

## EXERCISE TWENTY-TWO

### Looking Deeply

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| 1. Aware of my body, I breathe in.<br>Smiling to my body, I breathe out.  | Aware of body<br>Smiling               |
| 2. Aware that this body is not me,<br>I breathe in.<br>Aware that no self owns this body,<br>I breathe out.       | Body not me<br>No self owns body       |
| 3. Aware of a feeling present now,<br>I breathe in.<br>Smiling to this feeling, I breathe out.                    | Aware of feeling<br>Smiling            |
| 4. Aware that this feeling is not me,<br>I breathe in.<br>Aware that no self owns this feeling,<br>I breathe out. | Feeling not me<br>No self owns feeling |
| 5. Aware of a perception present now,<br>I breathe in.<br>Smiling to this perception,<br>I breathe out.           | Aware of perception<br>Smiling         |

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| 6. Aware that this perception is not me,<br>I breathe in.<br>Aware that no self owns this<br>perception, I breathe out.  | Perception not me<br>No self owns perception              |
| 7. Aware of a mental formation present<br>now, I breathe in.<br>Smiling to this mental formation,<br>I breathe out.  | Aware of mental formation<br>Smiling                      |
| 8. Aware that this mental formation is<br>not me, I breathe in.<br>Aware that no self owns this mental<br>formation, I breathe out.                                | Mental formation not me<br>No self owns mental formation  |
| 9. Aware of consciousness being<br>present, I breathe in.<br>Smiling to this consciousness,<br>I breathe out.  | Aware of consciousness<br>Smiling                         |
| 10. Aware that this consciousness is not<br>me, I breathe in.<br>Aware that no self owns this<br>consciousness, I breathe out.                                     | Consciousness not me<br>No self owns consciousness        |
| 11. Knowing I am not limited by this<br>body, I breathe in.<br>Knowing this body is not limited by<br>my lifespan, I breathe out.                                  | I not limited<br>Body not limited                         |
| 12. Knowing that this body as five<br>aggregates is birthless and deathless,<br>I breathe in.<br>Knowing that I am also birthless and<br>deathless, I breathe out. | Body birthless,<br>deathless<br>I birthless,<br>deathless |

13. Smiling to the birthlessness and deathlessness of this body,  
I breathe in.  
Smiling to the birthlessness and deathlessness of this self,  
I breathe out.

Smiling to  
birthless, deathless  
body  
Smiling to  
birthless, deathless  
self

This exercise helps us to look deeply at the nature of selflessness. The body and the other bases of perception (eyes, ears, nose, tongue, and mind) are not the self. Nor do they belong to a self that lies outside them. The five aggregates are the body, the feelings, the perceptions, mental formations, and consciousness. These five aggregates are not the self, and they are also not the property of a self that exists apart from them. Self is often defined as a changeless entity existing independently from so-called nonself entities. Buddhism teaches that there is no such self, because in reality there is nothing changeless which can exist independently of all else. What then, is, the meaning of the words "I" and "self" in exercise twenty-two, and what do they refer to? Obviously "I" here refers to the person who is meditating, who is a compound of the five aggregates. The five aggregates are themselves a river of constantly transforming phenomena which are not separate entities. If we understand that, then there is nothing wrong with the use of the word "I." If our minds are open to the fact that self is made of nonself elements, we can use the expression "self" without fear—like Buddha when he asked Ananda: "Do you wish to come to Vulture peak with me?"

The wrong views of self can be enumerated as follows:

1. The body is the self (*Satkāyadr̥ṣṭi*).
2. The body is not the self but it belongs to the self.

3. The body is in the self and the self is in the body.
4. The body is not the self but it is also not something independent of the self.
5. The world is the self, the self is the world.

It is important to remember that we meditate on no-self in order to uproot the idea of a permanent and changeless self-substance, not to establish a theory of nihilism. Eternalism and nihilism are both wrong views, traps which the Buddha taught his disciples to avoid. The view of permanence (Pali *sassata-dit̥ṭhi*) and the view that nothing is (Pali *uccheda dit̥ṭhi*) are the basis of all wrong thinking. If we are able to go beyond these two extremes, we can freely and as we please use the word "I," just as the Buddha used "This body is not me" or "I am not this body." To identify self with the world is also a confused notion if it means we are caught in "eternalist" or nihilistic thinking: "I am the universe. As long as the universe is there I continue to exist. When the universe is not there I cease to exist." This is not so, for truly reality is birthless and deathless, without self and without other. It does not come and does not depart. It is only by realizing this reality that we can destroy the wrong view of self. Those who simply repeat over and over again "no self" as a religious doctrine have probably lost their way and entered the view of nihilism.