



MEDITATIONS ON EMPTINESS

CLASS FIVE: THE EMPTINESS OF PERSONS

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

यतस्ततो वास्तु भयं यद्यहं नाम किञ्चन ।

अहमे च किञ्चिच्चेद्भयं कस्य भविष्यति ॥ ५७ ॥

yatastato vāstu bhayaṃ yadyahaṃ nāma kiñcana ।
ahame ca kiñcicedbhayaṃ kasya bhaviṣyati ॥ 57 ॥

If there was anything whatsoever we could name an "I," then fear could arise from any object. But if there is no self at all, who will there be who fears?

दन्तकेशनखा नाहं नास्थि नाप्यस्मि शोणितम् ।

न सिंघाणं न च श्लेष्मा न पूयं लसिकापि वा ॥ ५८ ॥

dantakeśanakhā nāhaṃ nāsthi nāpyasmi śoṇitam ।
na siṅghāṇaṃ na ca śleṣmā na pūyaṃ lasikāpi vā ॥ 58 ॥

The "I" is not the teeth, hair, nails, bone, blood, mucous, phlegm, pus, or lymph.

नाहं वसा न च स्वेदो न मेदोऽस्त्राणि नाप्यहम् ।

न चाहमन्त्रनिर्गुण्डी गूथमूत्रमहं न च ॥ ५९ ॥

nāhaṃ vasā na ca svedo na medo'strāṇi nāpyaham ।
na cāhamantranirguṇḍī gūthamūtramahaṃ na ca ॥ 59 ॥

The "I" is not the marrow, sweat, fat, or entrails; it is not the cavity of the entrails, the feces, or urine.



नाहं मांसं न च स्नायु नोष्मा वायुरहं न च ।

न च च्छिद्राण्यहं नापि षड् विज्ञानानि सर्वथा ॥ ६० ॥

nāhaṁ māṁsaṁ na ca snāyu noṣmā vāyurahaṁ na ca ।
na ca cchidrāṅnyahaṁ nāpi ṣaḍ vijñānāni sarvathā ॥ 60 ॥

The “I” is not the flesh, the ligaments, nor is it the heat or wind elements. It is not the bodily apertures nor the six consciousnesses.

तदेवान्येन रूपेण नटवत्सोऽप्यशाश्वतः ।

स एवान्यस्वभावश्चेदपूर्वेयं तदेकता ॥ ६६ ॥

tadevānyena rūpeṇa naṭavatso'pyaśāśvataḥ ।
sa evānyasvabhāvaśchedapūrveyaṁ tadekatā ॥ 66 ॥

If it (the self) is like an actor, taking one guise and then another, then it is not permanent. If it really takes on another self-nature, then the so-called “oneness” of that (self) is really quite extraordinary!

अचेतनश्च नैवाहमाचैतन्यात्पटादिवत् ।

अथ ज्ञश्चेतनायोगादज्ञो नष्टः प्रसज्यते ॥ ६९ ॥

acetanaśca naivāhamācāitanyātpaṭādivat ।
atha jñāścetanāyogādajño naṣṭaḥ prasajyate ॥ 69 ॥

That which is without consciousness is not the “I” – if it were, then it would be something like cloth, which is also without consciousness. And if it were something that had consciousness, then it would follow that when it was unlinked from the object of consciousness it would cease to be.



अथाविकृत एवात्मा चैतन्येनास्य किं कृतम् ।

अज्ञस्य निष्क्रियस्यैवमाकाशस्यात्मता मता ॥ ७० ॥

athāvikṛta evātmā caitanyenāśya kiṁ kṛtam ।
ajñasya niṣkriyasyaivamākāśasyātmata matā ॥ 70 ॥

If the self is unchanging, what could its consciousness be conscious of? If such were possible, then even empty space – which is without a consciousness and doesn't do anything at all – could be said to have a “self.”

अतीतानागतं चित्तं नाहं तद्धि न विद्यते ।

अथोत्पन्नमहं चित्तं नष्टेऽस्मिन्नास्त्यहं पुनः ॥ ७४ ॥

atītānāgataṁ cittam nāham taddhi na vidyate ।
athotpannamahaṁ cittam naṣṭe'sminnāstyahaṁ punaḥ ॥ 74 ॥

The “I” is not the mind of the past or of the future, since neither exist. If the “I” were the present mind, then when the present mind ceased to be the “I” would no longer exist.

यथैव कदलिस्तम्भो न कश्चद्भगशः कृतः ।

तथाहमप्यसद्भूतो मृग्यमाणो विचारतः ॥ ७५ ॥

yathaiva kadalistambho na kaścadbhagaśaḥ kṛtaḥ ।
tathāhamapyasadbhūto mṛgyamaṇo vicārataḥ ॥ 75 ॥

Just as there is nothing when you cut into the trunk of a banana tree, so too when you go looking analytically for the “I” there is nothing that exists.