

DEATH AND DYING FROM A BUDDHIST PERSPECTIVE

“The Nine Contemplations of Atisha” in Verse Form

From a Translated Text by Joan Halifax

The First Contemplation

Death is inevitable; no one is exempt.
Holding this thought in mind, I abide in the breath.

The Second Contemplation

Our life span is ever-decreasing; each breath brings us closer to death.
Holding this thought in mind, I delve deeply into its truth.

The Third Contemplation

Death will indeed come, whether or not we are prepared.
Holding this thought in mind, I enter fully into the body of life.

The Fourth Contemplation

Human life expectancy is uncertain; death can come at any time.
Holding this thought in mind, I am attentive to each moment.

The Fifth Contemplation

There are many causes of death – even habits, desires, and accidents are precipitants.
Holding this thought in mind, I consider the endless possibilities.

The Sixth Contemplation

The human body is fragile and vulnerable; our life hangs by a breath.
Holding this thought in mind, I attend to my inhale and exhale.

The Seventh Contemplation

At the time of death, material resources are of no use to us.
Holding this thought in mind, I invest wholeheartedly in practice.

The Eighth Contemplation

Our loved ones cannot keep us from death; there is no delaying its advent.
Holding this thought in mind, I exercise non-grasping.

The Ninth Contemplation

Our body cannot help us at the time of death; it too will be lost at that moment.
Holding this thought in mind, I learn to let go.

