

## NOTES ON “HOW TO SEE YOURSELF AS YOU REALLY ARE”

### Chapter 10 - Meditating on Yourself First

*Through one all are known.  
Through one all are also seen.  
- Buddha*

In Part 1 of the book, we learned that it is our own nonproductive emotions causing all our troubles and that it's ignorance of the true nature of the way we and all other things actually exist that's at the root of that ignorance. This ignorance causes us to exaggerate the goodness and badness of things and to view phenomena as though they exist separately, in and of themselves.

In Part 2 we learned about interdependence and that the actual way our selves and all phenomena really do exist is by way of dependency on parts, on conditions and on thought. We learned how to value dependent arising and emptiness and how to balance these views in order not to reify too much on the one hand and to avoid nihilism on the other.

Part 3 taught us about focusing the mind and calm abiding through sitting in meditation to strengthen our ability to analyze.

Part 4 of the book, titled, "How to End Self-Deception" is the section where we begin the actual meditation on emptiness. This part begins with Chapter 10, "Meditating on Yourself First", which presents one important point, which is the need to understand why we begin the meditation on ourselves first. It makes sense to begin this way because it is our own individual self, who "*undergoes pleasure and pain, makes trouble, and accumulates karma - all the noise and the mess....*". It is this person who is caught in cyclic existence and it is this person who becomes free. Therefore that's where the analysis should begin, here with ourselves.

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Buddha said, "*Through one all are known. Through one all are also seen.*" It might be tempting to interpret this as meaning that once one thing is known and seen to lack inherent existence, all things will be known and seen to lack it as well. Or even to think it means that once we know and see that our self does not have inherent existence, we will then automatically know and see that all other things lack it, too. But that's not what is meant, he is saying that once we get the understanding of how our self does not exist inherently, we can use this understanding to see how all other things are also without inherent existence. The Dalai Lama says we use our understanding of our own lack of inherent existence to "*extend this realization to the things we enjoy, undergo and make use of*". The emphasis is that we begin with seeing our own lack of inherent existence and then we use the knowledge, the method, and apply it to other things.

That's why Nagarjuna began the teaching first with the selflessness of persons. He explained in the *Precious Garland of Advice* how the person can't be found in any of the natural elements, not in consciousness, nor in any combination of them. He says that since the person is set up in dependence on an aggregation of the constituents, this person can't be established as its own reality.

He then goes on to say that in turn, those constituents are also dependent on their parts, so the rule follows, that they can't be inherently existent either. The implication is that beginning the work with seeing and knowing the lack of inherent existence of the "I" makes the understanding naturally flow to seeing how the parts of the "I" are also dependent on their parts, and so on.

This generalization is facilitated by the fact that the logic we use when looking for the lack of inherent existence of ourselves will be the same when we look for the lack of inherent existence of anything else. The dependencies will be the same; dependency on parts, dependency on conditions, dependency on thought. The same holds true whether we are looking at our self, our constituents, or any other phenomena.

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It is an important point as it is emphasized so clearly and given its own chapter, this understanding of beginning the work on the "I". We're reminded again at the end of the chapter and asked to reflect on:

- 1) It is the person at the center of all problems.
- 2) We have to generate the realization of our own lack of inherent existence first.
- 3) Once we know how we've been falsely discriminating ourselves, we can apply this understanding mentally to all phenomena and know the lack of their inherent existence as well.