

# The 9 Contemplations of Atisha

in verse form

## 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 decreasing continuously, every 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 into a real sense of practice.  
(or, "I enter more 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 listen with utmost care to every sound.

## The Fifth Contemplation

There are many causes of death – habits, desires, accidents can be precipitants.  
Holding this thought in mind, I consider the myriad 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 each inhalation-exhalation.

## The Seventh Contemplation

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

## 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 strengthen my capacity for release.

*Originally penned by Lord Atisha (982 - 1054 CE), a Buddhist teacher who reintroduced Buddhism into Tibet after a previous king had nearly destroyed it. He studied and mastered all of the traditions of Buddhism in India. This verse form is by Roshi Joan Halifax, the abbot and head teacher of The Upaya Zen Center in New Mexico.*