hall
9:00 — 9:30 p.m.	Question time in the hall
9:30 p.m.	Retire to your room; lights out



Additional information about Vipassana meditation and worldwide course schedules may be obtained from the Vipassana website:

www.dhamma.org