

Vipassana Retreat : DHRIM and Goenka

Differences and Similarities

The intention of this comparison between DHRIM and Goenka Vipassana is to help people know what to expect on our retreat, and is especially useful for those who have never done one of these types of retreats before. It should be noted that both types of retreats are very beneficial and doing either style retreat will have many positive benefits, as long as one puts constant effort into their individual practice. Fundamentally what counts most in the practice of Vipassana, is the effort that one has put in to their own meditation sessions. Now we will look at some main points of comparison.

1. Schedules: In both cases the schedule is the same. The bells ring at 4am and participants start to meditate at 4:30am and follow the same schedule until nightfall. The difference is that Goenka starts Vipassana style meditation on 4th day and on DHRIM on the third day.

2. Songs: In Goenka there are songs and/or chanting in the morning, at noon, at the end of the talks, and in some sessions. They are a kind of mantra to improve the vibrations of the place and make the environment more conducive to meditation. For some this can be off putting, but over time participants get used to it. In the case of DHRIM there are no chants or sounds.

3. Seated meditation: In both styles, the seating meditation sessions are on a cushion (as many or few as needed) with crossed legs and a straight back. A chair can be provided or a wall leaned on if the individual requires it. In Goenka Vipassana this request is more serious and the participant will need a good reason for not sitting like everyone else, as in Goenka it is taught that we should make the effort to continue to sit and meditate as instructed regardless of the sensation to move. In DHRIM Vipassana, it is not necessary to justify the need for a chair. The teacher explains to the participants the reasons why it is better to keep the seated posture as opposed to requesting a chair or leaning, then participants are free to take the initiative without needing permission from the teacher. Occasionally at DHRIM, it is also allowed to meditate lying down. In Goenka it is forbidden to meditate lying down and / or to stretch your legs forward.

4. Walking meditation: Goenka teaches a little bit of walking meditation in the advanced course called Satipathana. At DHRIM walking meditation is taught in the basic 10-day course, and participants are guided in the practice of both, seated and walking meditation. At DHRIM we put emphasis in the practice of walking meditation.

5. Exercises and yoga: At Goenka it is not allowed to exercise or do yoga during the retreat except for stretching in a discreet way without attracting the attention of anyone. At DHRIM, yoga is allowed and those who practice yoga are guided to find the balance and integration with the practice of Vipassana.

Additionally, at DHRIM some stretching exercises are taught for participants to do in the meditation hall when they consider it necessary in order to achieve relaxation of the body.

6. Food: In both cases food is strictly vegetarian. In the afternoon participants on their first retreat are encouraged not to eat more than one piece of fruit and lemon water and/or a herbal tea for the old participants. Fasting is not allowed during the retreat.

7. Reading and writing: At Goenka it is forbidden to read or write. At DHRIM it is allowed for participants who already did a vipassana retreat before to take notes on their progress.

8. Follow-up: At Goenka, the teacher calls several participants at the same time to ask if they are feeling sensations or making good progress. At DHRIM, the teacher calls participants one by one each day to inquire about the result of specific exercises that are given depending on the progress they are having. In this feedback, each participant can also ask what they want about the technique and the exercises they have to do, the teacher keeps track of the progress and tasks of each participant on a registry, aiding individuals in their practice.

9. Sitting place in the meditation hall: In both cases, at DHRIM and Goenka, old participants sit at the front according to their past experience in the practise. In the dining room, participants at DHRIM are assigned fixed places on each table; at Goenka, participants usually sit where they prefer every day.

10. Questions and Answers: At Goenka, the teacher limits participants questions to the minimum, trying to motivate the participant to leave aside the doubts and continue meditating. In DHRIM the teacher answers all the questions eliminating all doubts while motivating the participant to continue meditating. In both cases there are personal interviews at noon if a participant requires it. In DHRIM there is a basket where participants can write any question down and place it inside. These are answered at the end of the day in an open setting in the hall before going to sleep, this is optional so only those wishing to hear them need to stay. In Goenka questions are answered only from the participant who is in front of the instructor.

11. Number of participants: In Goenka, retreats can be of small or larger groups ranging from 50 to 100 people or very large from more than 100 to thousands of people at a time. In DHRIM there are only small groups with a maximum of 50 people.

12. Segregation of sexes: In Goenka sex segregation occurs at all times. In the case of DHRIM there is only segregation in the meditation hall, dining hall and bedrooms. In both a strict policy is upheld of no contact of sexual conduct.

13. Talks or daily discourses: In both cases there are daily discourses at 7:15 pm. In Goenka, the talks focus more on stories and anecdotes to illustrate a message or teaching. In DHRIM, the talks are more technical oriented, focused on meditation techniques and the balancing factors of meditation.

14. Presence of the teacher in the room: In Goenka, the teacher is present from 5:00 am and at the long

sessions during the morning and afternoon the teacher is sometimes absent, depending on the teacher. In DHRIM, the teacher is present in all sessions all the time from 4:30 am onwards.

15. Fundamental teaching: In both cases emphasis is given to the experiential knowledge of the appearance and disappearance of the object of observation (Anichia) that is crucial to develop wisdom. In DHRIM there is more emphasis on this and it is complemented with the teaching of the 7 factors of meditation development, to learn to balance the meditation session and to be able to move deeper into the body more profoundly.

16. Teaching methodology: At Goenka, participants are motivated to reach their own knowledge of the technique through practice, trying to put aside the mind. In DHRIM the participant is motivated to develop the knowledge of the technique by understanding the theory and the different tactics to develop the meditation. In Goenka the teachings are transmitted in audio by Goenka himself and the instructors are limited to answer the basic questions related to the technique. In DHRIM the teachings are given by the instructor in person, so the questions are not limited if they are about the technique.

17. Tasks for old students: In Goenka there are no additional demands except that the old students should start with vipassana on the third day. In DHRIM, old students are asked to keep a diary of the performance they are achieving day by day, with which they are interviewed and encouraged to perform specific exercises according to their progress.

18. Use of the clock: In Goenka a clock is kept behind the meditation group in the room, in DHRIM it is placed in front so that everyone can see the time that is passing with the intention to self-motivate them.

19. Metta practice: In Goenka, a recorded meditation with chants is conducted by Goenka himself with the intention to share the results of the course with all beings and to send love to all beings. This lasts for about an hour on the 9th day of the retreat. In DHRIM several guided meditations are conducted on the 9th day. One of these involves the practice of forgiveness to ourselves, our parents and the connection with the Spiritual Heart. Another is to send love through Spiritual Heart activation and also an exercise related to the practical use of vipassana in different life situations.

20. Spiritual Heart: In Goenka, the Spiritual Heart is known informally only in long retreats as long as the participant has this experience (Revelation of the Spiritual Heart). In DHRIM the technical aspects are taught to all the participants on the 9th day and there are several meditation sessions of the spiritual heart on the last 2 days.

21. Practical applications of vipassana meditation: In Goenka, specific applications of the vipassana technique are not formally taught. In DHRIM, on the 9th day there are teachings on how the vipassana technique can be present in personal & family situations.

22. Other practices: In Goenka the practices taught are anapana, vipassana and metta. In DHRIM these are taught with additional teachings in; the spiritual heart meditation, meditation for balancing energies, meditation for protection, meditation for healing others at a distance and meditation for purification of particular situations.

23. Restrictions of participants: In Goenka people who practice Reiki or kundalini meditation techniques or people who used drugs or medicinal plants are discouraged to participate in a vipassana retreat. In

DHRIM these people are accepted and they are guided and supported in their detoxification and healing journey.

24. Certificate of participation: In Goenka no certificates are given. At DHRIM certificates are given depending on the length and hours achieved. The ten-day retreat will certificate the accumulated 100 hours of meditation.

25. Economics: In Goenka all retreats are based on voluntary donations that participants provide at the end of the retreat. At DHRIM while some retreats are also held entirely off donation, other times this is not possible for us. In this case the cost of accommodation and meals is paid by the participant to the service provider at the beginning of the retreat leaving the vipassana teachings as a voluntary donation at the end of the retreat.

26. Support after the course: At Goenka, the teacher is available to support those who need to consult after the course by email, telephone or in person. At DHRIM the same applies and additionally, each participant is contacted approximately one month after the completion of the retreat.