



---

*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  
Edit 2 by Venerable Tenzin Dongak  
Edited Version*

© Tara Institute