**The 4 & 8 Sufferings (part 2)**

**The Suffering of Aging**

From the moment we are born, we are aging. Aging is a one way street. We cannot go back to our youth no matter how much we desire to. The hands of time turn steadily towards decline of our body. Even if we try to halt or slow the aging process with plastic surgery, the effect is temporary. Like the ocean coming in to full tide, it is relentless. When we look in the mirror each morning, we think we have not changed much, and we compliment ourselves on how good we still look. We age day by day but we only notice the changes over several years, and we get surprised when we see a picture of ourselves from 5 or 6 years ago. We get shocked when we see someone we knew when we were young, to see how much they have changed. When we look at old movies and see the beautiful people on the screen, and then we see a picture of them today we feel sad at how much their looks have declined.

It is said that we reach our physical peak at age 30. From then the ability of the body to recover from exercise and stress takes longer. With aging physical strength declines, gray hairs appear, skin wrinkles, get easily tired, memory worsens, eyesight weakens, hearing loss, death of those around us, and lose hopes and dreams. “With age, the skin becomes less elastic and more lined and wrinkled. The oil glands gradually produce less oil, making the skin drier than before. It's normal for [hair](http://www.webmd.com/beauty/hair-styling/rm-quiz-hair-care) to gradually thin on the scalp. As hair pigment cells decline in number, gray hair growth increases. By age 80, it's common to have lost as much as 2 inches (5 cm) in height. This is often related to normal changes in posture and compression of joints, spinal bones, and spinal discs.  Over time, changes in the ear make high-frequency sounds harder to hear and changes in tone and speech less clear. These changes tend to speed up after age 55. Most people in their 40s develop a need for reading glasses as the lenses in the [eyes](http://www.webmd.com/eye-health/picture-of-the-eyes) become less flexible (presbyopia). Presbyopia occurs when the lens becomes stiff and won’t adjust to refocus from distance to near [vision](http://www.webmd.com/eye-health/default.htm).  It's also normal for [night vision](http://www.webmd.com/eye-health/night-vision-problems-halos-blurred-vision-night-blindness) and visual sharpness to decline.  Changes in [sleep](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/ss/slideshow-sleep-disorders-overview) and [circadian rhythm](http://www.webmd.com/hw-popup/circadian-rhythms) occur as you age. You will probably [sleep](http://www.webmd.com/sleep-disorders/sleep-habits-assessment) less at night, and you may not sleep as deeply as you did when you were younger. And it's more likely that you'll wake up during the night and/or wake up earlier in the morning. With age, we lose muscle tissue and our muscles become more rigid and less toned. Our organs lose their extra reserve, too. The walls of the [heart](http://www.webmd.com/heart/picture-of-the-heart) become thicker, the [arteries](http://www.webmd.com/heart/picture-of-the-arteries) are stiffer, and the [heart rate](http://www.webmd.com/heart-disease/pulse-measurement) slows as we age. ” -WebMD

In Japan the prison population has been increasing due to the large number of older people who have been put in prison. These people are lonely and once they go to prison they have free medical care and get free meals. This loneliness must be the suffering of aging.

**The Suffering of Sickness**

It has been said that the body is a vessel for disease. One day we are healthy and energetic, and the next, suddenly and without warning we have a cold or flu. Nowadays a cold or flu is not something we worry about, but not so long ago a cold or flu could mean death. A few hundred years ago, the average lifespan was 30 or 40 years, usually because people would die from some kind of disease. In the past the fatal diseases included Tuberculosis, leprosy, polio, bubonic plague, and small pox. Today there are many kinds of new diseases: Heart disease, stroke, 100 forms of cancer, AIDS, Alzheimer’s, Parkinson’s...and so on, including various unknown diseases.

Let’s look at one of the worst of these diseases, the black (bubonic) plague. Over a five-year period from 1347 to 1352, 25 million people died from the black plague. This is a description of symptoms of Bubonic plague. *“The first symptoms of bubonic plague appeared within days after infection: fever, headache, and a general feeling of weakness, followed by aches, slurred speech, confusion, and fatigue. The victim's nervous system collapsed, causing extreme pain and neurological disorders. Fragile nasal capillaries led to excessive sneezing. Finally, the skin blackened, giving rise to the name “The Black Death.”* The disease killed people so quickly that the Italian novelist Giovanni Boccaccio, whose father and stepmother died of plague, wrote that “its victims ate lunch with their friends and dinner with their ancestors in the afterlife.” The bubonic plague is believed to have killed 137 million people during its 400-year reign of terror.

Each year globally, about 14 million people are diagnosed with cancer. Maybe decades in the future cancer will not be the same concern it is today, but by then some other illness will have replaced it.

It is true that “Health is wealth.” If we don’t have our health, no matter how many possessions we have, we cannot enjoy them. Today we may be healthy, but we don’t know when we might be diagnosed with an illness. In this way we can be struck down without warning by the suffering of illness.

No one, rich or poor, are spared from illness. Celebrities are no less prone to having a disease. X-Man actor, Hugh Jackman had a bout of skin cancer, while Michael J Fox has Parkinson’s disease. Angelia Jolie famously had her breasts removed when she discovered a “faulty” gene which gave her an 87% chance of having breast cancer; Actor Morgan Freeman has Fibromyalgia a condition that causes chronic pain, while Tom Hanks has been diabetic since age 36. The list could go on. It is said that having training in medical field is one of the best professions for getting a job. For as long as people are around, there will always be a need of skilled medical workers to deal with illness.

 (To be continued)