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**(Ānanda) Jarā Sutta**The (Ānanda) Discourse on Decay | S 48.41<sup>1</sup>Also **Jara,dhamma Sutta** The Discourse on the Truth of Decay

Theme: Even the Buddha's body decays physically

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The Buddha's body

1 **The (Ānanda) Jarā Sutta** is about the Buddha in his old age. In the Sutta, Ānanda lovingly massages the Buddha's aged limbs and declares how his complexion, too, is "no longer pure or bright, his limbs are all flabby and wrinkled, and his body bent over, and change can be seen in his faculties—in his eyes, his ears, his nose, his tongue, his body" [§3.2].

2 The Sutta teaching is the Buddha's admonition to Ānanda that "youth is subject to *decay*, health is subject to *illness*, life is subject to *death*" [§5]. This is, in fact, the theme of **the Mada Sutta** (A 3.39), which should be studied with this Sutta.<sup>2</sup>

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**(Ānanda) Jarā Sutta****The (Ānanda) Discourse on Decay**

S 48.41

1 Thus have I heard.

At one time, the Blessed One was staying in the mansion of Migāra's mother in the Eastern Park.

Ānanda notices the Buddha's body decaying

2 Now at that time, the Blessed One had emerged from his evening solitary retreat, and was warming his back in the warmth of the setting sun.<sup>3</sup>

3 Then the venerable Ānanda approached the Blessed One, saluted him, and while massaging<sup>4</sup> his limbs with his hands, said this to him:

3.2 "How amazing, bhante! How strange, bhante! How the Blessed One's complexion is now no longer pure or bright, his limbs are all flabby and wrinkled, and his body bent over, and change can be seen in his faculties—in his eyes, his ears, his nose, his tongue, his body."<sup>5</sup> [217]

<sup>1</sup> For a new tr see SD 63.10.

<sup>2</sup> A 3.39/1:146 f @ SD 42.13.

<sup>3</sup> *Tena kho pana samayena bhagavā sāyanha, samayaṃ paṭisallānā vuṭṭhito pacchātape nisinno hoti piṭṭhīm otāpayamāno.*

<sup>4</sup> *Anomajjanto*, from *anu + ava + majjati* [from √MRJ, wipe], *anomajjati*, "to rub along over, to stroke; to beat, pound" only in the phrase, *gattāni pāniṇā* ~, "to rub one's limbs with one's hands" (M 1:80, 81, 509; S 5:216). More commonly *anumajjati*, as *anumajjato* (M 1:246, 2:93, 212), *anumajjanto* (S 1:82; Miln 90), *anumajjāmi* (M 1:246, 2:93, 212), *anumajjitvā* (A 4:86), *anumajjeyyāsi* (A 4:86). Here *gattāni*, "limbs" is pl of *gatta*, "body." Comy here says "the back" (SA 3:244).

### The Buddha on his own body's decay

4 “Such it is, Ānanda, youth is subject to *decay*, health is subject to *illness*, life is subject to *death*.

This complexion is indeed no longer pure or bright, the limbs are all flabby and wrinkled, and the body bent over, and change can be seen in the faculties—in the eyes, the ears, the nose, the tongue, the body.”

5 The Blessed One said this. Having said this, the Well-gone [*sugata*], the Teacher, further said this:

### The verses on impermanence

6 *Dhī taṃ jammi jare atthu*<sup>6</sup>  
*dubbaṇṇa, karaṇī jare*  
*tāva mano, ramaṃ bimbaṃ*  
*jarāya abhimadditaṃ*

Shame on you, wretched decay!  
Decay, you maker of ugliness!<sup>7</sup>  
This image delightful to you  
is crushed by decay.<sup>8</sup>

7 *yo'pi vassa, sataṃ jīve*  
*sōpi maccu, parāyaṇo*<sup>9</sup>  
*na kiñci parivajjeti*  
*sabbam evābhimaddatīti*

Though one should live a hundred years,  
one still comes to the death's shore:  
no one is spared at all,  
it surely tramples all!

— evaṃ —

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<sup>5</sup> *Acchariyaṃ bhante, abbhutaṃ bhante, na c'evaṃ dāni bhante bhagavato tāva parisuddho chavi, vaṇṇo pariyo-dāto, sithilāni ca gattāni sabbāni valiya, jātāni, purato pabbhāro ca kāyo, dissati ca indriyānaṃ aññathattaṃ cak-khu'ndriyassa sot'indriyassa ghān'indriyassa jivh'indriyassa kāy'indriyassāti.* The exclamation *abbhuta* (Skt *adbhuta*), from √BHŪ, “to be,” lit “not to be, not real, against reality.”

<sup>6</sup> This line is found in Thī 206 (only Be+Se), but seems out of place there (Thī:eP 184,20; Thī:N 84 n106).

<sup>7</sup> Lines ab are addressed to Decay personified.

<sup>8</sup> Line cd are addressed to us (the reader). Or, we can take the whole verse as the Buddha reflecting his own struggle as Bodhisattva.

<sup>9</sup> Be Ke Se *sabbe maccu, parāyanā*, “All are. headnfor death.”