



**MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS**

**CLASS THREE : EMPTY THINGS WORK**

From the Ninth Chapter of Master Shantideva's GUIDE TO THE BODHISATTVA'S WAY OF LIFE:

यावत्प्रत्ययसामग्री तावन्मायापि वर्तते।

दीर्घसंतानमात्रेण कथं सत्त्वोऽस्ति सत्यतः ॥ १० ॥

yāvatpratyayasāmagrī tāvanmāyāpi vartate |  
dīrghasamatānamātreṇa katham sattu'o'sti satyataḥ ||10||

Even that which is illusory goes on for as long as there is a collection of conditions. Why should there be some kind of true reality to a living being just because of the long duration of his or her continuum?

मायापुरुषघातादौ चित्ताभावान्न पापकम्।

चित्तमायासमेते तु पापपुण्यसमुद्भवः ॥ ११ ॥

māyāpuruṣaghātādau cittābhāvānna pāpakam |  
cittamāyāsamete tu pāpapuṇyasamudbhavaḥ ||11||

(Objection:) “There is no negative karma from things like the killing of illusory persons who do not have truly existing minds.” (Response:) But when there is the illusion of a mind, negativity and merit arise.



यथा दृष्टं श्रुतं ज्ञातं नैवेह प्रतिषिध्यते।

सत्यतः कल्पना त्वत्र दुःखहेतुर्निवार्यते ॥ २६ ॥

yathā dṛṣṭam śrutam jñātam naiveha pratiṣidhyate |  
satyataḥ kalpanā tvatra duḥkhaheturnivāryate ||26||

It is not things that are seen, heard, and known that is being refuted here. It is the conceptualization of those things as truly existing – which is the cause of our suffering – that is here repudiated.

मायोपमत्वेऽपि ज्ञाते कथं क्लेशो निवर्तते।

यदा मायास्त्रियां रागस्तत्कर्तुरपि जायते ॥ ३१ ॥

māyopamatve'pi jñāte katham kleśo nivartate |  
yadā māyāstriyām rāgastatkarturapi jāyate ||31||

[Objection:] “Even when we know that things are like illusions, how will a mental affliction be finished off? Desire for an illusory woman arises even in the one who created her.”

अप्रहीणा हि तत्कर्तुर्ज्ञेयसंक्लेशवासना।

तद्दृष्टिकाले तस्यातो दुर्बला शून्यवासना ॥ ३२ ॥

aprahīṇā hi takarturjñeyasaṅklesavāsanā |  
taddṛṣṭikāle tasyāto durbalā śūnyavāsanā ||32||

Because the creator’s habitual arising of mental afflictions towards objects of knowledge have not been eradicated, when he sees her the habit of thinking about the emptiness of things is weak.



शून्यतावासनाधानाद्धीयते भाववासना ।

किञ्चिन्नास्तीति चाभ्यासात्सापि पश्चात्प्रहीयते ॥ ३३ ॥

śūnyatāvāsanādhānāddhīyate bhāvavāsanā ।  
kiñcinnāstīti cābhyāsātsāpi paścātprahīyate ॥33॥

Due to the strengthening of the habit of thinking of the emptiness of things, the habit of thinking things exist is eliminated. And because one has practiced thinking, “Nothing exists,” one later abandons even this idea.

सत्यदर्शनतो मुक्तिः शून्यतादर्शनेन किम् ।

न विनानेन मार्गेण बोधिरित्यागमो यतः ॥ ४१ ॥

satyadarśanato muktiḥ śūnyatādarśanena kim ।  
na vinānena mārgēṇa bodhirityāgamo yataḥ ॥41॥

[One might object, saying:] “Liberation comes from seeing the Four Arya Truths, so what’s the point of seeing emptiness?” But according to the scripture, there is no enlightenment without this path.

सक्तित्रासात्त्वनिर्मुक्त्या संसारे सिध्यति स्थितिः ।

मोहेन दुःखिनामर्थे शून्यताया इदं फलम् ॥ ५३ ॥

saktitrāsāttvanirmuktya saṁsāre sidhyati sthitiḥ ।  
mohena dukkhanāmarthe śūnyatāyā jñadam phalam ॥53॥

The result of meditation on emptiness is that one stays in samsara, liberated from clinging and fear, for the sake of those who are suffering due to delusion.



तदेवं शून्यतापक्षे दूषणं नोपपद्यते।

तस्मान्निर्विचिकित्सेन भावनीयैव शून्यता ॥ ५४ ॥

tadevaṃ śūnyatāpakṣe dūṣaṇaṃ nopapadyate |  
tasmānnirvicikitsena bhāvanīyaiva śūnyatā ||54||

So there is no possible refutation when it comes to emptiness. Therefore one should meditate on it exclusively and without any hesitation at all.

क्लेशज्ञेयावृत्तितमःप्रतिपक्षो हि शून्यता।

शीघ्रं सर्वज्ञताकामो न भावयति तां कथम् ॥ ५५ ॥

kleśajñeyāvṛttitamaḥpratipakṣo hi śūnyatā |  
śīghraṃ sarvajñatākāmo na bhāvayati tāṃ katham ||55||

Emptiness is the antidote for the obstacles to omniscience and for the mental afflictions obstacles. Why wouldn't one who wants omniscience immediately begin meditating on it?

यद्दुःखजननं वस्तु त्रासस्तस्मात्प्रजायताम्।

शून्यता दुःखशमनी ततः किं जायते भयम् ॥ ५६ ॥

yadduḥkhajananaṃ vastu trāsastasmātprajāyatām |  
śūnyatā duḥkhaśamanī tataḥ kiṃ jāyate bhayam ||56||

Fear arises when one encounters something that produces suffering. Emptiness pacifies suffering. So what is there to fear from it?