
Study Group – Aryadeva's 400 Verses

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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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Edited Version

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