

both are permissible terms when postulated merely for practical, everyday purposes³.

"Brief is the life of human beings . . . none to whom death cometh not" (S. 1. 108, cf. A. 4. 136). Even of a Brahmā, whose day is of a thousand years, is said that "his life is little, not for long" (S. 1. 143). "Life is like a dewdrop . . . a bubble on the water" (A. 4. 137, cf. D. 2. 246 f.),—"like a dewdrop on the tip of a blade of grass when the sun rises, such is the lifetime of men. Mother! do not hinder me" (Vism. 231), i.e. do not hold me back from the Path. "In the last analysis, the moment of the life (*jivita-khaṇo*) of beings is just as over-brief (*atiparitto*)⁴ as the turning of a single thought; like the turning of a chariot-wheel, which turns by means of just one place on its rim, and stands still by means of only one, so is the life of beings that of a single moment of thought, and when this ends the being is said to have ended. As it has been said, 'In the past thought-moment one lived . . . in the future thought-

veritable Selfhood, and no longer sees Self in what is not-Self, then he "no longer worries about what is unreal" (*asaṭā na pavāssaṭi*, M. 1. 135).

³ The pragmatic validity and real invalidity of the postulates corresponds to the distinction of relative, transactional (*vo-hārika*) and conventional (*sammūti* = *sammata*, or perhaps = *samvṛti*, "contingent") from absolute (*paramatthika*) truth. The affirmative language of postulation applies literally only to the world of accidents (D. 2. 63) and can only be employed analogically or negatively to ultimate reality.

⁴ Cf. A. 1. 249 where the little self (of which the "life" is referred to above) is *paritto*, the Great Self *aparitto*. On *ṛic* see my "*Unātrikān and Atyaricyatā*", *NIA*. 6. 52-56.

II

BUDDHISM

Early Buddhism, both in the Canon and as interpreted by Buddhaghosa, emphasizes the inconstancy and the extreme brevity of life under any conditions, in a word, its mortality in the sense that "all change is a dying" (Plato, *Euthydemus* 284 D, Eckhart, Evans ed. 1. 384); and asserts unequivocally the unreality of "beings" (*satta*)¹ and of the "self" (*attā*)², although

¹ S. 1. 135 *evam khandesu santesu koci satto ti, sammūti . . . nayidha satt' upalabbhati*; Mil. 72 *n'attiki koci satto yo imamhā kāyā aññānā kāyān saṅkamati*; 268 *na paramatthena satt'ūpa-taddhī*. D. 3. 211 *sabbe satta saṅkhārāṭṭhikā*: S. 1. 97 *sabbe satta marissanti*,—cf. Aristotle, *De an.* 3. 6 *vō γὰρ πρῶτος ἐν οὐρώσει δελ*. Just as much as the modern positivist, the Buddhist regards "individuality" as nothing but a transitory association of sensuous data, mere name and phenomenon, and "the very mother of illusions"; but at the same time denies absolutely that all that "is my Self". It should be needless to say that the postulated "self" (*attā*) or Ego (*aham*) is other than the Self to which the Buddha "resorts" (S. 3. 143, D. 2. 120), other than the "plenary, great 'I'" (*pūṇam ahaṃ mahāḥ, Vīvekacūḍāmaṇi* 240), other than the "I" that is "proper to none but God in his sameness" (Meister Eckhart). On the two "I's" cf. *JAOS* 67, 1947, pp. 69, 70.

² Nothing that can be named or sensed is a real "Self". When the Freedman realises that in the postulated "self" there is no

moment one will live... in the present thought-moment one is alive',

'Life, the self-ish nature (*atta-bhāva*), pleasure and pain, all⁵

Are conjunct (*samāyūta*) in a single thought, and its moment passes lightly'⁶.

Such is the 'Recollection of Death' in terms of the 'Brevity of the Moment' (Vism. 238).

"Connatural are life and its theft... Beings are born bearing in themselves inveteration and death. For indeed their recurrent thinking is infected with inveteration coincidentally with its origination; like a stone that falls from a mountain top, it breaks up together with the aggregates of which it is composite, so that instant death (*khaniṅka-maraṇam*)⁸ is connatural with advent" (Vism. 1. 230). In other words, birth and death are not unique events of any contingent existence, but of the very stuff (*evaṃ-dhammo*) of "life"; and this liability, of which a particular birth and death are only special cases, is precisely that "reincarnation" (*paṇa-bbhava*, *-āgamaṇa*) from which a final escape is sought; immortality (*amāta*) and life or becoming (*bhava*) are

⁵ "All", i.e. the passible five-fold composite "that is not my Self" (*na me so attā*), passim.

⁶ *Eka-citta... vattate (v'v't) khaṇo* implying that *citta-v'rtti*, "turning, or inconstancy, of thought" that the Yogi seeks to suppress. The mind is always on the move, and hence often compared to a monkey.

⁷ "Theft", i.e. by the "robber", or "waylayer", or "hunter"; Death.

⁸ Not "sudden death" at the end of one's life, but "instant death" all through it.

not composites, but incompatible; "the cessation of becoming is Nibbāna" (S. 2. 117). "As between one thought and the next (*citt'antaro*), such is a mortal" (A. 5. 300): "Could a man be called 'quick' who could so run as to catch in the air arrows loosed at the same time by four master-archers? Quicker than that is the wearing out of the composite-factors of life" (S. 2. 266); "All that is born, whatever is become, is corruptible" (*patokadhammam*, S. 5. 163). It is in this sense that "the Buddha looks upon the world in momentary (*khaye khaye*) dissolution" (Dpvs. 1. 16)⁹.

"Four and eighty thousand aeons the Maruts abide, and yet abide not even for so long as for the sequence of two thoughts... In the present lives the world, and with the break-up of a thought it dies (*paccuppanna jivati cittabhāṅga mato loka*)¹⁰... From the unseen come forth born beings, and broken-up pass into the unseen; like a flash of lightning in the ether they arise and pass away" (Vism. 625, 626).

Time (*sanaya*, "co-ition") is past (*atīta*, "over-gone"), future (*anāgata*, "un-come"), or present (*paccuppanna*, "up-come"). The present has three senses; that of the moment (*khāṇa*-) in which there meet forthcoming, stasis and break-down (*uppāda-tthiti-bhāṅga*-

⁹ Buddhaghosa derives *loka* from *laj*, *palaj*, to decay, be dissolved (Vism. 427).

¹⁰ Similarly in MU. 6. 17 and 6. 34. 43 "this world, measured by a thought... the conflux, just a thought" (*idam citta-mātram... cittaṃ-eva samisāram*), i.e. lasts only for so long as a thought, though it may also be meant that it is "of the stuff of thought", conceptual.

patitam); that of the continuation (*santati-*), i.e. "now" in the extended and usual meaning of the word; and that of road (*addhā-*)¹¹ in the sense of span of life, whether long or short; and of these three presents, the first is included in the second, and the second in the third. The becoming of the five-fold aggregates, i.e. of "beings", or "selves", takes place in the course of all these "times" (Vism. 431, 473).

Observe that the Stasis is only momentary, not in the continuing present, except in the sense that the moments are surrounded by the continuum; "as it might be a mountain torrent flowing swiftly from afar and carrying everything along with it, and there is no moment, pause, or minute (*khasso, layo, mulatto*) in which it comes to rest¹², ... even so is the life of men

¹¹ In its most extended sense the Road (*addhā*) as distinct from the Way (*magga*) ... much, indeed, as "byway" from "highway" ... is that whole extent of the past habitations (*pubba-nivāsa*) that were "not my Self", but in which, already, more tears have been shed than would fill the sea. "It is through (of) III, its origin and its eradication, and the Four Ariyan Truths that we have run and wandered on this long road, ... both you and I ... How is a Monk a 'Wayman' in that he is moving fast on this long road to where he has not yet been, there where there is a cessation of all composites, a relinquishing of all conditions, a waning out of thirst, an absence of gust, an arrest of becoming, ... Nibbāna ... There is no surcease of III until World's End has been reached" (D. 2. 60, A. 3. 164 and 2. 49).

¹² Cf. Plutarch, *Mor.* 432 A, B (on the stream of Time). In my *Figures of Speech or Figures of Thought*, 1946, p. 159, n. 10 (on *ksanika-nairātmādi*) I erred in speaking of existence as "not a continuity but a succession of unique instants

brief and light (*parittam lahukam*) ... or like the mark made by a stick on water ... For the born there is no 'not dying'¹³ (A. 4. 137). Buddhaghosa's three momentary accidents (*uppāda, tīti, bhāṅga*)¹⁴ are the same as the "forthcoming, maturity, and alteration or dying (*uppāda, vayo, aññatīkatta*)¹⁵ of things while of consciousness". The Buddhist doctrine is one of "continuity without identity", and it is because of *both* that the question, Is it the same man or another that reaps what has been sown, cannot be answered by a simple Yes or No.

¹³ Aristotle's *τοῦ ἀβροῦ ... καὶ γένοιο καὶ φθορά*, *Met.* 11. 12. 8.
¹⁴ Vism. 404-405; where it is asked whether in the case of one who visits the Brahma-world in an invisible, mental body, he does this "in the moment of the forthcoming or moment of stability or moment of break-up of the resolute thought" of going there, and answered that he goes "in all three moments"; which is as much as to say that they are not three consecutive moments, but one. It has been previously explained that if he goes in a visible body the journey takes some time, "for the body moves slowly".

¹⁵ Aristotle's *ἀβροῦ, ἀμυή, and φθοῖας*, dependent on food, *De an.* 3. 12; *AA.* 2. 1. 2 *anena hī mānī sarvāni bhūtāni samanāni*; *Taitt. Up.* 2. 2 *annād vai prajā prajāyante*; D. 3. 211 *sabbe sattā āhāraññīkā*; S. 1. 97 *sabbe sattā marissanti*. "All change is a desistance from a nature", Aristotle *Phys.* 4. 13, 222 B, cf. 4. 12, 221 B: "All change is a dying", Plato, *Euthydemus* 283 D, 285 B, and Meister Eckhart (Evans ed. 1. 384); "Alteratio est via ad generationem et corruptionem", St. Thomas Aquinas, *De mixt. elementorum*, ed. Parma 16. 353, cf. *Sum. Theol.* I. 105. 2 and I-II. 113. 7 ad 1.

It can hardly be overlooked, also, that the three phases of existence, *sṛṣṭi, sthiti* and *laya*, that are resumed in every instant, are the respective functions of the Trinity of Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva in so far as they are logically distinguished from "the unity of the Person".

