

Acharya Shri S N Goenka's 100th Birth Anniversary

Why In News

- **Vipassana is a wonderful gift** of the ancient Indian way of life to the whole world, but this heritage of ours was forgotten, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while addressing the concluding ceremony of the year-long celebrations of Acharya **Shri S N Goenka's 100th birth anniversary**.



SN Goenka

- **Born on January 30, 1924, in Burma** (now Myanmar), Goenka learnt Vipassana, a meditation technique, there from **Sayagyi U Ba Khin**, an acclaimed teacher and administrator.



- He later moved to India and made the technique popular worldwide through a non-sectarian movement.
- Goenka is survived by his wife Elaichidevi, also a co-teacher of meditation, and six sons. Goenka, who was conferred the **Padma Bhushan** for social work last year, started teaching meditation to the **public in India in 1969**.
- In **1976**, he set up the **Vipassana International Academy** also known as **Dhamma Giri** in Igatpuri, about 200 km from here in Nashik district.
- Acharya **Shri Goenka was a teacher of Vipassanā meditation** and the person behind the construction of the Global Vipassana Pagoda in the outskirts of Mumbai.



Vipassana

- **Vipassana is an ancient mindfulness meditation technique** that involves observing your thoughts and emotions without judgment.
- It's also known as insight meditation and comes from Theravada, Buddhism's oldest school of thought.
- Vipassana is a way of **self-transformation** through **self-observation**. It focuses on the connection between mind and body, and practitioners seek to understand things as they truly are.
- Vipassana's goal is to **purify the mind, develop values** such as compassion and equanimity, and increase empathy.

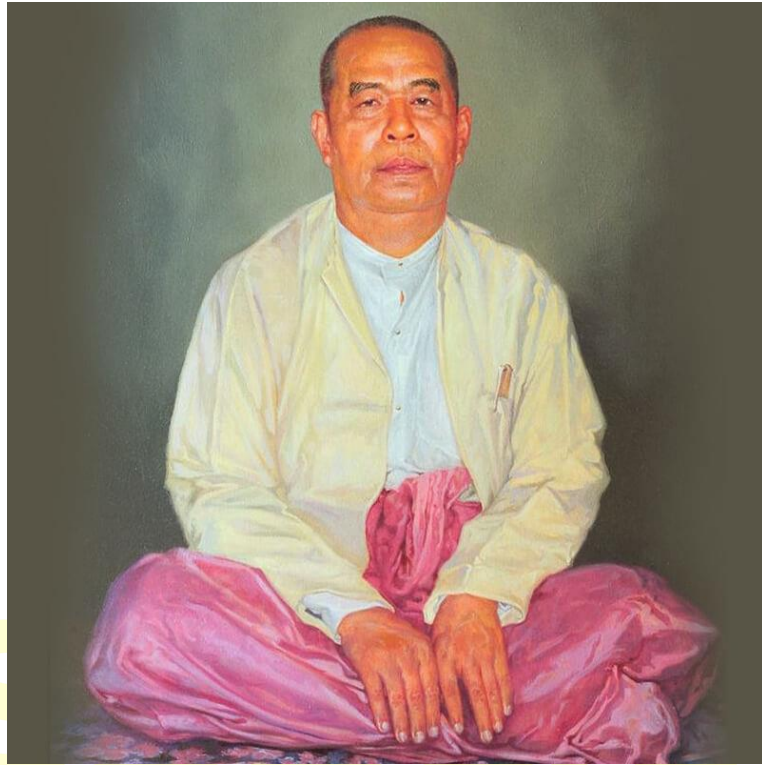


- **Vipassana is one of India's oldest meditation techniques.** It's said to have originated with the Buddha, who is said to have used it to achieve enlightenment.
- After that, he taught **60 disciples the Vipassana technique** and sent them in different directions. Vipassana then spread all over northern India, even becoming practiced by kings and emperors.
- **Allegedly, 200 years after the death of the Buddha,** Vipassana reached Emperor Asoka, who ruled over what is now India.



- Due to a recent war he was waging, **Asoka became horrified by the bloodshed** and decided to follow the path taught by the Buddha's disciples.
- This led to even more teachers spreading the Vipassana technique, traveling all over India and even Egypt and Syria.

- In the **1900s**, **Sayagyi U Ba Khin**, a **civil servant from Myanmar**, learned Vipassana and taught it to many students. He taught that the original, pristine technique should be spread.

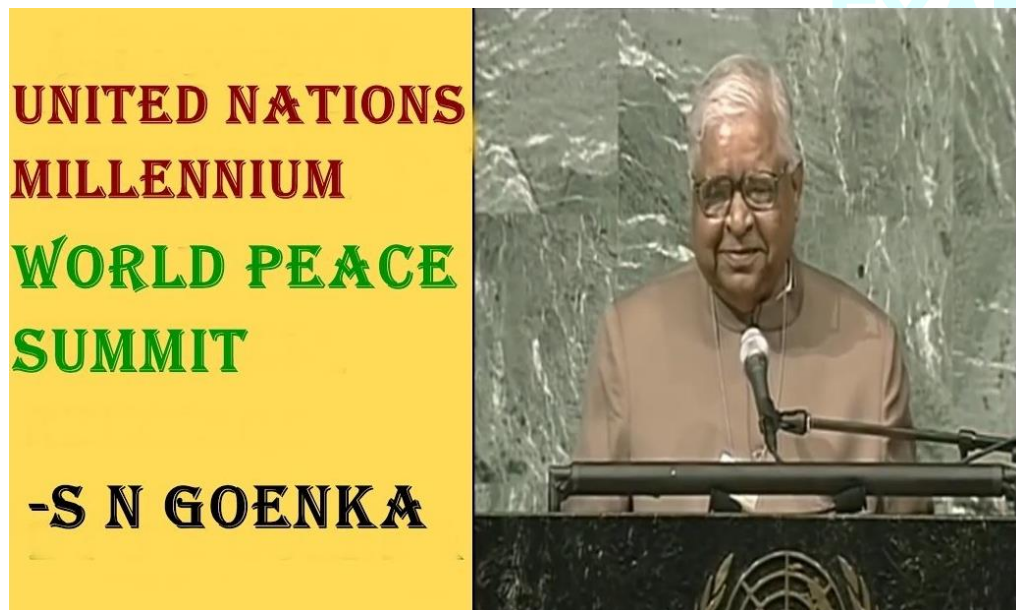


Vipassana courses require attendees to follow five precepts:

- Abstain from killing any being
 - Abstain from stealing
 - Abstain from all sexual activity
 - Abstain from telling lies
 - Abstain from all intoxicants
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- “There was a long period in India in which the art of **teaching and learning Vipassana** was gradually disappearing. Goenka ji took initiation after doing **penance for 14 years in Myanmar** and then returned to the country with this ancient glory of India.
 - The ancient technique was part of prison reforms carried out in **Delhi’s Tihar Jail in early 1990s** and it was taught to inmates there. Later, several prisons in the country introduced Vipassana for inmates.



- In 1982, Goenka began to appoint assistant teachers to help him meet the growing demand for courses.
- In 2000, Goenka addressed the Millennium World Peace Summit at the United Nations headquarters in New York.
- Besides India, Vipassana centres have come up in countries like the US, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom, Japan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Thailand under his guidance.



PM Modi Statement

- Vipassana is the path of **self-transformation** through self-observation. It was relevant thousands of years ago, when it was born, and it has become even more relevant in today's life. Vipassana also has the great power to solve the challenges that the world is facing today," Modi said.
- Recalling the **beginning of the birth centenary celebrations** of Acharya Goenka a year ago, Modi said the nation is celebrating Amrit Mahotsav and also remembering the ideals of Kalyan Mitra Goenka. He reaffirmed that when these celebrations are coming to an end today, the country is moving rapidly towards fulfilling the resolutions of a Viksit Bharat.



- "More than **80 countries in the world** have understood the importance of meditation and adopted it because of Guruji's efforts. Acharya Shri Goenka ji is one of those great people who again gave a global identity to Vipassana.



- **India is giving new expansion** to that resolution with full strength. We proposed International Day of Yoga in the United Nations. It got the support of more than 190 countries. Yoga has now become a part of life globally," Modi said.

- Even though it was India's ancestors who researched the processes of Vipassana yoga, the Prime Minister said the irony is that the next generation have forgotten its importance.
- **"Vipassana, meditation, dharana**, are often considered matters of renunciation but its role was forgotten," he said, praising eminent personalities such as Acharya Goenka for their leadership in this direction.
- Quoting him, Modi said, "A healthy life is a big responsibility of all of us towards ourselves."

To keep the body in good health is a duty... otherwise, we shall not be able to keep the mind strong and clear.

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BUDDHA

- "Today, the challenges of modern times have further increased the role of Vipassana. Today, distress and stress have become a common thing. Our youth are **becoming victims of stress** because of no work-life balance, and lifestyle problems.
- **Vipassana may be the solution** for them. Similarly, because of micro and nuclear families, elderly parents at home also remain under a lot of stress. We should try to connect elderly people, who have crossed the retirement age, with it (Vipassana)," Modi said.

