

The Purpose [of Gradual Guidance]

- If the practices of persons of lesser & medium capacity are preliminaries for those of great capacity, why divide the path into three levels?
- One purpose is to prevent conceit, thinking: “I’m a person of great capacity.”
- Another purpose is that it will give rise to excellent qualities.
- Analogies:
 - ⊗ Polishing jewels
 - ⊗ Climbing stairs

With broad white wings of conventional and
ultimate truth,
The king of swans, accompanied by the flock
of sentient beings,
Flies on the powerful winds of virtue
To the supreme far shore of the ocean of a
buddha's perfect qualities.

Chandrakirti, *Entering the Middle Way*, v. 6.226

The Actual Way of Taking the Essence of the Precious Human Life

This has three points: Training the mind in the stages of the path shared in common with persons of

- lesser capacity
- medium capacity
- great capacity

Actual Training in the Attitude of Persons of Lesser Capacity

- First, generate concern about future lives by
 - ⊗ Realizing you are definitely going to die
 - ⊗ Contemplating the sufferings of the three lower realms
- Second, rely on the methods for gaining happiness in future lives by
 - ⊗ Taking refuge in the Three Jewels
 - ⊗ Living your life in accordance with karma

The Faults of Not Cultivating Mindfulness of Death

1. Every day we will think “I will not die today”
2. We will keep thinking about ways of achieving happiness and eliminating suffering in this life only
3. Even if we learn and practice Dharma, our virtue will have little power
4. It will be hard to avoid the laziness of procrastination
5. Mental afflictions and faulty behavior might increase, leading to lower rebirths

The Benefits of Cultivating Mindfulness of Death

1. Craving for friends and relatives will decrease, and we will want to take the essence of this life by giving, etc.
2. We will refrain from faulty behavior.
3. We will accumulate the good karmas of taking refuge, ethics, etc.
4. As a result we will achieve a holy state and be able to lead other beings there.
5. It destroys mental afflictions and is a gateway to accomplish all that is virtuous and excellent.

The 9-Point Meditation on Death

- The three root contemplations:
 1. It is certain that we will die
 2. It is uncertain when we will die
 3. At the time of death, only Dharma helps
- Nine reasons (3 for each of the 3 roots)
- Three decisions (one at the end of each root)

First Root: It is Certain That We Will Die

The three reasons:

- A. The “Lord of Death” will certainly come and nothing can stop him
- B. We can’t increase our lifespan, and it is constantly decreasing
- C. We might die without having had time to practice Dharma

Conclusion: I must practice Dharma