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Birth, Aging and Death: Three Existential Sufferings in Early Buddhism

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Abstract

In Early Buddhism, birth, aging and death are characterized as the three main existential sufferings of the worldly person, not of the perfected saint. What the worldly person conceives as birth, aging and death of an "I," the perfected saint perceives as (dependently) arising, change and ceasing of the five-clinging-bundles: matter, feeling, perception, determinations and consciousness. In this paper, an attempt is made to examine early Buddhist discourses to understand the doctrinal explanation of why the worldly person conceives birth, aging and death whereas perfected saint perceives arising, change and ceasing. The examination of these discourses leads to the following conclusion: Because the worldly person conceives of an "I" and holds on to it as "this is mine," "this am I" or "this is my self" what he or she conceives as birth, aging and death is of this "I" or "self." And because the perfected saint has removed the conceit "I am" as well as the "self-view" from the experiential structure, he or she perceives (dependently) arising, change and ceasing, without conceiving of birth, aging and death of an "I" or "self;" thus, birth, aging and death constitute the unenlightened way of looking at life or one's experiential world; arising, change and ceasing constitute the enlightened way of looking at life or one's experiential world. The former determines suffering. The latter produces peace and happiness.

Key words: Existential Suffering, Early Buddhism, *Arahat*, *Nibbāna*, Aging and Death

Introduction

The Buddha's teaching in the *Suttas*, the early discourses in Pāli, identifies birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*) as three existential sufferings of the worldly person (*puthujjana*).¹ It identifies *Arahat*, the perfected saint, as one who is free (*vimutta*) from these sufferings. Thus, the three sufferings help distinguish the worldly person from the *Arahat*: the former suffers from them but the latter does not. A careful examination shows that the worldly person suffers the three sufferings due to his or her failure to understand the three characteristics of the determined things (*saṅkhata*)—arising (*uppāda*), change (*ṭhitassa aññathatta*), and ceasing (*vaya*)—as they really are. Therefore, it is the aim of this paper to elucidate the difference between the worldly person and the *Arahat* with reference to the three sufferings and the three characteristics of conditioned existence or determined things.²

In the course of this study, we will discuss three important questions: (1) Are birth, aging and death applicable to the *Arahat* at all? Are they suffering only to the worldly person, not to the *Arahat*? (2) How and why does the worldly person perceive arising, change and ceasing of the five clinging-bundles—matter, feeling, perception, determinations and consciousness—and the six senses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—subjectively as birth, aging and death of a presently existing this “I”? (3) In what sense are birth and death considered sufferings experienced by the worldly person now? Are the worldly person's actual birth from the mother's womb that has already taken place and his actual death that is yet to take place also sufferings to him at present?

From Three Characteristics to Three Sufferings

Birth (*jāti*), aging (*jarā*) and death (*maraṇa*) are three significant facets of suffering (*dukkha*). It is to these three sufferings that the Buddha teaches *nibbāna*, the cessation of suffering (*dukkha-nirodha*), as the solution.³ One instructed in the Buddha's teaching often commits to a spiritual path of going forth from home life into homelessness with the resolve: “I will be someone who has overcome birth, aging-and-death and other forms of mental sufferings.”⁴ The significance of the three sufferings could also be seen from the

fact that the early discourses specifically refer to them in their main doctrinal discussions. For example, they are referred to in the stock passage that defines ‘this is suffering’ (*idaṃ dukkhaṃ*), the first of the Four Noble Truths (*ariya-sacca*):

Now this, monks, is the Noble Truth of Suffering: birth is suffering; aging is suffering; illness is suffering; death is suffering.⁵

They also appear in the standard twelve-factored formulation as well as many other formulations of the Dependent Co-arising (*paṭicca-samuppāda*) that define both the arising and the cessation of this whole mass of suffering.⁶

Dependent upon the eye and a sight arises eye-consciousness. The coming together of the three is called contact. With contact as condition, feeling; with feeling as condition, craving; with craving as condition, clinging; with clinging as condition, “self”-continuity; with “self”-continuity as condition, birth; with birth as condition, aging-and-death, sorrow, lamentation, pain, grief and despair are formed.⁷

The soteriological significance of the three sufferings is emphasized in the Buddha’s discourses by stating that the three constitute the real reason behind both the appearance of a Buddha in the world and the appetite for his teaching in it. What makes someone a Buddha is the realization of the three sufferings together with their origin, cessation and the path leading to their cessation. Because the three sufferings remain a fact in the lives of every worldly being, the world is always in need of the Buddha’s teaching:

Monks, but for three things, a *Tathāgata* would not arise in the world, nor a fully awakened *Arahat*, nor would a teaching and discipline proclaimed by a *Tathāgata* shine in the world. What three? Birth, aging, and death.⁸

For anyone who is familiar with the religious traditions of the world, it is apparent that the three sufferings loaded with such soteriological and psychological significance are taught only in the Buddha’s teaching. The early discourses state that the three sufferings arise only in those who cling to a notion of “self” expressed in the discourses as: “clinging to self-doctrine” (*atta-vāda-upādāna*), “self-view” (*attānudiṭṭhi*) and “person-view” (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*).

For the Buddha, any “self-view” is a wrong view (*micchā-dīṭṭhi*). The worldly person caught up in this wrong view and has not received proper instruction and training in the right view as taught in the Buddha’s teaching is not in a position to understand fully the three sufferings by himself. This also means that he fails to discover the path leading to the cessation of the three sufferings. This failure is there because of the fact that it is only in the Buddha’s teaching that he could hear the “not-self” (*anatta*) doctrine. As it is pointed out in the discourses, all other religions and philosophies often end up in preaching either an existing real self in the religious sense (*sassata-vāda*) or no self in the materialist sense (*uccheda-vāda*).⁹ The former advocates ethics and morality but the latter dismisses them.

The failure to understand the Buddha’s teaching of not-self, therefore, fails the worldly person from realizing freedom from birth, aging and death. The realization of freedom from the three sufferings involves in the first place the removal of the subjective determinants (*saṅkhāra*), the causes (*hetu*), conditions (*paccaya*) or sources (*nidāna*) that determine one’s experiencing of a “self” (*atta*) or “person” (*sakkāya*). This failure to understand not-self doctrine makes him proceed with his clinging to the belief in “self” or “person.” In this way, the worldly person remains a worldly person having caught up in a situation of which, as a discourse puts it, he, being beset with birth, aging and death, just pursues the acquiring of the same. The Buddha illustrates this unfortunate situation of the worldly person by taking his own situation as a worldly being prior to his awakening:

Monks, before my awakening, while I was still only a being aspiring for awakening (*bodhisatta*), I too, being myself subject to birth, being myself subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement, I sought what was also subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow and defilement.¹⁰

The noble disciple (*ariya-sāvaka*), one instructed in the Buddha’s teaching, on the other hand, understands that he is beset with birth, aging and death. As he understands, he does not pursue for the same. Instead, he pursues for their opposites: not-born (*ajāta*), not-aging (*ajara*) and not-dying (*amata*). It is only the *Arahat*, one who has achieved *nibbāna*, the super psychological state of not-born, not-aging, and not-dying, who can claim confidently that he is completely free from birth, aging and death. From the *Arahat’s* view,

what the worldly person perceives as three sufferings are merely the arising (*uppāda*), alteration (*thitassa aññathatta*)¹¹ and ceasing (*vaya*) of the sense faculties (*saḷāyatana*) or of the clinging-bundles (*upādāna-kkhandha*). The *Arahats* see these three as defining characteristics of any determined thing (*saṅkhatassa saṅkhata-lakkhaṇāni*):¹²

There are, monks, these three characteristics of any determined thing. What three? Its arising is seen (*uppādo paññāyati*), its vanishing is seen (*vayo paññāyati*), its alteration while persisting is seen (*thitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati*).¹³

The sense faculties and the five clinging-bundles are dependently arisen things (*paṭicca-samuppannā dhammā*) and are determined things. The *Arahats* understand how they arise, cease and alter while persisting. Hence, those changes generate no suffering to the *Arahats*. The uninstructed worldly persons, however, cannot understand the truth of this situation or the declaration of the *Arahats* concerning the truth. They, therefore, continue to perceive the *Arahats* by means of their own worldly categories of birth, aging and death.

Moreover, worldly persons are always puzzled by the Buddha's explanations of the nature of the *Arahat* here in this life and his subsequent passing away. Therefore, they cannot resist demanding that the Buddha answers categorically the undeclared questions (*avyākata-pañha*) concerning the liberated sage (*tathāgata*). Due to not understanding the meaning behind the three sufferings and the Buddha's solution to them, worldly persons demand that the Buddha should provide answers to their worldly questions:¹⁴

Does the *Tathāgata*, the liberated sage, exist after death (*hoti tathāgato param-maraṇā*)? Does he not exist after death (*na hoti*)? Does he both exist and not exist after death (*hoti ca na ca hoti*)? Does he neither exist nor not exist after death (*nēva hoti na na hoti*)?

For the Buddha, these are questions of worldly persons who delight, take delight, rejoice in the five bundles and do not know and see their cessation as it really is.¹⁵

Taking of Change and Alteration as Aging of “I”

Among the three sufferings, what the worldly person visibly notices of him or her is aging (*jarā*). Therefore, I will take it for discussion first. What is this aging (*jarā*) that the Buddha is talking about? Why and to whom is aging a suffering? Is aging a suffering to the *Arabat*?

The problem of the worldly person who is uninstructed in the Buddha’s teaching is that he conceives (*maññati*) an “I” concerning the five clinging-bundles (*upādāna-kkhandha*)—consciousness, matter, feeling, perception and determinations—and clings to it as “this am I” and “this is my self.” The changes that take place in the five clinging-bundles are for him changes of “I” or “self.” Hence, these changes are always perceived by him as aging. As this situation of subjectivity in his experiential structure is somewhat automatic, we can say that the worldly person is someone who is caught up in it and as a result, undergoes experiencing of sufferings like aging and death. As he approaches his old age, he is afflicted not only physically but also psychologically (*ātura-kāyo c’ eva hoti, ātura-citto ca*).¹⁶ As it is shown in the early discourses, this sad situation of the worldly beings is solely due to their consideration (*samanupassati*) of the five bundles as a whole or any one of them as “this am I” and “this is my self” and subsequent manifestation of the obsessional views like: “I am the five bundles” and “the five bundles are mine.”

He [the worldly person] becomes engaged with matter as “my self,” clings to it as “my self,” and takes a stand upon it as “my self.” He becomes engaged with feeling ... perception ... determinations ... consciousness as “my self,” clings to it as “my self,” and takes a stand upon it as “my self.” These five clinging-bundles, to which he becomes engaged with and to which he has clung to, lead to his harm and suffering for a long time.¹⁷

From the Buddha’s perspective, the five bundles are contingent, dependently arisen; hence, they are subject to change and alteration. When the worldly person remains clung to the contingent five bundles or any one or several of them as “this is mine, this am I and this is my self,” there occurs in the five bundles change and alteration. This change and alteration of the five bundles causes the worldly person suffering because the change and alteration is

contrary to the notion of self—which is defined to be permanent, stable, eternal, not subject to change (*nicco dhuvo sassato avipariṇāma-dhammo*)—that he is clung to. A discourse expresses how the worldly person meets with suffering as a result of his obsessive taking of impermanent things as permanent:

The worldly person considers: matter is self (*rūpaṃ attato*), or self is possessing matter (*rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ*), or matter is in self (*attani vā rūpaṃ*), or self is in matter (*rūpasmiṃ vā attānaṃ*). He lives obsessed by (*pariyuṭṭhatthāyī*) the notions: “I am matter, matter is mine” (*ahaṃ rūpaṃ mama rūpaṃ*). As he lives obsessed by these notions, that matter (*taṃ rūpaṃ*) of his evolves (undergoes change) (*taṃ rūpaṃ vipariṇamati*) and alters (*aññathā hoti*). With the evolution and alteration of matter, there arise in him sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure and despair.¹⁸

Similarly, as the same discourse points out, by regarding the other four bundles too—feeling, perception, determinations and consciousness—as they are self, or self is possessing of them, or they are in self or self is in them, the worldly person generates anxiety, worry and suffering. This is the psychological and epistemological complex situation that the uninstructed worldly person is caught up.

This problematic situation of the worldly person is explained further in some other discourses. The birth, aging, and death are always of a being or a creature (*satta*). A being is one who takes all or any or part of the five bundles such as the six senses—eye, ear, nose, tongue, body and mind—as “this is mine, this am I and this is my self” (*me attā*). As a discourse points out, one is called a being or creature (*satta*) because “one is stuck (*satto*), tightly stuck (*visatto*), in desire, lust, delight and craving” for the bundles.¹⁹

Furthermore, a being is one who is obsessed by the notions of: I am the bundles or I am the sense faculties; the bundles or the sense faculties are mine; I am in the bundles or in the sense faculties. According to this definition, the word creature or being (*satta*) refers not just to the bundles or the sense faculties but to the bundles or the sense faculties endowed with an “I,” “self,” or “person.” Even though it is an assumed self, for the worldly person, it is not merely an assumption. For him, what he takes as “I,” or “self” or “person” is real. Therefore, for him, there is always an “I,” “self” or “person” who is doing the perceiving

and conceiving within himself. He then identifies that assumed perceiver or conceiver with the senses or the bundles, through which he now perceives and conceives the world in relationship to this “I” or “my self.” In this way the worldly person always finds himself situated in a world that he considers as “my world.”

And by what (*kena*) in the world (*lokasmiṃ*) ... is one a world-perceiver (*loka-saññī*) and a world-conceiver (*loka-mānī*)? By the eye (*cakkhunā*) ... in the world is one a world-perceiver and a world-conceiver. By the ear (*sotena*) ... nose (*ghāṇena*) ... tongue (*jivhāya*) ... body (*kāyena*) ... mind (*manena*) ... in the world is one a world-perceiver and a world-conceiver. By which (*yena*) ... in the world is one a world-perceiver and a world-conceiver—that is called the world (*loko*) in the Discipline of the Nobles.²⁰

The popular textual definition of old age as given by the Buddha refers to some biological changes that take place in creatures:

The aging, the decaying, the brokenness, the greying, the wrinkled-ness, the dwindling of life, the decrepitude of the faculties, of this and that creature (*satta*) in this and that order of creatures (*satta-nikāya*)—this is called aging.²¹

As this definition also conveys, aging is always of a creature (*satta*), one who is endowed with the notion of “I,” “self” or “person.” It is a “conceived” concept where the creature takes, considers, or holds the biological change and evolution that takes place in the sense faculties as of this “I” or “self” or “person.” The change that takes place lawfully in the sense faculties is a problem for this creature for it makes him worry and anxious. This anxiety and worry is there for him because it is by these sense faculties that he identifies him as “I.” In this way, the worldly person always conceives the biological change and alteration that takes place in the sense faculties with the concept of “aging” (*jarā*), a concept that is endowed with dislike, disgust and abhorrence.

As the Buddhist definition conveys, aging is the worldly person’s unenlightened view or perspective of the changes that take place in his faculties. It is his unenlightened consideration and regarding of the change and alteration that takes place in the five clinging-bundles. His perception of

change as “aging” of “this I” or of “this my self” determines for him anxiety, worry, and suffering.

And how, monks, is there anxiety from clinging (*upādā-paritassanā hoti*)? Here, monks, the uninstructed worldly person regards (*samanupassati*) matter thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is my self” (*etaṃ mama eso’ham asmi eso me attā tī*). That matter of his evolves (*vipariṇamati*), becomes different (*aññathā hoti*). To him, matter evolving and becoming different, sorrow, lamentation, displeasure, grief and despair arise (*rūpa-vipariṇām’aññathābhāvā uppajjati soka-parideva-dukkha-domanass’upāyāsā*).

Here the uninstructed worldly person regards feeling thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is my self.” That feeling of his evolves, becomes different. To him, feeling evolving and becoming different, sorrow, lamentation, displeasure, grief and despair arise. Here the uninstructed worldly person regards perception thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is my self.” That perception of his evolves, becomes different. To him, perception evolving and becoming different, sorrow, lamentation, displeasure, grief and despair arise. Here the uninstructed worldly person regards determinations thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is my self.” Those determinations of his evolve, become different. To him, determinations evolving and becoming different, sorrow, lamentation, displeasure, grief and despair arise. Here the uninstructed worldly person regards consciousness thus: “This is mine; this am I; this is my self.” That consciousness of his evolves, becomes different. To him, consciousness evolving and becoming different, sorrow, lamentation, displeasure, grief and despair arise.²²

The worldly person does not and cannot consider this change and alteration to be merely a change, growth and alteration in the bundles or of the faculties. Instead he conceives it as a change and alteration of his “I” or “my self.” In this way, he considers it as an alteration of what he takes to be “my body, my feeling, my perception, my determinations, or my consciousness;” or “my eye, my ear, my nose, my tongue, my body, or my mind.” Thus, for the worldly person, it is a change that takes place in his “I” or “my self.” Any change that is perceived as of “my self” or in “me” must be either pleasurable or suffering, depending on whether that change is welcome or unwelcome, liked or disliked, perceived to be for ‘my’ advantage or for “my” disadvantage.

The worldly person's identification of the change, evolution or alteration with the concept of "aging" (*jarā*), rather than with that of "impermanence" (*aniccatā*) or that which alters while persisting (*thitassa aññathatta*) implies that it is for him an unwelcome change. Therefore, for him, aging is always an experience of suffering (*jarā pi dukkhā*).²³ As the change in the faculties is "aging" for him, this change that he perceives as "aging" determines mental agony for him. Therefore, for the worldly person, because he perceives aging as of this "I" or "my self," aging generates mental sufferings like anxiety and worry. This also means that if he, after understanding that there exists no real "I" or "self," were to perceive aging as a mere change and alteration that takes place in the faculties or the five bundles, he would not experience mental distress and suffering out of it.

Weakening Faculties and Growing Desires

In another sense too, for the worldly person, aging is an experience of suffering (*jarā pi dukkhā*). As a disciple of the Buddha points out to a king, life is insatiable (*atitta*), a slave of craving (*tanhā-dāsa*). To illustrate this point he asks the king:

"What do you think, great king? Do you reign over the rich Kuru country?"

"Yes, Master Raṭṭhapāla, I do."

"What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the east and said: 'Please know, great king, that I have come from the east, and there I saw a large country, powerful and rich, very populous and crowded with people. There are plenty of elephant troops there, plenty of cavalry, chariot troops and infantry; there is plenty of ivory there, and plenty of gold coins and bullion both unworked and worked, and plenty of women for wives. With your present forces, you can conquer it. Conquer it then, great king.' What would you do?"

"We would conquer it and reign it over it, Master Raṭṭhapāla."

"What do you think, great king? Suppose a trustworthy and reliable man came to you from the from the west ... from the north ... from the south ... from across the sea and said: 'Please know, great king, that I have come from across the sea, and there I saw a large country, powerful and rich, very populous

and crowded with people. There are plenty of elephant troops there, plenty of cavalry, chariot troops and infantry; there is plenty of ivory there, and plenty of gold coins and bullion both unworked and worked, and plenty of women for wives. With your present forces, you can conquer it. Conquer it then, great king. What would you do?"

"We would conquer it too and reign it over it, Master Raṭṭhapāla."²⁴

It should be noted that the king here is an eighty-year-old man. Even though he is already having plenty, he is still desirous of acquiring more, conquering more. This psychological situation is not limited to a king but is common to every worldly being.

However, as one passes through life from one stage to another, from being a young man to being an old man, one notices that one's former beauty and physical strength have now gone and that one is on the verge of death, comparable to a ripened fruit in a tree destined to fall down at any moment. The weakening body generates much anxiety and worry to this unappeasable man. Introducing the meaning of the Buddha's statement that "life is unstable and is moving towards its end," the aforementioned disciple asks the same king:

"Great King, was there a time when you were twenty or thirty-five years old when you were expert in riding elephants, horses, chariots, (in handling) the bow and sword, having strong legs and arms, able and skilled in warfare?"

"Yes, Venerable Raṭṭhapāla, I was like that, and I was even inspired at times and did not see any one comparable to my strength!"

"What do you think, Great King, are you the same?"

"Not indeed, Venerable Sir, now I am worn, old, have reached the end of life and have lived my lifespan. I am now eighty years old. In some occasions, thinking of stepping in one direction I step in another direction."

"Great king, it is on account of this that the Blessed One has said the world is unstable."²⁵

Even though his sense faculties have weakened with old age, his desires, cravings, and clinging to sights, sounds, smells, tastes, touches and ideas have not. The sense faculties are the instruments for satisfying one's longings and desires (*chanda*). When one is young, the sense faculties are in their prime. To

the young man, this gives satisfaction for he enjoys and can enjoy well the five strands of sensual pleasures (*pañca-kāma-guṇā*):

Sights cognizable by the eye, that are liked, lovely, pleasing, dear, connected with sensuality, lustful; sounds cognizable by the ear, that are liked, lovely, pleasing, dear, and connected with sensuality, lustful; smells cognizable by the nose, that are liked, lovely, pleasing, dear, and connected with sensuality, lustful; tastes cognizable by the tongue, that are liked, lovely, pleasing, dear, and connected with sensuality, lustful; touches cognizable by the body, that are liked, lovely, pleasing, dear, connected with sensuality, lustful.²⁶

When the worldly person grows old, his sense faculties weaken and fail to meet the demands of his growing desires (*virūḷha-taṇhā*) for enjoying sensual pleasures (*kāma-taṇhā*). Even though with old age, the sense faculties of the worldly person have deteriorated, his craving for continuity as this same “self” or “I” (*bhava-taṇhā*) has not.²⁷ On the contrary, his craving for continuity as this same “self” or “I” has grown stronger. As he reflects on his faculties, he observes that these faculties that he take as ‘this is mine, this am I, and this is my self’ are weak, aged, grown old or decayed. This situation causes him worry, anxiety, and suffering. Thus, for the worldly person, aging determines suffering. Aging goes together with death as the frequently occurring textual terminology “aging-and-death” (*jarā-maraṇa*)²⁸ conveys. The worldly person knows that aging follows death or aging ends in death. As he perceives aging, his death becomes imminent causing him further suffering.

Does an *Arahat* age?

This state of the affairs of the worldly person could further be understood by comparing it with that of the *Arahat*, the perfected sage. The “self”-view (*attānudiṭṭhi*) or “person”-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) of the worldly person is grounded on the conceit “I am.” The *Arahat* is someone who has even uprooted the conceit “I am” (*asmi-māno samucchinnō*).²⁹ If he has uprooted the conceit “I am,” it means that he has also destroyed the “self”-view and the “person” view. The purging of the belief in self takes place first with the attainment of the world-transcending stage of the stream-entry (*sotāpatti*) to be achieved

by understanding the Buddha's teaching. The teaching to be understood is summarized in the following statement:

Whatever is subject to arising is all subject to cessation.³⁰

This understanding not only enables the stream-enterer to remove the "person"-view but also to eliminate his doubts regarding the Buddha and his teaching. As a result, his adherence to rules and vows will also be completely gone. As it is stated in the discourses, this understanding marks the acquisition of not only the confirmed confidence in the Buddha and his teaching³¹ but also the wisdom directed to arising and passing away:

Again, monks, a noble disciple is wise, he possesses wisdom directed to arising and passing away, which is noble and penetrative, leading to the complete destruction of suffering.³²

With the attainment of the final world-transcending stage of *Arahat*-ness (*arahatta*) to be achieved through meditative training grounded on understanding, the *Arahat* has uprooted the conceit "I am." The *Arahat* clearly perceives that the faculties have arisen dependent on some determinants and that they are liable to evolution and alteration. He sees impermanence (*aniccatā*), not merely that things are impermanent (*anicca*). For him, these faculties or in that matter any other thing such as the five clinging-bundles, are no longer things that concern "I" or "self." As dependently arisen things, the *Arahat's* sense faculties too alter. The *Arahat* perceives this change; but for him the change does not determine suffering. This is because he rightly perceives things; he sees that the faculties have changed or that the change has occurred in the faculties. This change is not "aging" to him because he does not conceive the change to be of this "I" or "my self" because in his case, he has already abandoned the "self"-view, "person"-view and also removed the conceit "I am." By now he has attained the psychological state of not-aging (*ajara*) because he sees that what is called aging is a mere change in the faculties, not of an "I," "self," or "person."

The *Arahat* is "not-aging" (*ajara*) because to undergo aging, in the first place, he is "not-existing" or "not-being" (*abhūta*) as "I," "self," or "person." As he is "existentially absent" or "not-existing," truly there are no faculties through

which one could identify aging existing for him. If no faculties exist in the sense of the faculties of an “I,” “self,” or “person,” no faculties to change or age for him. For the *Arahat*, there is no subject, no “I,” no “self,” no “person” as he has already removed (*susamūhata*) the conceit “I am” fully and irrevocably. This removal includes the removal of the latent tendencies to the conceits of “I”-making and “mine”-making (*ahaṃkāra-mamaṃkāra-mānānusaya*) and also the elimination of the “personality belief” or “person”-view (*sakkāya-diṭṭhi*) that is grounded on the conceit “I am” (*asmi-māna*).

If there is no “I,” how can there be faculties of “I”? If there are no faculties of “I,” how can there be faculties “existing.” For the faculties to exist, they must be identified with an existing “I” or the subject “I,” or they must be taken as being identical with the subject “I” or “my self,” or they must be labeled with the concept “I,” and thereby be assumed as things that persist in time without change, as things that are permanent (*nicca*), as things that exist. It is this permanency of “I” or of the faculties is what “I” want. A change to these faculties will be a matter of concern only because that change then will be perceived as a change to something that has been so assumed as a permanent or never changing self. Perceiving a subject “I” or “self” and holding onto it with craving is what is called clinging (*upādāna*). In the *Arahat*, there is no clinging to an “I” or “self”; hence for him there is no “self”-existence, no “self”-continuity, no being “I” or “self” (*upādāna-nirodhā bhava-nirodho*).³³

Unlike the worldly person, the *Arahat* perceives change and he does not perceive this change as of a permanent or never-changing self. By so perceiving, the *Arahat* transcends the existential ambiguity of the worldly person. This *Arahat*’s perception of impermanence or change (*anicca-saññā*) is therefore not suffering for him. It does not determine suffering because it is not the perception of impermanence of a “self” or “I.” It is not the perception of change to a “being” (*satta*), whether that “being” is the “being-faculties” (*indriya*), the “being-bundles” (*khandha*), the “being-elements” (*dhātu*), or the being-anything else. Therefore, even though the *Arahat* undergo and experience changes in his body, he does not age.

The fact of the *Arahat*’s not-aging could be illustrated with a statement made by the *Arahat* Upasena at his death bed. After a poisonous serpent’s falling upon his body, Upasena requested his colleague monks to lift his body and take it outside the hut so that it might break up and ‘scatter there like a handful of chaff’. He was then told by Sāriputta that no change for

the worse in his faculties necessitating such action was evident. Upasena replied:

Friend Sāriputta, to whom there is thus: “I am the eye” or “the eye is mine” or “I am the tongue” or “the tongue is mine” or “I am the mind” or “the mind is mine”—to him, friend Sāriputta, there is a difference to body or a change in faculties. To me indeed, friend Sāriputta, there is not thus: “I am the eye” or “the eye is mine;” “I am the tongue” or “the tongue is mine;” “I am the mind” or “the mind is mine.” What difference to body or change in faculties is there for me then?”³⁴

It seems the question posed to Upasena implies a change of a “being” (*satta*), and in this case to a “being-faculties.” Upasena’s reply states that there is for him no such change, simply because there is for him no such “being.” This is further confirmed by Sāriputta’s response:

It must be because I-making, mine-making, and the underlying tendency to conceit have been thoroughly uprooted in Venerable Upasena for a long time that it does not occur to him “I am the eye” or “the eye is mine;” “I am the ear” or “the ear is mine;” “I am the mind” or “the mind is mine.”³⁵

The worldly person, on the other hand, in his innermost being, subtly and falsely perceives and assumes a never-evolving self. He then notices an alteration taking place in that which he had taken to be such a self, that is, in the faculties or the aggregates. Thus, there is in him a perpetual contradiction, self and change, there is an ambiguity and perplexity for him. This is the existential ambiguity that determines anxiety and suffering for the worldly person.

A discourse clarifying the contrast between the worldly person and the *Arāhat* states that for the *Arāhat*, in the seen there is just the seen and there is for him no “that by which” (*yena*). What this means is that for the *Arāhat* there is no “I” or “self” that does the seeing.

When, Bāhiya, for you in the seen there shall be just the seen, in the heard there shall be just the heard, in the sensed there shall be just the sensed, in the cognized there shall be just the cognized, then, Bāhiya, you will not be “that by

which” (*yato ... tato tvaṃ ... na tena*).³⁶

The teaching that “in the cognized there shall be just the cognized” (*viññāte viññāta-mattaṃ bhavissati*) is not something applicable to the worldly person or even within his grasp. For him, there is always more involved. The change that the worldly person cognizes is not just a change to something pure and simple, but a change to something that he implicitly assumes to be unchanging by identifying it as “I,” “my self,” or “person.”

When there are no sense faculties “existing,” then there are no “existing” sense faculties to undergo any change. And when there are no “existing” sense faculties to undergo change and alteration, then there is no aging. Thus, *Arahat*-ness is a not-aging (*ajaraṃ*); *Arahat* does not experience aging. Though for the *Arahat* the faculties such as eye, ear, nose, tongue, and body change and alter, this change and alteration is not a change and alteration that determines suffering. Thus, the change is not “aging” for him. The *Arahat*’s hair goes grey, the skin gets wrinkled, the teeth fall just as of a non-*Arahat*. But whereas for the worldly person all this is “aging” or “decay,” it is not so for the *Arahat*. For the *Arahat*, it is just a change that has no unpleasurable significance whatsoever; therefore, in his case, it is not to be called by such words as “aging” and “decaying.” These words always signify suffering or unpleasurableness (*dukkhatā*). Since there is nothing perceived or felt to be unpleasurable or suffering in the *Arahat*’s experience, these words are not used about the *Arahat*.

Sufferings of Birth and Death

Nowhere in the Buddha’s teaching there states either explicitly or implicitly that arising (*uppāda*) is suffering or ceasing (*vaṃsa*) is suffering. But the teaching categorically states that birth is suffering (*jāti pi dukkhā*) and death is suffering (*marañam pi dukkhā*). However, as defined in the discourses, both birth and death are not actual events that the worldly person can presently experience. The textual definitions of birth and death clearly indicate that these two sufferings are of a being (*satta*), one endowed with the notion of “I” or “self.” The definition of birth reads:

The birth of the various beings into the various orders of beings, their being born, descent, production, the manifestation of the bundles, the obtaining of the sense-bases. This is called birth.³⁷

And the definition of death reads:

The passing away of the various beings from the various orders of beings, their perishing, breakup, disappearance, mortality, death, completion of time, the breakup of the bundles, the laying down of the carcass: this is called death.³⁸

As it could be inferred from these definitions, the worldly person neither experiences his birth nor can he recollect it, even though he can reason about the fact of his being born and his liability to be born again. Further, he has no experience of his death, though he can have a reflection on the approaching death. If the worldly person does not experience his own birth and death now, what “birth” and what “death” does he experience as suffering at present? On what ground, does the Buddha state: “birth is suffering; death is suffering”?

The worldly person notices that in his environ others are being born and dying (*cavamāne upapajjamāne*). This is a matter of his immediate seeing and concern and hence he logically arrives at a conclusion that he too was born and he too will die. This means that in reflection, he thinks and reasons about: “I was born” and “I will die.” It is this thinking or reasoning about his birth and death, not the actual events of his own birth and own death in this life, that brings him unpleasant mental feelings concerning birth and death. Thus, what he can experience is only thoughts regarding his birth and death. Even his experience of the approaching death is also a mere thinking about death, with the difference that there is here much more anxiety for him. This is because he thinks that for him death is imminent though the actual time of death is uncertain. It is these thoughts on his own past or future birth and his own future death that mainly generate fear and anxiety right through his life. Whenever he reflects upon himself, his experience concerning birth and death is: “birth is suffering” and “death is suffering.”

The fear and anxiety that drew Siddhartha out of his palace at the age of 29 to search for the “not-born” (*ajāta*) or the “not-dying” (*amata*) were not of

the actual events of his own birth or death but his reflexive thoughts on past or future birth and the future death of oneself and others around him:

Suppose that, being myself subject to birth, having understood the danger in what is subject to birth, I seek the unborn supreme security from bondage, *nibbāna*; suppose that, being myself subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, having understood the danger in what is subject to aging, sickness, death, sorrow, and defilement, I seek the un-aging, un-ailing, deathless, sorrowless, and undefiled supreme security from bondage, *nibbāna*.

Later, while still young, a black-haired young man endowed with the blessing of youth, in the prime of life, though my mother and father wished otherwise and wept with tearful faces, I shaved off my hair and beard, put on the yellow robe, and went forth from the home into homelessness.³⁹

The worldly person thinks that “I exist” or “I am” in the same way as I was born in some years back, and, as born, I am liable to die in future. In other words, he finds that this “my self” was born and will be dying as essentially the same as it is now. He now has these thoughts regarding his birth and death because he now finds himself to be “I” or “self” in his own eyes. Reflecting upon his present existence in this manner, he sees a self which he refers to as “this am I” or “this is my self.” He thinks that “this my self,” which I now see when I reflect, is the same as it was born in the past and, as it was born, it will be dying in the future. As he reflects on his life, these thoughts concerning birth and death determine much anxiety and suffering to him.

The anxieties and worries concerning “I was born” and “I will be dying” can arise only if the present experience is in some way or other reckoned as of an “I,” “self,” or “person.” The worldly person is concerned with a birth only because he sees an “I,” “self,” or “person” to which birth and death apply. In the same manner, the worldly person thinks he existed yesterday or even earlier too. What this means is that he thinks he was yesterday or earlier this same self he now is. And birth is the earliest point of his present existence or being for which he sees definite and certain grounds. Similarly, death is the last point of his present existence, the last point in time wherein he can perceive his “self”-continuity, being this same “self.”

In the worldly person’s experience, in his own eyes, there appears a false self. The discourses sometimes refer to this “self” as “that-which-stands” (*thiti*) or

“that-by-which” (*yena*).⁴⁰ Since there is this manifestation of a false self in one’s reflexion or self-observation, there is also the manifestation of an arising (*uppāda*) or a birth (*jāti*) and a passing away (*vaya*) or death (*maraṇa*), depending on one’s level of observation. Both the birth and the passing away concern this “that-which-stands” or “that-by-which” in his own eyes.

An Arahāt’s Experience

In the *Arahāt*’s experience such a “that-which-stands” does not manifest (*na paññāyati*). If in his experience such a “that-which-stands” were to not manifest, it also means in him there does not manifest an arising or a passing away of such a “that-which-stands.” The non-manifestation of such things is a characteristic of the *Arahāt*’s experience. That is why the *Arahāt* is called not-born (*ajāta*) and not-dying (*amata*).

“I am,” monk, is a conceiving (*maññitaṃ*), “this am I” is a conceiving, “I shall be” is a conceiving, “I shall not be” is a conceiving, “I shall be of matter” is a conceiving, “I shall be of not-matter” is a conceiving, “I shall be of perception” is a conceiving, “I shall be of not-perception” is a conceiving, “I shall be of neither-perception-nor-non-perception” is a conceiving. Conceiving, monk, is a disease, conceiving is a tumor, conceiving is a barb.

When, monk, he has gone beyond all conceiving, the sage is said to be at peace. But, monk, the sage who is at peace (*muni santo*) is not born (*na jāyati*), does not decay (*na jīyyati*), is not agitated, does not envy. Monk, for him there is not even “that by which” (*yena*) he can be born (*jāyetha*), not being born, how will he decay; not decaying, how will he die; not dying, how will he be agitated; not being agitated, how will he envy?⁴¹

As it is evident from the above passage, ‘that-by-which’ (*yena*) one can be born, grow old, and die, is this assumed “I” or “self.” The *Arahāt* is completely free from both “self” and its ground, the conceit “I.” The deception of self no more arises in him.

He himself does not perceive “self” (*yo attanā attānaṃ nānupassati*).⁴²

Therefore, there is for the *Arahat* nothing that can be referred to as having been born, aging or dying. When there is no death to come, then there can be no getting agitated (*kuppati*) whatsoever, and no kind of envying (*pihessati*) anything or anybody. Cessation of being “self” or “I” (*bhava-nirodha*) cannot be agitated or unsteadied or shaken, no can it have envy. These suffering things or phenomena such as birth, aging, decay, death, getting agitated, and envying pertain only to “being” as “I” or “self” or “person.” As the *Arahat*-ness is the experience of the cessation of “being” or “self”-continuity, it is at one and the same time the experience of the extinction of all of the suffering phenomena (*sabba-dukkha-kkhaya*). In the *Arahat*’s conscious experience, these suffering things are no longer there. Maintaining his mental balance in the face of death, he neither delights in life nor delights in life:

I delight not in death, I delight not in life, I await my time like a hireling his wage;
I delight not in death, I delight not in life, I await my time composed and aware.⁴³

Just like change that takes place in the body of the *Arahat* is not “decay” or “aging” (*jarā*) for him, the laying down of life (*jīvita-pariyādāna*) of the *Arahat* is also not “death” (*maraṇa*) for him. Decay and death always imply a “self,” and in the *Arahat*’s experience, there is no experiencing of a “self” for the *Arahat* sees everything, whether internal or external, far or near, to be not-self (*anatta*). It is decay and death that determine suffering. In the *Arahat*’s experience, though change, alteration, and disappearance are manifest, no decay and death are manifest. These not being manifest, no suffering is determined. This is what Sāriputta says to Ānanda:

There is nothing in the world through the change and alteration of which sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair arise in me.⁴⁴

Even if the Teacher himself were to undergo change and alteration, still sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure, and despair would not arise in me. However, it would occur to me: “The Teacher, so influential, so powerful and mighty, has passed away.” If the Blessed One had lived for a long time, that would have been for the welfare and happiness of the multitude, out of

compassion for the world, for the good, welfare, and happiness of *devas* and humans.⁴⁵

These two statements convey that Sāriputta is an *Arahat*; hence he does not experience decay and death either in himself or in others. This is further evident from the comment made by Ānanda:

It must be because I-making (*abhaṃ-kāra*), mine-making (*mamaṃ-kāra*), and the underlying tendency to conceit (*māna-anusaya*) have been thoroughly uprooted in the Venerable Sāriputta for a long time that even if the Teacher himself were to undergo change and alteration, still sorrow, lamentation, pain, displeasure would not arise in him.⁴⁶

Not-dying (*amata*) or *nibbāna* is to be reached here and now (*diṭṭhēva dhamme*) or at the time of death (*maraṇa-kāle*). The Buddha never states that he will be experiencing “not-dying” after his life is over. What he and his *Arahats* express is that they live experiencing “not-dying” here and now. To his first five ascetics the Buddha said:

The *Tathāgata*, monks, is *Arahat*, is all-enlightened. Give ear, monks. “Not-dying” has been reached. I will instruct you.⁴⁷

Thus, “not-dying” is something that has been attained, achieved and experienced by the *Arahat*.

Having attained it and realized it (*sacchikatvā upasampajja*), the *Arahat* lives experiencing it in the body (*kāyena ca phusitvā viharati*).⁴⁸

The fact that the *Arahat* has come to the cessation of birth, aging, and death (*jāti-nirodhā jarā-maraṇa-nirodho*) is expressed in the texts with numerous statements:

He is entirely freed from birth, aging and death.⁴⁹

He has done away with birth and death.⁵⁰

He has gone beyond birth and death.⁵¹

He has arrived at the destruction of birth.⁵²

Conqueror of death.⁵³

Having abandoned birth and death completely.⁵⁴

He crossed over birth and aging.⁵⁵

One gone to the end of birth and death bears the final frame.⁵⁶

Being capable of making an end, they fare no more in birth and aging.⁵⁷

Craving for continuity (as “self”) has been cut off; the conduit to continuity (as “self”) has been destroyed; now there is no further-continuity (as “self”).⁵⁸

The overcoming of death does not mean that the *Arahat* can live forever. Death is overcome by removing that “thing” called “I” or “self” to which death applies. The experience of the living *Arahat* is not-born, not-aging and not-dying. This is simply because all subjectivity, being “I,” “self,” or “person,” to which alone birth, aging and death are applicable, has been completely cut off, never to arise again.

This, the release of the mind through not-clinging, is the not-dying (*etaṃ amataṃ anupādā cittassa vimokkha*).⁵⁹

Even though the words “birth,” “aging” and “death” are also used referring to the *Arahat* following the communicational and cultural conventions, these words are incapable of conveying the true state of affairs of the *Arahat*. We could clearly see that the Buddha deliberately avoids using the terms “born,” “aging” and “death” when he is speaking of *Arahats* in comparison to worldly persons. For example, in answering the question of king Kosala: “to the born, is there any other than aging and death?” The Buddha explains:

To the born, great king, there is nothing apart from aging-and-death. Great king, even those who are eminent warriors, eminent brāhmins, eminent householders prosperous, owning great treasure, great wealth, large amount of gold and silver, immense means, abundant supplies of goods and corn, to them too, being born, there is nothing apart from aging-and-death.

Great king, even those who are monks who are *Arahats*, destroyers of the psychological taints, reached completion, done what was to be done, laid down the burden, achieved his own welfare, utterly destroyed the fetter of ‘self’-continuity, released through comprehending rightly, to them too, it is the nature of this body to break up, to be laid down (*tesampāyaṃ kāyo bhedana-dhammo nikkhepana-dhammo*).⁶⁰

Once all subjectivity is extinct, there is nothing more to arise again. However, there yet remains life for a while longer, which is the *Arahat’s* life, the living

experience of the *Arahat*. The Buddha describes this remaining life as *sa-upādisesa*, “with stuff remaining” or “with residue.” This too comes to an end when the *Arahat*’s life span is over and the body breaks up.⁶¹

Conclusion

As the above discussion points out, birth, aging and death are only for the worldly person, not for the perfected saint, the *Arahat*. What the *Arahat* perceives as (dependently) arising, change and ceasing of the five experiential bundles or the six sense faculties, the worldly person conceives as birth, aging and death (of this “I,” “self,” or “person”). The birth, aging and death are sufferings to the worldly person and they determine further suffering for him. Arising, change, and ceasing are not sufferings for the *Arahat*, nor they determine further suffering for him. What causes the worldly person to conceive birth, aging and death is his conceiving of an “I” and holding on to it as “this am I” or “this is my self.” What causes the *Arahat* to perceive (dependently) arising, change, and ceasing, without conceiving of birth, aging and death, is his removal of this conceit “I” from his experiential structure. What this means is that the worldly person suffers the three sufferings taking arising, change and ceasing, the three characteristics of the determined things, wrongly. This is because he perceives a “self” concerning the five clinging-bundles and conceives birth, aging and death as of this “self.” The perfected saint is free from the three sufferings because he perceives arising, change and ceasing as they really are due to the fact that he does not conceive them as birth, aging and death of a “self” for he has neither conceit “I am” nor “self-view.” In this way, birth, aging and death constitute the unenlightened way of looking at life and the world, and the arising, change and ceasing constitute the enlightened way of looking at life and the world. The former determines suffering. The latter produces peace and happiness. Furthermore, it is only from the Buddha’s teaching one could acquire this enlightened perspective for it is the only religion that teaches the “not-self” doctrine. It is by understanding the five bundles are not-self, one would be able to dissolve clinging to a belief in “self.” This conclusion could be shown with the following chart:

	Puthujjana	Arahat
Conceit	"I am"	Removed
Latencies	"I-making and mine-making"	Absent
Fetters	"person-view"	Destroyed
Wrong views	"self-view" or "self-views"	Absent
Perception	Birth, aging, and death of "I," "self," or "person"	Arising, change, and ceasing of the five bundles and the six sense faculties
Experience	Suffering	Peace and happiness

Notes

* A summary version of this paper was presented at the International Conference on Buddhist Approaches to Hospice Care held at the Shanghai Jade Buddha Temple, Shanghai, on 4th November 2018.

- 1 For a discussion on the concept of suffering in early Buddhist discourses, see Somaratne (2018).
- 2 A.I.152 (3.47): *tīṇimāni bhikkhave saṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkaṇāni. katamāni tīṇi? uppādo paññāyati, vayo paññāyati, ṭhitassa aññathattaṃ paññāyati. imāni kho bhikkhave tīṇi saṅkhatassa saṅkhatalakkaṇāni ti.* It should be noted here that many Buddhologists assume impermanent (*anicca*), suffering (*dukkha*), and not-self (*anatta*) to be the three characteristics of conditioned existence. However, as it could clearly be seen from the above textual reference, the three characteristics of conditioned existence are the arising, the alteration and the cessation.
- 3 The cessation of suffering is to be achieved by extinguishing lust (*rāga*), hatred (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). See S.IV.251 (38.1): *yo kho āvuso rāga-kkayo dosa-kkayo moha-kkayo idaṃ vuccati nibbānan ti.* At S.IV.252 (38.2), this same definition is used to define *Arabat*-ness.
- 4 See M.I.192 (29.1): *idha bhikkhave ekacco kulaputto saddhā agārasmā anagāriyaṃ pabbajito hoti: otinṇo'mhi jātiyā jarā-maraṇena sokehi paridevehi dukkhehi domanassehi upāyāsehi.*
- 5 S.V.421 (56.11).
- 6 S.II.72: *evam etassa kevalassa dukkha-kkhandhassa samudayo hoti/ nirodho hoti.*
- 7 S.II.73–74 (12.44): *cakkhuñ ca paṭicca rūpe ca uppajjati cakkhuvīññānañ, tinnaiṃ saṅgati phasso, phassa-paccayā vedanā, vedanā-paccayā tanhā, tanhā-paccayā upādānañ, upādāna-paccayā bhavo, bhava-paccayā jāti, jāti-paccayā jarā-maraṇaṃ soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassa-upāyāsā sambhavanti.*
- 8 A.V.144 (10.76): *tayo 'me bhikkhave dhammā loke na saṃvijjeyyūṃ, na tathāgato loke uppajjeyya arabaṃ sammāsambuddho, na tathāgata-ppavedito dhamma-vinayo loke dibbeyya. katame tayo? jāti ca, jarā ca, maraṇaṃ ca.*
- 9 See Chapter 4 of Karunadasa (2015) where he says: “the notion of the self can be subsumed under two main headings: the spiritual metaphysical self and the annihilationist physical self.”
- 10 See M.I.163 (26:13).
- 11 Bhikkhu Anālayo 2017 on this point writes: “The notion of impermanence that pervades early Buddhist discourse is one that, besides encompassing the aspects of arising and passing away, recognizes an “otherwiseness of that which persists,” *ṭhitassa aññathatta* ([AN], Vol. I, p. 152).
- 12 It should be noted that *saṅkhatā dhammā* and *paṭicca-samuppannā dhammā* refer to the same.
- 13 A.I.152 (3.47). For text, see note 1.

- 14 See *Cūḷamāluṅkya-sutta* (MN63) at M.I.426f.
- 15 S.IV.388–389 (44.6).
- 16 S.III.2 (22.1).
- 17 S.III.114 (22.85): *tass'ime pañc'upādāna-kkhandhā upetā upādinna dīgharattaṃ abhīyā dukkhāya saṃvattanti.*
- 18 S.III.3 (22.1): *kathaṇca, gaḥapati, āturakāyo c' eva hoti, āturacitto ca? idha gaḥapati assutavā puthujjano ariyānaṃ adassāvī ariya-dhammassa akovido ariya-dhamme avinīto sappurisaṇaṃ adassāvī sappurisa-dhammassa akovido sappurisa-dhamme avinīto rūpaṃ attato samanupassati, rūpavantaṃ vā attānaṃ; attani vā rūpaṃ, rūpasmim vā attānaṃ. ahaṃ rūpaṃ, mama rūpaṃ ti pariyuṭṭhaṭṭhāyī hoti. tassa ahaṃ rūpaṃ, mama rūpaṃ ti pariyuṭṭhaṭṭhāyino taṃ rūpaṃ vipariṇamati aññathā hoti. tassa rūpavipariṇāmaññathābhāvā uppajjanti soka-parideva-dukkha-domanassupāyāsā.*
- 19 S.III.190 (23.2): *rūpe... vedanāya... saññāya... saṅkhāresu... viññāṇe yo chando yo rāgo ya nandi ya taṇhā tatra satto tatra visatto tasmā satto ti vuccati.*
- 20 S.IV.95 (35.116).
- 21 S.II.2 (12.2): *yā tesaṃ tesaṃ sattānaṃ tamhi tamhi sattanikāye jarā jīraṇatā khaṇḍiccaṃ pāḷiccaṃ valiccavatā ca āyuno saṃbhāni indriyānaṃ paripāko, ayaṃ vuccati jarā.*
- 22 S.III.18 (22.8).
- 23 S.V.421 (56.11).
- 24 M.II.71–72 (82 *Ratthapāla-sutta*).
- 25 M.II.69.
- 26 A.IV.415 (9.34).
- 27 For *bhava-taṇhā*, see Somaratne (2016).
- 28 See, for example, S.II.2–3 (12.2).
- 29 S.III.83 (22.76): *sukhino vata arahanto – taṇhā tesaṃ na vijjati, asmimāno samucchinnā – mohaḥālaṃ padālitaṃ.*
- 30 S.V.423 (56.11): *yaṃ kiñci samudaya-dhammaṃ sabbaṃ taṃ nirodha-dhammaṃ.*
- 31 S.V.389–390. In this and many other contexts, the stream-enterer is defined as one who possesses the confirmed confidence in the Buddha, the Dhamma, and the Saṅgha and also the virtues dear to the Nobles.
- 32 S.V.401–402.
- 33 S.II.2 (12.1).
- 34 S.IV.40–41 (35.69): *yattha nūna āvuso sārīputta evaṃ assa ahaṃ cakkhun ti vā mama cakkhun ti vā ahaṃ jīvā ti vā mama jīvā ti vā ahaṃ mano ti vā mama mano ti vā tassa āvuso sārīputta siyā kāyassa vā aññathattaṃ indriyānaṃ vā parināmo. mayhaṃ ca kho āvuso sārīputta na evaṃ hoti ahaṃ cakkhun ti vā mama cakkhun ti vā ahaṃ jīvā ti vā mama jīvā ti vā ahaṃ mano ti vā mama mano ti vā. tassa mayhaṃ āvuso sārīputta kiṃ kāyassa vā aññathattaṃ bhāvissati indriyānaṃ vā vipariṇāmo ti.*
- 35 S.IV.41 (35.69): *tathā hi paṇāyasmato upasenassa dīgharattaṃ ahaṃkāra-mamaṃkāra-mānānusayo susamūhato. tasmā āyasmato upasenassa na evaṃ hoti ahaṃ cakkhū ti vā mama*

cakkhū ti vā ... ahaṃ mano ti vā mama mano ti vā ti.

- 36 Ud.8 (I.10): *yato kho te bāhiya dīṭṭhe dīṭṭhamattaṃ bhavissati, sute sutamattaṃ bhavissati, mute mutamattaṃ bhavissati, viññāte viññātamattaṃ bhavissati, tato tvaṃ bāhiya na tena.*
It should be noted here that PTS edition mistakenly omits *tato tvaṃ bāhiya na tena, yato tvaṃ bāhiya na tena tato tvaṃ bāhiya na tattha.*

37 S.II.3 (12.2).

38 S.II.3 (12.2).

39 M.I.163 (26.13–14).

40 M.III.246.

- 41 M.III.246 (140.31): *asmī ti bhikkhu maññitaṃ etaṃ, ayaṃ ahaṃ asmī ti maññitaṃ etaṃ, bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, na bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, rūpī bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, arūpī bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, saññī bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, asaññī bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ, nevasaññināsaññī bhavissanti maññitaṃ etaṃ. maññitaṃ bhikkhu rogo, maññitaṃ gaṇḍo, maññitaṃ sallaṃ. sabba-maññitānaṃ tv eva bhikkhu samatikkamā muni santo ti vuccati. muni kho pana bhikkhu santo na jāyati na jiyyati na kuppati nappiheti. tam pi assa bhikkhu natthi yena jāyetha, ajāyamāno kiṃ jiyyissati, ajīyyamāno kiṃ miyyissati, amiyyamāno kiṃ kuppissati, akuppamāno kissa pibessati.*

42 Sn.v.477: *yo attanāttānaṃ nānupassati.*

- 43 Thag. vv. 606–607: *nābbhinandāmi maraṇaṃ nābbhinandāmi jīvitaṃ, kālaṃ ca paṭikaṅkhāmi nibbisaṃ bhatako yathā; nābbhinandāmi maraṇaṃ nābbhinandāmi jīvitaṃ, kālaṃ ca paṭikaṅkhāmi sampajāno patissato.*

44 S.II.274 (21.2).

45 S.II.274 (21.2).

46 S.II.275 (21.2).

47 M.I.171–172 (26.27)

48 M.I.477 (70.15).

49 A.I.144 (3.38): *parimutto jātiyā jarā-maraṇena.*

50 A.I.144 (3.58): *paḥiṇa-jāti-maraṇa.*

51 It.69 (77/3.3.8): *jāti-maraṇam accagā.*

52 It.100 (99/3.5.10): *jāti-kkayaṃ patto.*

53 Thag.v.1180: *marañābhikkhū.*

54 Sn.v.500: *jāhitvā jāti-maraṇaṃ asesam.*

55 A.I.133 (3.32): *atāri so jāti-jaraṃ.*

56 Thag.v.1022: *dhāreti antimaṃ dehaṃ jāti-maraṇa-pāragū.*

57 S.V.433 (56.22): *bhabbā te antakiriyaṃ na te jāti-jarūpagā.*

58 S.V.432 (56.21): *ucchinā bhava-taṃhā khīṇā bhava-netti natthi dāni puna-bbhavo.* For *punabbhava*, see Somaratne (2017).

59 M.II.265 (106.13).

- 60 S.I.71; S.I.163 (3.3): *natthi kho mahārāja jātassa aññatra jarāmarañā. ye pi te mahārāja khattiya-mahāsālā ... ye pi te mahārāja brāhmaṇa-mahāsālā ... ye pi te mahārāja gahapati-*

mahāsālā aḍḍhā mahaddhanā mahābhogā pahūta-jātarūpa-rajatā pahūta-vittūpakaraṇā pahūta-dhanadhaññā tesam pi jātānaṃ natthi aññatra jarāmarañā. ye pi te mahārāja bhikkhū arahanto khīṇāsavā vusitavanto katakaraṇīyā obitabhārā anuppatta-sadatthā parikkhīṇa-bhava-saññojanā samma-d-aññā vimuttā, tesam pāyaṃ kāyo bhedana-dhammo nikkhepana-dhammo ti.

- ⁶¹ See It.38 (44/2.2.7): *katamā ca bhikkhave sa-upādi-sesā nibbāna-dhātu² idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṃ hoti khīṇāsavo vusitavā kata-karaṇīyo obita-bhāro anuppatta-sadattho parikkhīṇa-bhava-saññojano samma-d-aññā vimutto. tassa tiṭṭhante va pañcindriyāni yesaṃ avighātattā manāpāmanāpaṃ paccanubhoti sukha-dukkhaṃ paṭisaṃvedeti/paṭisaṃvediyati. tassa yo rāga-kkhayo dosa-kkhayo moha-kkhayo, ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave sa-upādi-sesā nibbāna-dhātu. katamā ca bhikkhave anupādi-sesā nibbāna-dhātu² idha bhikkhave bhikkhu arahaṃ hoti khīṇāsavo vusitavā kata-karaṇīyo obita-bhāro anuppatta-sadattho parikkhīṇa-bhava-saññojano sammad-aññā vimutto. tassa idh' eva bhikkhave sabba-vedayitāni anabhinanditāni sīti bhavissanti. ayaṃ vuccati bhikkhave anupādi-sesā nibbāna-dhātu.*

Abbreviations

- A *Āṅguttara-nikāya*. Morris, Richard, and Edmund Hardy, eds. 1885–1900. *The Āṅguttara Nikāya*. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- It *Itivuttaka*. Windisch, Ernst, ed. 1889. *Itivuttaka*. London: Pali Text Society.
- M *Majjhima-nikāya*. Trenckner, Vilhelm, and Robert Chalmers, eds. 1888–1896. *The Majjhima Nikāya*, 3 vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- S *Samyutta-nikāya*. Feer, Léon, ed. 1884–1898. *The Samyutta Nikāya*. 5 vols. London: Pali Text Society.
- Sn *Suttanipāṭa*. Andersen, Dines, and Helmer Smith, eds. 1913. *The Suttanipāṭa*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Thag *Theragāthā*. Alsdorf, Ludwig, and K. R. Norman, eds. 1966. *Thera- and Therīgāthā*. London: Pali Text Society.
- Ud *Udāna*. Steinthal, Paul, ed. 1885. *Udāna*. London: Pali Text Society.

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