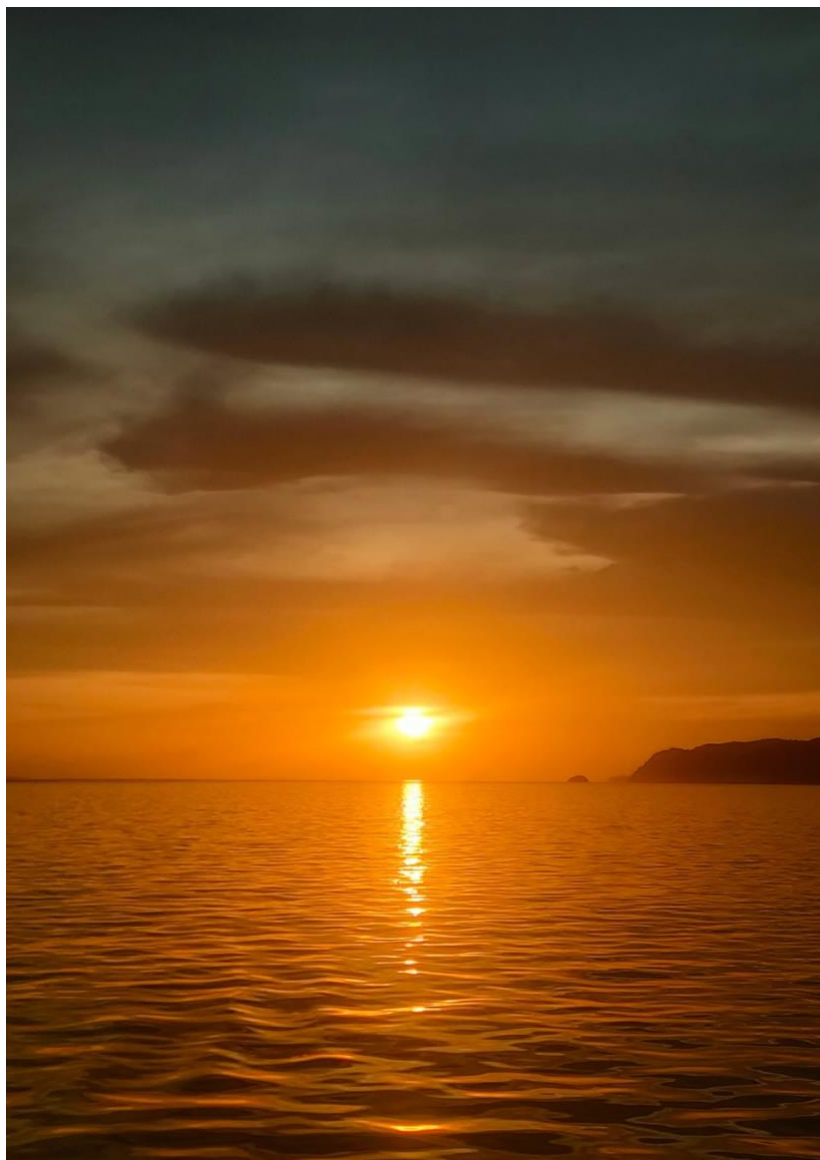




**VIPASSANA, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED
PRACTICE**

by

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PREFACE

PLEASE - DO NOT SKIP THIS ALL-IMPORTANT PREFACE 🙏

This booklet is short and has been intentionally written to be as brief and simple as possible. It has been created with one aim only. The aim is to highlight the great importance of Daily Practice.

In this booklet the meditation practice referred to is Vipassana, as taught by S. N. Goenka. I may use the name Goenkaji, this is a term of respect for the teacher who greatly helped my personal journey and the journey of by now perhaps millions of others too.

The reason I chose Vipassana as taught by Goenkaji for the main part of my none-negotiable Daily Practice is due to scientific process involved and the sheer depth to which this system takes students through. I have experienced other meditation courses and even other very similar Vipassana meditation courses. I have attended shorter courses and discovered that these shorter courses are unable to take a new student to the real depths of Vipassana. Any course shorter than a 10 full days only gets to touch upon a very slight understanding of Vipassana. Goenkaji and the team involved in Dhamma.org have designed the process so that if followed with diligence and strong determination every student will be successful.

I've experienced other styles of meditation to discover that some seem to be trying to teach students to get to a certain destination. The destination can be a dangerous place. Getting to a destination can then bring the wanting and yearning for more and more deeper

experiences, like an addict craving craving craving. Even if or when one gets to a destination - now what, so what.

Being a research & development engineer I need to fully understand how and why something either works or does not work. I also now want to know a thing is real and true through experience, rather than believing in something. Believing in something is just not enough, I really do need to know. I really do know through personal experience the power of this meditation practice.

Through the experiences I've had in Vipassana I know for sure how this Vipassana meditation course and the continued practice will greatly help bring on what some folks call in the spiritual world; the awakening moment. For many people that awakening moment is simply the realisation that we are so much more than the egoic mind and the physical experience, that we are purely the awareness of our experience, be that breath or sensations.

When we know through experience that we are the awareness, life can take a huge shift. This is the shift that slowly and surely helps to take us away from the life of suffering.

The Practice

The most important thing to realise is that meditation is not a destination, it's a practice.

The reason most people talk about meditation (and also yoga) as being a practice is due to the fact that we are always learning through the art of practicing. As soon as there's an expectation from meditation this is going back to the old habit pattern of craving. The art of meditation really can free people from the old habit patterns of cravings and aversions. Slowly and surely these cravings and aversions become less and less.

When someone finishes a 10 day meditation course they become known as old students. This does not mean there is any higher level to the practice of meditation. It simply means the old student now has a basic understanding of Anapana meditation (meditation on the breath), of Vipassana meditation (meditation on the sensations) and of Metta meditation (meditation on loving kindness).

When destination is mentioned, I am merely talking about meditating to a state; of being in a state of no thinking at all, of being in a state of bliss, of peace and calm, even the destination of enlightenment can be an expectation.

The Subtler Art Of Meditation And The Breakthroughs

Many people new to meditation, and at times even old students may say, or even have a time when they think "I can't meditate at the moment". This is simply the old habit pattern of the mind. Meditation can really be as simple as observing the fact that the mind is very agitated and not focused at this moment in time.

Meditation can be as simple as noticing that at this moment it is a challenge to focus attention on the sensations, or the breath. These moments of awareness are also great moments in our practice. These are the real aha moments. One moment you might be noticing that you are meant to be meditating on sensations or breath and then there's an aha moment that comes when you realise you are aware that you are thinking about something.

Most people who are very new to meditation often immediately notice this aha moment or even have a wow moment upon noticing how the noisy and distracted the mind really is, how the mind is constantly thinking. As soon as one sits to meditate there will be these aha moments - aha, right now my mind is thinking about an idea, my mind thinking about a moment in my past, or my mind is thinking about something in the future. This is not a bad thing, to label it a bad thing is craving a good thing, this is actually the subtler, and finer art of meditation. Simple awareness and focus is meditation! With practice more and more of these aha moments come. With practice these aha moments also come sooner. With this observation and awareness, slowly and surely the practice becomes more and more focused on sensations or the breath.

There are also going to be times when the practice becomes less focused. This is meditation, this is how we are meant to live our lives. Living with acceptance knowing that at this moment life is as it is, knowing that the meditation practice at this moment is as it is and to be ok with a turbulent mind, at this moment in meditation, and to also be ok with a highly focused mind and to not crave the highly focused state of mind. This is how it is right now and always remember - this too shall pass. This is anicca, this is changing.

Why Vipassana As Taught By S. N. Goenka?

New students often have very different experiences during their first course. Some may have deeply profound experiences while others may have very subtle experiences within their meditations. As said at the start there should not be a destination in mind for your meditation, other than to help you to come out of the suffering that the mind creates.

Of course there are higher and higher stages of meditation that highlight just how powerful the human experience is.

The important point to remember is that; as the mind can be very powerful in terms of focus, the mind is also equally powerful in creating a life of suffering.

This meditation practice as taught by Goenkaji is a scientifically proven practice that takes people out of suffering.

As Goenkaji explains in his discourses, there are many forms of meditation, all of which can be helpful. After trying a few different practices I know how powerful and profound Vipassana, as taught by Goenka is. Not only for me too. I've personally watched as hundreds of students go through the 10 day courses. I've watched as new students arrive with frustrated painful and sometimes even miserable looking faces and finish their course looking like totally different people. For some people coming out of Vipassana, it can actually still feel a little overwhelming, this too is ok. It may take a little more time to integrate for some people. If this happens to be you, contact your assistant teachers and ask for further guidance.

Why many people do not continue their practice.

There seem to be a few main reasons for not continuing a meditation practice after attending a course.

The challenge of two hours a day.

One reason that can arise, is that it's difficult to maintain an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. The challenge of two hours a day has definitely been one of the biggest challenges for me. For about four years I became what I now jokingly call a bipolar meditator. The reason I label it such is due to bipolar being the label that the medical system gave me back in 2004. For the first four or five years of being a student of Vipassana I would complete a ten day course, come out feeling so much more harmonious with my life and so much calmer. After each course I would sit for an hour each morning. This hour became less and less till by about 3-5 months in, I would no longer be sitting at all. At this stage the level of doubt, negativity and the old habit patterns came back, the old moodswings would start to become overwhelming again and I'd feel the need for another Vipassana course.

I knew deep down that I was so much more than a label and that one day I'd find a way to maintain a balanced mind. In 2017 I went through another emotional period which seemed at that stage to be totally unbearable. At this moment I knew I had to change this old habit pattern of going into deep aversion when a challenge arose. I dedicated myself to doing at least ten minutes every single day without fail for a whole year. This 10 minutes quickly became 15 minutes, then moved to 30 minutes and that one year goal has never stopped. I have

meditated virtually every single day since then. More on this later.

No Longer Feeling Sensations.

Students no longer feeling sensations seems to be another common reason for new students to stop their practice. This was also the case for me and it was one of the reasons my practice faded with less and less time each morning till I was eventually no longer sitting at all.

It really doesn't matter if at any stage of your Vipassana you are finding a struggle to feel sensations you still have Anapana and this works just as well for your meditation practice.

The main point you are reading this for right now is; to know that with continuation of practice you really will see your old habits start to fade away and when the old habits go, suffering also goes.

Can't find a suitable place to meditate.

Having what we think is a suitable and consistent place can be another reason some people stop their practice. This is also the easiest to overcome. There is no huge need for a "special place" to meditate. You can simply wake up, freshen up by brushing your teeth, taking a shower or just washing your face, take a drink of water then go back to your bedroom, plump up your pillow and there's your place. I often travel for work so it's not possible to have a consistent place to sit therefore this is how I've sat for over 10 years, even when I've been on very small boats, even while sharing a room with friends. I've actually discovered that sharing a room with friends

and having friends seeing me sitting on my pillow has inspired friends get into meditation too.

How to make continuation of practice easier

This is only for those who may already have doubts about being able to complete an hour in the morning and an hour in the evening. A doubting mind at this stage will surely lead to discontinuing your meditation practice early.

Therefore, all I am suggesting here is one particular way that helped me, and has helped numerous others to get into a stronger and more determined Daily Practice.

If the two hours already seems daunting what you can do is to dedicate to doing a shorter meditation, not trying. To try is to set yourself up to fail, to do is to succeed. The words we use can change the outcome.

The way to succeed is to dedicate yourself to this new Daily Practice. Work with strong determination right now you make the decision that each morning you will wake and do a minimum of 10 minutes, every single day. What I found, and what others found is that this short ten minutes morning meditation is a lot easier. This short meditation is so easy that eventually it will become longer in duration.

When we are starting off on the journey of meditation and daily practice the single most important factor, is

consistency. With a positive mindset around being consistent in ones practice we are setting ourselves up for a success and in creating a life that will slowly and certainly lead to less and less suffering.

Make your morning meditation something that is none-negotiable and to be done regardless of the situation. Of course if your room is on fire or any other life threatening matter arises, go attend to that, though be sure to come back straight away.

It really is about continuity of practice!

At the end this booklet will be a few links to applications that will help you maintain continuity and highlight how you are getting along too.

The why behind continuity of practice?

There have been two times since I started a none-negotiable practice back in 2017 where I realised I had missed the morning sit. The reason I noticed I had not sat was because each time I noticed the mind was trying to take me into a very dark state of negativity, doubt and even into a thought of being depressed. Each time this doubting negative mind came back I then had a moment of realisation - "oh wow, I haven't meditated". I quickly noticed how strong the doubting negative mind had become. In short, if I do not meditate each day, very quickly the old habit pattern of the mind tries to creep back. Many other meditators have shared very similar

experiences around the huge shift in their moods when they stop their practice.

Many long term practitioners of meditation have also shared how quickly the mind can turn into negativity and doubting within as little as only 2 days without the morning sit.

More Breakthroughs

One huge breakthrough on my meditation journey was to eventually realise that what the practice has taught me, is to avoid the old habit of following any negative or doubting thought processes. Now when a negative or doubting thought arises my practice has taught me to let it go and come back to the breath or sensations. I now simply do not connect with any negative or doubting thoughts. The morning sit has literally helped me get set up for success with each and every new day. I still feel really lethargic each time I wake up, though after the morning sit I feel completely different and totally ready to go. After the morning sit I drink more water and then have a freshly brewed coffee and read.

Another breakthrough was when I was sitting with friends who were drinking a lot of beer. Often during times when certain friends or colleagues would drink a lot there would be times when conversation could get heated. A breakthrough came one evening when a friend who was rather drunk got quite abusive and said something really harsh, ordinarily my old habit pattern would be to fire back a reaction, however I had a profound moment of awareness, I paused momentarily which stopped the old habit pattern of reaction. This pause gave time to change the habit and then respond from a place of loving kindness and simply say "yes, I see

how it could possibly be seen it that way". This was a huge breakthrough and a powerful habit change for me. The meditation practice is also helping to change the old habit patterns of reacting, to responding from a place of love and intelligence.

I no longer spend much time with people who get drunk. I now see how much suffering this used to cause me. I now avoid drunkenness and life is so much more productive and harmonious.

Discipline

One of the greatest things that a meditation practice teaches us is discipline. Even better than just discipline, it teaches such great personal discipline that will greatly help improve your life.

All successful people have a morning practice.

If you look through history at the all successful, that also happen to be good people - virtually every single one of them had or has a morning practice. Not all have meditation as their practice, they all do however have some form of meditative practice and time for themselves. However those that do meditate are by far the most harmonious in their lives.

What happens when the practice stops

It is very common for new students to Vipassana and even new students to any daily meditation practice to feel huge change in their lives. Often there's a feeling of wanting everyone they know to learn how to meditate.

There are those who have been in such elated states that they've been going around telling all their friends and family about the need for meditation who also may at some stage stop their daily practice. I have witnessed many such friends and clients who have the elated high and then it's quite easy to see when such friends and clients are no longer practicing. It is easy to see how the mood has shifted, they are not as positive in mind, not as vibrant as during the time when their daily practice was consistent.

There can be a tendency to think "oh it didn't work for me" or things like "I'm not good enough at this", "it's just not really meant for me". If meditation was not for you, there would have been no change whatsoever. This is the old habit pattern of the mind coming back and trying to take you into negativity and doubting yourself, and doubting the practice.

To Conclude

After these years of ups, downs and ins and outs with meditation I really would like to encourage you to create a new disciplined you, for You and no one else.

I guarantee that the real magic of meditation happens in continuation of practice!

Continue to strengthen your practice by taking part in a 10 day course now and then as this will further deepen your practice. Offer service at a Vipassana centre and witness how being there in service of others can also be greatly helpful to you and your practice.

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this. I really do hope this helps offer another perspective to help and inspire you to maintain your daily practice.

With love

With thanks to:

I would first foremost like to thank the great S. N. Goenka himself for giving his life to be in service of others, for creating and sharing such an incredible gift to the world. I'd like to thank Sarah Winnick for being the person who first planted the seed of Vipassana in me. I would like to especially thank all the assistant teachers, especially the first assistant teachers I was blessed to have encountered, Sin Fat & Pek Hai for they were filled with so much love, compassion and understanding to the highs and lows I experienced during my first course, of having such a helpful nature that they were willing to see me outside of the usual set times to help me understand the experiences I was going through and to even help with questions after the course had ended. I would also like to thank every single old student who has gone on to serve at courses. Without the help of old students volunteering their time there could be no Vipassana like this. This is what makes Vipassana as taught by Goenkaji so special. And of course huge thanks also go out to all the founders and donors who have experienced such profound greatness in this practice that they have helped with finance, with land, with administration, operational and all other aspects involved in Dhamma.org.

May the seed of Vipassana and Goenkaji's teaching continue on, and on...

For more

For a deeper look into the real art of meditation and Vipassana go to www.dhamma.org.

How to time your meditations. Insight Timer is a great free application (<https://insighttimer.com/>) that comes with a timer, you can even chose the sound of the starting and ending gongs. The application has lots of guided meditations and teachers. As you are now an old student to Vipassana I would highly suggest staying with Vipassana, Anapana & Metta meditation as some of the guided meditations can take us away from the pure practice and into distraction meditation with sounds, voices, music and some even offer visualisations which take us far away from Vipassana.

More about me and the journey

www.healingbipolar.com