

Meditation on Emptiness

Preparation: Start by taking just a minute or two to focus on your physical body, finding the most beneficial position with your spine straight and erect, a position in which you can be aware and awake, but not stiff or rigid. Feel the weight of your body, its substantial, earthy character. Become present in the moment and place where you are.

Now continue with the 9-round breathing meditation (see the instructions in the module “How to Meditate.”) Let all thoughts go as you focus on the breath as you inhale and exhale through each nostril, breathing in white light and breathing out black smoke.

Motivation: When the mind is calm and focused, create an altruistic motivation for the meditation session. Think that you are meditating not just for your own well-being or peace of mind or good reputation, but you are taking the time now to meditate and develop the wisdom of emptiness in order to attain the state of enlightenment where you can most skillfully benefit all beings and lead them as well from suffering and to enlightenment.

The main body of the meditation:

Now think “I,” “I.” Allow the feeling of “I” to grow. Focus on the sense of “I,” or “me.” One way to bring up this sense of I is to generate a strong emotion ... for example, bring to mind an instance in which you felt strong anger or strong fear. Now allow a small part of your mind to subtly act as an observer, observing this sense of I. (That “observer” must be very sneaky and subtle, otherwise, this sense of I tends to disappear.)

How does the I appear? As one with the body? As completely separate from the body? As one with the mind? As completely separate from the mind? Often, the I appears as something independent, separate from, the mind and body. Is this appearance accurate and true? Let’s investigate.

What is this I? Is it the body? The whole body? A part of the body? Is it the head? The heart? The brain? If it is any of these things, how could then we say “my head,” or “my heart,” or “my brain,” or even “my body”? Contemplate this for awhile.

Now think: Is the I the same as the body, or is the I the “possessor” of the body? If the I is not the same as the body, is it completely different? If the I is the possessor of the body, does that mean it is completely independent of the body? Something separate? Contemplate this for awhile.

Can the I exist without the body? Think about this.

Now think: Is the I the same as the mind, that which perceives and thinks and experiences, both perceptually (through the 5 senses) and conceptually (through thinking)? Is the I the same as the whole mind? As every moment of the mind? If the I is the mind, which moment of the mind is it? Which part of the mind? Contemplate this for awhile.

If the I is the same as the mind, why do we say “my mind”? Is the I the possessor of the mind? Is the I completely different from the mind? Completely independent of the mind? Something separate? Contemplate this for awhile.

Can the I exist without the mind? Think about this.

The I is neither one with nor completely separate from the body. The I is neither one with nor completely separate from the mind. What is it then? How does it exist?

The appearance of the I as something completely independent of the mind and body is a complete illusion. It is a completely false appearance. And this appearance gives rise to all the afflictions of the mind, all the delusions and resulting karmic actions. This false appearance is the root of our samsara and our suffering. This false appearance is completely deceptive, and the I that appears to exist in this false way DOES NOT EXIST AT ALL. Thus, the very subtle I that does exist (conventionally) is COMPLETELY EMPTY OF THIS FALSE WAY OF EXISTING. The I is completely empty of independent existence, or of inherent existence. The I is a mere imputation, a mere label, that depends on the base of the body and mind. Contemplate this strongly. Once you have come to this conclusion, allow all your thinking process to stop and merely concentrate on this understanding with single-pointed focus, so that it can penetrate into the deeper levels of your mind.

Dedication

Due to the merit and positive energy of meditating to understand the emptiness of the I, may I, who is merely imputed by mind, and all sentient beings quickly generate all positive qualities of kindness and compassion, which are merely imputed by mind, and remove all negativities and obscurations of self-cherishing, which are merely imputed by mind, from our mindstreams. May the wisdom of emptiness annihilate all my wrong views and completely cut the root of samsara in my mind and the minds of all sentient beings. May I swiftly awaken to the state of supreme enlightenment, which is merely imputed by mind, and lead all other beings, which are merely imputed by mind, to that very same supreme state.