
Study Group – Aryadeva’s 400 Verses

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

7 March 2006

I am very happy that we have come together again today.
I thank you and welcome you.

You all know the importance of generating a good motivation at the beginning and at the end: initially a good motivation for the action, which is followed by a good dedication at the end.

One should base all one’s activities on love and compassion, which are the basis of bodhicitta. First one generates the motivation of bodhicitta based on love and compassion, and after the action one dedicates with bodhicitta based on love and compassion. By basing bodhicitta on love and compassion one can see how bodhicitta is the root of all qualities.

One should consider oneself very fortunate to be able to generate an understanding of bodhicitta. One has not been able to do so for many lifetimes, but now in this lifetime one has found the Dharma, a qualified virtuous friend and an understanding of bodhicitta. These come about very rarely, and having found them now shows that one has many merits. One should therefore rejoice in one’s good fortune.

Having found the Dharma in this life you then also train your mind in the Dharma and bodhicitta. In order for one’s Dharma to be effective it needs to be applied to unsuitable mental states. If one places the insight gained from listening and contemplating over here and one’s unsuitable mental states over there, then the Dharma will not help to improve one’s mind.

One is very fortunate to have some understanding of the Dharma. There are many, many people who wish to have mental happiness, but who are unable to achieve it because of a lack of Dharma knowledge. But with Dharma knowledge one has the method for achieving inner happiness. Because the majority of beings are not in that state one should feel very fortunate.

You should now generate the motivation of bodhicitta thinking, ‘I have to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and in order to achieve this aim, I am going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible’.

I myself try to practice in this way, by generating the thought of bodhicitta - wanting to attain complete enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings, and wanting to liberate all sentient beings from their sufferings. I find that the more I am able to generate these thoughts the happier my mind becomes.

The text is called *The Treatise of Four Hundred Verses [on the practise of the Bodhisattva Yogas] put into Word and Chapter*.

It is divided into four major outlines

1. Meaning of the title
2. Translators prostration
3. Meaning of the text
4. Colophon or conclusion

1. Meaning of the title

The Sanskrit title of the text is *Tsadu-shadaka Shastra Karika Nama*. *Tsadu* means four, *shadaka* means hundred, *shastra* means treatise, *karika* means put into word and chapter, and *nama* means it is called. So the text is called *The Treatise of Four Hundred Verses put into Word and Chapter*.

The text has sixteen chapters, each of which has twenty-five verses, which gives us four hundred verses. The original root text was called *The Treatise of Hundreds*. Even though it is implicit, four was not explicitly stated by Aryadeva when he composed the root text. In fact the four was added by Chandrakirti, who wrote an extensive commentary to *The Four Hundred Verses*.

Aryadeva called the text the *Treatise of Hundreds* because of its function, which is to dispel misconceptions. *Hundreds* is meant only figuratively, and not as a definitive number. In actuality the number of misconceptions is limitless, and this text dispels them all.

The relevance of the title also becomes clearer when one looks at the definition of a *pure Buddhist treatise*, which is *pure speech endowed with the qualities of generation and refuge*. This text eliminates hundreds of misconceptions and categories of afflictions by generating the antidote, and rescues sentient beings from the suffering of lower realms in particular, and cyclic existence in general. It is a pure Buddhist treatise.

Because of its function it was originally called, as Chandrakirti explained, *The Treatise of Hundreds*. Once one knows the meaning of the title one can read the text with the appropriate motivation.

Other scholars mistakenly assigned a different meaning to the name but we won’t go into that right now.

2. Translator’s prostration

The translator’s prostration is to Youthful Manjushri, and the purpose is twofold.

a. To indicate that the text belongs to the Abhidharma basket of teachings the translator prostrates to the Youthful Manjushri, who is the deity of wisdom. Any teaching of the Buddha will fall into one of the three baskets of teachings - the Abhidharma basket, the Sutra basket or the Vinaya basket. One purpose of the translator’s prostration at the beginning of the text is for the translator to show what basket the teachings belong to. This text falls into the category of the Abhidharma basket, because it is a text that on an explicit level deals primarily with the higher training of wisdom. But that does not mean preclude dealing with other aspects of the path on an explicit level - it is just that they are not the primary focus.

We explained this in great detail when we went through the translator's prostration to *Introduction to the Middle Way*, so you can refer to that explanation.¹

b. The second purpose is to be able complete the translation of the text.

3. Meaning of the Text

This comes in two parts:

3.1. An overview of the text

3.2. Specific explanation of the different chapters

3.1. An overview of the text

3.1.1. Showing the qualities of the author

3.1.2. Eliminating misconceptions of other texts

3.1.3. Summary of the essential thought of the text.

3.1.1 Showing the qualities of the author

This is similar to showing the greatness of the author at the beginning of the *Lam rim*.

The author of the text is the sage Aryadeva, who was a direct disciple of Nagarjuna. For this reason one can say that this text does not divert from the thought of Nagarjuna. What this means is that the thought of this text does not contradict *The Collection of Six Texts*² by Nagarjuna. This becomes significant because later on, as we shall see, there are some scholars who question the purpose and validity of this text.

Aryadeva was born in Sri Lanka as a prince of a royal family. After some time he gave up the life of a prince, became ordained, went to South India and studied at the feet of Nagarjuna. This is really a very pure life story.

He studied both the systems of sutra and tantra extensively at the feet of Nagarjuna and through his practice attained the illusory body. He therefore attained enlightenment in that very lifetime, because if someone attains the illusory body they attain enlightenment in that

¹ 12 March 2002

² *Rig-tzog truk*

From Jetsun Cho gi Gyaltzen's *The General Explanation on the first Chapter of the Abhisamayalamkara*.

Four texts conveying the object: suchness of dependent arising; two texts showing the object possessor, the view realising emptiness, to be the root of the path leading to liberation.

The first set again has two: Two texts primarily eliminating the object of negation: true existence; two texts showing the validity of activity and action despite lacking true existence.

The first two: 1) The *Root Wisdom* eliminating 'true phenomena', the thesis of the self of person and phenomena mentally constructed by those propounding 'real existence'. 2) The *Grounding Fine* refuting the 'Sixteen Subjects of Intellectuals' used to prove 'real existence'.

The second two: 1) The *Seventy Stanzas on Emptiness* showing in general the validity of activity and action despite lack of true existence, elaborating on *Root Wisdom*'s seventh chapter 'Analysis of Generation, Abiding and Disintegration'. 2) The *Elimination of Dispute* showing the validity of refutation and establishment despite lack of true existence, elaborating on the first chapter of *Root Wisdom*, 'Analysis of Conditions'.

The remaining two are the *Precious Garland* and the *Sixty Reasons*. They explain the realisation of the two truths that is indispensable for liberation from samsara. What need is there to talk about attaining Buddhahood? They also explain the need for a path abandoning the extreme views relating to the existence and non-existence of a path to liberation.

very lifetime. As there are sources showing he attained the illusory body, one knows that Aryadeva attained enlightenment within that very lifetime.

3.1.2. Eliminating misconceptions of other texts

Then comes the refutation of some mistaken views in a commentary on *The Four-hundred Verses* by the Indian pandit Ven. Dharmapala. Two things are being refuted: Ven. Dharmapala's mistaken interpretation of the title and his mistaken interpretation of the essential meaning of the text.

a. Mistaken interpretation of the title

Ven. Dharmapala said that the text is called the *Treatise of Hundreds* because the first eight chapters are the hundred-fold explanation of the Dharma and the second eight chapters are a hundred-fold discussion of the Dharma. He gave a two-fold meaning to the title, relating it differently to the first eight chapters and the second eight chapters.

Chandrakirti said this is incorrect and that it shows that Ven. Dharmapala did not read the text very carefully. He says that Aryadeva composed the text solely for the purpose of giving a person with a Mahayana aspiration a complete explanation of the whole Mahayana path, and that the text does so in a continuous and complete manner.

b. Mistaken interpretation of the essential meaning of the text

Dharmapala assigned the refutation of the inherent existence of conceptually fabricated phenomena, i.e. the Mind Only point of view, as the essential meaning of the text. But there is no doubt Aryadeva is a person who does not accept any kind of true existence, since he establishes the lack of true existence of dependent arising. He is not a person who accepts other-powered phenomena or thoroughly-established phenomena as existing truly. In the mind of Aryadeva there is not the slightest assertion of any type of true existence.

Aryadeva establishes that in order to even just attain individual liberation one needs to realise subtle selflessness of phenomena, something that is not ascertained by the Realists.

3.1.3. The Direction of the Text in Brief

Here an *objection* is posited: If both Aryadeva's text and Nagarjuna's text are of the same thought, then does that not make Aryadeva's text redundant?

The answer is that this is not the case. Even though Nagarjuna's texts refute misconceptions of both Buddhists and non-Buddhists alike they are not argumentative texts, but primarily concerned with establishing the pure Buddhist view for those wanting to attain liberation and enlightenment. Aryadeva, however, goes to great lengths to refute the different misconceptions and to engage with the different positions more. It is a more argumentative text.

Aryadeva's text establishes Nagarjuna's text as the text showing the yogi practices that have to be followed in order to attain complete enlightenment. By doing so it

implicitly shows that those wanting to attain lesser liberation also need to realise the suchness of phenomena.

Opponent: The Four-hundred Verses are still redundant because this has been done already by Nagarjuna's Precious Garland of the Middle Way.

The answer is that there is no fault because this text deals extensively with refuting the four misconceptions of grasping at purity, happiness, permanence and self as a preparation for the generation of bodhicitta; it is an extensive explanation of training in the path common to the medium capable being as preparation for bodhicitta. *The Four-hundred Verses* is also not redundant because it refutes misconceptions with regards to the two truths, also taught by Nagarjuna, in a broader manner.

Another point that is raised is the absence of a homage at the beginning of the text, which is a requirement that one finds in all ancient texts. Chandrakirti says that Aryadeva did not explicitly state a homage at the beginning of the text, in order to drive the point home that the thought of his text is no different from Nagarjuna's text, and to show his affinity with the thought of Nagarjuna. Implicitly, of course Aryadeva would pay homage to the buddhas, bodhisattvas and so forth.

How does the text show the stages of the path?

How does the text show the stages of the path? The answer is by showing the mode of abiding of illusory worldly phenomena, and then their ultimate nature. Initially the text explains the conventional illusory nature of phenomena, their nominal side, and then it explains their ultimate nature. From the point of view of the two truths one can say that first conventional truth is explained and after that ultimate truth is explained. The conventional illusory truth becomes the method through which ultimate truth is realised.

Next comes an overview of the chapters of the *Four Hundred Verses*, and then comes a specific explanation of the individual verses. You should read through the text in advance in order to prepare yourselves for the class. Then what you hear in the teaching will be clearer.

*Transcribed from tape by Adair Bunnett
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
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Edited Version*

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

14 March 2006

As usual, please generate a good motivation thinking, 'I have to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. In order to do so, I am now going to listen to this profound teaching and then I am going to put it into practice as much as possible'.

In the four lines of the Refuge and Bodhicitta prayer it says, 'I have to attain enlightenment.' This enlightenment is based on the love and compassion that one initially generates. Then, on the basis of increasing one's love and compassion, one generates the superior intention that naturally leads to bodhicitta. To be true bodhicitta it has to be based on these factors.

3.1. An overview of the text (cont.)

3.1.3. The direction of the text in brief

As we said last time, Aryadeva initially explains the nominal world of illusory conventional truth, and then uses that as the basis for explaining ultimate truth.

Specific content of the individual chapters

In the overview it states that the first four chapters deal with generating renunciation by overcoming the four mistaken conceptions: the conception that grasps at the aggregates as permanent; the conception that grasps at the contaminated aggregates as happiness; the conception that grasps at them to be pure and the conception that grasps at them as having a self. These chapters explain extensively how to generate renunciation to samsara on the basis of showing that grasping at the permanence etc. of the contaminated aggregates is distorted.

The five contaminated aggregates

The five contaminated aggregates are the aggregates of form, feeling, recognition, compositional factors and primary consciousness. These five aggregates are referred to as the *contaminated aggregates* or *closely taken aggregates*. They are that which one should fear and renounce.

Initially we have the **form aggregate**. For example your body would be a form aggregate. The form aggregate comes first because it is the most obvious of the five. It is what one sees first.

Subsequent to the form aggregate we have the **aggregate of feeling**. Depending on whether one sees a pleasant form or an unpleasant form, one generates feelings of, respectively, happiness or suffering. That's why the aggregate of feeling comes second.

After the aggregate of feeling comes the **aggregate of recognition**, which are the mistaken conceptions imputing non-existent values of true existence,

permanence, etc. onto the feelings of happiness and suffering. They greatly exaggerate and distort the actual nature of the feelings of happiness and suffering.

This then in turn gives rise to the different afflictions such as anger and attachment, which belong to **the aggregate of compositional factors**.

These in turn lead to further instances of **the aggregate of primary consciousness**.

The five contaminated or suffering aggregates are also called the closely taken aggregates. They are called this for two reasons:

a. The name of the cause is assigned to the result. The cause of the closely taken aggregates is karma and affliction. Karma and affliction immediately generate the contaminated aggregates. So they are the closely taken aggregates from the point of view of the cause.

b. They are called the closely taken aggregates from the point of view of the effect, because they immediately generate further karma and afflictions.

This should also be related to the twelve interdependent links, because two of the interdependent links are karma and three of the interdependent links are affliction. So when we say that karma and affliction are the cause that closely generates the contaminated aggregates, then one should relate that to the process of how this actually happens.

Of the twelve interdependent links, the first dependent link of ignorance and the eighth and ninth dependent links of craving and grasping are afflictions. The second link of compositional karma, which is projecting karma, and the tenth link which is establishing karma, are the karmas that generate further instances of contaminated aggregates, or new cyclic existence. There is always the question, 'What is cyclic existence?'. Cyclic existence is that which takes rebirth through karma and afflictions. So the continuity that takes rebirth through karma and afflictions is cyclic existence. That's very good to know.

Summary of the individual chapters

The first eight chapters

We said that the first four chapters show how to generate renunciation by showing the four conceptions of permanence, happiness, purity and self to be distorted.

The **first chapter** deals with overcoming the misconception of the aggregates as permanent, by establishing them as impermanent. The aggregates are impermanent because they are generated in dependence on causes and conditions. Because they are generated through causes and conditions, they are impermanent and lack permanence. The chapter also shows how to meditate extensively on death and impermanence.

Because of their impermanence the five contaminated aggregates unreliable and therefore unsuitable to be the final object of all one's hope for happiness. Here one has to remember that the contaminated aggregates are impermanent because they are generated by karma and afflictions. Therefore the contaminated aggregates are harmful, and to perceive them as happiness is a mistaken

conception that has to be overcome. This is the content of the **second chapter**.

The **third chapter** shows that since the contaminated aggregates are misery and always disappointing, the three realms are therefore impure, and to perceive them as pure is a misconception that needs to be overcome.

The **fourth chapter** shows that because the five aggregates are impure and should be abandoned, it is unsuitable to generate pride by thinking of them in terms of 'I' and 'mine'. The chapter shows the logic that refutes the referent object of pride. In such a way it shows the self to be distorted.

The first four chapters explain how one generates renunciation by overcoming the four misconceptions. By training well, and meditating on the practices common to the middle capable being one comes to see that being in cyclic existence like being in a burning pit. By explaining the method of how to attain individual liberation for those of lesser inclination, these chapters also implicitly explain how those of Mahayana inclination generate wishing bodhicitta.

Those of Mahayana inclination initially generate renunciation by reflecting on their own suffering situation. Then they generate love and compassion by transferring that understanding to others and by meditating on their suffering. So by meditating on the samsaric nature of others' existence, practitioners of Mahayana inclination generate love and compassion for others. This then leads to the generation of wishing bodhicitta. So one can see how Aryadeva implicitly explains here how those of Mahayana inclination generate bodhicitta.

For a student of lesser inclination the first four chapters merely show the method to be liberated from cyclic existence and attain liberation.

The **fifth chapter** shows how the attainment of complete enlightenment depends upon the Mahayana yogic practices, which then leads to the necessity for the generation of engaging bodhicitta. **Wishing bodhicitta** is a mere wishing state where the person only wishes for complete enlightenment. **Engaging bodhicitta** is where the person is actually practising the Bodhisattva path at the time. This chapter explains the necessity for engaging bodhicitta by explaining how the attainment of complete enlightenment depends upon the practices of the Bodhisattva path.

Seeing that it is impossible to accomplish even one's own purpose if one's mind is under the control of the mental afflictions, let alone the purpose of others, the **sixth chapter** explains the way the mental afflictions are generated.

The **seventh chapter** explains the methods for overcoming the manifest afflictions, whose generation, abiding, and increase comes about primarily through contact with external objects, such as form and so forth, by taking these external objects as the focal object.

Since not knowing the mode of abiding of forms and so forth is the primary cause for the generation of afflictions

in those who are confused, the **eighth chapter** makes the disciple a suitable vessel by generating the wish to abandon the mental afflictions, and by generating an interest in emptiness just from the point of view of doubt.

The first eight chapters show the path that ripens the mental continuum of the disciple by explaining conventional truth.

The last eight chapters

The last eight chapters explain ultimate truth for the purpose of purifying both the afflictive obscurations and the knowledge obscurations. The knowledge obscurations are the obscurations to omniscience.

The **ninth chapter**, by showing that functionalities lack any essence of permanence, shows that they completely lack permanence.

The **tenth chapter** shows outer and inner selflessness.

The **eleventh chapter** refutes the view of permanence of time.

The **twelfth chapter** refutes extreme views extensively.

The **thirteenth chapter** shows in detail the lack of true existence of the different sense powers and their objects.

The **fourteenth chapter** overcomes extreme view by showing how those who wish to attain liberation and enlightenment also need to realise the lack of true existence of dependently arisen phenomena, and how dependently arisen phenomena are illusory like a fire wheel.

The **fifteenth chapter** shows in a more extensive manner how to meditate on the lack of true existence of generation, abiding and disintegration.

The **sixteenth chapter** explains the purpose for composing the commentary, and how to meditate on the relationship between the teacher and the disciple, by refuting remaining arguments.

3.2. Specific explanation of the different chapters

This has two main outlines:

3.2.1. The sequence of the path relative to illusory conventional truth; and

3.2.2. The sequence of the path relative to ultimate truth.

3.2.1. The sequence of the path relative to illusory conventional truth

This has two outlines:

3.2.1.1. Showing how to generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions; and

3.2.1.2. After having generated the wishing bodhicitta how to train in the path.

3.2.1.1. Showing how to the generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions

This has four outlines:

3.2.1.1.1. Showing the way of abandoning mistaken grasping at permanence by explaining extensively how to be mindful of death

3.2.1.1.2. Explaining the method for abandoning the mistaken grasping at happiness by mediating on the contaminated body as suffering.

3.2.1.1.3. Explaining the method for abandoning the mistaken grasping at samsara as pure by meditating on it as impure.

3.2.1.1.4. Explaining the way for abandoning distorted self-grasping by showing how contaminated form and so forth can not be held as 'I' and 'mine'.

The first major chapter that we are going to do is the explanation of how to abandon grasping at permanence, by meditating extensively on the mindfulness of death.

The way I'm going to go through the verses is that I will primarily follow Gyal-tsab's commentary. The way I am going to do the commentary is that I am going to primarily concentrate on explaining the words of the root text. Gyal-tsab uses many, many examples for each verse in his commentary. If you were to go through all the examples it would take many years to complete the commentary. So I am just going to concentrate on the part of the commentary that deals with the words of the root text themselves and Gyal-tsab's explanation of the root text. I am also going to include comments by Chandrakirti and other scholars, and I will also include something of my own. In that way it should be quite good. You should also read it well from your own side.

Chandrakirti's commentary also lists many, many examples for each of the points, but it is not suitable to our situation to go through all the examples. Of course when the commentators wrote their commentaries, they had lots of time, and their students had lots of time. They could spend all day going through different texts, and comparing quotes and different sources and so forth. But we don't really have that kind of leisurely situation. We have to go from one point to the next in a steady manner. Therefore we are just going to concentrate on the words of the root text.

We can recite the *Heart Sutra* once and pray for the success of the Commonwealth Games that start tomorrow. We can pray that they will run smoothly without any problems and obstacles.

Questions

What are the twelve interdependent links?

Student: Ignorance; karma; consciousness; name and form; the six senses; contact; feeling; craving; grasping; becoming; birth; and ageing and death.

How many of them are karmas?

Students: Two

What are the two karmas?

Student: The second and the tenth dependent links, karma and becoming.

Even though in effect it is karma, but the word 'karma' is actually not present in the name of the second link. It is the compositional link. What is being generated are the samsaric aggregates and what is doing it is karma. So the first dependent link is ignorance, then out of ignorance one generates karma, but the karma does not abide. It disintegrates in the next moment and leaves a potential on the mind-stream, which is why consciousness is third. The tenth link, becoming, is the establishing karma.

First there is ignorance, and out of this karma is generated, which disintegrates leaving consciousness. After the karmic imprint is placed on the consciousness, it is ripened by the eighth and ninth links of craving and grasping and becomes establishing karma, existence.

Compositional link two is projecting karma. When it is ripened it becomes establishing karma.

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Commentary by the Venerable Geshe Doga

Translated by the Venerable Tenzin Dongak

21 March 2006

First, please sit yourself in a comfortable upright proper meditation posture and then generate the single-pointed motivation of bodhicitta, wanting to attain enlightenment for the welfare of all sentient beings. Then really think, ‘For that purpose I am going to use what I learn in this profound teaching in my practice as much as possible’.

The **first chapter** comes under the outline 3.2.1.1.1. Showing the way of abandoning mistaken grasping at permanence by explaining extensively how to be mindful of death.¹

1. The explanation of the meaning of the chapter.
2. The explanation of the title of the chapter.

1. THE EXPLANATION OF THE ACTUAL MEANING OF THE CHAPTER

- 1.1. A brief explanation exhorting the disciple to conscientious striving on the path for liberation by being mindful of death.
- 1.2. Explaining extensively how to meditate on impermanence.
- 1.3. The benefits of meditating on impermanence.

1.1. A brief explanation exhorting the disciple to conscientious striving on the path for liberation by being mindful of death

Because of a lack of conscientiousness the mind does not aspire for liberation, which is why one needs to generate conscientiousness. This is done by meditating on death and impermanence.

If you look closely at the words of the heading you can see its deep meaning. What does the path to liberation refer to? First of all liberation is liberation from suffering and its causes. The path that leads there is the practice of the six perfections of generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom practised in dependence on renunciation. This can also be summed up as the three higher trainings. What one is liberated from is cyclic existence, and what this means is that one is liberated from suffering and its causes, which are karma and afflictions. So practising generosity, morality, patience, enthusiasm, mental stabilisation and wisdom on the basis of renunciation becomes the path to

liberation, and these practices can also be summed up as the three higher trainings.

If one is not conscientious, i.e. if one is reckless, then the mind will not enter the path to liberation. What makes the mind reckless is a lack of awareness of impermanence and death. If the mind is under the power of the grasping at permanence then it becomes consumed with this life and is not concerned at all with liberation. This automatically shows that grasping at permanence is a distorted and confused state. By overcoming grasping at permanence one can generate the conscientiousness that strives in the path to liberation.

Conscientiousness is a virtue, and recklessness is a non-virtue. Therefore it is important to know what distinguishes them from each other. The *Compendium of Knowledge* defines **conscientiousness** as: While abiding within detachment, non-anger and non-ignorance together with enthusiastic effort, protecting whatever meditation on virtuous objects (virtuous states) and (protecting) the mind from contaminated objects; having the function of perfectly completing and accomplishing all samsaric and non-samsaric perfections.

It is a mental factor that is combined with enthusiasm and abides in a state of non-attachment, non-anger and non-ignorance. It protects any meditation on virtue and protects the mind from contaminated objects. The function of conscientiousness is to accomplish all temporary and ultimate accumulations of virtue and merit.

If the mind is under the control of attachment, for example, then it is difficult to meditate extensively on virtue. So by definition conscientiousness is a mental state that abides free from attachment, anger and ignorance.

To sum it up, conscientiousness is a mental state that is free from mental afflictions, is combined with enthusiasm, protects the meditation on virtue and protects the mind from contamination. So you can see that without having conscientiousness it is impossible to meditate on virtue.

Conscientiousness is one of the eleven virtuous mental factors and its opposite, recklessness, is one of the twenty proximate afflictions. The definition of **recklessness** is exactly the opposite to conscientiousness: A mental factor that abides within attachment, anger and ignorance while being combined with laziness, not protecting the mind from contaminated dharmas and not meditating on virtuous dharmas; having the function of obstruction virtue and increasing non-virtue.

Recklessness is a mental state under the control of attachment, anger and ignorance, and is combined with laziness. It actually prevents the mind from engaging in virtue and leads to engagement with contaminated objects. The function of recklessness is the exact opposite of conscientiousness in that it greatly increases non-virtue, and it greatly decreases one’s virtuous practices. It is a state of mind where one thinks, ‘It does not matter. I can just leave my mind under the control of the afflictions’.

¹ To simplify the numbering, the first four chapters from 3.2.1.1.1 to 3.2.1.1.4 will start with 1, 2, 3, and 4 respectively. They all fall under the heading 3.2.1.1 Showing how to generate wishing bodhicitta by training in the meditations common to the medium capable being, which is the abandoning of the four misconceptions.

Now we go to the root text, which is a very special text. One should tell oneself that now, when one has the great opportunity to study this text that explains in such an excellent manner how to overcome the grasping at his life, one should make an effort to lessen the grasping at this life.

***The ruler of the three worlds [1]
Is the autonomous Lord of Death himself.
Realising this, if one sleeps like the perfect ones
What could be worse than that?***

Grasping at one's permanence and thinking one is not going to die is the main obstacle to generating enthusiasm for striving on the path to liberation. If one allows one's mind to remain under the control of grasping at permanence, thinking, 'Oh, I am not going to die', then one is not going to be interested in wanting to achieve liberation. Therefore it is important that one repeatedly meditates on death and impermanence in order to generate a yearning for liberation.

One's grasping at one's permanence is a distorted and confused mental state, because by nature the aggregates are changing moment by moment. Although they are momentary in nature one does not perceive the aggregates in such a manner: rather one perceives them as abiding, and this perception of the aggregates as abiding is a mistaken, distorted perception. Why? Because the aggregates are actually changing moment by moment.

Meditation on the impermanence of the aggregates has many benefits: not only does it generate the wish for liberation, but it also lays the groundwork for understanding that the aggregates are suffering, impure and lack self.

What kind of person is the person referred to in the third line, a person under the Lord of Death? It is a person who, because of true-grasping at functionalities, is not liberated from the three realms. Such a person has generated no antidote to true-grasping at functionalities in their mind, and therefore they are not liberated from the three realms. The only way to be liberated from the three realms is to realise emptiness.

The common explanation of the three realms is that they are the desire realm, the form realm and the formless realm. However one can also relate the three realms to the lower realms, the intermediate or human realm, and the higher realms of the divine beings.

The reason why one is under the control of the Lord of Death is because one has not realised selflessness. The Lord of Death is the ruler of the three realms and exists in all of the three realms. This relates to the point that is always mentioned - there is no place where one can hide from, or not be affected by, the Lord of Death. Regardless of whether one is in a higher or lower realm, if one has not liberated oneself with the realisation of emptiness one will always be under the control of the Lord of Death. Here one does not need to relate the Lord of Death to an external being or some form and so forth, but one can relate it to the very ending of life, because it is the ending of life that is death. The Lord of Death is autonomous in

that he does not order others to do his bidding, nor is he instructed or ordered by others to kill: it is something he just does autonomously.

The Lord of Death is always looming like a butcher brandishing a sharp knife, and it depends completely on the Lord of Death whether or not one will live. Sometimes one thinks, 'Oh, whether I will live or not depends on other factors in my life', but whether one lives or not is completely in the hands of the Lord of Death. So the Lord of Death looms over one like a butcher with a sharp knife and it is only a question of time as to when one will be killed. Realising this one should generate renunciation with the same urgency as if one had red-hot coals lying on one's head, or as if one were in a pit of burning coal. Through recklessness one is prevented from following a path to liberation, but becoming mindful of one's death will generate conscientiousness, and one will generate an urgency to attain liberation, similar to wanting to become free from burning coal and fire.

There could be nothing worse than being lazy and reckless and remain like the perfect ones, the arhats and buddhas, who have already conquered the Lord of Death. Rather, one should repeatedly meditate on death and impermanence and generate a strong yearning for liberation, and practise the path to liberation with conscientiousness, and in such a way take the essence of this precious human life.

It is similar to the analogy where a king's minister is in danger of being killed by the king and therefore has to be very much aware and on his guard. Likewise one should be aware and conscientious because the Lord of Death is constantly looming. One should practise the path to liberation conscientiously.

The common fear of death that everybody experiences comes from the fear of losing one's possessions, losing one's relatives and losing one's body. Of these three, losing one's body probably causes the most suffering, and it is probably the most difficult for those who have a perfect body. Even in this life one just has to analyse how much suffering it causes if one loses a valuable possession compared to when one loses something that does not have much value.

The fear of death in relation to the Dharma is different. Geshe Potowa said that he was not afraid of death but of birth, because death is over very quickly, but then comes the next life which, for most people, will be fuelled by non-virtue. So it will be a lower rebirth that will be very hard to bear. One can observe that there are different types of lower rebirth or suffering rebirths that would be very difficult to bear.

Since one is under the control of mental afflictions there is nothing one can do about dying. But there is something that one can do about the way that one dies: one can lessen the grasping at this life by meditating on death and impermanence and one can lessen the fear of a lower rebirth by practising virtue and purifying all non-virtue. On the one hand everyone grasps at the happiness of this life, one grasps at one's possessions, one grasps at one's

body and so forth, and these different graspings can be lessened by meditating on death and impermanence. The next life is determined by one's karma: non-virtue causes one to be reborn in the lower realms and virtue causes one to be born in the higher realms; so to avoid being born in the lower realms one needs to purify one's virtue and one needs to create the cause for higher rebirth virtue. By knowing the Dharma and how to practise it, and applying it to one's life one can reap its benefits. In this way one can die without worry.

1.2. Extensive explanation of how to meditate on impermanence

1.2.1. The way of meditating on mindfulness of one's own death.

1.2.2. How it is unsuitable to mourn others suffering of death but not thinking about one's own suffering of death that is still experiencing.

1.2.3. Advice to abandon attachment to harmful activities and practise the path to liberation enthusiastically.

1.2.1. The way of meditating on mindfulness of one's own death

This comes in two points:

1.2.1.1. Meditating on coarse impermanence

1.2.1.2. Meditating on subtle impermanence

1.2.1.1. Meditating on coarse impermanence

Coarse impermanence is the impermanence that can be directly observed: one can see somebody dying, and one can see the glass breaking and so forth. Subtle impermanence, however, needs to be established by reason, by a valid sign, because it refers to the momentariness of the object, which is not something that can initially be observed directly.

Subtle impermanence refers to the momentariness of the object. The definition of *impermanence* is momentary. It refers to the non-abiding of the object. The object is always in flux and never abiding, not even for one moment. This is not something that one can observe directly: it is something that has to be established by valid reasoning, by valid sign.

Coarse impermanence is what is referred to here as death and impermanence. It is taught in five outlines:

1.2.1.1.1. Life is not an antidote to death and should not be trusted.

1.2.1.1.2. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death as death affects everybody equally.

1.2.1.1.3. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death by thinking that there are antidotes to sickness and aging.

1.2.1.1.4. It is very unsuitable to be unafraid of death as the time of death is indefinite.

1.2.1.1.5. Refuting the argument that a brave person is not afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.1. LIFE IS NOT AN ANTIDOTE TO DEATH AND SHOULD NOT BE TRUSTED

This comes in two points:

1.2.1.1.1.1. Actual

1.2.1.1.1.2. Since one's life is very long one does not need to be afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.1.1. Counteracting the thought that life is the antidote to death and therefore one does not need to be afraid of death

One is born to die [2]
Further those in the nature of going without freedom
Appear to be in the process
Of dying not living.

Here the mistaken notion is that since life is the antidote to death one does not need to be afraid of death. As life stops death and as one is presently is very much alive one is not going to die. One is going to be alive for a long time and therefore there is no need to be afraid of death now, as the time of death lies far into the future.

The attitude described here is, 'Oh, as long as I have my life I don't need to worry about death. I am just going to enjoy life until I die, and then when I die then I will worry about death. Anyway, life counteracts death, and at the moment I am very much alive, so I don't need to worry about death'.

This attitude of not worrying about the Lord of Death until I am going to die is incorrect, because even though one might be alive right now, life is not the antidote to death. Actually it is precisely because one is alive that one is going to die.

One is born to die and those in the nature of going without freedom appear to be in the process of dying not living. Far from being the antidote to death, life is a condition for death. First one is born and the inevitable result of being born is that one will die. One is shepherded by sickness and old age towards death just like sheep are inevitably led to the butcher for slaughter. Thinking that one is protected because one is alive is a mistaken notion: because one is alive one can become sick, being alive is why one becomes old and also why one dies. So being alive does not really have any qualities.

Since rebirth in one's mother's womb, one is continuously moving towards one's death without a moment's respite. Therefore none of these qualities that you ascribe to life are there.

By meditating well on death and impermanence one's Dharma mind will develop well.

Transcribed from tape by Jenny Brooks
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnett
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak
Edited Version

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Precious Garland by Nagarjuna states, the conditions for death are abundant.

There are many conditions for death.
The conditions for life are very few.
Even those become conditions for death
Therefore one should always train one's mind in
the treasure of the Dharma.

This relates to the second root of the death and impermanence meditation in the Lam Rim, which is that the time of death is indefinite. Why? Because there are many more conditions for death than for life. Even the few conditions for life quite often actually become conditions for death. So there is no telling when one will die and therefore it is highly inappropriate to become reckless by thinking, 'I still have many more years to live'.

Regardless of whether you think that your past has been short and that you still have a long future, or whether you think that both your past and your future are long, both of these ways of thinking actually indicate very clearly a fear of death. All one has to do is look a little bit deeper into the mind of the person.

Analogy: The analogy used here is of a person who, despite travelling along a dangerous road where many people are robbed, is singing and dancing. Even though the person is afraid, they try to portray a very brave appearance on the outside by singing and dancing. But if one looks very closely at that person, then one can see that the singing and dancing are only a façade of braveness, generated to make himself unafraid. What this indicates is that inside the person is actually afraid. Similarly, holding views in which one thinks that the past has been brief and the future is long, or thinking both the past and future are long, indicate that the person is actually afraid of death.

1.2.1.1.2. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death because death affects everybody equally

Mistaken argument: Even though the time of death is uncertain, since death is actually something that happens to everybody sooner or later, there is no need for me to be personally afraid.

*If you do not have the fear of death [4]
Because your general nature accords with others.
Does the harm to one
Generate suffering through jealousy?*

This verse deals with a misconception that actually arises from the previous train of thought, where a person thinks, 'Even though it is not certain how long my future is going to be, everybody has to die sooner or later. So why should I worry.' This is also quite a common way of thinking, and is also inappropriate.

What the text is trying to do is to highlight and overcome ways of thinking that encourage recklessness.

If a person thinks, 'I don't have to be afraid of death because death is something that happens to everybody', and does not generate any unhappiness when recognising that everybody is dying but becomes miserable when seeing that death afflicts a particular

individual, then that type of unhappiness came about through jealousy. But the suffering of death is different, for it does not come about through jealousy. It is in the very nature of death to cause suffering.

Analogy: Here the commentary illustrates the point by using the example of a village where initially only one person is taxed by the king. That one person will of course feel unhappy. Why? Because of jealousy. None of the other fellow villagers have been taxed, so the taxed person is unhappy because of jealousy. Once the king starts to tax everybody equally, then that person's unhappiness will cease.

The suffering of death is not like that; it is something that one has to experience individually. It is not a suffering that becomes less just because it is experienced by everybody else. For example, when one is reborn in the hell realms there will be many other fellow hell-beings who all experience suffering, but it does not lessen one's own suffering. This pertains to the point that one has to experience the fruits of one's own karma, which cannot be experienced by somebody else. Happiness and suffering are an individual experience, and because it is in the nature of death to cause suffering it is appropriate to be afraid of death. The suffering of death is not something that comes about through jealousy, but through its own nature. Hence it is suitable to fear it.

1.2.1.1.3. It is unsuitable to be unafraid of death because there are cures and treatments for sickness and old age

Mistaken Argument: I don't need to worry because when I get sick, I can always go to the doctor and through the practice of taking the essence (which is a particular practice where one takes the 'essence' of flowers or stones and so forth), I can purify my body and attain the common siddhi of longevity. Therefore I don't need to worry about death.

*Though you are unafraid of sickness and aging [5]
Because they have a treatment
Since the later cut has not cure,
It is very clear that you should fear it*

This is a very common way of thinking that is highly inappropriate, because even though one can temporarily cure sicknesses, and temporarily extend one's lifespan through, for example, the practice of taking the essence, this is only a momentary achievement. There is no cure for death, and ultimately everybody has to die. Even though these different types of cures and achievements might exist, death will definitely come, and it cannot be reversed by any means. Therefore death is something that you should be afraid of.

Analogy: Here the analogy that the commentary uses is that of the laundry servants of the king who are responsible for washing his clothes. If they lose any of the clothes, then in order to pacify the king and avoid being killed as punishment, the servants might, for example, compose a plea with a nice eulogy for the king. But while that might work with a king it will definitely not work with the Lord of Death. No matter how many poetic pleas we may write for the Lord of Death, death will not spare us, and will definitely come.

1.2.1.1.4. It is extremely unsuitable to be unafraid of death because of the time of death being indefinite

This comes in two parts:

1.2.1.1.4.1. One needs to be afraid of death since one can directly see that death is a shared experience for everybody

1.2.1.1.4.2. Refuting that one does not need to be afraid because one does not see any definite time of death

1.2.1.1.4.1. One needs to be afraid of death since one can directly see that death is a shared experience for everybody

Mistaken argument: I can see that everybody is going to die, and that death is something that affects everybody, but my time of death has not arrived yet, so therefore I don't need to worry.

*Like livestock about to be slaughtered, [6]
Death is common for all.
Further, if one sees that others die
Why are you not afraid of the Lord of Death?*

Death is something that afflicts everybody and it is directly observable, so therefore one needs to be afraid of death. Death is not very difficult to observe; it is similar to livestock that is to be slaughtered. One knows they are all going to die and actually they also observe each other being slaughtered and dying. Similarly, death is something that affects all ordinary individuals in common. How can one remain unafraid, saying, 'I don't see death', when one can see that many people have died in the past, and that there are many people who are dying in the present, and that there are many people who are going to die in the future. Therefore one should contemplate the danger of death and not remain like livestock being lead to slaughter, who are unable to do anything to avoid it, even when they see other animals being killed right there in front of them. Instead of remaining reckless, and unconcerned about virtue and non-virtue, one should generate conscientiousness for virtue and practise virtue.

1.2.1.1.4.2. Refuting that one does not need to be afraid because one does not see any definite time of death

Mistaken argument: I don't worry about death because there is no point to it since one doesn't know when one is going to die. Again, this is a very popular attitude.

*If you think I am permanent [7]
Because the time is indefinite
Then at the time of death, the Lord of Death
Will harm you.*

This also leads on from the previous thought where the person thinks, 'Even though death is directly observable, since the time of death is indefinite, I don't need to place any great importance in reversing my situation'. It talks about respect, so placing any great importance on reversing it is also an unsuitable thought, and an extremely foolish one at that. This way of thinking says in effect, 'Because the time of death is uncertain, therefore I am permanent'. This is extremely foolish precisely because the time of death is uncertain. In fact, from today onwards one should expect to die any time because the

time of death is indefinite. Even though one may not die today, when the time of death comes the Lord of Death will harm you, and cause you suffering. Therefore do not place your hopes in any lifespan that you might have left, but think about death and generate conscientiousness for practising the path to liberation. This verse is basically telling you to practise virtue, because even though you might not die today, and the time of death is indefinite, when the time of death comes you are going to suffer. Therefore make preparations to counteract that and practise virtue. Death comes to everybody so therefore one should make preparations for death.

1.2.1.1.5. Refuting that is not the cause of fear for a brave person

This is another popular attitude where one says, 'I am brave and strong so therefore I don't fear death because fear of death is for weaklings'. Some brave people will engage in harmful actions towards others, even at the cost of their life. They will be unafraid of death because they are so brave. Despite the indefiniteness of the time of death, they will engage in harmful actions even at the cost of their life.

We have finished four classes, so next time is discussion group. Have good discussions and after that write a good exam.

Correction to 14 March 2006 :

The twelve interdependent links are called:

1. The dependent link of ignorance
2. The dependent link of compositional factors
3. The dependent link of primary consciousness
4. The dependent link of a variety of names and form
5. The dependent link of a variety of the six sources
6. The dependent link of contact
7. The dependent link of feeling
8. The dependent link of craving
9. The dependent link of grasping
10. The dependent link of existence
11. The dependent link of rebirth
12. The dependent link of aging and death.

*Transcribed from tape by Bernii Wright
Edit 1 by Adair Bunnnett
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Edited Version*

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Tara Institute Study Group 2006 - 'Aryadeva's 400 Verses'

DISCUSSION

NAME:

BLOCK:

1

WEEK:

5

4TH APRIL 06

MARK:

-
1. What is the title of this year's text and explain why Aryadeva's original title differs. [2]

 2. Briefly mention two mistaken ideas Ven Dharmapala held with regards to this text. [2]

 3. If both Aryadeva's text and Nagarjuna's text are of the same thought, then does that not make Aryadeva's text redundant? Clarify this objection. [3]

 4. Give an overview of the first half of Aryadeva's text by summarizing the first eight chapters [16]

 5. Describe the usefulness of the mental factor '*conscientiousness*'. [3]

 6. 'Since one is under the control of mental afflictions there is nothing once can do about dying. But there is something that one can do about the way that one dies...' Comment [2]

 7. Why according to Buddhism is one 'born to die'? [3]

 8. To enjoy life in the present moment and only worry about death when the time comes is considered a mistaken attitude in Buddhism. Why? [2]

 9. "There are many conditions for death
The conditions for life are very few.
Even those become conditions for death.."
- Discuss these lines from Nagarjunas *Precious Garland*. [2]
10. How does the attitude of a person who does not fear death encourage *recklessness*? [3]

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