

Araka Sutta ***“The Teacher Araka”***

Translated by Bhikkhu Candana

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“Bhikkhus, in the past there was a teacher named Araka, the founder of a religious sect of practitioners, who lived free from lust for sensual pleasures.

“Araka, the teacher, had hundreds of disciples whom he would teach the Dhamma, by saying:

‘O! Brahmins, the life of a human being is so very brief, fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery. This must be carefully pondered and understood by each one of you. Therefore, you should become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

1. “Human life is like that of a dewdrop, Brahmins! Much like when the Sun rises early in the morning, the dew drops that had gathered on the tip of grass quickly vanish, unable to stay long.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like a dew drop; fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

2. “Human life is like that of a bubble, Brahmins! Much like when heavy rain is pouring down, you can see the splashing of the rain drops that form into bubbles everywhere, almost quarreling with each other here and there, but ever so quickly, they all vanish and disappear from sight.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like the bubbles of rain drops that vanish; fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

3. “Human life is as short as that of a line that is drawn in water, Brahmins! Much like when you try drawing a line by moving a stick on the surface of the water, which instantaneously disappears, and is no more.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like a line that is drawn in water with a stick; fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore,

strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

4. “Human life is as short as the swiftly flowing river rushing down from the mountains, Brahmins! Much like the swiftly flowing river coming down from the mountains, as it rushes, pushes forth and does not stop, taking and dragging down with its strong current all that stand on its path, without stopping or taking a break, not even for a minute, a second, or just a moment, nor could it ever turn back.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like the swiftly flowing river; fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

5. “Human life is short and not so different than a glob of spittle, Brahmins! Much like when a strong man collecting a glob of spittle at the tip of his tongue, quickly and easily spits it out, the spit is no more.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like a glob of spittle, fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

6. “Human life is short and not so different than a small piece of lard, Brahmins! Much like when someone drops a small piece of lard onto a blazing red-hot iron pan that’s been heated for an entire day, the lard would immediately hiss and vaporize.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like a small piece of lard, fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery, you must therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

7. “Human life is short and not so different than a cow that is on her way to the slaughterhouse, Brahmins! Much like a cow that is on her way to be slaughtered, whichever leg she lifts to continue walking, whatever she does, the cow would still be headed straight to the slaughterhouse, to be killed.

“Having a life that is so very brief, just like a cow that is on her way to the slaughterhouse; fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery; you must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

“But Bhikkhus, during the time of Araka, the teacher, humans enjoyed an average lifespan of sixty thousand years! And girls would reach the age of marriage when they were five hundred years old!

“At that time, humans would suffer from only six types of ailments: cold, heat, hunger, thirst, and the need to urinate and excrete.

“You see, Bhikkhus, that teacher Araka was instructing human beings who had such a long lifespan, with very few discomforts and even fewer ailments, teaching them that life is so very short, fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery, and how they must, therefore, strive diligently to become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, and dedicating themselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

“But now, more than ever, Bhikkhus, it is very appropriate and essential to remind yourselves that the life of a human being is so very brief, fleeting, and full of worries, as it brings with it so much suffering, pain, and misery. This must be carefully pondered and understood by each one of you.

“Therefore, you should become wise while living a wholesome life, doing merit-bringing actions, dedicating yourselves to the holy life, because death is inevitable for all those who are born.

“Bhikkhus, it is appropriate and essential now more than ever, because one lives at the most to a hundred years, or maybe a little bit more. Someone living a hundred years has three hundred seasons, that include a hundred winters, a hundred summers, and a hundred rainy seasons.

“Bhikkhus, someone living a hundred seasons, lives only one thousand and two hundred months, that include four hundred months of the winter season, four hundred months of the summer season, and four hundred months of the rainy season.

“One living one thousand and two hundred months has two thousand four hundred fortnights, consisting of eight hundred winter fortnights, eight hundred summer fortnights, and eight hundred rainy season fortnights.

“Someone living 2,400 fortnights has 36,000 nights, consisting of 12,000 winter nights, 12,000 summer nights, and 12,000 rainy season nights.

“One living 36,000 nights eats 72,000 meals, consisting of 24,000 meals taken in the winter season, 24,000 meals taken in the summer season, and 24,000 meals taken in the rainy season, including mother’s milk that one has consumed as an infant, and any other meals one has missed.

“The missed meals include times when, while being aggravated by anger, the person could not eat; aggravated by pain, they could not eat; aggravated by sickness, they could not eat; while observing the Uposatha, they could not eat; and while they were unable to obtain food, they could not eat.

“Therefore, Bhikkhus, I have elaborated for you on the human lifespan, in its seasons, months, fortnights, nights and days, along with the number of meals a human being would consume, while living those hundred years.

*“Bhikkhus,
Whatever should be done by a compassionate teacher for his disciples,
Out of consideration for them and their wellbeing,
All that, I have done for you.*

*“Now, there are these roots of trees and empty kutis.
Go and meditate, Bhikkhus!
Do not be heedless or negligent!
Otherwise, you will regret it later!
This is our advice to you.”*

Sādhū

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