

Vipassana Newsletter

In the tradition of Sayagyi U Ba Khin, as taught by S. N. Goenka

Vol. 1, No. 7, 12 October, 2025; (Revised) (continued since January 1990)

Regd. No. MHENG/25/RAA43

Price per copy ₹ 0.00

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Words of Dhamma

Yathā daṇḍena gopālo, gāvo pājeti gocaram;

Evaṃ jarā ca maccu ca, āyuaṃ pājenti pāṇinam.

– *Dhammapadapāḷi Daṇḍavaggo 135*

Just as a cowherd with a stick drives cows to fresh pastures, so old age and death drives the life of beings to an end.

The Victory over Death

The prevalent meaning of the word ‘mrityunjayi’—master of death—has become misleading. The victory over death was never intended to indicate that death would no longer occur. In our hearts, we hold great dread of bodily pain or mental suffering in those moments in the midst of death. One of the chief reasons to remain immortal is to gain relief from this fear.

Victory over death means to not allow another birth to occur. If birth takes place and the flow of life begins, then death is inevitable. There is no way to find succor from it. This is an immutable law of Dhamma, an unshakeable truth. But in case the process of taking birth stops, then one gets relief from the process of death. This then is Nibbāna, freedom, moksha. This is the ultimate purpose, the final goal of Vipassana meditation.

One of the yardsticks of our progress towards this goal is the state of our final death moments. If life is released in fear, tears, sleep, unawareness, or blind attachments, then the next life and death are inevitably ones of misery. And also inevitable is that the next life will likely be in some lower realms, which may make it difficult, indeed very difficult, to be born again in human form.

However, if the death occurs in a state of awareness, in an awakened conscious state, observing the impermanence of reality with the awareness of rise and fall, fearless and peaceful, advancement in higher realms will be unavoidable. And if the body is released in a state of total and complete detachment, then certainly, one will become a victor over death.

Only by mastering the art of living can one get such a death.

– *From Hindi Patrika, Vol 7, No. 10, dt: 21-12-1980.*

The Death of Our Father

– *By Satyanarayan Goenka*

[Continued from the previous issue. This is the final part of the heartfelt letter written by Goenkaji to his elder brother Babu Bhaiya (Babulal Goenka) in Myanmar.

From 1 to 12 Sept. 1972, Goenkaji was conducting a camp in Raxaul (Bihar), bordering Birganj in Nepal, when he received the news that in Mumbai, his father's thigh bone was fractured in a mishap. At the camp's conclusion, Goenkaji took a flight to Mumbai. This has been narrated in the last newsletter (Sept 2025). As it turned out, this journey to Mumbai had become agonizingly long and circuitous.

Barely half an hour across the border from Raxaul was Birganj in Nepal, from where he could have taken a direct flight to Patna (instead of the inordinately long and hopping flights) and onwards, saving valuable time when he was eager to reach his father. People did suggest this route, saying no one will know whether you are Nepalese, Indian, or Burmese. But in those days, Goenkaji carried a Myanmar passport, which permitted travel only to India. He did not want to break Sila and enter Nepal, which would have been very easy for him. Such was his adherence to truth. – Editor]

The letter continues:

Patience and Compassion of Father

23 Sept 1972 – Bombay

Dear Babu Bhaiya, Respectful Salutations!,

The day of the accident, he went to the beach for his daily walk and was distributing fruits, etc., to beggars outside the temple when a municipality van came to nab the unlicensed stall owners, leading to a melee on the road. In the confusion he was struck by a horse carriage and fell, breaking his thigh bone. He got up, sat in the car, and returned home. As he complained of pain. He was taken to a hospital where he remained for 4 days. His patience and forbearance were noteworthy. His heart went out to that horse-carriage driver, and he said, "Don't let the police harass him." It was not his fault. I fell due to my own weakness.

Forebearance and Sense of Humour

He never focused on his difficulties in his youth or middle age, which was not uncommon for him. Forbearance had been his second nature. If we mentioned his diabetes or any other disease, he would shrug it off as nothing to worry about. We'd marvel at his mental fortitude. In the final days of his life, his forbearance became exceptional.

Sitting far away in Raxaul, I grew concerned about the excruciating pain he must be in with his fractured thigh, which could not be operated on straight away, but when I returned, I discovered that he was never given medications. Lying in hospital, he would remain jovial, smiling, surprising the doctors and nurses. The room would be filled with family and visitors, playing cards with animated conversation. Once a senior doctor asked, "Is there any pain?" Babuji replied in the negative. Then why are you in the hospital, the doctor said? "Because I enjoy being here," he said and laughed loudly. All started laughing.

At times he would wince in pain. And when someone would ask concerned where the pain was, he would laugh and say, "Oh, there is no pain." This would lighten everyone's mood. Once he told his elder brother, "I am tired of lying in bed; I would like to walk to the toilet." Upon being told he cannot walk as his leg is broken, he, as if remembering, said, "Oh yes, my leg is broken!" How could he forget his pain? I think the lifetime's practice of not laying emphasis on even the most difficult situations and sufferings but laughing them off had become like second nature to him.

Once when asked how the treatment was progressing, he said in jest, "Certainly there is no dearth of doctors here." One day he complained, "Why are so many doctors called?" He did not like constant

ministrations by them—giving injections, saline drips, checking b.p., temperature, and so on. This really bothered him. In his last days, he just wanted peace. But of course the family could not accept that these were his last days, and the stream of doctors continued. He would get irritated upon mention of one more doctor but would relent when his elder brother called one.

Once, early in the morning, he called Shyam Behari (brother), asking him to get paper and pen. Everyone was alert to hear of his last wishes. But funnily, he began dictating, early morning a doctor comes with an injection, then after half an hour another one to check blood pressure, then the next one comes for a saline drip, and so on. This was the last day of his life, yet it was full of gentle amusement.

People marveled at his sharp mental alertness. While listing out the doctor's visits, he mentioned the doctor injecting him seven times, which the elder brother refuted, saying the injections were not seven. But Babuji was right. He was injected seven times. The day prior to his passing, he was semi-conscious, drifting in and out. In that state he talked about playing cards, which concerned his brother, who felt if his mind dwells on cards in the final hours, how would he go to higher planes hereafter? But his concern was unfounded, as soon Babuji regained consciousness and his mind became alert again.

Unusual Awareness

All the senses were unusually alert—he could hear and see from afar with total clarity. The body sensations became sharp. If anyone touched him even slightly, he would react. With his senses, even the mind became alert, and this alertness remained till the end.

In his final moments, his eyes began to wander around the room. Certainly he was not looking at those present. Focused on his fast-approaching destination, a sacred one, he breathed his last. Still there were no signs of passing—no hiccups, no breathlessness, nothing. Just falling into a deep sleep. His face was bright and peaceful. It was 1:45 pm.

The next day when he was to be taken for cremation at 9 am, his face exuded tranquil calm, and his body was pliant and soft. There were no signs of death, no rigidity, except that the doctor had certified him dead. If you see the photo that was taken during his final bath, you will be surprised—as if he just lay there, turned on his side. He looked so alive.

Final Journey –Face Left Uncovered

Elder brother, breaking the tradition, kept his face, still glowing, uncovered so that those around could see and be inspired not just by this saintly person's life but also death. My brother later told me as to how, soon after his demise, the hospital room permeated with divine Dhamma energy. At home too, where his body was placed, the atmosphere pulsated with Dhamma vibrations as all around either meditated or recited scriptures as they sat surrounding him all night.

It was but natural for divine energy to permeate the atmosphere, given the higher realms he had moved towards as a result of a life lived with grace. He had been properly supported by his dhammic family, including my elder brother. The ending had to be gentle and filled with grace.

Detachment

He practiced detachment all his life; indeed, who knows since how many lifetimes this practice has been going on! He was not going to permit attachment towards anyone now, though he fulfilled his responsibilities towards all to the fullest. If anyone was unwell, he would ensure the best treatment and care was given, but without attachment. He did not wail and cry if someone died. His detachment was to be marveled at. No wonder that despite sensing his approaching death, he was not disturbed. He was so very fond of you and wanted you to be able to somehow leave the troubles behind and return, but did not call for you as he lay dying.

Whenever I returned from a camp, his face would light up, and he would ask all about the camp. He had participated in the first camp held in India, and subsequently he would be there at the concluding part of all the camps that were held in Mumbai. Seeing so much love and gratitude in the eyes of people would fill him with tranquil joy. He loved me too so deeply, yet, in his final moments, he did not remember me.

In fact, in his final moments, he did not ask for anyone. It does not mean that he did not love us all; indeed, love poured from him. Before passing, he called each one and blessed him, as if blessing him with a lifetime of happiness. But it was not love full of attachment. He was neither a heartless one, nor was he immersed in love filled with attachment.

Those who get caught in intellectual debate on detachment are not necessarily detached, while those

who are truly detached do not concern themselves with intellectual definitions of detachment. Such was our respected father. Truly detached. Where, then, was the question of weeping and wailing at such a passing? It was truly a great fortune that we were offspring of such a saintly one. This good fortune would multiply manifold if we were able to imbibe some of those virtues in our lives.

*Your younger brother,
Satya Narayan Goenka*

Vipassana newsletters: printing and posting related problems and solutions.

Posting the newsletters has become a matter of concern over the past few years. First, its registration had to be redone. Then there was another obstacle. The postal department dismissed the previous arrangement of posting at discounted rates, which meant the posting that was charged earlier at the rate of 0.25 paise per issue is now charged at Rs. 2.50 per issue. Yet it still does not guarantee timely delivery. Despite many complaints from readers, this problem persists. Also, the cost of paper, printing, and posting has more than doubled. As a result, we recommend the following choices to our readers:

- 1. Download the "Vipassana Meditation App" on your mobile from this link: <https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vipassanameditation>. The single column and large font size make for convenient reading. Or:
- 2. Go on the VRI website and click on <https://www.vridhamma.org/newsletters>, which will take you to the newsletter section. Here you can read them or download and print them. Or:
- 3. On email. You can share your email address with us. The newsletter will be sent to you. Again, you can read it or print it at your end.

If you agree with any of the above three options, then you may inform us of your preferred option at the following **Email:** patrika.vri@gmail.com This way, your name will be removed from the list of members to receive a hard copy by post, even if you are a life member, thus saving the postal costs.

AUSPICIOUS DEATH

Sri K B Chikkanarayanappa Ji, a Teacher from Bangalore, Karnataka, passed away peacefully on 26th September, 2025, at the ripe age of 99 years. He took his first course in 1988 and accepted Vipassana as the way for the rest of his life. He was appointed AT in 1994 and then T in 2005. He served as the CT for Dhamma Paphulla, Bengaluru, from 2005 to 2012. The initial translations of the course materials in Kannada were done by him, which enabled the local people to participate in the courses. He spent all his years tirelessly serving courses, giving numerous introductory talks on Vipassana across Karnataka, and translating several Dhamma publications into Kannada, for which the state of Karnataka will ever remain indebted. May the merits thus earned smoothen his forward journey towards Nibāṇna.

Additional Responsibility

1. Mr. Vinodkumar Watni as CAT for Marathwada (districts of Chhatrapati Sambhaji Nagar (Aurangabad), Jalna, Beed and Latur.)
2. Dr. Sangram Jondhale as CAT for Marathwada (districts of Nanded, Hingoli, Dharashiv (Osmanabad) and Parbhani.)
3. Mr. Swarn Sandhu, To Serve as Centre Teacher of Dhamma Rasmi, Australia

New Responsibility Teacher

1. Mr. Yogesh & Mrs Alka Agrawal, To serve as Centre Teacher of Dhamma Sambodhi, Bodhgaya, Bihar

New Appointments Assistant Teachers

1. Mr. Bhooshan Sandh, Mumbai
2. Mrs. Meenakshi Pakhare, Pune
3. Mr. Sun Hong Jie, China

CCTs

1. Mr. Medhankar, Lakhimpur Khiri, U.P.
2. Mr. Ashish Bhatia, Mohali, Punjab

One-Day Mega Courses at Global Vipassana Pagoda, Gorai, Mumbai

1) **Sunday, 18-1-2026** Mataji's Demise-day (5-1-2016) and Sayagi U Ba Khin's demise day (19-1-1971).

2) In addition there are Daily One-Day Courses being held in the Pagoda for Vipassana Students. Please follow the link to join and take advantage of the immense benefit of meditating in a large group
Contact for all one-day: 022 50427500 (Board Lines) Mob. +91 8291894644 (from 11 am to 5 pm).

Online registration: <http://oneday.globalpagoda.org/register>; **Email:** oneday@globalpagoda.org

3) **Dhammalaya Accommodation during Mega Courses:**

Meditators can stay at Dhammalaya during mega courses and avail maximum benefit. Please **contact:** 022 50427599 or **Email-** info.dhammalaya@globalpagoda.org or info@globalpagoda.org

DHAMMA DOHAS

*Brahma devatā manuja paśu, sabhi mrityu ādhina;
Para gyānī karatā rahe, punarjanma ko kshīṇ.*

Brahmas, devas, human beings and animals, all are controlled by death; But the wise continue to weaken rebirth.

*Apanā-apanā karmaphala, bhoga svayaṃ hī bhoga;
Kauna baṇṭā paye bhalā, jara mrityu kā yoga.*

Each one must bear the fruits of his own kammas; Who is able to die and grow old without cause?

*Jivana bhara baḍatī rahe, sukhada puṇya kī bela;
Maraṇakāla jagrat rahe, hoyā svarga se mela.*

May the vine of good and joyful deeds keep growing; May you be aware at the time of death, guiding one to heaven.

*Sharaṇa grahaṇa kara dharama kī, kara nija citta ashoka;
Varaṇa kare jo maraṇa ko, gamana kare suraloka.*

Take refuge in Dhamma, keeping one's mind free of pain; Whoever accepts death passes to a happy realm.

Edited and published by R.P. Yadav for VRI, Igatpuri-422 403 and printed at Apollo Printing Press, 259, SICOFT Ltd., 69 MIDC, Satpur, Nashik-422 007.
Subscriptions BY BANK DRAFT, PAYABLE AT IGATPURI IN FAVOUR OF (Vipassana Research Institute) Vol. 1, No. 7, 12 October 2025.

SUBSCRIPTION TO ANNUAL NEWSLETTER: ₹ 100.00 (FOR OUTSIDE INDIA- US \$ 50); Vip. NL; (Revised) Regd. No. MHENG/25/RAA43. Price Per Copy ₹ 0.00

Posting Day: **12th of every month**, Posted at **Igatpuri-422403**, Dist. Nashik (M.S.)

DATE OF PRINTING: 8 October, 2025, DATE OF PUBLICATION: 12 October, 2025

If undelivered, please return to:

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