



Dhamma Patāpa Update

Southeast Vipassana Center



Satipatthana Sutta Course Q&A

Every year Dhamma Patapa holds a special course for old students called the Satipatthana Sutta course. This year the course is being offered in the Spring on [March 26-April 4](#). Senior Assistant Teacher Brett Morris conducted the course last September and answered the following questions.

What is the Satipatthana Sutta course?

The Satipatthana course is a really unique course and an excellent opportunity for students. It is one of the qualifications before students can move onto long courses because you really get a sense of what the Buddha taught and realize Goenka-ji 's deep understanding of the Buddha's teaching. In the discourses, Goenka-ji goes over the Satipatthana Sutta which is a key teaching that the Buddha gave on meditation and Vipassana. It is an eight-day course but otherwise the course has the same exact schedule as a ten-day course.

Can you tell me a little more about the Satipatthana Sutta?

It was sutta, or discourse, the Buddha gave. Sati is mindfulness. Satipatthana is establishing the base of mindfulness. So the meditation technique he taught is all about mindfulness. It is a key sutta on meditation and probably the most complete. In it, he describes the four

main parts of Satipatthana: the physical body, sensations that arise on the body, the mind and contents that arise on the mind. So in this sutta, the Buddha explains how to observe all of these four different aspects of the human being. And how to use that observation for liberation.

How does it differ from a regular ten-day course?

It's an old student course so the minimum qualifications are that students have sat for at least one year and are doing their best to maintain their practice, are maintaining their sila and have sat at least three ten-day courses. So one big difference is the seriousness of the course since all are old students. The other difference is the discourses where Goenka-ji discusses the Satipatthana Sutta. He actually reads through it and discusses the passages throughout the course of the eight days.

Also in the early morning chanting, Goenka-ji is chanting the Satipatthana Sutta. So it's quite nice to hear the discourse and then every morning you can hear it in the chanting.

Who can serve the course?

To serve the course it's the same requirements to serve a ten-day course.

Can you write during the course?

You're given a copy of the Satipatthana Sutta in Pali and English translations, so you can take notes about the sutta, and write down questions during break times.

You can also follow along in your book during the discourses. But meditation time is meditation time; you're not taking notes or reading the sutta during those periods.

It seems like there's a stronger intellectual component than the ten-day course. Is that true?

It depends on the student. Some people will really listen to it. Others who have a deeper intellectual curiosity will really study the Pali, take notes, and write questions. It depends on the person. The opportunity is there for more intellectual exploration during this course. Especially someone who is interested in the Pali and the Buddha's direct words.

In addition, you get a better understanding of Pali, especially key Pali terms in our meditation which come up more and more in long courses especially.

How many times have you sat the course?

Quite a few. There's a lot of information. It's a great course.

So you can sit it many times?

Yes. The more courses we sit, in general, the better, of course. But I think a number of people make that their yearly course.

Why is it offered so rarely, just once a year at many centers?

Because it is an old student course and centers are quite full with long wait lists for ten-day courses. The priority is always trying to get new students for the ten-days. And we see, at most centers, the Sattipatthana courses do not fill up.
